Contemporary Danish Prose

Various

Table of Contents

Contemporary Danish Prose

Various

- BOOKS FOR FURTHER REFERENCE:

Juliet Sutherland, Nicole Aposotla, Charles Franks and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team.

CONTEMPORARY DANISH PROSE
AN ANTHOLOGY

DANISH SHORT STORIES

BY DR. F. J. BILLESKOV JANSEN Professor of Danish Literature in the University of Copenhagen

Among Danish short story writers there are six classic authors, six pillars of the art of narration, and all the contemporary short story writers whose dates are to be found at the end of this book are based on them. It is therefore natural to introduce this anthology with some words on the predecessors of its authors in Danish prose−writing.

It is due to Steen Steensen Blicher (1782−1848) that the Danish short story has struck such deep roots in the soil of our country. In his early youth Blicher received his first poetical inspiration from his reading of Ossian, whose poems he translated into sensitive Danish prose (1807−9), and in the Jutland moors he found a sombre reflection of Ossian's Scotland. But when, in 1824, Blicher began to write short stories, his characters were not misty and vague in the style of Ossian, but human beings of flesh and blood; he told stories of Jutland peasants of the past and the present, interpreting their tragic−heroic attitude to life.

It was in his own native region that Blicher made, as Walter Scott had done, his felicitous poetic discovery, the tradition of the Jutland peasantry. And it was not without connection with this decouverte that in 1845 Meir Aron Goldschmidt (1819−87) commenced upon a series of stories depicting the domestic life of Danish Jews. In these stories, Jewish customs and traditions, Jewish thinking, and Jewish characters are seen from within, and described in a language which reveals and veils at the same time. Once and for all Goldschmidt's tales have stamped the Danish short story with the impress of their intimate art.

In the years after 1835 Hans Christian Andersen (1805−75) recreated the new artistic fairy tale, and a suggestion of the fairy tale element has remained in Danish narrative prose ever since. But as time went on, Andersen added the 'story' to the 'fairy tale'. In many of these stories there is a genial criticism of our own weaknesses; Andersen's humour is not least to be found in his 'stories'.

Strangely enough, Naturalism made its entry into Denmark with some short stories of a peculiarly dreamlike character. In the stories which J. P. Jacobsen (1847−85) published during the 1870s and 1880s, a sensitive description of natural scenery and milieu is combined with an account of the roadless longings and never−to−be−fulfilled passions of man. Both Henrik Pontoppidan (1857−1943) and Herman Bang (1857− 1912) were ten years younger. In Pontoppidan the story with a purpose found its place in Danish literature. With scathing sarcasm and subtle irony this writer of short stories denounces the meanness and covetousness of the farmers, as well as their weak attitude towards the dictatorial tendencies of Conservative policy in the eighties. The dominant note of the short stories of Herman Bang on the other hand, is human sympathy. His field is that of the 'silent beings', men, and especially women, whom life has pushed aside, the suppressed and stunted minds. Bang also has a sympathetic understanding of the restless and homeless artist. In his characters there are traits both of Danish homeliness and of something exotic and strange.

The reader will see the tragic resignation of Blicher, the intimate art of Goldschmidt, the imagination and humour of Andersen, the dreamlike quality of Jacobsen, the satire of Pontoppidan, and the human sympathy of Bang come to life again on the following pages, in new, often profoundly original, combinations. In these short stories he may

discern the nuances of the Danish character.

INDOMITABILITY

BY JAKOB KNUDSEN Translated By V. Elizabeth Balfour−Browne

I walked through the waiting−room of the little country station in Jutland, with my head and body aching from the journey: the rumbling of the train, the warmth of the compartment, the hot unpleasant smell of the waste steam, the vibration of the engine which still stood grunting at the platform. I had had a poor night and my head still felt dizzy. I passed out through the main door, which, being fitted with a spring, fell to behind me with a click. Out in the cold, misty December rain a little one−horse gig was waiting in front of the station. The driver was the well−known small−holder who had got the driving for the Lecturing Union by offering the lowest terms. I was about to climb into the vehicle by stepping on the corner of the swingle−tree and the left−hand shaft since there was no step to the gig, but the driver, doubtful of the bar's bearing my weight, warned me against that. I managed by putting my foot on the hub of the wheel but in so doing I badly smeared my fur coat with grease. The driver gave me half of his ragged horse−cloth to put over my knees and at last we set off at an amble in the steady rain. It was not heavy but was unrelenting and my neck and shoulders were soon soaked.

At one time I imagined that for the rest of my existence I had no other prospects of making a living than by undertaking reading and lecture tours, and so I took very seriously as being interminable the discomforts which might accompany them. Today, too, burning nephralgia gave me no peace. The driver was very entertaining considering the circumstances, but I am convinced his conversation was intended to distract my attention from the slow progress we were making. The horse was of Russian stock and for this reason its pace became so slow as to resemble that of a snail. The man never used the whip as the creature seemed likely to shy at it and a flick of it might really have caused it to bolt. On the other hand he kept repeating "Hup! Hup!" without intermission until the words sounded more and more as if he were turning a quid in his cheek.

After two hours of this we stopped in front of the village school where I was to stay for the next twenty−four hours. By this time I was quite out of humour not least because my fur coat was wet through, for I knew by experience how difficult it was to get such a thing dried when away from home without its being spoilt by being put too near the stove. It didn't appear that anyone within had seen the gig arrive. The driver tried to attract attention by cracking his whip but it gave only a wet cloop.

Well, it was a good thing, I thought as we waited, that it was one of Holberg's comedies I was to read that evening. His humour is an excellent antidote to gloominess. Reading aloud from his work when I myself have been depressed, I have often thought I could feel how much indisposition he himself had to overcome while he wrote the plays.

The master now came out onto the steps, a man of about 30, with fair hair and a moustache which drooped well over his mouth and was stained at the ends with tobacco. We were complete strangers to each other.

Briskly, with a touch of the dashing pedagogue about him, he said, "Good afternoon," but thereupon was seized by a fit of coughing and spitting while I crawled down from the gig. When I was on the ground I was prepared to shake hands but he was unable to do so for coughing. It was the deep, hollow, unmistakable cough of a consumptive in an advanced stage of the disease. I felt a horrible certainty that the man who now stood and blocked the doorway in front of me would be carried out of it within a few months.

At length the attack passed. He took a few hasty puffs at his pipe which was on the point of going out and put out his hand with a swinging, rather exaggerated movement.

"Rain! Rain! It rains every single day," he said with a peculiar intonation on the last word. "Come in, Jakob Knudsen, and warm yourself. You look like a drowned rat!"

We hung my fur coat on a nail near the stove and put my suitcase close to it. His wife, who looked tired and over−worked, brought in coffee; several children appeared in the room and stared at me.

The school−master offered me one of his pipes, but I refused it with the excuse that I had a cold.

"By the way, I have a bone to pick with you, Jakob Knudsen," he said at once. "It is better not to beat about the bush, but well, let me tell you straight out. I have read your last book and the character you have drawn of a Danish, as I take it a Jutland, teacher is absolutely unfair "

I attempted to defend myself. He was not intended to be typical, and so forth.

"No, no, the mistake is that you have drawn him both stupid and self− important, and those are two bad faults."

"Of course, but I have surely not suggested they are not?"

"I didn't get that impression at all. On the contrary it would seem rather as if you really meant what you wrote there."

"Well, you have misunderstood me...."

During this conversation, which, by the assistance of frequent misunderstandings, continued for a long time, the children in the room began to play with my fur coat. They set it swinging towards the stove.

I became anxious for my valuable property and unresponsive to my host's conversation. At last in a pleasant, joking tone I asked the eldest boy to leave my coat alone.

"You are no pedagogue, Jakob Knudsen," said his father. "Your words will have no effect that way. Explain to Thorgrim WHY he must not play with your coat and then you'll see."

"The reason is that I don't wish it," said I in a rather less pleasant tone.

"That is no reason no pedagogic reason. Thorgrim," and he turned to the boy, "do you think it would be good for your bottom to touch the stove?"

The boy grinned and began to approach the stove backwards in a crouching attitude.

"No, no, Thorgrim. Answer me. Of course you don't think so. The stove is too hot. Well, it isn't good for Jakob Knudsen's coat either. Do you understand now?"

The children again took hold of the coat.

"See, that's the way a little joke, just a joke, yet it is instructive, and it is so easy. There must be an appeal to the understanding."

Thorgrim now hung on my coat and swung to and fro. I took it down and laid it on the bed in the room where I was to sleep that night.

"Yes, caution is thought a virtue among the middle classes," said my host, "but it is not my intention to make leaders of the bourgeoisie out of my children. Would you like to see the church, Jakob Knudsen, before it is quite dark? It is only two steps off."

We rose and donned our coats.

"Father, what are you going to see up at the church?"

"What are we going to see? We are going to see what there IS to see."

"But what is there to see, father?"

"I can't tell you that in one word. We can talk about it later."

"May I go to the church with you?"

"No, Thorgrim, certainly not."

"Why not?"

"It is cold and wet and you'll get a cold. Do you understand?"

"No; I won't, father, so may I come?"

"Well, yes. Come with us if you really want to. But you must put some other shoes on. You can't come in those gym−shoes."

Thorgrim rushed out of the front door and into the church−yard in his thin tennis shoes.

"Oh, well. All right," said his father, following him. "I consider that children have to learn that they have wills too, and that will has a meaning. I think their wills should be developed," he said to me.

I could not answer. At the moment I was feeling life in general utterly distasteful.

"I believe that if there is to be a future," the school−master continued, "it depends on children's having vigorous, healthy and powerful wills."

The rain had stopped but the weather had got much colder. The teacher had wrapped a long, knitted muffler round his throat. He coughed and smoked as we walked up to the church.

"We had his Grace the Bishop in church a fortnight ago. Children and young people filled the body of the church the whole jing−bang; a big to do there and in the school."

I had heard from other school−masters something of the stories he was going to tell. But I was too spiritually numb to take part in any argument with this man moreover my host's bearing scarcely invited it.

"He is a drivelling old fool, the bishop, with his two fingers held out when he shakes hands with a teacher, and the endless talks to them at dinner at the vicarage."

"H'm," I said.

"Well, don't you agree, Jakob Knudsen? Don't you know him?"

"Not well enough to be able to express myself so forcibly about him."

"Everyone in the parish here is agreed on it since the visitation. I said so to the children in the school after he had gone. I said, 'The bishop is a drivelling old fool, children,' I said. And there wasn't one who contradicted the statement, ha! ha!"

"Now, you'll have to see that you keep in with the children in the future. Otherwise there'll be trouble."

"Oh! I don't think there will be any trouble. And I believe that children's respect for authority must be broken sooner or later. I think there are many relationships they will have to see rationally. I am really a heathen."

"Indeed? But you didn't need to be so to call the bishop a drivelling old fool."

"No, probably not. But I am really a heathen or rather a pagan. I am Greek through and through."

"That is difficult to understand."

"You mean that that doesn't go with being teacher in a Danish school?"

"Not only that; you don't give the impression at all of having a Greek outlook."

"H'm, you don't know of course my views on Socrates. I have read absolutely everything that man wrote."

"But he wrote nothing...."

During the exchange of views on literary history which followed we had entered the church. Thorgrim remained outside. He was examining a number of wreaths lying upon a new grave.

Inside the church, my host's cough began again, so booming and hollow that one could almost believe that the sound came from the vaults of the old squires underneath the aisle. At the same time he changed the subject of conversation and began to extol the Danish sanatoria.

"They are the salvation of Denmark, the sanatoriums. They have a real mission. They are a benefit to the whole race of Danes. You have no idea how many of us in this country there are with consumption full of bacteria and bacilluses. Well then, a spell at a sanatorium and they're away not a germ left! I have been at Herning Sanatorium three times. I came back perfectly well. That is a great satisfaction and a great encouragement."

"But are you quite fit at present? You seem to be coughing a good deal."

"I'll take another spell there in the Spring and get a proper Spring− cleaning. One naturally accumulates some germs during the Autumn and Winter."

"I wonder if you ought to smoke so much?" "I don't think it can do further harm. Besides it is so refreshing. Tobacco smoke is refreshing..."

I stood looking at an old grave−stone of the sixteenth century. It had been taken from the floor and built into the wall of the chancel. The surface was black and showed a bas−relief of an armoured knight with folded hands, and his wife in a farthingale. It was getting dark in the church and it was bitterly cold; it felt almost as if there was an icy current of dead days and nights between us and the vanished age to which the old stone belonged. I took my

pocket−knife and made a scratch on the edge of the slab. I wanted to see what the stone was like under its four hundred years old surface. Slate−grey it was, and as fresh where it was exposed as a fruit which has just been cut open. As fresh as it had been four hundred years ago, as indeed it had been thousands and thousands of years ago before the little moment of time began when it had come into man's service. In the life of the stone it was really only a few days ago that the knight and his lady had lived, and in a few days we ourselves would have passed away...The teacher's cough was racking him. He stood and propped himself against one of the front pews. As soon as the paroxysm was over he pulled at his pipe to prevent its going out.

When we emerged from the church he was in the middle of an argument of which I must have missed the beginning.

"Denmark's children are Denmark's hope. It is the only one we have," I heard him say aloud. "We older ones cannot live for ever. We retire and the youngsters start where we leave off. And so it is of importance that these young people have a straight back, a firm will, wide understanding, a fearless step and no hobbles round their ankles. That is my philosophy of education. But I have a suspicion that that is not quite your point of view, Jakob Knudsen?"

"Well, I scarcely know. But in any case I am against hobbles on the ankles."

"H'm. But oh! Jakob Knudsen I was sorry, I was heartily sorry, to hear you speak so to my boy, that he must not touch your coat because you did not wish it. Yes, it is the MOTIVE, the motive that is so wrong, so horribly unpedagogic. We must explain, and again explain and never be tired of explaining to children the great WHY, WHY they must not do this or that. I think it was so utterly primitive of you, so antediluvian, that BECAUSE I DO NOT WISH IT."

I has to defend myself and we entered upon a discussion which lasted misunderstandings and fits of coughing included right up to the time of the reading, and after that again until bed−time. And then my host had so violent a paroxysm that I was really afraid it would lead to a haemorrhage or to his choking.

He got over it at last however and quickly got his pipe going again, but for a while after it he sat in his rocking−chair with closed eyes, utterly worn out.

"It will be interesting to talk to Dr. Biedermann at Herning in the Spring," he said and opened his eyes. "I can see him before me when he comes and puts his stethoscope to my chest. It is a pleasure to talk to that man, and to get a really scientific insight into the state of one's own constitution. And then to come home, well and cheerful, to one's little, accustomed job."

The indomitability of so empty a soul, I thought to myself.

Thorgrim was rocking the chair in which his father was sitting. I thought that now and again it looked rather risky but I did not feel myself justified in saying anything.

"You know, Thorgrim, what we are discussing, don't you?" said his father when the chair seemed at one moment as if it had nearly tipped over backwards.

The boy grinned.

"We are in agreement, aren't we, Thorgrim?"

The boy rocked the chair more violently.

"Come now, Thorgrim, not so hard! You know that I don't like that it is not good for me."

I could not bear to watch the spectacle so I said I would take a stroll before I went to bed.

I put on my overcoat and went out.

Underfoot the ground was frozen hard. Over my head the stars formed a dense canopy. The firmament was hardly visible everywhere there was the silver glitter of stars or the silver haze of starlit mist.

What peace and orderliness! Here was no silly, empty jargon but unshakable dependability, omnipotent purity, powerful enough to drown the world's watching eyes in eternal blindness!

By earth's nocturnal blackness I was then reminded of the proximity of Christmas. And I felt that Christmas had the same origin as the starry heavens, since God's love and his omnipotence flow from the same source. In him is the same unshakable dependability, the same remoteness from vain and transitory jargon; the same purity as that of a child who has never been in love, or of a girl who loves for the first time, yet omnipotent, the purity of omnipotent love which however much it is gazed upon and praised remains for ever pure, as if it were eternally unseen.

Until now I had been troubled in mind, unsettled and depressed the whole day until now.

When I came in again, Thorgrim had gone to bed.

"Yes, he upset me, the little monkey, he tipped me right over," said his father, "but now I've talked to him seriously about it, and I think he understands better that he must not do that kind of thing."

"It is freezing hard," I said without sitting down. "You can feel it is near Christmas."

"Yes, so it is," said my host and stood up too. "A week today will be the 23rd. Yes, Christmas is a beautiful feast The festival of the home. But there are too many holy days, time one must waste sitting in the parish clerk's seat. By degrees I have really got tired of the message of dear old Christmas. I am more interested in the message of the Sanatorium, for without it I would have been on the list of candidates for Death. Don't you think so?"

"I think it is possible."

"And so Good Night, Jakob Knudsen, if you think we have been awake long enough for the present."

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, the message of sleep is one of those one doesn't easily get tired of."

THE GOOSE−HERD FROM BRAMSTRUP

BY CARL NIELSEN Translated By W. Glyn Jones

I must have been eight or nine years old. Every morning I used to go over to the manor house at a very early hour and drive a great flock of geese down to some ponds a considerable distance away. As we approached the water the geese all flew or ran headlong into it; they raced around, dived and flapped their wings, and the air was filled with their loud cackles of delight. I had never seen a large flock of geese before, so you can imagine how very surprised and upset I was on the first day, when, although I had been told to keep the geese together, I found it

absolutely impossible to do so, as the ponds were old peat−diggings separated by reeds and rushes. I could not possibly take my stick and jump into the water after them, or I should have sunk to the bottom. To my great relief they soon calmed down and gradually gathered together in the biggest pond. Since this scene was repeated every morning, it was not long before I learned to watch it without excitement but I had other troubles. It was a terribly lonely spot, depressing in the extreme, and the arrival of evening and the hour when I should be able to go home, was something I often longed for in my dejection. It is impossible to describe how boring it was, and my only real distraction consisted in eating my sandwiches twice a day and in looking at my home−made sundial to see how long it was to evening. So one day my mother gave me a little bag to hang around my neck and said I could while away the time now by collecting goose feathers for her to use to stuff pillows and eiderdowns. I thought this great fun. When the geese came on land or lay down in the grass I would stand and watch whether they were preening their feathers so that I could find something for my bag. Once, however, I almost had an accident and was punished pretty hard for being too enthusiastic. It was one day when a fresh wind was blowing. All of a sudden I saw four or five goose feathers sailing across the water like tiny ships and drifting right into the side of a peat trench. I examined all the banks of the ponds and discovered the sides facing the wind were lined with feathers. Strange to say, they were not wet; most of them were bent in the shape of a boat. I soon had my bag around my neck and nearly filled it. Finally I saw quite a cluster of beautiful white feathers floating on the water, but they were so far out that only with the greatest exertion could I reach them; I hoped, however, that the wind would help me, and in a way it did, too. Now and then a feather would sail past me, but so quickly that I had to make a sudden grab at it. This game went on for some time, but then I fell head first into the water, bag and all, and as the trench had steep sides and I could not swim, my situation seemed fairly dangerous. I was very much afraid of drowning. Then I managed to get hold of some cat's− tails and found myself standing on a narrow strip of earth between two trenches; for some time I carefully maintained my position on this, and then gingerly made my way across to some long grass which was growing under the water; up to my neck in water I could wade from that to another part of the bank. Now I took off my wet clothes and hung them up on some bushes in the sun and wind, but I was most concerned about my feathers, which were also saturated. However, I spread them out to dry in a sunny place which was fairly well sheltered from the wind; but I had not realised that of course they would become lighter as they dried, and when I came back an hour later to have a look at them, they had all blown away. It was a sad day, but there were many more like it. When the shocks had been carried from the corn−fields to the barns, I was told to drive the geese out to the stubble so that they could pick the fallen ears of corn. It was dreary work to walk about for a whole day on these great, bare patches, and I began to long for the ponds again. There I could at least find a piece of willow and cut myself a flute; I could often see something crawling about on the beds of the ponds or hear the splash of a frog hopping out; why, once a stork had come along and settled near to where I was lying, and I had held my breath until I had nearly burst so as not to disturb it. Or I might be lucky enough to imprison a couple of sticklebacks and pretend they were my cows which I had to look after in the cattle−shed. During the last few days at the ponds I had also come across a little striped fly which, in the full blaze of the sun, had hovered right in front of my face, vibrating like a steel spring; then, like a flash of lightning, it darted to one side, and there it hovered again. It wanted something of me; it was so gay, but I could never catch it, although I wanted no more than anything else. It was not to be seen in the fields, and now that I was walking about on the stiff, uninteresting stubble I remembered the ponds as a whole world rich in interest a world which I now missed. Here and there near the entrance to the stubble fields a pile of rakings had been dropped, and I gathered them together, so that even now I could lie down and make myself fairly comfortable. One day when I was lying on my back looking at the clouds I heard something cry up in the air. It was a flock of wild geese or swans flying over us towards the west. Immediately my geese began to screech as if they were mad; they stretched out their necks and began to fly. I jumped up and ran after them, but they flew away over a big hedge and finally disappeared quite out of sight. I ran over to the hedge as fast as my legs would carry me, but failed to get through it. I burst into tears, and was just about to run to Bramstrup to fetch help when my eyes, which were scanning the hedge to find an opening, fell upon a gate at the opposite end of the field. I was down there in a flash, but it was locked. So I scrambled over and finally found the geese some distance away. They were still very restless, cackling and chattering, and I could not bring them together again. After some time, however, I managed to drive them up to the gate, but only then did the real difficulty begin. I had been hoping that they would go through the openings in the gate of their own accord, but for a long time my hopes were not realised. Finally,

however, a couple of the youngest tumbled through; an odd few of the others followed them, but once or twice it happened that one of them stuck half−way; and when I went to help them they screeched as though possessed, and the flock scattered again, so that I had to start all over again. At last I had most of them on the other side of the gate, but it was out of the question to persuade the gander and the older ones to squeeze through the opening at the bottom. Again I wept and wished I had them all together in one place, no matter where. Finally I discovered that an opening could be made in the hedge by cutting away some hawthorn twigs on the outside of the gate−posts. At last I persuaded the gander and some of the old geese to go through, but I had to take one of them by force, and it rewarded me by bespattering my clothes with mud, so that I looked a dreadful sight. And yet, believe me, these troubles and tears contain for me some of the poetry of Heaven and of earth.

ST. PETER AND MORDECAI

BY JOHANNES JORGENSEN Translated By Ann R. Born

I.

It was during the time when Our Lord walked the earth with his apostles. As is generally known, Our Lord was a poor man. He had no regular employment, neither with State nor borough, he was not in an office, he was certainly no University professor or minister of the church. He had no private income to live on, and he had no door on which he could knock on the first day of each month and when bidden to come in walk over to the counter, remove his hat, sign a receipt and be paid so and so many five pound notes. To be blunt about it, Our Lord lived on charity, but he never had enough to enable him to put something aside for a rainy day (not that he wanted to do that anyway). He couldn't, perhaps, be arrested for lacking the means of subsistence, because he always had enough for his immediate needs; the other question directed at vagrant persons, that is, as to where they live, was more serious. Our Lord had no permanent address, he caused the registration office not a few headaches at one moment he was stated to be living in Capernaum as a lodger of Simon bar Jona's mother−in−law, and the next in Bethany, where he had a room at the house of one named Lazarus a house of somewhat ill repute, as a matter of fact "You know, the sister, the one from Magdala" "Oh, the beautiful Miriam with the red hair stunning bit of goods but, well..."

But Our Lord couldn't always count on getting to either Capernaum or Bethany by evening. The Holy Land is small, of course but even so, when you are on foot the roads are long enough. And the apostles, who faithfully followed Our Lord from Dan to Beersaba and from Sion to Djebel Hermon, were not all such good walkers for instance, Peter was no longer so young; neither was Matthew, who had spent half his lifetime sitting behind the counter in his customs house, any great lover of hiking expeditions. On the other hand John was usually ahead of all the others often he was joined by Nathanael John was so eager to know what Nathanael had been thinking about "when he was sitting there beneath the fig tree," but Nathanael only replied that it was a secret between the Master and himself.

Then one evening Our Lord and the twelve faithful happened to lose their way among the mountains of Judaea. They were coming from thee north and had intended to go on as far as Ain Karim to stay with the family of John the Baptist. But they had taken the wrong road at Nebi Samuil and when darkness fell and the first jackal appeared beside the road, they found themselves in the middle of a stony, deserted valley. They came to a halt the disciples gathered about the Master, at a loss as to what to do. Peter bent down, got hold of a stone and aimed it at the jackal, not hitting it, but causing it to run off. From a short distance they heard its eery laugh which was answered by other jackals round about among the rocks.

"Why did you do that, Simon?" said the Master reprovingly. "Now you have set all the jackals on to us."

Peter struck the sword he wore at his belt.

"I will defend you, Rabbi!"

"All right," came the reply (and there was a smile in the answering voice). "All right, Simon bar Jona, you had better go up over the hill and see if you can't catch a glimpse of a house. The new Roman town which the Latins call Castellum must lie somewhere in this direction. Meanwhile, we others will say Evensong."

And while Peter disappeared up over the slope (the stones slipping and slithering under his feet) the twelve recited De Profundis "We call to Thee from the depths, O Lord." But the prayer was hardly finished before there came a shout from the scouting apostle, who had just reached the brow of the hill "Come up here! I can see a light!"

He was right. The light was not far away. Before long the tired band was standing outside the door and knocking. But just at that moment the light inside was extinguished.

"Knock again, Peter," commanded the Master.

A peevish voice answered from within: "What do you want? I am in bed with my children I have washed my feet and I don't want to soil them again by walking on the floor. There is a caravanserai farther on people will still be up there. Go along there!"

There was a short silence among those outside. "Caravanserai that's all very well! A caravanserai needs paying for. How much is there in the money−bag, Judas?"

Judas felt the purse which he wore at his belt it was not heavy. "And there is bread to be bought for us all first thing to−morrow," he added. "Unless you all want to fast?"

"Knock once more, Simon," ordered the Master.

They heard a small child begin to cry inside the house then there was a rustling sound as if somebody had got up from a mattress of maize leaves the sound of naked footsteps padded across the stone floor a bolt was drawn back and a middle−aged Jew showed his hooked nose and grizzled beard through the cautiously opened crack in the door.

"Adonai, Lord of Hosts," he burst out in horror, when he saw how many were standing out there in the dark wanting to come in. And he hastily made as if to shut the door.

But Peter had already wedged his foot in and in a confidential half− whisper he informed the owner of the house as to WHO it was who stood before him.

"Rabbi Joshua ben Joseph oh, yes, I've heard a lot about him," came the answer, almost amiably. "There is room for the Rabbi under my poor roof, but as for all you others how many of you are there? Twelve! No, for all you others there is the caravanserai, as I said! Master, walk in!"

And with these words the owner of the house flung the door wide open. But after Our Lord came Peter and after Peter, Andrew and after Andrew, John and Nathanael and Judas, who clasped the money−bag tightly so that the silver coins in it should not chink and raise hopes of payment in the owner of the house....Finally the whole house was full of apostles, who lay down to sleep in all the corners.

II.

The next morning Peter was up betimes talking to their host, whose name was Mordecai, of the tribe of Levi. "You may be sure," he explained to the man, who was none too satisfied, "that you will not have done this for

nothing. You know who my Master is and you also know that he has no silver nor gold but he can give you things worth far more than they. Ask what you will of him and your desire will be fulfilled. But be careful to ask sensibly! You don't get such an opportunity every day."

The good man will most likely wish for wealth, good health, a long life, thought Peter. Or, if he is a devout Israelite, he will pray for the forgiveness of his sins and a place in Abraham's bosom after death...

Before long the apostles stood ready to leave, gathered about their Master barefoot, no staff in hand, no purse or bag at their belt. They all thanked their host heartily and begged him to excuse them for pushing their way in the night before. "And now, wish!" said Peter.

Now it should be mentioned that the previous evening, when the lamp had been rekindled in order that the many uninvited guests could find themselves resting places, Peter had seen a box of dice standing on the table. He had been amazed to find a Jew who played dice in such a deserted village this foreign game had only just begun to be known in Jerusalem, where it had been introduced by the Roman soldiers.

The dice−box was still on the table in the morning, and Simon Zelotes (which stands for The Zealous One) looked at it somewhat disapprovingly. Judas had been a strict Pharisee and still had trouble in accepting the new commandment: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

But now a most extraordinary thing happened. "You may wish a wish," said Peter, "and the Master will give you everything you wish for."

Mordecai looked at the Master, who nodded and said Amen.

Then the old Jew picked up the dice−box. "Master," he said, "let me always win whenever I play with these dice even if it should be with Satan himself!"

"Miserable man," burst out Peter. "Is that all you can think of to wish for?"

"I have no other wish," answered the grey−haired Israelite calmly.

They all looked at the Master and again the reply came from his lips: "Amen! So be it!"

III.

The years passed. Everyone is familiar with the events that followed. The Rabbi of Nazareth suffered, died, rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, from where He has not yet returned to judge the quick and the dead. Simon bar Jona went to Rome, preached the Gospel, suffered, died, was buried beside the Via Aurelia below the hill of the Vatican, and received his position in eternal glory as keeper of the gates of Paradise. The keys are his and his alone; if he shut the door no−one shall ever open it, if he open it no−one may shut it.

The time came for Mordecai of the Levi tribe too to forsake his earthly abode and go to where the way divides one way is narrow and dark and leads upwards, another goes downwards and is broad and brightly lit and paved with good intentions. At the parting of the ways stands a sign−board like those on the French railways: Bifur and so that nobody should go wrong, an angel stands beside the sign−post and directs people where to go.

All his life Mordecai had walked in righteousness, and the angel directed him to take the narrow path.

"Mayn't I go a little way along the broad one?" asked Mordecai.

"Good Heavens," answered the angel. "Anyone who holds a ticket to Heaven is allowed to go where he will on the Other Side. But take care you don't get run over."

The warning was timely an elegant car with a lovely young lady at the wheel whizzed past Mordecai, roaring to hell in a cloud of petrol fumes.

The old Jew kept to the pavement. Traffic was brisk, both there and on the carriageway eventually there was such a jam that the cars had to be parked and everyone continued on foot. Mordecai had not experienced such a crush since the previous Easter in the fore−court of the temple at Jerusalem and he thought now that he could recognise a number of the faces he had so often seen there at festival times behind the tables of the money−lenders and pigeon−vendors. Mordecai was about to greet them but somehow they didn't seem to want to be known. So he restrained his courtesy and besides, he had far more important matters to attend to.

For it was certainly not for his own pleasure that he was treading the road to Hell to−day. The reason was quite another one; the good Mordecai had a fairly certain idea that several members of his family, not less than twelve in number, who had already mistaken the right way when they were on earth, had gone wrong in eternity too. And it was his plan now to try to pass the time of day with them at least who knows perhaps there was still a chance of doing something for them?

Thus considering, Mordecai arrived at the main entrance to Hell. He could see inside long avenues of lights, coloured lanterns in the trees, music and a crowd of strolling, laughing, flirting people. There was a turnstile at the gate, and the clicking noise of it went on incessantly, new joyous guests streamed through continuously. Mordecai joined the queue and at length came to the entrance.

"Ticket, please?"

That nearly put a stop to Mordecai's plan. Of course he had a ticket but it was WHITE. And you could only go in on RED tickets. A small discussion ensued until finally a superior inspector decided the dispute. Mordecai was in the right white tickets granted safe−conduct for Heaven, Purgatory, and...HERE.

"By the way, though, what brings you down to us, Mr. Mordecai?" asked the polite inspector.

Well, it so happened that Mordecai was rather keen on having a chat with some of his family. The inspector did not see why he shouldn't.

Mordecai gathered his courage together. Might it perhaps be possible for him to take them away with him to another place if it wasn't too much to ask?

The inspector immediately became rather more guarded. It depended chiefly upon the persons concerned, he declared. But Mordecai felt quite certain on that score who would not gladly leave the eternal prison if they were given the chance?

"You may be right," replied the official politely. "But of course such permission can only be given by one person by the President of the Republic of Hell. His Excellency Field Marshal Lucifer."

"I rather suspected that," answered Mordecai, still keeping his spirits up. "Do you think I could have a word with the President?"

"Actually the President only receives in audience at midnight. But I imagine he would make an exception in the case of such a rare visitor. It is 6 o'clock now the President dines at 7 o'clock I will see if it might not be possible just before dinner. In the meantime it might amuse you to see our latest film 'Christian Women naked on the

Beach at Miami.' Or if you prefer something historical, there is the Massacre of Czar Nicholas and his family the bodies are chopped up soaked in petrol and burnt an interesting cultural spectacle..."

Mordecai had his audience earlier than had been expected. The President received him in his study. A writing desk, practically bare− −no telephone only on the walls a row of shining screens, where pictures showing everything of importance happening anywhere in the world, i.e. all serious transgressions against the ten commandments, immediately appeared to the Chief. Mordecai made out ten screens and over each one were printed in Hebrew the ancient words from Moses' stone tablets printed in mockery as an impotent protest against the reality of life and the powers of darkness.

"Well, Mr. Mordecai," began the President, using one of the three official languages of Hell, English, "Well, Mr. Mordecai, and what can I do for you?"

Without thinking Mordecai began to talk in Hebrew, his native tongue, stopped himself and started to continue in English. But the President stayed him with a wave of the hand "No, Mr. Mordecai, go on Hebrew, Russian and English are our official languages! I understand you perfectly."

Then Mordecai stated his undeniably bold request. There followed a short silence His Excellency fingered the sole decoration he wore on his fiery red uniform tunic a small iron swastika. "And what have you got to offer me in return for the dozen sinful souls you wish to export from the Republic?" came the voice of Lucifer at length.

Mordecai felt in the inner pocket of his tunic yes, the miraculous dice−box was there! He took it out and placed it on the desk.

Then: "Your Excellency," he said, "I will give you my own soul, the soul of a righteous man. But as I know that you have no jurisdiction over me, your Excellency, I will make a pact with you of my own free will. Here are these dice one throw with them and the matter is decided. If you win, then the twelve souls in question must remain here, and I with them. If I win, all thirteen of us shall be free!"

It was plain to see that Lucifer was tempted. He prefers chess, certainly more than once he has checkmated his white opponent with those black men of his. But always the White Queen proves her superiority over him and saves the game, often at the last moment. However, playing dice is a good game too and the stakes were tempting the soul of Mordecai the Righteous...

He grasped the box firmly glanced into it first to see whether there had been any hanky−panky with it and threw. There were three dice and they turned up 6, 6 and 5. Lucifer put his hand to his to hide a smile there would have to be a miracle if Mordecai his twelve sinners were to be saved. And miracles...!

Then the dice rattled for the second time; they showed 6, 6 and 6.

IV.

Mordecai and the twelve souls he had rescued stood before the gates of Heaven and rang the bell. The doors were opened by St. Peter himself he did not recognise Mordecai but seeing that the man had a white ticket well, come in!

"But those others behind there who are they may I see their tickets?"

"Oh," answered Mordecai, "they're just with me," and with that he tried to rush the whole flock inside, past St. Peter, without showing their tickets of admission (which they did not possess, anyway). But the ancient guard of the heavenly gates was not going to play he hastily lowered the iron grating in the door "Nobody comes in here

at face value!"

Then Mordecai approached the grating by himself and asked to be allowed to say just a word or two between the iron bars to St. Peter. The request was granted St. Peter laid his ear to the grating as if it were the confessional, and Mordecai spoke quite quietly.

"Do you remember," he said softly (and again he spoke in Hebrew, which is also one of the official languages of HEAVEN there are only two, the other being Latin). "Do you remember, one evening your Master and you and the eleven had lost your way in a deserted valley among the mountains of Judaea? The jackals were beginning to come out, and you threw a stone after one and the Master reproved for doing so. Then he commanded you to go to the top of one of the hills and look around for a light and you saw a light and the light was in my house. And you all came and stood outside my house and knocked..."

"Ah yes," whispered St. Peter back. "Now I remember you wouldn't let us in you had washed your feet and didn't want to soil them again..."

"That was what I said," answered Mordecai, "but what did I do? I opened the door to your Master and all the rest of you crowded in after him and I didn't drive you out!"

"No," answered St. Peter. "That's right. You didn't do that. On the contrary you put us all up you saw to it that the Master had a resting−place and the twelve of us too!"

"And now," said Mordecai and knew that he had triumphed. "Now I stand here outside the gate and knock. And you will gladly open up for me, as I opened up for the Master. But the others will push in after me and you won't drive them out, I know, dear, holy Peter, you will take them in together with me to eternal Rest!"

OFF FOR THE DAY

BY JEPPE AAKJAER Translated By W. Glyn Jones

What a fine household it was living in Mudwood Farm on the particular summer morning with which we are here concerned. Stephen, the fifty year old owner of the farm, came dashing out of the scullery door, tripped over a zinc bucket which had been thrown down on the flagstones, turned on it in his temper and, to the accompaniment of a stream of meaningless oaths, flung it at the house, so that one of the kitchen−windows fell clattering in the dust. The next moment Stephen's worthy wife was standing threateningly in the doorway:

"Heaven preserve us, has the man gone mad?"

Mary was on the point of weeping.

"Do ye not think, Stephen, that ye're a man much to be admired, the way ye're acting against y'r ain interests? Two of the best window− panes smashed to smithereens! Oh Lord!" Mary began laboriously to gather up the broken pieces in her apron, while she continued to give vent to her feelings.

Stephen kept his distance. In actual fact he was rather ashamed of his action, and furious about the expense he would have to have the window−pane replaced. It was the very Devil, the way he had lost his temper!

Of course, he had not aimed at the window−panes, but at the wall of the well nearby, and the whole thing was intended to create a bit of a scene and give those damned women−folk a scare it would do them good, too!

Mary continued to grumble; Stephen growled in his defense:

"H'm, those damned sluts," (this was aimed at the servant−girls), "why the Hell do they put things down so as ye fall ower them and break every bone in y'r body! They deserve a downright good hiding, so they do!

"Here they go, puffin' an' blowin', puffin' an' blowin'! They just canna get one leg past the other; but let them out, just let 'em out to enjoy theirselves, and Ah'll guarantee that they can get a move on, so Ah will. They dinna care a hang whether anything's done on the farm or no; oh no, it's a case of passin' away the time, of gettin' their wages out o' ye so they can gae an' hae a good time wi' their friends; that's all they're after; it doesna matter one bit whether the master's doin' well or no; he can gae tae blazes! And ye're in favour of it! Ye think Ah must put up wi't! So the morn Ah'll no hae a herdsman again. Even if the beasts bellow their heads off, what does it matter, as long as the lad has a good time. Och aye; he's off for the day. He's off tae the woods when odier folks have to work. That's what teachers invent nowadays; it's a fine upbringing to give such a lad, Ah must say! It ought tae be put a stop tae!" And Stephen swung his arm wildly about his head.

But now Mary, who had been seeking a new excuse to attack him, had found it, and called to her husband across the broad, fresh−smelling midden, "Yes, by Jove, ye're the right man to talk of upbringing, the way ye behave y'rself and smash y'r ain windows in y'r temper! Should an old man no be ashamed of doing what one would hardly expect of an irresponsible servant. Goodness me!"

But before the last words were uttered Stephen had already scurried off through the door of the storehouse.

What had taken place before this scene was as follows:

After breakfast the cowherd had come forward with a message from the new school−teacher, saying that he intended going to Bedingholm Woods with the children the following day; the trip was to be by train and would cost but a small amount; the teacher hoped that not only the farmers' children, but the servant lads too, and preferably without exception, would be able to obtain permission to take part in the outing which had indeed been arranged a long time before, and which people had taken a great deal of trouble to organize.

The teacher knew well enough it was the first time anything of this kind had been tried in HIS school, while in other, less old−fashioned districts, it was an established custom that the children should go on a trip to some natural beauty−spot in the neighbourhood at least once every summer. All this the teacher had put to the parents one Sunday in church and had also gained the consent of most of them; but unfortunately Stephen had not been present and would, moreover, probably only have been converted to the teacher's point of view with the greatest difficulty.

Wee Jamie stood there now and stated his and his teacher's case before his strict and surly master; he felt that he was doing it inexpressibly badly, small and nervous as he was. His voice trembled, and his sentences tumbled from his lips in bits and pieces, while Stephen stepped on each little utterance separately and smashed it like an egg−shell; he raised his voice to the roof and let it rumble over Jamie's head, full of reproaches, while the little fellow was on the point of shrinking into his own cap from shame.

"To the woods! Did ye say to the woods? On a trip? YOU! Just when we're gettin' ready for the harvest! Oh no, that'd no be sae bad, would it! Then ye'd hae whiled away a bit more time! And that's what the teacher puts into y'r heads. That's why we make gifts tae hims an' pay him an' do Lord knows what for him so as he can teach you tae make demands on the master! Ye canna make it awkward enough on y'r ain! Aye, Ah've seen for a long time what sort of a person he is. If only we'd kept the auld one! He could hold a meeting in the kirk a damned sight longer as this here poor weakling, and Ah'll be hanged if this here fellow'll ever in his life put an epitaph together as good as auld Paterson's. An' then the auld man was a chap as a body could talk tae; he could get used tae the fact that when a body has a servant lad an' gives him food an' wages an' this an' that then it was no so as he

could sit in the school an' waste his time, but so as he'd be able tae dae a wee bit o' good on the farm. But just gae tae this one an' ax HIM tae let the lad off school for a couple o' days, an' what'll he answer? 'I am afraid it is impossible for me to permit that, Mr. Stephen Mudwood.' No, he canna permit it! Pompous wee blighter he is! An' then he comes here now an' demands as Ah give up my rights ower the lad, an' just in the busiest time o' the summer, too; it'd hae been bad enough if it had been a a a winter day, so it would."

"Och, ye're a poor one, the way ye stand and carry on, I must say," interrupted Mary, and at the same time lifted a boiling pot of potatoes off the fire so that the water splashed down on to the flaming moorland peat. "Do ye want the teacher to take the bairns for an outing in the winter? How on earth can ye stand there and talk such a lot of blether; there's no a grain of sense left in what you say! I can quite see it's no easy to do without the lad for a whole day, but for the sake of the others you canna deny it him. I've heard that Wullie's lad's going "

"Niel Cruikshank's goin', too," blurted out Jamie now he had gained courage from his mistress' somewhat unexpected support. "He's goin' up tae drive wi' Jamie Vincent."

"Och, hold y'r tongue, will ye, ye wee de'il!" said Stephen, and made a threatening gesture at the little cowherd, who cringed so much that he almost disappeared under the table−leaf.

Mary continued, "As I say, we dinna want to have any bother with the schoolmaster on account of that, seeing as we'll soon have bairns of our own in the school. We'll find some way of managing without him." "Aye, Ah ken y'r 'ways', Ah do," retorted Stephen, wild with rage. "That means Ah can run after the beasts mysel'. For it's no tae be thought o' that ye an' the lassies'll "

"Aye, but we'll manage that somehow;" said Mary in a soothing tone, "if only ye could stop your temper getting the upper−hand!"

Stephen turned towards the lad again, ready to pour forth more grievances. "It's a wonder Ah've no been commandeered tae DRIVE ye tae the station as well; MUST ye walk? MUST ye REALLY walk, ma weemannie? Shall Ah no get the sprung carriage out? Or the caleche that'd be a lot more fun, ye ken.

"An' it's no but a case o' askin', ye ken; y'r master's only here tae− dae as his servants like tae ask him. Ye can hear that fra the mistress here if ye canna find it out elsewhere; she agrees wi't; she thinks it's quite a' right when a servant lad can demand "

"Och, can ye no find something else to do besides standing here and carrying on?" replied Mary with a threatening glance.

"If Ah let ye hae YOUR way a' the time Ah'd soon be made a fool of in front o' the pairish."

"What do ye think folk would say if we were the only ones to stop their lad from going on the trip?

"Och, go away from the table so as I can pour the water off the potatoes," concluded Mary authoritatively as she pushed up against Stephen, holding the boiling pan by the ears.

Accompanied by the loud noise of wooden clogs, Stephen backed away from the sink, and as he had really lost his temper now he grated his studded clog−soles loudly on the flagstones as he left the house.

It was shortly after this that the attack on the window−panes, which we have already heard about, took place and ended with Stephen's flight through the storehouse.

A little later he appeared on the green behind the white wall of the barn; there were a couple of animals tethered there, and he had to move them away.

The red colt was a long time before it recovered from its amazement when, instead of the patting to which it was accustomed, it received a furious jerk in its wooden halter; and the leading ram, which otherwise had been allowed to do as it liked everywhere, and whose cheeky, half−friendly thumps on Stephen's roomy trousers−seat had never before been taken the wrong way, was today rewarded with a vicious blow between the eyes and an angry, "Will ye get out o' the road, ye shaggy de'il!"

With his back bowed in rage and his arms bent as though he were about to administer a box on the ears, Stephen slid away across the meadows.

Towards evening the same day wee Jamie was standing down by the stream swilling his brown legs, while the swallows were chirping over the rushes and the peewit was calling across the spreading pasture land. An elderly man with turned up trousers came across the marshes with a fishing rod bobbing up and down over his shoulder; he stopped in front of Jamie, showing his naked feet to be thin like those of an old man, and said elatedly, "Well, well, just look at the wee chappie. My word, I like to see ye getting y'r wee shanks clean. Ower yonder on Mudwood Farm ye usually gae about wi' enough dirt on ye tae take off wi' a fork; but how is't as ye're makin' y'rsel' sae fine this evenin'? Are ye goin' out?"

"Ah'm goin' on a trip tae the woods the morn. All the school's goin'. We're tae hae a fiddler wi' us, too, 'cause we're no comin' hame till the last train," said Jamie, and kicked about in the stream so that the water splashed up.

"Eh, what's this Ah hear!" exclaimed Thames, the fisherman.

"It's a bit better than sittin' at hame wi' a dish o' sour gruel, is't no!

"Will't cost ye onything?"

"Ye−es. For them as can afford it; but Ah've no tae gi' ought; the teacher's said sae, 'cause ma mither's been tae see him."

"Ah−sae Stephen's said ye can gae, then?" asked Thames.

"Yes, sort o'," replied Jamie evasively.

"H'm, Ah can just imagine ye've no had an easy job on," said Thames with a grin. "But ye dinna need tae worry now ye've once got permission.

"Och, Lord, but ye'll hae tae be up pretty early, will ye no?"

"Aye, we're goin' wi' the early mornin' train; an' we're no gettin' out until the third station!"

Jamie was dazed by the thought of such a long journey.

"My hat, nor ye are! Well, ma lad, dinna let me catch ye ower− sleepin' the train'll no wait for onybody, ye ken."

And Thames sauntered off with his fishing rod.

The next morning Stephen Mudwood had scarcely opened the door to Jamie's room beside the stables and raised his cracked voice before the lad was sitting wide awake on the bed−end, reaching out after his best clothes which

he had been careful to lay out on the box at the side of the bed the previous evening.

"Oh, so ye ARE goin' tae put on y'r new things straight away!" said Stephen. "Ah thought ye'd hae waited till ye'd got the beasts out."

This put the damper on Jamie. He had been hoping so fervently that he would be let off seeing to the cattle today; for if he had to struggle out to the most distant fields with THEM he could well forget the time not to mention how begrimed he might get his new clothes.

Jamie sat a moment between his old and his new clothes, undecided which to put on; and in despair at the choice he began to snivel quietly.

"Oh, sae ye're goin' tae blubber about that, are ye!" yelled Stephen. "Aye, Ah ken. Ye're a crowd o' lazy blighters, the lot o' ye. Sae ye were goin' tae jump right out o' y'r bed an' intae the train; och aye, that'd hae been fine! Then someone else could hae took y'r place an' seen tae everything theirselves; so long as YE can get away!"

Jamie's tears fell more and more profusely, while Stephen became more and more angry; finally he turned towards the naked boy with a threatening gesture and shouted, "Will ye shut y'r mouth, ye miserable shrimp, or Ah'll teach ye a lesson! Must ye sit here an' snivel ower havin' tae take a couple o' beasts tae the meadows when there's mair as twae hours afore the train gaes! Ye just get y'r trousers on an' make a start while there's still time. It's damned well about time ye realised ye're workin' for a livin' now and canna hide y'rsel' behind y'r mither's skirts ony mair."

At that moment the quiet shuffle of a pair of wooden shoes was heard on the stone flags outside the stable; Stephen turned round and saw the lad's mother, a little, bent woman with a pale, kindly face.

"Good mornin'," she said and peeped from under her shawl past Stephen at her son, who was still whimpering on the bed−end.

"Och, so ye ARE up; see, I've come wi' a pair o' new socks for ye; ye'd better look y'r best the day, I suppose."

She looked, smiling, up at Stephen's surly face; but when she had glanced a few times from him to her son she immediately understood the situation and said, "H'm, perhaps it's a wee bit difficult to do without him for a whole day."

"Ha, ye take nae notice o' that these days," replied Stephen and twisted his mouth sullenly.

"It's gettin' tae such a state as it's no but on pay−day as a man kens whether he's got ony servants or no.

"But Ah wanted him tae take a few beasts out tae the fields afore he started; Ah didna think that'd be asking tae much o' him when he's got the rest o' the day to fool about in.

"But the train's no goin' for a couple o' hours or so; an' even if he look some o' the cattle out and shifted a few pens o' sheep afore he set off away fra it all he'd still be able tae get what HE'S after. Ah'll no make unreasonable demands on the lad, indeed Ah'll no; but Ah would like him tae take the calves down tae the lower meadow an' it'd no be sae far out o' his road, either."

"Aye, but all being well, he'll manage tae dae that if he can be free THEN" said Annie quietly; "but ye'll hae tae get a move on, laddie!"

Stephen, who had achieved what HE wanted, disappeared from the stable without saying good−bye, while Jamie began to dress.

"Come on out tae the water−trough an' get y'rsel' nice an' clean an' wash behind y'r ears!" exhorted Annie.

"What a lovely shine ye've got on them," she continued, pointing to Jamie's shoes which he had carefully brushed the previous evening and put beside the bed. "D'ye no think it'd be best tae hang them and y'r socks roun' y'r neck while ye're busy wi' the beasts; otherwise ye're goin' tae get them all dirtied wi' dew an' mud, ye ken."

Before many minutes had passed Jamie had the calves coupled together and was standing on the flagstones with his socks and shining little shoes tied to a string over his shoulder. He had really become quite fine in his best clothes, standing there freshly washed. A brand new tie which his mother had brought for him in her pocket caused him to squint down under his chin every other minute in pride. For the last time Annie went behind her son and jerked up his jacket collar.

Jamie's mistress came out of the doorway with a neat packet of sandwiches in her hand.

The calves were dozing as they waited with the ropes round their necks, and only occasionally did they raise a foreleg to scare away the flies.

"Thank ye so much for letting the laddie go wi' the others; it's such a treat for him," said Annie.

"Yes," answered Mary, and rested her hand on her protruding abdomen, "servants have a good time of it these days; it's no like in our young days! They'll soon be gettin' the same treatment whether they're the farmer's children or the farm labourer's. And come to think o't, there ought to be a WEE bit of difference made between your ain bairns and other people's.

"That's what Ah think, anyway!

"Well, here's y'r sandwiches," she said, and changed the subject abruptly. "An' if ye dinna eat it all, ye bring it back wi' ye, remember.

"Now ye'd better be gettin' along wi' the beasts; and behave y'rsel', then nobody'll chatter about ye."

Jamie took the sandwiches and set off with the calves. His mother followed him in silence.

Outside the gate she flung her striped apron on one side and thrust her hand into the pocket of her skirt.

"Ah suppose Stephen didna gi' ye onything towards y'r trip, did he?" she asked, and began to unwrap a piece of newspaper.

"No−o!"

"No, Ah thought not sae.

"There's just one threepenny−bit your father gied me for ye.

"He's down at the marshes hisself; ye'll be goin' right past where he is! You should wave tae him fra the train; he'd be sae pleased!

"An' look after y'r money, laddie; for we've no got sae much o't.

"An' just let me see as ye've got some respect for y'r clothes!

"Well, cheerio son. See as ye get off all right!"

Jamie went ahead with his herd of calves.

The morning sky was a dreamy blue; flocks of pigeons were flying home from the fallow fields, beating their white wings in the air; the calves' tracks lay behind them like long, dark stripes in the dew.

People from the farms were already beginning to drive the children to the station. The horses, frisky in the morning air, kept close to each other, so that the carriages formed an unbroken row. The freshly painted bodies of the coaches shone in the sun; the farmers' small daughters in their light blue frocks and with coloured ribbons in their hats were sitting in the driving seats, whispering, full of curiosity like ducklings which have just come out of the shell. Behind them, holding fast to the backs of the driving−seats, were the servants lads, swaying to hold their balance when the wheels jolted down into a rut.

One of the parties had a clarinet in the coach, and the redfaced musician was puffing up his cheeks as he blew the shrill notes out into the dewy morning air.

When this coach jolted past the lazy calves in the herd, they suddenly woke up, made a rush to the side and jerked Jamie, so that his shoes bounced up and dealt him a blow on his ears. A couple of the little girls in the carriage leant over from the driving−seat, pointed at him and set up a shrill, mocking laughter; a servant boy dangling from the coach, who felt higher up in the world, turned his freckled face towards him and shouted, "YOU'll be late!"

Jamie had been thinking that himself all the time he had been walking. It was unbelievable how those calves could amble along and rub one ankle against the other; it was almost impossible to drag them out of the village.

Jamie took hold of the whip now and let it fall a few times on the knobbly backs of the piebald calves. But at that the good relationship between them was irremediably broken. The leading calf stood obstinately stock still. Jamie went on ahead, put the reins over his shoulder and pulled with all his might; the calf's neck seemed to stretch to twice its normal size, and its eyes closed above the wooden halter, which dug deep into its flesh as though it were deliberately undergoing this torture in order to do penance for its sins; a long, rainbow−coloured thread of saliva hung from its muzzle; only in a strict slow−march did it move forward, with its knees stiffened and its hooves turned outwards in order to resist. Sweat poured down over Jamie's forehead; now the last coach had disappeared behind the hill leading to the station; this was going to be the complete ruination of him!

Exasperated and tired out he turned round with his whip in the air. But the calves, which had the very worst of bad consciences, dived now as though by common consent backwards into the ditch, tugged at the halters and jerked so hard that one of the tether−ropes snapped across the middle.

Two of the calves sprang away from the rest of the herd and buried themselves to the sound of scornful bellowings in a neighbouring oat− field.

Jamie howled in despair and anger.

A furious, old woman in a knee−length, parti−coloured under−skirt came gesticulating and grumbling out of a part of the farm nearby and sowed a great mass of oaths and curses over the wide fields:

"The De'il take ye, ye filthy scamp, can ye no keep y'r beasts under control!"

Her angry words were multiplied by echoes from the out−buildings.

Terrified, Jamie dashed after the calves in his bare feet, darting about on the white flint in the fields. The wet ears of the oats immediately forced their dew through his trouser−legs; only the calves' ears were to be seen above the top of the oats; with their long, greedy tongues they skimmed the ears from the straws all round them.

The old woman was on the point of bursting, so much was she shouting.

Jamie's eyes were popping out of his head in utter helplessness; then suddenly he saw Thames the fisherman going past on the road; Thames threw down his fishing rod straight away and waded into the oat−field; by their combined efforts the two of them gradually succeeded in getting hold of all the calves by the muzzle; Thames did not leave his small friend until they had all the herd safely in the meadow.

"Lord, how she carried on!" said Thames, and pointed in the direction of the short−skirted old dame who was now sulkily retreating towards the farm.

"It was the widow, by Jove! She's no exactly an angel tae greet ye in the mornin', Ah must say!"

A little later he added, "H'm, sae Stephen just couldna let ye hae the whole day off after all! Ah ken how it is! But Ah should THINK ye'll be in time if ye hurry!"

Thames continued his stroll along the river with his fishing rod bobbing up and down over his shoulder.

A few yards from Jamie he stopped and listened; yes, that was the engine whistling; it must be arriving!

"Jamie, laddie, Ah think ye'll hae tae run as hard as ye possibly can! They ought tae be ashamed o' theirselves, making the bairn late when he only has a bit o' pleasure once a year!" he muttered to himself as he went on, shaking his head.

And Jamie ran off heartily; at first he seemed to be able to run up the slopes in two or three bounds; then the hollows of his knees became less steady; now and then he got a jag on his toes from a piece of flint, but it only made him draw in his toes to lessen the pain.

Now he had reached the long hill leading to the station; he was bent nearly double, so fast was he running. Here, where the view ahead was hidden, the fear of arriving too late lent him wings.

"Ah'll be too late! Ah'll be too late!" he whispered inaudibly at every step.

The green woods surrounded by the water, his merry companions, the games, the country dancing, the music, the steaming coffee and the delicious wheat−cakes ALL that seemed to him to be disappearing in the smoke from the engine as it steamed out of the station.

Bewildered by lack of breath he reached the top of the slope; there was no train to be seen; it was so deserted and uninviting down there.

"'Ah'll be too late! Ah'll be too late!" still these words pounded through his head.

But there was still a possibility that the train was hidden behind the red brick station building.

Yes, my word, was that not smoke coming up over the roof?

Jamie ran as though he had fire beneath the soles of his feet, while his shoes, hanging loosely about his neck, clattered ceaselessly behind his head.

Now the road turned to the right and revealed that the smoke which had filled him with hope was issuing from a neighbouring house. "Ah'm too late! Ah'm too late!" he groaned tearfully as he turned into the platform with a red mist before his eyes.

Oh, how empty it was there! The hens were walking about between the shining rails; the clapper on the station bell was gently swinging to and fro in the morning breeze.

Jamie's eyes grew to an unnatural size as his gaze followed the empty track and was lifted higher and higher towards the vacant horizon.

The station−master, a thin man with a stern face, had come out on to the platform:

"Were you supposed to be going on the trip?"

"Yes," said Jamie, and sobbed as though he only now realised the full extent of his disappointment.

"Well if people want to catch a train they must take care to come in time," said the station−master as if he were reading it out of the rules and regulations.

"Yes, but Ah had tae take the calves out first!" sobbed Jamie. "Is it you who works for Stephen Mudwood, then?"

Jamie affirmed this.

"On the insistent demands of Mr. Petersen, the teacher, I had the train wait until five minutes after it was due out; they said they had seen you on the way but as you had still not arrived −"

Now the station−master's wife had come out to join him:

"Good gracious me, has he missed the train!" She peered down at his tear−lined face.

"Come into the house and have a cup of coffee."

The kind lady gave him some cake as well. Jamie sat on the very edge of the fine sofa and hardly dared look up for shyness, while, to the accompaniment of small hiccupping sounds, he noisily emptied the cup.

A moment later the kind lady's door was closed behind Jamie's naked heels.

THE BOUNDARY

BY MARIE BREGENDAHL Translated By W. Glyn Jones

I

"Now listen, children, I do want to impress it on you that you may run about where you like on your father's fields! And you may go out to the King's Mound and the marsh, too; but don't go beyond the boundary− −that is the one thing you must not do!"

The old grandfather stood with his hand raised and a threatening look in his eyes, and the sight of so much severity in the face which was normally so mild amazed his grand−daughters as he spoke to them.

"A lot of ruffians they are living out there in the 'Shack' you musn't have anything whatsoever to do with those people!" he went on. "I can't think of anything they haven't done; a lot of vermin and thieves and drunkards they are in other words they are the real scum of the earth." He thumped his clenched fist so heavily on the table− top that his book which was furnished with a metal clasp jumped into the air.

"Do you mean Elsie and Malvine, too?" asked Elsbeth in amazement. "Can even little girls like that be what you just said?"

"Yes, indeed they can! As long as anyone can remember there have only been ruffians living in that hut no one else CAN live there!" he declared emphatically. The two lasses might not be more than children yet; but it was all the same. When thistles and stinging−nettles had been sown, you could not expect to find corn and flowers growing. There was no arguing about that, and it could not be altered!

Grandfather helped himself to a fresh twist of tobacco, and chewed away at it with great zeal; then he sat down to plait osiers for a little sewing−basket he was working on.

The little girls looked at each other in silence and sighed. It was so tiresome to have this pleasure denied them.

What was the use of being able to go out to the King's Mound, when the most attractive thing about it was to walk to the top and then roll down the very steepest part, only to end without fail just by the doorstep of the Shack in other words, on the OTHER side of the boundary.

And what fun was there in being able to go out to the marsh, when the boundary was right on the edge of it, and when the real marsh the one with rushes all along the edge, with peewits' and terns' nests, bees' nests filled with honey and a clump of osier so big and dense that you could nearly get lost in it when THAT marsh was on the forbidden side of the boundary, right outside the windows of the Shack?

And INSIDE the hut why, it was indeed full of strange things of which you never saw the likes elsewhere: rabbits with long ears, a goat which went into the house through the same door as everyone else, a rocking−horse which was certainly a little bald, and the legs of which were perhaps slightly out of place, but which you could probably still have a ride on if you were careful.

There was a big box there, too, with a handle on its side rather like the one on a grindstone, and it made the most wonderful noises when you turned the handle round. Yes, there was indeed a lot to look at and amuse yourself with!

What a lot of surprising treats you were given as well: rye bread with treacle on it or potatoes which you had to hold in your fingers, dip in a big bowl of salt and eat without either meat or gravy! But the tastiest of all the things you might be offered were fried peewit and tern eggs which you yourself had helped to find in the nests out in the marsh.

So now there were to be no more of these delights.

It was a serious scolding they had received because they had not asked permission before running out to the place where these delights were to be found. In fact it had been more than a scolding. Those were cruel pinches Grandfather had given their arms a short while ago when he had found them out in the marshes again and had dragged them back across the boundary in his fierce grasp. On the way home across the fields, too, he had shaken them time after time to add weight to his stern admonitions:

"Don't you dare go into the Shack any more! NEVER GO BEYOND THE BOUNDARY!"

Not even when they had reached their father's farm had Grandfather let them go. No, they had to do as they were told and go with him into his room! And although he had begun on his work now, the little girls still had the feeling that he intended them to stay on the bench where he had put them, and that he was turning new harsh words over in his mind, and that they might at any moment pour forth in the form of warnings and prohibitions.

The clock on the whitewashed wall struck eleven. Were they really to sit here until lunch? And such a wonderfully fresh and clear morning it was, too. How were they to pass away all that time?

"Grandfather, where do 'scum of the earth' like the Shrike's come from?"

"From other 'scum'!" answered Grandfather.

"Oh? Are there more people like that, then?"

"Oh yes, there are plenty of that kind." Grandfather gave a couple of grunts and turned up the corner of his mouth. "But you'll find that out all right if you live long enough."

"Yes, but ?" Elsbeth wanted to ask another question, but did not quite know how to put it. Then Greta interrupted.

"'Scum of the earth' well then, it's no one God has created, is it?" she asked.

"H'm." Grandfather turned his tobacco over once and gave the osier plaiting a sudden jerk.

"You would hardly think so!" he said then.

And at the same time he popped his head down over his work.

II

Several months passed.

Grandfather's admonition, and the shaking and scolding they had received from him had really made such an impression on the little girls that they never forgot that they were not allowed across the "boundary." Indeed they remembered so well that they thought about the marsh and its wonders every day about the mound and the times they had rolled down its steep slope about the Shack and those who lived in it, animals as well as human beings.

And not only did they THINK about it, but they talked about it as well. They asked the farm servants all about it, and their playmates from the neighbourhood, and they heard many strange things:

Michael Shrike had a wooden leg; his REAL leg he had broken so badly in a fight with a gang of "other drunks" that it had to be taken off...

And one day many years ago a couple of men from the market−town who were hunting found a stick and a hat in the rushes at the edge of the marshes, and when they began to fish around a little in the swamp they found a dead man there as well...It was soon discovered that it was a wool merchant who had been in the district the day before on business. Michael Shrike was immediately suspected of having robbed the merchant of all the money he was known to have had on him, and then of having pushed him into the marsh. He was "locked up" and remained in prison for months on end; but no one could persuade him to confess it, and the evidence was not clear enough to convict him. So no "result" had ever been reached; but otherwise no one seemed to doubt that it was an obvious case...

The woman who lived in the house and called herself Michael Shrike's wife had gypsy blood in her that ought to be enough to put that big− boned, coarse woman in her place! Her skin was dark brown like the water from the marsh; and besides, she was called SIDSEL! No one was called that nowadays, except as a nick−name...

The two little girls were not Michael Shrike's, but his daughter's. And the daughter herself and her husband were in prison for breaking into an old woman's farm, gagging and binding her, and robbing her of all her money...

All this the children learned, and more besides.

Some of it they understood, but most of it they did not. But the tone of aversion and horror which was to be heard when people talked of the folk from the Shack did not fail to have its effect. The little girls were persuaded once and for all that Grandfather had been right: the people from the marsh were "scum", that is to say a sort that nice people did not mix with. In short, they must not go beyond the boundary.

III

They did not go beyond the boundary.

But how they longed to! More and more at every strange thing they heard! More and more with every day that passed! If only they dared risk going out there once more just once!

Before long they discovered a mound in their father's fields where, just like Moses, they could stand with their hands to their brows and look down on the "Promised Land." Here they stood on bright summer days and gazed out across the marsh, across the swaying rushes and reeds at its edge, amongst which their former playmates frisked about in bare feet and with their skirts tucked up high. It was indeed hard to have to stand there and look into the Land of Canaan without being able to reach it, without EVER being able to reach it!

So strong was the attraction of the forbidden land that they gradually ventured right out to where it began. It was mostly in the afternoons, while people were having a sleep after their lunch, that they crept out to the Mound and the marsh, in the corner of which the strange BOUNDARY was marked by a steel wire stretched between four posts. Well, Grandfather had said they might go TO the boundary. But they must not go beyond it.

It was on such an afternoon that they saw their small friends, Elsie and Malvine, come running towards them, not, as they expected, surprised or full of joy at seeing them, but occupied with quite different thoughts, full of wonderment at something strange which was taking place at home in the hut.

Michael Shrike, their grandfather, was "going away".

Where he was going, they did not know. But it must certainly be a long journey he was going on, for Grandmother had given them to understand that he was never going to come back any more. Actually, however, it was not that which was so remarkable. But how splendidly he had been dressed for this journey! The clothes he was to travel in were simply magnificent!

"Just come up with us, and then you can see for yourselves! You've never seen anything like it, NEVER!"

They gave no thought to the fact that it was forbidden. There was no time for that. Elsie and Malvine pointed up towards the hut both with their legs and arms, shouting and gesticulating:

"Be quick and follow us! Do be quick and come!"

And they WERE quick.

And what they saw was indeed remarkable.

Standing in the middle of the floor in the only room in the hut, with its ends resting on two chairs, was a long black bed, box or chest the children were not quite sure what to call it. In it rested Michael Shrike on an immaculate, white sheet of perforated, waxed paper; but it was difficult to imagine it was supposed to be he. Not only had he been thoroughly washed and shaved better than the little girls had ever seen him before, as far as they could remember and had his hair done with a fine, white and very straight parting on one side; but the strangest thing was the suit he had on. My word! It was white from top to bottom, and made of the same material as the sheet. It was scalloped and perforated all along the edges, and had pleated cuffs and fluting on the chest. Of all the fine clothes the little girls could think of brides' dresses, priests' robes, soldiers' uniforms none equalled the solemnity of Michael Shrike's finery. In addition a wreath of flowers of almost bewildering colours had been laid on his chest. Surely those flowers had not been gathered in a garden!

Elsie and Malvine had certainly been right: there was indeed something to look and marvel at.

Not least was it the thought of how all this finery would behave when Michael Shrike started to move that occupied them. For if he was to go on a journey he could certainly not lie there in the black box in his fine clothes all the time. And whether he was to ride or walk, sit at a banquet table or whirl in the dance, it would in truth be a great marvel to see Michael Shrike.

Here was something for the imagination to wrestle with. Fascinated, and with wide eyes, the little girls tiptoed round the corpse of Michael Shrike. Now and then they let their fingers stroke along the crisp white cloth; now and then they were bold enough to touch the strange, hard flowers in the wreath; but they did not touch his hands; they did not know why, but they dared not do that.

If Sidsel had not come in and said that their grandfather was standing over on the other side of the boundary, asking where they were, there is no knowing when they would have gone away.

IV

More time passed about a month.

The fresh admonitions the girls had received that day on their way home as well as the way in which they had had their arms shaken at the same time, had had the desired effect: the people in the Shack were "scum"; and they had to keep away from them!

Nor, however, did they forget all they had seen there the splendid, airy dress Michael Shrike had on, the long journey he was about to embark on and the air of great solemnity which had surrounded him.

Amazement at all this continued to occupy the minds of the children. Oh, how they would have liked to pop over for a few moments to see what had happened since, whether Michael had left, and whether he had stayed away...

But one day they were given something else to think about.

One morning as they were dressing their mother came into their room. She looked very serious and seemed to have been weeping.

"Your dear old grandfather has passed away," she said, and stroked their hair in her emotion. Once they had put their clothes on they might go with her into the drawing−room to see him.

They were soon ready and went with her.

Just look what could all this mean? They opened their eyes wide as they entered the drawing−room. They could see Grandfather lying on a white cloth in a black bed, and he looked exactly like Michael Shrike.

Yet he was really not quite so fine as Michael had been. Washed and shaved he certainly was and dressed in white, too. But the clothes were not of the same crisp, airy materiel as those of the other man, and the wreath he had lying on him they soon saw to be made of cuttings from the box−hedge, and it was nowhere near so magnificent as the shining, many−coloured wreath of flowers which Michael Shrike had had lying on his chest.

For a long time they stood in silence beside their grandfather. Their amazement was great indeed, but mingled with disappointment.

"Is Grandfather going to go away now, as well?" asked Elsbeth.

"Yes, dear, Grandfather is 'going away'. He is going so far away that he will never come back to us."

Both the little girls nodded. They both understood.

"Is he going with Michael Shrike?"

"Going with Michael Shrike ?" Their mother seemed amazed at the question. "Oh, my dear children, God alone knows whom we shall go with on this journey. But it may well be that Grandfather and Michael Shrike are going together."

"Oh."

The little girls looked at each other, peeped at Grandfather and looked at each other again. They were both thinking the same thing, but hardly knew whether they dared express it.

After a while Elsbeth plucked up courage.

"Then Grandfather is going to go beyond the boundary himself now?"

"Good gracious, my dears, what do you mean? The boundary Grandfather has crossed is one we must all cross," said Mother. She stroked their hair tenderly. But Elsbeth and Greta ducked and avoided their mother's gentle caresses. They exchanged some very meaning glances and then crept out of the room.

They went together out to the peat−shed where they were fairly sure of being alone. Here their thoughts found ample expression.

Many things had been turned upside down for the two small girls in that short time their conception of the true distinction between "Springhill Farm" and the "Shack", between "nice" people and "scum".

When the day could come after all when they might accompany each other on a journey was it really worth making such a fuss if they were to see each other once in a while in their ordinary daily life?

SPRING

BY AGNES HENNINGSEN Translated by Ann and Peter Thornton

In 1893, at the early age of 23, Vilhelm Thorsen took his Master of Arts Degree. He spent the first part of his

holiday with his lonely mother and her family at their small farm on the Island of Lolland, and on the First of August he went to Funen where his fiancee was learning housekeeping in a doctor's household, where, as was the custom in those hospitable days, he had often been asked to stay. At this stage of his holiday he felt fully recovered from the years of hard study; quite the triumphant young man, full of vague dreams and aspirations. But the day after his arrival, during the first outing alone with his fiancee, he regretted that he had not resisted this trip to Funen. Life again seemed full of responsibilities.

In the first place it was getting damnably hot. He wasn't used to walking; at the farm in Lolland there had always been a horse and cart, and here in the hillocky Faaborg country one seemed to be forever going uphill. How he wished that he were homeward bound on board the ferry, crossing the Great Belt, with Copenhagen only a few hours off.

He was slight and fair−haired, and wore a light−coloured suit. He was generally considered ugly, with his small rather dim eyes set too close to an outsize nose. As a rule the consciousness of this ugliness made him exceptionally affable. He liked people, and was always trying to win their approval.

The same could be said of his companion, the daughter of an important business man, the seventeen year old Emilie Hahn, generally known as Milli. She took a great interest in everyone and, in return, expected people to be immediately interested in her. She was small, dark, and very pretty a little too conscious of this prettiness. Self−satisfaction betrayed itself as she walked in her billowing skirts, briskly yet with great elegance, the little white leather boots tripping along as if to say, "was there ever a more charming sight?"

She walks like all her class, thought Vilhelm, she's never had anything to do but think of clothes. I can just stagger along; what an old stick I've become. How could he move naturally in his present sulky mood?

He had made a fool of himself. He had behaved stupidly towards little Emilie Hahn from the very day her brother, his school−friend, had dragged him home to their large villa in Copenhagen. He had behaved most stupidly of all, however, on this accursed walk.

There seemed to be something wrong with him as regards women. Many gave him pleasure, but none for long. For this reason he had decided, from the time he had thought about these things at all, never to marry. And then he had found himself playing the part of a suitor the moment he had met this lovely girl who now danced along beside him. Well, what of it? They had all been suitors, all the young men who had buzzed about her in those days. Everyone dreams of winning the big prize, and surely he had been the very last person she would choose; an ugly student with no money at all, the son of a humble farmer. But then he tore off his new grey hat, groaning with the heat she had chosen him, in spite of it. The very same evening that the sensational news of her father's bankruptcy resounded through the city she had sent a messenger to him with a note saying that he was now the only one of her friends she wanted to see. He had actually treated himself to a hansom cab, so great had been his eagerness to assure her that at any rate his feelings were unchanged, that if anything, they were stronger than before. He remembered how that hansom cab had jogged along at a snail's pace.

However, he had quickly been jerked out of this chivalrous mood. "Of course such a disaster is bound to bring people closer to each other," she had said, with her customary self−possession. He would have preferred a modest question: "Am I now too poor for you, an only son, with a mother to support?" He would have appreciated a little intelligent suspicion of his noble gesture. But, he thought, rich girls have no imagination; they believe blindly whatever one tells them. Those born with money are fools.

He pulled down his hat to hide the angry flush that came to his face at these thoughts. Here he was being mean about little Milli when it was all entirely his own fault. Even what had happened today. The worst thing of all was that now he would have to keep it up and be bound forever by this false chivalry.

No, the worst thing of all was he started to bang the dust off his clothes with his fist the worst thing of all was that he who, almost entirely by his own efforts, had raised himself above his class, that he, a university man, should have behaved in such an uncivilised manner. Only a boor would seduce his fiancee.

"Don't bang that dust all over me." Her voice was lighthearted. "Let's rest for a moment." She stepped carefully over the ditch carefully so as not to tread on the flowers and sat down at the edge of the field, very artfully, so the pleats in her skirt showed to advantage. "How you do sigh and groan and puff."

Vilhelm Thorsen spread a large, worn silk handkerchief on the ground and sat on it, staring straight in front of him. On the other side of the narrow road was a strip of land planted with new fruit trees. They must belong to the farm where they were going. He thought of making some remark about being nearer their destination than they thought, but this seemed too much of an effort in his present mood. Instead he lay back and stared up at the sky.

Milli Hahn didn't even turn her head in his direction; she needed no further proof that something was wrong. But what? And when had it started? That morning he had set off in high spirits, delighted with the weather, the countryside, delighted with her. This sudden depression was something she would have to think about. But she was no better at mastering herself than he was. She just sat there wearing that silly half−smile which she found so irritating in others. It was always like that, she could never really keep down her high spirits. Enthroned here in the sun with that dear old grouser, Vilhelm, stretched out beside her, what worries could she possibly have? Grass− stains? She sat up. She had recently made serious resolutions to be more economical, and grass−stains would ruin her pink muslin dress. However, she flopped back without even bothering to investigate. Wasn't it wonderful when such trifles presented themselves as one's only worries? No, it was really rather sad. How she longed for some violent emotion, and instead every experience she ever had was just "water off a duck's back". When her father went bankrupt and they had all stood there in tears, she had just felt excited that now at last something had really happened, and earlier today, up there in the forest when she had thought for a moment that disaster had struck her personally...

A solemn expression clouded her face. Yes, there had been something magnificent about it, something fateful. She had rushed away from him, down the glorious smooth slope of pine needles, without even wanting to slide down it as she usually did. She had to be on the move, as always when she was very excited. But now it was as if she were someone else, someone with a responsibility. She had been stricken, that was the word, stricken, with responsibility, only it had been such a pleasant sort of responsibility. She knew that at home they would all be in tears again when they found out, and she felt it was a pity to bring this new shame upon them. But this feeling was only momentary. What had really struck her was the vision of a tiny face in a frilled bonnet. She had sensed for a moment the peculiar sweet smell of babies.

It had been so wonderful that she had started to sing, out there in the silent forest. When Vilhelm, quite out of breath, had caught up with her, she had chattered away about nothing in that unconscious way one does when suddenly overcome with 'joie de vivre'. She had sworn she would keep this secret happiness to herself. Even at school she had noticed that with the secret gone, the happiness soon goes too. But of course she had behaved just as she used to as a schoolgirl. At his first question she had let it all out. Vilhelm had asked why she was so above herself, he had actually used those words: "Why are you so above yourself?" In reply she had chanted to the tune of one of her favourite hymns: "l l−o−v−e disaster, l l−o−v−e fate.." and this hymn of rejoicing had ended with a line that even took her aback by it's daring and lack of modesty, " To us a child shall be born."

One could hardly blame Vilhelm for looking alarmed.

He put on an expression not unlike that of the new doctor at home when a lady's stomach was upset; had looked aside and made embarrassing explanations. "She had no need to worry,...she could rest assured...," and so on.

Of course she was not at all pleased to hear, after this wonderful disaster, that she had no need to worry. For a second she had just stood there drawing deep sighs of vexation and wonder. But of course only for a moment. She had rushed off again to be alone to think over this new state of affairs and, incredible as it may seem, this new development which had in fact brought her back to where she had started filled her with new happiness. I am still myself, I am unchanged, I am still young water off a duck's back.

Actually, she was sometimes very serious. For instance, when she was alone under a sky strewn with stars or by herself on a moonlit night, she could feel an ache of sorrow that she had never met anyone she really admired. Vilhelm? He was certainly superior to the other young men she knew; unusual, so rough, and yet so sensitive. And then he was bold. Twice in the past she had been secretly engaged, first to a young business man who spoke three languages but couldn't spell in his own, then to a handsome cadet. Both, in their fear of losing her, had 'respected her', and never dared to kiss her. Vilhelm Thorsen on the other hand, with his cheap ready−made clothes, had snatched her in his arms the very first time they had been alone together. She had stamped her foot and threatened to hit him if he dared do such a thing again, but he had done as he pleased. She loved people to be reckless when occasion demanded. But as for admiring him, and wanting to be like him...?

She glanced in his direction. He was lying with his eyes shut. She was tired too, so tired that she preferred to think of the past rather than of what was to come. Sleepy thoughts...

Long ago there had been two people she had looked up to. Only two throughout her whole childhood her mother's parents, a charming old clergyman and his wife in Jutland. But as for admiring them or wanting to be like them? She couldn't help comparing them and their strong faith to the donkey with the carrot always just out of reach. Somehow they seemed beneath her.

Look at those fruit trees over there, how big the apples were already. Soon this summer in the country would be over, she would return to Copenhagen, to a new home of her own. She was to be married to this freakish young man.

"I've found a nickname for you," she explained, excited by the thought of her new existence. "I'm going to call you 'Freak'." She threw her parasol at him and hit him on the leg. He winced at the blow and lay for a few seconds with his eyes open, then reluctantly got up and flung the parasol back to her.

"Shall we go on?"

Now she was the one who did not reply. A ridiculous idea occurred to her. Did he regret what had happened? She pondered over this, sticking out her lower lip, as if she had been alone. Did he have regrets, like a girl? Or was he like the men in historical novels whose feelings changed once they had 'had their way'? Surely that was impossible? She could never have become attached to such a wretch.

She noticed that, to protect his best suit, he had seated himself on the big red silk handkerchief which he carried for that purpose. He had many such unbecoming habits. The effects of a childhood spent in poverty marked one for life, he had once said; that was probably why he looked so dejected now, like a candle which had just been snuffed out. Poor thing, he couldn't bear one to behave at all unconventionally. One thing was certain she slapped her leg in her excitement she had no regrets! She had felt for the first time that she had a heart, had felt that she was after all not always entirely self−centred.

That mysterious physical experience which she had just been through for the first time, held no attractions for her; she had expected that, and she was pleased as she would be ashamed to have succumbed to that sort of thing. Anyway, it was ridiculous to make such a fuss about it, giving it an aura of mystery and terror and hopeless embarrassment. It had seemed to her no more unnatural than the mating of the doves at home at "Villa Pax". No, the surprising, wonderful thing about it was the spiritual ecstasy which had swept over her. She had felt a surge of

tenderness towards him, Vilhelm, her Lord and Master a strange, wild urge to humble herself, to serve him and die.

She had kept a sprig of pine as a keepsake. She took it out of her pocket and held it under her nose. Oh, that scent of pine! They had made their nest on the moss amidst the pines on one of the lonely hillocks in the forest, so high up that they seemed nearer the sky than the earth. Oh, that smell of pine! She saw his face as it had been then his ruthless face...

All at once a peculiar shiver ran down her spine, sweet, sugar−sweet, disgusting. Physical sensations after all! The whole thing was beastly if one felt like that oneself! She sat there for a moment, astounded, then rolled over to conceal her face, breaking the brim of her straw− hat. The noise it made embarrassed her everything became embarrassing when one felt like that oneself. The scrunch of the straw−hat made de Vilhelm sit up. What was she destroying now? At the sight of her lying there on her face he found his voice.

"What's the matter, Milli?"

The white hat did not stir. The sight of someone else in a bad humour soon brought him to his senses. He edged himself towards her, still keeping the silk handkerchief between himself and the ground.

"But my dear young Lady," he began jocularly, "what a picture of despair. I've never seen you like this before; this is not like you at all." He tried to pull her towards him but she rolled away, still hiding her face. "You've been so gay up till now," he went on; "what's come over you?"

"Oh well," he continued, "go on and sulk," and he relapsed into his bad mood.

"This heat is unbearable." He got up and shook out the handkerchief. "Come on, let's go on."

Milli sat up and took off her hat in order to straighten the brim. The hat seemed to have lost its elan, just as she had herself, she thought. Gone too were her better feelings. Vilhelm had stirred up these nasty sensations so he deserved some unpleasantness in return.

"Are you coming or not?" he said irritably. "There's no shade here."

"No, wait," she cried, jumping to her feet. "Tell me, do you regret what has happened?" He looked away and started to fold his handkerchief meticulously. He had often admired Milli's skill at reading one's thoughts but she oughtn't to be allowed to be so blunt; she should realize he couldn't answer that question. A man doesn't beg his beloved for favours one moment, and then admit he's had too many the next.

So he wouldn't answer? She flushed in anger. She must have an answer! She couldn't imagine anyone would actually confess to such pitiful regrets. All right then, he could suffer the humiliation of lying! She must have an answer!

"Do you regret what has happened today?" Thorsen shook out his red handkerchief again, waving it before her eyes as if she were a bull to be teased, before putting it back in his pocket; then opening his small dim eyes very wide he looked intently at her.

"Yes, I do."

Her bitterness melted away as rapidly as it had come. How wonderful to get such an honest answer. She had chosen her husband well. With the aid of two hatpins she put on what remained of her hat. She didn't care now if she did look a sight. She went on, still in a serious voice in order to get a proper answer. "Why do you regret it?"

He increased his pace and mumbled in an embarrassed way, "Because... I think that there is some sense after all in the good, old−fashioned conventions."

"Surely we proved that one should break away from those conventions?"

"No, not people like us who...but it's rather late in the day for such an admission," he interrupted himself, "so I shan't say any more."

"No, no, it's terribly interesting. Do tell me what you really feel about it."

But how could he tell her? It would not sound very nice if he were to admit that his desire was always too easily satisfied. He had sworn that, were he to make the mistake of becoming engaged, closer intimacy would have to wait for the proper setting their own room, their own furniture, and so on. No, it would not sound very nice.

"Go on. Why not people like us?"

"We shall have a home of our own in a few months; some things seem... to need a background of peace and beauty."

She saw in her mind's eye this 'home of their own', four rooms in some dreary street...IN A STREET! She compared it with their nest on the lonely hillock where, through the tree−tops, she had caught a glimpse of tiny white clouds floating in a blue sea of sky. If that wasn't peace, if that wasn't the most perfect beauty...? "But Adam and Eve, and all the others who didn't have a front door to slam behind them, do you think they missed peace or beauty? Why should we be so unnatural?"

He very nearly bellowed at her to shut up. All at once he realised that he had tired of her even before this afternoon. It was her arrogance, her superiority, her eternal lighthearted chatter. He had imagined that any innocent woman would have been slightly subdued, quieter, more humble, after what had happened today, but he was damned if this one didn't still behave as if she owned the earth.

"Nowadays, one cannot afford to be too natural," he said. "Civilised people need...four walls...shaded lamps, and..."

"Yes," she mocked, "you may well stammer, and you who approve of good, old−fashioned conventions, do you believe at all in good, old− fashioned love?"

"Well, you certainly don't either," he answered and pushed past her.

They had arrived at the farm; a watch−dog, still out of sight, barked desperately at the sound of their footsteps, and tugged at its chain in vain.

"No, I only believe in love that comes and goes," she shouted to make herself heard above the barking, "and one thing I know for certain I should detest a chained house−dog and I refuse to have anything to do with one."

THE TAILOR'S SUMMER

BY KNUD HJORTO Translated By J. F. S. Pearce

Kirsten came right down to the garden gate with me. "Well, you're going anyway, you say, so that'll save me the trouble of writing to them."

I squeezed my old nurse's hand for the third time. "I'll see to that, Kirsten. The funeral's on Thursday, then "

"Yes, tell them Jens died yesterday, and the funeral's on Thursday," Kirsten said, hastening to amend my former statement.

"That's right, he died yesterday, and the funeral's on Thursday " I looked into Kirsten's eyes, and I still seemed to see in them that air of authority that I remembered from twenty−five or thirty years ago. I was more than four when I had left her charge, and she had been not quite eighteen, but she had been a strict nurse, very keen on cleanliness, and heavy−handed too. She wiped my nose as if she were squeezing the matter out of a boil. When she washed my ears, she used to twist them as if she were trying to screw them off my head. A wash by Kirsten left my cheeks feeling as if they were on fire. Kirsten's strong point was cleanliness; I would not care to repeat some of the things she did to me to keep me clean, but she was highly successful.

"That's all right," repeated Kirsten, "if you're going anyway; I'm not too good at writing. What a wind against you, too. Do you really think you can do forty miles in a wind like this? It's right in your face." Kirsten looked at me kindly. Her blue eyes seemed strangely young, but the lines round her mouth betrayed her age.

"The road turns before long," I said. "And the sun'll keep me warm." I wheeled the bicycle on to the road, and stood behind it, ready to jump on. The three youngest children stood by, watching.

"Remember me to them, and tell them Jens died quiet and peaceful. What do you think you're up to, Hans, interfering with the gentleman's bike?" Kirsten led off at him, and the expression in her eyes was just as familiar to me as it was to her own children. Hans, who had been pointing to a cut in the front tyre was dragged through the gate. I saw his red wrist marked with white stripes, as Kirsten let it go.

"Good−bye, Kirsten," I said, and jumped on. "I'll have it all squared up in four or five hours."

"Thanks, Knud. Good−bye," she called out from the gate, but her words were half−drowned by the fresh April wind rushing past my ears.

The weather during the past fortnight had been unusually varied grey skies with rain, then quiet, warm days, which brought out the flowers and the bushes, then clear days, when the sun was really hot, yet with a cutting wind. It is like that to−day. The sun warms up one side of you, whilst the other side freezes in the wind. This was just the kind of weather that old Jens, the tailor, could not stand. The sun would shine in through the window, and he would think summer had come. He would go outside, and it would be all right by the house wall, and he would bask there, and then round the corner would come that treacherous wind that you get with the sun at this time of the year. One day Jens went out cutting firewood in the sun and wind, and came in again, sweating, yet frozen; one side of him in winter, and the other in summer. That was too much for old Jens. He hobbled off to bed, and stayed there. Summer and winter joined forces inside him, and between them they killed him.

The wind cut me like a knife as I cycled into it; I had to lean forward so as to avoid it as far as possible. It would be a good five hours before I had carried out my errand.

Kirsten always saw that I was well wrapped up, and it never mattered to her that I hated being too hot. She stayed on at the farm after I grew old enough to look after myself, but she always kept an eye on me, as there was no−one else to do so, and she performed her duties with a watchful eye and ready hand. If I happened to be absorbed in some childish observation of something or nothing in a draughty corner of the farm, Kirsten would be there with hand and eye, and she would have me out of the wind: "What're you standing there in the starving cold for? You get in the yard, it don't blow there."

Kirsten's blue eyes, like the clear, cold winter sky, dominated my early childhood. I never got my own way with her, oh no! Whenever I tried to dig in my tender heels, and be stubborn and stiff−necked, I could count on a keen head−wind of quite unique strength from Kirsten.

Later it occurred to me that her eyes were not so cold, after all. She had had her troubles with the farm−hands when she was younger. I remember an incident at a north−eastern corner of the farm. It was a cold spot, and I had no intention of staying there, but there were two people standing talking just round the corner, and one of them was Kirsten. They were talking loudly and angrily, particularly the farm− hand, and it seemed to me that it was Kirsten who was taking the orders that time. Kirsten was in the habit of giving me orders, so I knew what they sounded like. Well, I turned round the corner carefully, and was met by a gust of cold wind. At the same moment, Kirsten's eyes fell on me, but there were tears in them. She walked up to me and took my hand. "There you are, then, Knud," and she took me indoors. She settled down to do some darning, and, for want of anything else to do, I sat on the peat−box, swinging my legs. I kicked the box with my heels, so that the noise might help to pass the time. Suddenly Kirsten asked me if I would like her to tell me a story. I listened to it, but do not remember any of it. I do not suppose it was very interesting. But I do remember that Kirsten was very kind to me. I sat with my head on her knee, and she patted me. My mother had died a few years before.

A lot of the hands wanted to walk out with Kirsten, but either she would not do as they wanted, or they would not do as she wanted, or something of the sort. Three times I was there when Kirsten and one of the men quarrelled. I remember one who said, "What's tha want to start owt for then?" Kirsten never spoke like that. She was a town girl, and did not speak dialect. Whenever Kirsten appeared, the men turned up at once. They approached her with their eyes screwed up, and a twisted smile on their lips, as if there was a strong wind blowing in their faces. One day old Niels said, "Tha'll not get rahnd 'er in a 'urry." The hands, who had no doubt expected to make rapid progress with her, were offended. Kirsten was not shy, but after all, she was young, and did not like people having too much to say to her.

Then Kirsten became engaged to a labourer whom I never saw. All I know about him is that one of the maids told me one day, "Oh, Niels isn't so bad." That left me as wise as I had been before, and so I am still. But Niels got drunk once or twice, and that was the end of him. I can just imagine the cold blast that met him from Kirsten's blue eyes and wide, handsome mouth. So it was not to be Niels and Kirsten. Another of the maids, who was not engaged, said spitefully, "Who does she think she is? She don't deserve to get no−one."

Then Kirsten left us, and I was free to walk about and fall over wherever and whenever I liked, until I was seven, and had to go to school.

The ruts in the road are new, and quite dry, and they are as hard as concrete. They are always on the look−out for a chance to catch my front wheel. The constant head−wind is tiring, but the road turns about five miles further along, and later on it turns again, so I can look forward to an almost following wind.

In front of me there lies a village a tangled cluster of houses and farms, of manure−heaps, trees and so on. The road seems to be blocked by a tall poplar, and, behind that, two houses. But I bear down on my pedals, the tree recedes to one side, the houses separate, and settle themselves on their proper sides of the road to let me through. A manure−heap, that seems right in my way, slips off to the left. Even the winding road straightens out, and lays itself smoothly before my front wheel. I have disentangled the whole of the village, but when I look back a few moments later, it is spread out again like a tangled cluster of houses and trees.

The road does not turn much, but still, it is a great improvement, and the sun seems to be ten degrees warmer. The wind is quieter, too; only when I ride past the old poplars can I hear a short, harsh rush of wind. How old and decrepit they look; most of them are leaning, some of them look as if a good puff of wind would blow them over into the ditch. There is no sign of leaf on them, and in a month's time, they will be just as bare. They miss spring altogether, and do not come out until summer.

Kirsten returned to us four years later. She looked just the same to me, but the farm−hands did not run after her as much as they had done. "They know her," somebody said, and that may be the explanation. Apart from that, Kirsten looked well, and she and I got on wonderfully together; after all, I was too big to be ordered about.

We had a tailor named Jens in the village. He used to go to people's homes and do sewing there. In that respect, he was one of the old−time tailors, and he was like them, too, in the fact that he was hump− backed, and limped, but he got along all right. There was nothing actually wrong with him, it was just that the length of one of his legs had been worked out wrongly. It was an inch, or even less, short. Jens, the tailor, walked along quickly, with a pump−like action.

I can only remember Jens as an old man, just as I remember my father and a lot of other people whom I have always known. He was about forty−five when I was ten. I had no idea of his age then. As far as I was concerned, he had reached that age when it becomes difficult to keep the space between nose and mouth dry. He always said good−morning to me in a friendly voice, but that was all. He was a bachelor, so he was not used to domestic small−talk.

Kirsten was in service at the farm, and Jens came there to do some sewing, and so they happened to meet, with their every−day tasks as common ground between them. Jens sewed, and Kirsten darned. She gazed at him with her great blue eyes, and Jens' glance, so used to looking downwards, tailor−like, was forced up from his needle, to meet her eyes. I did not stay in the room for very long; it was winter, and the yard was thick with snow, but nevertheless, I had to go in there from time to time to dry my mittens, and as they hung on the oven door, smelling first of dampness, and then of scorching, I heard a little of Jens' and Kirsten's conversation. Jens' voice was placid, and he spoke with the flattest of Zealand intonations. Kirsten had a clear, strong voice, which could easily reach an ear−splitting pitch, but she was keeping it soft then. I suppose she had got her eye on Jens straight away, and Jens, who was a silent man, felt he had to follow her example. Jens was, indeed, the owner of a house, and was well established. It may seem strange that he was not married, but it must not be forgotten that at that time, especially in the country, all the girls got married, except occasionally a priest's or teacher's daughter here and there, so there was no one left over for men who were constructed on incorrect geometrical principles.

I do not know how far they got that time; my mittens dried, and I ran back outside. But Jens and Kirsten were married about six months later. That was Jens' summer, and he had missed his spring.

Then one Sunday afternoon, a month before the wedding, a farm−hand paid us a visit. He had a red face and staring eyes. I was sitting by the first tree in the avenue, with a bag of buttons, and the man asked me, in an aggressive tone, whether Kirsten were at home. I took a step back, and I had to look at him for a moment before I could answer that Kirsten was at home, and was in the maids' room. In fact I had just been in there to have a tear in my button−bag sewed up. The man went a few steps towards the gate, but then he asked me whether I would go and call her.

When I described the man to Kirsten, the look in her eyes gave me thoughts far in advance of my years. But she did not say anything, just "Yes," and crossed the yard and through the west gate. I went out by the east gate, and I happened to hear their voices along by the south corner.

"You're mad," said the man's voice. "What do you want him for? I've been teetotal for two years now, and all."

"You're a bad 'un," Kirsten answered. "If we got married, you'd beat me."

"Beat you! There ain't no−one can get top hand of you."

I could not hear what Kirsten said to that, but then I heard his voice again: "If I did beat you, it'd be you as drove me to it. I'm a bad 'un, you say. What do you think you are, then?"

I ran away, so as not to hear any more. I was so worked up that I was nearly crying. I was sitting some way up the drive, playing with my buttons, when I heard footsteps down by the farm. It was the man again, but when he saw me, he went through the field, in order to avoid me. I thought he was going to a lot of trouble for a boy of my age, but I drew myself up and had a good look at his back. There was really nothing to see, except that his ears were very red. But still, they were the ears and back of a farm−hand with a terrible voice, which had filled my imagination with thoughts of murder, like the people in the old ballads did, and it did me good to stare at him. Suddenly he turned round, and I saw his ugly, dark red face. He did not move for a moment, as if he were considering whether to come back and hit me. I glanced down to the farm, to judge how far off it was; I was quite safe. Then he turned away again, and I went home, trembling.

I was sitting alone with my buttons at the big table when Kirsten came in for something. When she saw me, though, she came up to me and sat down. She asked me how many buttons I had, and whether the shiny policeman's buttons were really worth eight ordinary trouser buttons. I could not say a word, but looked down in silence at my buttons. The atmosphere was becoming a little too tense for me, and I wished she would leave me alone. She did so, and laid her hand on my arm as she got up. She went out without another word, but she did not forget what she had come for, a pair of scissors that were in the table drawer.

That was a great relief. I left my buttons, and ran up to the hay− loft. It was in semi−darkness, but the light from the western sky shone in through the gaps in the boards. I curled up in the hay, and soon fell asleep.

That evening there was only a man and a boy, Kirsten and myself on the farm. I sat beside her with a book, and asked whether I should read her a story. I had read it twice, and knew it well. Kirsten said she would like me to, and I read the story of the man in the seven league boots. Kirsten praised my reading, and talked to me about the story, but when the other two had left the room, she looked at me, and I happened to look at her.

"Did you hear what Niels and I were talking about this afternoon?"

"No," I said, shaken by the impression I had received, and terrified at the thought of discussing it.

I think Kirsten understood me all right. "You mustn't tell anyone."

"No," I said.

But yet it was a great relief to have talked about it. I could not bear to meet Kirsten's eyes; they were kind, but not happy.

"You'll be a grown−up lad yourself, one day," said Kirsten.

"Yes," I said, feeling very solemn at the thought of it.

Kirsten married, and went to live up in the town. A few years later, Niels got married, and came to live next door. Niels became another of my childhood acquaintances. I came to know the look he gave me when we met. It was full of that rude indifference which young men sometimes feel towards boys of about ten. That look was more marked in Niels than in anybody else perhaps there was still some ill−feeling left from that day when I had gazed at him from the back. It is embarrassing for a little boy to meet a man like that alone. If you say "Hullo", and you cannot always get even that out, you get a grunt by way of answer. You really feel quite ill inside, until you meet an old lady, who stops and says: "Hullo, Knud. Just out of school? Did you do your lessons all right?"

Niels had a bad reputation. He did not drink, but he had his way with as many of the girls and young wives in the town as he could. They said he was after Kirsten, too.

One day, as I was passing Jens' house, Kirsten called me in. It had occurred to her that she had a lot of old buttons, and I collected buttons. I was to go in and see them. By then I was twelve, and button collecting was done with; I was a botanist now. But I went in. Kirsten pushed open the kitchen door with a peat−basket she was carrying. The door swung open and hit a man, who got out of the way with a growl it was Niels. I looked at Niels, and he looked at me, but neither of us said a word. Then I realized that I did not like the man, but I was no longer afraid of him. Niels clearly did not like my being there. Kirsten gave him a look that made him scowl. Then he said good−bye, and left. I was twelve years old, and knew quite a bit. Niels' visit made me think, but Kirsten took me into the front room. "Look at these, now."

Both my trouser pockets were filled with buttons. Kirsten went to the door with me. "Niels is a bad man. If you tell anyone you met him here, tell them I said so."

"I will," I said. "Good−bye, and thank you for the buttons."

The buttons were fine. There were a lot of brass ones, and some strange old ones made of a white metal. I was moved by them as one is by a stroke of luck that comes just too late. I put them away in a drawer, and thought of Niels. The next time I saw him, I would say good−day to him loudly, as if I were a grown−up man.

Jens stayed at home to do his sewing now. Instead of going out to his work, he could be seen going for walks with his children. At first they held his lower hand, then, as they grew, they held the other hand, which was a little higher. The children shot up, straight and well−built. They liked their father, and respected their mother. Jens respected her, too. I had all my clothes made by Jens, and I used to think that Kirsten had rather a cold air about her, but apart from that, she seemed not to be displeased at having had children. She had six, the youngest of which was born when Jens was a good sixty. Kirsten always talked to me a lot when I came to be measured. She began to look older, but her eyes did not change. Jens only talked about the matter in hand, and he used to cough Hrm, hrm very harshly. Kirsten explained: "Father's got a cold to−day." But it was not a cold. His cough was the internal symptom corresponding to the dampness between his nose and mouth.

Jens, the tailor, did not betray many feelings, not even happiness. But he had his summer, and his harvest was six children. That did not alter him much. He grew old, but that was an internal change; he had always been old outside, but his hrm, hrm, became more long drawn out. He grew thinner, but it was hardly noticeable. He was like a crooked tree, that had been lopped, and which had very little foliage left. One day, a puff of wind came, and blew him over into the ditch.

I have not seen Jens for many years, and now I am on my bicycle, doing his last errand.

I would be very interested to know whether Kirsten really would not have preferred Niels, and whether all her common−sense quite reconciled her to having Jens instead. But if I were to ask her that now, it would embarrass her just as much as she used once to embarrass me.

It feels quite still, now that the wind is at my back. I can hear the ball−bearings going round in the hubs, and I can hear the cyclometer catching its stop on the front wheel. It is collecting up the miles as I ride along, storing them up in its little steel brain. I only need to get off to read them.

I reach the town towards evening. There are soldiers quartered nearby, and as I pass the first house I hear a familiar sound: the laughter of a delighted girl in the company of a man in uniform. I jump off, and walk past them until I meet someone sensible, whom I ask where a certain Hans Jensen may be found, then I carry on according to his directions. The streets are almost empty a few young apprentices smoking cigarettes, with the pavement at their feet spattered with what look like splinters of glass, where they have been spitting on it. Outside a bookseller's there is a big dog, putting to a most improper use some bright−coloured wall−paper which stands outside, and which would seem to have aroused his aesthetic instincts. Elderly people are meeting, and talking

about the weather. They all say the same: "What a nice day it's been. A real nice day."

ADRIFT

BY MARTIN ANDERSEN NEXO Translated by W. Glyn Jones

Peter and Karl were two small creatures whose sphere of existence lay in those depths to which the sun does not always penetrate. Down there everything glows with a peculiar light of its own; thus it was created. Consequently the two could reckon themselves among Nature's favourites, and yet continually have the feeling that everything was in store for them. Together with their mother, they lived in a gloomy hole in the buildings of the Medical Association, and according to the normal method of reckoning they were nine and eight years old respectively. That is to say that this amount of time had elapsed since they made their entry into this empty life and had their responsibilities assigned to them. There were no tin soldiers lying in a box waiting for these two; their treats were to be found in the form of crusts of bread when they were lucky. And it did not take them long to realize their position. They quickly understood how idle it was to start bawling and demanding what they wanted, and began to fend for themselves from the very first.

To find their bearings was not difficult, merely a matter of realizing they lacked everything, a realization which was to a great extent born in them. The more eagerly they could set about the task of finding a way of providing for themselves.

As for the cause of their existence, he had left them completely in the lurch just like a god who has paid the earth a short visit. His existence was established beyond all doubt: he had established it, like the rogue he was, by the mere fact that he had brought the two lads into the world, only then to disappear into the blue. There was no other trace of him not even a name. Whoever he was, he had deigned to enjoy the sweetness of creation, and then shirked the responsibility of providing for those he had helped to create; now he sat aloof, enthroned in unseen majesty, and amused himself by rendering life insecure for them. Not even their mother's professed widowhood gave any security; the other women in the neighbourhood smiled, and it seemed as though even she had doubts at the bottom of her heart. She needed both joy and horror of a far more radical significance than daily life could possibly afford, so she allowed herself to see that power which had parted the waters of her tiny world hovering like a portentous shadow over the trivialities of everyday life. Sometimes it hung like a force which at any time might come and land her poor belongings at the pawnbroker's, and at other times like good fortune itself coming from afar to their relief.

She, for her part, was the concrete basis of the lads' existence, the only thing they could rely on in all circumstances; she was as good and reassuring as the earth which bore them. Everything else was vague and without foundation, and it was left to them to give it shape and substance as far as their capabilities would allow. Right from their birth they had possessed an inexhaustible supply of patience, and while their mother was at work they both sat propped up in their own corners of the old sofa and stared at each other with that expression of boundless experience which poverty gives as a christening−gift. They said goo−goo as though they understood the seriousness of life, picked the stuffing out of the back of the sofa, and thumped their foreheads with the old wooden spoon which they had been given to gnaw at with their newly−formed teeth thus they began their task; and when they could manage no more they cried themselves to sleep. Now and then their mother would slip home from work and have a look at them, and each time they had done something to make them a little more wonderful than they were before.

One day the elder of the two decided he had had enough of sitting and watching; he rolled head−first off the sofa and stood up with the help of the table−leg. When his mother came home the top of his little head was as thick as a cushion but he could walk! So before very long he was able to deliver newspapers.

As previously said, one of them was eight and the other nine, and they had already been playing their part in supporting the family for many a long day.

It was apparently a perfectly ordinary day. The sun was shining with a peculiar, wild joy which had its inevitable effect on the disorderly flocks of sparrows flying over the blocks of flats; otherwise things were much the same as ever. Their mother had gone to work at five o'clock in the morning as usual; at six o'clock Mrs. Hygum, their next−door neighbour, knocked on the wall, and the boys got up and started the day in good spirits. Peter tidied up the room and then went to fetch the greengrocer his provisions for the day, while Karl was out in Ryesgade helping the paper−woman by running up the steepest flights of stairs for her.

Now the morning's duties were finished, and they sat in the cramped kitchen and ate their bread and dripping. They were no longer fresh as when they had started; there was no light−hearted chatter to be heard; they did not kick their legs about in a pointless effort to give themselves something to do, but hung indifferently over their bread and dripping as though they had suddenly discovered how pointless it was to go on. Their enthusiasm had left them! Nor was that anything out of the ordinary either the same thing was repeated every day at the same time; it came over them like a sudden reaction after their activity.

It was not that they were tired; they were already well hardened, and these exertions so early in the morning only acted as a cheerful prelude to the day's business. They could think of a hundred and one glorious ways of employing every single hour of the day, and each one of them would be of some benefit to themselves and their poor, little home. It was a tiny world apart that they and their mother had created for themselves in the face of unfriendliness and opposition on all sides; it was achieved at the cost of great effort and was built of the refuse from the great solar system called Society. Their world did not form part of this system but journeyed through space along paths of its own and propelled by the poor means at its disposal; a never− failing effort was necessary to maintain it and a collision was something they could not afford. In their small, outstretched hands the lads already bore the lion's share of the burden, and they were happy to do so.

But recently a great hand had reached out to take hold of them; they were no longer to be permitted to rove about as they chose, but should be brought under the influence of the System. It was the first time they had realised that anyone took any notice of them and theirs, and for the meantime this new interest was shown by the fact that they were forced to sit every morning and endure the torment of breathing in the dust of what others had achieved in the course of time, while all that they themselves had achieved was allowed to fall into disuse. This intervention demanded moreover to be considered as beneficial to them. In the afternoons when they managed to escape, their work had accumulated to an alarming extent and they plunged headlong into it and rinsed themselves of the dust they had gathered during the morning.

The two lads knew from their own experience that there was something called Society; it was something concerning all those people who could plan their mid−day meals for a whole week at a time. From the very first they were aware that they themselves were excluded from it and had accordingly adapted themselves to the situation; a vague conception of justice had told them also that they could not possibly owe Society anything when they had come to terms with want and hunger solely by dint of their own efforts right from the time they first saw daylight.

Behind this realisation lay, however, another which was not acquired by experience, but the roots of which lay much deeper a realisation which was really too big and unwieldy for two small boys. It was impalpable like fear of the dark and gave warning of invisible dangers on all sides; it was that realisation which made both mother and children avoid all charitable institutions, preferring instead to take the law into their own hands when need threatened their existence. Countless occasions had helped to create this realisation, which did not merely develop in individuals with special gifts, but hovered as it were over everything they did, helping even a child to see through the philanthropic outer covering right into its very depths, right into the centre of the web where the spider sits and waits. From the moment they began to creep about they had continually been on their guard and

had met both kindness and harshness on the part of strangers with the same mistrust which was born and bred in them; and they had managed perfectly well they had both been dangerously ill and slept on the Common without the great monster's having been able to scent them. And now, suddenly, without warning, it was gaping over them with the poor excuse that they were more than seven years old.

Now Karl and Peter did not exactly allow themselves to be swallowed. They knew intuitively that it was not from consideration of what was good for THEM that people suddenly went to the trouble of letting them sample the blessings of Society. The first time this Society beckoned to them they bolted like two foals born out of the fold, and their mother had to be dragged in before them in order to induce them to go inside. Life became one long game of truant, but the only result was that they were regularly beaten for it, while their mother worried as she had never worried before; for a long time she had to neglect her work and take them to school, until they finally gave in mostly out of consideration for her.

But it only SEEMED as though they gave in; they were able to defend themselves in the manner of the weak and immediately began to feign dead. Everything was lost on their thick−skinned impenetrable stupidity. It was, however, a moral obligation of Society to educate the two children of the proletariat, and no efforts were spared; all the most up−to−date methods in education were employed to enable these two miserable youngsters to appreciate the wonderful process of enlightenment which is to be traced throughout countless ages in the history of the world. Nor was that all. They, who could not legally lay claim to a single grain of rye from all that grew on this earth, could, if they wished, be transported in spirit beyond all temporal boundaries and see themselves safe in the all−pervading love of God Himself, and here was an excellent opportunity for them to acquire a conception of the true value of Man.

But they did not specially appreciate that. There was less to fill their frames with during all this and they were not able to go out to play until much later in the evening, unless all the work were to be heaped on to their mother; it was that thought which occupied them while they sat in complete boredom and listened to accounts of the great achievements of Mankind and travelled round the globe with the aid of a pointer and a map of the world. These two had gone on expeditions which offered adventure of an entirely different kind; on dark evenings when the watch−dogs were loose and the frosty wind howled miserably in the empty grates at home, they had clambered over high railings in search of coal; and when their mother was ill they had gone on even more difficult expeditions in quest of food right into the darkest interior. That was THEIR secret, and not even their mother was allowed to share it.

It threw them on their own resources, however, once and for all, and determined their attitude to this new force which, with every utterance, condemned what was merely the two indomitable lads' means of self−preservation, setting up death by starvation as the supreme form of honesty for the poor.

After many trials they had arrived at their own conception of life and happiness; they had based their mode of life on it, and so far had all they wished for and a little more besides! By some wonderful process or other they had managed to extract honey from the barrenness which surrounded them, and through their bitter experiences they had evolved a rather rough philosophy of life, one which was somewhat different from the one they were taught, but which on the other hand had the advantage of being their own and according to which they could live.

This they concealed deep within themselves and behaved in front of other people as though they were a pair of very thick−skulled little boys. When they heard how the Lord gave the Laws to Man, or how the Angel announced the birth of the Saviour, they sat and stared foolishly through the window as though it were something which had happened for the benefit of the others, but which did not concern them. It seemed that the flickers of intelligence in the two brothers had been extinguished, but fresh plans were smouldering within them: where they could find new sources of revenue and how they could improve the old. They had to acquaint themselves perfectly with all building projects in the town, so as at any given time to know at which timber−yard there was the best prospect of filling their sacks; and considerable experience was necessary in order to decide where they

could dispose of their booty with the greatest profit and without running about more than necessary. There was plenty to occupy them.

The cogs of that great and impressive machine turned above them, but to no avail; they preferred their own dry bread to this vision of the good things in life, and this they showed by an unbending seriousness which was taken to be apathy. There was nothing to be done about it; they were two mentally defective children, a couple of miserable wretches from the back streets who were in vain being crammed with the reflection of life's splendours, which process is intended to remove the persistent feeling of loneliness from the minds of the poor.

Realising this their tormentors quieted down at last; and this was the state of affairs now. There was no reason to believe that any attempt would be made to alter it, and for this at least the boys were grateful. They had no objection to their being considered less gifted than they really were, since this was their only means of ensuring that they would be allowed to take care of themselves and what belonged to them, and so they continued to look at life cheerfully. It was only just before school−time that a certain amount of dislike made itself apparent it only lasted until they managed to lull themselves to sleep for the morning.

Nor was it any different today; breakfast was the dividing−line between two existences, and as they chewed away at their food they prepared themselves for the yoke which they knew was awaiting them, and then they quietly slipped away from the kitchen−table. Without wasting words grumbling about the inevitable they locked the door and slipped the key under the mat; then they adopted their sheepish expressions and made their way reluctantly towards the encounter which they knew they had to face.

When they emerged from the gloomy blocks of flats on to the coast road, the younger of them, by some strange chance, turned off in the wrong direction and started to run. At this Peter took fright and set off in energetic pursuit in order to bring him back on to the right road; but by the time he caught up with the little chap he too thought this direction perfectly all right and had forgotten why he was chasing him. From a cloudless sky the sun darted its rays in abandon over the world, utterly destroying all permanent conceptions; the vision of a beating to follow tried to bar their path but gave way without resistance tomorrow was so far off that it could have no claim on reality. And leading away from all that, white with dust and burning beneath the ardent rays of the sun, lay the coast road, pointing straight to adventure.

Out there was another, more luxurious sort of life, a life in Sunday best. People lived in fairy houses completely surrounded by green gardens, and in those gardens there were always folk eating off shining white table−cloths and drinking wine with their food in full view of everyone passing. Perhaps they would call a barelegged boy in to them and stuff him so full of fine food that he had to vomit it all up again a strange miracle which had been known to happen. There WERE, however, sometimes railings loose enough for a nimble lad to squeeze through and make sure he had a share in the proceedings. And far beyond that, when one had left civilisation behind, lay the REAL world with a great forest full of deer. When people came home from those parts they had always red whistling−balloons with them, and they were always gay.

The two lads painted it all in glowing colours to each other as they trudged off. The policeman at "Vibenshus" instinctively noted their appearance, and a large watch−dog approached them impudently and stopped them while it noted their scent. With a rather unwilling grimace it pushed its muzzle first against their bare legs and then against their clothing as though it wanted to assert that rags are always suspicious objects, even when worn by two blue−eyed little boys who can look right into God's bright Heaven without blinking. With that they were permitted to pass for that time.

Their bare legs did cause them some trouble; there were holes in their toes from broken stones on the roads, and here and there a scratch was to be seen on their calves; the two small pirates stepped along the ground with a peculiar mistrust as though the earth had not yet cooled down properly. However, it was only because there were sometimes pieces of glass lying where they put their feet.

Moreover, they wore their tattered dress in blissful ignorance of the effect it was producing, and indeed it almost seemed they were proud of it. It was unique for its kind, too, pieced together of whatever their mother, by keeping a sharp look−out, had prevented from being committed to the rubbish−bin in her employer's wash−house, as well as what they themselves had come across in the fairy−tale garden of the very poor the refuse dump by the clay−pit.

Their heads being the most important part of their bodies, Our Lord had Himself attended to them and covered them with a thick crop of hair which was now turned to gold by the sun, and which even in the gloomiest back−yards reminded one of fields of golden corn. As we have already heard, a number of quite serious experiences had found their way into those heads, but they merely lay hidden there and gave fuel to a little roguish flame which continually flickered from the lads' eyes. Their faces were still earth and dirt, but dirt which could smile quite delightfully; and from the middle of that muddy complexion shone two patches of blue sky, like a superfluous promise.

As they tramped off in the sunshine and light−heartedly made the dust spurt out from under their small feet, they might have been mistaken for two young immortals who had created themselves out of thin air only, of course, until they were seen against a background of the established order. And now that they WERE in existence and found all the necessities of life denied them they were prepared to ransack even poverty itself, and they clothed themselves in all their booty. It was not to be wondered at that they felt themselves rich. That was their first feat, and now they proceeded in their filthy trophies to win the day; their naked limbs peeped through their rags here and there like a young sun and seemed to give a promise that they too would go far in their lifetime. There they were, two radiant children of the proletariat who did not owe the slightest thing to anyone else, but who had everything to their credit, two of those creatures whom no one really knows because they belong to unexplored depths! They had emerged from their obscurity and come to the surface for a while to join in the game in the sun, and they themselves shone with all the strange colours which develop in the darkness.

All in all they were well equipped, and they knew it; the consciousness of this was reflected in their small bodies. Life had provided for them with some extravagance, and in a last fit of prodigality had landed them at the bottom of everything, perhaps so that they might be able to take the lead on the day the present order is reversed.

They tramped on indefatigably, keeping as far as possible to the dust, which acted as a soft covering for their sore feet, and they went into ecstasy at every new thing they saw. There was such ample room in their minds for new impressions that even the smallest happenings registered there as powerful experiences.

When they reached Hellerup they discovered they were hungry. "It's the country air," said Peter with an air of superiority; and it was for once a first−class explanation of a phenomenon which was very commonplace. Of course they had eaten their two pieces of bread and dripping in the morning as usual and they were not in the habit of having anything else before they came home from school. With the help of a piece of steel wire they wangled two bars of chocolate from a dilapidated slot−machine, and they munched away at it as they plodded on; the dust rose from between their toes like tiny puffs of smoke. They smeared their faces all over with the last bit of chocolate it was just as good as a scalp if they should meet their chums and besides, it acted like war−paint, a general challenge to the world at large. Whooping softly, and with their painted faces thrust forward in defiance, they continued their march, keeping a sharp look−out for new experiences.

A vast brewer's cart came rolling along and enveloped the two warriors in its dusty wake; when they reappeared they were right underneath the wagon, riding astride the beer−barrels which hung from iron chains between the massive wheels. There they hung, swaying in breakneck fashion like two giddy satyrs, and they let out wild cries which were, however, deadened by the rumbling of the wooden vehicle. Or else they let their feet drag along in the dust in an excess of bravery to see if they could bring the spirited horses to a standstill. In this manner they reached Skovshoved; there the wagoner discovered them and chased them off with his whip.

Somehow or other they escaped and rolled down between the wheels into the ditch without being crushed; and what a stroke of luck that was! For there they found a packet of sandwiches which someone or other probably a school−child had thrown away. There were both cheese and sausage sandwiches this was certainly the entrance to Fairyland! They sat down at once and enjoyed life; the food they divided into two equal parts, but Peter, as the first−born, reserved for himself the right to lick the paper.

It would be ridiculous to say they were full, for that they had never been in all their lives so far. But they were nearer to it than usual as they plodded off again at a rather leisurely pace.

They looked like two real tramps in miniature as they strolled off with their shoulders raised, Peter with his hands in his pockets, and Karl, who still had no pockets, with his little paws in the corresponding tears in his trousers seam. Two strange tears they were too; mother sewed them up each evening, and the next morning there they were again as though the trousers knew there ought to be pockets just there. The only thing which could be objected to in the two vagabonds was their size; no lady would be scared over to the opposite side of the road merely by the sight of them but there was still time for that! Now they just allowed themselves to drift at random before the light summer breeze.

In this manner, by some inexplicable coincidence, they had slipped down behind the villa gardens to the beach. There was a notice down there saying "Private!" Peter made a valiant attempt to spell his way through it but gave up in favour of more amusing things. The only notices which had any real interest for these two were those announcing that dogs were loose; and this was not one of those.

In a trice they had their clothes off and amidst loud shouting they took possession of the blue Sound; up on the veranda the ladies who lived in the villa had the pleasure of seeing the two bold adventurers frisk hilariously on a bed of sand, giddy and unkempt like two house− sparrows in a puddle of water. Then the owner of the house joined the ladies. He regularly attended nude shows and immediately saw that morality was in danger, and the two boys were accordingly chased off, while the ladies of the house withdrew from sight as quickly as possible.

Well, the earth had gradually revealed itself as being far bigger than they had expected, and they had no objection to inspecting another part of it. They scrambled into their clothes as they fled, and once more took the road leading away from home. In the distance loomed the woods, and there it was they wanted to go; only far enough to see the deer and catch a glimpse of the end of the world.

But as they were trudging along at a fine rate Karl stopped still.

"Ooh, just look at that, Pete!"

There was a huge cherry−tree standing in the middle of the lawn of one of the villas. It was laden down with cherries, and sparrows in their hundreds making a dreadful din had taken possession of it. Showers of them were swooping down on to the tree and flying off again, fighting among themselves and snatching all they could, so that large bunches of cherries and leaves were continually falling to the ground. It was sheer gluttony; it was perfectly obvious that THEY were not earning their own food.

"They're stuffing themselves properly," said Peter and licked his lips as he remembered an occasion in the past. He had eaten cherries himself that year: the thatcher in one of the flats near theirs bought a lot of the half rotten ones in the vegetable market a whole barrow− load for a couple of shillings and sold them again in the street. In return for an errand he had gone Peter had earned himself a cap−full of those which could not even be sold in the street and how good they had tasted, oh yes! There was something extra−special about them; you had to click your tongue to express it.

Karl had not been present on that occasion and so he found it difficult merely to shrug his shoulders with the air of one who knows what the sparrows are enjoying he was simply envious of them.

"They're a lot of pigs," he said in a hurt voice. "They're not eating it; they're just spoiling the whole thing; they've already taken everything off the branches at the top! I wonder if anyone lives here?"

"Can't you see no one does, silly, the shutters are fastened?"

They found a little hole in the hedge and crawled through. First they carefully gathered up from the grass the cherries which the birds had knocked down; they were not used to wasting anything at all. Then they scrambled up into the tree and made themselves comfortable. Their merry chatter was soon stilled, and they started on their treat in silence and almost with solemnity; one hand gathered in while the other put the cherries into their mouths, out of sight a whole handful at a time. They waited to spit the stones out when there was more time.

Karl suddenly stopped and drew a deep breath; he was still at that age when things had to be put into words before they really meant anything.

"They're cherries!" he exclaimed with an enchanting look in his blue eyes. "Ooh, my! Hey, suppose our stomachs were cut open! They'd be just like the wolf's full of stones."

And he started grabbing after more; Peter merely grunted.

A key was turned, and the garden−gate creaked; but they neither heard nor saw, they were too deeply engrossed in their feast.

The merchant, whose family were staying at some sea−side resort or other, only wanted to have a look at his house in the country and his beloved morello tree. A suppressed oath could be heard when he saw the ravages caused by the sparrows; but he quickly remembered he was a member of the League for the Protection of Animals and checked himself. It was an unpremeditated outburst, and his face was soon smoothed over again. The carefree birds in the heavens, oh dear, they had to live as well! He hummed good−naturedly as he went round the tree to determine the extent of the damage.

Suddenly he caught sight of the two lads who were sitting and pressing themselves flat against the trunk in the forlorn hope that he would not see them. He raised his eyebrows and recoiled in amazement.

"Hey there, a couple of young thieves, eh!" he shouted, drowning all other noises. "I've just come home at the right moment! Come on down, you, and be quick about it, you pair of rascals!" His voice sounded like an outsize ventilator in action.

The boys slid down the tree and made an unsuccessful attempt at running off. In a trice the exasperated man had them by the collar; he was not keen on touching more of their clothing than was absolutely necessary, so he took hold of both their wrists in his own left hand and held them as if in an iron claw, shaking his stick above them and storming with rage.

It was not his intention to take the law into his own hands, he was a law−abiding citizen and wanted to leave the punishment to the authorities. Precisely because he hated these small, would−be thieves who belonged to God−knows−where and who would never be of as much use in the world as they ought to be, he did not wish to carry out the punishment himself, but just give them a friendly word of warning before handing them over to the police; and thus he would avoid incurring any responsibility, so he thought. There would be no harm done if sometime in the future they remembered this moment as a ray of warmth which had made an impression on them before they became fully hardened, and felt that justice only existed with a view to THEIR well−being that

justice was done in order to save them, as it was so beautifully put.

But the two boys fervently desired that he would shut his big mouth and hit them if only he would give them a hiding and not call the police! They knew more or less how bad that could be, but they nourished an invincible fear of the law; that it was which made them crouch trembling in his grasp.

And that was what he actually did. Good fortune had fallen in love with the two grimy lads and had made the merchant talk himself into such a frenzy that he forgot all his fine theories and had to give vent to his feelings on the spot. And only when they had winced sufficiently under his stick did he think it unreasonable to make more of the matter, and he let them go. Of course they could have been handed over to the authorities all the same, but fundamentally he was good nature itself.

That he repented later of his untimely tolerance and thought that it would undoubtedly result in their being sent to prison some time, was a matter of the greatest indifference to them. Now they were free, and it would be a long time before they allowed themselves to be nabbed again. They did not reach the mysterious woods with the deer that time nor the edge of the world either; all that would have to wait for a better opportunity time was on their side. For the moment they had had plenty of overpowering and fateful events to add a little spice to reality; they had stared out into the bottomless pit of justice and had very nearly been dragged down; the law had opened its monstrous jaws to swallow them.

And they HAD been in Fairyland!

But now they wanted to go home. Fear had lent strength to their legs, and they pranced off side by side like a pair of horses pulling well together. The cherry−stones felt like an extra little burden in their stomachs a token that the whole episode had been real. And somewhere or other inside them slumbered satisfaction and pervaded all their bodies. There was one thing which could not be doubted it HAD been a wonderful day.

THE FIRST PARTY

BY KARIN MICHAELIS Translated By Ann And Peter Thornton

Not to spill anything down one's dress. Not to upset anything. To blow one's nose. To say "Thank you for inviting me." Not to eat more than two cakes and perhaps a bun. Not to get above oneself. Not to shout...

Trold nodded to all this, skipping with impatience while her mother made a final inspection of her ears and tied the white muslin pinafore over her starched, embroidered dress.

Hand in hand with Hans, she passed the Court House and the Gaol. She hoped the prisoners wouldn't guess she was going to a party while they were locked away in there on nothing but bread and water. God ought to send down an angel to sing to them a little. Luckily the sun was shining through the prison bars. Yes, she was definitely going to marry a prisoner or perhaps a gaoler, because then one might manage, some dark night, to set them all free.

Hand in hand with Hans, she went up a street she didn't know; there she met three cows and Sennel, the errand boy. One of the cows had a bad eye, but Hans kept tight hold of her when she wanted to cross over and tell the boy that she was going to a party, and that boracic lotion was good for the eyes. Hans turned another corner; another unknown street. Here there were no buildings, just one long red house with eleven windows in a row and a long wooden fence on either side. The whole street smelt of beer−porridge with cream. It made one think of Saturdays and horse−fairs. "Do you think we're going to get beer− porridge?" "Shut up, silly," said Hans, "it's a brewery, stupid." But how was one be expected to know that?

Inside stood a very grand lady wearing a white cap and white lace apron. She helped one off with one's coat. One curtsied, said, "Thank you very much for inviting me," and "Mummy and Daddy sent their regards," and the lady laughed; it was very embarrassing. Then one was shown into a room with green silk on the chairs like looking through a piece of green glass and then into another room with velvet like convolvulus. One scarcely dared breathe, it was so magnificent. A great mass of glass hung down from the ceiling above a table with a blue cloth and silver centre−piece. Trold tried to remember it all so she could tell her mother when she got home. Lots of children were running about, far too many to count, all in white dresses and without pinafores. At last one was taken into a room with white walls, and there was a table loaded with so many cakes, one thought one must be dreaming. A beautiful lady came up to them and said, "Hallo, little Hans. So this is your sister. What pretty hair you've got. What is your name? I'm Magna's mother." Trold was too frightened to answer; the lady's voice was like winding a velvet ribbon round one's finger.

All the children sat down round the table, drank chocolate with whipped cream, and ate cream−cakes with jam. Trold wasn't frightened at all, at least not till she had finished the second cake and started on a rusk that made such a noise inside her mouth that she wanted to crawl under the table, but she couldn't just leave it. Two boys talked continuously to Hans. One had red hair and a nose that had been stuck on all wrong. He had spilt a lot of food on his clothes. "You are a sight, Fjolle" said the beautiful lady, "Fjolle, pull up your stockings".

A little girl jumped up on a chair: "Now do hurry up so we can go out and play." "Sit down Magna, we must wipe your faces first." In came the lady who had been in the hall, and another lady wearing the same white cap and apron. One of them carried a bowl of water and a huge sponge and the other a large bath towel. They wiped one's face with the sponge; one put one's hands in the big bowl and was dried in the towel. Trold couldn't help laughing, it was like being a baby all over again.

Then another new room, with wicker chairs like Mother's shopping basket, but with coloured cushions, and a birdcage full of green, red and yellow birds. At one side of the room was a door out to the garden and all the children rushed out in a bunch. At first Trold kept very carefully to the centre of the paths as she was rather frightened of hurting the lovely flowers. But then along came Magna "I say let's, play 'Pirates'. I'm a pirate; what are you?" Trold longed to take off her black velvet ribbon with the amber heart and say, "Would you like it?" But before she could begin to undo it, Magna had run off.

Everything was in a whirl around her and inside her...

There was a little hill one could roll down and a pole with lots of ropes one could hang on to and be whirled round, seven at a time... And a see−saw and two swings. One was allowed to run or walk just as one liked, even through the flower−beds. One of the trees was so big that under it there was room for five red tables, thirteen white chairs and a hammock with three red cushions. One was allowed to pick fruit from all the trees and shake down the apples, and pick roses and unripe plums and turn somersaults. One could do exactly what one liked. Trold didn't enjoy playing 'Pirates'. Just think if there were real pirates about. But Grandmother's Steps she could play every day and never tire of.

Magna asked, "Shall we see−saw?" Trold didn't know how. Magna showed her: "Now hold on!" She went up and up, and Magna went right down to the ground, now Magna flew up and she came down with a bump. She held her breath. She had a funny feeling deep, deep down inside. A lovely, peculiar feeling, quite different from any other better than ice− cream, better than looking through yellow glass. She longed to laugh or scream but could only hang on tight and try it over and over again.

Afterwards she was quite silent; perhaps that was what it was like to be taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire.

Two men went round the garden hanging up things called 'Chinese lanterns'. Magna had torn a great hole in her dress "Who cares?" "Is your father never ill?" Magna laughed, "Ill? Why should he be ill?" Trold felt very silly.

Perhaps Magna's mother always had enough money and no bills. Oh, what a wonderful time she was having. She never once thought of the prisoners, or of the earthworms Hans used as bait when he went fishing, or of the louse Caroline had drowned in the basin that morning, or of the poor stockings that couldn't darn themselves.

A bell rang. That must mean supper. Trold guessed it wouldn't be porridge perhaps sandwiches with cheese and sausage; and then it turned out to be mock turtle stew! What would Mummy say? If only she could have saved half her helping; it felt all wrong to be eating all these lovely things, and not sharing them with Mummy and Caroline and Sanko and the babies. But the almond pudding she just left even though it was what she loved most of all because she suddenly remembered the prisoners who only had bread and water, and she nearly burst into tears.

Later, they all joined hands and rushed, in a long chain, through all the rooms even more rooms than before; up some stairs through bedrooms beautiful enough for princesses or fairies; then downstairs again and out into the garden. Trold tore herself free and flung her arms round a tree−trunk. Oh, how lovely it all was how wonderful. By now the trees were quite black, the sky was gone, but round about hung the coloured lanterns, like flowers. She would have liked to walk round and kiss each one.

Walking home with Hans through the dark streets she suddenly burst into tears. "What's wrong with you now, silly?" said Hans. He said it quite kindly. "I've got such a tummy−ache" she lied. She couldn't tell Hans that, in her heart of hearts, she regretted her vow to marry a gaoler because there surely would never be a party in a prison; no Chinese lanterns in the trees or anything.

At home she told her Mother and Caroline everything, right from the lady in the hall and all the beautiful rooms down to the Chinese lanterns in the garden. There was only one bit she left out she didn't really know why. Only when she had said her prayers and Mummy had tucked her in did she whisper, "Mummy". "Yes Trold, what is it?" "Mummy, there was a see−saw...A SEE−SAW." "Was there? What fun that must have been; but now you must go to sleep." Trold shut her eyes. If only God would come and carry her off in a chariot of fire. Perhaps if she married a really rich man she could have a see−saw of her own. Then she would see−saw all day, up and down, up and down forever; and round about in the trees there would be Chinese lanterns always... Trold was asleep.

PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN

BY JOHANNES V. JENSEN Translated by R. H. Bathgate

Nowadays things are peaceful in Jutland, and especially round about Christmas it is too peaceful for words. Yet only two generations ago Christmas meant a brief period of peace in a none too peaceful year. Was is not strange, then, that this very time around Christmas was often so disturbed in days of old? Again and again we hear of outbreaks of old quarrels, of reckonings between deadly enemies, of crimes; and they all took place on Christmas Eve, or on Boxing Day in the church itself! Some people seem to have thought that they would take advantage of the opportunity while everyone was thinking of peace and none of danger; and others GOT their peace, when it was denied them, made sure of a peaceful Christmas by violent acts.

There lived a man on Sonderup Heath who was called Christen Peat. People were afraid of him, though he was harmless enough: he was a decent peasant who owned a miserable little small−holding out on the heath and earned the rest of his bread as a hired labourer. But he was a murderer. Christen Peat killed the Tinker one Christmas Eve. He was completely acquitted, it is true, but all his days there remained a fringe of silence about his name: there was blood on his hands.

The Tinker was a thief and an old lag who lived in the neighbourhood: they talk about his misdeeds to this very

day. They say that he was one of the knackers from Hole. Although he was clearly a bad lot, and people were afraid of him, yet there hangs some of the rough warmth of yesterday about his renown: he amused people, he was a thorn in the flesh, many times he committed a crime for the sheer fun of it; he was a real joker. He seems to have been one of those crazy birds who are perhaps at bottom nothing but distorted and wasted talents. There were many tales about the Tinker. His strong point was breaking out of prison; he thought of the most incredible ways they just could not keep him. Tradition has it that he had unusually slender hands and feet, and that the jailor never noticed that he could squeeze out of the chains. However he managed it, and whatever new tricks he discovered, he was at large in the district regularly every year; for his wife and daughter lived in a hovel on Sonderup Heath. Christen Peat's house lay not far away.

There lay an unfathomable social gulf between the two families, though there was little to choose between their conditions. And moreover, for years the Tinker had nourished a deep personal hatred for his neighbours. And one can hardly blame him. Year after year, when he had broken out of prison under unspeakable difficulties and come home to his own ones like a wild animal with the dogs on his heels, all he could see from his own wretched windows was Christen Peat's dwelling, shining with insufferable innocence for all its poverty. There lived Christen Peat, the penniless saint, who never at any time sought conflict with the well−to−do, who in his scrupulous and blameless life never did anyone any harm, could never live peacefully enough, and preserved an unshakable contempt for dishonest people! There were the three little children he had acquired, toddling about the hut looking like God's own angels, while Christen Peat worked himself double with a spade on his heath−plot. The Tinker could never rest from his longing to tar and feather the noble pauper and set a light to him and turn him into a blazing martyr. Whenever he was home he tried to bring Christen Peat to blows, but the cautious small−holder minded his own business and had no wish to match himself against the Tinker in any kind of accomplishment. At last the Tinker longed to come home as much for Christen's sake as for his own family's, he hated him and longed to get at him. And the day came when he could no longer restrain himself.

One grey gloomy Christmas Eve Sonderup village was frightened out of its wits when half a squadron of Randers Dragoons thundered through the village, just when everybody least expected any trouble; darkness was just falling and the simple sweet peace of Christmas was beginning to settle over the village. All sounds became muted, every thought of an outside world had disappeared, when a countless horde of horsemen in blue with helmets and cold sabres rushed into the village! Slush and dirt splashed up about them from the road. They came galloping in like a frightful vision through the wintry mist. Old folk began to shake at the knees for fright. It brought back memories of another Christmas when they had seen the dragoons in Sonderup.

That was many years ago now. Then the reason for their visit was that the sheriff himself and four other men had gone out to the heath, where there lived rascals at that time too a man with a wife and two sons, who had clipped sheep in the fields at night for a long time, and made the district unsafe in other ways. Now the people of Sonderup wanted to be free of them over Christmas, and to this end they forced their way into the hut and killed all four occupants with axes. But it was a misunderstanding on their part: it could not be excused as self− defence, and they were all five executed themselves in their turn.

But they soon found out what the dragoons were here for this time: the Tinker had broken out again and under worse circumstances than usual, as he came to give the jailor a knock on the head from which he had not recovered. That was why it was so essential to recapture him, and now they thought they would surprise him in the bosom of his family on Christmas Eve.

The dragoons split up when they reached the heath, galloped to both sides of the Tinker's hut and surrounded it in a moment. But the Tinker was not there. They searched the hovel right up to the roof, they cross−examined his wife and daughter, they left no straw unturned, but they could not find him. When they had ridden away with their task unaccomplished the Tinker crept out of a hole in the clay floor, which had been trodden well down and disguised with a sprinkling of peat. He was too clever for them.

Two hours later the church bells in Sonderup rang in the holy season. It became so still, so sensitive in the darkness. Only the bell in the church−tower spoke, it babbled in its strange voice through the thawing night over the low, diffident village, lying all alone in that wide landscape. The wind came and went, the water seeped and dripped through the clotted snow in the ditches. The church bell spoke, now tired, now in a singing mood, disheartened and happy, up and down like an old man who has seen life. And at last it became silent with nodding emphasis, like an old, old man. The night sky cleared, the stars were lit in the wide sky, they hung and sparkled, chill and small. Brittle sounds were cast out over the earth, the water dripped more quietly, the cold rose up to the night. Then even the frightened icy sound of the water ceased, with a few faint creaks as in its sleep; it froze, and the frost held.

Now everyone was at home in his house. Only one man from Sonderup, who had been compelled to leave the village, crossed the heath that evening. And to his unspeakable terror he met the Tinker walking with a can of tar in his hand.

"Good evening," said the Tinker, in excellent spirits as it seemed. "Don't be afraid, Knud, I'm not going to harm you. I'm just going to set light to Christen Peat's hair. God bless you and a merry feast!"

In Christen Peat's room Christmas had begun. It made itself known by a growing silence. Christen's wife made ready as if to receive guests. The three children had to take it in turns to spend a painful minute before the tripod with the washing bowl and the soap. Jeppe and Laurine, the two eldest, let themselves be washed with great fortitude, they understood the deep significance of the approaching holy evening. Jeppe was five years old and Laurine was four, and they already knew about many things. They had been into Sonderup village once, where they had been seen walking hand in hand. That was the richest experience of their lives. They had inspected the gate in the churchyard fence and the other mysteries of the village, a big deep garden where a tree towered up with fat pears on it; they had seen a cage full of squabbling ducks somewhere by a grand house, and when they had breathed the air outside the vicarage gate and glimpsed wonderful flowering plants through the clear windows far inside, they wandered out of the village again, hand in hand, and arrived back home as it was growing dark. Karen Marie was only two, and too little in every way, and therefore she cried as she was being washed. Jeppe and Laurine were far beyond her in every respect. They knew about the outside world, in which they had wandered: they knew the plants and flies of the heath, had an understanding of the value of rushes and the shiny seed of the sedge, of round red stones and coloured pieces of pot. They plucked the tiny cones of the bog−myrtle and played cows with them, they made pies from the mud outside the house and sailed wooden chips in a puddle. All summer long they played in the winding sunken roads where the fine black sand in the ruts warmed and ran through their toes. Now winter had shut them inside, time out of mind. They had been able to stretch a cautious hand out of the door to catch drips from the roof, they had tasted the bitter water that ran down the window−panes when they thawed. The window−seat was their winter abode: at night it opened its familiar, warm eiderdown−embrace to them, and they spent the day on its shiny worn top. They kept their belongings on the window−sill, Jeppe's collection of excavated treasures, pretty stones and the like, and Laurine's precious woollen thrums and chicory paper. Karen Marie, who was so little, had of course no possessions.

Then when the children had been washed, and their hair had been combed, and they were dressed in their fine blouses, their mother began to lay the table with its fine white cloth, and they had to be so good that you just couldn't imagine it, so as not to upset anything. The porridge, which today was quite white, of a different, finer and more expensive kind of meal than the everyday barley−broth, bubbled so richly in the pot and said Pooh, as if it were making the utmost efforts to be good. And their mother was so silent and gentle. When Christen Peat came home from his work and bent his long stooping figure in under the low ceiling, he saw his three offshoots sitting in a row on the window−seat behind the white table, three pairs of tiny clogs sticking out straight in front of them, three faces shining with soap and solemnity, three shocks of yellow hair in the dimly lit room.

Silence descended over the room. While the food was being got ready, the three children witnessed their father's washing himself, he even washed his face: he had to suffer for the occasion too; he prepared himself for the

indescribable. Then they ate, first the fine porridge and then pork and potatoes. They were very contented. Somewhere, high or low, something had happened that affected everyone, so that light entered every room, no matter how cramped it was. Christen Peat's share had been three children with diamond−clear eyes, who sat each with its piece of sizzling pork in its little fingers and ate like anything. The room was cosy. Mother had a surprise waiting behind the closed door of the oven, they could hear it seething and singeing in there. The candle on the table scattered gold about the room, so full of honest peace.

Then one of the windows crashed in. The pieces fell in Laurine's hair. Her mother screamed in terror. Christen Peat looked up and caught a glimpse of the blade of a peat−spade through the shattered pane. He got up, with his long stubbly face as pale as death. Outside, the Tinker's loud, quite off−hand voice could be heard: "Now you're bloody well going to be tarred, you holy Boniface..."

Christen Peat had made a spear long ago, because the Tinker had threatened his life. He took it down from the rafter and went to the door.

The battle took place outside in the little porch. The Tinker had got the passage door open and wanted to get in, but Christen Peat threatened him with the spear through the door. The Tinker covered him with a hail of abuse but could not get near enough to reach him with the peat spade. For a long time that was all. Then the quick little Tinker saw his chance and struck a blow at Christen with the sharp spade. It was wickedly meant, and Christen Peat, who was a heavy, clumsy man, only got out of the way by the skin of his teeth. He really had not thought the Tinker was serious. He began to tremble.

"Look out," he said tearfully. And when the Tinker looked as if he was going to lunge out again he warned him sadly: "Look out! Or you'll get this in your guts!"

"You daren't, you little saint!" the Tinker egged him on. He swore on, but his eyes had become strangely hot, and his tongue played him tricks so that he had difficulty in speaking. Suddenly he became silent, and instead of swearing and using foul language he drew sideways nearer, with his spade at the ready...and then Christen Peat felt that the Tinker was a danger for him. It began to rush and boil in Christen's head. The clear frosty sky out there, the door besieged by a malicious man with eyes of blood; the room behind him, a confusion of terror and wailing children, it all spun round, it boiled up through him. And when the Tinker with the face of a butcher suddenly came into motion and sprang forward, Christen Peat bent his heavy weight forward and stuck him clean through the chest. The Tinker's heart blood spurted out like hot soup along the handle of the spear and scalded Christen's hands. After a sharp fierce death struggle, during which he growled like a sheep and grasped the shaft of the spear with his hands and even tried to get his feet up to the cutting iron as he lay on his back, the Tinker was dead.

When it was over, Christen sighed and blinked tears out of his eyes. After a moment's thought he dragged the corpse a little way from the house before he went in to the others. An hour later he stood before the sheriff's door and gave himself up. He was taken to the county town and set in prison. But after an examination he was acquitted, of course.

FUJIYAMA

BY JOHANNES V. JENSEN Translated by Elias Bredsdorff

The richest experience I ever had was at sea off Japan; I remember no real event since then. I awoke early in the morning, before sunrise, because the wind blew gently into my cabin, and because in my sleep I was so brimming over with joy that I could not remain lying there. When I looked out of the open port−hole, high in front of me was a sort of beautiful cloud but it was not a cloud, it was Fujiyama.

That wonderful mountain towered above the whole world; it did not seem to stand on the earth, for the mountain was so far away that its foot merged into the blue thickness that made the Japanese sky. But above the sky itself the white snow−cone of the mountain broke through the atmosphere, airy and light as a cloud, so that instantly I grasped both the vast density of the globe and its weightless flight in space.

It was as though the earth itself confronted me in all its cosmic freshness, the young planet spinning its way out of the darkness, crowned by the aurora borealis with its beautiful sea−blue sphere and the multi−coloured soil of the continents lit by the sun.

What I felt on that occasion was the same primitive experience which one can have as a child at the first sight of anything, a straw, a drop of rain on the window−pane. Afterwards, when acquired ideas have made childhood into the lost country and created illusions of another, nobler, reality than the one we see, then a remoteness and strangeness, a sublime surprise are needed to give back the earth its freshness.

When I saw Fujiyama my last illusions of another existence than the one which IS, were shattered. I understood that the higher world towards which we aspire can only be the one which IS, but that we have never at a given moment attained to it, that we are ordinarily blind to it. No more fruitful thought than that can exist. This, fundamentally, is the only thing a man can experience.

Therefore Fujiyama is a holy mountain, the object of worship for a whole people.

Columbus! There is only one happiness which is eternal: to see again this blessed earth.

THE KNIGHTS OF RIND WELCOME A KINSMAN

BY THIT JENSEN Translated by Ann R. Born

As he gallops in to Ollestrop the skies are lowering, he sees that it is a huge old place, with the buildings ranged in long low wings. Formidable it looks though, resembling more than anything a fortress. And it appears to be thickly populated, dogs, pigs and children bark and mill around him as he swings down from the saddle.

A bold, willowy lad, together with several others of the same slimly aristocratic type, surround the horse and himself, and he cannot decide whether it is he or the horse who are causing the excitement; but then he hears one of them blurt out, as he turns towards the front entrance:

"He is like a Gospel!"

And then he knows it is the Lepper.

The great hall at Ollestrop is rightly named. There are many small windows facing out to the courtyard, but none towards the country− side. There are only the thick blind castle walls.

And now Crown−Byrial, the noble king of Himmersyssel, comes towards him. His glance shoots acumen, intelligence lies in the high line of his forehead, the narrow stone−grey cheeks; the long nose with its delicate nostrils gives the appearance of free−born repose. The aristocratic appearance is enhanced by the smoothly bald head, which resembles a tonsured monk's and was caused by a sword wound; this it is which has earned him the name of "Crown−Byrial". But at the mouth the expression of peace and also dignity is lost, for it is a broad, heavy, out−jutting jaw covered with a squarely−trimmed black beard.

The lawlessness of the knights of Rind is in that great heathen mouth, and the uncontrollable wildness of their

minds in the fiercely glittering brown eyes.

He is a tall man, though with prominent bone−structure, dressed in a thick, patterned grey jerkin and with a grey wollen scarf about his neck. He is a blending of ancient Danish aristocracy, candid and good− humoured, and fierce primitive warrior. He peers out from under beetling brows, long black hairs grow curling from his nostrils. Apparently this stranger is a peaceful visitor, and he advances peacefully himself, but battle is only dormant within him, if it should chance that way. His weighty shoulders are set strongly for bearing a heavy battle−axe.

A young man rises from a bench by the wall and comes forward with the same clear, penetrating glance keenly questioning from beneath identical brows, like eaves, tall, sparse and strongly boned, unmistakably the son of his father.

"Why, but it is why, Jens Favourskov himself."

That is Kraesten Byrialsson, who took part in the Seven Year's War, and he remembers Jens well, and recalls the memories of home they exchanged, and Jens remembers him and the relationship to Elsa Pors Byrialsdotter they discussed during the war in Sweden....And as if by magic flagons of wine and goblets appear on the table and more sons and their wives and young grandsons arrive, as thickly as if a human anthill has been stirred up.

Dame Kirsten Jensdatter greets Jens with much suspicion, she has eyes of a steely blue which take the measure of his worth in fortune and valuables but their steely strength is vanquished straightaway by a single smile from Jens, and perhaps they are influenced as well by the eating utensils he has brought stored in his leather pouch. The handles are sticking out, flat ebony shafts with gold ornamentation and strange elongated motifs. The young people gaze at them, and their excitement knows no bounds, for Jens tells them that the designs are notes in gold for Evensong. They draw out the knife and test the blade, they inspect the double−pronged fork, the spoon with its golden bowl, these are passed eagerly from hand to hand, and Kirsten declares there must be royal fare for that kind of tool. The food that had been set on the long table is whisked away, for that is "nowt but slops and crusts, and no fare for lusty menfolk" new dishes are whirled in, fresh wine in new silver stoups, in honour of kinsmen.

"So you have fought in all the lands and nations," Crown−Byrial says with good−hearted admiration.

"And you have battled until you won renown in all the lands and nations where I came," says Jens, and Crown−Byrial chuckles aloud, and his nephew, Big Jep−Byrial, follows suit, grinning he says that the tongue of Jens has been overlaid with roses in those foreign lands, but doubtless the thorns he inherited from his homeland will come to light. And Wee Jep−Byrial, his younger brother, whistles through his nose saying that those thorns come from his homeland all right.

Then they all flock out into the courtyard, and the Lepper is brought out, for of course they must see "The Gospel", for the privilege of sleeping in whose stall the boys are squabbling.

There he comes, and the vociferous tones of the men fade to silence.

And Crown−Byrial says only:

"He has the Lord's own blood in him."

And the Lepper knows right well he is there to be gazed at, and that they are ready to fall at his feet there. He is so full of himself that there is no holding him. A pig squeals, and he tosses back his head, oh, not that there is alarm of any sort in the way that he listens, it is just for the sake of his prestige, for nothing can affright him. The fringe of his mane falls from his arching neck sheening white and silken, but he stands there, knowingly docile, fully aware that he is being appraised, fully aware that the gaze of the men is full of delight, that their voices are saying

"noble creature" he turns his great softly shining brown eyes from one man to another how those eyes smoulder, smoulder with inner fire, with rushing winging blood. "I am faultless," says each fibre of muscle quivering along his sleek loins. "I am faultless," says each silken hair on the broad back and smoothly rounded chest. He stands challengingly on the faultlessly slender legs, bearing his indomitable youth and spirit with dignity. But he turns the liquid peat−brown eyes towards his master, nuzzles with his muzzle the hand holding the leather rein, lined with fine scarlet morocco. All he wants is to blow his warm breath against that hand, no rein is needed, for he has no wish to be anywhere but with his master.

Then they go in to start drinking.

That king of stallions is worth a royal draught.

There is drinking and there is talk of kinsmen and relationships of Jens from Hvam, Crown−Byrial's paternal grandfather, who was shot with a cross−bow on Klotrup Field, and they received Bygum in compensation. And there is drinking, and talk of war, and drinking, they slap their thighs and laugh over the Battle of Svarteraa, where the Swedes yelled and halloed that they had the Jutes where they wanted them, for they had fallen to their knees and were praying, and those fools believed it was for mercy. But a fine sort of mercy they found, the Swedes, for in a matter of moments they were on their way to Paradise with the mercy of the Lord! They shout of Daniel Rantzau, that glorious man and warrior, for whom every soldier would gladly dare the jaws of death, and they will vanquish Death itself and...

And Jens is drinking, it seems to him that his maternal family is like a downy nest he has fallen into, and he casts off his courtly demeanour and slaps his thighs with the rest. And with eyes shining with laughter he recounts his wooing at Jorgen Hak's, and a roar of mirth shakes the ceiling. Big Jep−Byrial makes out rantingly that he must surely have been wooing the evil spirit which consumes fiery tow, and is a monster of the heath, and flame springs from its nostrils and venom in the saliva from its jaws, for this is the sort of nickname Jorgen Hak bears, monster that he is and remains.

And Wee Jep−Byrial whistles through his nose and says monster that he is and remains.

"You are all bidden to the wedding," cries Jens, "for I will have the daughter of Jorgen Hak before the year is out."

Then Dame Kirsten looks at him, glance against glance trying to find out what cunning plan he has up his sleeve, for she can feel it with feminine intuition.

"Then you will have to cast a spell, old Jens."

Jens swings the silver goblet above his head and the wine spills over on to his red hair.

"With all the spells in the mansion of the Virgin Mary or the Devil's cauldron will I get Fovlum Abbey and Hella Hak in my power."

Then Dame Kirsten nods with satisfaction.

Well−mellowed, but not intoxicated, Crown−Byrial leans over towards him.

"Jens trust in us, for we are your bodyguard, we of Rind, and we are many. You will have a host against you, for Malthe Stigsson will not relinquish his wooing easily, and he has many loyal kinsmen in these parts!"

Byrial leans back in his seat the heathen warrior's jaw juts out in a great triumph.

"It will be a great clash!"

They have begun to reckon up the fighting men of the district and decide who will be on the Stig side and who on the Rind, when the sons' wives come in and announce that if they are to reach home it is time for the men to prepare for the journey, for now the snow is driving. If all the snow that has threatened for days comes down they may be snowed up before the roads are passable again. But the men have changed their minds, merry with wine they pull off their jerkins, eyes shining, they have no wish to break up such a good gathering, the women must make the best of the available accommodation and take themselves off to bed with the children. But now the women know they will not have to go out into the night they want to have a share of the guest as well, inquisitive as they are they flock around him asking if it is really the latest fashion that men and women dance together in pairs in a dance called the Polka? Jens affirms this, and, rising, slim and dazzling, he bows to one of the young girls and asks her to dance the Polka with him, but they scatter shrieking like terrified chickens never shall anyone bring them to such unchastity as to let a man dance with his arm around them. Is it really so out in the great world that married ladies reveal their hair beneath a new type of cap?

Jens nods, recently he saw Dame Sophie Brahe, the sister of Tyge, wearing such a cap, and he has seen the Duchess of Parma with nothing but a golden net covering her head so that all her hair was visible.

Dame Kirsten shakes her head indignantly never shall a daughter of hers cross her threshold if she dishonour herself in so unseemly a fashion! forget all chastity and modesty and show her hair as a married wife! But that's how it is, the world has changed since her young days, and it will all end in disaster, for that is blaspheming the Lord's commandment.

And now they must just wait and see what mishap the storm brings, for as they sat together the other day in the weaving room, every one of them heard a heavy crash, and that was an omen that one, nay several will be caught in the snow.

...The men are drinking, they strive to outdo each other in talk, until Jens begins to tell of his meeting with Jorgen Lykke out at the ford. And now Svingelberigh Church will not be standing much longer. Then they split their sides with laughter, for Pastor Mads will certainly have something to preach about then. But give him his due, Pastor Mads preaches the Word with a bravely fluent tongue, and if the Papists were still in power he would be wearing gaiters by now, and then the battle between him and Jorgen Lykke would be even. But he's an odd blockhead, that Pastor Mads, for he never touches wine, no, nor beer even...That is the last thing Jens hears for then he finds himself out in the courtyard breathing in the fresh, snow−filled air. He feels himself wavering but he directs his steps straight towards the stable to look to his horse.

The Lepper turns his eyes towards him as he enters, he has been waiting long for him. Jens strokes and caresses his neck, and lays his heavy head to rest against the snowy mane, and the horse turns his head and nuzzles his sleeve.

The manger is spilling over with oats, and fine straw bedding is strewn thick on the floor. In the neighbouring box lies the young lithe boy, like a cavalier, whom Jens saw at first, watchfully awake, guarding "The Gospel". The thought comes to Jens' fuddled brain that he will take him up as a boy and train him to be a nobleman.

When he returns to the hall the men have gone back to their favourite topic, how Himmersyssel will be divided if the two suitors of Mistress Hella each summons his followers.

"The Benderops will be against the Stigs", says Big Jep−Byrial, and Wee Jep−Byrial whistles through his nose as usual and says that the Benderops will be against the Stigs.

Crown−Byrial thinks this is likely, because the Benderops are such a righteous family, they can never forget the old matter of the Marshal, and it is true enough that the family has never fully come into its own again, since Stig Andersen Hvide murdered the King. Not because he inflicted a mortal wound on the King, the devil take it, he had deserved it. No, it was because he became a traitor to his own country, for that was a bad business. Even though they persevere in saying they are related to Esbern Snare and Bishop Absalon and Asser Riig and Skjalm Hvide into the bargain the fact that they have traitors' blood in them hangs like a doom over the family...A sudden rustling sounds on the window−panes, gaining in strength. It is the snow's army advancing. In the light from the window the fine whirling mass of snow can be seen like a witches' dance, crazy and wild. The wind tears and howls outside.

The men listen to it, then Niels Byrialsson says thoughtfully:

"That is a wicked tune old Night is playing on her magic pipe out there."

THE LOST SON

BY HARALD KIDDE Translated by V. Elizabeth Balfour−Browne

I

With his back to the unyielding wooden partition of the compartment he rested his arm in the sunshine at the window.

The rumble of the wheels was borne into the open carriage from both sides. The air stirred by their advance struck him in the face with the odour of soot, sand and spruce. The puritanical psalm−singing behind him kept time to the rhythm of the wheels:

"God, teach me to consider
How fleeting is my life!
Like a flowing river
Pass its days and nights.
More of them or fewer
As Thou dost pre−ordain,
They can, O Lord, be likened
To a fading dream.
Lo, generations earthy....."

He nodded his head half keeping time, until he wakened with a jerk. These psalm−singing peasants, what were they to him? They had chanted their hymns all the way from Lund, their eyes fixed and their hands clasped on their sticks or round their bundles, wrapped up in their own singing as in their long coats and checked shirts. Regardless of the words their voices droned on as in a waking sleep.

The country sped past grey and green to right and left, sand flats, mountain firs and spruce, yellow and green under the ever−blue sky. Broom, sandy tracks and heather, brown fields of withered grass, low juniper bushes and blue sky. A solitary gate and more spruces.

And the psalm−singing behind him:

"Lo, generations earthy
Fall back to earth as dust;

They are but shadows merely
Nor more than shades at most.
They struggle and they labour
Without thought of their end,
Here they make store of treasure
Which strangers gather in..."

Flemming Cronenwall! It was here, in this land among these spruces that you died.

Died? Oh no! Every morning songs of your bondage fell from your soul in pearly drops like the dew from withered grass; in the heat of a summer's day poems poured from your heart like the resin from the golden wood of the spruce. Died? Then I had surely not sat here on a pilgrimage to your room and your dwelling in the sand that clogged your footsteps.

Alas! Amber−yellow like beads of resin your poems exhale a scent of fir−wood and brandy. Or clear dew they breathe of moss and twin− flower. Flemming Cronenwall! Blackguard and innocent, sot and psalmist, the purest and yet the grossest of Sweden's poets, the pride of her heart!

Her pride, yea, but also her shame.

He smiled. He remembered the faces of Flemming's parents when he met them at Lund, when he heard their names and had to speak to them, had to thank them for their son's poetry, for edification and for horror, for castigation and for tenderness the father's long, stern face with the pained expression in his eyes, the hands rubbing aimlessly against each other.

Yes, yes, they had of course heard they said it together they had even unfortunately perhaps . The father begged him to pardon them, he had never been able to find time to take up such things. "And his views! There has been a stern struggle in Sweden you know, and Flemming was on the side of the most revolutionary. He may have been gifted, but he was difficult to deal with."

And the mother, frail and silent by the side of her husband's distinguished, worn, ministerial figure, her eyes on the stranger, listening, not missing a syllable. It was her son, the great hulking idler and ne'er−do−weel, yet beloved still, in spite of all the grief he had caused them with his incomprehensible opinions and the impossible company he kept. "Yes, you who are young, as he was, and a poet like him, tell me, his mother, who never understood it, why Flemming was at that time regarded by everyone as a profligate, an outcast and his parents' shame, and then suddenly after his death as a famous poet like Tegner, and the glory of his country. Tell my heart that, my heart which is wearing itself out between him at my side and him who is dead; tell me whether I did right or wrong in supporting so firmly the lover of my youth against our own and only child, when they stood fronting each other, one generation against another. Explain to me what I find inexplicable, I beg you."

But he bit back the words he would have said. He had remembered why Flemming Cronenwall, the illustrious Minister's only son, lived his life out there in the country, through the kindness of the peasants whom he sometimes paid but most often did not: why his poems sighed of poverty and shameful dependence, flaming with resentment or sobbing in searing home−sickness.

Then he had said suddenly and he did not know if it was in anger against those two who stood there before him and had not tried to understand, or in pity for them who still even now COULD not understand: "I am going up there to see the district and his room: I want to tell my own countrymen about Flemming Cronenwall."

All at once a light shone in their lonely, care−worn faces, a moment's hope, a hasty decision, but it flickered out again in sudden abandonment. To accompany him? To go also? But no! No! How could he, he, a Minister, meet

those peasants who had opened their home to his abandoned son? In that room where he had drawn his dying breath they would be strangers, estranged in death as in life, as now, blindly begging to be told what their own child had been.

For the young man had had to tell his father, the Cabinet Minister who had guided the foreign policy of his country for half a generation with firm and authoritative hand, what supreme importance to humanity was a single little volume of poetry: to reveal to his mother the soul and the sorrows of the son she had taught to lisp his first words, explain the thoughts he had thought.

They had both stood before him uncertain and motionless with their listening eyes on his, and heard of something that life contained but which they had never encountered, of music which could draw souls to itself and fill them with the courage of life and death but which their ears could never hear.

Had they not in lonely hours, now when Sweden was worshipping their son, sat with his poems before them and mustered all their knowledge about themselves and life and discerned NOTHING? Nothing but words that seemed incomprehensible, nay, distorted, to them, or words they could not even read without a blush of shame, songs which did not sound to them different from those the labourers sang out on their estate on summer evenings. And for the sake of those verses they had lost their son, for these he had perished and become immortal! Please explain this so that we can understand.

But he had been silent and looked aside, his mouth hopelessly closed. Had it then always to be that the flesh of bodies closely akin would yet build between their souls walls, deadening, impenetrable, condemning each to a death of loneliness?

Flemming, if you had not had these two as parents, these conscientious, respectable two, if your first thoughts and your first poem had not been met at home by threats or silence; if you yourself, what was created to be entirely you and no other, had not been called unreasonable and harmful, would the brandy−bottle out here among the sandhills and the pines, in your home−sickness and your poverty, have been so frequent a solace and so soon a murderer?

And you two old people, had not this son been yours would you not now have been sitting in the centre of an admiring circle of unexceptional children and grandchildren in the comfort of an old age full of wisdom, not have stood there, frightened on the brink of the grave into life again, to a new and ungraspable life moreover, and in your naked poverty and your shivering helplessness begged me, a young man and a stranger, for an answer?

"...but would he please call on them on his return journey to his own land they would always be at home now of course and tell them how Flemming had lived out there, and what what sort of people they were who who had been so good to him?"

The mother had stopped him as he was going, laid her hand on his arm and looked at him so beseechingly that the father had nodded in support, though his wise, open forehead was wrinkled in trying vainly to solve the puzzle: Was morality then no longer morality nor duty duty?

Indeed, you are right. What kind of strange music did your son have in him, which all hear but you? Which wipes out imperfections and faults and raises broken men to God?

The psalm−singing droned on behind without change of rhythm, like the land of sand and spruce.

"A guest like to my fathers
I am led by Thy hand,
And soon I pass the river

To my father's land "

"Like my fathers, to my fathers", yes, you old ones, perhaps there, perhaps there you will be able to hear the music no one here on earth can open deaf ears to, the music that was the soul of your son, your lost one....

Sand, sand, spruce, spruce. O Flemming Cronenwall, you resourceful soul, who in this monotonous desert found wells of new beauty which in your frustrated life gave you a spur to new love. Flemming Cronenwall, you lost son

But he listened the psalm−singing and the wheels were no longer in time with each other. He turned his head.

A line of gleaming white faces, with expressionless blue eyes under the caps and shawls, sang, motionless, without taking breath.

But the tops of the pines slid by more slowly, the sandy track dipped lazily away under the fir−trees, the telegraph poles glided past more gradually. It was the wheels that were off the beat.

Were they going to stop?

A whistle out in front, crying far ahead over the still scrub−land had Flemming Cronenwall heard the train whistle pierce thus through the years of bondage? The song was cut through with the sudden relief of a boil cut by the scalpel. Then it swelled on again, oozing dully.

But the young Danish poet was standing with his stick and his case on the jolting floor.

Through the sooty brown billowings of the smoke there appeared ahead a tarry black roof, a red painted wall, Mainge Station, to which Flemming Cronenwall came one day, driven from his father's house like one accursed; there he had stood and looked along the metals to the forest−bounded horizon, and from there he was borne that Autumn day when the sparse yellow leaves of the birches floated down upon his coffin.

Grinding and scraping, the train came to a stop before the gravel of the platform and the red−washed walls of the wooden building with the clock, and the benches between the shining windows, the one with a telegraph notice board, the other with woven yellow curtains and painted china flower−pots. As he jumped down onto the gravel tiny pebbles scattered, spurted to right and left and then fell to sunlit rest.

The bell in the signal−box gave its short "ting" and to the accompaniment of the monotonous psalm−singing the train trundled on again, rattling and creaking.

He stood on the gravel of the platform and watched the departing carriages, which, dunching each other in the back, waddled away between the stiff lines of the forest. The sooty brown smoke and the hymns sullied the stillness of the sky's midday blue.

He walked slowly forward in the ankle−deep sand, planting his stick heavily at every step. The sun was in his eyes, shone in under the brim of his straw hat. The sand ran over the leather of his walking− shoes, flowing silver−white. Only the hiss of the sand and the chatter of a distant jay. And in front of him the golden−white road, slightly undulating, vanishing far ahead between the conifers like a thread between tufted patterns in wool−embroidery. And out there the poet to whose room he was proceeding, the singer of the sand, Flemming Cronenwall.

Did time pass while he walked? The sun's rays gradually moved down to his nose and mouth until they now glowed upon his chin. A light breath met him over the motionless plain of fir−trees. He wondered if he had yet

walked the two hours which they had told him it was from Mainge Station to the farm.

He did not know: he felt that both he and Time had been moving together from eternity at this same place between these same trees, while the sun blazed whitely over his head from the same spot in heaven.

He stopped and put his hand over his eyes. Had his thoughts not also stood still like the sun, the fir−trees, like the peasants' eyes just now as they sang?

Flemming Cronenwall! Did time pass for you like the buzz of a fly on the sun−baked window−sill, and did you waken only when the fly became silent and it was dark behind the window−panes; was it then you wakened into death?

He looked out over the landscape. Motionless all the tree−tops, their shapes like crosses in the soundless midday sunshine. Only the jay's distant scolding, a swarm of flies above the sand in the road, and the scent of resin and withered grass.

But the farm

Yes, there, it must lie up there, the only rise in sight, with some scattered birches and fir−trees: the roof scarcely distinguishable from the gleam of the sunlight and the foliage. But now, yes, now he saw the light−green facade with white window−frames and the verandah and the flower−beds and the path in front. A flag−pole in the lawn, tapering, white.

Here at this farm, thus remote, half−melting into the landscape, had he then lived his life, he, the days and hours of whose existence Sweden was now familiar with, admiring, and pitying.

Here in this land had his life's blood ebbed, while his heavy feet marked time here, and the sun had glared whitely from its sky. For fifteen years he had lived at this farm. And he had now been sleeping ten years in his grave.

But the sun shone glaringly over the same trees, and the same sand. And it was the same hour.

II

A pile of logs cast its shadow over the red wood−shed. The tar−black roofs shone under the blue midday sky. The spout of the pump meditated over the water−trough hedged about by nettles. The golden clusters of the rowan shadowed the wooden steps which led up to the entrance door, and whose newel−post was drowned in meadow−sweet. This scent mingled sweetly with the elder−blossoms whose creamy bunches were pressed between the gables of the dwelling−house and the stable across the leaning garden−hedge.

He walked in the sunshine over the grass−grown flagstones towards the wooden steps. He heard a cuckoo's thoughtful call in the birches behind the house.

In the musty half−darkness of the entrance he knocked on the door to the right. He got a glimpse of its worn red and green mats in the twilight from the small windows darkened by plants.

Flemming Cronenwall, did you drink in this musty, silent darkness?

"Come in," sounded a deep, hesitating peasant voice.

He opened the door.

A green tinge from the rowans outside, a glimpse of the tiles of a stove and of a cool line of glasses on the shelves along the wall.

A large placid face looked at him with a pair of blue spectacles. A broad−shouldered peasant, the owner of Tvihoga, sat there in his shirt sleeves, Mans Gustafson, at the end of the table with a newspaper on the heavy board before him.

A clock ticked busily on the wall, there was a smell of shadows and linen presses.

"Good day to you," the young Dane stopped a moment. It struck him that it might perhaps seem odd that he had come to this strange farm merely to see how their lodger had once lived, he who had drunk a lot and never paid. This great serious face there, would it be able to understand why? Remember the psalm−singing peasants; was it likely that they could have seen God revealed in Flemming Cronenwall, a drunken ne'er−do−weel and irregular with his rent?

"I...I have come over from Copenhagen to ask if I might see the district and the room where Flemming Cronenwall lived his last years, and I am wanting to write about all about it for my own countrymen to read."

He stopped. He felt the darkness of the house staring at him. Who? Flemming Cronenwall? Write about him?

He shut his eyes. Oh Flemming, Flemming, and all you others, the dead departed, the young living, does it mean anything to have had a soul with music in it? Or is it a matter of Can you do accounts? Can you cart manure? Are you a rate−payer of this parish?

"Flemming Cronenwall.....Flemming." The peasant stirred. The Dane opened his eyes quickly; that great face was so open behind the spectacles. The brown hands moved uncertainly, feeling along the edge of the table. "Flemming Cronenwall, did you know him?"

The Dane came forward to the table. Now he was sure. The sun had not moved since the day that Flemming died. Here all was as still as the day after a funeral. Flemming! It was here you found the security which permitted love to stream from your heart out over all of those who passed by hostile or deaf, here your soul's music met with those who could echo Amen.

"Thanks, thanks for the kindness you showed him for fifteen years," he gripped the heavy gnarled hand, his eyes hot with tears. Flemming, in your life−time when you were in need of it, poor soul, and only because you were Flemming Cronenwall, you were loved by human hearts.

"H'm, h'm, but sit down and tell me a little. May I ask your name? He had not so many friends that we did not "

"No, no," the young Dane wiped his eyes. He sat on the long wall−bench by the peasant's side. The room round him large and cool with the black bureau, the glass arranged along the shelves and the spinning− wheel in the corner in the dim light as it filtered through the leaves, it was all so cosily known to him as if from his childhood, Flemming Cronenwall's home. "No, no, I never knew him unfortunately. Only his poems and but I have always loved them and him through them. And now I am wishful to tell my own countrymen of him, what there was about him which is of value to mankind."

"Yes..." Mans Gustafson leaned forward with his elbow on his knee, a stalk of grass in a corner of his mouth, he had brought it over with him from the newspaper. "Yes...about his poems. When we read them it is as he were talking to us and...and made everything clear to us so that we could understand what...what we had never understood before even," and he nodded towards the panes in the low windows, "if he showed us the fir−trees and the sand out there, well, then we saw what they were like. He sort of wakened us, so that we felt we were

alive."

He was silent, with the wrinkled forehead, as if deeply retired into himself. The piece of grass hung down from his mouth full of tiny brown seeds.

Dragging steps drew nearer outside the door.

"Yes, yes," the peasant struck his knee, "it was a bad loss for us that he died."

The stranger looked at him, at the deep furrows in his high forehead, the hanging of the beardless lower jaw. The grief Flemming Cronenwall's death had been to this peasant knew no cure but death.

The door opened, over there, between the bureau and the chest of drawers. A grey head stooped in through the low door−opening, a long figure straightened itself up in the room, a grey coat with pewter buttons and woollen hose above thick−soled shoes. A pair of small eyes bored into the stranger. The hair rose in a stiff grey mane from the back of the head, a couple of wisps were drawn across the bald, red− brown forehead. A soiled neck−cloth flapped down over the black waistcoat.

"H'm, yes, this, this is Pelle Silfverljud." The peasant moved a little on the bench, heavily, his thoughts still fixed on the dead man who was so alive. "You have no doubt heard of him, if you know Flemming Cronenwall?"

Pelle Silfverljud? he, of course it was he, whose name was found on the title page of Flemming Cronenwall's poems, as the man who had collected and published them after his death, and had drawn his life in short but deathless strokes, Flemming's first admirer and only friend.

He rose much moved. Who had loved him better than this man who had drunk his life away with him, held his hand in death, fought for his name when death had already wiped it out, in constant stubbornness sending bundles of manuscript from publisher to publisher, refused and rejected until he finally succeeded in getting the work accepted at his own risk by a provincial bookseller in Skane? And now, when the book appeared in edition after edition it was said among his friends that he had refused all reward and with the money had established an endowment for young and needy poets. But to think he continued to live here after Flemming's death!

"Yes, Pelle Silfverljud the studious," nodded Pelle shortly. "Have you really come here for Flemming's sake?" The small rat−brown eyes with their red rims fastened sharply, keenly, on him.

A stifling odour of alcohol and tobacco assailed the Dane's nostrils, in the green light he saw Silfverljud's lips brown with tobacco−juice, his sharp nose, his large blotchy cheekbones.

Oh Flemming! Did you two studiosi perpetui drink together here behind the small panes of the farm−house in the desert−drowsiness of the hot summer days, in the age−old silence of the snowy winter nights, discussing the world's ancient wisdom and its latest foolishness or the milkmaid's coarse beauty and the quality of the alcohol in the booth among the spruces down by the station which the excise officer sniffed for in vain?

"And you want to write about Flemming? So you've come all this way, is that what you are saying?" Pelle gazed at him with arms akimbo; the young Dane felt uncomfortable under this feeling of being tried in the balance. Tourist or Poet?

"While he was alive, I was the only one who appreciated him and Mans and Olivia of course " he nodded abruptly towards the peasant, at which his high mane of hair jerked stiffly like the quills of a porcupine, "but now Well, if you're going to tell the Danes about our Swedish Flemming, I'll help you in whatever way I can. Now first you can come over and see his room."

He nodded again at Mans Gustafson whose pale blue eyes under his wrinkled brows looked searchingly at him.

The peasant, with the grass−streamer in his mouth the whole time, crossed the room to a nail in the wall. The back of his grey waistcoat seemed to tremble. Did they approach this room as those psalm−singing peasants would the sacrament, in holy stillness and in forgetfulness of their cattle and their timber?

Mans Gustafson stopped, half−turned towards Pelle Silfverljud, rocking in stockinged feet, "Will you tell Olivia?"

"Yes, all right." Pelle turned his bony figure on its heel, the long wide−skirted coat swung out round him. "Olivia!" He gently opened the door and put his head out. "Olivia! There is a stranger here. We are going to show him Flemming's room. He wants to tell the Danes about him."

"All right, I'm coming," sounded a thin voice outside and the rustle of an apron being thrown aside.

He listened. Was it a child's voice or an old woman's?

"Here it is," the peasant turned round with a big rusty key on his forefinger, his eyes watching the door. "Is mother coming?"

"Yes, she'll be here in a moment." Pelle cleared his throat rumblingly, pulled down his waistcoat and with shaking fingers settled the black kerchief at his neck like a parson about to administer the sacrament.

The door opened and a little bowed woman crept in, in a full brown dress and over her shoulder a triangular kerchief embroidered with red and green flowers. Her small, brown, friendly eyes met with a smile those of the stranger. She nodded gently and looked up at Mans Gustafson who felt along the bench in the leaf−green twilight for his cap.

"Are you ready, father?"

"Yes, yes, mother," he nodded solemnly.

"Then we'll go." Pelle Silfverljud opened the door to the passage. He gave the stranger a last, slow, critical look. "H'm, I see you're an honest man. And so you may see how Flemming Cronenwall lived."

III

"Yes, it is a little stuffy, we don't like to disturb the place much," said Pelle as he stretched over the red−painted wall−table and loosened the hasp of the window.

The window creaked as he opened it. The sweet−william and poppies in the garden appeared in luscious confusion between the gooseberry bushes, spruces beyond the garden paling towards the main road, a lovely white cloud like a snail shell, the cuckoo's meditative call, the soundless flickering of birch leaves.

The three old people stood still, stiffly, under the low beams. The woman had twisted her little, yellow hands into the ends of her kerchief. Mans Gustafson turned his piece of grass hurriedly between his lips. Pelle held himself rigid with brows drawn together as if in a grim rage.

The scent from the roses and the conifers floated mild and powerful in among the musty smells from the white−washed ceiling and the floor− boards and the wall−paper. The cuckoo called on.

He looked round slowly and breathed hard.

At a slant on the green−papered wall a rusty sporting gun, the red− painted bedfoot half across the old range, a swivel−chair and a little glass wall−tablet with the words "First a Cross, Then a Crown" wreathed in withered white cornflowers, the wall−table and an old Halland chair, the seat dark green and worn thread−bare, a few dilapidated books in a book−case on the wall, mostly small with the gilt nearly rubbed away. And there by the flowered curtain, a greenish−black picture in a dark wooden frame.

The door stood open to the tangle of roses and gooseberries in the garden. A bee hummed among the gnarled fruit−tree trunks, the sweet− william and the wolf's−bane fell forward in flowery masses, a fox− glove stood erect, malignant, its purple flowers like snakes' mouths. And a goat bleated dispiritedly.

So then, this was where he had come he must have had to stoop for he was a tall man that day when in a rage he had broken at last with his father and the whole of Stockholm, and, savage as a boar, had fled to South Sweden to find a discreet hole in the country, and he had found this farm among the spruces and had confidently talked the farm people out of their reluctance and himself into the house, and had settled himself here in this room without further ado. Now the fight must be fought, the great battle which should show his parents his manifest rightness Good God, they HAD to understand.

"Come now, dad, you won't turn me out again, will you? Or you, little mother? You'll see how well−behaved I am. And as for the money, we'll manage that that is when I get myself some tin, for now you see . Oh! That glorious scent of the spruce! And you have such lovely roses, mother. That bed is a bit different from the show stuff at home; ugh! Horrible, it smelt of priests and kings! No, this is the place for me!"

The Dane smiled, he could hear it so clearly, that booming voice. There was no need for Pelle Silfverljud to recount it in a voice hoarse with brandy and harsh like the heath outside, while Mans took the grass stem out of his mouth and listened with deep lines on his forehead, and Olivia's eyes smiled mildly and rested here and there in the room in order to remember the moment more vividly.

"Yes, yes," Pelle nodded round him, "the people here thought that first day, I'm sure, that they'd got a brigand into the house. But when he went to the field with Mans the next day and stirred the porridge for Olivia when he got back, and, at table read the paper out to you and explained it, and banged the table and roared with laughter and hooted in anger, then I imagine you put down your spoons and listened."

His keen eyes were fixed on the two old folk. Mans nodded two or three times, deep in his recollections, and Olivia laughed softly like a little bird clucking, drew her shawl round her and looked with friendly eyes at the stranger who stood listening.

"And then when he came home one day with Pelle Silfverljud, oh yes!" Pelle had sat down carefully on the carved Halland chair and let his big bony hands with the long fingers hang down limply. "He met me in the hut down among the trees, for I Well, yes, I had been put out of the train for not having a ticket. I wanted to make my way home to the old folk up in Skara to explain to them that you can't study to be an official without flesh on your bones, and with red rebellion in your veins. That was what they had dreamed up in their carpenter's hut. However, may the Devil bless that conductor fellow who kicked me out for that was how I got to know Flemming Cronenwall. If he had not come along on his lawful occasions, I mean, to get a drink, I would have been found hanging among the trees behind the hut, for by then I had come to the end of my resources and my hopes. But then, he was one to make the dead alive. No, I never became an official but I became Flemming Cronenwall's friend. And that is of more account. Even if those at home died without understanding it, you can understand."

He raised his eyebrows slightly towards those two. The old woman nodded eagerly. Hans Gustafson gazed at the garden and the trees through the window.

"Yes, Pelle Silfverljud," he said softly, "and because of that you shall stay here all your life."

Pelle nodded, that was only natural.

There was a whiff of scent from the thick−cheeked roses, on the window−sill lay the petals of poppies like red shells. The birches flickered, dreamed and flickered anew.

"Well, yes. We were together for eleven years. Flemming had been here for four years before he found me, and I have been here for ten since then."

The Dane glanced at the two old people of the house. They stood there silent, listening, bowed forward a little in their peasant dress, the embroidered shawl and the shirt sleeves.

And you two, you two industrious birds, you nourished cuckoo fledglings. When were you paid? Well, now and again, when a tolerable sum came to Flemming unexpectedly or Pelle had an unusually horrible gangster tale translated and accepted, then you got arrears and something in advance which they borrowed for further revels the week after. But otherwise . And the last years when all doors were closed to Flemming, and Pelle was drudging on alone, then you never saw a penny. Finally there was no talk of payment. Then he was simply the apple of your eye, whom those outside there in the world wished harm to, who threw himself down with hoarse sobs, rose up and bellowed with rage, then laughed at the capers of Syrsan the puppy, suddenly fell silent and brooded with lips shot forward, walked swiftly away from you without a word to his own door and shut himself in to come out again at supper−time mild as a god, his revenge accomplished by an ode throbbing with gratitude to humanity. Then your house came to life again in a feast incomparable, when he sat at the end of the table and smiled so charmingly that it went to your heart so that you trembled with joy to be alive, when he hummed to you as he drank, ate and told stories, consoled and explained, leaned back, snapped his fingers and made the room spin round you with all the seven colours of the rainbow and the sand and the fir−trees vanished and you drove along the rainbow right up to the crystalline heaven of God until you had to drag the drunken giant to bed, to the tune of his abundant blessings.

Yes, and those nights when you heard the shambling footsteps on the flagstones and Syrsan strained at his chain, and you old Mans, honest man, had to get out from under your eiderdown while Olivia held the flickering lantern, and you carried them in, the drunken sots, filthy with vomit and sand. There against that high door−sill Flemming Cronenwall would have brained himself long ago had your arm, hardened by toil, not managed him so firmly and so reverently.

He looked up at the musing peasant face a fine rain of seeds was falling from the turning stalk down over the hollow worn floor.

You good, noble man, had the magic such power over you that you forgot the simple philosophy of your fathers and the fine words of your clergyman's sermons?

A fly buzzed among the poppy petals on the window−sill. Had Flemming Cronenwall heard it buzz so on Summer afternoons, in dreaming idleness here by the worn wall−table, while the scent of dust and roses penetrated and his soul fought out its blind and stubborn fight with the formless mistiness that was life life that made him Flemming Cronenwall and chained him behind these windows with their view of the forest and with this buzzing of flies?

These walls know what neither Mans Gustafson nor Olivia, nor even Pelle Silfverljud and the lovers of the poems know of the hours when you were wretchedly lonely, you Flemming Cronenwall, the spoilt child of magistrate and Foreign Minister, you so hopeful in youth, who now in poverty and tears tremble at the sight of your own blind and degraded soul.

But there the bed. He turned on the swivel−chair. There he had lifted his head, his bare head wasted by sickness and drink, and listened for the last time, turned his ear towards the silence of the trees and the sand, to the horizon:

"Answer but once, you life without, you which persists, WHO was I, the lost one?"

Until at last he lay there, large and gentle, his face like a Pope's, full of contentment and death, Flemming Cronenwall, no one else.

The Dane rose and went over to the painting in the dark brown wooden frame, the hasty rough sketch of the face that had been Flemming Cronenwall's. He knew it so thoroughly from the reproduction in the beginning of the book, but here was the original in the place where the man himself had sat and graciously allowed himself to be painted by one of the few young men who had already in his lifetime felt like his brother in the fight for the new hate and the new love, for a new way of living: Yngve Hallongreen.

Yes, you face, answer me only one question, WHO were you? And what were you, with music in your soul, doing in this life where men worked conscientiously and were satisfied with small gain?

Flemming's heavy face leaned forward a little from the green−black background. The mighty bare forehead towered up with its light eyebrows over the eyes which held the ghost of a smile in them, the nose bisecting the face, feeling its way down over the pursed up mouth and the square chin. A red beard clothed the heavy jaws like the coat of a squirrel. A thick hand rested on an oaken cudgel.

Large and happy he sat there, yet with the terror of weeping in the corners of the eyes and mouth: who, oh, WHO am I?

Pelle then told how Flemming, after being refused by a Swedish publishing house had gone to a publisher in Denmark, and on being again rejected was aware that the man's little daughter had stared at him and whispered, "That must be a great and rich man, father."

Great and rich, yes. The child and the peasant saw you for what you were, you who, in the eyes of the world and of yourself were only an outcast.

But

He turned towards the three whose eyes lingered in calm and respectful gaze upon that dignified but frightened face there, their loved one and chieftain, their dead one.

And there burst involuntarily from his lips, on his own behalf and theirs:

"Well, but what WAS Flemming Cronenwall, really?"

"What? Why," and Pelle Silfverljyd raised his angular form stiffly with his big hands hooked into his coat cuffs, "he was just Revelation." "Revelation?" The young man looked sadly upon him. Yes, speak to me of our vocation in life, we without morals or sense of duty.

"Yes, why we exist," nodded Pelle shortly. "True, isn't it?" He looked at Mans and Olivia.

The peasant took the stalk from his mouth and nodded firmly two or three times.

"Yes, if he had not come to our farm I would not have known what happiness meant."

"No, father, nor sorrow either," Olivia wrapped her hands in her kerchief and looked warmly and gratefully at the great, questioning face.

"No, mother, that only came when he died," said Mans softly and looked down at his stockinged feet.

The Dane raised his eyes to Flemming. Are you answered, and are we? We who are poor and disowned?

"Here is only an insignificant thing, but you loved him, his poems I mean, and they WERE him the pen he scribbled them down with."

Pelle Silfverljud turned round hesitatingly; he had been standing with his back to them, leaning over the table. In his tobacco−stained fingers he held very gently a reed pen with the remains of a rusty nib in it.

"You can see, the last ink is still on it."

He held it up in front of him, half embarrassed, his little eyes scanning the dirty−green clotted ink.

"Olivia found it here on the floor when we had carried his body out. It had probably fallen after he had written his last poem, you remember, the one they say is his greatest. Yes," he laid the pen down carefully on the bare table, beside the ink−well, "he turned me into a human being."

Yes, exactly, to a human being. Not a Cabinet Minister, nor a peasant, but a human the poet, the humanest of humans.

He turned on the threshold and looked back once more.

The poppy petals on the now closed window−sill burned like drops of blood in the slanting sunbeams. The sandy road's slow windings took on a red glow. The birches' unresting leaves twinkled beyond the window− panes.

But the closed ink−well stood enthroned with the pen leaning against it. Here all was over. The wall−paper and wooden furniture stared silently at each other. He who had sat there had risen and departed, never to come again. But outside there were still the spruces and the sunlight. And these three here were Flemming Cronenwall's estate.

Pelle Silfverljud shut the door against the intense red evening rays and turned the key. They stood among the cottage roses in the garden, and on the sand of everyday life again.

He turned along the sandy road and looked for the last time.

Up there above the thick woods Tvihoga farm among its firs and its birches stood quiet and forlorn.

Pelle, whose long figure had waved from the flag−pole with his red− checked handkerchief, had gone in. Now it was all closed up again, with its black roof and shining windows, closed up round his memory, his greatness, his life.

And the jay scolded at the sunset.

IV

He walked slowly up the pale grey granite steps. His footsteps echoed under the shadowy arches. Through the windows as tall as a church he saw the tops of the lime−trees and the towers of the Cathedral, high as mountains.

Here it was then, in the mansion of their old age, that Flemming Cronenwall's parents resided.

He listened. The echo of his footsteps rang along the dark arched passage; there was deathly stillness in the Market Place and the streets of this University town, deathly stillness in this cold and lofty house.

Alas, Flemming Cronenwall, what chance was there of Revelation here? Here it was only a matter of silence and action.

He looked down at the solid blocks which made the steps. He could see the bear−like Flemming clambering up them. And he smiled.

But in the distance his ear heard the wooden steps at Tvihoga creak under his weight, so blessedly homely.

But the parents? How was he to explain to them? What was he to tell them? The smell of the farm there, it was as unknown here in his parents' home as Flemming himself.

He pulled the heavy wrought−iron bell−pull at the porch, stood waiting on the mat and looked down at the gleaming granite slabs which disappeared into the cool darkness, the ancestral steps which Flemming had walked down when he went out to his own world and his own work.

How was he to tell the parents about their outcast son?

The servant's footsteps on the floor within. The door creaked open heavily.

He sat on a velvet stool and regarded the father's face, so sallow in the light of the evening sky between the gold−coloured curtains, the tufts of grey hair, the questioning eyes, the hollow cheeks. The mother, leaning against the back of her husband's chair, fragile and dark, her face above the stiff lace collar strained and expectant.

A clock ticked briskly in the darkness over by the marble stove. In a large cage behind the palms there fluttered two or three tropical birds like sparks of fire through the gloom.

He heard his own voice, so ineffective under the empty ceiling, relating quickly and briefly what he was well aware they could not understand.

And they were silent, those two who had brought to birth the soul of whom he talked, hearkening to the stranger who had to teach them about their own flesh and blood, of the life and death of him who had lived and died among unknown people in an unseen district.

The young Dane ceased and made a movement, relieved that now that he had kept his promise he could get up and leave this place.

"Halfdan, did you hear that?" His wife leaned forward softly over her husband's shoulder. "Did you hear? They keep his pen with the ink on it."

"Yes, I heard," said the Minister, nodding, brooding.

Then he looked up, the strained, thin face furrowed by habitual seriousness and sedulity, and he bowed his stiff neck:

"We thank you, sir, for the information you have given us about our son."

"And for " his wife's eyes stole a look at him, half−afraid, her arm still curved round the back of her husband's chair, "and for your affection for Flemming."

The father sat stiffly for a moment.

"Yes, for your affection for Flemming," and he again bent his head.

They had kept his pen with the ink on it!

He smiled sadly to himself as he hurried down the granite steps with long strides.

But up there, among the palms and the tropical birds in the darkening room, by the open stove, the two sat in their loneliness and stared in front of them with wondering eyes.

WHO was he then that they had treasured his pen?

ILLUSION

BY EDITH RODE Translated by Ann and Peter Thornton

I must confess that it wasn't originally my idea but it was I who carried it out. One day at Versailles I overheard a man say, "I'm going to dig up a chestnut shoot and take it home in my suit−case. I want my boy to have a chestnut tree from Versailles and I don't think it will die if I wrap it in damp moss and tie it up in grease−proof paper."

What a delightful idea, I thought, and decided to do the same thing myself. So a tiny chestnut shoot, wrapped in moss and grease−proof paper, made the journey from France to Denmark in my suitcase.

That is to say, no one will ever know exactly where our ways parted. It may have been that the hand of some rummaging Custom's official had found the clammy lump and hastily put it down, or possibly some chambermaid or other had dropped it with a gasp of horror. I shall never know. It had certainly disappeared by the time I reached home.

None of this would have mattered at all if I hadn't already written to a very great friend of mine that I was bringing him a tiny chestnut tree from Versailles. I couldn't disappoint him. If it had been a tie or a pair of gloves, I could have explained it away I could say they had been stolen or that I had forgotten them and given him something else instead but a chestnut tree even a very small one from VERSAILLES is virtually irreplacable.

But as I hadn't got it I would have to get one, which I finally managed to do at a little flower shop on the outskirts of the city. It wasn't quite as tiny as the original which had really been no more than a sprouting conker, but it was the smallest, most pathetic tree I could find and the one that best answered to the description in my letter a pale, sickly, unhealthy−looking shoot with two minute leaves.

My friend was delighted with it. "I just can't imagine how you found room for such a huge tree in your suit−case," he said.

'Huge tree' was certainly a fantastic exaggeration but I let it pass as in point of fact I neither had, nor even could have found room for it in my suit−case.

The tree eventually flourished, after a slow start: "It had to become acclimatised," my friend explained. The word 'acclimatised' quickly made me change the subject.

One day he had to go away and left the tree in my care. Then what happens the thing just won't grow. First I give it a lot of water; then no water at all. I put it in the sun; then in the shade. But all to no avail. Slowly but surely it

shrivels up while all my own plants continue to flourish as usual and shoot up before my very eyes.

"Well now," I said, "I shall just have to get hold of another tree, it will be the second. 'THE CHESTNUT TREE FROM VERSAILLES' IS JOLLY WELL GOING TO BE A REALITY." But the very next day, before I have time to carry out my plan, my friend arrives. He is standing in my room as I come in, gazing at the dead tree. The tears spring to my eyes. Yes, tears of genuine sorrow and possibly also of annoyance at his unexpected arrival before I have managed to buy a replacement. But women must never disclose that their tears are due to annoyance or are caused by anything but pure and simple sorrow, and so I allow myself to be consoled by my friend and even to smile in a melancholy fashion.

"Now," he said, "I'm going to tell you something that I had decided never to tell a living soul, but I can't bear to see you so upset. THAT TREE OVER THERE ISN'T THE CHESTNUT TREE FROM VERSAILLES AT ALL."

Completely taken aback, I try to gain time by demanding in a somewhat belligerent tone: "What do you mean by that?"

"I bought it myself," he confesses. "The original tree from Versailles died three days after I got it," (he blushes) "so I bought this one so that you shouldn't be disappointed. Why do you look at me in that way? Are you angry with me?"

I'm not angry, just slightly disappointed that there should be no person in this world that one can really trust, but when I tell him this he disarms me completely. "Oh, that's not true," he says, "one can trust YOU." And he says it with such warm and genuine affection that I believe him.

THE SCHOOL−TEACHER AND HIS FAMILY TAKE A SUMMER HOLIDAY BY THE SEA

BY HARRY SOIBERG Translated by Ann R. Born

Never before had Niels the Beachcomber seen such joyous faces as on the day he drove the strange visitors home to Beachcomber Farm, he felt an air of enchantment all around him that surpassed his comprehension, for he knew that more unpretentious districts than this land of sand dunes were hardly to be found. He sat awkwardly slumped in the driving seat, listening to the strange city dialect; he was familiar with the tongue of the county town, but these people were from the capital and a learned man into the bargain. Several times, hearing their delighted outcries, he looked around him in surprise, believing something must have appeared which had slipped his notice until now...usually he recognised each little clearing or sandy hillock. This was the first time they were taking summer visitors, so many weeks of excitement had preceded this moment; how would such an insignificant spot strike these people? There had been moments when both he and his wife had thought of the old homestead as a poor place. Several times the wife had had it in mind to cancel the visit so as not to lure the poor souls all that way if the place didn't suit them− −and if they went away again, what a disgrace that would be.

But they were in raptures. He stole a glance at their faces; it was indeed joy, you might almost think that the loveliest things to be seen were nothing other than the clumps of heather and the straws of sea−grass shining in the sun, and what delight over the song of the lark, and each tiny peewit to be seen above the rushes.

He became pensive, pondering on the life there was in these people, the grown−ups were almost worse than the children. He could hardly get a word in edgeways for the shower of questions directed at him. The lady grasped his shoulder from her seat at the rear and asked him first about this and then about that. It was just like being out in a storm. The feel of her hand brought a lop−sided grin to his face, he had noticed at once how it was with her, that she was pregnant. And what about the girl who was sitting next to her, would she be a maid or a daughter?

When the farm came in sight some distance away, Niels felt his heart leap up into his mouth, he kept his face turned aside so that his tension and awkwardness might remain unnoticed. The old flaws and shortcomings which had almost been buried in oblivion, were suddenly so apparent to him that he felt they were bound to notice them at once.

But what was this...a thrill went through him, the children in the wagon had begun to clap their hands and shout with joy at the sight of the foal trotting beside the mare in the meadow close by the farm. The grown−ups too broke into raptures over the peaceful spot, lying there enclosed by heath and dunes, with its cultivated fields, and with the joyous song of a lark echoing over the barns.

Then Niels's features relaxed into a beaming smile, he shot a glance at his wife, who had shyly come to the door to greet them, so that she might know that the guests he brought were pleasant ones.

The minute the children had hopped down from the wagon they scattered like chickens, and the guests had hardly entered the living−room door when the whole place was shattered by shrill shrieks, as if an accident had happened, and everyone rushed out again. The children were running towards the door with the gander at their heels, the youngest lay where he had tumbled down in the grass, screaming in direst terror. But a moment later they were laughing and clapping about it all.

The teacher's wife remained standing out in the yard with her face turned towards the wind, Niels and his wife both felt quite embarrassed, her skirt wrapped itself around her knees so that it was evident that she had hardly any clothes on. Mrs. Niels glanced towards the stable−door and the scullery, from where the farm−hand and the girl announced their presence...never before had she seen a woman so obviously letting the world know she was going to have a child. Quietly she led them in through the living−room and the rooms they were to occupy; her heart was beating despite her outward composure. Where the lady and gentleman were to sleep stood the bed−steads piled high as haystacks with quilts; it was a sign of prosperity for the strangers' eyes, bedclothes and linen it would take more than a lifetime to wear out. In her heart he was proud to be able to offer them that anyway and she glanced expectantly at their faces.

The teacher slapped his hand down on the tightly packed down quilts, whose solid feather contents filled out again as if he had struck a ball, and laughed good−naturedly.

"You've certainly got some weighty ones here," he broke out, "but I can only sleep with one blanket over me."

Mrs. Niels retained her composure in spite of her disappointment, she seemed hardly to gather what he said. But the lady made haste to explain courteously that they were accustomed to blankets at home.

And before Mrs. Niels realised what they were about, they began to carry the mountains of bedclothes out of the room. But otherwise they thought it all delightful.

You might have thought that the farm was deserted next morning, all was so still when the guests appeared in the hall ready to go to the beach. The teacher had only a white robe thrown over his shoulders, and it flapped around him so that Mrs. Niels and the maid drew back in a flurry from their hiding−place behind the window−frame. The children went leaping out into the garden in a garb which involuntarily made you think of savage peoples in the tropics...but when Mrs. Niels caught sight of the lady and the young girl in similar airy garments, it seemed as if all order in the universe was suddenly demolished before her eyes...that women could make such an exhibition of themselves! If she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she wouldn't have believed it possible.

With the wind wafting their clothes the family danced across the green, so that it was hard to distinguish in the sunlight between naked skin and clothes; involuntarily she glanced towards the stable door, where the farm−hand and the young herdsman had appeared a moment before...for young folk to see such sights! But their heads had

vanished too.

Suddenly the girl burst out giggling, scarlet and spluttering, as if she had stumbled on some great knowledge unawares. Not until then did Mrs. Niels regain her tongue.

"Gracious heavens," she exclaimed, "So that's the sort of folk we've got at the farm bathers!"

Her face revealed that she was outraged, she said nothing further but remained thoughtful, as if she had incomprehensible things to occupy her mind.

Later in the morning Niels came driving home along the beach after his daily beachcombing expedition, he walked beside the wagon with the rein in his hand in his usual phlegmatic manner. Several times a smile played about his lips at the thought of the strangers at home. Now and then he glanced along the beach, he had a feeling that a singular kind of day was in store for him, he was filled with curiosity and a desire to see more of these odd people. Suddenly he became aware of something on the beach, his gaze became fixed and sharp, as if he had caught sight of something drifting out at sea, but then he jerked at the rein and stopped the wagon.

What was that it looked like naked people!

He passed his hand across his eyes as if he doubted the truth of their vision. By heavens, it WAS somebody...there were big ones and little ones, they ran along the beach in the sunshine, so that their white skins flashed like fire in the light.

They were just near the way up from the beach, he glanced nervously back to see if he could possibly go by another way, but it was impossible to drive a loaded cart over the dunes. He kept the horses still for a while so that they would discover him and put on some clothing, or else hide themselves. Now he could clearly hear both voices and laughter...and see, there was the man, running along with one of the children riding astride his shoulders.

Dubiously he made the horses start with the thought that they would soon get out of the way when they saw him coming; he pretended not to have noticed anything, but still he kept his gaze fixed on them, and he drove as slowly as it was possible, to keep the horses moving... but there was no sign of their having seen him.

There stood the lady, outlined against the blue sky, he dragged at the rein, and suddenly he felt a strange, heavy, still feeling inside him.

Bashfully he drew back behind the wagon and occupied himself with this and that so no one should know he had been a witness to what he had seen...those crazy folk. But he soon realised that if he went on waiting for them he would have to leave his horses and cart.

You would almost have thought they didn't reckon him for a human being at all.

When he slowly drove on he kept himself out of sight behind the load. When he came to the way up the children came rushing to meet him, wanting a ride, but he shooed them away more brusquely than he really intended, and urged on the horses so that they broke into a trot along the soft sandy road from the beach.

A little while later he tramped into the farmyard with a clouded countenance, so that his wife, catching sight of him through the kitchen window, noticed at once that something had happened to him. Suddenly he came through the scullery and went into the living−room, where he slumped down on the settle and fell into a muse. His wife passed the door a couple of times on unnecessary errands before she made up her mind to go in to him.

He kept his eyes on the floor, as if there were something shameful in the news he was about to communicate, and she closed the door resolutely so that they could talk in privacy. She too wore an embarrassed air, as if she was confronted with things unmentionable even between married folks.

Niels had experienced more on that journey along the beach than in the whole previous course of his life...he had never even seen his own wife clothed in less than her chemise. A glance at her told him that she too had something to impart.

"The way those people rushed off," she began. "In full view of the hand and the girl...they had hardly a stitch on them. Terrible for the young folks to see such sights."

She stood there with flaming cheeks.

"Did they go off like that?" he asked.

"It seems shameful to talk of it," she answered.

Then he too told of what he had seen. The lady had been standing in full view of his eyes down there on the beach, with no more shame in her than a pregnant ewe in the field.

They both kept their eyes on the floor while they talked, if this got round the neighbourhood it would bring both gossip and shame on them, taking suchlike folks in.

Then she had a brainwave.

"You must collect some empty fish boxes and build them up down on the beach so they can have a place to stay in and use as a bathing hut," she said.

At midday, while the visitors were indoors, Niels went down to the beach and dragged the boxes together and erected a building he was quite proud of...if they wanted to they could get very good shelter there.

In the evening, when the school teacher was sitting enjoying the peace and quietness outside the farmyard while the children were being put to bed and the sun was just going down, Niels approached him, having for some time hovered about in his neighbourhood. The school teacher at once began to chat enthusiastically about the sea and the beach and the heavenly surroundings, overjoyed to be in a place they could have to themselves.

Niels listened attentively, trying to make out the gist of what he was saying. But it puzzled him a bit, you would almost think the strangers were the only folk alive on the farm.

Finally he came out with the reason for his approach.

He had built up some fish boxes down there, he said, so that they had somewhere to undress...for there were no bathing huts here.

The school teacher interpreted his words as purely innocent, that wasn't necessary, he answered, there was room and to spare here, and as he smiled his face already reflected new freshness from the sun and the sea.

It was plain to see that there was something amiss at the farm, everybody seemed bashful as if they each carried the knowledge about with them of things they must not mention. A week after the arrival of the strangers the shepherd boy came leaping home from the dunes one day, scarlet−faced and distraught, as if he had been witness to some unholy sight. Both the farm−hand and the girl tried to make him talk, he stood there and grinned, but they

could get no explanation out of him.

It was the girl who showed herself most sophisticated.

"Talk about Adam and Eve," she laughed, but she turned scarlet all the same. And the hand sneaked a stiff glance at her as if she were forbidden fruit herself.

Over in the cow−shed the hand made the shepherd boy talk. He had gone up to the summit of a sand dune to look for the sheep, and he suddenly saw the whole school teacher family lying before him, their bodies as pink as newly born piglets at first glimpse he had been so startled he hardly recognised them, he thought only barbarians and heathens went about in such fashion.

Rumours of the goings−on at the Beachcomber Farm spread quickly about the neighbourhood. Nothing was discussed openly, but all the same people got to know about this and that. A peasant who had been among the dunes gathering turf, had seen sights...At first they didn't know quite how to take it, although of course they had heard descriptions of seaside life from other places on the coast. Among the older people disgust was aroused at the idea of naked people running about the place. But chuckles soon became audible among lads and girls, though each word held in its own way contempt for these strange people who could allow themselves to behave like this. Many of them went to the farm on some pretext or other, they kept behind the barns so as not to be seen by the farmer or his wife, for they didn't want to upset them. And if they happened to catch sight of any of the school teacher family they kept out of sight behind doors or walls as if the reason for their presence there was written all over them.

The hand and the shepherd boy behaved like people who possessed knowledge which would annihilate the whole world if they really cared to break silence about it.

Then it happened one morning that Niels's wife had to go into the drawing−room to look for something in the chest of drawers which stood in there; she listened at the door to make certain no one was up yet. She had needed the article she was going to fetch for some days, but had continually put off going in there for fear of disturbing...She laid her ear against the door panel, she had heard a noise from within, but now all was quiet again. So she grasped the door handle, she had just crossed the threshold and turned towards the chest when she halted, rooted to the spot with a kind of horror for a moment she was utterly flabbergasted and didn't know whether to advance or retreat.

The teacher was sitting by the window bent over the table writing, completely in the nude. As the door opened he turned his gaze smilingly from his papers and made a welcoming gesture towards the farmer's wife.

"Come in, you won't disturb me," he cried; in his preoccupation he took her confusion to be fear of disturbing.

He sat in the middle of a bar of sunlight slanting in through the window−panes; it seemed to Mrs. Niels as if she could see the sun−rays passing right through him. With a half−smothered shriek she flung up her arms and staggered back through the door right out to the scullery where she sank half−swooning on to a chair.

"Lord above, Lord above," she groaned with her arms hanging limply down, never had she seen the like.

A hectic flush suffused her cheeks. The girl, who was standing right in front of her, did not know whether to laugh or be frightened.

"Heavens above," she said, in a tone meant to show that whatever the case she was in sympathy with her mistress.

"Sitting in there writing in the blazing sunlight, he was, with never a stitch on him," she brought out at last.

The girl turned away abruptly, bent over and burst out laughing.

"Was he sitting there writing in his birthday suit," she reiterated. "You must have given him a good scare, then."

Niels's wife stared up at her with a disgusted and yet somewhat milder expression, as if a feeling of comedy was also beginning to dawn on her.

"Given him a good scare...he waved his hand, as friendly as you please. Come in, you're not disturbing me, he said, and he was just about to get up, the raving lunatic."

Then the girl laughed even more heartily and pictured the whole scene with a vivid imagination.

A few minutes later Niels appeared in the doorway asking what was going on. Whether or not he understood his wife's horror and shared her disgust, the description brought an amused quirk to his features.

"You certainly chose the right moment, old girl," he said with some humour.

When this story spread over the neighbourhood, gossip began in earnest about the farm, this was a situation they could understand, and ever afterwards great amusement was caused by the description of the farmer's wife's horror when she went sneaking in to her chest of drawers.

The school teacher sat in the drawing−room staring in amazement at the door through which Mrs. Niels had vanished. Only then did it occur to him what was the matter, and smiling he walked across the room. It was clear enough that the good woman in her innocence had been terrified, but that was just something to laugh about.

He stood by the window in the sunshine, filled with happiness and a sense of well−being. A year of strenuous school work lay behind him, he had left home tired and worn out, and it was chiefly for the purpose of gathering new strength that they had chosen this isolated and lonely spot by the sea. He looked down at the table, where a pile of closely−written sheets bore witness to the persevering work of several years' leisure time from teaching. This very day he had chosen to rise early to take advantage of the peace and quiet while the children were still asleep.

Niels and his wife stayed home from church two Sundays in succession. As a rule church was a regular weekly event. They usually set off in good time so as to have the opportunity for a chat with their fellow parishioners while waiting for the vicar and often the waiting time was full of gaiety. But it could also happen that if anyone had offended against law or custom in any way it was at this time that they felt the sting of official censure. And Niels's wife had only to look into her heart to know what public opinion would have to say about the happenings at Beachcomber Farm.

It was quite natural for the mistress of a house full of guests to stay away from church for once. But when the second Sunday came round they both went about with preoccupied expressions. At church time Niels went and sat down at the table in the living−room and read from the old family book of sermons, once or twice his wife came to the door and peeped in at him, it was as if he sat there and read for her too. But a strange unrest moved in Niels's heart, all the time the image of the beach and the blue sky rose up before his eyes, filled with shining white bodies which came dancing up between the words as he was reading, as if the world around him was possessed by a wicked witchcraft.

When they drove away from the farm on the third Sunday, they were both sitting unnaturally still on the driving−seat, he held the horses in to a walk nearly all the way to avoid arriving too early. From a long way off they could see the congregation standing about in groups by the church wall, and they were soon aware that their approach had been observed. Faces were turned towards them, and an immobility fell upon the groups, as if there

was something peculiar about them.

Niels the Beachcomber drove quietly up alongside the ditch by the churchyard where the vehicles were left. People usually gave each other a hand down, but this time he was left to get down from the wagon by himself. He glanced up at his wife, who remained seated on the driving−seat with her fringed black scarf tied so tightly under her chin that only a portion of her face was visible. Her heart was beating as it had only done once in her life before on the drive to church, and that was the time she had been driven there as a bride, but to−day it beat with humiliation and shame.

Not until he had finished dealing with the horses did he help her down, she stayed beside the wagon wheel and smoothed her dress, while he drew the great prayer book with gilt edges from his pocket as if it were both their guardian and their weapon. Then they looked at each other and went side by side to the churchyard gate.

The gathering too seemed to be overcome with embarrassment, they had turned their backs on the advancing pair or kept their eyes on the ground, so there was no occasion to give any greeting. Niels and his wife stopped at the far end of the path, keeping close to each other. She blushed and turned pale by turns, she felt as if it was she herself who had been in the forbidden situation. She seemed to expect to be the object of mirth herself. But within her a deep, outraged pride at being treated in such a way by old acquaintances made itself felt.

"Well, Niels," suddenly came a voice that was both bantering and mocking. "How d'you like playing bathing attendant?"

Every face was immediately visible, they all stared at the speaker, a little peasant well−known for his gibing tongue, and then the communal gaze shifted to Niels, who answered with a good−humoured grin. Laughter was heard at once, and the groups relaxed into movement.

"It's getting too dangerous to go down to the sea, what with all those Indians among your dunes..."

Suddenly it seemed as if joviality was going to get the upper hand, a note of coarseness came into the laughter, even the women began to smile, when an excitable voice broke in.

They should think of the young people.....

In a trice all trace of amusement vanished from their faces and they saw only the scandalous aspect of the affair.

"Oh yes, we've all heard there's been a run on the beach," said the mocking little peasant again. "But there had been others besides young folk who had had business in that direction."

Amusement broke out again, though now several of the men retained their stiff carriage and demeanour, uncertain who was being scoffed at.

At last the vicar appeared and everyone immediately took on their accustomed expression for church. But even during the service Niels and his wife were reminded time after time of their guests at home, as if both the vicar and the word of God were aware of them.

While the village people were at church, the school teacher and his family were basking on the warm sand above the dunes, letting the sun bake them through and through, they had already taken their first dip of the day, down on the beach the children ran and played with seaweed and stones. Now and then a pair of seagulls came drifting along the coastline, searching for food, but as soon as they noticed the presence of people they flew out to sea, afraid of danger. Sometimes the whistle of a dunlin could be heard, gliding along the edge of the beach, visible in the sunshine like a piece of feathery down blown about by the breeze. The only other sound was the noise of the

breakers on the beach which seemed to fill all the space around them with each breaking wave.

The teacher sat upon a sandy slope reading aloud from the book in his hand, so sunburnt that there was not a pale patch on his body. Both his face and his voice reflected happiness. Just below him lay his wife and the young girl, refreshed after their bathe, equally sunburnt, listening while he read.

Beside the teacher lay a rucksack full of books, a selection from the pearls of the world's literature, which he bore out to the dunes with him daily, as if something additional was needed to give the happy natural life real content and atmosphere.

A little way away behind the summit of a sand dune lay a half grown lad hidden in the sea−grass gaping at them, he had sneaked up unnoticed from dune to dune to get a look at them. He lay there ready to leap up and flee at the slightest sound.

"I'll be damned," he mumbled and a bashful sneer crossed his face, but the next moment he ducked down behind the top of the dune and looked about nervously for fear anyone should see him.

Suddenly he rolled himself down the slope and remained prostrate. Over on another dune a lad had come in sight, in spite of the distance he had seen a grinning face. For a moment they both seemed most impelled to rush off in opposite directions. But then the first one began to wave to the other to come across, here was something to see.

You should crawl up there and take a look, he grinned to him when he got there.

For a while they both lay side by side, behind the top of the dune and stared down at the family.

"I think he's reading the Bible," whispered one of them to the other. An expression of indignation and outrage appeared on their faces, and completely unexpectedly one of them gave vent to a shrill bellow, which sounded like somebody shouting at an animal to scare it they tore each other down the side of the dune, lay for a moment in confusion over what had happened, then leapt up and raced away.

Both the teacher's wife and the girl gave a shriek of fright, the teacher threw down his book, ran up the dune and reached the top just in time to see the two lads vanish over the dunes. He came back wearing a serious expression.

"It was a couple of boys," he said. The ladies had grabbed their clothes, suddenly startled out of their happy paradise. They looked at each other uneasily while he tried to reassure them. "They were just having fun," he said.

On the afternoon of the same day, when they were sunbathing on the beach after the second bathe of the day, a piece of wood came flying down among them from somewhere up in the dunes.

The teacher rushed up there indignantly, but there was no one to be seen...only when he reached the top of the next dune did he see the attackers this time a whole gang of them, fleeing amongst resounding laughter.

In the evening he went to the beachcomber and had a chat with him about it.

Niels stood there very ill at ease, with his gaze rooted to the ground, not knowing what to say.

"They threw sticks at you?" he repeated.

Despite his serious expression his face took on tones of pleasure, although he understood that this was a serious matter.

"We are not aware that we have harmed anyone," said the teacher.

"No, that was true enough," answered Niels, with some hesitation in his voice. They were decent folk enough in that way...

He fought hard with himself to come out with what had been painfully on his mind for so long, but he seemed to be getting more and more shy. He could not even fix his eyes on the stranger.

"Nobody in the neighbourhood is used to having guests like you," he said. "If only you would wear just a bit more when you are down on the beach." It was as if he tried to put a mildly joking tone into his voice.

The teacher laughed confusedly, unable to answer, it had never occurred to him.

When Niels went in to his wife to tell her what had happened, his whole being was animated, he laughed so much that his wife had to hush him in case the visitors heard him.

Those lads had certainly scared them...and with increased humour he repeated what he had said to the teacher. It was funny enough that it should be the young folks who had taught them a lesson.

About the neighbourhood too Niels's reply to the teacher caused both pride and amusement when it got around. He had shown himself to be both master of his house and a good beachcomber.

LIFE'S GREAT MOMENTS

BY JOHANNES BUCHHOLTZ Translated by Lydia Cranfield

The train was hammering along the rails and the passengers were rustling their newspapers as they turned them over, or were just dozing in their comfortable corner seats. Nobody spared a glance for the stars which were beginning to appear between the scurrying autumn clouds. As the train gathers speed, so the brain slows up. There is hardly a place more conducive to sleep and listlessness than a noisy express train. Here one is set apart from life, in transit from a place, where life is being lived, to another. Here in the train nothing happens except the dry rustling of a newspaper.

The brakes jarred and some lights flew past. They had stopped at a station, but that was of no account nothing was likely to happen here.

Suddenly the door was opened and the cold, icy air beat in around the legs of the passengers. Many voices could be heard a whole chorus of voices and several people started to enter the compartment. Those who were already sitting there spread themselves in their seats, ready to defend their places.

But what's this? The newcomers are filling the compartment with things suit−cases, parcels, flowers: flowers in pots and in baskets, bouquets, three large bouquets, two of chrysanthemums and one of roses with long silk ribbons attached −

From the darkness outside a young woman is entering the lighted compartment and is taking off her coat she is a "white" bride, complete with veil and myrtle wreath; her cheeks flushed with pleasure at the stir she is creating, she is beaming self−confident. The young man then must be the bridegroom, and the two older, rather heavily dressed people, must be his parents. And so it is. The mother−in−law turns apologetically to the passengers explaining that her son he is a chauffeur at Risbro has been married to−day and now they are going home, and it is because of this festive occasion that they are all travelling second class.

A group of wedding guests stand on the platform outside the carriage window. Suddenly a handful of rice is thrown over the bridal couple, and over the entire compartment as well.

The bridegroom, in the act of stacking suit−cases, clothes and flowers on the racks and the seats, turns round, surprised and cross:

"Who did that? What a mess! Was it you, Maren? How on earth could you think of doing such a thing? That's good rice!"

Maren replied with another shower of rice.

"Will you please stop it, Maren, stop it immediately! Right into the carriage! If you don't stop, we'll have to close the window. What do you mean by it, throwing rice and into a second class carriage, too!"

"I believe it's a custom," says the bride, and her mother−in−law agrees: "Yes, I believe that it's a custom."

"Oh well, if it's a custom then it's another matter," says the bridegroom, appeased. "But all the same, she shouldn't do it. Still, people have so many customs. When the solicitor was married someone threw a galoche into the car after them."

"A slipper," corrects the bride.

"A slipper, then! And the solicitor tied it to his suit−case. He still had it when we reached the steamer. What an idea, to throw a galoche into the solicitor's car."

"A slipper."

"All right, a slipper."

"That's supposed to mean that he'll be under his wife's slipper be henpecked!"

"Henpecked! That's a peculiar thing to wish for anybody! I can't believe that was the idea."

The train moves off.

"Give me my bouquet so that I can wave with it," says the bride, eagerly. "No, not that one, my bridal bouquet, with the ribbons."

"Good−bye, good−bye!"

"Good−bye, Sine! And thanks for the salt−cellar! Good−bye, Uncle, and thanks for the sugar−tongs!"

Bride and groom sit down for a moment's breathing space, and then the small, slight chauffeur says:

"Well, there's going to be something for us to unpack to−morrow."

"It's all going to be unpacked to−night," replied his young wife, emphatically.

"Not all of it," he says, apprehensively. The bride does not answer. The chauffeur's mother is afraid that her son's remark will be interpreted in a manner somewhat to his discredit, and turning to her fellow passengers she explains: "My son couldn't sleep a wink last night for excitement. His new suit didn't arrive until four o'clock this

morning."

Here the chauffeur joins in the conversation. He is a Jutlander, calm, ruddy, clean−shaven and with lean features:

"The trains meet at Risbro junction and there I was standing on the platform at four o'clock this morning. I was going south and my suit was supposed to come on the northbound express from Copenhagen that is. I tipped them half a crown to hold back the train for half a minute while they found the parcel."

The bride talks to herself in a dreamy voice:

"The sugar−tongs really are lovely and then Gerda's speech."

The chauffeur agrees:

"Yes, you're right. When she got up I thought she was going to make a few jokes, but not at all. She could certainly hold her audience. There was just once when she went to pieces a little, but she managed all right, she knew just what she wanted to say."

"I wonder if she made up the speech herself?" asks his mother.

"I don't know, but it's quite possible; of course, she's clever, her brother is a teacher "

"There were over a hundred telegrams," continues the bride, her eyes shining. "I believe there were more telegrams than greetings cards."

"Did you see the one from the solicitor?" asks the bridegroom.

"Yes, I did. 'Hearty congratulations from Mr. and Mrs. Jensen and the children', it said."

"Don't you think that there will be something to follow later on?"

"No, that acquaintance doesn't rise to those heights."

"I believe we had two−hundred−and−forty Kroner in cash?"

"It was two−hundred−and−forty−two Kroner that is, I didn't count it myself but Marius told me it was two−hundred−and−forty−two; he counted it in the dining room."

"Some of the money came with the greetings cards."

In the meantime the old father−in−law had been dozing; a jolt of the train wakes him.

"I believe I've been asleep sitting here!" he says, shamefacedly. But his son reassures him:

"You go on sleeping, father, sleep on. That's just why people travel second class so that they can sleep. The seats are as soft as a feather−bed."

"Well, I'm not going to sleep any more now," says the old man, "we've got to get out soon."

He and his wife start to get their things together. There is something they want to pack in a flat cardboard box. Afterwards they want to tie it up with a piece of string.

"Why don't you help your father and mother?" asks the bride.

"Well, I should hope they can manage that themselves," he replies placidly.

The bride gives her groom a cross look probably the first since they were married and helps them herself. She has a knack of tying string so that it holds.

"Wait a bit, mother−in−law," she says fetching out a basket of fruit which had been hidden underneath the flowers "you must take some grapes home with you, it's seldom you get grapes and we've plenty." She puts one heavy cluster after another into the old woman's hands.

Then the train stops; the old people are getting off a couple of stations before the young ones:

"Good−bye, father−in−law, and thank you so much for the dinner− service!"

"Good−bye, mother−in−law, and thank you so much for the dinner− service!"

The two women kiss. The older one controls her emotion but the eyes of the younger one become misty.

"Good−bye and thank you for the dinner−service. Come on, wave to them, Jens. Keep waving! They can still see us."

The train glides into the darkness.

When the chauffeur leant out of the window his waistcoat rucked up a little. His bride pulls it down with an energetic tug.

"Lift your coat before you sit down," she says. "I hope you aren't crushing that little salt−cellar in your pocket."

"No," says the chauffeur, solidly and quietly. He strokes his ruddy, bony face. One can see that his thoughts are elsewhere. He is thinking of his car, he can feel himself streaking along endless, straight roads with similar, similar, similar poplars on either side.

He does not yet realize that he has made A GOOD MARRIAGE. Love of flowers, lots of flowers, love of salt−cellars, sugar−tongs and dinner−services, care of old women and the capacity of handling her menfolk all that forms the essence of a good wife.

Shortly afterwards the young couple also left and the train flew into the night. The passengers sank deeper into their corner seats and yawned discreetly behind their hands. A fragment of life had disturbed them for a brief moment. Nothing could be heard except the hammering of the wheels against the lifeless rails and the dry rustling of a newspaper.

THE DREAMING CHILD

BY KAREN BLIXEN

In the first half of last century, there lived in Sealand, in Denmark, a family of cottagers and fishermen, who, after their native place, were called Plejelt, and who did not seem able to do well for themselves in any way. Once they had owned a little land here and there, and fishing−boats, but what they had possessed they had lost, and in their new enterprises they failed. They just managed to keep out of the jails of Denmark, but they gave themselves up

freely to all such sins and weaknesses, vagabondage, drink, gambling, illegitimate children and suicide, as human beings can indulge in without breaking the law.

The old judge of the district said of them: "These Plejelts are not bad people, I have got many worse than they. They are pretty, healthy, likeable, even talented in their way. Only they just have not got the knack of living. And if they do not promptly pull themselves together, I cannot tell what may become of them, except that the rats will eat them."

Now it was a queer thing that, just as if the Plejelts had been overhearing this sad prophecy and had been soundly frightened by it, in the following years, they actually seemed to pull themselves together. One of them married into a respectable peasant family, another had a stroke of luck in the herring−fishery, another was converted by the new parson of the parish, and obtained the office of bell−ringer. Only one child of the clan, a girl, did not escape its fate, but on the contrary, appeared to collect upon her young head the entire burden of guilt and misfortune of her tribe. In the course of her short, tragic life, she was washed from the country into the town of Copenhagen, and here, before she was twenty, she died in dire misery, leaving a small son behind her. The father of the child, who is otherwise unknown to this tale, had given her a hundred rixdollars, these, together with the child, the dying mother handed over to an old washerwoman, blind of one eye, and named Madam Mahler, in whose house she had lodged. She begged Madam Mahler to provide for her baby as long as the money lasted, contenting herself with a brief respite, in the true spirit of the Plejelts.

At the sight of the money, Madam Mahler got a rose in each cheek, she had never till now set eyes on a hundred rixdollars, all in a pile. As she looked at the child she sighed deeply, then she took the task upon her shoulders, with what other burdens life had already placed there.

The little boy, whose name was Jens, in this way first became conscious of the world, and of life, within the slums of old Copenhagen, in a dark back−yard like a well, a labyrinth of filth, decay and foul smell. Slowly he also became conscious of himself, and of something exceptional in his worldly position. There were other children in the back−yard, a big crowd of them, they were pale and dirty as himself. But they all seemed to belong to somebody, they had a father and a mother, there was for each of them a group of other ragged and squalling children whom they called brothers and sisters, and who sided with them in the brawls of the yard; they obviously made part of a unity. He began to meditate upon the world's particular attitude to himself, and upon the reason for it. Something in it responded to an apprehension within his own heart: that he did not really belong here, but somewhere else. At night, he had chaotic, many−coloured dreams, in the daytime his thoughts still lingered in them; sometimes they made him laugh, all to himself, like the tinkling of a little bell, so that Madam Mahler, shaking her own head, held him to be a bit weak in his.

A visitor came to Madam Mahler's house, a friend of her youth, an old wry seamstress with a flat, brown face and a black wig. They called her Mamzell Ane, she had in her young days sewn in many great houses. She wore a red bow at the throat, and had many coquettish, maidenly little ways and postures with her. But within her sunk bosom she had also a greatness of soul, which enabled her to scorn her present misery in the memory of that splendour which in the past her eyes had beheld. Madam Mahler was a woman of small imagination, she did but reluctantly lend an ear to her friend's grand, indeterminate soliloquies, and after a while Mamzell Ane turned to little Jens for sympathy. Before the child's grave attentiveness, her fancy took speed, she called forth and declaimed upon the glory of satin, velvet and brocade, of lofty halls and marble staircases. The lady of the house was adorned for a ball by the light of multitudinous candles, her husband came in to fetch her with a star on his breast, while the carriage and pair waited in the street. There were big weddings in the cathedral, and funerals as well, with all the ladies swaddled in black, like magnificent, tragic columns. The children called their parents Papa and Mamma, they had dolls and hobby−horses to play with, talking parrots in gilt cages, and dogs that were taught to walk on their hind legs. Their mother kissed them, gave them bonbons and pretty pet names. Even in the winter the warm rooms behind the silk curtains were filled with the perfumes of flowers named heliotropes and oleanders, and the chandeliers that hung from the ceiling were themselves made of glass, in the shape of bright

flowers and leaves.

The idea of this majestic, radiant world, in the mind of little Jens merged with that of his own inexplicable isolation in life, into a great dream, or fantasy. He was so lonely in Madam Mahler's house because one of the houses of Mamzell Ane's tales was his real home. In the long days when Madam Mahler stood by her washtub or brought her washing out into town, he fondled and played with the picture of this house and of the people who lived in it, and who loved him so dearly. Mamzell Ane, on her side, noted the effect of her epopee on the child, realized that she had at last found the ideal audience, and was further inspired by the discovery. The relation between the two developed into a kind of love affair: for their happiness, for their very existence, they had become dependent upon one another.

Now Mamzell Ane was a revolutionist, of her own accord, and out of some primitive, flaming visionary sight within her proud, virginal heart, for she had all her time lived amongst submissive and unreflective people. The meaning and object of existence to her was grandeur, beauty and elegance. For the life of her she would not see them disappear from the earth. But she felt it to be a cruel and scandalous state of things that so many men and women must live and die without these highest human values, yes, without the very knowledge of them, that they must be poor, wry and inelegant. She was every day looking forward to that day of justice when the tables were to be turned, and the wronged and oppressed were to enter into their heaven of refinement and gracefulness. All the same, she now took pains not to impart into the soul of the child any of her own bitterness or rebelliousness. For as the intimacy between them grew, she did in her heart acclaim little Jens as legitimate heir to all the magnificence for which she had herself prayed in vain. He was not to fight for it, everything was his by right, and should come to him on its own. Possibly the inspired and experienced old maid noted that the boy had in him no talent for envy or rancour whatever. In their long, happy communications, he accepted Mamzell Ane's world serenely and without misgiving, in the very manner, except for the fact that he had not got any of it of the happy children born within it.

There was a short period of his life in which Jens made the other children of the back−yard parties to his happiness. He was, he told them, far from being the half−wit barely tolerated by old Madam Mahler, he was on the contrary, the favourite of fortune. He had a Papa and Mamma and a fine house of his own, with such and such things in it, a carriage, and horses in the stable. He was spoilt and would get everything he asked for. It was a curious thing that the children did not laugh at him, nor afterwards pursue him with mockery. They almost appeared to believe him. Only they could not understand or follow his fancies, they took but little interest in them, and after a while they altogether disregarded them. So Jens again gave up sharing the secret of his felicity with the world.

Still some of the questions put to him by the children had set the boy's mind working, so that he asked Mamzell Ane, for the confidence between them by this time was complete, how it had come to pass that he had lost contact with his home and had been taken into Madam Mahler's establishment? Mamzell Ane found it difficult to answer him, she could not explain the fact to herself. It would be, she reflected, part of the confused and corrupt state of the world in general. When she had thought the matter over, she solemnly, in the manner of a Sibyl, furnished him with an explanation. It was, she said, by no means unheard of, neither in life nor in books, that a child in the highest and happiest circumstances, and most dearly beloved by his parents, enigmatically vanished and was lost. She stopped short at this, for even to her dauntless and proven soul, the theme seemed too tragic to be further dwelt on. Jens accepted the explanation in the spirit in which it was given, and from this moment saw himself as that melancholy, but not uncommon phenomenon: a vanished and lost child.

But when Jens was six years old, Mamzell Ane died, leaving to him her few earthly possessions: a thin−worn silver thimble, a fine pair of scissors, and a little black chair with roses painted on it. Jens set a great value to these things, and every day gravely contemplated them. Just then, Madam Mahler began to see the end of her hundred rixdollars. She had been piqued by her old friend's absorption in the child, and so decided to get her own back. From now on she would make the boy useful to her in the business of the laundry. His life therefore was no longer

his own, and the thimble, the scissors and the chair stood in Madam Mahler's room, the sole tangible remnants, or proofs, of that splendour which he and Mamzell Ane had known of and shared.

At the same time as these events took place in Adelgade, there lived in a stately house in Bredgade, a young married couple, whose names were Jacob and Emilie Vandamm. The two were cousins, she being the only child of one of the big shipowners of Copenhagen, and he, the son of that magnate's sister so that if it had not been for her sex, the young lady would with time have become head of the firm. The old shipowner, who was a widower, with his widowed sister occupied the two loftier lower stories of the house. The family held closely together, and the young couple had been betrothed from childhood.

Jakob was a very big young man, with a quick head and an easy temper. He had many friends, but none of them could dispute the fact that he was growing fat at the early age of thirty. Emilie was not a regular beauty, but she had an extremely graceful and elegant figure, and the slimmest waist in Copenhagen, she was supple and soft in her walk and all her movements, with a low voice, and a reserved, gentle manner. As to her moral being, she was the true daughter of a long row of competent and honest tradesmen: upright, wise, truthful and a bit of a Pharisee. She gave much time to charitable work, and therein minutely distinguished between the deserving and the undeserving poor. She entertained largely and prettily, but kept strictly to her own milieu. Her old father, who had travelled round the world, and was an admirer of the fair sex, teased her over the Sunday dinner table: there was, he said, an exquisite piquancy in the contrast between the suppleness of her body, and the rigidity of her mind.

There had been a time when, unknown to the world, the two had been in concord. When Emilie was eighteen, and Jakob was away in China on a ship, she fell in love with a young naval officer, whose name was Charlie Dreyer, and who, three years earlier, when he was only twenty− one, had distinguished himself and been decorated in the war of 1849. Emilie was not then officially engaged to her cousin; she did not believe, either, that she would exactly break Jakob's heart if she left him and married another man. All the same, she had strange, sudden misgivings, the strength of her own feelings alarmed her. When in solitude she pondered on the matter, she held it beneath her to be so entirely dependent on another human being. But she again forgot her fears when she was with Charlie, and she wondered and wondered that life indeed held so much sweetness.

Her best friend, Charlotte Tutein, as the two girls were undressing after a ball, said to her: "Charlie Dreyer makes love to all the pretty girls of Copenhagen, but he does not intend to marry any of them. I think he is a Don Juan."

Emilie smiled into the looking−glass. Her heart melted at the drought that Charlie, misjudged by all the world, was known to her alone for what he was: loyal, constant and true.

Charlie's ship was leaving for the West Indies; upon the night before his departure he came out to her father's villa near Copenhagen to say good−bye, and found Emilie alone. The two young people walked in the garden; it was moonshine. Emilie broke off a white rose, moist with dew, and gave it to him. As they were parting on the road just outside the gate, he seized both her hands, drew them to his breast, and in one great flaming whisper begged her, since nobody would see him walk back with her, to let him stay that night, until in the morning he must go so far away.

It is probably almost impossible to the children of a later generation to imagine or realize the horror, dread and abomination which the idea and the very word of seduction would awake in the minds of the young girls of that past age. She would not have been as deadly frightened and revolted if she found that he meant to cut her throat.

He had to repeat himself before she understood him, and as she did so the ground sank beneath her. She felt as if the one man amongst all, whom she trusted and loved, was intending to bring upon her the supreme sin, disaster and shame, was asking her to betray her mother's memory and all the maidens in the world. Her own feelings for him made her an accomplice in the crime, and she realized that she was lost: Charlie felt her wavering on her feet, and put his arms round her. In a stifled, agonized cry she tore herself out of them, fled, and with all her might

pushed the heavy iron gate to, she bolted it on him as if it had been the cage of an angry lion. On which side of the gate was the lion? Her strength gave way, she hung on to the bars, while on the other side, the desperate, miserable lover pressed himself against them, fumbled between them for her hands, her clothes, and implored her to open. But she recoiled and flew, to the house, to her room, only to find there despair within her own heart and a bitter vacuity in all the world round it.

Six months later Jakob came home from China, and their engagement was celebrated amongst the rejoicings of the families. A month after she learned that Charlie had died from fever at St. Thomas. Before she was twenty, she was married, and mistress of her own fine house.

Many young girls of Copenhagen married in the same way par depit and then, to save their self−respect, denied their first love and made the excellency of their husbands their one point of honour, so that they became incapable of distinguishing between truth and untruth, lost their moral weight and flickered in life without any foothold in reality.

Emilie was saved from their fate by the intervention, so to say, of the old Vandamms, her forefathers, and by the instinct and principle of sound merchantship which they had passed on into the blood of their daughter. The staunch and resolute old traders had not winked when they made out their balance−sheet, in hard times they had sternly looked bankruptcy and ruin in the face, they were the loyal, unswerving servants of facts.

So did Emilie now take stock of her profit and loss. She had loved Charlie, he had been unworthy of her love, and she was never again to love in that same way. She had stood upon the brink of an abyss, and but for the grace of God she was at this moment a fallen woman, an outcast from her father's house. The husband she had married was kind− hearted, and a good man of business, he was also fat, childish, unlike her. She had got out of life, a house to her taste and a secure, harmonious position in her own family and in the world of Copenhagen; for these she was grateful, and about them she would take no risk. She did, at this moment of her life, with all the strength of her young soul, embrace a creed of fanatical truthfulness and solidity. The ancient Vandamms might have applauded her, or they might have thought her code excessive: they had taken a risk themselves, when it was needed, and they were aware that in trade it is a dangerous thing to shy at danger.

Jakob, on his side, was in love with his wife, and priced her beyond rubies. To him, as to the other young men out of the strictly moral Copenhagen bourgeoisie, his first experience of love had been extremely gross. He had preserved the freshness of his heart, and his claim to neatness and orderliness in life by holding on to an ideal of purer womanhood, in the first place represented by the young cousin, whom he was to marry, the innocent, fair−haired girl of his own mother's blood, and brought up as she had been. He carried her image with him to Hamburg and Amsterdam, and that trait in him which his wife called childishness made him deck it out like a doll or an icon,− −out in China it became highly ethereal and romantic, and he used to repeat to himself little sayings of hers, to recall her low, soft voice. Now he was happy to be back in Denmark, married and in his own home, and to find his young wife as perfect as his portrait of her. At times he felt a vague longing for a bit of weakness within her, or for an occasional appeal to his own strength, which, as things were, only made him out a clumsy figure beside her delicate form. He gave her all that she wanted, and out of his pride in her superiority left her all decisions on their house and on their daily and social life. Only in their charity work, it happened that the husband and wife did not see eye to eye, and that Emilie would give him a little lecture on his credulity.

"What an absurd person you are, Jakob," she said, "you will believe everything that these people tell you not because you cannot help it, but because you do really wish to believe them."

"Do you not wish to believe them?" he asked her.

"I cannot see," she replied, "how one can well wish to believe or not to believe. I wish to find out the truth. Once a thing is not true," she added, "it matters little to me whatever else it may be."

A short time after his wedding, Jakob one day had a letter from a rejected supplicant, a former maid in his father−in−law's house, who informed him that while he was away in China, his wife had a liaison with Charlie Dreyer. He knew it to be a lie, tore up the letter, and did not give it another thought.

They had no children. This to Emilie was a grave affliction, she felt that she was lacking in her duties. When they had been married for five years, Jakob vexed by his mother's constant concern, and with the future of the firm on his mind, suggested to his wife that they should adopt a child, to carry on the house. Emilie at once, and with much energy and indignation, repudiated the idea, it had to her all the look of a comedy, and she would not see her father's firm encumbered with a sham heir. Jakob held forth to her upon the Antonines with but little effect. But when six months later he again took up the subject, to her own surprise, she found that it was no longer repellent. Unknowingly she must have given it room in her thought, and let it take root there, for by now it seemed familiar to her. She listened to her husband, looked at him, and felt kindly towards him.

"If this is what he has been looking for," she thought, "I must not oppose it." But in her heart she knew, clearly and coldly, and with dread of her own coldness, the true reason for her indulgence: the deep apprehension, that when a child had been adopted there would be no more obligation on her of producing an heir to the firm, a grandson to her father, a child to her husband.

It was indeed their little divergencies in regard to the deserving or undeserving poor, which brought upon the young couple of Bredgade, the events recounted in this tale. In summer time, they lived within Emilie's father's villa on the Strandvej, and Jakob would drive in to town, and out, in a small gig. One day he decided to profit by his wife's absence to visit an unquestionably unworthy mendicant, an old sea captain from one of his ships. He took the way through the ancient town, where it was difficult to get a carriage along, and where it was such an exceptional sight that people came up from the cellars to stare at it. In the narrow lane of Adelgade, a drunken man waved his arms in front of the horse, it shied, and knocked down a small boy with a heavy wheelbarrow piled high with washing, the wheelbarrow and the washing ended sadly in the gutter. A crowd immediately collected round the spot, but expressed neither indignation nor sympathy. Jakob made his groom lift the little boy on to the seat. The child was smeared with blood and dirt, but he was not badly hurt, nor in the least scared, he seemed to take his accident as an adventure in general, or as if it happened to somebody else.

"Why did you not get out of my way, you little idiot?" Jakob asked him.

"I wanted to look at the horse," said the child, and added: "Now, I can see it well from here."

Jakob got the boy's whereabouts from an onlooker, paid him to take the wheelbarrow back, and himself drove the child home. The sordidness of Madam Mahler's house, and her own, one−eyed, blunt unfeelingness impressed him unpleasantly, still he had before now been inside the houses of the poor. But he was, here, struck by a strange incongruity between the back−yard and the child who lived in it. It was as if, unknowingly, Madam Mahler was housing, and knocking about a small, gentle, wild animal, or a sprite. On his way to the villa, he reflected that the child reminded him of his wife, he had a reserved, as it were, selfless way with him, behind which one guessed great, integrate strength and endurance.

He did not speak of the incident that evening, but he went back to Madam Mahler's house to inquire about the boy, and, after a while, he recounted the adventure to his wife, and somewhat shyly and half in jest, proposed to her that they should take the pretty, forlorn child as their own.

Half in jest, she entered into his idea; it would be better, she thought, than taking on a child whose parents she knew. After this day she herself at times opened up the matter when she could find nothing else to talk to him about. They consulted the family lawyer, and sent their old doctor to look the child over. Jakob was surprised and grateful at his wife's compliance to his wish. She listened with gentle interest when he developed his plans, and would even sometimes vent her own ideas on education.

Lately Jakob had found his domestic atmosphere almost too perfect, and had had an adventure in town, now he tired of it and finished it. He bought Emilie presents, and left her to make her own conditions as to the adoption of the child. He might, she said, bring the boy to the house on the first of October, when they had moved into town from the country, but she herself would reserve her final decision in the matter until April, when he should have been with them for six months. If by then she did not find the child fit for their plan, she would hand him over to some honest, kindly family in the employ of the firm. Till April they themselves would likewise be only Uncle and Aunt Vandamm to the boy.

They did not talk to their family of the project, and this circumstance accentuated the new feeling of comradeship between them. How very different, Emilie said to herself, would the case have proved, had she been expecting a child in the orthodox mode of women. There was indeed something neat and proper about settling the affairs of nature according to your own ideas. "And," she whispered in her mind, as her glance ran down her looking−glass, "in keeping your figure."

As to Madam Mahler, when the time came to approach her, the matter was easily arranged. She had not got it in her to oppose the wishes of her social superiors, she was also, vaguely, rating her own future connection with a house that must surely turn out an abundance of washing. Only the readiness with which Jakob refunded her past outlays on the child left in her heart, a lifelong regret that she had not asked for more.

At the last moment Emilie made a further stipulation. She would go alone to fetch the child. It was important that the relation between the boy and herself should be properly established from the beginning, and she did not trust to Jakob's sense of propriety upon the occasion. In this way, it came about that, when all was ready for the child's reception in the house of Bredgade, Emilie drove by herself to Adelgade to take possession of him, easy in her conscience towards the firm and her husband, but, already, beforehand, a little tired of the whole affair.

In the street, by Madam Mahler's house, a number of unkempt children were obviously waiting for the arrival of the carriage, they stared at her, but turned off their eyes when she looked at them. Her heart sank as she lifted her ample silk skirt and passed through their crowd and across the back−yard; would her boy have the same look? Like Jakob, she had many times before visited the houses of the poor, it was a sad sight, but it could not be otherwise: "You have the poor with you always." But today, since a child from this place was to enter her own house, for the first time she felt personally related to the need and misery of the world. She was seized with a new deep disgust and horror, and at the next moment with a new, deeper pity. In these two minds, she entered Madam Mahler's room.

Madam Mahler had washed little Jens and water−combed his hair. She had also, a couple of days before, hurriedly enlightened him as to the situation and his own promotion in life. But being an unimaginative woman, and moreover, of the opinion that the child was but half− witted, she had not taken much trouble about it. The child had received the information in silence, he only asked her how his father and mother had found him. "Oh, by the smell," said Madam Mahler.

Jens had communicated the news to the other children of the house. His Papa and Mamma, he told them, were coming on the morrow, in great state, to fetch him home. It gave him matter for reflection that the event should raise a great stir in that same world of the back−yard that had received his visions of it with indifference. To him, the two were the same thing.

He had got up on Mamzell Ane's small chair to look out of the window and witness the arrival of his mother. He was still standing on it when Emilie came in, and Madam Mahler in vain made a gesture to chase him down. The first thing that Emilie noticed about the child was that he did not turn his gaze from hers, but looked her straight in the eyes. At the sight of her, a great, ecstatic light passed over his face. For a moment, the two looked at one another.

The child seemed to wait for her to address him, but as she stood on, silent, irresolute, he spoke: "Mamma," he said, "I am glad that you have found me. I have waited for you so long, so long."

Emilie gave Madam Mahler a glance had this scene been staged to move her heart? But the flat lack of understanding in the old woman's face excluded the possibility, and she again turned to the child.

Madam Mahler was a big, broad woman, Emilie herself, in a crinoline and a sweeping mantilla, took up a good deal of space, the child was much the smallest figure in the room, yet at this moment he dominated it, as if he had taken command of it. He stood up straight, with that same radiance in his face and countenance. "Now I am coming home again, with you," he said.

Emilie vaguely and amazedly realized that to the child the importance of the moment did not lie with his own good luck, but with that tremendous happiness and fulfilment which he was bestowing on her. A strange idea, that she could not have explained to herself, at that, ran through her mind, she thought: "This child is as lonely in life as I." Gravely she moved nearer to him and said a few kindly words.

The little boy put out his hand and gently touched the long silky ringlets that fell forward over her neck. "I knew you at once," he said proudly, "you are my Mamma, who spoils me. I would know you amongst all the ladies, by your long, pretty hair." He ran his fingers softly down her shoulder and arm and fumbled over her gloved hand. "You have got three rings on today," he said.

"Yes," said Emilie in her low voice.

A short, triumphant smile broke his face. "And now you kiss me, Mamma!" he said, and then grew very pale. Emilie did not know that his excitement rose from the fact that he had never been kissed. Obediently, surprised at herself, she bent down and kissed him.

Jens's farewell to Madam Mahler at first was somewhat ceremonious for two people who had known each other a long time. For she already saw him as a new person, the rich man's child, and took his hand formally, with a stiff face. But Emilie bade the boy, before he went away, to thank Madam Mahler because she had looked after him till now, and he did so with much freedom and grace. At that, the old woman's tanned and furrowed cheeks once more blushed deeply, like a young girl's, as by the sight of the money at their first meeting, she had so rarely been thanked in her life.

In the street he stood still. "Look at my big fat horses!" he cried.

Emilie sat in the carriage, bewildered. What was she bringing home with her from Madam Mahler's house?

In her own house, as she took the child up the stairs and from one room into another, her bewilderment grew, rarely had she felt so uncertain of herself. It was, everywhere, in the child, the same rapture of recognition at times he would also mention and look for things which she did faintly remember from her own childhood, or other things of which she had never heard. Her small pug, that she had brought with her from her old home, yapped at the boy, she lifted it up, afraid that it would bite him.

"No, Mamma," he cried, "she will not bite me, she knows me well."

A few hours ago yes, she thought, up to the moment in Madam Mahler's room she had kissed the child she would have scolded him: "Fye, you are telling a fib." Now she said nothing, and the next moment the child looked round the room and asked her: "Is the parrot dead?"

"No," she answered wondering, "she is not dead, she is in the other room."

She realized that she was afraid both to be alone with the boy and to let any third person join them. She sent the nurse out of the room. By the time when Jakob was to arrive at the house, she listened for his steps on the stair with a kind of alarm.

"Who are you waiting for?" Jens asked her.

She was at a loss how to designate Jakob to the child. "For my husband," she replied, embarrassed.

Jakob on his entrance found the mother and the child gazing into the same picture book.

The little boy stared at him. "So it is you, who is my Papa!" he exclaimed. "I thought so, too, all the time. But I could not be quite sure of it, could I? It was not by the smell that you found me, then. I think it was the horse that remembered me."

Jakob looked at his wife, she looked into the book. He did not expect sense from a child, and was soon playing with the boy and tumbling him about.

In the midst of a game, Jens set his hands against Jakob's chest. "You have not got your star on," he said.

After a moment Emilie went out of the room. She thought: "I have taken this upon me to meet my husband's wish, but it seems that I must bear the burden of it alone."

Jens took possession of the mansion in Bredgade, and brought it to submission, neither by might nor by power, but in the quality of that fascinating and irresistible personage, perhaps the most fascinating and irresistible in the whole world: the dreamer whose dreams come true. The old house fell a little in love with him. Such is ever the lot of dreamers, when dealing with people at all susceptible to the magic of dreams. The most renowned amongst them, Rachel's son, as all the world knows, suffered hardships and was even cast in prison on that account.

Except for his size Jens had no resemblance to the classic portraits of Cupid, all the same it was evident that, unknowingly, the shipowner and his wife had taken unto them an amoretto. He carried wings into the house, and was in league with the sweet and merciless powers of nature, and his relation to each individual member of the household became a kind of airy love affair. It was upon the strength of this same magnetism, Jakob had picked out the boy as heir to the firm at their first meeting, and that Emilie was afraid to be alone with him. The old magnate and the servants of the house no more escaped their destiny as was once the case with Potiphar, captain to the guard of Egypt; before they knew where they were, they had committed all they had into his hands.

One effect of this particular spell was this: that people were made to see themselves with the eyes of the dreamer, and were impelled to live up to an ideal, and that for this their higher existence, they became dependent upon him. During the time that Jens lived in the house, it was much changed, and dissimilar from the other houses of the town, it became a Mount Olympus, the abode of divinities.

The child took the same lordly, laughing pride in the old ship−owner, who ruled the waters of the universe, as in Jakob's staunch, protective kindness and Emilie's silk−clad gracefulness. The old housekeeper, who had before often grumbled at her lot in life, for the while was transformed into an all−powerful, benevolent guardian of human welfare, a Ceres in cap and apron. And for the same length of time, the coachman, a monumental figure, elevated sky−high above the crowd, and combining within his own person the vigour of the two bay horses, majestically trotted down Bredgade on eight shod and clattering hoofs. It was only after Jens's bed hour, when, immovable and silent, his cheek buried in the pillow, he was exploring new areas of dream, that the house resumed the aspect of a rational, solid Copenhagen mansion.

Jens was himself ignorant of his power. As his new family did not scold him or find fault with him, it never occurred to him that they were at all looking at him. He gave no preference to any particular member of the household, they were all within his scheme of things and must there fit into their place. The relation of the one to the other was the object of his keen, subtle observation. One phenomenon in his daily life never ceased to entertain and please him: that Jakob, so big, broad and fat, should be attentive and submissive to his slight wife. In the world that he had known till now, bulk was of supreme moment.

As, later on, Emilie looked back upon this time, it seemed to her that the child would often provoke an opportunity for this fact to manifest itself, and would then, so to say, clap his hands in triumph and delight, as if the happy state of things had been brought about by his personal skill. But in other cases, his sense of proportion failed him. Emilie in her boudoir had an aquarium with goldfish, in front of which Jens would pass many hours, as silent as the fish themselves, and from his comments upon them, she gathered that to him they were huge, a fine catch could one get hold of them, and even dangerous to the pug, should she happen to fall into the bowl. He asked Emilie to leave the curtains by this window undrawn at night, in order that, when people were asleep, the fish might look at the moon.

In Jakob's relation to the child there was a moment of unhappy love, or at least of the irony of fate, and it was not the first time either that he had gone through this same melancholy experience. For, ever since he himself was a small boy, he had yearned to protect those weaker than he, and to support and right all frail and delicate beings amongst his surroundings. The very qualities of fragility and helplessness inspired in him an affection and admiration which came near to idolatry.

But there was in his nature an inconsistency, such as will often be found in children of old, wealthy families, who have got all they wanted too easily, till in the end they cry out for the impossible: he loved pluck too, gallantry delighted him wherever he met it; and for the clinging and despondent type of human beings, and in particular of women, he felt a slight distaste and repugnance. He might dream of shielding and guiding his wife, but at the same time the little, cool, forbearing smile with which she would receive any such attempt from his side, to him was one of the most bewitching traits in her whole person. In this way he found himself somewhat in the sad and paradoxical position of the young lover who passionately adores virginity.

Now he learned that it was equally out of the question to patronize Jens. The child did not reject or smile at his patronage, as Emilie did, he even seemed grateful for it, but he accepted it in the part of a game or a sport. So that, when they were out walking together, and Jakob, thinking that the child must be tired, lifted him on to his shoulders, Jens would take it that the big man wanted to play at being a horse or an elephant just as much as he himself wanted to play that he were a trooper or a mahout.

Emilie sadly reflected that she was the only person in the house who did not love the child. She felt unsafe with him, even when she was unconditionally accepted as the beautiful, perfect mother, and as she recalled how, only a short time ago, she had planned to bring up the boy in her own spirit, and had written down little memorandums upon education, she saw herself as a figure of fun. To make up for her lack of feeling, she took Jens with her on her walks and drives, to the parks and the Zoo, brushed his thick hair and had him dressed up as neatly as a doll. They were always together. She was sometimes amused by his strange, graceful, dignified delight in all that she showed him, and at the next moment, as in Madam Mahler's room, she realized that however generous she would be to him, he would always be the giver. Her sisters−in−law, and her young married friends, fine ladies of Copenhagen with broods of their own, wondered at her absorption in the foundling and then it happened, when they were off their guard, that they themselves received a dainty arrow in their satin bosoms, and between them began to discuss Emilie's pretty boy, with a tender raillery as that with which they would have discussed Cupid. They asked her to bring him to play with their own children. Emilie declined, and told herself that she must first be certain about his manners. At New Year, she thought, she would give a children's party herself.

Jens had come to the Vandamms in October, when trees were yellow and red in the parks. Then the tinge of frost in the air drove people indoors, and they began to think of Christmas; Jens seemed to know everything about the Christmas tree, the goose with roast apples, and the solemnly joyful church−going on Christmas morning. But it would happen that he mixed up these festivals with others of the season, and described how they were soon all to mask and mum, as children do at Shrovetide. It was as if, from the centre of his happy, playful world, its sundry components showed up less clearly than when seen from afar.

And as the days drew in and the snow fell in the streets of Copenhagen, a change came upon the child. He was not low in spirits, but singularly collected and compact, as if he were shifting the centre of gravitation of his being, and folding his wings. He would stand for long whiles by the window, so sunk in thought that he did not always hear when they called him, filled with a knowledge which his surroundings could not share.

For within these first months of winter, it became evident that he was not at all a person to be permanently set at ease by what the world calls fortune. The essence of his nature was longing. The warm rooms with silk curtains, the sweets, his toys and new clothes, the kindness and concern of his Papa and Mamma, were all of the greatest moment because they went to prove the veracity of his visions, they were infinitely valuable as embodiments of his dreams. But within themselves they hardly meant anything to him, and they had no power to hold him. He was neither a worldling nor a struggler. He was a poet.

Emilie tried to make him tell her what he had in his mind, but got no way with him. Then one day he confided to her of his own accord.

"Do you know, Mamma," he said, "in my house the stair was so dark and full of holes that you had to grope your way up it, and the best thing was really to walk on one's hands and knees. There was a window broken by the wind, and below it, on the landing, there lay a drift of snow as high as me."

"But that is not your house, Jens," said Emilie, "this is your house."

The child looked round the room. "Yes," he said, "this is my fine house. But I have got another house, that is quite dark and dirty. You know it, you have been there too. When the washing was hung up, one had to twine in and out across that big loft, else the huge, wet, cold sheets would catch one, just as if they were alive."

"You are never going back to that house," said she.

The child gave her a great, grave glance, and after a moment said: "No."

But he was going back. She could, by her horror and disgust of the house, keep him from talking of it, as the children there by their indifference had silenced him about his happy home. But when she found him mute and pensive by the window, or at his toys, she knew that his mind had returned to it. And now and again, when they had played together, and their intimacy seemed particularly secure, he opened on the theme.

"In the same street as my house," he said one evening as they were sitting together on the sofa before the fire−place, "there was an old lodging−house, where the people who had got plenty of money could sleep in beds, and the others must stand up and sleep, with a rope under their arms. One night it caught fire, and burned all down. Then, those who were in bed hardly got their trousers on, but ho! those who stood up and slept were the lucky boys, they got out quick. There was a man who made a song about it, you know."

There are some young trees which, when they are planted have the root twisted, and will never take hold in the soil. They may shoot out a profusion of leaves and flowers, but they must soon die. Such was the way with Jens. He had sent out his small branches upwards and to the sides, had fared excellently of the chameleon's dish and eaten air, promise−crammed, and the while he had forgotten to put out roots. Now the time came when by the law

of nature, the bright, abundant bloom must needs wither, fade and waste away. It is possible, had his imagination been turned on to fresh pastures, that he might for a while have drawn nourishment through it, and have delayed his exit. Once or twice, to amuse him, Jakob had talked to him of China; the queer outlandish world captivated the mind of the child, he dwelt with the highest excitement on pictures of pig−tailed Chinamen, dragons, and fishermen with pelicans, and upon the fantastic names of Hong Kong and Yangtze−kiang. But the grown−up people did not realize the significance of his novel imaginative venture, and so, for lack of sustenance, the frail, fresh branch soon drooped.

A short time after the children's party, early in the new year, the child grew pale and hung his head. The old doctor came and gave him medicine to no effect. It was a quiet, unbroken decline, the plant was going out.

As Jens was put to bed and was, so to say, legitimately releasing his hold upon the world of actuality, his fancy made headway and ran along with him, like the sails of a small boat, from which the ballast is thrown overboard. There were now, all the time people round him, who would listen to what he said, gravely, without interrupting or contradicting him; this happy state of things enraptured him. The dreamer's sick bed became a throne.

Emilie sat at the bed all the time, distressed by a feeling of impotence which sometimes in the night made her wring her hands. All her life she had endeavoured to sever good from bad, right from wrong, happiness from unhappiness. Here she was, she reflected with dismay, in the hands of a being, much smaller and weaker than herself, to whom these were all one, who welcomed light and darkness, pleasure and pain, in the same spirit of gallant, debonair approval and fellowship. The fact, she told herself, did away with all need of her comfort and consolation here at her child's sick bed; it often seemed to abolish her very existence.

Now within the brotherhood of poets, Jens was a humorist, a comic fabulist. It was, in each individual phenomenon of life, the whimsical, the burlesque moment that attracted and inspired him. To the gale, grave, young woman, his fancies seemed sacrilegious within a death−room, yet after all it was his own death−room.

"Oh, there were so many rats, Mamma," he said, "so many rats. They were all over the house. One came to get a bit of lard on the shelf, pat! a rat jumped at one. They ran across my face at night. Put your face close to me, and I will show you how it felt."

"There are no rats here, my darling," said Emilie.

"No, none," said he, "when I am not sick any more, I will go back and fetch you one. The rats like the people better than the people like them. For they think us good, lovely to eat. There was an old Comedian, who lived in the garret, he played comedy when he was young, and had travelled to foreign countries. Now he gave the little girls money to kiss him, but they would not kiss him because they said that they did not like his nose. It was a curious nose, too, all fallen in, and when they would not, he cried, and wrung his hands. But he got ill, and died, and nobody knew about it. But when at last they went in, do you know, Mamma, the rats had eaten off his nose nothing else, his nose only! But people will not eat rats, even when they are very hungry. There was a fat boy named Mads in the cellar, who caught rats in many curious ways, and cooked them. But old Madam Mahler said that she despised him for it, and the children called him Rat Mads."

Then again he would talk of her own house. "My Grandpapa," he said, "has got corns, the worst corns in Copenhagen. When they get very bad, he sighs and moans, he says: 'There will be storms in the Chinese Sea, it is a damned business, my ships are going to the bottom.' So, you know, I think that the seamen will be saying: 'There is a storm in this sea, it is a damned business, our ship is going to the bottom. Now it is time that old Grandpapa, in Bredgade, goes and has his corns out.'"

Only within the last days of his life did he speak of Mamzell Ane. She had been, as it were, his Musa, the only person who had knowledge of the one and the other of his worlds. As he recalled her, his tone of speech changed,

he held forth in a grand, solemn manner, as upon an elemental power, of necessity known to every one.

If Emilie had given his fantasies her attention, many things might have been made clear to her. But she said: "No, I do not know her, Jens."

"Oh, Mamma, she knows you well!" he said, "she sewed you wedding gown, all of white satin. It was slow work so many fittings! And my Papa," the child went on and laughed, "he came in to you and do you know what he said? He said: 'My white rose.'"

He suddenly bethought himself of the scissors which Mamzell Ane had left him, and wanted them, and this was the only occasion upon which Emilie ever saw him impatient or fretful.

She left her house, for the first time within three weeks, and went herself to Madam Mahler's house to inquire about the scissors. On the way, the powerful, enigmatical figure of Mamzell Ane took on for her the aspect of a Parca, of Atropos herself, scissors in hand, ready to cut off the thread of life. But Madam Mahler in the meantime had bartered away the scissors to a tailor of her acquaintance, and she flatly denied the existence both of them and of Mamzell Ane.

Upon the last morning of the boy's life, Emilie lifted her small pug, that had been his faithful playmate, on to the bed. Then the little dark face and the crumpled body seemed to recall to him the countenance of his friend. "There she is!" he cried.

Emilie's mother−in−law, and the old shipowner himself, had been daily visitors to the sick room. The whole Vandamm family stood weeping round the bed when, in the end, like a small brook which falls into the ocean, Jens gave himself up to the boundless, final unity of dream, and was absorbed in it.

He died at the end of March, a few days before the date that Emilie had fixed to decide on his fitness for admission into the house of Vandamm. Her father suddenly determined that he must be interred in the family vault irregularly, since he was never legally adopted into the family. So he was laid down behind a heavy wrought−iron fence, in the finest grave that any Plejelt had ever obtained.

In the following days the house in Bredgade, and its inhabitants with it, shrank and decreased. The people were a little confused, as after a fall, and seized by a sad sense of diffidence. For the first weeks after Jens's burial, life looked to them strangely insipid, a sorry affair, void of purport. The Vandamms were not used to being unhappy, and were not prepared for the sense of loss with which now the death of the child left them. To Jakob, it seemed as if he had let down a friend, who had after all, laughingly trusted in his strength now nobody had any use for it, and he saw himself as a freak, the stuffed puppet of a colossus. But with all this, after a while there was also in the survivors, as ever at the passing away of an idealist, a vague feeling of relief.

Emilie alone of the house of Vandamms, preserved, as it were, her size, and her sense of proportion. It may even be said that when the house tumbled from its site in the clouds, she upheld and steadied it. She had deemed it affected in her to go into mourning for a child that was not hers, and while she gave up the balls and parties of the Copenhagen season, she went about her domestic tasks quietly as before. Her father and her mother−in−law, sad and at a loss in their daily life, turned to her for balance, and because she was the youngest amongst them, and seemed to them in some ways like the child that was gone, they transferred to her the tenderness and concern which had formerly been the boy's and of which they now wished that they had given him even more. She was pale from her long watches at the sick bed, so they consulted between them, and with her husband, on means of cheering and distracting her.

But after some time Jakob was struck with her silence and scared by it. It seemed at first as if, except for her household orders, she found it unnecessary to speak, and later on as if she had forgotten or lost the faculty of

speech. His timid attempts to inspirit her so much appeared to surprise and puzzle her, that he lacked the spirit to go on with them.

A couple of months after Jens's death, Jakob took his wife for a drive by the road which runs from Copenhagen to Elsinore, along the Sound. It was a lovely, warm and fresh day in May. As they came to Charlottenlund he proposed to her that they should walk through the wood, and send the carriage round to meet them. So they got down by the forest gate, and for a moment with their eyes followed the carriage, as it rolled away on the road.

They came into the wood, into a green world. The beech trees had been out for three weeks, the first mysterious translucence of early May was over. But the foliage was still so young that the green of the forest world was the brighter in the shade. Later on, after midsummer, the wood would be almost black in the shade, and brilliantly green in the sun: now, where the rays of the sun fell through the tree crowns, the ground was colourless, dim, as if powdered with sun dust. But where the wood lay in shadow, it glowed and luminesced like green glass and jewels. The anemones were faded and gone, the young fine grass was already tall. And within the heart of the forest, the woodruff was in bloom its layer of diminutive, starry, white flowers seemed to float round the knotty roots of the old grey beeches, like the surface of a milky lake, a foot above the ground. It had rained in the night; upon die narrow road the deep tracks of the woodcutters' cart were moist. Here and there, by the roadside, a grey, misty globe of a withered dandelion caught the sun; the flower of the field had come on a visit to the wood.

They walked on slowly. As they came a little way into the wood, they suddenly heard the cuckoo, quite close. They stood still and listened, then walked on. Emilie let go her husband's arm to pick up from the road the shell of a small, pale−blue bird's egg, broken in two, she tried to set it together, and kept it on the palm of her hand. Jakob began to talk to her of a journey to Germany that he had planned for them, and of the places that they were to see. She listened docilely, and was silent.

They had come to the end of the wood. From the gate they had a great view over the open landscape. After the green sombreness of the forest, the world outside seemed unbelievably light, as if bleached by the luminous dimness of midday. But after awhile, the colours of fields, meadows, and dispersed groups of trees defined themselves to the eye, one by one. There was a faint blue light in the sky, and faint, white, cumulus clouds rose along the horizon. The young green rye in the fields was about to ear; where the finger of the breeze touched it, it ran in long, gentle billows along the ground. The small, thatched peasants' houses lay like lime−white, square isles within the undulating land; round them the lilac−hedges bore up their light foliage and, at the top, clusters of pale flowers. They heard the rolling of a carriage on the road in the distance, and above their heads the incessant singing of innumerable larks.

By the edge of the forest, there lay a wind−felled tree. Emilie said, "Let us sit down here a little."

She loosened the ribbons of her bonnet and laid it in her lap. After a minute, she said: "There is something I want to tell you," and made a long pause.

All through this conversation in the wood she behaved in the same way, with a long silence before each phrase not exactly as if she were collecting her thoughts, but as if she were finding speech in itself laborious or deficient.

She said: "The boy was my own child."

"What are you talking about?" Jakob asked her.

"Jens," she said, "he was my own child. Do you remember telling me that when you saw him the first time, you though he was like me? He was indeed like me; he was my son."

Now Jakob might have been frightened, and believed her to be out of her mind. But lately, to him, things had come about in unexpected ways, he was prepared for the paradoxical. So he sat quietly on the truck, and looked down at the young beech shoots in the ground.

"My dear," he said, "my dear, you do not know what you say."

She was silent awhile, as if distressed by his interruption of her train of thought. "It is difficult for other people to understand, I know," she said at last, patiently; "if Jens had been here still, he might perhaps have made you understand, better than I. But try," she went on, "to understand me. I have thought that you ought to know. And if I cannot speak to you, I cannot speak to anyone." She said this with a kind of grave concern, as if really threatened by total incapacity of speech.

He remembered how, during these last weeks, he had felt her silence heavy on him, and had tried to make her speak of something, of anything.

"No, my dear," he said, "you speak, I shall not interrupt you."

Gently, as if thankful for his promise, she began: "He was my child, and Charlie Dreyer's. You met Charlie once in Papa's house. But it was while you were in China that he became my lover."

At these words, Jakob remembered the anonymous letter he had once received. As he recalled his own indignant scouting of the slander and the care with which he had kept it from her, it seemed to him a curious thing that after five years, he was to have it repeated by her own lips.

"When he asked me," said Emilie, "I stood for a moment in great danger. For I had never talked with a man of these matters. Only with Aunt Malvina and with my old governess. And women, for some reason, I do not know why, will have it that such a demand is a base and selfish thing in a man, and an insult to a woman. Why do you allow us to think that of you? You, who are a man, will know that he asked me out of his love and out of his great heart, from magnanimity. He had more life in him than he himself needed. He meant to give that to me. It was life itself, yes, it was eternity that he offered me.

"And I, who had been taught so wrong, I might easily have rejected him. Even now, when I think of it, I am afraid, as of death. Still I need not be so, for I know for certain that if I were back at that moment again, I should behave in the same way as I did then. And I was saved out of the danger. I did not send him away. I let him walk back with me, through the garden for we were down by the garden−gate and stay with me that night till, in the morning, he was to go so far away."

She again made a long pause, and went on: "All the same, because of the doubt and the fear of other people that I had in my heart, I and the child had to go through much. If I had been a poor girl, with only a hundred rixdollars in all the world, it would have been better, for then we should have remained together. Yes, we went through much."

"When I found Jens again, and he came home with me," she took up her narrative after a silence, "I did not love him. You all loved him, only I myself did not. It was Charlie that I loved. Still I was more with Jens than any of you, he told me many things, which none of you heard. I saw that we could not find another such as he, that there was none so wise." She did not know that she was quoting the Scripture, any more than the old shipowner had been aware of doing so when he ordained Jens to be buried in the field of his fathers and the cave that was therein this was a small trick peculiar to the magic of the dead child.

"I learned much from him. He was always truthful, like Charlie. He was so truthful that he made me ashamed of myself. Sometimes I thought it wrong in me to teach him to call you Papa."

"At the time when he was ill," she said, "what I thought of was this: that if he died I might, at last, go into mourning for Charlie." She lifted up her bonnet, gazed at it and again dropped it. "And then, after all," she said, "I could not do it." She made a pause. "Still, if I had told Jens about it, it would have pleased him, it would have made him laugh. He would have told me to buy grand, black clothes, and long veils."

It was a lucky thing, Jakob reflected, that he had promised her not to interrupt her tale. For had she wanted him to speak he would not have found a word to say. As now she came to this point in her story she sat in silence for a long time, so that for a moment he believed that she had finished, and at that a choking sensation came upon him, as if all words must needs stick in his throat.

"I thought," she suddenly began again, "that I would have to suffer, terribly even, for all this. But no, it has not been so. There is a grace in the world, such as none of us have known about. The world is not a hard or severe place, as people tell us. It is not even just. You are forgiven everything. The fine things of the world you cannot wrong or harm, they are much too strong for that. You could not wrong or harm Jens, no one could."

"And, now, after he has died," she said, "I understand everything."

Again she sat immovable, gently poised upon the tree stem. For the first time during their talk she looked round her, her gaze ran slowly, almost caressingly, along the forest scenery.

"It is difficult," she said, "to explain what it feels like to understand things. I have never been good at finding words, I am not like Jens. But it has seemed to me ever since March, since the Spring began, that I have known well why things happened, why, for instance, they all flowered. And why the birds came. The generosity of the world, Papa's and your kindness too! As we walked in the wood today, I thought that now I have got back my sight, and my sense of smell, from when I was a little girl. All things here tell me, erf their own, what they signify." She stopped, her gaze steadying. "They signify Charlie," she said. After a long pause she added: "And I, I am Emilie. Nothing can alter that either."

She made a gesture as if to pull on her gloves that lay in her bonnet, but she put them back again, and remained quiet, as before.

"Now I have told you all," she said. "Now you must decide what we are to do."

"Papa will never know," she said gently and thoughtfully. "None of them will ever know. Only you. I have thought, if you will let me do so, that you and I, when we talk of Jens," she made a slight pause, and Jakob thought: "She has never talked of him till today" "might talk of all these things too."

"Only in one thing," she said slowly, "am I wiser than you. I know that it would be better, much better, and easier for both you and me, if you would believe me."

Jakob was accustomed to take a quick summary of a situation, and to make his dispositions accordingly. He waited a moment, after she had ceased to talk, to do so now.

"Yes, my dear," he said, "that is true."

YOU AREN'T BIG ENOUGH

BY HANS POVLSEN Translated By John Poole

Eric was always having adventures: he loved them. The only trouble was that he entered into them heart and soul,

and wanted to go through with them to the bitter end. He never saw the troll until the very last moment and was invariably taken completely by surprise. The others always ran away in time, leaving behind a dark, pale−faced little boy who was too scared to turn round and look the troll in the face.

With the coming of the fine Autumn weather the villagers' cattle were let out to graze. Eric was allowed to be with them all day long; from the early morning when it was so cool and the dew ringed everything a faint blueish colour, until evening when the calls of "Git−oop− there..." echoed through the meadows and set the cows moving slowly up the valley, necks craning and ears pointing forward, slowly advancing columns homeward bound.

On one such delightful day Eric and his friend Chris were lying in a sand−pit; spread out beside them was a supply of newspaper and tobacco. It was not their first adventure of this kind, and they were enjoying every moment of it. In this particular field of activity Eric had been able to demonstrate quite convincingly that his thin and skinny type was better able to cope with tobacco than that to which the other sturdier fair−haired children belonged. He had skipped the green face and sickness stage, and this had won for him a great deal of prestige.

This particular adventure went as all adventures should, until the time came for the troll to put in his appearance. His coming was as unexpected as it always is to those who really live their adventures.

The local postman chanced to shamble past as Eric was lighting a newspaper cigar.

All that happened was that he said: "You aren't big enough," and went on his way with his cap pulled down over his bearded face.

In a flash Erik took in the full implication of what had occurred. The postman was just starting on his round; in a little while he would be in Harrup village where he could easily let fall some casual remark, as he often did, just as he was leaving one of the houses there. It would be just like him to talk in riddles and say: "He's not big enough, that young Eric," and there straight away would be half the answer.

He let the cigar fall to the ground and stole home. On the way he chewed juicy grasses and sucked clover flowers in the manner approved by those who were considered experts in removing traces of tobacco smoke. He stopped every other minute and breathed into his cupped hands, quickly inhaling his own breath again to test it for purity. When he got home he drank water from the well, quantities of it, before going indoors as if nothing had happened.

So far as his father was concerned, there was nothing to fear; he always seemed to be buried so deep in something children could never understand that no tobacco smell could ever penetrate to him. It was practically certain that he did not have a sense of smell like ordinary people.

The postman came once a day, his face rank with beard and the peak of his cap pulled well down over his eyes. Eric awaited his coming in terrified apprehension. He had, however, already discovered that he was being watched over by a benevolently forgetful Providence, and every day that followed helped to confirm this. The postman came and went. When he was on duty there were some things that he was not allowed to talk about and others that he did not choose to talk about. Eric was aware of this and was grateful to the old man for having, as it now seemed, treated the knowledge of his crime as confidential information which he was bound as a public servant not to divulge.

All this helped to prepare the ground for the birth of a new monster which then proceeded to grow up in Eric's mind. It was the idea of becoming the owner of a pipe. It loomed large and black and it made him afraid, but it grew none the less, became more substantial, and as the days went by, developed into the tiny, obstinate and irrepressible germ of a criminal desire.

He hardened himself in solitude, spending hours gazing at the gnarled branches and young shoots of an elderberry tree. He managed to make himself a pipe from this material, but the finished article was ugly and unsatisfactory. Besides which it tasted green. This caused the veil over his great desire to be lifted: the notion which had irresistably come to maturity in his mind of becoming the owner of a real pipe.

One day he noticed that there were three ore lying on the plate rack. They were there the next day, and the next. Fate must have had a hand in it, for it was the very sum that he deeded.

His father was as usual in the study writing something unreadable and uninteresting. His mother was on her hands and knees in the garden grubbing up potatoes, and Eric was supposed to be going into the village to buy bread.

In the kitchen the kettle was sitting over the warm stove like a broody hen. As he came in and looked at the money it seemed to him that he was very far from being alone and without witnesses. The kettle was making clucking noises which animated the whole kitchen. Whenever the coals shifted underneath it, the clucking turned into the shrill cackle a hen makes as it gets up in answer to the peeping of its chicks.

At any other time he would have been comforted by the kettle, and found romance and far distant music in the noises it made. But just then he wanted to be alone. There it sat on the hot plate, plump and self−confident, minding its own business, but keeping a watchful eye on him all the same.

And sure enough it became restive and screeched just as he was picking up the money.

But the deed was done, and tight−lipped he went out to fetch his cap. Before going down to the village he would have to go into the study.

His father scratched among his small change for a long time before he found the right money for a loaf. As he waited, Eric had an uncomfortable feeling that the three ore would break the silence and call out from their hiding place in his pocket. At length the necessary fifty ore lay on the table; two−ore and five−ore pieces which his father had obtained from the sale of pens and pencils in the school.

His father never made a fuss as men so often do when they have to part with money for food which they are going to eat themselves. He merely shrugged his shoulders involuntarily, as if something had caused him pain.

Eric recognised the gesture, pre−occupied as he was. He hurried away and went down the garden to tell his mother that he was off.

Down on her hands and knees, she was supporting herself with her left hand as she scraped away the earth from under a potato plant. Then covering the hole she had made with a shower of clayey soil she moved forward over it and straightened her back.

"You remembered without being told," she said with a trace of surprise in her voice which she could not hide. It occurred to Eric that a somewhat watchful look had come into his mother's face just lately; for a moment her eyes would sometimes get suddenly bigger, and he did not like it.

She knelt there looking straight in front of her with muddy hands twice their normal size hanging at her side, for all the world as if they did not belong to her at all.

"You can get the money from father if he's got any, that is," she said with a sudden sadness in her eyes.

"Oh, I expect he has," Eric burst out, thereby plunging carelessly into the labyrinth of deceit.

Up by the house Eric stopped. He thought he heard someone call but he did not answer because he was not sure whether it could not have been the money in his pocket that had cried out. There it was again disturbing the peace of the garden like the humming of a noisy bumble bee. His mother was calling. His heart beat faster as he went back to her and heard her say, without even looking at him: "There are three ore on the plate rack, so you need only ask you father for forty− seven".

"All right."

He went indoors making the kitchen door creak so that it could be heard outside. What was he to do? There was nothing for it but to take the three ore back to his father. If his father then happened to say nothing to his mother the matter would rest there. But Eric had the feeling that he was on very thin ice and that he would have to move fast.

Without further deliberation he opened the study door and gave three ore to his father.

"Mother had three ore already," he said, which was perfectly true.

Without lifting his eyes from the paper in front of him his father fumbled blindly on the table for the coins. It was plain that he had idea of what he had been given. All was well then. Eric went into the yard full of a warm feeling of reassurance.

It was only when he had got out there that he realised how much the situation had changed. There was now no longer any point in his going into the village to fetch the bread!

The schoolroom door was standing open, and he went into the doorway to think things over a bit. It was an awful shame that he would have to go on living without that pipe, but also a surprising piece of good luck that his first set−back had turned out so well. He was back where he started but he was still free to act. What was more, he had not stolen any money and had hardly lied at all. Almost unconsciously he kicked off his clogs and went into the schoolroom and up to the teacher's desk, where he sat on the tall chair and started pulling the stuffing from under the torn leather cover.

He could not hide it from himself for very long that he was only sitting there because he was going to take three ore out of the drawer in the desk.

They were there all right and many more; his father would have no idea how much money there was altogether.

When he stood outside again he had the feeling that everything had gone reasonably well. He started to run and did not stop until his clogs rang out on the village cobbles.

He soon bought the bread and went with the loaf under his arm to the shop where there were clay pipes lying on a glass shelf which hung in the window. Some had their bowls nearest to him, some their stems; they were on view both inside and outside the shop, and they were all for sale.

The shopkeeper was busy, but his wife caught sight of Eric and came to the counter. Eric pretended not to see her, because he did not like the idea of telling her what he wanted. She looked like a mother, he thought, the sort that knows everything.

But then she spoke to him: "And what would you like, my dear?"

People in the shop turned round waiting for his answer, and he wished he were outside again. Suddenly he hit upon a way out of his quandary.

"I was told to ask if you had any clay pipes."

To his dismay the woman smiled.

"Have we any pipes for this young man?"

The shopkeeper, who as usual had been listening with half an ear to what was going on in the rest of the shop, had also heard Eric's request, and he laughed, and so did the customer he was serving.

"Who is it wants to know, you little Caiaphas?"

Eric could not answer that one. He moved his lips, but his voice just would not come.

At last the shopkeeper took a pipe from a box under the counter and pushed it over to him.

"Three ore," he said, and went back to talk to the other customers.

As he was leaving, Eric heard someone say: "That must be one of the schoolmaster's kids from over Harrup way."

It was just about as bad as it could be.

He kept the pipe in his pocket until he got as far as a sheltered spot along the road where he had looked forward to a little rest. As he reached down for the pipe he stopped momentarily in his tracks and then went on again pretending that he unfortunately could not spare the time to rest in the ditch after all...

He had forgotten to bring any tobacco with him from home. He realised at the same time that he was being saved from returning home from the village smelling of tobacco.

Even so, his mother looked hard at him at he came in. He looked away and felt his confidence dwindling. He decided to do penance by not smoking the pipe the first evening. It took some of the weight off his mind, as if he had been relieved of some unpleasant duty.

He mooched around, hung about the house, leaned up against the barn wall and talked to his small sister. It did not enter his head to go off and join Chris and the other boys.

His mother saw all this, but kept her ideas to herself until Eric had fallen asleep, tired and confused after his drawn battle with the demons in his soul.

Then she went straight up and took the pipe out of his pocket and went and put it on her husband's writing table.

The interrogation began the very next morning before Eric had got up. It was cleverly conceived. He was like a prisoner who was being questioned without knowing whether his accomplice had confessed where was the pipe and what did his mother know about it?

In his terror he denied everything. The denial was something that in his soul longer than the crime itself. When his mother fetched the pipe from the study and, sure that he would own up, held it up in front of him, it was too late. A knot had been tied inside him. All the powers of affirmation and confession that his soul possessed were already securely bound up. He said no, and he kept on saying no.

But the circumstantial evidence was too strong.

He took his preliminary punishment like a man; it warmed and stung him. The position that the nature of the execution demanded that he should take up, enabled him to stifle in his pillow any cry that might otherwise have escaped his lips.

Mrs. Meissel then went away taking the pipe with her and left him to cover up the stripes with his trousers.

It seemed to Eric that his father tried to avoid him all that day, although it was not possible to be sure of this, as Mr. Meissel was a very retiring sort of man at the best of times; buttoned up, probably against his will. Eric often wondered whether his father was just as much a stranger to his mother. He knew perfectly well, of course, that they laid their plans together when the children were asleep. They also discussed a great many things quite openly, and when it came to the point they always backed one another up. This could be both good and bad.

Early in the afternoon Eric was sent into the study and told to get on with his home−work. With the feeling that the painful episode was now over he went briskly ahead with learning his hymns and his multiplication tables. It was quite a relief to get back to the daily grind.

He hummed his way through the first verse of the hymn that he had to learn. It was full of mysterious things which very likely nobody knew anything about. The whole piece was silly anyway, as that sort of thing always was. Then came the six times table; not easy to grasp either. The best part was "six−sixes−are−thirty−six", which at least sounded funny. He alternated between the two kinds of "verse", reading each in the same tone and with equal lack of understanding.

As he sat muttering by the window he caught sight of a small grey object which lay on the writing table, half covered by a sheet of paper.

It was the clay pipe.

The unfortunate affair had all of a sudden reached its climax. As soon as his father came home he would sit down at the table, lift up the piece of paper and...

Eric knew straight away that this must not happen.

He shuddered helplessly, then grew calm and terribly determined; there was absolutely no doubt at all in his mind. He snatched up the pipe, jumped up on to the book−case ledge, looked round the room, and then reached up and put the pipe right on top of the case.

As he jumped down again the bookcase shook and he thought he heard a rattling noise behind it.

He almost hoped that it was the pipe, for it would mean that it had as good as disappeared for ever. He could not imagine that the case had ever been moved from where it now stood. The pipe had taken it upon itself to go a step further than he himself had dared.

He was determined to stand firm in his position, and with his defences prepared he was ready to meet his fate. Right or wrong he would have to take the consequences of his action. But whatever happened it would be far worse if the pipe were to lie on the table when his father came in.

Eric thought no more about multiplication tables or hymns. He did not think about anything except that he was now standing in a dark place where everything was malevolent and hostile. There was peace and sunshine everywhere, yet in the middle of it all there was this one dark spot which the light shunned and where he stood quite alone.

He went to the window and saw that the sun was also shining out in the garden, throwing long shadows over the grass. All the leaves were still. It was a frightening sight.

With no fixed purpose in his mind he opened the door that led to the little passage behind the baking oven. What did he want there anyway? The strangely spicy smell, which normally was what he loved best in the house, was now malevolent too.

Perhaps he should...He tried to open the door to the parlour, but it screeched a warning to him to shut it quickly for God's sake, and screeched again as he did so.

He was shut in with his crime. The chair, the desk, the hymn book and the multiplication table remained unfeelingly indifferent and left him to himself.

Then suddenly he was seized with the desire to see his pipe again. He drew the chair over to the bookcase and clambered up. He scraped the top of the case with his hand, but could not find it. Then he peered between the back of the case and the wall, into the pitch black space which for as long as he could remember he had thought of as the hiding place of eternity.

There was no pipe to be seen. It had completely vanished. If only he too could vanish in there like the pipe.

He heard his sister clattering over the cobbles in the yard. She was talking to herself and to her doll as she pushed the wretched little doll's pram on to one of the garden paths and with maternal efficiency tucked the doll up in a blanket.

Unbearably peaceful sight!

He turned round into the room as if looking for cover, for something to do.

He put the sheet of paper on the writing table back where he had found it, and pushed the paper−knife underneath. It was lucky that he had done so, for a minute or so later there was his mother in the doorway. Her eyes took in at a single glance the writing table and everything else in the room. But the boy was sitting where he should, his book in front of him. The sheet of paper lay on the table.

He was allowed to run out for a while to play with his sister. The garden and the sun brought him light; but the dark eternity from behind the bookcase was there too, like a sharp black thing, a pin in his clothes, which suddenly pricked him in the middle of a game and filled him with a sudden feeling of weariness.

Then came oblivion in the heat of the game.

A couple of children from a neighbouring cottage came and stood at the corner of the house they were at a loose end. They came and played in the garden, and the noise they all made attracted other children from nearby farms. They rolled in the grass round the flagpole, they vanished into the bushes. Eric romped until he was bruised all over and entirely free of the shadow that had been hanging over him. With all the children chasing him he rushed about like a whirlwind which bends the trees and bushes in the hedgerows. It turned into one of those games which only happen once or twice in a life−time; when the participants enter so much into the joyous spirit of the romp that they never quite forget the experience. Eric's entangled soul opened up in response to the game as parched earth opens up to receive the rain from a thunder shower and never thinks it will get enough.

Pursued by brigands he jumped across paths and through shrubberies up the big garden towards the house. He saw nothing, heard nothing except his pursuers' tussle with the dense foliage and whipping branches which swung back dangerously in his wake. As he ran the exhilaration of the terror and excitement sent shivers down his spine

as it welled up inside him. He did not know whether he would get away; whether he or the brigands were making the noises behind him. He leaped like a wild thing out of the last of the elderberry bushes, and stood with ecstatic, darting eyes looking for the safest way out of his present far too exposed position.

He was met by the piercing gaze of a pair of eyes. His mother was standing quietly on the stone steps to the kitchen, like a piece of stone herself.

It was not only to his pursuers that he had exposed himself. So far as he was concerned they no longer existed; he was not even conscious that they came rushing round him, caught hold of him and pulled him to the ground.

It was as if his now completely unfolded being had momentarily become drenched with some corrosive liquid, while he was still off his guard. In a brief death−struggle, when the darkness behind the bookcase, Eternity and Hellfire rushed over him with long strides, his soul crumpled up and was emptied of all life.

Then he got up and, lashing out wildly all round him, shook off his astounded playmates. As devilish as the devil he was about to encounter, he followed his mother through the house to the study.

His father was standing there, irresolute, in the midst of all the injustice and evil of this world. He too found the whole situation unbearably sinister.

Eric felt as if he had been blinded; as if all light had gone out of the room; he was aware of nothing but the imminence of the inevitable fate which was closing in on him, on his father and him. He was conscious of his mother's hand leading him to the writing table.

He heard her ask: Where is the pipe? and noticed that her voice was strange and full of sorrow.

He said nothing. His father said nothing. Eric noted that he turned away and sighed. It was an action that he knew well and it told him that a full grown man can also be in distress.

"Where have you put the pipe, Eric?" he heard his mother ask. She held him by the shoulders and shook him. He realised that she would not know what to do if he did not own up now. She lifted up the sheet of paper as if hoping that the paper knife had changed back into the pipe since she had last looked.

"Where have you put it?"

"Nowhere."

Eric was well aware that this was the most dangerous answer that he could make, and he saw from his mother's movements how near she was to laying hands on him.

If only she had done so, he thought, as he heard her give up the struggle and leave the room.

He was now completely defenceless. His mother's anger was at least of this world: forgiving and forgetting. Not like his father's, an earthquake−impending judgment day.

He stood there, not daring to move; not daring to lift his eyes from the spot on the table leg on which he had fixed his gaze as soon as he had come into the room.

Behind him his father moved restlessly about the room. If only his mother had stayed behind. It was unbearable to have to stand here with a man who was going to say the words that only his mother knew how to say. His father was not even angry: merely weary and depressed.

When at last he heard a voice, uncomfortably quiet in that tiny room, ask: "Eric, where have you put it, please?" it was as if they were both committing some terrible sin.

Eric could not move, could not speak. A sickening feeling came over him with a rush. He was no longer a criminal, but a much−maligned individual who was being forced into a dastardly action by a man who had also been wronged and who was extremely loath to do it.

He saw the man pick up the sheet of paper or rather sensed that he was doing so and realised that the question was being put to him again and again. It sounded as if the Saviour on the cross was accusing him and at the same time pitying him because he had committed the world's greatest sin.

Not for one moment did he think of admitting his guilt. He denied everything, blindly, as though he had every justification to do so. At length he became aware that he was being led out of the room, through the passage behind the oven through the empty schoolroom and out into the peat−shed.

My poor child, said the Man Our Lord from the cross. The boy lifted up his perplexed eyes and saw that the Man was his father and that there were tears in his eyes. He saw him take a strap from his pocket and felt in one biting flash this is Abraham sacrificing Isaac. The one and only blow felt like a murder survived, a mortal blow which scarcely hurt. It was an injustice crying aloud to the heavens, never to be forgotten, which would for ever make him an enemy of that house.

Another question. In vain. Once again a denial, a tight−lipped, irrevocable "No".

He had won after all. The door of the half−darkened shed flew open, the peat dust whirled up in the doorway, and the late afternoon sunlight streamed in.

Mr. Meissel went out quickly it looked like flight leaving the boy by himself.

Eric stood motionless in the dusty mist and listened to his father's footsteps over the yard. He waited for the back door to slam, but it did not.

Relaxed now that it was all over, he stood still and looked down the road. The postman was coming back from his round. The smoke from his pipe dissolved into the air behind him as he walked. He was going to the post−office with parcels and things, and there he would stick stamps on letters and sort out newspapers. A fortunate man who could openly and before the whole world light up his pipe. He did not have to go through hell first.

Eric sat down on the warm peat in the shaft of sunlight. He was tired, very tired.

THE STORY OF THE REMARKABLE MAN WHO MARRIED A FOX

BY PETER FREUCHEN Translated by John Poole

Up on the Labrador side of the Hudson Bay there once lived a seal hunter. He was clever enough with his spear, but he could never hold his own with the other men and it was for this reason that he had no wife. Every time he tried to make friends with a woman, the other hunters came and took her away from him, and he was much too good− natured to do anything about it.

As time went by and he still remained a bachelor, he grew ashamed and moved to the end of a lonely creek where he lived by himself in a house of his own building. Being a man he had great difficulty in cleaning and curing the skins of the animals he caught, and although he managed this somehow, he found it almost impossible to make

clothes and boots out of them. The things he made had no shape at all, and he told himself that he would never be able to return to his fellows since they would be bound to laugh at him and mock his ridiculous clothes.

One day he caught sight of a fox−cub near his house. It did not seem to be afraid of him and, since, as it was summer, the pelt was of no value, he refrained from killing the animal and instead amused himself by watching its antics. The cub became tamer every day until finally it would come and lick the blood and oil from his hands after he had finished cutting up and skinning his catch. As he had no women in the house he naturally never bothered to wash.

The man became more and more attached to his fox and, thinking that as it grew bigger it would probably run away from him, he fastened a cord round its neck and tied it to the doorpost.

Here now came a time when he caught very little, and he was only able to throw out a few bones from the stew for the young fox to gnaw.

One day he had been out hunting longer than usual, and when he came home he was astonished to find that some seal skins which he had scraped clean had been carefully prepared and were neatly stretched out on the ground in front of his house, kept taut with wooden pins such as women use.

He was most surprised at this, for he was quite alone, but seeing nobody around he went indoors, ate his food and lay down to sleep.

Next day he went out hunting again, and when he got home there was a dish of stew steaming on the table together with a bowlful of freshly− picked berries covered with fish oil. They were very tasty and melted in his mouth.

"I wonder who can have done this?" thought the man as he lay down to sleep.

He went out hunting again next day, and all day long he could only think of what new gifts might perhaps be waiting for him when he got home. He was so taken up with his speculations that he paid no attention to the seals and arrived back empty−handed. The first thing he noticed was that the stretched−out seal skins had disappeared, but when he went indoors he saw a beautifully made pair of boots lying on his couch. He was very pleased.

"Now I can show myself again," he said to himself, for his boots had been the shabbiest things he possessed. They were the most difficult to make, so no wonder.

Then he lay down to sleep, but he had been so surprised at what had happened that he dreamed all kinds of queer things and got very little rest.

When he set out in his kayak the next morning he decided to keep a watch on the house. He paddled behind a small iceberg close to the shore, hid the kayak and crawled up to a spot near the top from which he could see over to his house. He waited a long time while the sun moved across from one side of him to the other, and then at last he saw a beautiful woman come out of his house and almost immediately go back inside. It looked as if she had thrown something on to the rubbish heap. The man rushed down to his kayak and paddled home as fast as he could go. When he got back, the house was empty, but, wonder of wonders, it was swept quite clean. This was something which he had not done since he built it, for men never attend to such matters.

He was so determined to catch the woman that he worked out a stratagem. The very next day he paddled a short way down the coast, dragged his kayak on to the beach and hid it in cave. He then moved curiously inland, coming round to the back of the house from the high ground above.

The lovely woman came out of the house, and he was so filled with desire for her that he rushed down and chased her as she ran to the beach. There he caught her, and he immediately fell so much in love with her that he dragged her back to the house and there made her his wife. She did not offer much resistance and, indeed, found much pleasure in him.

They lived very happily together for a long time, and she turned out to be very clever at all kinds of domestic work and sewing. As the man was no mean hunter he brought back a great many skins so that it was not long before he was equipped with much fine clothing. She also made him a new covering for his kayak so that he could go on long trips, such as he had never been able to undertake in his old waterlogged craft.

One day he paddled to a far distant spot where he had once been able to catch ringed seals, and there he met a man from the settlement where he used to live.

"It looks as if you have found yourself a clever woman," said the stranger, looking at him closely. "What cleverly made clothes and fine boots."

"I have married an exceedingly beautiful woman," said the man. And now that he had begun to talk after having been so long away from other people, he started praising his wife in such detail that the other man felt quite embarrassed.

"I should very much like to make your wife's acquaintance," he said, "since she is so excellent in every way."

And he proceeded to suggest that the two of them should exchange wives for a time so that her qualities could be better known. The man was ashamed to reject the stranger's proposal and agreed to the exchange.

He paddled to the other man's house while the stranger set off on the long trip to the man's lonely dwelling.

When he arrived the woman had already retired to rest, so he crawled through the doorway to come into her. On the way in he was met by a very strong smell of fox which tore at his nose.

"What a frightful smell of fox there is in here," he said.

When the woman heard this she began to bark like a fox. Kak−kak−kak, she said, and turning into a fox she jumped down from the couch and slipped through the doorway and past the stranger before he could catch hold of her.

When the man arrived back the next morning, his guest told him what had happened. Then he remembered that he had been so taken up with his new wife that he had quite forgotten the little fox which had been tied to the doorpost.

Only once had she reminded him that she had at one time been in the shape of a fox. That was when one evening as they lay together on the couch he had noticed that her gums were bleeding and he had asked her why this was.

"It's because you once threw out the bones from your stew for me to gnaw and it made my jaws bleed," she said. But they had talked no more about it after that.

The man was broken−hearted at losing his wife and ashamed at having made himself ridiculous in front of the stranger. He himself had got used to the smell of fox and it had not bothered him.

When the stranger had gone back to his own home, the man went out to look for his wife. He searched for many days and followed a fox trail which led up into the mountains. At the end of the first day he noticed that part of

the tracks were human footprints. Several days after that it was all footprints, then it became part fox and part human, then all fox, and in this manner ranged between human and fox for many days.

The man was so eager to get back his wife that he kept on going and entirely forgot to sleep or eat. At long last he came to a cave, and there the tracks stopped. But the opening was so narrow that he could not get through, although he could hear his wife talking inside.

"Come out to me, come out to me! I have come to fetch you home."

"I will not come out. I can't forgive you for exchanging me for another man's wife." Then he heard her say to another woman inside: "You go out to him."

A little later a woman came out who was so extraordinarily ugly and had such long legs that the man would have nothing to do with her.

"I will be your wife," she said.

"I will not have you," said the man. "Your legs are too long," for it was a spider in human form. Then the spider went back and said to the woman:

"He will have nothing to do with me: he says my legs are too long." The man shouted once again for his wife to come out.

"I will not come out. How could you think of exchanging me for another man's wife!" Then she told someone else to go out to him.

A little later another woman came out, but she was even uglier than the previous one. She had two great eyes which hung down over her cheeks.

"I will be your wife," she said. But the man said that he would not have her, as she was far too ugly, for it was a blowfly in human form. Then the woman went back inside.

"He will not have me as his wife. He says my eyes are too big."

Once again the man shouted to his wife to come out to him.

"I will not come out to you. Did you not agree to exchange me for another man's wife?" she shouted back, and then he heard her say to another woman that she should go out to him. A woman came out that was uglier than either of the other two.

"I want to be your wife," she said.

The man saw that she had a whole row of legs on each side of her body just as if her ribs were sticking out through her clothes. It was a centipede in human form.

"I will not have you; you have far too many legs," said the man, and the worm returned to the cave.

"He will not have me because I have too many legs," he heard the woman say to the woman inside. Then he shouted again to his wife to come out to him. "I have come to fetch you home."

But she answered him: "No, you have heard what I said. I will not come out because you exchanged me for another man's wife. You come in to me."

"But how am I to make myself small enough to squeeze through this little hole?"

"Shut your eyes and try to get in by making yourself small and pushing your way in."

This he did, and managed to get through the narrow opening. When he opened his eyes he saw that he was in a tiny house and there was his wife sitting on a couch. He was so overjoyed that he went straight over to her, forgetting how angry he was that she had run away from him. He wanted to make it up with her so that she too could be happy, and so he laid his head on her lap and said: "Oh, it is such a long time since you picked the lice out of my hair. Please go through my hair again; my head itches so."

And the woman began to pick the lice out of his hair, and as she did so she sang him a song:

Lie you now down to rest,
Lie you now down to sleep,
In the spring when the blowfly comes,
You will wake up.
In the spring when the terns fly around,
You will wake up.
In the spring when the ice has broken,
You will wake up.

Her song was so sweet that he fell into a deep and dreamless sleep. When he woke up he found that his wife was no longer by his side. He called out for her, but there was no answer. All he heard was a fox barking up in the mountains. Kak−kak−kak it said, and then everything was quiet again.

The man crawled outside and was amazed to find that it was spring, though it had been winter when he had gone to sleep. Blowflies buzzed around him as he walked, and when he came to the seashore he saw that the ice had broken and that the waves were breaking on the beach. He went on homewards and saw the terns diving head first into the water after fish.

The man walked on and on, and at last he came to his house. There he saw a woman sitting on the roof and was filled with joy, for he thought it was his wife who had gone on ahead of him and now sat waiting for his arrival. She sat with her back to him and did not move although he shouted words of greeting. When he came up and touched her, off fell her clothes, for it turned out that there was nothing but a heap of bones piled up underneath them. This was how his wife showed him that she was no longer in human form and had no further use for clothes.

After this the man went back to the life he had led before he took the little fox as his wife. He continued to catch a great many seals which he had to skin and clean himself. He bitterly regretted that he had tried to gain respect by changing wives with another man, for after that day he never saw his wife again.

This is the end of the story of the bachelor who took a fox as his wife. There is no more to it, for there is nothing more to tell. What happened to the man afterwards nobody has remembered to relate, and therefore nobody knows.

CAMPANELLA

BY KNUD ANDERSEN Translated by Lydia Cranfield

Most honoured Madam,

It is now some time since I promised your son I would write to you. That was at the railway station in Liverpool when he said: "You simply must be a friend and write to my old lady and tell her exactly how things are. Say that there must be a Cape Horn'er lying somewhere hereabouts waiting to stretch her topgallant sails in a stiff nor'wester down St. George's Channel and that I must just make one more trip before going home."

Those were his last words to me, and now I am fulfilling the promise I gave him.

You see, I was quartermaster in the "Northumberland", which you may have heard of. She is one of the old Atlantic packets, and your son came on board as a passenger in New York for the voyage home with us in order to visit you, Madam, and he was neatly dressed and decent in every way. We got to know each other well, and I can tell you straightaway that I have seldom met a man with a stronger determination to visit his mother. Besides, I've never heard anyone talk more proudly of a lady, and even supposing I did take it for granted that most of it, anyway, was exaggerated and fanciful and I've since forgotten much of the rest I must say that you are still my idea of a tip−top mother. In every respect.

I remember one evening when we had just sighted Fastnet. A real Irish snorter had come down on us, with sleet from the northwest. Your son and I were sitting under the lee of the engine−room casing, because the "Northumberland", the old wench, was groaning and heaving, and shipping water fore and aft.

He said only a few words, and I left him in peace, for I knew his thoughts were only of you. But all of a sudden he exclaimed: "So that was Ireland; I wonder how an Irishman would feel now."

I made no reply, for don't I know the Irish. A lot of them, too, roam about for a long time before returning to their own poor island.

"To−morrow evening we shall be in Liverpool," he went on, "and then Harwich, then Esbjerg, and then "

Dear Madam, you can see that he was thinking of you! In your place I should be perfectly satisfied with such a son.

"It's strange returning home," he said suddenly.

"Of course, but we can travel over together. I'm going home myself."

"That's good," he said, "for I don't want to go alone, I haven't been home for ten years."

Those were his words and they were plain enough.

No more was said that night, and the next morning everything looked promising. The "Northumberland" was making a steady fifteen knots from Tuskar Rock to the South Stack through the snow−squalls, although we could not see a ship's length from the crow's nest. Suddenly there was a clearing between two snow−squalls and God help you, Madam, that did it, and neither he nor I could undo it.

I am anxious to try to make you understand your son, but then, of course, you have never seen the full−rigged

ship "Campanella", the record beaker, outward bound from Liverpool. She came along on our weather side less than a ship's length away. She was running free and passed us like a vision, dipping her bows to the cat−heads as she pitched, though the green water was surging along her hatches on leeward, she carried herself with elegance, Madam, like the newly created earth when she trod her first dance in the solar system.

Both watches were on deck setting fore−and mizzen−topgallant sails to a roaring "Blow the Man Down, Bullies", for they were the lads of the "Campanella", the record breaker. Thank your Creator, dear lady, that you did not hear them, for you might have died on the spot with longing to go with them.

When they were abeam we could see the man at her wheel. He stood there in his thin dungarees, with his cap pushed back, for the "Campanella" was hard on the helm. Up to windward Old Man White was balancing on the taffrail with one hand on the main−brace and the other clutching a megaphone. You'll hardly credit it when I tell you that just as she was passing us, he put the megaphone to his mouth, yelling: "Loose the royals!" Would you believe it, to crack on royals in a north−westerly gale! But he did it, although his beard was grey, for wasn't he Old Man White himself, the skipper of the famous "Campanella"?

Another snow−squall wiped her from view and, dear Madam, when I turned round there was your son standing next to me. He was as pale as a ghost, and if you could have looked into his eyes you too would have understood how he felt.

"Now she's getting royals as well!" was all he murmured so nicely, Madam. Apart from that we did not speak, nor did I try to dissuade him when we landed in Liverpool the next day; but as I've already said, he came to the station to see me off, and his last words were: "Now you must write and tell my old lady exactly how it is"

You must forgive him for choosing a dog's life instead of coming home to see you. He was so neat and decently dressed, and sober, and if you should think that he made a mistake then it is simply because I have explained things badly writing is not much in the line of us sailors.

If only you could have seen the "Campanella" yourself! But then you might have died on the spot with longing to go with her.

Respectfully,

Knud Andersen.

THE SHOW

BY KNUTH BEEPER Translated By J. F. S. Pearce

Sofie is ready, and she knocks on the floor with a stick. Sine is hearing Erma recite part of Luther's Catechism, and the same time she keeps one eye on Mrs. Paysen's milk which is on the gas.

Erna sits on the hay−box repeating her lesson aloud, her eyes fixed on the yellow−washed kitchen ceiling. "I believe in God the Father, maker of Heaven and Earth."

"Yes," says Sine, stirring the milk and following the catechism at the same time. Erna goes on. "That is...I believe God created me and all living things, that he gave and preserves my body and soul, my eyes ears and all parts of me, my reason and my senses...my senses... senses..." Erna is stuck.

"Also shoes and clothing, food and drink," Sine goes on, reading from the book. "Phew...these blooming

flies...can't get rid of them in this hot weather."

"Also shoes and..." Erna foes on with renewed confidence. A loud and continuous knocking can be heard from above.

"Oh, blow that!" Sine throws Luther on to the kitchener, and runs upstairs.

Erna calls after her: "I've got to go in a quarter of an hour...the vicar gets so cross if I don't know it!"

"All right, just a minute!" Sine calls back.

Erna takes the book and reads it over.

"Well, Sine, I really must come downstairs. What glorious weather! Who'd think the weather had turned out specially nice just for the show!"

"Yes, it's all right as far as the weather's concerned," says Sine.

"Take my arm and help me, then."

Sine takes Mrs. Gotsche's arm, and helps her across the room. A golden beam of dancing sunlight shines in through the skylight. Sine takes Mrs. Gotsche's arm, and helps her across the room. A golden beam of dancing sunlight shines in through the sky−light.

"I'm so happy, Sine."

"Oh, yes," says Sine, panting under the weight of Mrs. Gotsche. "There'll be a lot of people in town, and we'll have plenty of people in ordering material and so on, and then there's Jens Aagaard and dear Line coming."

"Yes."

"Well, they haven't written, but they'll be sure to come. Jens is going to be one of the judges, you know. There aren't many shows they don't go to; it wouldn't be much of a show if they weren't there... we all got engaged at the same time, Gotsche and me, and Jens and Line..."

"That must be lovely!" says Sine, gazing out over the roof−tops.

"What must be?"

"Why, getting engaged."

"It's even lovelier getting married...if you can find a husband like Gotsche."

"Ready?" Sine asks.

Sofie takes hold of the banister, and turns round so as to go down backwards, and Sine goes in front to support her.

"I'm ready now."

So is Sine.

"Oh, how we used to dance in those day! All night long!" Sofie feels for the first step with her foot.

"No, here," says Sine, taking her ankle to set it on the step.

Sofie steps down.

Her heavy body lowers itself down. There is not a trace of spring in it, just weight, and under this dead weight her weak foot turns feebly, almost like a dead leaf curling up.

Sine pushes, panting, with both hands, and puts the foot straight.

"Ow, Sine!"

"It's this here left foot," Sine groans. "The right foot isn't so..."

"And then there were the cadets from the 'Niels Juel', Gotsche used to be so jealous of them," Sofie interrupts.

"Oh, yes." Sine sets the foot on the second step.

"They're fine chaps..." Sine has seen them when they have been in harbour at Skagen.

"But you don't know that they were the same ones," says Sofie, who has found the third step for herself. "Do you think the stairs are safe, Sine, I think they're giving!"

"Eh...Yes, I'll..."

Die Milch...I can die Milch smell!" Mrs. Paysen calls from her bed, and she bangs with her hand on the wall.

"Yes, ah...hold on a minute!" Sine dives downstairs.

The milk is boiling over on to the table and floor.

Erna is sitting on the hay−box, deep in her book, mumbling half to herself: "The finest of God's creations is Man, whom God made in his own image, that he might know, being a creature of reason..."

"Why didn't you turn it off, you silly girl!" shouts Sine, dashing over to the gas.

"Eh, what?" Erna comes back to earth, and stares at the saucepan and the pool of milk on the floor.

"Sine...Sine...Do you hear me!" Mrs. Paysen calls from her room, just as Sine is going back to Sofie.

"Yes." says Sine, poking her head round the door.

"Had it boiled over?" Mrs. Paysen asks from her bed.

"Well...not exactly."

"What a pity," sighs Mrs. Paysen, who can tell by Sine's voice what had happened to the milk.

"Come along, now, Sine," Sofie calls out from up the stairs. "Or else I'll tumble downstairs, and then you'll have Gotsche to deal with!"

"Coming!" Sine calls, and runs off.

"Never leave die Milch when it heating is," Mrs. Paysen says to the closed door...

Then Sofie and Sine get on with the task of getting down the narrow, steep stairway.

"When I get to walk properly again, Sine,...do you know what we'll do?"

"No."

"We'll clear the dining−room one evening, and have a dance...One show day, it must be...then Jens and Line'll be there...la...lalala...just think!" Sofie nearly takes the last three steps at one go in her excitement about dancing, but Sine is there, and puts her strong young shoulder in the way.

After they have got downstairs, and Sine has taken Sofie's arm, Sofie, who thinks she sees tears in Sine's eyes, asks: "What are you crying for? Has your sweetheart left you?"

"Crying?...I'm not!" Sine protests.

"I don't see as there's anything to cry about," Sofie makes a sweeping gesture with her arm. "All this sunshine, and the show, too... lots of people in the shop, and Jens and Line here too!"

"Man is composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body." Erna is mumbling away on the hay−box.

"So that's where you are, is it," says her mother.

"I've got to go to the Vicar's and Sine's got to hear me, and it's time for me to go!" wails Erna.

"Don't be silly...If you don't know one thing, then say something else...that's what we did with the vicar at Skaerum...it worked fine...and we got coffee afterwards...those of us who came from the farms, that is."

Erna purses her lips, and reads on: "The dust returneth to the earth whence it came..."

Sofie and Sine go on into the drawing−room. "I was just thinking, Sine, I hope you have dusted and cleaned everything well for Jens and Line!"

"I always do that anyway!" Sine exclaims, in rather injured tones.

"Of course, Sine, you're a good girl,...we couldn't find another like you anywhere!"

"Oh...there now...just think!" Sine is flattered, and smiles.

"No, I really don't think we could." Sofie flops down in the window chair.

"Give me the foot−stool, then...that's right...and my work−box...I've got to sew a new ribbon on to my frock...Mother won't be getting up to do it for me..."

No, Sine does not think so either.

"I'll have to do it myself...I'll want my glasses too...Thank you."

Sine starts to leave.

"Just thread this needle for me, Sine."

Sine turns round, licks her fingers and threads the needle. "Here you are."

"That can wait till later." Sofie sticks the needle into the pin− cushion in the work−box.

"You do it so easily...you're real smart at it, Sine."

"Sorensen's flag's lots bigger than ours!" says Kai, who is holding a bag of nails. "But we've got the most...he's only got one."

"H'm, yes. Give me another nail!" Gotsche nails up the last of the eight foreign ensigns to the whitewashed shop−front. He bought them all at an auction for a shilling, plus commission, just for this kind of occasion...They are flags of all countries, and such nice colours...Unfortunately there wasn't a Danish flag amongst them...But they stream out wonderfully in the wind, making a fine show.

There is a constant stream of carriages passing. Some of them turn in at Tinus Sorensen's, and others carry on down the street, with its rows of white flag−poles all along each side, each with its proper Danish flag hoisted, as at Sorensen's.

Kai hardly knows what to look at first. He wants to be in on the decorating, and he wants to watch the wagons as they rumble by. Three men come along, leading a large black and white bull. There are two poles fastened to the ring in its nose, a rope round its hind leg, and its eyes are blindfolded. The men holding the poles and the rope take their job very seriously. The bull is snorting as it walks between them. A white paper, red−rimmed, is fastened between its horns, with the inscription, in black: First Prize...Nero of Vraa.

"Oh, just...just look!" Kai shouts, and retreats, backwards, to the wall.

"Ssh! Quiet, boy, you might startle him!" warns his father.

The bull gives a frightening, ominous roar, and disappears with his three guardians down the avenue of flags.

Then come two men with a stallion, striking sparks from the road with its four hooves, as they clatter on the paving. It neighs and tosses its noble head and maned neck, making the yellow harness and hood rattle. Kai jumps with delight at this.

"Look...Ooh, look!"

"Oh, yes," says Gotsche, casting his eyes over the animal's sleek flanks and down to its strong, lively legs. "Yes." He stands lost in thought for a moment, on the pavement of this sun−bathed town.

"Oh, yes," says Gotsche, and shakes his head, as if to drive something out of his mind. "Now don't you run off...there might be some errands for you...H'm!"

"Man's body is more perfect than the beast's, and it alone is meet to be the habitation and instrument of Man's soul!" Erna is learning her lesson out loud to Sine in the kitchen.

"You know it all right, I should think," says Sine.

Kai is in Sorensen's yard, where there are long rows of carriages standing. Emil and a new hand are busy unharnessing the horses. Farmers and their wives are chatting in the yard, and unloading things off the carts...A man and his wife are sitting in the back shop eating sandwiches.

Tinus Sorensen is kept running between the shop and the yard, and back to the shop again...where people are standing at the counter smoking and talking...the coffee−mills are at work...the two assistants and the apprentice are everywhere, pencils tucked behind their ears.

Tinus Sorensen gives everybody a welcome, and wishes good appetite to the two who are eating.

Then he goes to run in again, but suddenly remembers something, and calls out loudly across the yard: "Emil...there's that load of coffee...we ought to have collected that..." Then he turns to go in again.

The farmers look at one another.

"Can we get coffee, too, Sorensen?" one of them asks.

"All you want, Lars Pedersen." Sorensens piggy little eyes sparkle. "We keep it in store for years...it improves with keeping...WE can afford to do that...little shops can't!" Sorensen hurries off into the office, where a man is standing with a wrinkled brow, wishing to pay his account, but not understanding how it can have mounted up so much.

"Ha ha...they do, you know, they do...when you leave them so long, Senius Hansen!" says Sorensen...

"Yes...but surely..."

"I keep the books myself, Senius Hansen. Do have a good cigar to smoke at the show...it's a lot pleasanter when you have a smoke... we'll soon square this up...that was a first−class meeting you had in the woods the other day...God's good weather, and Naerum's good address...both excellent...Unfortunately I wasn't there, no...couldn't get...but according to the paper...I must say...yes...that agrees with the ledger, Senius Hansen..."

"Yes...but..."

"Let's just shut the door for a moment...I'll be there directly, Per Knudsen...Welcome to the show, Hans Svendsen...I'll be there directly..."

Never before had Kai seen so many horses as there are to−day in Sorensen's stables...They stand side by side there in their stalls, pawing the stone paving with their front hooves, and eating from their mangers. The latest arrivals shake themselves, making their harness rattle, and a pungent steam is given off from their heavy, sweating bodies.

One of them lifts its tail and the yellow balls of dung drop into the open drain, and form a little pyramidal heap. Then it lets its tail fall back like a stopper going into place, and it goes on chewing the fodder in the manger.

"It would be a lot easier if you were a horse!" thinks Kai, and runs over to find out about the sacks.

"H'm, there aren't any yet!" says his father, who is sitting at the desk stamping catalogues.

"There's such a lot over at Sorensen's...there can't be many more to come..." says Kai.

"H'm...h'm..."

"There'll be plenty come here yet, you see," says Sofie comfortingly.

"H'm, perhaps...just move aside, boy!" Kai has moved right up to his father, thus hindering him from using his arms.

This is well worth seeing.

This is that stamp his father got from Copenhagen. He just bangs it down on a little pad, and then on the paper, and it prints "Hans Gotsche...Agent",

"Marvellous, isn't it," says Sofie.

"If you're a good boy, you might get one like that when you grow up," his mother promises.

"Can't it write anything else?" Kai wants to know.

"H'm, write anything else?" his father asks. He thinks it is rather grand as it is...it looks so nice on these white catalogues with the black−printed reaping machines printed on them. "H'm, if only we sell some of them," he says to himself.

"Sell them...they're just to give away, aren't they?" Kai asks, afraid of losing his afternoon's job.

"Oh, yes, the catalogues...but not the reapers...I should think not!"

"Oh, good!" Kai is relieved, and asks if he may have one.

He trots jubilantly over to Fraerik and Persen with catalogue in hand.

"Eh?" Persen asks, as he stands by the drilling machine, giving the metal−work a good coating of cutting−oil..."What's this... Jones reaping−machine..." He takes the paper and studies it.

"Your father going to sell them, eh?"

Kai nods, looking at his nice catalogue and Persen's oily fingers.

"He's having us on, I bet...carry on, Fraerik...get a move on..."

When Kai gets the catalogue back, there is a big black thumb−mark right over the blue stamp...Kai makes haste off, so that Fraerik doesn't get a chance to see it...if he does, there'll be just one more finger−mark on it.

Oh, yes...he has to go and see Granny, and see if he can get sixpence out of her to spend down at the show. There's such a lot of things to go in and look at...but not free...only for the policeman's children. You can go into the refreshment tents free, all right, but what's the good of that? But there's so many other things...he was down there yesterday when the tents arrived, and there's a circus, and a roundabout too...

Grandmother is in bed, with her long, thin fingers folded over the eiderdown. Her white hair straggles out from under her night−cap. She looks older, now she hasn't got her bonnet and wig on, Kai thinks.

Medicine bottles and a hymn−book stand on a chair beside the bed. The curtains are still drawn, as the sun is shining strongly from the south.

"Well, boy, it's you, eh?"

"Yes, it's me, Granny."

"You come not to see me. Yesterday you were here only yesterday morning."

"I was down at the show−ground, Granny, and then I went to Knud's."

"Oh, yes, Kai." Grandmother smiles wearily.

"But I'm here now, Granny," says Kai, standing looking at his Grandmother for a moment. She nods and smiles feebly at him again.

He stands silent, hesitating for a moment, fiddles with the medicine bottle, lifts up the lid of the box of green powder, and shuffles his feet.

"Well, my boy?"

"I'm going to the show, Granny!"

"Oh, yes." His Grandmother nods vaguely.

"I wouldn't half like to go in and see some of the things... There's real poisonous snakes and a circus and an escaping man and canaries riding bikes...and lots of things...and a bear too...there was just the tent there yesterday, but the bear's coming to−day by express train..."

"That costs money, though," says Mrs. Paysen, and tries to ease herself up a little on the pillow. She reaches her bony, wrinkled old hand up for the bed−cord...She hits it, instead of catching hold of it, and the cord swings back against the wall. Her hand searches in the empty air for it...then at last she finds it, and raises herself up.

"That costs money!"

"Yes. I know that." Kai agrees with her there.

"And is isn't hardly worth to see!" There is no agreement here.

"Yes Granny, you bet it's worth seeing...snakes...bears... canaries. That's worth seeing, ain't it?"

"I shall you twopence give...but promise me you will not go too near the snakes and bears...It is nasty, savage animals..."

"All right, Granny...But won't you give me sixpence, eh?" Kai does not think this is too high a price to keep him clear of the bears and snakes.

"Nein, nein, um Gottes willen...du bist wahnsinnig...sixpence for such rubbish...Nein!"

"But I've got to have a ticket into the ground, Granny!"

"Und that cost?"

"Sixpence!"

"Then is sixpence not enough!"

"No, but I can easy slip into the ground, but I daren't try that on where the snakes are!"

"Nein, nein, it's ganz furchtbar that you such ideas should have." Grandmother is so shocked that it brings on a fit of coughing... "Nein, now I give you sixpence for ticket and twopence for etwas anderes."

"Oh, thank you, Granny!" says Kai and thinks to himself that that will be enough for lots of sideshows.

"Never be deceitful. Can you my purse find...under the pillow... Thank you!"

Mrs. Paysen unwinds the elastic band that is bound round and round the old, battered purse with her trembling fingers, and feels in the dark depths of the purse.

"Hier, und hier." She puts a sixpence and two pennies on the chair, and carefully winds the elastic round her purse again..."I have only two shillings and five pence left, and I get not my old age pension until the first...ach ja...and I must have once more some medicine...und stamps...I must to Anna in America und Hermann in Hamburg und Ludolphine at Gothersgade write...ach ja...it is for the last time, no doubt...and little Aake will I never see again...ach nein..."

"I'll tell you all about everything when I get back, Granny," Kai promises, and puts her purse back under the pillow.

"Yes, if you like to." Grandmother sinks back under the clothes. "Ach, ja."

Kai picks up the money, and stands shuffling his feet for a moment. "Well, I'll be going, then, Granny." He is already beginning to think that he has been too long in this room, with its drawn curtains and medicine bottles. Outside, the clatter of hooves can be heard as further high−spirited stallions are led through the streets to the show−ground, to show all and sundry the strength of a healthy animal, whilst the vicar in his quiet, secluded room near the market−place is teaching the confirmation candidates of the strength of God's Holy Spirit which dwells in the body of man...

A living stream of people of all ages push and elbow each other, chattering and laughing as they pass along the pavements on each side of the road.

The street itself is choked with people on foot.

And every few moments along come men with horses, which might easily kick out, and bulls, trying to gore people, and amongst them all, carriages drive through. Wagonettes, with the foreman in the driver's seat, with the kitchen−maid beside him. They are in love, and ride along as proudly as a prince and princess. The farm−hands and maids sit behind on the long seats, chattering, and laughing or squabbling...It is the greatest day of the year.

The squire of Vilstrup drives up in his gig, his brow wrinkled. He looks more as if he had been sent for by his bank than as if he is coming in for the show.

One−horse carts, driven by thin, quarrelsome small−holders, their children in the back, sitting on sacks of vegetables, drive down the same avenue of flags as the two−horse wagons with their high boxes, driven by stout farmers, who are at peace both with God and the bank. Elmegade is black with people riding, driving, walking and cycling towards the show−ground. Behind the yellow, drawn curtains at the public houses, there is a continual never−ending buzz of voices, swelling and decreasing by turns. And in the background can be heard the clattering of bottles and glasses, roars and shouts, and the plop of never−idle bottle−openers. A door opens, two men reel

out, and two more seem almost to be sucked in by the noise from the open door.

They have been waiting for this day for months, at home, in their blue working blouses...and now, in they go, proud of their paper collars and shop clothes. Just one half−day, which stands out from so many grey ordinary days.

"Go to the Devil!" shouts someone inside.

"Seven beers, Hansen!" calls another.

"'War Cry'. But a 'War Cry!'" comes the feeble voice of a woman. It's like a rabbit picking a fight with a bull−dog.

Then the Landlord slams the door to.

A pair of old tramps, red in the face with drink are re−living their early days. They walk along like a couple of two−year−olds, stopping now and again to have a good laugh. "No, no, but what about Batty Petra!' says one of them, reminiscently, and he laughs so much that he nearly drops his pipe on to the pavement.

"Oh, yes...Ba...Ba...Batty Petra!" The other is nearly bursting with laughter, and he has to lean against a fruit stall. Children from town and country stand around, united in their attempts to get in amongst the delights of the stall; honey cakes, rock, apples, pears and long black strings of licorice.

The children have already, with their round, greedy eyes, eaten all the contents of the stall in their imaginations, and only lack of money holds them back in actual fact.

The old woman in charge of the stall seems almost afraid of being eaten up herself. She slaps at them with her shrivelled old hand with its dirty nails, and it looks strangely dead against the shining red and yellow apples on the stall.

"Clear off, you children...let the grown−ups through...Do you want anything?" she asks the man leaning on the stall.

"Eh?" He stares at her absent−mindedly. His mind is forty years away in the maids' room on a farm. "Want anything?...You bet we do..." He winks at the other. "But we aren't letting on." The two young rips of sixty sweep on in the stream of people, leaving a wake of laughter behind them.

Kai is carried along in the midst of the pushing sea of people as it surges past fruit stalls, and stalls selling cigarettes and pipes and sticks, past fishermen from Aalbaek, selling dried fish off carts. He is one little wave in that sea of people pouring towards the show− ground. Intoxicated with happiness, he keeps tight hold of the bundle of catalogues under his arm.

He has tried to hand out some of them to the swarm of people who came off the train...but they passed him without stopping...He managed to press one into the hand of a man, but he threw it down straight away, without even looking at it.

Kai picked it up crossly. He'll wait until he gets to the show now. Besides, there are so many boys here trying to sell things...Cigars, a penny each...Good cigars, a penny each...

Kai is pushed and shoved by the crowd, and at last finds himself by the ticket office. He works his way round outside the crowd, and towards the entrance, which is decorated by flags and spruce branches. Over the top is a board with "Welcome" painted on it in red and white letters, flanked with sheaves of rye...On each side of the

entrance, there stands a man with an armband on his left arm, with the word "Steward" on it. These men look stern and aloof...People swarm through, pointing virtuously, and with unnecessary emphasis to their tickets, which they have stuck in their hatbands or their top−pockets.

A farm−hand and a girl in a white dress push their way through, arm in arm. "Has the girl got a ticket?" ask the steward.

"I'm looking after her. She's got a ticket all right!" the man says. He smiles warmly at the girl, and shows her ticket.

"Quite in order." The steward is very solemn, as if it were a death certificate he was discussing.

A few men in long, black, shining boots, with feathers in their hats, and with yellow dust−coats over their arms, and each carrying a knobbly stick, push through. They are wearing ties and shop clothes; not the sloppy ready−made kind, but the sort that fits the body like a glove. They hold their heads high, looking right over the "Welcome" sign, and they pay no attention to the stewards whatsoever. They are talking amongst themselves just as if the stewards and tickets and people were completely non−existent. But they have their tickets in their pockets, at least, the stewards, who step obsequiously aside, are quite satisfied that they have.

"Old bastard", says a tall, beery labourer, who once worked for one of them.

Kai, his catalogues under his arm, stands with a number of other boys and girls, who are also on the wrong side of the "Welcome", but who gaze in, their wide and bright eyes betraying to the stewards that they would like to sneak in.

"Clear off, you kids...Stand back...let the grown−ups in!"

Oh, what a swarm of people there will be in there on the grass, just like ants, and the horses will be paraded, neighing right into the faces of the judges, with their yellow coats and red rosettes. The roundabout is going...da...dum da...da...dum da da...dum da da. That's one pennyworth, and then off again...da dum da da...da dum da da...

Kai was successful in slipping under the wire fence when one of the stewards further along the fence had his back turned, and then he ran so hard that he left half his catalogues floating in the air behind him. He nearly knocked over a table on which a man was selling waffles, and he got a black look, and a "Young blighter" for his pains.

Kai starts to explain politely that he didn't mean to, but the stall− holder has his eye on two girls in white dresses, and he smiles at them, showing a mouthful of yellow teeth. "Come along, now, Ladies... hot waffles...nothing extra for the jam...only twopence each!"

Kai walks off, not knowing where to turn in all the uproar of the show.

There is an avenue of refreshment tents, and there are men trying to shout each other down in front of the side−shows, with their gory posters.

Kai feels for the eightpence in his pocket, and hurries past the fruit and cake stalls. He has no time for them. He squirms through groups of people which are all over the place, pushing along and chattering.

There is Constable Svendsen standing by a cart, talking to someone. That makes Kai jump...what about a ticket...suppose the policeman wants to see it...bet he will...he won't have forgotten that business about the soldier's cap.

Kai makes a wide detour round Svendsen on his way to the roundabout and the side−shows, where the volume of the showmen's voices is in proportion to the smallness of their tents...People are crowding up and elbowing each other, standing watching, and then struggling on to the next tent.

"Roll up, roll up! Ladies and Gentlemen, here we have..." The ringmaster stands up on a stage, shouting and waving his hat...three little Austrians are playing the bag−pipes, a clown with a dead−white face and red nose is beating the drum, and another clown is playing on his own even redder nose as if it were a flute...Fraulein Kausky, the equestrienne, is flicking her patent leather boots with her whip, and Dulharpe, the death diver, stands with his arms folded, and looks down with a cold gaze at the mass of people below the stage.

A tall, weedy youth, his large ears red with exposure to the weather, pushes towards the entrance, eating a doughnut covered in brown fat.

The ringmaster rings his bell..."This is your last chance, Ladies and Gentlemen. This world−famous show is just about to begin...Come along now, Ladies and Gentlemen."

The youth with the doughnut pushes himself one whole pace forward as he tries to comply with this invitation. "Come and see Dulharpe's dive of death..."

At this point, the youth drops his doughnut in the grass.

"Pick it up, Guv!"

The fellows laugh, and some of the girls shriek with laughter.

The youth licks the brown off his fingers, and gives the ringmaster a good, hearty stare.

The bell is ringing every moment or so at the "Try your strength" machine, whilst the tubercular little owner of the machine keeps on calling out his invitation to the lads to have a go at a penny a time, and they do so with the same seriousness as they try their strength 365 days in the year earning their living...Her...cu...les. Her... cu...les. One winner after another puts down the wooden club phlegmatically, and the area is swarming with penny Hercules.

The Salvation Army is there, playing hymns and preaching, and a few old women and children stand around listening, their mouths gaping...

A young man with fair, curly hair, in uniform, like the rest, stands with bared head, shouting out his message above the noise. He stands on tip−toe at every other word, so as to give more weight to his preaching...

"I rejoice that I am saved!"

"We present Miss Eva, the famous snake−charmer!"

"That Jesus found me, in this vale of tears!"

"Hot waffles, twopence each!"

"That Jesus received me, a sinner!"

From the beer tents can be heard voices in a sort of chorus of unintelligible talk...A...va...a...va...a...va...a...va...

"Cigars, honey cakes and squeaking balloons!"

"Miss Eva will take up the deadly boa−constrictor!"

"He folded me into his arms!" cries the Salvation Army man.

"And fold it into her arms!" the showman roars, at the same time.

"Amen...Alleluia and amen...Oh, how true!" sigh the Salvation Army people, and they hold their caps before their faces, or lower their eyes beneath the straw bonnets.

"Adults fourpence, children twopence...to see the charming Miss Eva from California wind the monster snake round her neck!"

Miss Eva, who stands to one side, has on a very low−cut, sleeveless dress, and wears large ear−rings. She smiles a little crookedly at the showman's "charming".

Her face looks as if it had been painted with paint from the same pot as the placards on the sides of the tent a dead−white background, crimson lips and cheeks, and blue−black eyebrows, the colour of a thunder−cloud.

Miss Eva pushes her hair up with her bare arm, showing the hair under arm−pit; she bobs up and down daintily on the toes of one foot, and smiles, revealing a row of teeth that is too realistic ever to be her own.

Kai has been standing there a long time, quite absorbed in her, his eyes glued on her.

Oh, how pretty she is! If only she were his mother, and would put those bare arms round his neck and love him.

He daren't, otherwise he would go and take hold of her arm.

Oh, how pretty she is...He feels the money in his pocket.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, you see here Miss Eva from California!"

"California, eh!" says a passer−by.

"Church Street, Fjordby, more likely!" says another.

"Come along, now...Come along...No waiting..."

Miss Eva sits down at the cash desk, and starts to sell herself, as the crowds stream in.

Kai would like to go in. He stands by the tent door, with his pennies in his hot, sticky hand, but he is going to wait until Miss Eva herself has gone in.

A few fellows push him right up to the cash desk.

"Coming in?" Miss Eva smiles at Kai, who stammers and blushes all over at these words from Miss Eva, and all he can say is..."Yes...er... no...I mean..."

"Then clear off, you scruffy urchin, and don't stand there blocking up the entrance!"

Kai is down−cast that she should speak to him like that, and give him such a black look, too.

"Just starting, Miss," says the double−chinned showman with die pointed nose into her ear.

Eva gets up, and starts to close up the cash desk...Kai runs up, takes off his cap, bows, and, very red in the face, sacrifices his two−pence to Miss Eva's cash desk. She smiles at him, and he drops his catalogues on the grass in his confusion.

Then he picks them up, and hurries in behind the tent−flap and the broad grey backs that are in there already, waiting for Miss Eva.

THE DISASTER

BY TOM KRISTENSEN Translated by Lydia Cranfield

Erland Erlandsen, the poet, remembered for the rest of his life the night when he saw Disaster in all its colourful meaninglessness, jagged like an explosion.

The evening had started up in Erik Hoff's studio, in genial company. There they were at midnight, four friends, their pipes drawing well. The table gleamed with its coffee cups and the full burgundy glasses throwing ruby−red blobs on the white cloth. The blue tobacco haze made their blear−eyed faces seem to float in a mist. There was a sculptor, a press−photographer, and the quiet Hoff himself, his pale blue eyes half closed, leaning back in his chair, enjoying his pipe and absorbing the intimate atmosphere; and there was Erland Erlandson relating a personal experience.

The serenity was broken suddenly by the sound of someone thundering up the stairs. It was Gering, tall and dark, who was also a poet. He burst into the room, but at once stood still as if thunder−struck. His eyes were dark and troubled.

"Are you sitting here drinking wine?" he gasped. "Haven't you heard anything then?"

"What should we have heard?" drawled Erlandsen.

"Don't you know anything about it at all? Is that really true?" Gering sank exhausted into a chair. He looked from one to the other, and his dark eyes narrowed as if accusing them of inhuman cynicism. "You don't know anything! And you are drinking burgundy! Give me a glass, I need it. But I still can't understand how you can sit here drinking when there has been a terrible railway smash near here only twenty minutes away and a hundred people killed. The ambulance sirens are screaming through the streets "

The smoke−laden atmosphere at once became a confusion of agitated figures. Hoff asked questions, the sculptor jumped up and wanted to rush out at once, the press−photographer stared like a lost soul at Gering, and Erlandsen began whistling as if wishing to play an accompaniment to his own disturbance, to play himself up above the event, above everything.

An express had overtaken a slow train, and the rear coaches had been smashed. One of the carriages had somersaulted down the embankment, and the engine had fallen on top of it, lying with its wheels in the air. A fantastic sight!

They listened uneasily, making as if to get up, unwilling to hear any more and wanting to go and see for themselves. They sat down again and went on drinking while listening to Gering's story; but they were unsettled.

Cruelty, curiosity, and horror prompted them. They leant over the table, they dropped back in their chairs, they rose and sat down again and again.

"What the hell are you whistling for?" asked Gering, glowering across at Erlandsen, whose eyes were enamel bright and who whistled shrilly snatches of popular tunes, linking them into extraordinary symphonies.

"We must get off at once," said Erlandsen hoarsely, without answering Gering. Nervously gesturing, he grasped at the empty air as if to catch something invisible. "This is real life. Life is like that. I want to look it in the face. I want to come face to face with it!"

"You're damned ghoulish!"

Erlandsen laughed nervously.

In the meantime Hoff had fetched more hot coffee. The others gulped it down, put on their overcoats and ran downstairs.

Outside the night was cold and dark.

"Look at the stars! Why should they be so unaffected?" asked Gering, who remained standing with his head thrown back. The stars were shining in the dark, frosty night−sky. One particularly large blue star with red twinkling edges hung above a factory chimney.

"An accident wouldn't matter much if it made the stars fall! Of course they are unmoved. That's the devilish grandeur of it all!" said Erlandsen. He shuddered in his overcoat and again started whistling.

Gering shook his head and buttoned his close−fitting coat around him.

"Can't you realize that there has been a terrible smash?" he spluttered.

"How many were killed?" asked Hoff.

"Over a hundred."

Then they hurried off. They half walked, half ran. Sometimes in their hurry they would spread themselves out across the dark road where only a few street lamps lit up the night. They swarmed into the light and out again into darkness. Then they would move nearer together, walk unconsciously too close to one another, speak half sentences, catch half−uttered words.

"The silhouette of that factory with the long building and the four chimneys always reminds me of a battleship!" said Hoff, inconsequently, in a strange aside.

Gering stopped. "How right you are! Yes! That's exactly what it looks like! Quite!" And then he walked on again.

They passed by isolated groups of people. In among some trees a few vagrants were tramping along in time to a ribald song. Some fine figures hurried along in carpet slippers. Vesterbro emptied her dregs out towards the scene of the accident; all the night−life of Copenhagen was drawn out along its dark approaches. Men in evening dress, mysterious ladies twittering with curiosity! Blazing head−lamps of cars formed fan−shaped beams which flew across the stone paving. Motor cycles throbbed and roared past the dark, huddled houses. In one of these a lamp was being carried along through a row of rooms making it look as if it were the windows hurrying past a stationary light.

Further along the rows of lamp−posts took a sudden turn and stopped abruptly. A faint, icy wind from the open country wafted across the sombre crowds.

They crossed a field.

"Look, a child!" said the sculptor. There was a dark figure, pushing a perambulator, followed by another indistinct shape.

"Wasn't it terrible?" said a woman's voice.

"It certainly wasn't very nice!" replied a man.

They were returning from the scene of the accident.

"That's too bad! Bringing a child along," protested the sculptor.

"Yes, people are morbid," replied Hoff. "And so are we. What on earth are we doing here?"

"He's quite right!" exclaimed Gering; but no one stopped.

Quickly they passed through a small village with tall hedges. The inn was lit up. Through the open door a brilliant light streamed out from the inn garden. The small village was seething with whispers. People spoke excitedly but in lowered tones; everything hedges trees, houses seemed subdued, and over all was a faint murmur.

"Here it is, here!" said Gering.

They passed through an opening in a hedge, and a short distance away they could see masses of lights. A strong green light and some red lights were stationary, but myriads of yellow lights were moving ceaselessly up and down the railway embankment on which was strewn a confusion of long dark shapes with shining surfaces. Voices rang out sharply in the frost−clear night. There was clanging of iron and crunching of gravel. In the darkness the lonely spot, where all was movement and ceaseless activity, had the same magic drawing power as the excavation of a street at night.

They now felt compelled to run. The noise and shouting drew them on. Their pace quickened. The field and the dark, lumpy soil flew beneath them. What were they treading on? Plants? Had they broken into a nursery? Some leaves on the ground glinted with white rings of hoar frost. They looked like strawberry plants. Rows of trefoiled leaves with phosphorescent edges slid away under them.

They all five jumped across a wide ditch. Five heavy thuds! Then they set off at a trot alongside the same ditch, down towards the fitful flickering at the scene of the accident.

Black figures formed a many−headed silhouette against the red and green lights. In the middle the mass billowed up in the air forming a dark hillock. They were the people standing on the luggage which had been dumped from the coaches. Beyond the crowd was a glare rising from the ground a bonfire, a gigantic blaze throwing its light up against a long black shape. An inverted letter and some figures gleamed; it was an upturned P and the number of the engine! The whole mass of the locomotive was lying upside down, and in between the light of the lamps some dark circles could be picked out: the wheels!

Erlandsen pushed forward in amongst the watchers. They all had expressionless, yellow faces on dark bodies, so intense was the light that shone on them, so spellbound were they at the sight.

A big, dark form stood in the centre of the glare, a huge soldier, swinging a pickaxe above his head. Every now and then this living shadow erupted into a ruddy face. Suddenly he whirled round, threw off his tunic, and when he started work again he made a vivid picture or red and white, working in his shirt−sleeves; his figure seemed to grow and grow. He became merged with the regular thudding of the pickaxe, the beat which gave rhythm to the whole work, the mad rhythm of the disaster: a man splintering open a door.

In between the thuds could be heard shouted orders, the clanging of pieces of iron which were being thrown aside, the breaking of glass, and the incessant shovelling of coal and gravel. These sounds came from higher up the embankment, by the wheels of the locomotive, where an arc lamp of an eerie green colour threw its light on a coach which lay pointing diagonally down from the spot where the collision had occurred. From the black sky high above on the top of the embankment, where some undamaged carriages still stood, the roof of the coach stretched in a broad surface down to the bottom of the slope. The compartments nearest the top were undamaged, those on the middle were half buried, and the bottom ones were match−wood. Erlandsen could follow distinctly the line of words: II Class, II Class, II Class, as they neared the foot of the slope and vanished, a slanting line of repetitions. Out of the leaning compartment windows some curtains fluttered; they looked like ships' cabins in heavy weather.

He absorbed it all. He took in immediately every detail in the harsh light against the sombre background of night and death. The disaster was like a blow in the eye; burning colours of red, blue and green swept into his mind which grasped at every gruesome detail; compassion, great compassion would later on gather all his impressions into a whole if only he could remember the details, remain cool and remember clearly.

Behind him he sensed the presence of the others, Gering's tall figure, his glasses shining in the light, Hoff's face with the narrowed eyes, the press−photographer with his pale face devoid of eyebrows, and the sculptor farthest behind. Erlandsen sensed it all; but when he let his thoughts desert the colours and the contours, the diagonal line of the coach, and the other jerky diagonal line of soldiers who with lamps in their belts were scrambling down the embankment, he had a choking feeling in his throat and was afraid of vomiting. If he were going to be sick it would spoil his aesthetic impression, his belief in being able to look life in its flaming face with all its features shattered. But he would not flinch, he would face it.

Clarity, coolness, colour, line, in the midst of all the horror!

The light attracted him like a magnet. He wanted to stand close to the disaster so that he could feel its heat upon his face! And now only a single row of spectators remained in front of him.

"What are they listening for?" asked someone.

Up by the green arc light some men in uniform stood peering into the smashed coach. They stood stiff and motionless with an expression of oriental calm on their faces, which had taken on an olive colour in the light of the lamp. They were listening.

"Look! They're bringing out a body."

Two soldiers came stumbling down the embankment carrying a stretcher. A tarpaulin was spread on it in heavy folds making it impossible to distinguish the outlines of what lay underneath. They set down the stretcher next to some others.

Erlandsen glanced across at the stretchers. There was death underneath those tarpaulins, but it was meeting with real life to see it. He looked again and had to hold on stubbornly to the thought that they were actually dead, those who lay there, otherwise the whole thing became unreal; colours, shapes, surfaces, shadows.

Suddenly he sensed a movement in the dark crowd. All those on his right were being pushed backwards as if by an invisible wave, and a gasp from hundreds of people catching their breath rose like a sound in nature: the soughing in a tree at twilight; the sudden rustle in a cornfield at night. He swayed to the right; in an instant hundreds of white terror−stricken faces flashed from the background of the darkness like willow leaves trembling in the wind, elusive and fluttering; a fitful light from the scene of the accident shot up into the air, a huge, dark wall began to tilt forward slightly, and some of the night broke loose.

"The engine is falling!" someone shouted.

"There's an arm, a white arm sticking out!" came a murmur from the dark crowd; and Erlandsen, who wanted to see better, moved to the right, felt nausea, but felt compelled to watch. The dark wall sank back again; in the midst of the confusion of lights it was as if some darkness had been shut out, a door closed.

"Shall we go over there?" asked Gering, with a strangely expressionless face. "I have two press cards."

"Yes, come on then."

But that was soon forgotten. There was fresh movement in part of the crowd. The police were pushing them down from the heap of luggage, and there were muttered protests.

"Hello, Erland!"

A man's broad figure had turned round and his face gleamed in the light. It was an old acquaintance.

"Are you here, too?"

"Always on the spot. But I heard you say that you wanted to go over there. Don't do it! Blood and all that. You keep slipping in it. Don't do it!"

Erlandsen knew that the big fellow was tough.

"Then I shan't," he said.

Gering too let the matter drop but talked instead of the cold.

Suddenly Hoff was there between them.

"We've seen enough. Come on, let's go."

But they still remained standing there. Then they started to walk backwards, their faces still turned towards the moving lights. The sound of the shovels digging under the coach, the thuds of the pick− axe which formed large arcs in the glow, made them hesitate. They succeeded, however, in edging slowly backwards and extricating themselves from the crowd. All the hats and heads merged together into a restless, undulating line of darkness against the glare. It was as if the whole scene had been lifted up into the night and was burning and flickering in the darkened air.

Now they were all five together again and slowly began to leave, but they still kept looking back. The shattered carriages and the lights seemed like a burned−out house where the embers are still smouldering among the ruins with isolated flames licking into the air. It was the atmosphere of the aftermath of a catastrophe, of light against darkness, of colour effects against destruction.

It was only when they reached the village and could no longer see the scene of the accident that it became possible for them to walk at a regular pace. They exchanged a few words. Erlandsen whistled and his hands were restless.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Gering.

"There was material there," he replied. "I'm going to use it!"

They stood for some time staring at the star which kept changing from blue to red, and they talked about it.

"I'm sure it's a planet," said Hoff.

With that they parted.

Erlandsen went home by himself. He was confused, and at the same time his mind was so clear that he could recall each detail.

He lay in bed for a long time tossing restlessly about. Strange that now he had already forgotten the number of the great P−locomotive lying with its funnel churned into the earth. His mind wrestled with colour fantasies, turned to the injured, but kept coming back to the vivid colours as if to harden itself. The material had to be hardened! The mind had to be hardened!

The first faint light of dawn broke through. The familiar furniture and bookshelves appeared from a dark veil. The curtains gleamed in a white mist.

Suddenly he heard a sound which startled him, a monotonous hopping from perch to perch, backwards and forwards. His canary was astir, it was something alive, warm and soft, a thing of flesh and blood and life, a being which had not been mangled and could continue its regular habits. It jumped to and fro, clip−clop, clip−clop.

In a moment the realities of life and death overwhelmed him, life with a hitherto unknown warmth, death with a hitherto unknown chill. Mentally he discarded all colours and shapes; they were like precious stones rubies, emeralds, sapphires, lying useless and cold on a table. In his imagination he swept them with a broad gesture off the table down to the floor. They were useless and more lifeless than death itself.

He rose, dressed and went out into the morning light, out amongst the trees, the factories, the shrubs, the houses, amongst all the familiar things which were just awakening.

ON THE SQUARE

BY JACOB PALUDAN Translated by F. A. Rush

He still remembered the dingy, little square where a kind of suburban street widened out in the town where he had first earned his own living. Not that it ran to good money from the very beginning, but it amounted to food and lodging. One must learn before one can serve customers properly and get that easy flourish that comes in time, bringing a wad of notes to the pocket. On the other side of the big bay window he had the square under his eye throughout the day's constant to and fro, so he certainly remembered it.

There was also a view in the other direction, through the back room, to a spacious yard where country folk put up their traps and carts on Saturdays, and horses snorted and life buzzed merrily. A backdoor is useful in life now and then on Saturdays, for example, when the shop did not close until 11 o'clock. Released at last, one could get

a few minutes to steal over to the back of general merchant From's shop for an ice−cold lager straight from the cellar. Martin would not immediately have risked that if Frederik, his slightly older apprentice colleague, had not shown him the way. Frederik was a tough, stocky little man with sparkling eyes and a taste for adult pleasures. He smoked cigarettes in a completely sophisticated manner so that the smoke disappeared inside him and then, when one had forgotten all about it, there it was again, streaming out of his nose. He smoked so much that one was positively dizzy on following him into the lavatory to read the afternoon paper and to pull oneself together a bit. He was so much addicted to nicotine he actually maintained that the smoke was good for a sore throat. "Can't you see?" he would say, "it's a first− class disinfectant?"...According to St. Augustine, man is made for God, but Frederik and his friends, who sometimes crept in like Red Indians after locking−up time and lights−out, were at that time made for tobacco smoke best of all accompanied by a lager.

When Frederik and Martin had dived in at From's and rapidly emptied their bottles, they reappeared after a swift wipe of their mouths on their sleeves, taking care to arrive back from different directions and not both at the same time. So longs as they did not breathe too earnestly on customers or superiors, all went well.

But now for the little world of the square. Traffic streamed through it thickly in the morning and in the late afternoon. Most of the people were on their way to somewhere, into the town in the morning and back again in the evening like a tide. The square had a quiet life of its own. The outstanding feature was the young people from the country, girls as well as young farm hands, who hesitatingly climbed the doctor's stone steps and later came down again with a blood− stained handkerchief to their mouths. They had had all their teeth out at once so that they would never again have toothache. Very conveniently there was an elderly female dental mechanic in the same building, and she just as quickly attended to the supply of artificial dentures as the strong−wristed doctor lugged out the real ones, like staves from a barrel. She herself had a tremendous denture, almost as if it were an advertisement, and it seemed to Martin that at times it bore a horse−like grin of triumph on its own account, without any cooperation on the part of the owner's face.

A few yards from this tough old nut, in a cellar, was Thamsen, the greengrocer, who, truth to tell, had not got much of a business. One saw him, round as one of his own potatoes, slip down a side street in his slippers of a morning to one of the big greengrocery shops and return with a few greens and radishes. He realised on these in the course of the day, with just a little something added for his trouble, to neighbouring housewives of unthrifty disposition or too harassed to care; and he managed to exist, Heaven knows how, without expending any noticeable energy, which was just what he intended.

On a higher floor in the same house one saw the sea−captain take his seat in the window at nine o'clock each morning, light his long pipe, and unfold his newspaper. His day had begun its pre−determined course. When anything happened in the square he lowered his paper and craned forward with his egg shell of a head. Although he was not at all old, his mild pleasure in merely sitting and watching gave him an irritating air of senility. Now and again he had an infant on his lap, and he seemed to be bringing it up to the same form of amusement, smilingly pointing out anything worthy of attention. The child had come into the household through a daughter who had no clear knowledge of how it came about, but, as she said, "He insisted" a reply that was well known on the square and in the surrounding district.

But Gerda would never get herself into such a deplorable position. While her father, the brisk and always grimy smith moved about among his machinery and never lifted his cap unless some sudden problem demanded a little cooling air on his head, Gerda sat in the window above, sewing with porcelain fingers that did not know what wagon grease was. Over her sewing she followed what went on in the square, like the captain. Naturally, she was on nodding terms with the two young men opposite. She was the square's Gretchen, a remote beauty, who was seldom seen with a hat on her brown hair, for she went out as little as possible. She was her father's joy and treasure, and she must wait. But was she not in danger of waiting too long? Frederik, who had many irons in the fire knew her a little, and he would often turn his shining eyes over to her first floor from the shop window but, after a nod of recognition, she would bend over her needle again, ignoring his attempts to carry things farther.

Only once could Martin remember her coming over to them for something, in a hurry and without her hat, as startling as a picture that had walked out of its frame. And what was such beauty like at close quarters? Overwhelmed by surprise, it was difficult to take in the whole, but Martin's impression fell into three parts. Her eyes were dark and dangerous, for Martin had no belief in the existence of beauty that was not at the same time dangerous. But she was beginning to get lines on the cheeks and chin, an increase in their roundness that was not all to the good; it was only behind a window that she looked fresh from the cocoon. Lastly, it was equally clear that she had no more intelligence than that of the sex in general. "There's no intellect there," said Frederik expertly. Frederik always talked as though he had sampled all the girls at close quarters.

Next door to Gerda's was a public house frequented by seamen and the unemployed and useless greybeards of the district. "The Zealand" was not a genuine dive, only a sort of restaurant on the seamy side of bourgeois respectability. Frederik and Martin had ventured across a few times when things seemed quiet. It was a riskier undertaking than the merchant's back shop, but how piquant sweet the feeling in the diaphragm to sit behind the tobacco−yellow net curtains, looking out on the scene of one's own proper activities, where, indeed, one was probably already missed. All excursions into milieux to which one does not rightly belong were stimulating, Martin felt, and here one was certainly on forbidden ground. So much the better. If one could not go upwards and everyone could not there was always elbow room on the way down. And, truly, there was something alluring about sitting in such a glass case, watching others work and go through the antics of living. Indeed, was that not precisely the role of the gods?

Life in the square was utterly bourgeoisie in the changes that were possible within its bounds. People could look tired out and totter along like marionettes; in their Sunday best they could look as if they had all suddenly raised themselves to a slightly higher but more uncomfortable position on the social ladder; and, when the evening sun was behind them and their clothes were flapping in a stiff breeze, they could look like complete strangers on some dramatic errand in some colour−enchanted existence. But it was certainly no colour− enchanted existence; that was only a bit of Nature's phantom−filled buffoonery; it was quite the opposite. A gasp went up in the square, the captain almost threw down his paper and Gerda her sewing, when the town's most eccentric doctor and his donna came sauntering by on an ordinary evening stroll. He was reputed to be a morphia addict, and his walk was characteristic. He wore check trousers, an artist's jacket, and on his dark, demonic head an old tall hat. She was in a silk dress of heart−arresting brevity, a Parisian, apparently, in every detail, and made−up so that one might guess any age between 30 and 60.

Life in the square came to a standstill as these two strolled along, casually as seaweed washed by incoming waves, either unconscious of the attention they aroused or indifferent to it. People might criticise them, but criticism could not reach them; they did not ask for any opinion. They belonged to a different stratum of society and they had possibly gone to the dogs in every way, but there was an air about them as of ghosts, and their patent leather shoes had surely carried them to dances and to drawing−room dramas such as nobody in these parts knew.

Martin remembered well that in those days it was, after all, on girls that all things turned, the bewitching other half of mankind. How important they were could be seen from the conscientious criticism devoted to every girl who came within visual orbit. Frederik and Martin reported to one another in a dog−Latin incomprehensible to others whenever there was something worthy of attention to be seen outside or inside the shop, and if the other was not present, they found an excuse of some kind to bring him within eye−shot, contriving the while to present an air of absorption in his work. But Martin knew in himself that the whole question was confoundedly difficult. It all seemed easy enough in books, where everything just happened inevitably, and in the newspapers one was always reading of girls who were so mad about a man that they gave him their bank book, although they, too, were quite capable of reading the newspapers...Or think of the captain's daughter opposite...He remembered one of his early days in the town. He had gone for a trot round the villa quarter and had felt himself a complete outsider, utterly irrelevant to his innermost being. The only other person who was out for a walk and equipped against the shower that suddenly teemed down was a rosy−cheeked girl a domestic servant, perhaps. She shared her umbrella with him in friendly equality, and he found something or other to say. When they parted she had still

rosier cheeks, from embarrassment, no doubt, because he was not more successful as a cavalier, more amusing or gallant or enterprising. Perhaps she, too, was lonely. And why was he none of these things? Because he thought himself ineffective, an ingrained doubting of himself, instilled into him throughout his childhood. Whenever something could and ought to happen, an invisible, sniggering ape would jump out at him on the very pavement with "Hi, hi, you can't. You can't do it. You can't do anything." Even when he was happily confident and all seemed plain sailing with nothing to hinder him, the consciousness was there, gripping him cold as ice underneath his nervous system, so that in the very moment when he wanted to do something demanding the least effort of self−assertion, that ape appeared immediately. If he said to himself "I am", there rose from his innermost depth an inconquerable "I am not".

A minor experience in those days that were curiously compounded of monotony, foolery, and half−conscious melancholy, was furnished by Marie, his employer's maid. She would come up the kitchen stairs for various little things, and, on her free evening, she was very smart in velvet with transparent sleeves. She was out to please, but Martin was fascinated by a black tooth that showed when she laughed, and it worked against her interests. Still, she always set out to get a little flirtation going between herself and the two young men, and she paid no more attention to the one than the other. Martin gradually came to know her contours nearly as well as her way of pressing her thigh and her knee against him, as though in all innocence, but somewhat frequently. One morning Frederik had extraordinarily sparkling eyes, a something tom−cattish about him, and he was heard singing sotto−voce a few lines from a popular song that glorified those who knew how to make the most of their chances. To Martin's surprise there sprang up in his mind a feeling rather like hate for the unsuspecting Marie.

There was also the mild diversion of being sent out for change or on urgent messages when the errand boy was unable to go. One spring day of the kind that makes everyone light−hearted, he was entrusted with something or other ordered by Pastor Sorensen a few streets away. He did not hurry. He delighted in the fresh, young leaves that floated like light green smoke against the old red brick of the church walls. He rang the bell at the pastor's house. He was let in, and, as he had some special instructions to give, he had to wait a few moments for the pastor to come.

He stood near the window in the study. Pastors always know a host of people outside their own usually large family, and this particular man of God was undoubtedly very popular, judging by the great array of photographs on his desk, loosely ranged in serried rows. Let's see if he has a nice niece, thought Martin, true to the dominant motive in his life in those days, and he reached out to one of the photographs which bore the gilt imprint of a local photographer. It was a girl sitting in a hospital bed with pillows behind her. As he looked at it more closely, something seemed to happen to him. It was as if he met humanity in a more wonderful edition than ever before. The girl was quite young, with long black curls falling over her cheeks, her neck, and the white−clad shoulders. She seemed to him beautiful beyond description. Her eyes were full of a convalescent's courage and joyous expectation; but one could detect in their dark depths that they had not long before expressed concern and affliction. She looked out eagerly at the photographer as though moved by a reawakened desire to dance. Her smiling lips showed just a little of her lovely teeth, sweet, gentle, and yet how terrible, how cruel, it would be if she were to ask him among a laughing crowd of girls to repeat some clumsy remark or other. For Martin it was as if a door had just opened on to the light of spring. "When such a one such a one is found," he meditated, "life is then worth while." He had thoughtfully turned over the photograph, and he read "Esther Magda Tranekaer Nielsen" written in ink, then someone suddenly turned the door handle and in panic haste he pushed the photograph back among the others. A permanent bad conscience was so general among young people in those days.

The pastor did not notice Martin's confusion. He roamed around in uneasy semi−circles, hunted for something in his pockets, said "Well, well" and "Thank you for the instructions" and then "Good−bye." With this Martin left that most enviable man who knew Esther; but he felt that he was no longer alone. It was as if he had just left some exalted company in which a marvellous and unexpected secret had been revealed to him. He talked softly to himself and gazed at the passers− by with bright eyes. He noticed for the first time how truly caressing the air

was, how soft and invigorating, after the hardness of winter. To think that that such a being lived somewhere around here; with only a little luck one might meet her and follow her just a little way on the same pavement.

A golden velvet light hung over the roofs and chimneys of the little square. He threw himself back into the waiting work, whistling as he went up the steps in a few leaps, and when he saw Marie or Gerda he laughed inwardly, strangely, as if he were a country gentleman's son who had taken a job in this vale of shadows for the fun of the thing. The more he noticed them, the more distinctly real grew that country estate in his mind, the turreted wings almost visible among great woods filled with birdsong.

That evening a slender new moon floated over the railway, and here, walking along the side, he often took a breath of fresh air. At a certain point one passed through a cloud of perfume from a group of balsam poplars. It was all no longer irrelevant; it had all been seen by those wonderful dark eyes. He thought of Frederik now sitting at "The Zealand", fortifying his manhood with beer and tobacco before he went to knock at Marie's door. He also wondered if it was now the time for the morphinated doctor's dizzy indulgences. How lamentable such things were when one thought of what this world had to offer: a little walk with Esther and her smile on parting and on meeting again. That is if one knew her if...

One could not just go and question the pastor. Still, he thought he might investigate a little himself, which was really as inevitable as the growth of a tree. Jemini, how different the world was from anything he had ever thought! Today dawn had broken and a gleam of light showed in the darkness. In the telephone directory there was a positive mob of Nielsens, yielding nothing of value except the joy of letting the finger glide over the rubric and knowing that he must surely have at least touched the right Nielsen. Print is in many ways full of secrets; if you look at a calendar you can even see your own death date without its disturbing you.

Many days went by perhaps a fortnight but although every injection after a time loses its strength, Martin still had his head in the clouds. When he said to himself "You are", he did not melt away promptly into flabby doubt. He was happy at his work, and never alone in his thoughts when work was over. And he was quick to respond on the day when the call fell on his ear: "Something urgent for Pastor Sorensen".

"Right?" he shouted, thankful that Frederik was standing just out side the back door, inhaling health from cigarette smoke.

The weather was more enchanting than it was before, much warmer and the green diaphanous clouds of the birch trees in front of the church were beginning to take a firmer outline. He sensed an approaching meeting in which joy and fleeting nervousness and a mild indisposition were all inextricably mixed. For Heaven's sake he must be alone in the study for a few moments; he would go mad if his eyes did not meet again that pure, clear face when he was so near to it once more.

The pastor was not there. He pushed past the maid, saying that he had a lot of things in his pocket and could he put them on the desk. She knew him well, opened the study door, and went off to the kitchen. He rushed in and snatched up the photograph which revealed itself standing carelessly just where he had put it down. His nerves flickered again like little flames; yes, oh yes, she was the only woman in the world worth looking at, beauty of body and soul in one. But was there not more fear in her eyes than he had first noticed? There had been some healthy people in the room the photographer and her parents. Did she feel different from them in her white nightgown apart from them? He turned the photograph over just as he heard a footstep in the hall, and he read, at last, the writing underneath the name: "Died 9th April. To Pastor Sorensen from her Parents". The pastor's wife did not understand why this otherwise well brought−up young man just stared at her as though she had no right there and his lips moved without a sound.

Somehow or another Martin got back to his starting point. The legs have own wisdom and made for the place he had left half−an−hour before. His world had turned into weekdays again after a long Sunday. He thought Gerda

gave him a significant nod in welcome from her seat in the window and that Marie stayed a particularly long time when she came on one of her visits to the room behind the shop. She noticed his changed mood, said something or other about it, and pressed her knees against him. It was as though a padlock had closed around him with a little click; he was safe here where he belonged, but all was gloomy and all voices were hollow as in Hades.

And in the morning he awoke without a spark of desire to do anything as the whole affair crept into his consciousness again a little heavier every day, because it was still a little longer since she had been interested in the surroundings they had in common a little longer since his world was also hers. He felt sick at the smell of coffee and at the sight of the little square where the young folk from the country reeled confusedly along after an extraction. He imagined a grave in a churchyard full of the things that man, in his feebleness, finds to erect there. He remembered a frightening, sweetish smell at some family funeral, when November rain had forced the mourners to shelter in a room with a number of labelled coffins and whatever he was doing, he stopped with a gasp. He turned Esther's face into an angel's. But angels were not for him, and she had become one too early. What delights had been in store for that mouth and those arms! None had ever looked so queenly as she or had so obvious a mission in life. She broke like some lovely piece of porcelain and the echo rang through the world.

The town was seething with people in the balmy evening hours and seemed to have doubled its population. They were kindly and cheerful folk, who had neither the look nor the habits of traitors, yet he felt that was what they were. Perhaps one of the passing youngsters with their elegant canes was her former cavalier, but she had one more in the eyes of those who saw things as a whole, not only in the past a late−comer, he, Martin, belonged to her full story. And because men do not live like animals wholly in the present moment, he must continue to search. He found in a murky, muggy newspaper office the newspaper in which the death notice had appeared. That told him who she was, and one Saturday night, when all the shops cast golden beams into the streets, he saw her father in one of them a tall man, just turning grey, in the white overall of the proprietor. He did not look at all like her.

The following Sunday, with his heart thumping like that of a burglar making his debut, he paid a visit to the stairs which led to the home of the Tranekaer Nielsen family and the homes of a whole host of other people. He got no closer than to read the nameplate on the door. The sound of many voices inside reached him and, immediately, a peel of laughter. Yet, in there, it was Esther's home hardly two months before.

Out walking that evening, because it was impossible to sit still, he passed his square. A net curtain on brass rings was pulled to one side and a hand waved to him urgently. Behind it he saw Frederik's lowered head with a sly glint in his eyes.

It was "The Zealand's" quiet day, and even Marie had allowed herself to be enticed inside. Those two were alone in the comfortable room that faced the street, and they seemed to be enjoying that Elysian and comprehensive view of the workaday scene. Marie giggled. Frederik rapped the table and called for beer with the amplitudinous air of a coming big businessman. He was on cigars that evening "Beer and cigars", he kept chanting as if he were naming the formula for all earthly bliss.

He radiated contentment. Martin and he clinked glasses. Marie sipped carefully at a liqueur. Martin hardly knew how the first hour passed; but the vocal chords have their own wisdom, and suddenly he heard someone say: "But to die just as spring came. No." It was his own voice.

Frederik had for some time had a notion that Martin had lost a relative. He expressed sympathy and dismissed the matter hurriedly. Just now he did not want to have the happy atmosphere of the moment wrecked whatever happened.

"She was something to herself something something peculiar," Martin mumbled on, and it seemed that uninvited he must in one way or another pay homage to her image an image that was already beginning to fade.

Disintegration even that disintegrated.

"Was she a bit cracked?" asked Marie merrily.

"But when you're dead, you're dead. It's all over bang." Frederik hit the table hard. "S'welp me, it's useless to oh, can't you understand? You must drop it." He got to his feet and hinted to Martin that they should have a break. Out in the "gents." he told Martin it was his turn to look after Marie. She was keen on him that was no secret and he, Frederik, could not for all eternity didn't Martin see what he meant? There were plenty of girls and one must have a change even if they were all pretty much the same. "It's just exactly the same comedy with all of them, don't you understand?"

"The curse of it is, I don't. I don't understand."

Frederik took his time. He shook himself, looking at Martin inquiringly.

"It'll come. Be practical. Come on in. All things come right in the end, here on the square."

He nudged Martin in the stomach sympathetically. "Come on in. Beer and cigars."

Martin was drunk. He went into the doorway and looked out on the mild June night. Something rigid in him relaxed a little, a step towards release. If only one could tamper with Time's eternal clock, as they had done once with the clock in the shop over the way to escape a little earlier if one could do that and make Time move ten times as quickly, people would die like flies, and the fact oh, it applied to everything and he could not find the words for it the fact that the self was nothing, something evanescent, would become absolutely clear. If he were to return to the square in thirty years' time, all would be like a cleaned and scoured kitchen table; gone the doctor's patients from the country, reeling round like the mourning burghers of Calais; gone the captain and the greengrocer and Frederik; and Gerda would have waited for sourness or death. We were all in Esther's boat all of us alike.

But just as it seemed to him that the universe began to expand and reconciliation's warm wool to wrap itself round his heart, he remembered the laughter he heard on the stairs at Esther's home, he thought of the treachery of life, and without knowing what he meant by it, as he took a few confused steps out into the empty square, he said: "Never."

WORLD FAME

BY C. E. SOYA Translated by R. H. Bathgate

There were only two of us in the tram, my neighbour and I; and we were bored at least, *I* was. Nor did the district we were passing through invite cheerfulness it was one of those depressing, unromantic suburbs that breed dreamers and escapists.

My neighbour was very ordinary to judge from his appearance. He was of medium height, medium weight, medium intelligence, and middle−aged. He was rather like myself and I took him to be psychologically completely uninteresting.

I changed my view when unexpectedly he exclaimed:

"Now I know how to become world−famous."

It gave me a shock. Not because he spoke to me without being introduced I am not Swedish. Nor because he seemed a little mad so do many of my acquaintances. No, the shock came from

No. On second thoughts, I would rather not say why. There are too many people who don't like me for me to dare to expose what lies nearly in the depths of my soul.

I pulled myself together a little after the shock, and then I said:

"Well, that's very nice. How exactly do you propose to do it?"

"I shall perform a circus turn," he answered. "The really big circus acts are all world−famous."

I nodded

"Grock, the Rivel brothers, Baggesen, and the rest. You're quite right."

My fellow passenger continued

"It will be a conjuring trick," he said. "I have just been sitting and thinking the whole thing out in detail, and if you would like to, sir...?"

"Certainly."

"But you mustn't you must not use it!"

"Oh, no. I never steal conjuring tricks."

"Well, you see, first the two assistants come in with the props. They should be wearing livery. I've been thinking a great deal about whether it should be red or green livery, but I am inclined to think now that it should be green. Red is a little banal. A bright shade of dark green with gold braid on."

"Very smart!" I interjected mainly to show that I was following.

"The props," he continued in a matter−of−fact voice, "the props consist of a table, an aquarium, a dozen goldfish and a dozen tadpoles. The goldfish and the tadpoles are in the aquarium. The aquarium must be made of plastic, so that it won't break. I shall probably have to get it made in America.

"When the assistants come in they carry the table between them, with the aquarium on the table; and the fish and the tadpoles, as I said, play about in the aquarium.

"The assistants put the table down in the middle of the ring then they go.

"I don't know if I said that there should also be water in the aquarium, but you understood that, perhaps?"

I nodded. I HAD understood that.

"Then *I* enter.

"I am not really quite sure, you know, whether I should be in evening dress or just a plain suit. I think I'll choose a suit, though perhaps a little better than this one "

He looked down at the many creases in his waistcoat and his trousers.

" But nothing elegant or expensive or arty. I think it will produce the greatest effect if my dress is in contrast with my fame and...my colossal income "

We stopped at a tram−stop, and my neighbour was silent for a moment. Perhaps he was afraid to initiate the conductor into the secrets of his world−famous act. A workman got on by the driver on the front platform, and we set off again.

"I bow," went on my fellow−passenger. "Not low, but not ungraciously, either. And then! Then the orchestra stops playing. You understand: nearly the whole act will take place without music then the audience will know that this is REALLY something.

"I stick my hand down in the water, catch a tadpole, a little innocent tadpole, and throw it up in the air. Up towards the big top. And then it disappears."

"Disappears?" I exclaimed. With perfectly genuine astonishment.

"Yes. Vanishes. Invisible. On its way up in the air, suddenly it's not there any more. Then I take a goldfish, up in the air with it and it's gone. Can you see the people staring?"

"Yes," I said. "They will certainly stare. I know something about the public's reactions from my own line of business, and they will all open their mouths to see better, I assure you."

"Another tadpole. Another goldfish. Another tadpole. Another goldfish. And so on, and so on until they have all disappeared under the big top."

I muttered:

"Is it mass hypnosis you use ?"

But he went on without answering my question

"Now it is the aquarium's turn. I get hold of it with both hands, life it up, throw it high in the air

"And it's gone!"

"The aquarium as well?"

"The aquarium as well."

"But how on earth?"

"Finally I take the table. Up in the air with it. It disappears, fades away. While the audience sits and stares, suddenly phtt it's gone!"

"Good Lord!"

"Then I bow. Graciously, but not too low. And make my exit."

"You make your exit!"

"Yes. Out to the stables. The orchestra starts playing, a good rousing tune: Sousa's 'Stars and Stripes' or something. It would do no harm if they play for quite a time, it doesn't matter if people become impatient or...or annoyed, it will only make the final reaction even greater.

"The two assistants come in again during the last few bars, carrying between them, a big oval bath−tub. They set the bath−tub down exactly the same spot as the vanished table.

"When the bath is in place, they fill it with water. I think a hose− pipe from the stables would be best; buckets take too long. Then they go off, the music stops, and I come on and bow graciously, but not too low. The ringmaster comes forward. He explains in four languages all at once that now the audience is going to see the greatest sensation the circus world has ever known. What actually happens is the private secret of the great world−famous artist, no one else has yet discovered it, no one knows yet if it is an ingenious piece of deception or a miracle. The ringmaster goes off. I shall wait a little wait until the whole arena is deathly quiet. Then I step forward quite informally up to the bath−tub, look up, up towards the big top, clap my hands lightly, and a tadpole falls down into the bath. The audience is still quiet they don't know if they saw aright. Another clap a goldfish flashes down and plops into the water. And I go on clapping like this until all the tadpoles and goldfish are swimming around in the basin.

"Then I clap twice the aquarium comes rushing down from up above; three times the table. I bow. Can you hear the applause?"

"I can. It'll be colossal."

"Don't you think that should make me world−famous?"

"Certainly. No doubt about it. It's enough to put Chaplin in the shade. But how exactly will you do it?"

"Well," he said, rather doubtfully. "That is what I have been sitting and thinking about. I haven't got it quite straight yet, but "

His face lightened

" but when I do, then I'll be world−famous."

I got another shock which took my breath away. That was exactly

Ah, no I don't think I had better let on about that either.

I tumbled off at the next stop. Exactly two stops too soon, with the result that I had to trudge a good way...through one of those depressing, unromantic suburbs which breed dreamers and escapists. But the man's tale had left me confused and distrait...as people are said to become when they meet their own ghost.

THE EVENING PRAYER

BY NIS PETERSEN Translated by Eileen Macleod

Carl Trostrup's job in life was to sink wells for people and when I met him he was working near a village in the heart of Thy. We lodged at the same small temperance hotel and as is the custom in these places, we took our meals at one long table. He had disappeared, however, long before I sat down to my breakfast at 7.30 and as he took a packet of sandwiches with him for lunch, we did not see each other until supper at 7 o'clock. His workmen

came in first and as a rule they had to wait a few minutes before he appeared. He was a man of middle height, with a face the colour of roasted coffee beans, a somewhat uncommunicative and very even−tempered man, upon whom stormy events appeared to make no more impression than a slice of bread, but he was a man possessed of a convenient and practical memory. This showed itself sometimes when there was a dispute about the details in connection with some question or other; usually he could settle the matter with one courteous, relevant and clear remark. Moreover, he not only had his opinion and facts neatly bottled and corked ready for decanting, but he did so, not only with the silent, but also with the strong man's determination to be heard. Carl Tostrup was an exceedingly strong man, and it was a joy and an edification to see him at table; there was not that tough and gristly steak which could cause his teeth the slightest inconvenience, nothing daunted these exceptional bone formations. If by mistake the dish had contained a stew of the leather thongs of a hand flail, he would hardly have noticed it in fact it is doubtful whether he ever noticed what he put into his mouth. He seemed to be the kind of man to reduce one kind of woman the good housewife and cook to despair, whilst others regarded him as a model of easy−goingness.

Carl Trostrup was also something of a character in other respects. For instance, he demanded of his workmen cleanliness and tidiness, and when one remembers how exhausted workmen can be at the end of a hard day's work, it is easy to understand one or other of them giving in to the temptation to sit down to table without a proper wash and brush up. One of the first things I saw him do was to fire one of his best men. This man had appeared, bold as brass, in torn trousers covered with oil and held together in the most essential places with tacks and rubber patches, and his shirt matched the trousers so well that he might have been rigged out from a theatre wardrobe. After it had been suggested a couple of times that he might at least tidy himself up a bit before sitting down to a civilised table, one rainy evening about Easter time he was handed his final pay−packet and he seemed like a man doubting his own eyes.

Generally we did not talk to each other, but sometimes the well−borer remained sitting at the table after the men had gone outside to smoke their pipes or court the girls. Then he would go through his correspondence, making a cross here and a monosyllabic note there; his letters were no doubt models of objectivity and conciseness like the man himself. Meanwhile he smoked a cigar and when it was finished he would collect his letters and papers, bid us a brief good−night and, with his easily recognisable heavy tread, go up to his room. But very occasionally before leaving he began a short conversation about something or other he had on his mind but never about the wind, the weather, the coming festivity or the difficult times; from him there was nothing to be found for the salvage collectors.

One evening he astonished me by asking without any explanatory introduction: "Have you ever said evening prayers?" A strange question to ask a virtual stranger. It had fallen to my lot several times in my innocent youth to come into contact with missionaries who wanted to know whether I had made my Peace with God, but Trostrup was certainly not a missionary. Therefore the question caused me some confusion and I said: "What do you mean evening prayers?"

"Just that," he said. "Did you say your prayers at night as a child?"

Well, that was easy to answer, my brothers and sisters and I all said our prayers, until we were left to do so alone and after that probably about the age of twelve it gradually faded out. I told him this.

"What prayers did you say?" he asked, and as the question really seemed to interest him, I replied that we had a formula which remained basically the same; we prayed for our sick and sorrowing relatives and friends by name, for those who were in prison or who might die during the night, for "China's hungry millions", and for other lost and presumably unhappy heathens such as Santals and Afghans, and finally for the Royal Family. The prayers ended with Our Father, and in our very early childhood we sang that dear little goodnight song: "I know a lovely garden" you know the one "where roses grow and bloom..."

"Were you happy as a child?" he continued, and when I answered briefly, yes, because a child really never feels 'happy' in the emotional meaning of the word, he nodded and said: "I was happy also, until I was fourteen."

People are queer in many ways; if you say to them, "You must at least be able to recount one strange or moving or exciting experience of your early years", you are almost sure not to get so much as a commonplace anecdote out of them, but if you give them time, a week or a fortnight, and quietly watch them daily without directly approaching them, they will almost invariably come of their own accord. There was no doubt of the well−borer's intention; he was about to relate his life's history. But he found it difficult to get started. First he absolutely had to ring for some cigars, and after that he had an errand outside infallible symptoms, signs without which the story might even have lacked something. However, at last he sat down again, looked at his hands which were criss−crossed with cracks and hard as pig−skin, and cleared his throat. When he spoke he stumbled and hesitated at first, but he soon got into the swing, and when he came to the end it was obvious that he was satisfied at having covered all the important points. He said:

"You noticed perhaps that I said I was happy until I was fourteen; it does seem rather strange, of course, to be able to fix that sort of thing so exactly, but when I have told you what happened then, you will understand. You have possibly guessed I grew up in the country, but my father, like me, was a well−borer and was therefore often away from home for weeks on end, although he did his best to be home on Sundays at any rate. The place we had could just be run with the help of an oldish farm hand, a lad and maid of all work. And it was only when my childhood was long behind me that I came to the conclusion that he really kept the farm for my sake. It was one of his ideas that it was best for children to grow up amid nature; I am carrying on that idea myself and I too, have a little farm.

"The relationship between my father and mother was really lovely and I don't think he ever came home without some little present for her sometimes quite a trifle, but often something for the house or perhaps a silk shawl, the sort of thing which pretty women appreciate because it makes them still more beautiful. And my mother really was very beautiful, a fact which was generally agreed. Therefore, although my father was not himself very well known in the parish because his work kept him away so much, we were often invited out, but Mother hardly ever went except when Father was at home, so our social life was mostly during the winter. I want to make it quite clear that Father didn't in any way prevent her from going out, either she just did not want to go alone, or she stayed at home from a kind of feeling of loyalty. And so I naturally became very closely attached to my mother, so much so that during the two years after my twelfth birthday we were really like brother and sister a well−worn cliche, but still . We collected mushrooms and botanised together, we gardened together, we built castles in the air together, and when I did my school homework, it was not so much that she helped me, as that she also did her homework ready to be heard in school next day, and perhaps she felt it like that too. And last but not least we always said our evening prayers together, up to the time I was fourteen when it stopped with one blow. And then everything else somehow stopped also."

Although the well−borer must have been a man of about forty and therefore the incident should have had plenty of time to have faded, or at least partly faded, from his memory, it was painful to watch his struggle to keep his feelings under control. However, he continued after a short pause:

"The things that happened were in themselves shattering for our intimate little circle, but it was that evening prayer, or evening song, which made it unbearable and turned it into a crime. Of course you know that little song, 'Now I close my eyes...' which ends with the lines:

'From sorrow, sin and danger
Thine Angel keep me safe,
Who guided all my steps this day.'

A hundred times, many hundreds of times had I said that verse, and always I had lain down to sleep with a feeling of invincible sentries outside my door and window...and when everything went to pieces it was as if the sentries

had been withdrawn for ever and I was left to my own frailty and weakness.

But to return to the point before my father went off on a job, then far away into a remote part of the country, he sometimes said jokingly to my mother that now she must be careful with the men−folk, for it was common knowledge that when a young and beautiful woman was alone at home the fearless pioneers of love were not far away, as sure as the Pope would go to Heaven. When he said this Mother turned up her nose, stuck out her jaw and replied that they might as well come, as it really wasn't altogether amusing to be there alone for weeks on end, and hear the whistling of the wind in the poplars outside the window. And then they both laughed and she added that she had me and Karo and that she couldn't wish for a better bodyguard.

'Yes, that's right, and you have Jens too,' he said Jens was our middle−aged farm hand, and there had been talk of fixing a bell out to his room beside the stables, but each time the idea was dropped because Mother pointed out that as it was quite likely that he would be in the maid's room when he was needed, it would be necessary to have a connection fixed there too. Then they laughed again to each other, and Father started up his motor bike and rolled off across the courtyard whilst Mother stood watching him and waving because she knew he would look back at us when he reached the bridge over our little stream.

The spring of my fourteenth birthday was more full of events than any previous one, even if I don't count being moved up into the middle third, which was really quite good considering that it took me an hour and a half to cycle to school and back, and that I had various duties at home besides the voluntary occupations with Mother. The first event was that Jens shot an eagle, for which he was fined; Mother paid it on the quiet, because Father held that one should not encourage people to break laws. He applied the same strict rules to himself, a fact which we did not perhaps appreciate enough until it was too late. It was so like him once I had solemnly promised Mother ten young pigeons for her birthday, which was very early in the year, and on the day before her birthday, when I climbed up to feed the birds for the last time they had all disappeared except two, which lay dead in the pigeon house. Before I got on my bicycle to ride into the village where I knew I could get the ten birds I needed, I told the farm hand to keep quiet about it, but of course he didn't, so when I got home late in the evening, Mother had coffee and doughnuts ready and she kissed me and said that she was proud to have a son who made it a point of honour to keep his word.

'What do you say?' she asked Father, and he didn't answer just then, but a little later he said, 'In my house we didn't get any praise for keeping our word.' That made Mother angry, and when Father turned to me and said 'Isn't that right, Carl?' I naturally said 'Yes,' but I didn't really mean it.

As I said, many strange things happened that spring one of our horses ran amuck and crashed through the fence into the stream it was an unusually good old horse with a light mane, and we had had him ever since I was born, so we were all very sad about it...and the bees kept on swarming from the very beginning of the spring, and when at last they quietened down only half of them were left. There was something bewitched about everything, it seems to me now. And then Uncle Polycarp began to visit us at short intervals. Perhaps it was really he who made us feel that everything had become strange and hectic. Uncle Polycarp was as different from Father as a cock from a drake. Whilst Father was deliberate, thoughtful and honest to an almost morbid degree, his brother was just the opposite. Those who came into contact with him must inevitably have felt that they had met an advertisement for health salts. He was always busy with something or other, always full of stories and completely untrustworthy. Father warned him now and again to stick more closely to the truth. Uncle Polycarp promised he would, but added that of course the advantage of telling the truth was that you didn't have to remember exactly what you had said, and then he immediately plunged into a new story of how, when he had once been travelling in Iceland, he had been so ill that he had had to write his last will and testament on a piece of dried codfish, or even worse nonsense than that. Then Father would shake his head and go away, and Mother would laugh and say that he would never learn sense, but he amused her all the same, and she probably secretly thought it would not have done any harm if Father had had a little of Uncle Polycarp's gaiety. Eventually, the tragedy happened. As so often before Father had to go off on a job which would keep him away for the whole week, and hardly had he passed

the gate when Uncle Polycarp drove into the courtyard. This surprised and bewildered us all because he had visited us only the week before. At that time he was travelling round selling seed to those of the larger farms prudent enough to secure supplies nine months ahead, and he had told us that he had "vacuum cleaned" the district, and by that he meant there was nothing more for him to do here. However, he was always welcome and I remember that we all three went for a walk in the copse which lay at the end of our garden. In different circumstances I should hardly have remembered what we talked about, but later happenings made every detail stand out clearly. Several times during the walk Mother and Uncle nearly started a quarrel, and I thought: What a pity that he has come and spoilt the afternoon for us. It was a pretty little wood, our copse, even though it could hardly be called a wood, even though it was really only a few half−tame trees, still they were trees and it was fun to walk between them, though there was not much room. And so I noticed that Uncle tried several times to take Mother's arm, and that every time she pulled it away. Once they very nearly had a row, because he had made some silly compliment to her, and she said sharply, 'Do you think I don't know that you are one of the sort that asks a married woman whether she hasn't a younger sister just like her. We have heard of Mary Something or other' I didn't catch the name . He laughed at that, it amused him. Later on, on the way home, Mother said that once there had been things which people couldn't talk about, but that now, thanks to men like Polycarp, they could hardly talk about anything else. If he had not laughed before he certainly laughed now and he said: 'That's what you love to talk about really,' but Mother replied, 'That's where you're mistaken, my friend, and in any case you can keep your mouth shut whilst the boy is about'. That hurt me because I was fourteen and I thought I knew all about the things one didn't talk about. Luckily this turned out later to be wrong.

During our walk a heavy thunderstorm had been gathering and just as we reached the hall door, the Lord put the earth in soak, as Polycarp described it, and after having seen to the animals, I said 'Goodnight', and went to bed.

What comes next is nearly impossible to relate, but I feel somehow that it helps me to tell someone about it. In the middle of the night I woke up with a feeling that something was wrong, and immediately after I heard noises and screams coming from my parents' bedroom below. I shakily pulled on some clothes and rushed down. What a sight met my eyes. In my father's bed lay Uncle Polycarp, dreadfully knocked about, with blood streaming all over his face and Mother was running backwards and forwards in the room, moaning as I have never heard anyone moan. Like Polycarp she was in her night garment, and she had obviously been lying on the other bed when the attack took place. It soon became clear that burglers had broken in and had attacked Polycarp, thinking that he was Father.

Just imagine a fourteen−year−old boy in that situation. Mother moaned incessantly. 'Oh, Carl, my poor boy, what is to happen to us all and Father...poor Father.'

At last Jens was there in the doorway. He was oldish and confused, but he managed to think of telephoning for help, which I had not had the courage to do because my immature brain was pondering about how we could get out of this terrible position with the least possible harm. I did not go to school for a few days, of course, and they sent over to the field the next day to tell me that my father had come home and wanted to speak to me. When I went into the room, Mother was leaning with her head on her arms over the long table where we always had our meals with the farm workers. She kept on repeating: 'Well, hit me then, beat me, kill me. What have I got to live for after this?' But Father spoke calmly, almost in his usual way. 'Did you say prayers with the boy before you went to bed?' he asked, and Mother moaned 'Yes, oh yes, I suppose so.' 'Supposing won't do', said Father, and Mother sobbed that she had done so. 'The last lines as well?' Father asked, and as Mother didn't answer, he repeated it louder. Mother again answered yes, she had said it all, the last lines as well. 'From sorrow, sin and danger Thine Angel keep me safe, Who guided all my steps this day. Those lines as well?' He said this as if he hoped that she had skipped the last lines, but Mother only replied with a tired nod. His face became so queer almost pallid I think it is difficult to say because his complexion was brown, as I am now and he said hoarsely: 'Before you defile our house you say prayers with him'. He said no more. He lifted his hand to strike, but I got in first. I drove my fist into his face, and then in my terror I ran out, out of the farm out of the place away and four days passed before they caught me and sent me home.

"I did not go back to school again," said Carl Trostrup objectively. "I was apprenticed to a blacksmith for a couple of years, and after that I became a well−borer. It's a good profession which can keep a man, there is always work for good well−borers; they won't be able to do without us, until there are no more people left in the world."

A LITTLE BABY IS CHRISTENED AT IVER'S

BY KAJ MUNK Translated by R. P. Keigwin

In the middle of the blustering black night there is a knock on the window. Cautiously. Apologetically. You have gone to bed late and not long fallen asleep, so you can't really believe you are being disturbed. You turn over on the other side. Then there comes another knock, louder, more insistent...and a voice: "Hallo!" "Well," you answer, "what is it? "Will you go over to Iver's and christen a little baby?

There is somehow a special joy for a parson in being raked up out of his beauty sleep in the middle of the night simply because there is need of him. For a moment he feels that he is just as useful a member of society as a doctor. In a twinkling he has coat and trousers on and has snatched up a prayer−book. There is not even time to reach for his cassock that can stay on its peg for it's a matter of life and death. And now the Ford begins humming a hymn; away it goes, while every house in the parish is lying asleep with darkened windows. Only one has a light in it.

The kitchen is steamy from all the warm water that is being used to− night, damp in a strangely solemn way for such an ordinary kitchen, though already there is mingled with this the aroma of coffee, dear symbol of everyday, the home beginning to slip back to the normal again. A child's eyes peer at you from its cot, drowsily dull, now realising for the first time that this hour of the day also exists. The father emerges with his 1−year−old on his arm, likewise woken up by the unusual happenings of the night and evidently mystified as to why all approach to Mother is forbidden. 'Sh,'sh,'sh! the father tries to lull the baby to sleep. Then the midwife appears and takes over from the embarrassed man. And we stoop as we go through the low door and in to the battlefield itself.

Inside the narrow room with the many beds, two big and five little, are four people. I see them at once, all four. Iver, who follows me in, sees no doubt only the two. There lies his wife, already decked out in white, though her forehead is still drenched with sweat, her face all covered with red spots, and her eyes half wild with the agony she has been through. She tries to give me a smile, but she can't quite manage it; it is so short a time since she came from the fighting−line. They have stuck their bayonets into her belly, and there is a faint smell of gas in her nostrils and a nauseous taste in her mouth. Added to that, my presence gives her an inkling that it is not absolutely certain that the victory has been won; it might still be wrested from her grasp. And there, too, lies the "victory", in an old−fashioned cradle on wheels, swaddled up in warm blankets; and, beside him, bending down over him, stands the angel of Life, breathing warmth into his body and encouraging the frail little heart to keep on with its unaccustomed beats. But over there in the dark corner stands another; I know him well, I have seen him so often when I have come out to my parishioners, the old and the sick. From the sockets of those hollow eyes he flings the angel of Life a glance of stern enquiry: "I wonder how strong you are, if I should now decide to try my strength with you." But the angel gives the glance no reply; takes apparently no notice of him; merely continues his efforts for the child.

Tepid water is poured into a basin, a clean towel put out, the holy rite can begin.

I do not really know the significance of baptism. I know a large number of explanations of it, and I know an even greater number of objections to it from Soren Kierkegaard's for once low−pitched protest against the splashing of water on a child's head, to the most ethereal views deploring that Christianity should be turned by the sacraments into an unspiritual religion. I also remember so well how in my earliest youth, precisely in my Kierkegaard period, I sat in a country church while my in'ards retched with nausea at this ridiculous dunce of a Government

official solemnly questioning a baby in arms that was as likely to answer him with one end as the other. I know that neither David nor Socrates nor even Gandhi was baptised; that the child which dies in its mother's womb may have at least as much right to eternity as the greybeard; and that it is a revolting thought that God should revenge himself on the children whose parents have neglected or refused to have them baptized. I know that for most Danish members of the established church christening and naming may almost be said to come to the same thing; that it would be absurd to suppose that "a germ is implanted" or that anything else whatever of a magical kind happens to the baby; that baptized and unbaptized grow up together and turn out exactly the same. All this I know, and a great deal more besides. But for the time being, as I stoop down over the new−born little boy, I only know that this is a great and holy moment.

Candidates for confirmation in Danish parishes learn from their catechism that to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost is to be baptized into communion with the Triune God and participation in his grace and bounty. What Jesus Christ has won for us all, this he has given to every single one of us in our baptism. And in this way we have, being baptized, come into communion with the Triune God; we are incorporated into Christ's kingdom; we have become children of the Father, and participators in the working of divine grace by the Holy Spirit...And then they go and tell us that Luther did away with the Latin! Do they suppose that village children have any idea of the meaning of "communion", or "participation", or "incorporation"? Or of an expression like "the working of divine grace"? Not to mention "washing of regeneration", being "justified by grace", and all the other piling up by the theologians of Pelion on Ossa. That might be all very well with things that are beyond them anyway, even though it would of course be better if they were in Latin.

But what are we to say of a harangue like the following? "Note. In baptism we are born again; that is to say, a new man is born in us. But this new man shall grow more and more, until it be perfected hereafter; and our sinful nature, or the old man, shall more and more be overcome and brought into subjection, until it is destroyed. This shall come to pass by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which sanctifies us through faith"...There's a nice consignment of Darwinism for you, ready for unloading at one of the main centers of Christianity.

But my thoughts are not of atonement or of old Adam or of justification or of any other textual accountancy and elaborated rights and wrongs, now, as I turn back the woollen blankets, and the pink, puckered little old man's face comes in sight. They have not dared to wash it more than was strictly necessary; clots of blood have coagulated about the tiny forehead. Little human child, have you taken part in the war already been right to the front so much in the thick of it that it cost you blood? So that was the first thing you encountered in this world. Well, the second look, it's me...No, not me, for I stand here in the name of another. One who said: "Come hither to me, and I will give you peace." So then the first thing you saw, little child, was war; but, immediately afterwards, he who is peace. He it is that now sets his sign upon your blood−stained brow and your feebly pounding breast and smiles to you and says: "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

I know perfectly well that you don't understand a word of all this. But if all goes well no, I must not say that; but if all is permitted to go as we hope it may, then a day will come when you go up before the altar in our church in order, with me, to recall these moments here. By that time you will already be quite a little man, who has even begun to think of cigarettes. And if God in that hour grants me success, then I know that you in an inward flash will come to see that it is not I that stand there. My black cassock will become shining white, a coat woven in one piece; my ramshackle figure will straighten, become authoritative and masterful, itself one piece like the coat, and my low forehead with its myriad fugitive thoughts will become high and calm and cool and then you will know whom you belong to in life and death and all eternity.

I nod down to the little one and begin to recite the words that are the church's profession of faith through the ages right from pagan times those venerable, unambiguous, almost untheological, poetic, beautiful words about the enemy we must shun, the creator and saviour and preserver to whom we belong. And Mother is so anxious to answer yes for her child, but her strength is hard put to it, and so we all help her by answering too. And now the time has come. Carefully Father lifts the tiny mite up on the pillows and lays it in the mother's arms, while himself

continuing to support it, and I dip my fingers in the water...

Water! The brook winds through the flowering meadows; the lake spreads cool and blue and life−giving amid the torrid hills of the desert; the ocean swells in titanic power and proffers death in its arms to the defiant, then smooths itself out again, carries messages between the nations and gives salty freshness and strength to youth plunging naked into it. The dew−drop on the straw mirrors the star as it sways; sprightly as the nightingale's song is the babble of the fountain; refreshing the splash of rain on the parched fields. Under the earth invisible currents bring life to every plant; the sun coaxes the water up through stem and tendrils and turns it into wine glowing red as the stream that is life itself to our hearts...Hail, master from the waves of Gennesareth, who didst choose water in token of brotherhood between thee and us! Then I link a new small human name with the great names of eternity, and the little chap is put back again, and I stroke the tired mother's forehead with "congratulations and blessings", and I call upon the good old poet at Soro [Footnote: B. S. Ingemann (1789− 1862)] and let him speak for us as he alone can:

"God's son himself was once a child and in a manger laid,
and promises of joy in heaven to little ones he made,
and flowers that in paradise are blooming.

God's son he loves us so, the friend of children all,
and on his arm he bears the child to God."

Then Father folds his hands and, in the wonderful happiness of her relief, Mother begins to cry; and, as I steal a glance over to the corner, the stern−looking gentleman is transformed. He seems to me to have merged into one with the angel, and my heart beats at once fearfully and at ease.

Later comes the presentation in church. Yes, that is a proud day. It has become the custom for the mother herself to be godmother, and it is no mean custom. Has she not every right to be? Right to prove to the whole congregation that now the struggle has been proudly brought to an end, for this time. Let the organ peal out, let people crane their necks, let God smile down from his heaven. High on his victorious mother's arm the little conqueror makes his triumphant entry into life.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW ERA

BY HANS KIRK Translated by Marianne Helweg

Bregentved had been working on the Cliff, but now he had found something else to keep him busy, selling land, which was a step up from selling herrings. Anton lost his job, but he soon got another, for Grocer Skifter wanted a boy to help in the warehouse and to carry goods out to people when they ordered them. So Anton was taken on as assistant in the shop, when he was not at school.

The building sites for the workers' houses had already been parcelled out, and roads and boundaries defined. Someone had to negotiate with the purchasers, and Bregentved thought he would be the right man for this. He talked with the solicitor, Mr. Schjott, and they agreed that Bregentved should have a commission on all that he managed to sell. He put a notice in his window with: "Good building sites for sale" written on it. A great ambition had been realised; he had become a dealer, and a dealer in land. You could see that he felt he had risen in life, for, whereas before he had dressed like the other day labourers, he now wore his town suit with its rubber collar and green tie every day.

But it was not enough to put a notice in the window, nobody came to buy the sites. Bregentved had made his room into a sort of office; he sat at the table with pen and paper in front of him, and there were chairs for the

customers to sit on while he wrote out the contract and deed of sale. But the customers stayed away, and he realised that, to do business, he would have to go out and talk to people.

So Bregentved went calling, and, quite casually, he would bring the conversation round to the question whether it might not now be necessary for the day−labourers to have houses of their own. With a good daily wage all the year round, they should be able to afford decent homes.

"This is a shocking place you have," he said, as he looked round Lars Sjaeldenglad's parlour, "it's not fit for a woman like you, Line. You should have a snug little house with a tiled roof and plenty of headroom."

"Have you one to give away, then?" asked Line Sjaeldenglad. "At least this belongs to us."

That was not Bregentved's intention exactly, but he did have a plot he could sell them, and once they had the site, he told them, it would be an easy matter to raise a loan to build.

Line shook her head: "We're not biting off more than we can chew, thank you. Beggars can't be choosers."

He had no more luck at Marinus'.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Marinus in horror, "what sort of a price is that to ask for a bit of land? Why it's as much people pay for a whole cottage. And how would I get all that money?"

Bregentved explained that only a small deposit would have to be made, the rest of the money could be paid off over a number of years. But Marinus said No; he knew what it meant to be in debt. He was not taking on a responsibility like that.

The sites remained unsold, and Bregentved went to Faergeby to complain to Schjott.

"Don't worry," said the solicitor, "the buyers will come. But if you're smart, you'll go round to the farmers and get them to promise to sell all land for building sites through you. The main thing is to keep prices up. In six months, or maybe a year, people will be fighting for plots in Alslev. A town will grow up round the factory, that's certain."

Bregentved followed his advice, and he had no difficulty in getting the farmers to agree. They saw that it was in their interest not to undercut each other's prices once the buyers came along.

It was summer time. The crops in the fields were growing, and the soft night air was scented with jasmine and lilac from the sheltered cottage gardens. Every Saturday there was dancing at the inn, and the girls were more in demand than ever before, for, with so many single menfolk in the town, there were not enough to go round. The old people shook their heads at all these goings−on. It was a bad sign when the girls went dancing and came home in the early hours with hay in their hair. And if they were led astray, who could they turn to? The men did not belong to the parish, and who knew, they might have wives and sweethearts where they came from.

All day long the sound of activity came from the Cliff. Heavily loaded carts creaked their way over the churned−up road through the village. Workmen on bicycles arrived at the break of day. Alarm clocks shrilled in cottages and farm−houses, sleepy men tumbled out of bed, shook themselves awake and set to work. Tinkers appeared with sweaters, and boots and God knows what else to sell. They came on foot with bundles on their backs or pushing handcarts full of goods. Their sales−talk was glib, and they sold their wares, for the place was full of people with bulging pockets. The farmers shook their heads. It was a disgrace to see how these men flung good money about instead of putting it into a savings−bank and letting it breed. Look at Black Anders' daughter, Mathilde, now, she had been given a piano. Her father, so they said, and her sweetheart (who came from the west and worked on the Cliff) had bought her a very expensive second−hand piano. Which showed what happened

when people got above themselves. What did lame Mathilde want with a piano? Only rich farmers' daughters had that sort of stuff.

The air became torpid with a baking sun, even the wind blew hot, and the men became tanned and brown. The hard work made the sweat pour from them. The young ones threw off their shirts and worked in belted trousers, and in the dinner hour they threw off their trousers as well and jumped into the fiord from the quay. What with larking in the water, puffing and blowing like seals, they hardly gave themselves time to eat. The day labourers did not hold with bathing. Salt water was weakening, and, as everyone knew, it was bad for the health to get wet. But what was the good of preaching? These were strange days when all time−honoured customs were turned topsy−turvy.

It was not only humans who needed to be cooled off. The cattle in the meadows along the fiord stood up to their bellies in water. A thunderstorm passed over the district, and the workers took shelter from a torrential shower. Afterwards everything looked fresher and greeener, and the white patches on the Cliff much whiter than before. The sun glistened, and soon the deafening noise on the work−site began again. Stones were loaded, iron girders hoisted on squeaking pulleys, mallets rang on iron, axes on wood, and through it all there was a shouting of eager voices. In one place Marinus was giving a hand with the brick−laying, balancing a load of bricks on his shoulders. In another Cilius and Black Anders were hoisting girders together with men they hardly knew by name. Andres and Boel−Erik, Horse−Jens and Poul Bogh, the Klovhuse tenants, fishermen from the harbour, smallholders from the moor, Faergeby workmen, bricklayers, builders and labourers of all sorts from distant places, hundreds of men all hard at work, swept up together in a fast−moving rhythm. This was not like working on the land you had to keep in step, had to keep in unison.

Once a week you pocketed your comfortable wage; there was never any trouble or argument, none of your farmer's excuses of "No money today", no waiting till he got paid for the milk at the dairy. Two clerks sat in a wooden shed and handed each man a pay−envelope with his name on it. It was all worked out according to the rate, and there was never a penny missing. The men brought money home, there was enough to spare for the children's clothes. Take Marinus: his children had never been very well dressed. Now they were getting new shirts and dresses, and Tora sewed and hemmed till the sparks flew from her sewing machine. A little was put by for a rainy day too; after all, you never knew how long the job would last. But the day labourers felt better off than they had ever been, they had ready cash in their pockets and owed nothing to anyone.

On the other hand, the cost of living was going up. Marinus's landlord decided that they could now afford to pay a little more in rent.

"I should have thought we paid enough for this couple of rooms," said Tora. "I don't know how you have the face to charge any more!" But the landlord had the face; if they did not like it, there were plenty of others who needed a roof over their heads.

"You ought to be ashamed, bleeding us for a tumbledown shack like this!" said Tora. "I thought you were a decent man, but I despise you, that I do."

The farmer was not slow to retort: "You take as much as you can for your work," he said, "so why shouldn't we take what we can get in rent? Charity begins at home, you know."

"First myself, then myself, and then myself again! That's the rule with you farmers, morning, noon and night!" snapped Tora, "and if you could strip us naked, I suppose you'd do it!"

"If it was a question of stripping you, Tora, I wouldn't hesitate!" laughed the farmer, "you're a fine, handsome woman, though you do have a devilish tongue!"

The same thing happened to the other tenants; their rents were put up. And now it was Bregentved's turn to have visitors. The building plots started selling, and the first to buy was Andres. He moaned over all the money he had to pay out, but there was no cheaper land to be had anywhere near the factory. Andres had figured out that if he built his house a bit on the large side, with a flat to let and a couple of rooms for unmarried workers, that would cover the cost, and he would be able to live free himself.

One day Niels came home and announced that he had bought a plot on the installment plan.

"But my dear boy," cried Marinus, "you must have gone out of your mind! What do you want with land? And how are you going to pay for it?"

"I've given Bregentved a down−payment," answered Niels, "the rest will come off my wages bit by bit. Then, when we've paid for the plot, we'll get a building loan. We're not going on paying the farmers double rent for these hovels."

"It'll probably make no difference," said Marinus, "after all, it's their land we'd be building on, and we're certainly not going to get it for nothing. I never would have believed land could be so dear."

There were others who thought of building the Faithful Brethren. Now that so many people were coming to live in the place, it was time to build a Mission Hall. Once it had been erected, with a cross over the gable, sinners would be sure to find their way there. A fisherman must cast his net where the shoal is thickest.

After his conversion Pastor Gamst had taken on Karlsen's mission, and become leader of the small band of Faithful. He went from house to house collecting for the Mission Hall, and one evening he presented himself at Hopner's door with his list.

"I am the vicar of this parish," he said, and explained what he came for.

Mme Marja put away her cigarette and stayed for a moment to listen to the parson. Then she quietly left the men in the snug little low− ceilinged room.

"A mission hall?" said Hopner, "that's not in my line. You must remember, Pastor Gamst, that in a year's time Alslev will no longer be a country village, but an industrial town, a factory town."

"All the more reason," replied the parson. "There will be great tasks ahead, souls in need of the Word of God."

"True enough," said Hopner, "but the question is, whether the souls will bother to listen. There is the difference between an impoverished land proletariat and a modern industrial one. Religion has no hold on the factory worker; he has grown out of its primitive symbolism. He has enough material comfort to dismiss all this talk of suffering and sacrifice as ridiculous. Forgive the expression, vicar, I speak as an industrial employer."

"But however good material conditions may be, the soul still has a thirst to satisfy," objected the parson; "death still exists, and life is no less difficult."

"Animals don't think about death," said Hopner, "nor do healthy people. And it's a moot point whether religion does help people over their difficulties nowadays. If we must have a religion, it should at least tackle contemporary problems. Start a new religion, Pastor Gamst, or modernise the old one. Let us have the eleventh Commandment: 'Thou must not go on strike!' If you can hammer that one into your congregation and then get my workers into your fold, I'll give you my blessing. Then you shall have a mission hall or a new church, if you like. What we need is a religion which fits our modern industrial and economic organisation, a religion which fits with capitalism. The old bait's no good any more."

"Mr. Hopner!" Pastor Gamst rose angrily to his feet.

"Sit down!" commanded Hopner. "I don't say this to insult your faith, I am speaking merely as an industrial employer. I am building a factory; that is a greater undertaking than you may think. I have had countless difficulties to overcome, had to raise capital, had to risk my own money as well. That is the first stage. The next is to run the factory. I have make it pay, and I have to feed my workers. If I am to keep up with my competitors the work must not be interrupted, which means no strikes, no unnecessary fuss. I am best served by employing quiet and orderly people, and it's my object to keep them as quiet and orderly as possible. The factory worker who has no property of his own is difficult to handle, far more difficult than the ignorant, but also innocent agricultural labourer. The factory worker has a faint idea what it's all about. But give him property, let him establish a family and become even the smallest pillar of society; let him gambol in the blessed institutions of democracy and revel in the power he doesn't wield. Give each man his own house and garden, his position in the Council with the accompanying duties and apparent rights, and you'll keep him quiet. That's modern religion for you that's democracy, and that's the religion which has my full support."

"But what about the soul? The secret depths of man?" asked the parson.

"What is the soul or secret depths of a sound potato?" retorted Hopner. "But if the potato is diseased you will find dark spots on it. A well−oiled machine will hum along in its own contented rhythm. But if it's not oiled it will protest and squeak. The soul is a canker. It can be quite decorative, in the same way that a bunion can be crimson or purple. But the human mind is made up of a series of functions and reactions. Actually, Mr. Gamst, there is very little to choose between men and the machine. It is the modern employer's task to make the section of humanity which serves industry, namely the workers, function as smoothly, efficiently and noiselessly as the machine itself. It can be done and it is done, and we don't need religion to help us. All we need is a certain knowledge of modern mass psychology. However, if you insist on presenting us with a religion, it must be one that belongs to the times, one that preaches the great commandment: 'Thou shalt not stop the machine. The machine is thy God, to which thou must dedicate thy life's blood. Thou must not go on strike, thou must not demand higher wages, thou must not cause the machine to stop'."

Pastor Gamst leaned back in his chair. He was tired; he had been going round with his list the whole afternoon, and had hardly had time to eat his supper.

"But no man can live in this terrible world of yours," he said, "far better a world without machines altogether....."

"So it would be!" nodded the engineer, "for without modern scientific technique we would plunge head first back into the Middle Ages. The machine means a decent standard of life for the whole of mankind. If we were without it we would again need parsons and religion. Soulfulness would be on the increase in proportion to the spread of hunger and misery. But never mind, I might as well finance your religion like signing an insurance policy. How much am I rated at on your list?"

The parson rose to his feet.

"Under the circumstances I cannot accept a donation from you," he said. "But a time will come when you will discover that you have an immortal soul in need of spiritual sustenance. Some day it will rage in your breast like a caged beast. For you cannot kill the soul, only lull it to sleep for a while. Sooner or later it will wake up."

Pastor Gamst continued on his rounds with the list. People gave him contributions, but they did not amount to much, and it looked as if it would be some time before the mission hall could be built. He visited his parishioners more frequently, and looked in on the new families that had come to live in the district. He spoke to the young workers, he even ventured up to the barracks to talk with those who were billeted there. Everywhere he was

politely received. Slightly embarrassed, people listened to him talking about Mercy and Salvation, and he felt himself that his words did not enter into their souls.

THE TIN BOXES

BY HAROLD HERDAL Translated by J. F. S. Pearce

The clear July day was so hot that the air above the road seemed to dance, and the dark figure of a man could be clearly seen coming along the road. Like a black silhouette, against the bright mid−day light. He had adopted a strange gait all of his own a sort of skipping step, which carried him briskly on his way.

A small parcel, wrapped in newspaper, and tied up with over−much string was tied to a cord round his waist, and swung just below his hip. This same cord served to keep closed his enormous coat, which blew out round his slight body like a wind−filled sail. He was like a tent which had grown feet, and was walking along the road. His trousers were short and ragged, and his bare legs could be seen, with his feet slobbering along in a pair of worn−out boots that were many sizes too big for them. His seedy, frail and puny figure was quite swallowed up in that faded, tattered coat.

Yet, strange to say, there was a light−green soft hat perched firmly on his sharp little head, and beneath it appeared two grey pig−tails of hair, bound up with coarse string, finished off with a pair of bows. His face was smothered in brownish beard, from which there stood out a shiny red nose and alert little hedgehog eyes, which glittered like the glass eyes of a stuffed animal.

He was a peculiar little man, with an air all his own. As he dashed along with his queer gait and undiminished speed, he mumbled to himself continually.

The broad high−way between the open fields and wide heathland was empty but for him. There was no reason whatsoever for his haste, and he knew it, too indeed he often remarked to himself that there was no hurry. But he had adopted that style of walking almost of running once and for always, and stuck to it probably he could do no other and he only changed it when passing through towns.

There he went about with great care, shy and nervous, with an uneasy expression on what little of his face could be seen, and with anxious eyes. There he would walk extremely slowly, and he always kept close to the walls. Always cautiously, warily and fearfully. You never know! Dogs and so on!

Only on the open road did he skip along freely and merrily, his eyes keen and happy, and full of tenderness for flowers, worms and the song of birds.

He was frightened almost to tears by dogs, horses, cows and, most of all, by sheep, and he hated them.

He had a feeling of humility, of self−effacement, almost, in the presence of chickens; he always used to bow to cocks.

He would quickly and carefully doff his hat, which was held on by elastic, as if he were excusing himself for being so busy that he could not stop, and had to hurry on. His soul filled with a vision of paradise, and was transfigured.

Oh, how wonderful! To see chickens!

To hear cocks crowing! Wonderful!

What a lovely world!

And the clouds, too!

His soul trembled with joy; he smiled, and his grey eyes were bright and sparkling.

He was deeply touched by the flowers on the roadside, especially those that were a bit battered and dusty. He mumbled something to them, and went his way.

And there was the sun, shining down from the clear, blue sky of summer.

This, too, made him happy beyond words.

So he repeated the law; he mumbled the words solemnly, as if it were some religious chant:

Never by refuse tips, manure heaps, rubbish dumps;

Never near farms and houses, or in towns.

Only on roads, in fields, in woods.

But never in the outskirts of towns, or by fair−grounds.

That was the law.

His soul filled with solemnity as he recited it. Little tears forced their way into his inflamed old eyes, and he nodded with blissful sentimental emotion, as he dashed along the edge of the road, near the ditch, mumbling all the while.

He trotted along to the rhythm of a little song.

He scratched his head vigorously, just above his left plait, continued his pace, wrinkled up his little nose, which looked, indeed, just like a small, solid, purple rose, smacked his cracked and colourless lips under his beard, making little sucking noises, as if he were tasting something, uttered a strange gurgling sound, glanced to either side, took a quick look behind, found himself alone, and could see no one, and suddenly set off running like mad...

He stopped, out of breath and sweating, drew a deep breath, was seized by a fit of coughing, panted for breath, and stood still, with an almost wild look in his eyes, and quite breathless. Then his little face took on an expression of satisfaction, he uttered happy sounds, and looked round earnestly. There was neither man nor beast in sight only fields, open country, and the empty road.

The baking sun blazed down from above.

Then he seemed to become frightened, or else just uneasy, again.

Then he looked around again.

All right, then he jumped into the air, came down again, up again, floated for a moment in space, in the sunshine, flying with the insects down again, up, down, up, down, up, down...

He seemed to be intoxicated with joy.

Then he raised his arms, the wide coat−sleeves fell back, and little dirty hands appeared, with delicate, slender fingers, hooked like the thin claws of a bird, and they made gestures as if trying to find something firm in the air, which they could seize. He waved his arms like wings, and made faint squeals of delight.

His eyes shone out quietly from the tangle of hair, he became breathless and tired, and had to stop...

He heard the larks singing high up in the shimmering blue heavens.

Now he seemed to see something special. He walked towards this with small dancing steps his eyes fixed themselves upon it, he approached, withdrew, seemed to be playing some game appeared bold, then timid, brave, then fearful, made as if to flee, attacked, then fled...

And glanced suddenly round as if afraid of being taken unawares by someone.

And this was all happening on the broad, dusty road, between fields of oats and rye, beneath a blue sky, with the white furnace of the sun up above.

He stood still, like a cat watching for its prey. This notion entertained him vastly he put on an air of great ferociousness, showed his teeth, growled and then in a moment, he was gentle again, and peaceable he had only been acting savagely for fun only for fun, and now he seemed almost to be apologizing. Then at last, with a little howl, he threw himself down, with his hands grasping, on to a small shiny tin box, which lay sparkling in the grass right on the edge of the rye−field. He stood with an oblong sweet−tin in his hands, quiet, silent, solemn; his hands caressed the tin, and he stroked it.

He was a happy man.

A torn newspaper lay by the roadside. He picked it up, turned the pages as if he were looking for something the pages were stuck together it had laid there some time, but then he found what he was looking for the date:

Wednesday, the 27th of June.

Further along was a clump of bushes. He sat down in the shade of them, and gave himself up to intense and possessive absorbation in the tin he had found. His life had a very real object, his existence was not meaningless, he had achieved something, and was happy. He was surrounded by the peaceful fields of the manor, the corn was perfectly still, not a breath of wind swayed its ears, which were not yet filled; the sun was high, and its midday heat streamed down; and there were the larks, the insects and the ants...

He sat there in his huge coat, under which he was half−naked he sat happily looking at the tin box.

He had tin boxes over the whole of Zealand scores of them he had collections of them hidden on the edges of moors, beside little lakes, and in other peaceful spots. It filled him with joy when thought of it. HIS existence was not meaningless; he had something to live for!

OTHERWISE HE WOULD BE BETTER DEAD!

He sat with his back to the corn, and gave himself up to thoughts. He did, indeed, think. People might not think so. But he was, indeed, a thinking man; no ordinary tramp most certainly not!

His life had an object, a meaning, a point; he lived a life that was BY NO MEANS he nodded to himself by no means empty and meaningless. Indeed no.

Indeed no, he repeated, in his small, thin and dispirited voice, which, nevertheless, now and then took on a more energetic note. He beat the grass with his delicate little hand, but stopped, as if he were committing some offence. The others the others whom he met on the road, they made fun of him, pulled his leg, called after him, and laughed. Blimey, fancy collecting tin boxes any fool can do that! What for, anyway what good does it do?

He gloated. They were right they did not know how right they were. Any fool can collect tin boxes. He nodded. Then his face was lit up by the knowledge of something that he alone knew. To collect them according to the law according to the law! That's different, quite different!

Indeed it was.

He nodded, and looked very firm. He was a man with an aim in life, and he was prepared to fight for it.

Then he laughed.

Ha ha!

What did they know of the law?

Nothing.

Nothing whatsoever.

Indeed no!

And here he was, sitting beside a rye−field, in the summer sunshine, holding a beautiful, silvery sweet tin in his hand, and in his heart was the law.

His eyes sparkled with triumph.

He caressed his find both with hand and eye. He held the box up high, and saw it shining in the sun's light. It still smelt of sweets. That reminded him. He quickly pulled out his flask and swallowed rapidly once, twice, thrice coughed a little, and took a deep breath...

The whole thing was quite clear, as clear as crystal.

Take the flowers...or the animals...Don't they have to care for their kind? Has their life no meaning? Can you not see that for yourself?

Right.

Let me then ask: must there not be a meaning to one's life? Why else are we here? He raised his head in all humility, and looked around provocatively, as if expecting an answer, or a refutation.

Then he made a concession:

It may well be that life as a whole has no meaning, and that people just exist, live and must die. But that is no good. In that case, one must ONESELF create a meaning for one's life and existence. One cannot go around just

aimlessly.

He was so happy that carefully, most carefully, for it was somewhat complicated! he took off his hat. His hair was red, and greying, neatly parted down the middle, and plaited at the back...

His eyes were shrewd and humorous, and were set in the same hairy wilderness from which his red nose shone forth. He happened to catch the parcel which he always carried with him, and which he was always so careful about, although it was quite empty.

Time after time he was asked what was in it.

Nothing

It gave him a feeling of pleasure when the others gaped at him.

What the devil do you go around with it for, then?

He just laughed kindly at them not proudly, at all, but humbly rather, as people laugh, who know something the others cannot understand for they cannot help their ignorance.

The sun was shining; he lay back, and gazed contentedly up at the sky. He was at one with nature, and he lay there a long time, picking his nose solemnly, and looking pensive.

Suddenly he sat up and nodded.

So he collected tin boxes, then.

That had become his object, and that gave meaning to his existence.

What do other people do?

ANTS AND CONTRARINESS

[Footnote: This story was written during the German occupation of Denmark. As it could not be published in Denmark at that time it was printed in a Swedish literary magazine.]

BY KJELD ABELL Translated by Eileen Macleod

One pitch black pouring evening it had been streaming wet all day and now the time was just after twelve there was a knock on the wet glass pane of the basement cafe.

Mrs. Hansen looked up from the counter. She was adding up the takings with a microscopic bit of indelible pencil which had continuously to be licked. It was quite still in the cafe, a haze of stale beer and half dead cigar stumps floated in the centre like a sluggish feather bed and sleepily obstructed the view to all sides; one could barely distinguish the cabinet−sized enlargement of the late Hansen, in wrestling kit with medals, on the end wall over the sofa.

Somebody knocked again, cautiously and miserably, it sounded as if it might be a child. Heavens above, a child at this time of night! Mrs. Hansen quickly lifted her bosom from the supporting counter, hurried over to the door and pulled aside the curtain that hung behind the glass panel.

Through the pelting rain she saw the dissolved outline of an old man, wispy grey hair and time−worn beard merged into the general wetness and clung dankly to his threadbare overcoat. With a quick pull she opened the door and got the old man in. She had to support him over to the counter, and whilst she held him up with a firm grip, she groped behind her for a bottle and glass. With one hand she eased the cork out and poured a little into the glass. She had almost to force it between his lips Good Lord, how exhausted he was. At last he drank, but it did not seem to help much, he was still limp and on the verge of collapse. With little encouraging noises that sounded like the clucking of a sympathetic hen, she got him moved over to a chair near the stove. She knelt down and took hold of his legs to move them closer to the fire. What queer shoes he was wearing, more like a kind of sandals, and the spindly legs sticking out from the old coat were bare and blue with cold. He must be one of those queer evangelists who wander about the streets handing out religious tracts. But whatever he was, now at any rate he could sit there and get dry whilst she arranged the back premises for the night. She could keep an eye on him through the door, which she left ajar. Merciful heavens, the poor old chap! Mrs. Hansen shook her head in gentle concern as she folded up the crochet bedspread. She puffed up the eiderdown, shook the pillows, pushed a chair up against the bed to keep the bedclothes in place, and went about humming softly there was so much to be done before she could get to bed, the plants to be watered, particularly the Araucaria, her favourite on the three−legged potstand. Like a mother testing her baby's bath water, she lovingly stuck her finger into the soil of the flower pot but at that moment something happened, she had not time even to take her finger out, she was too busy listening. Somebody was singing could it be him? no, for there were many voices, it was a large choir and there was also something like harps− −and children's voices yes, it really was children singing, only the queer thing was that he was still sitting there all alone in front of the stove, she could see him through the crack of the door. But how had he come to look like that? He had begun to dry, his hair and his beard framed his face and flowed over his neck and shoulders with dignity and beauty, the old coat was becoming more and more blue, deep sky−blue, and it was no longer a coat, it was a cloak. And what was he holding in his hand? It looked like a ring, one of those used in olden days to play quoits in the grounds of noble manors it shone as he sat polishing it it was made of gold, and now he lifted it up over his head and then let go, but it hung floating in the air like a halo. But perhaps the strangest part of it all was that every time he moved there were sounds of music and singing voices, the folds of his cloak seemed to be full of joyous harps and tinkling guitars.

It was too much for her. She pushed the door open and exclaimed: "Good God!" This was not meant as a form of address, just an ordinary expression of surprise. He turned and looked at her. "No, I am not the good God, I'm only St. Peter". Heavens above! Mrs. Hansen fumbled hectically in her brain−box to find a scrap of a hymn tune or something else religious suitable for instant use. But it was not necessary, for the next heavenly remark which fell from his beard was quite earthly he was plain hungry, he had had nothing to eat or drink since he left heaven that morning and what a day and what a storm, he had got soaked through and had not been able to rise from the earth and ascend to heaven.

Ah, thank goodness, food, that was in her line, she could cope with that and on to the table came dripping, and salt beef, and liver paste, and cheese and of course a couple of bottles of beer she chose Star Brand, as she thought that would be the most seemly.

"Thank you very much", said Peter when he was comfortably settled on the sofa, "what delicious liver−paste, did you make it yourself?" She just watched him whilst he was eating, she did not dare to utter a word. If he had some heavenly tidings to deliver, he must really broach the subject himself. And he did, but only after he had wiped his mouth and his beard carefully with the paper serviette.

"Not a word against the Lord", he said, "he is all right perhaps a little bewildered, and no wonder with all he has to do he has so many plans, he is so full of initiative, he keeps on experimenting day and night throughout eternity unfortunately he is still a bit of an amateur, the world business did not quite merit a first prize and that annoyed him. You have no idea how it annoyed him, and in sheer irritation he blazed off right away over to the other side of the Milky Way and there he is working it all out, and he will not give up until he has created the ideal sphere, but it takes time. Down here, of course, you only reckon in light years, so I am not in a position to

give you even a rough idea of how long he has been away; in the meantime he put me in charge of heaven, and what a job, I feel like a rag. Up with us the Saints fight for the haloes, and down here people are fighting I don't really know what for. The other day I thought there was rather too much noise coming up from the earth for my liking so I asked a couple of archangels to fly down and see what was happening, but I didn't know that they should have had national identification signs painted on their wings, so they were shot down still we have plenty more of them all the same I thought perhaps it would be best for me to go myself but never again, never, never I'm absolutely flabbergasted, and when I get back soon, I shall put in a report to the Lord that will make him give up all his experiments with earthly spheres Man was a good idea, but badly carried out."

But we are created in His image, Mrs. Hansen thought, though she dared not say it; instead she just pushed the plate of sandwiches nearer to him.

"Yes, in His image, you say" Mrs. Hansen jumped, it was uncanny, he could read her thoughts "but dear Mrs. Hansen, even the most complete master can overlook a flaw in construction and he did mankind has a construction fault they should never have been allowed to suffer from CONTRARINESS. From the moment Adam and Eve slammed the gates of Paradise, you have been contrary you were given an earth created for the common happiness, lovely with changing seasons, and fertility that gives enough for everybody but what everybody has, nobody wants. You want to have something that you can call entirely and exclusively your own, and to be really satisfied you also each want a little more than the others. That which the Lord decided should be YOURS, you converted into MINE; MINE and MORE, those are the two words that float most frequently and most lightly in the ether you have never been satisfied with what you had always you had objections you made hay of the Lord's intentions and ideas when he says: Let there be light, you immediately say: Let there be darkness. You should be ashamed of yourselves you were given both hearts and brains for your use but you can't be bothered you are created to be free beings but that you don't care about, it's so much easier not to think, much easier to let others think for you, and easiest of all to let one think for everybody, and just to follow like ants, did you hear Mrs. Hansen, I said ANTS."

Yes, Mrs. Hansen had heard very well, but what ants had to do with it, she could not imagine.

"Mrs. Hansen, can't you see?" Peter was now quite worked up, his beard billowed and his eyes shot stars "can't you see that it is an impertinence towards the Creator a lack of tact that cries to the high heavens if it had been the Lord's intention that this world should be an ant heap, a world of termites, then he would have stopped creation at the ants and he would never have needed to improve and refine, and to invent Adam and his complicated mechanisms God knows, he would have stopped at the ants and termites and THEY would have been the lords of creation the ants who keep their mouths shut, keep in step and in line, following a stultifying instinct. You were given more than instinct you got freedom of thought Mrs. Hansen, do you understand what that means freedom of thought?"

He banged the table and Mrs. Hansen was beside herself with despair. Why had he come to her, she was just an ordinary little woman of absolutely no importance. Why didn't he go to the great ones to those who run the business?

"I've tried that, Mrs. Hansen" again he had read her thoughts "in order to talk with the great, one has to wave one's arms about in such a strange way, and that is not my line nor can one do the goose−step wearing a halo I was about to give it all up and go home, when down came the rain and I was stuck to the earth like a wet dish−cloth, I couldn't drag myself free, and then I happened to come to your place I thought it was just chance, but in reality it was the finger of heaven that pushed me here it was guidance from above the will of the all highest it is to the little ordinary people, to the little apparently peaceful adaptations of ants and termites that I am going to speak that is where it is to begin they are to be mobilised into a sort of rolling pathway which knocks some people off their legs. You are a little part of that great pathway, Mrs. Hansen that is why I began with you, Mrs. Hansen, roll on."

"But I can't do anything like that nothing at all I'm at work all day." Mrs. Hansen fought for her life.

"Now, now, Mrs. Hansen, you can set a good story rolling round the whole neighbourhood, can't you? When you let a word drop, it is like a little stone gently thrown into a large pond and at once the rings begin to spread further and further out."

Mrs. Hansen was on the verge of tears "No, no, I can't and I WON'T." "That's a different matter, I'm sorry " said Peter, drumming sadly on the table.

Oh dear, thought Mrs. Hansen, one should never get oneself involved in the drying of saints; now she had better get rid of him she was afraid of having trouble with the police blackout and curfew regulations.

"No, Sir Peter, you must really ask somebody else, I see to my work and that's that and God knows, heaven cannot blame me for it."

Peter got up wearily "That's what they all say simply push things off−away with responsibility let everything go its crooked way, just drift along with the tide too."

Mrs. Hansen had also got up, she fussed nervously round Peter "Perhaps so. I'm sorry about it but now you must go, we have such strict police in this district" she tried to lead him to the door "and when you get back to heaven, if you should meet my husband give him my love, and tell him that the business is doing quite well in spite of the difficult times" "The business is doing well!" Peter turned and looked at her kindly, but right through Mrs. Hansen mumbled something about having to make a living.

"Living, do you call that living?" Then he opened the door and slowly went up the two steps into the street she slipped quickly up behind him, she wanted to see how he went aloft. He stood on the pavement, like a monument, luminous and pale blue, with his white hair and beard. He looked at her long and she felt almost as if all the other people, all the millions on the earth stood in ranks behind her then he said: "Now I am going home and I will tell the Lord, no, no, I won't, I'll leave him in peace, the dear one for now I understand suddenly that human contrariness has its use, in spite of everything. When you have been ants and termites for a bit longer you will not put up with it any more and then you will let them see ." At that moment a policeman cleared his throat in the darkness St. Peter kept quiet, then he raised his halo and began to walk slowly down the blacked−out street. Mrs. Hansen stood looking after him his light coloured figure disappeared into the darkness, and the heavenly music, which softly sang in the folds of his cape, faded away.

A CATASTROPHE

BY JORGEN NIELSEN Translated by W. Glyn Jones

It happened in the good old times before the First World War. At ten years of age, little Anders Sorensen, by profession a servant boy in the country, knew nothing of good or bad times; he had not been in existence for very long, you know. On the contrary, he believed life was fair if one always did what was right, the reward would follow as a matter of course. These scraps of information about life he had received from the very best sources, school and home, and he took everything literally. And the right things were to work hard and conscientiously, as you were expected to do, and then to save all you could. You should start on that as a child, and in this way you should continue. Then you could not help becoming a big and rich and happy man.

It was, however, difficult to live up to these demands but the fact that you thought it was difficult revealed that your character was not strong enough, and it was up to you to make it stronger.

The boy's wages were two pounds twelve shillings a year a shilling a week plus board and lodging, and he was allowed to do as he liked with them this he had achieved after many difficult negotiations with his father. Although society demanded of him that he should go to school three days a week he could keep himself and still lay some money by. That was extremely well managed, he thought; that was to live like a grown man. But it was made so difficult for him, that he was often almost in despair. There were so many rocks to go aground on.

To begin with the work he had to do was far too heavy for a lad of his age; it was not far from being a labourer's work. Life made demands on him. It would have demanded less had he not been so terribly alert, so amazingly full of energy. Unreasonable things were expected of him; and he himself did even more than he was asked but he was only a child. It would have been a good thing for him to have felt a little drowsy sometimes, to have given up occasionally or to have shirked the more difficult work; but where was he to know that from? He had always been told that such an attitude is wrong under any circumstances. It was his habit to take the bull by the horns, he did not dodge but went on ahead with his eyes wide open. And that is a good thing, but it is not ALWAYS a good thing. He had too much will−power, but not for a moment did he suspect it, he thought he had too little.

He set about things every day as though it were a matter of carrying out a superhuman task or enduring some torture. Each evening he marvelled that he had survived the day. Was his strength wasted? Not a bit of it. Not in any conceivable way. A man who worked would not lose his reward; the world was just. Every day unfailingly yielded its income, two pence, a little less than that in fact, for he knew so accurately what the fraction was. Out of his wages of course he had to pay for any clothes and clogs and other things he could not do without, but he had worked it out that he could probably have fifteen shillings or a pound by the end of the year. He was hoping for a pound. That was a lot of money.

No, he did not think of his exacting job as a burden that was laid on him, but as a path to distinction, to victory, as a beginning to advancement in the world.

But there were all those rocks.

He had only to keep himself, of course, but that state of affairs could not last long. His parents were in difficult circumstances, and at that time his mother was seriously ill; biscuits were about the only things she could eat, but they were expensive things in comparison with the sorts of food they normally lived on at home. His mother rarely had her biscuits.

Anders, however, who was not entirely without means, could not bear the idea of his mother's having to do without them. So every Wednesday he bought her a packet of biscuits. A packet at twopence−halfpenny. Oh, he was painfully well aware of the price. It was just about a halfpenny more than he earned that day. It was a great sacrifice, for every day was a struggle and had its significance in the endless chain of exertions which was to advance him in the world. But he dare not do otherwise; he had to do what HE could to help his mother to get well again. His mother thought it was sweet of him to come with the biscuits, but she never imagined what it cost him.

It never occurred to him to buy himself a few pence worth of sweets; those day were past, he thought. Not that he was an ascetic by nature, quite the contrary, he wanted all the fullness of life. One day he would have all the good things possible, but the path he had to follow to reach them was long and tiring. In his home he had never seen anything but the most utter, dire poverty he wanted so much to get away from all that. "To get on in the world." That was the formula. In actual fact his most ardent dreams of wealth were dictated to him by the fear of having to lead the same distressing and joyless existence as his mother and father. He dreamt of achieving more than other people because he was afraid of having to be content with less than they. It was what scholars call over−compensation. Anders never thought about the cause of it. He was only a little overworked peasant lad with a burning thirst for life.

It was a biscuit−day. Anders had just come from school after running home with the biscuits which he had fetched from the grocer's during his mid−day break. And now, after a hurried meal, he was sent out to plough.

It was a sunless, chilly day in early spring, and the wind was so strong that it almost amounted to a gale. The horses were young, unruly animals which Anders had difficulty in keeping in check. The fact that the soil in the field was sandy with a lot of gravel in it did not make matters easier. The plough showed a tendency to jump out of the ground at every moment. The strong wind also helped to make him confused.

To look at he was an ordinary lad of ten, with blue eyes and freckles, and wearing clothes with a lot of patches on them; he patched them himself now that his mother was ill, but the result was not so good as when she had done it.

He was not big enough for his plough−team; it was easy to see that he was far too small. He did not behave like the grown−up plough−man he thought he was, but like a miserable little creature being dragged around and ill−treated by the two large animals. A feeling of deep despondency was smouldering in Anders' heart; he was overstrained in the extreme and had harassed nerves, but did not know it. (A peasant lad cannot possibly have nerves!) That day, as on all other days, he had been up at five o'clock, had worked on the farm for a couple of hours with the milking and clearing away the dung and so on, and after that he had been to school for a few hours. Whilst he was eating his belated lunch he had become irresistably drowsy. But he had to go out with the horses as soon as possible. His master was always rather impatient on the days when Anders had to go to school. He regarded it as a sort of negligence on the part of Anders that he went to school. He thought it was a bit too much that he had to do without his lad until far into the afternoon even in the busiest season of the year and all for the sake of school...

Anders was not at all happy that afternoon as he walked behind the plough. No, he was running behind the plough, he was jumping about in a daze, ploughing, that is what he was doing.

He was perfectly well aware that he was in a bad mood and very disheartened. He was extremely well aware of it today. The magic formula which had kept him going on other days almost twopence in wages failed him on days such as this. The day's wages were used up before they were earned. Because of that the day was spoiled, it was revealed in all its nakedness as being purely joyless thraldom, at a complete loss. Had anyone been able to read the poor child's thoughts they would have said he was mean. The spirit of a miser developed to its fullest extent in a child. How dreadful! Yes, he was mean. Nature helps itself as best it can. Being parsimonious in the extreme was the only means whereby Anders could transform days of adversity into days of triumph. Yes, he might be having a rough time of it, but he was striving for the future, making the future secure; his reward would come later.

Today he was just having a rough time of it.

And then it happened. How, he did not know afterwards, but the accident happened. During his breathless struggle with the horses the whip sprang out of his hands and chanced to fall in such unfortunate position that he plough ran right over the handle and broke it.

It was a really first class handle, costing one and threepence. He knew the exact price of it.

And that money would be deducted from his wages. Whatever was broken at work had to be replaced; the master had said that once and for all, and the ruling had been adhered to. Up to now it had been bearable, although distressing: once it had been a case of a wooden tethering− stake and once a whip−lash.

But one shilling and three pence!

His master would not grumble; oh, no, he was cleverer than that. Anders wished so fervently to be treated as a grown−up person, as a man. Some people humoured him willingly in those instances where they saw their own advantage in it.

He stopped the plough. The horses were no longer rebellious now that evening was approaching. The wind had subsided, and the first suggestion of dusk had crept over the flat, colourless landscape. The lad stood and broke down completely; everything was in vain. The conditions under which he had been living had made him stoical, although he never realised it; he never wept, not even now, but he had suffered a complete spiritual breakdown here beside the broken whip− handle. It was a fine, gold−painted, slender handle, a feast for the eyes, but dear accordingly. Normally it was only used when the family went to town, but the ordinary whip had been mislaid. So fatefully mislaid!

Ten days work together with strict economy all wasted in a moment! He could not FACE it; his nerves would not stand it. The days were so long and heavy, so overpowering, and he could not stand them when he no longer had the illusion that they gave a lasting reward. One day wasted he could bear but a whole lot of days! He gave up; he gave up all his future. It was simply a short−circuit. He was no good; he realised perfectly well that he was a good−for−nothing. It never once occurred to him that he might one day regain his courage.

Of course he would have to go on attending to his work, but...

Now the plough was in motion again. Broken−hearted he staggered after the horses. The furrows became a little crooked, but it made no difference whether he was praised or scolded; he was no good in any case; he was a wretch, entirely different from great men in books, the ideal characters who had never done anything wrong and had never felt their spirits fail them, but who always, unwavering and with set faces, had marched forward along the straight path to fame and fortune. Oh no, he was in no way like these people.

And when he had felt thoroughly downcast for a time, a soothing, sweet thought crept over him. He had exactly seven shillings, a fortune amassed in the course of many laborious months. Now when he was free that evening he would go down to the grocer's and buy a few cigarettes and sweets. Was it a wilful act? He could not do otherwise; he sank to it as though in a quicksand. He had to have some pleasure, he was so worn out. But it was not in this way he thought about it; it was no reasoned action.

He told them about the whip when he went home with the horses. I see. His master made a note of it in his diary; he showed no sign of bad feeling.

As they were sitting at supper porridge his master said:

"You don't seem to have got on very quickly with the ploughing this last couple of hours."

"H'm," Anders managed to say. He looked down. That was not like a man. He usually answered like a grown person to anything that was said to him. People had often been amused by that. They thought it was comical that he attached so much importance to asserting himself. But now his self−respect was lost. In its stead he felt a new, salutary apathy. It seemed to him that it was easier to be wretched than to strive after perfection.

Then the thought occurred to him that it had been foolish of him to tell them about the whip. Would other lads in his place have rushed to admit it? He thought not. It might have been forgotten, or he could have got out of it in some way or other that he certainly could have managed. When he was worth nothing in any case, he might just as well behave like that. It is often people who conceal things who come off best in the long run.

As soon as he could slip away from the farm he hurried off after sweets and cigarettes. He knew the people at the grocer's, so it was all right for him to come and buy something a little after closing− time. At the same time he

bought an extra packet of biscuits for his mother and thought that that was a naughty thing to do as well, for it too was a desire to which he was giving in. On the way home he met two school friends. They were given cigarettes and sweets. He was being generous. And it turned out that what he was doing in despair and because he was sick with scorn for himself, impressed them and awoke their admiration it was a strange discovery.

And he enjoyed the sensation; he was only human and a child. But at the same time he was tormented by the thought that what he was doing was unforgivable. He did not know that people must have something good now and then, for the sake of balance; no one had told him that. His actions were determined by a passionate longing to do what was right, indisputably right. And what was the right thing, then? Well, the world had greeted him with a smiling face. He was given unreasonable conditions; nearly everything was taken from him. And then he was confronted with a moral, a lesson in life, which ran: he could act according to the highest ideals of life only by denying himself even the last little bit.

But that he could not do. There was a limit. Nature demanded what was due to it and forced him to relax when that limit was reached.

His understanding had not developed sufficiently to grasp this. He only knew he was unable to accomplish the task he had set himself. And in his room that night, when he had crept into bed and lay eating his last sweets in the moonlight, he was still tormented by what seemed to him his irremediable defeat. Just imagine what he had ruined! First that whip−handle which cost so much money! And then in desperation he had wasted more money on sweets and cigarettes! He thought it was a fantastic excess. He thought he had spoiled so much that it could never be repaired. Yes, he was a wretch, a debauched person, a nasty piece of work. There existed no doubt in his mind about that, and it hurt him more than he could bear. And as though to lessen the pain he plunged himself, so to speak, deeper into the pleasure that was at hand the sweets and despair. He discovered the dangerous delight to be found in giving up; he felt it all the more powerfully because he had taken too much upon himself. Just let everything go on as best it can, he was no good in any case...

It was only a mood, but it went deep, and it left traces.

Moods are the only things which really exist.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

BY H. C. BRANNER Translated by A. I. Roughton

We had made a dug−out together in John's large overgrown garden, and there we were sitting one March day allotting parts. Above us the barren fruit trees and bushes stretched their branches black in the mist, and the smell of raw earth and wet leaves was in our noses, buried beneath with a spirit lamp and three eggs in a pot. John sat on a box, Torben and I had to make do with the bare earth.

It was obvious that John had to be Athos. Torben and I both secretly hankered after being Athos, but we knew it was hopeless, because John WAS Athos, and Athos was John. To this day I still see the noble hero Athos as a redheaded thirteen year old boy with fair eyebrows and small light eyes almost an albino. Silently he would come striding along on his fat red bandy legs in socks, saying, "EN GARDE my friends", and standing with his sword; and at the name Mylady there would come a green glint in his eyes. For John was a woman hater like Athos, and like Athos he had deep and secret reasons for his woman hating. By devious means we managed to get out of him that there had once been someone called Madeleine, but we never went any deeper into it than that. For greatly though John wished himself dead, he still lived on for the sake of his honour and his revenge. On one occasion he took it upon himself to prove scientifically that women were not human beings. We sat round a table with a green cloth and a decanter and glasses. I was his opponent in the argument, and Torben was judge. "I can prove it like

this..." said John sitting with a stony face, "How can you prove it...." it still seems to me that he ended by proving that women were not human beings.

Torben and I fought for some time over the role of d'Artagnan, but in the end John interfered here too and made Torben Porthos. Torben refused for some time, but at last found himself inescapably in it and laid about him merrily. He was a fat boy with a cast in one eye, the only child of wealthy parents. Long before we others, he had a tailored suit and a Norfolk jacket. He usually overemphasised his fatness and his cast, showed off and played the fool, but sometimes a casual allusion would make him furious and he would gnash his teeth and attack us with a stick. I kept out of his way when he got like that, but John with his stony face would get hold of him, lay him on his back and sit astride him. Torben would kick furiously, till suddenly he was roaring with laughter and it was all a joke, even while his face was still swollen and streaked with misery. That was Torben. All things considered there was much to be said for his being Porthos quite apart from the similarity in the names.

"ERGO," said John looking at me with his inexorable eyes, "ERGO, you must be d'Artagnan."

ERGO I was d'Artagnan.

I was at that time a pale knock−kneed boy with sticking out ears and a fair head as smooth as an egg I am afraid there was very little of the brave Gascon about my appearance. But I could conjure a thoroughbred stallion from a bicycle, I knew how to fill things to the brim with magic, how to smell out kidnappers and villains in disguise. For the rest I was always in love, dashed off blazing trails on my bicycle, "Wild flies the hawk" came home hinting darkly of assignations. The others tried to guess her name, and one name after another was suggested, for I was an adventurer with many lady loves. They knew perfectly well that it wasn't true, and I knew that they knew, but it was accepted all the same we sat in the dug−out and grew hot in the head from talking about it. Torben made himself fat and squinting and laid about him with words which his parents would not have believed he knew, and John sat with his stone block of a heart and smiled bitterly, prophesying all the misery I might expect. So, taking all things into consideration perhaps I wasn't after all the worst d'Artagnan.

We felt the water in the saucepan, but it wouldn't get more than lukewarm, so in the end we made holes in the eggs and sucked them as they were, crushed the shells and shouted, "Each for all and All for each", said Sir, and My friend to one another. Then we went out into the rainy mist, drew our swords and swore.

Athos, Porthos, d'Artagnan.

At first nothing much happened. Over in the school the musketeers met every day in a corner of the playing field and smuggled little notes to one another. The pass code word for the day was written in them and the place where we should meet, sometimes there was also "Danger" or, "Be on the look−out, we are betrayed". For Cardinal Richelieu was sitting hidden somewhere, and his creatures in disguise were everywhere. In the afternoon we kept to the villa way, shouting and whistling in the twilight and creeping after people who looked as though they might be creatures. Afterwards we met and made our reports. We were breathless, our swords were drawn and our blood was up. But there were also days when we sat in the dug−out and just talked; about duels and travelling to England, robbing ladies and the torture chamber of the Bastille.

We could talk ourselves thus to complete despair. Then there were waste wet Sundays, when we pushed far out over the fields talking hopelessly about the wicked and cruelly beautiful Mylady. Porthos used strong language about her sex and laughed desperately till he got hiccups. Athos had a green glint in his eye he wanted her drawn and quartered. But the young hero d'Artagnan nursed his longing like a stone in his heart and had imaginary meetings with her at an old oak in the wood...

Countess de la Fere, alias Mylady, had ringlets and brown eyes and hid her past of sin and shame under the very Danish name of Musse Mortensen. Athos' Mylady had been first Madeleine, and at first he called Musse "the new

Mylady" but the capital M could in any case stand for either. For a long time we used it as a password. "M," we said, when we met. Mylady was fourteen and two classes higher than Porthos and me, so we really scarcely existed for her. She only bothered about the big boys from the Senior School. During playtime we stood silent in a corner and watched her practice her seductive arts upon them, they were coarse and violent in their love and sometimes pulled her hair. But it was all feminine intrigue, said Athos. She had them in her toils, and on the way home we made a long detour and watched them crowding round her and ringing their bicycle bells and knocking each other into the gutter for her sake. She walked on the pavement and lured them all to destruction with her Mylady smile.

She must be rendered harmless, said Athos, and made us others say the same, so we sat in the dug−out and laid plans to kidnap and brand her. Athos would himself lay the glowing iron on her shoulder. But it was after all only words and phantasies, and at times we got sick of talking about it. It drove us up from the dug−out to lie upon our backs in the pale whispering spring grass staring up at the clouds and talking about it some more. And Porthos played the fool out of sheer despair, for what did Mylady care for us? We were small and insignificant, no one cared anything about us. For behind it all sat an unknown and all powerful Cardinal and pulled his threads, and even Mylady was only a pawn in his game. I stared up at the clouds with a heavy heart. Porthos hopped like a rabbit and barked like a dog. But Athos lay there with his red soldier's face and stuck to it that Mylady must be rendered harmless. He was like the Elder Cato.

So we set watch upon her house. She lived in a big house with a large garden and an open field round it. We dug a hole in the field and took it in turns to keep watch. "M," we said solemnly, every time we relieved one another and made a report. And there were a great many things to report. M. went out and came home again. A car drove up to the house. The postman came with a large yellow letter. M. appeared in the garden with her friend. M. put on the light in her room and drew the curtains. It was all observed by the eyes of an excited musketeer from the hole in the field and was written in the pocket log book and hidden in a cigar box in the dug−out. There were some important things too. One evening we saw M. waving a white silk handkerchief out of the window, perhaps to a lover sitting hidden in the garden. Another evening we stole right into the house and found a bit of paper on which something was written in pencil. The writing was nearly washed out by the rain, but it was made out to be many remarkable things.

One Sunday the Musketeers held a conference. The contents of the cigar box were brought out again and examined. Athos explained how they must be interpreted. "ERGO," said he, "That's what I think. What do you think my friends?" And we speculated and argued till our heads were nearly bursting and we were wild and furious. "To me, my friends," shouted I, d'Artagnan, and we lept upon our thoroughbreds and out into the woods. It was an April day with unsettled weather, we climbed a tall tree and let the storm carry us away. And from up there the young hero d'Artagnan deliberately dropped a little white card, which fluttered down between the tree trunks and remained hanging in a bush.

"Screwth!" shouted I aloud and tried to climb down after it, but Athos hold of it first. It was a visiting card with the name Musse Mortensen printed in fine italics I had stolen it from the bag on her bicycle. And on the other side was written in red ink. "This evening at 7, at the big oak. M.".

"Unhappy d'Artagnan," said Athos as if he were reading from a book. "This I have long suspected, that you had fallen into this woman's toils."

"My lord," replied the young hero d'Artagnan and drew his sword. "You have no right to read my letters. You must give it back at once, or we two must cross swords."

"Come here, Porthos, we must disarm him," shouted the noble Athos. "That she−devil has already turned his head, he is no longer responsible for what he does." Three pairs of feet whirled wildly round in the dead leaves, dry twigs crackled at last the young hero d'Artagnan stood without a sword. "My lord," said the noble Athos,

"you must, until further notice, look on yourself as our prisoner. And now away to the great oak." The worst suspicions of the noble Athos were confirmed. In the bark of the great oak were carved the initials of d'Artagnan and Mylady and a heart with an arrow through it. A judgement seat was set up then and there. Athos walked up and down in front of the tree with folded arms. "Circumstances force us to act quickly," said he in his book language, "in the meantime I think that this woman has too powerful help to make it possible for us to carry out our plan of branding her as she deserves. So I suggest that we content ourselves with cutting her curls. That will in any case for a time hinder her from ensnaring honest men and bringing them to ruin. What do you think, my noble lords?"

Porthos thought the same, and I was a prisoner and madly in love, so my opinion didn't count. "Judgement has been given," declared Athos solemnly. "We come then to execution. Point A. Who shall carry out the sentence? Point B. Where, when and how?"

Point A was settled by drawing lots between Athos and Porthos. Porthos drew the long straw and should therefore have the honour of being allowed to cut off Mylady's curls. That is how it was interpreted by Athos. Porthos himself held that the long straw must mean he should not have to do it, but Athos was adamant. "The lot has fallen on you," he said, "the laws of the musketeers are unbreakable."

The execution was arranged for Wednesday evening at the time at which Mylady usually rode home alone after the dancing class at the school, I let myself be bullied into playing the role of traitor. On the last deserted bit of the way before reaching the house I was to overtake her on my bicycle and get into conversation with her. As we reached the gate Porthos was to jump out from an ambush wearing a mask and cut the curls with a pair of scissors. I had to pretend to defend her. Meanwhile Athos was to lie concealed in the ditch opposite and only join in if it became absolutely necessary. In the end I was just as eager as the others and was given my sword back. We stood up, crossed swords and shouted "M." and "Each for all and all for each!"

Wednesday evening I sat upon my bicycle and waited a little way from M's house. I stood alone and deserted at the corner of the path. My heart pounded alarmingly. Athos and Porthos were at their posts. M. appeared together with her friend, they parted company at the corner and shouted something about meeting tomorrow. Now she was coming. I could feel the beat of my blood in the backs of my eyes, every beat like a dancing veil of little black spots. SHE was coming, SHE, SHE. She was already beside me, with her unapproachable profile, she did not look at me. She didn't know me. We had never spoken to one another. It was all lies, the card, the assignations and the hero d'Artagnan. I felt so very small on my bicycle. But somehow or other I managed to push it forward and came alongside the mist with the paralysing brown eyes in its midst, and managed to say it.

"Good afternoon, Musse."

"Good afternoon," said Musse, looking straight ahead.

Pause. Two singing bicycle wheels and one unapproachable profile.

"Have you been to the dancing class?"

"Yes." My toes curled in my shoes.

"Are you going home now?"

To the latter she found no need to reply, since she was already there. She got off to undo the gate. A flood gate opened in the back of my head and everything merged in a swirling torrent the railings revolving bars Musse Mylady Athos Porthos d'Artagnan and the scissors. I clutched desperately at a straw.

"Musse, do you know John Berthelsen?"

Mylady stood coolly surprised with her bicycle. "No," she said, "I don't."

"Yes, you do, you know him quite well." I insisted desperately. "The big redheaded boy in the Lower Fifth."

"No," said Mylady.

"Well, anyway he's dotty. Do you know what he is? He's a woman hater."

"Is he?" "He's a simply crazy, he goes round with a pair of scissors cutting girls' hair off. I just thought I'd tell you."

"Oh," said Mylady, "well, I must go in, good−bye."

She had already disappeared in the dusk, spots of light from her bicycle flashed upon the gravel path, disappeared and were lost. There was a deathly silence. Then Athos crawled out of the ditch and came across the road, stiffly and ominously on his red bandy legs.

"So that, my friend," said he, "is how you keep your path. Well, all is now lost come forward, my good Porthos," he added turning towards a dark bush in the hedge behind, "all is lost."

There was a rustling in the bushes, a gulping and choking, but Porthos did not emerge. At last Athos went in and found him. He was lying doubled up among the bushes, black in the face with suppressed laughter. "Ha ha ha," he choked, "do you know him, the big red−headed one from...Ha, ha, ha." We had to help him to his feet and drag him out into the road. He hiccupped violently. "Shut up," said Athos, for at that moment a light appeared in Mylady's window. "Explain to me rather why you did not do your duty."

"Yes, but didn't you hear what he said? hic him, the big red... hic...he's completely crazy...hic...he is...hic."

"Shut up," said Athos. "It's absolutely no excuse for you that he failed too. You are a pair of miserable traitors, both of you."

We rode slowly away from the scene of the crime. "By the way it is a lie when she says she doesn't know me," said Athos suddenly. "It is a notorious barefaced lie. I have evidence to the contrary..."

And all the way home Athos described how he had recently overheard a conversation between M. and her girl friend. He had originally decided to say nothing about it, but since we had both now fallen into that she−devil's toils. Besides all was lost now for certain. Porthos and I peered at him from each side as he walked stiff−legged and made his report in a dry soldier's voice. M. and her friend had been sitting on the mound in M.'s garden, he had been lying under the hedge and heard everything. First they talked about Porthos, but not for very long. He was a clown, M. had said, a fat buffoon. They didn't bother about him...

"That's a lie," burst out Porthos.

"You may believe it or not, as you choose," said Athos inflexibly.

"Although you have betrayed your musketeer's honour, fortunately I have mine safe then came d'Artagnan's turn he was a very fine Cavalier, said Mylady, good enough to play around with. A harmless little boy..."

Porthos and I supported one another with our eyes and smiled uncertainly.

"And what about you?" asked Porthos sceptically, "what did she say about you?"

"Well, that's the thing," said Athos. "They talked about me for a long time. It seemed that Mylady hated me for one reason or another. She did not say anything nasty about me on the contrary. But she hated me. She would know no peace until she had had her revenge, she said. She would give no reasons."

"Oh, that's love," said Porthos and winked at me. "She is in love with you."

Athos shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly."

We stood for a long time under the lamp at Athos' garden gate and went on talking about it. I could not allow myself to be pushed out of the field as Mylady's lover. There was the card and the heart on the tree, and finally it was me after all who had spoken to her. But that was no proof, said Athos. It seemed that Athos possessed proof about Mylady, but he would not say what it was we could jolly well guess, he said. And we guessed and guessed, standing dead tired and pale in the green light of the street lamp. But we couldn't guess. Porthos showed the whites of his eyes, he hugged the lamp and pretending it was Mylady, ended by drawing something on the path with a twig and laughed aloud and whinnied like a horse. Then a window was slammed up, and Athos' father shouted out if we knew that it was nearly ten o'clock. We didn't know, we looked at one another in horror and beat it, each to his house with his heart in his mouth.

Next day Athos was in a frightfully bad temper. In play time he sat eating his lunch silently in a corner of the playground, and in the afternoon when we came to fetch him, he wouldn't come with us. He wouldn't go down in the dug−out, nor out to the post by Mylady's house, he didn't want to do anything. He had drawn the curtains in his room and was sitting brooding on a green plush sofa, his legs drawn up under him, his hands round his ankles. From time to time he grew overwhelmingly tired and had to fight to keep his eyes open. Porthos and I understood at once that it was again something to do with Mylady, but there was a lot of whispering in the dusk behind the shutters before we got out of him what had happened. He had eaten the laburnum seeds he had had lying about since last year. He had eaten them because it was his intention to die a stoic's death. The worst had happened, even he Athos had begun to doubt now. That Seductress had tried some new devilish trick and he was no longer sure of himself. As a man of honour there remained nothing for him but laburnum seeds. But it didn't seem that they had worked as intended higher powers would not let him escape the lover's curse, he said. So now he might as well spill the beans and show us what he had seen this morning on his walk.

We got on our bicycles and rode slowly along the street, Athos in front, Porthos and I a little behind. At the corner of the market place there was a photographer's shop there Athos stopped and propped his bicycle against the curb. He said nothing, and it wasn't necessary either. For in the middle of the window sat Mylady. She sat there with two ringlets hanging forward over her shoulders, one could see every hair. One could see the little soft hollows in her throat and the way she carried her head, and the dark curls above her brow and Oh! her paralysing brown eyes, which gazed straight through the heroes: Athos, Porthos and d'Artagnan. Our hearts sank, we felt sick and couldn't get our breath. Porthos smiled fatuously, Adios cleared his throat and pursed his lips. "To horse, my friends," shouted I at last and tore us away, we lept upon our thoroughbreds and dashed wildly home to the dug−out. Porthos and I went completely to pieces, took out and opened a bottle of fruit wine we had had standing a long time. "We are lost, my friends," I shouted, "we love her all three. In this red Spanish wine we will drink the toast which is death, the beautiful and deadly Mylady's health."

But Athos put down his glass. "Never," he said firmly, "our honour as Musketeers bids us fight to the last breath. Think of all the influencible souls which that woman will drag into misery with her portrait. There is only one way left to us now, and that we must do this very night. We must carry off the picture and rend it in pieces."

Porthos and I shouted intoxicated. "Hurrah! Health to Mylady's kidnapping." But a minute later we were in wild argument as to who had a right to the picture. Athos wanted to take it and burn it privately, he did not trust our

strength of mind, and we did not trust him to burn it. We all three wanted the picture. "Well, we can duel about that later," said Athos finally and began to plan the carrying off in detail. Points A, B and C. A. Porthos must break open the cabinet with a crowbar. B. I must cut out the picture with a pocket knife and C. give it to Athos, who would stand a little way off and keep watch. Afterwards we should all fly in different directions to lead the Cardinal's creatures on a wild goose chase. Finally Athos made us swear an oath that we would give nothing away, not even in the torture chamber of the police. "With that we've thought of every possibility," he said and thought for a bit. "My friends, we meet half an hour before midnight..."

Every possibility had been thought of, but it didn't go quite after points A, B and C this time either. The undertaking was from the beginning so frightfully desperate. The Musketeers met, not half an hour, but three whole hours before midnight, because Porthos had been severely scolded by his father and had to be home by half past nine at latest. So we arrived at the photographer's corner and began operations in partial daylight. The market place was full of people, there was a parking place immediately opposite, and a large arc lamp was burning right above our heads as we stood and waited for a little darkness. "Go to it," said Athos.

The kidnapping might still have been successful in all its foolhardiness, if we hadn't bungled it. But at the noise of the crash Porthos lost his head, shoved the crowbar under his coat and bolted into a doorway. We stood there trembling for five minutes and then we tried again. With the same result. At the third attempt two policemen suddenly appeared round the corner of the house. They weren't two yards from us when we saw them. Athos stiffened at his post and never uttered a sound.

"What are you up to?" asked the policemen, and Athos said "Nothing." But Porthos turned pale, his mouth quivering as he stood there with the crowbar perfectly obvious.

"You'd better give that to me, young man," said one of the policemen and took it from him. They were very friendly and didn't say anything on the way to the police station. One walked between Athos and me, the other led the way with his hand on Porthos' shoulder in quite a friendly manner. Perhaps they reckoned that he was the most dangerous− −he after all was the one who had the crowbar and he looked the eldest in his Norfolk jacket. Nothing was said, but I dreaded the breaking of the silence.

It didn't go very well. Porthos burst into tears the minute he saw the blue light over the police station, and he was also immediately chosen to be taken to be interviewed by the chief constable, who was sitting ready behind his desk with gold−rimmed spectacles, and brushed back badger hair. Athos and I were not permitted to be present, we were put in a bare white room with a leather−covered bench against the wall. But by putting our ears against the door we could just hear most of what was going on inside. We could hear a typewriter tapping and Porthos' crying stopping and breaking out again at intervals, and the chief constable saying he should just be quiet. Nothing would happen to him if he made a clean breast of it...

"Yes, but it wasn't me..." sobbed Porthos, "it was him. John him John Bertelsen...yes, the redheaded one...yes, he said he would burn it...Yes he did, because he was in love with her...I don't know, p'raps it's because he's crazy. He believes he's Athos...Yes, Athos from the three musketeers..."

Athos and I looked at one another.

"Ah! So that's the way the wind blows," whispered he. "Then we might as well confess everything. All is certainly lost."

But there wasn't much for us to confess. It appeared that the chief constable had found Porthos' explanation satisfactory. We only had to give our names, ages and address, together with our father's profession, then he pushed his chair back and looked at us. We were guilty of wanton destruction of property and attempted theft, he said, we really ought to be in approved schools. Under supervision. However, no further action would be taken in

the matter, except that John as the leader would have to take a letter home with him. But our names were now on the police register and if at any future date we should come in conflict with the law, this matter would be taken into consideration, and then it would cost us dear...

This he said with a sharp gleam behind the gold−rimmed spectacles and finally asked John if it were true that he was going to burn the picture of the young lady? "Yes," said John. "But why? That you might want to steal it I can understand. But to burn it. What ever for?"

Athos cleared his throat. "I wanted to stop that woman from luring unsuspecting souls to ruin," he said.

There was a strange silence. The young policeman at the typewriter stopped his work and got suddenly behind the door into the waiting room. The chief constable had risen and was at standing with both hands on the desk, his whole face puckered up. "What?" he said.

"I wanted to prevent that woman..." began Athos again. "Ah," said the chief. He turned his back and pulled out his handkerchief and blew his nose. "One minute," he said. And he was already behind the door with the other. It seemed that something had suddenly happened, we heard a tremendous cough. "You may go," they shouted out gruffly. "No further action will be taken in the matter."

Nor was there, not even the letter to Athos' father. But Porthos told everything when he got home. I think he confessed and cried for a long time in bed in the dark so that his parents had to comfort him and promise him the new bicycle he had long talked about. At any rate he turned up a few days later on a completely new bicycle with three speed and chromium plated wheels, but he didn't stop to let Athos and me look at it in fact he pedalled all the faster and nodded curtly as he passed by. As far as I remember he never spoke to us after that. Perhaps that had been the price of the new bicycle.

Athos and I went on for sometime saying "Sir" and "My friend" to one another. Then we got tired of it and broke up the Musketeers' league.

And now it is twenty years ago...

"JOURNEY'S END"

BY AAGE DONS Translated by F. A. Rush

Hartvig was up by six although he had been difficult to rouse on recent mornings because he had begun to sleep so badly.

But today he had wakened early: Old Weie was to be buried. And even if he had to go next door when "the family" arrived, to play with Jorgen, and was not to be allowed "to follow" Weie, it was an exciting day. The villa "Journey's End" was in a state of feverish busyness.

Aunt Jane had actually forgotten to bring him some coffee to bed. Annoyed, he ran down the stairs, but at old Weie's bedroom door he stopped. He was no longer afraid, as he was in the night; it was now broad daylight and Weie, moreover, had been taken to the chapel. Nevertheless, it was with a sense of victory and a thumping heart that he opened the door ever so slightly. The wind pulled it from him, for the window had been wide open ever since Weie died. Hartvig's night− shirt flapped round his thin legs, but he forget his usual sensitiveness to cold for this was where Weie died.

Aunt Jane came dashing upstairs and grabbed his arm: "Child, child, you'll catch your death of cold. You're that

inquisitive, you are. What have you come running in here for? He's gone."

Hartvig's big, blue eyes flashed with anger. He pulled his arm free, his dignity outraged. "Let go. You're hurting...It can't have been nice for Weie lying in the chapel at night. Why had he to do that? I'd have been scared."

"He's dead, child. He doesn't see or feel anything. It's only the living who are afraid." Jane Olsen often marvelled that Hartvig, who was a bright boy at school, could be so stupid. Still, he was only nine. "Come down with me and get dressed where it's warm."

"You haven't washed my jersey yet," he complained, sitting on the box where the logs for the stove were kept and pulling on his stocking.

"I can't get to it with all the baking and cleaning and only my one pair of hands. What's fifty kroner for ham and beer and all that goes with a funeral? Mrs. Jelk's been real stingy."

"Ham was old Weie's favourite dish and he hardly ever got it," said the boy, remembering how often Weie had grumbled that his food was insipid and did not even taste of either dirt or cinnamon.

Jane did not reply. The boy had been queer since Weie died. That was why he had better go to the Hansens for the day. One never knew what he might say next. She spread a thick layer of sugar on his bread and butter with a steady hand and poured the coffee.

"How old was Weie?" he asked, after a short silence.

"Sixty−nine," she answered, and the boy's wide−open eyes did not leave her's as he asked how old SHE was. She protested angrily, for she never told her age, except when she applied for a job or replied to a marriage advertisement. But nobody could wear a body down like Hartvig, and at last she had to come out with it: Yes, she was thirty− five. Would she never be older than that, he reflected. Anyway, that would mean she had thirty−four years to live if she lived to be as old as Weie, he added.

The boy was a mathematical genius! Was there a match for the child. The teachers said he was very gifted.

"But Weie could very well have lived longer," said Hartvig in an accusing tone, "if only ."

She looked at him sharply.

Hartvig was a tactician. He said threateningly: "Why can't I go to the funeral when I'd like to so much?"

Jane repeated still once again her reasons he was not old enough, "the family" would prefer to be alone, there was no room...

"You're lying, you are," he muttered.

She was not going to let herself get heated that day. She quietly kneaded the dough for the bread with steady hands, her face immobile as though she slept. She had a gaily−coloured scarf on her head a typical, elderly peasant woman. "You will do as I tell you."

Offended he went off to Weie's parlour. The stove was already blazing merrily. The house was so damp that patches of mould showed through the wall−paper. He sat himself in Weie's chair near the window. On the window shelf stood a photograph of the old man a snapshot taken in the garden the previous year. The boy stared

at it, and again a cold shiver crept down his spine. To Hartvig, Weie had been immeasurably old like that Methuselah. His hair was completely white and his beard, too, though rather grubby from the food he spilled in it. He had greyish, bloodshot eyes and a thick lower lip that was burning red. Hartvig could not help staring at it. "What are you staring at, boy?" Old Weie would ask, without getting an answer. And then there were his trailing legs and a back that was badly bowed. Methuselah...

Hartvig had never before considered whether he liked Weie or not, but he now knew that he did. Just after he had come to "Journey's End" it had seemed to him that Weie was a nuisance because he was continually correcting him. Not that he had taken any notice of Weie; he did not count for much; it was Aunt Jane who ruled the roost. Now and again, Hartvig could almost be sorry for Weie, particularly when Aunt Jane got angry with him for spilling food down himself. Oh, those trembling hands! Or when Weie shouted that the house was his and Aunt Jane only his housekeeper, storming away in one of those sudden attacks of what she called "refractoriness". It always moved Hartvig when Weie was "refractory", for it was absolutely true that the house was his, although there was not much evidence of it.

The years passed quickly. Hartvig began to read the newspapers, and when he took the "District News" in to Weie in the evening, he had a glance through it before handing it over, which made the old man cross. But it came about that Weie's eyes became weaker and weaker, and, almost as a matter of course, Hartvig offered to read aloud to him. It was pleasant to show how clever one was. Moreover, it must surely be regarded as a good deed. Occasionally, Weie gave him something to buy fruit drops at the corner shop or he treated him to chocolate from a little silver box he carried in his waistcoat pocket. But it also happened that Weie would say that his aunt should take him to the cinema. Then she would seize the opportunity to sing Hartvig's praises, how clever the boy was, and if only one could see him through his education, and how Weie ought to bear him in mind with a little help when the time came. Hartvig was curiously embarrassed by all this.

Weie had been a farmer; but he had lacked both skill and energy. Times were bad and so the former gay bachelor was stranded at "Journey's End" on a meagre annuity and a subsidy from his rich sister, Mrs. Jelk. The masterful Jane Olsen became his housekeeper. All this was not what he had been accustomed to the one−time fine landowner was reduced to a frail old man in narrow circumstances. He could not look back on a life that had achieved anything and his feelings were not softened by the younger end of the family being enterprising and prosperous. Among his nephews were a chief accountant and a dentist. The dentist paid Jane Olsen's wages. It was humiliating and Weie found it hard to thank anyone.

When Olsen had been with him about six months, she began to talk of her little nephew, her brother's son, who was an orphan and not well cared for at all. Hartvig came on a visit one Sunday. He was pale and lanky. Weie felt a strange tug of sympathy in his stony, old heart the little fellow was so oddly silent and suppressed. "We've got room enough and a little puppy like him won't eat much," said Olsen, and so it came about that Hartvig was allowed to come, just as Olsen had planned. The hollow eyes and the repression quickly disappeared. Weie frequently regretted that he had been so compliant, for Olsen had never really paid him, as he had thought she would; but he consoled himself with the thought that it was truly a good deed, and that was a field in which he was, perhaps, a little in arrears.

Mrs. Jelk had only once before been in "Journey's End". That was when the tenancy contract was signed. She had not liked the house; it was not well−appointed; the elm trees in the front garden made the parlour gloomy and damp; the district was dull. But the rent was very reasonable, and Ludvig was tired of travelling round as a perpetual guest, so they took "Journey's End". The name alone was discouraging to Mrs. Jelk's mind.

She had not managed to visit Ludvig during the six years he had lived at Knagelse not before today. She had paid him the monthly allowance− −nobody could expect more of her, she who hated dreary provincial towns.

On the way out to Knagelse she continually assured herself that she certainly had no cause for self−reproach.

She had lost contact with Ludvig; they had grown away from one another. Life had coarsened him, in her opinion, and they no longer had anything in common. He never would talk of their childhood and of himself hardly at all. When he came on his regular six−monthly visit to Copenhagen and she asked him how he was getting on, she got for reply an ill−humoured: "As you see." What she saw was distressing a bent, old man with a chalk−white face, who could not be persuaded to take a little course of artificial sun−ray.

And now she stood with the rest of "the family" in Ludvig's parlour. Jane Olsen, in a black wool suit and squeaking, new, patent−leather shoes, told them the details of Weie's death. Outside the dreary, grey house, a miserable, little Dannebrog waved at half−mast (Why had Ludvig not got a national flag of the usual size, thought Mrs. Jelk), and inside the room it was so hot that the dampness was unnoticeable, but it would surely mean arriving home with a chill.

Mrs. Jelk was determinedly friendly. They had to get through this unpleasant day.

"It's comforting that Weie didn't have to suffer long," said Jane Olsen, and she wiped her nose with a black−edged handkerchief.

Wonderfully discreet, thought the dentist's wife (who was a miracle by Arden), but a little more feeling in the voice would not have come amiss.

They had to brace themselves up with a cup of coffee before the funeral, and Miss Olsen went into the kitchen.

"It's clean here, at any rate. It positively reeks of soap," said the dentist's wife, looking at herself in the bright mahogany top of the cabinet. "This Empire sofa's not too bad, if it's repaired, but the rest is certainly pretty poor..." ("Now, now, Lissen," murmured die dentist.)

"Who's he left the furniture to?" asked Lissen, very practically.

"We'll ask the lawyer after the funeral," said Mrs. Jelk.

"I tip Olsen for a sure winner. Uncle Ludvig was always a lady's man. Did you notice that she has a princess−style hair−do with a pad. Her dentures fit badly, but, for the rest of her, she's got all the curves she needs." ("Now, now, Lissen". The dentist used his patient, chairside voice.)

Mrs. Jelk had seated herself in a decrepit easy chair. Lissen was tactless. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jelk was thankful they had come. It would not have been possible to endure the day alone. "Inger!" she cried as a grey−haired woman came smiling towards her, "I'm so glad you're here." Inger, who was a hospital sister, had allowed herself to be persuaded at the last moment "to follow Uncle Ludvig". "I can't bear funerals," Mrs. Jelk had said in her most pitiful voice.

When Jane Olsen came to set the table after the funeral, she found that they were thirteen. That was the hospital sister's fault, coming without notice. To have thirteen at table was just about the worst thing that could happen, particularly at a funeral. Jane had generations of peasant superstition behind her, and she had great respect for it. The boy must be fetched, was her immediate reaction; it was the only way to ward off trouble. But what would he say? He was always worst at table, talkative because he was such a small eater and he had to use his mouth for something. She flew over the path and reached the neighbour's garden. "Hartvig!" she screeched.

The boy was usually very pernicketty, but today, of all days, he had rooted about in the earth like a pig. He had been playing at funerals, he said. She did not let him off lightly, but, contrary to habit, he put up with it in silence. He was excited. He did not even ask why, after all, he was to join them at table. All he said was: "My jersey those stains!"

Jane Olsen rubbed and rubbed at the dirty jersey with benzine and a cloth. If only she could have foreseen this she would have got the boy some new clothes. Hartvig scrubbed his hands and cleaned his finger nails with a wire nail. Jane rubbed away at the last stains, not very successfully, speculating on what they were talking about in the parlour, and the set of her lips hardened. They had come back from the lawyer's. The trouble would certainly be starting.

"What did I say?" Madam Lissen asked triumphantly. "'Furniture and contents to go entire to my faithful housekeeper, Christiane Bothilde Olsen'. She had him in her pocket."

"She certainly has a terribly hard face." Mrs. Jelk shook her head. "I'm afraid that poor Ludvig yes? and hard eyes." Mrs. Jelk was becoming more and more distressed. Ludvig had really wanted only to be left in peace or she would have tried to see more of him.

Before Jane Olsen released Hartvig on the family, she took him into Weie's bedroom. Her voice was low and unrecognisable. "Now hold your tongue and don't you say a word at table. If you say anything (and in that 'say anything' lay all that gave Hartvig bad dreams) I'll lock you down in the cellar tonight." Jane's eyes pierced deep into his, like spears. He ground his teeth in terror, bringing an almost imperceptible smile to her sunken mouth. She went without waiting for an answer. The boy stood there deeply distressed; but defiance quickly awakened. She frightened him all the time; it was her method of bringing up children; but her threats were never carried out.

"Ah, here is my nephew, little Hartvig," said Jane when he came into the room, and the boy greeted them all round with a moist and flabby handshake. "Now. Would you care to be seated."

Mrs. Jelk gazed wonderingly at this elderly−looking child. He was so out of place in his stained, grass−green jersey which stank of benzine. He did not go well with the pungent, soap−smelling cleanliness. There was something inappropriate about it all. It came to her mind that he had been dragged in at the last moment. She counted the company. Yes, fourteen at table.

For most of the meal Hartvig sat silent and scared. He hardly touched the food, overawed and repressed by the unaccustomed company. Chewing painfully, opening his mouth too wide, and breathing hard, he stared relentlessly at "the family".

Mrs. Jelk asked coldly about the housekeeper's earlier posts.

"I've been a housekeeper housekeeper to elderly people widows" (at the last moment she had corrected 'widowers' to 'widows') "and unmarried misses..."

Hartvig, full of book learning, was always on the watch for his aunt's mistakes and he could not restrain himself: "A miss is never married."

They laughed, and Jane Olsen smiled at him with anger in her eye.

Ludvig came painfully closer to Mrs. Jelk with every moment. Here in this parlour he had lived, in this dismal, tasteless hole oh, the dark green walls with plaques that were advertisements for beer, the rocking chair with its embroidered Mecca plush and its cabinetmaker's flourishes, the gigantic grapes in HAUT−RELIEF on the oaken sideboard− −he lived here with this staring, ill−brought−up child and a doubtful woman as his only company.

"What did the doctor really say, Miss Olsen?" she asked.

"Heart failure. And there was also influenza, of course." Jane Olsen got up from the table and passed the trifle round again. She had told of Weie's last illness once before. Mrs. Jelk ought to have listen. The boy's eyes were

almost starting out of his head and his hands trembled with agitation. He was getting ready to cackle. "Will madam not have a little more trifle? Oh, the sun's coming out. Perhaps you would all like to see the garden afterwards."

"You were with my brother when he died, of course?" Mrs. Jelk stuck to her subject. If only she could have comforted his last hours; but he had had no one except this woman with him perhaps not even her, just alone. She looked at the housekeeper with a mounting uneasiness, and she perceived clearly that her questions were received with dislike and distrust a distrust that her own tortured forebodings had inspired.

"Yes, I sat with Weie the whole time, I certainly did."

The boy's restlessness increased. He could not keep still. He pulled at the tablecloth. He wanted to say something, but the words stuck in his mouth while his jaws ground away at the same piece of macaroon without ever really meeting.

"What is it, little man?" asked Mrs. Jelk in an encouraging manner.

"He's very nervous anaemia," explained Jane.

Her voice brought the words to Hartvig's lips. "It isn't true what she says. She was out all the evening and the night too. Weie lay in the middle of the floor dead when she came home. It was then we went in. I didn't dare to go in when I was alone. He just lay and groaned almost from when she went. I heard him clearly, but I was frightened, and she always locked the house up when she went out, so I couldn't fetch anyone."

The icy clamminess of the house seemed to paralyse them all in spite of the heat from the stove. Only Jane, who was accustomed to it, had something to say: "How CAN you say such a thing, child. That's wickedly untrue," she said drily, and the hard mask of her face did not change in the least. This in itself shook Mrs. Jelk terribly. Poor helpless Ludvig...

Hartvig's cheeks flushed with temper. She accused him of lying in front of the whole "family" he, who knew the Ten Commandments, which said "thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour". But SHE was the liar. She had lied to Weie when she was going out in the evening with that commercial traveller. She had lied to him when she put most of the housekeeping money in her savings bank account and then had to give him porridge for his meals, saying that everything had got so dear. SHE was the liar.

"I lay there and heard how he groaned, and I prayed to God for him, but it didn't help at all. Before she went she'd given him those powders that make you sleep in elderberry juice. And when she came home with the commercial traveller, Weie had stopped groaning and we went in. He was lying on the floor all curled up, and she said it was a good job he wasn't cold or it would have been hard to get him laid out properly. When they'd laid him on the bed as if he'd died like that she went into the kitchen and made some coffee. And that commercial traveller man shook me and said I'd better not dare to say anything he's called Mogensen."

Jane Olsen did not attempt to stop Hartvig. She just sat and looked at him with her hard eyes, as unshakable as a mountain. The others stared at the child; the women almost breathless, the dentist ready to take a hand in appeasement as he had been all the time.

Jane Olsen was going to say something, but Mrs. Jelk forestalled her. She rose and announced, suddenly very composed: "I think we'll go."

They went slowly into Weie's parlour, Mrs. Jelk last. Jane Olsen stopped her on the threshold. "I should like a few words with you, madam."

She closed the door and they were alone. She was apparently unmoved. It did not appear to trouble her that they had all left the meal she had prepared before they had finished.

"I must excuse Hartvig. He ought not to have behaved like that. He's a very nervous child. The doctor says it's a kind of hysteria, and when he has an attack he lies. He also has nightmares, and what he dreams he believes really happened. Well, Weie's death he liked him so much− −hasn't made things any better. Besides, he's angry with me because I wasn't able to buy him new clothes to go to the funeral."

She spoke very composedly without any seeking for words, and her eyes bored deep into Mrs. Jelk's.

"Yes, yes, I see," said the old lady. "Hartvig looks hysterical. One wouldn't like to believe all that he said."

She stopped and thought over what she had said. Because the boy was hysterical, he might well speak the truth, and she had herself suspected just that ever since she arrived. But it was no use. Nothing could be done about it now.

Jane Olsen followed "the family" out through the garden gate. They parted very politely. This painful episode must be forgotten. They were all thankful that they had got through the day and all was over.

Hartvig was standing in Weie's parlour when Jane came back. He was waiting with the defiant face of a martyr.

"You very nearly spoiled everything for us, you did." She pushed off her shoes. "But it went all right in the end. They were so puzzled they forgot about the will...I won't put you in the cellar."

"Why not?" He stared at her.

"It'll be frosty tonight, and I don't want you down with pneumonia. You've to go to school in the morning. Have you done your 'prep'?"

"I don't need I know it."

He had big, dark shadows under his eyes and she said gently: "You haven't had your cream today, Hartvig."

Old Weie had had to make do with export cream, thought Hartvig, who always drank the best whipped cream with his luncheon.

"And you shall go to the seven o'clock performance at the cinema."

"Is the commercial traveller Mr. Mogensen coming?" he asked promptly.

She smiled. How bright the boy was. No fooling HIM. Yes, he would be her support one day and earn money for her to pay the debt his father owed. Her smile grew bitter as she thought of the penniless student who went and died before Hartvig was born.

"He'll have gone before you get home."

"Will you tell him anything anything about me at at table." He was afraid of the commercial traveller.

She shook her head. "That's no concern of his."

It was no concern of his either that she had had an antique dealer out to see the furniture and the silver. They would be worth more than she had expected. There were some collector's pieces among the silver. She was not ill−pleased with the way things had turned out. Weie had not been a great prize, but she had put quite a bit away during the years she had been with him...

"Remember, Hartvig, whatever I do, I always do it for your sake," she said.

THE KING'S FACE

BY LECK FISCHER Translated by Eileen Macleod

I shall never forget that day in August...A midday peace lay over the courtyard and the children's sandpit, when Agnes suddenly threw down her spade and would not play any more, and squatted down by the wall which was warm from the sun and the heat of summer. The fowls sat lazily on the soft soil under the chestnut tree, and up in the house the blinds were drawn whilst Grandpa and Grandma had their after− dinner nap. Even the cobbler's workshop with its wide, shiny windows was empty. The world went softly on its way in the little Danish town until it was once more time to work.

"What do you want to do then?" I looked disappointedly at my sister, who was three years older than me, and went on patting my sandhill, which was going to be a castle. She was ten, and always the leader.

"Shall we go up and look at the King's picture?" She got up with a jump and stood kicking little hollows in the sand "Grandpa won't be up for an hour, and I've been up there before. He's got a red cloak on the King, I mean ". "You've been up there..." I couldn't say anymore. We were allowed to so everywhere except up into the loft. The house itself with its large living quarters, and the shop had been explored long ago. Over the workshop the pigeons lived in a cooing mass, but in the loft over the outhouse Grandpa kept a wealth of strange things that he wanted to have to himself.

A shaky ladder led from the peat shed up to the forbidden place. Agnes had told me that the King's picture was up there, but she had not let out before that she had really seen it.

"Are you coming?" She sauntered a few steps and tempted me with her calm indifference. It was so exciting that I dropped my spade and left it there the sand heap was not to be made into a castle just now.

Agnes crept up first. One rung of the ladder was loose and she stepped as lightly as a cat up on to the next whilst with her back she pushed up a hatch. Behind me stood a wall of stacked turves which shut the light out. The sweat stood on my forehead from excitement. "Come on." She knelt down and I crept up and eagerly grabbed the hand she held out to me. Anxiously I passed the loose rung and reached the top.

There really was something to look at here. Agnes closed the hatch and we were alone with the stored treasures and the cobwebs and dust of many years. Over by the chimney hung some of Grandpa's old great coats and on a chest stood a sewing machine. Piles of cake boxes, shoe boxes and old newspapers were stacked right up to the top of the end wall.

"Can you see out?" I looked at the sloping window covered with spiders' webs, and Agnes lifted me up and pointed to the trees in the garden and the water, which the dirty glass transformed into an unreal view that I did not recognise. Then she took my hand and led me over to the newspapers.

"Here's the King." She pointed and moved an engraving of the Battle of Isted which fascinated me because it showed Danish soldiers vanquishing an enemy in flight. It was only when she pulled the King out into full view

that I became impressed. The frame was nothing much, and the glass had gone long ago, but there was the King on his throne, with his son and his grandson and his grandson's little boy, and they all had crimson cloaks or robes over their shoulders. The King was a nice kind old man with side−whiskers.

"Isn't he grand?" Agnes expected praise.

"Yes," I answered humbly, for I had never seen such a picture before.

"Of course, he's dead now. The other one is king now that one."

Agnes pointed again and enjoyed showing off her knowledge. "The King got ill, just like Daddy and died of it, and now we'll play hospitals." She moved the pictures and arranged some newspapers. In a moment she had made an excellent bed for me.

"But if Grandpa..." I tried to raise objections. If Grandpa came up, he would see at once that the things had been moved.

"He's asleep. Now you're ill just like Daddy, in hospital and I'm your nurse." There was no more to be said, and I lay down on my bed of sickness with a cake box for a pillow.

We were only too familiar with illness. Father had been ill for six months and came home from one hospital only to be sent to another. Everything had changed because of Father's illness. Mother was quite unlike herself, and we were alone at Grandpa and Grandma's. Nobody had said when we would be going home.

"Now you must lie still. A patient always lies still." Agnes gave this information and disappeared behind the chimney. When she came back she had a white cloth over her hair I noticed that it was an old hand towel; the red monogram sat in the middle of her forehead, like a jewel. She also brought a rug with her. It was made of little pieces of cloth of all colours, and the dust hung in a cloud over me as she shook it.

"You must have this over you, and then I'll go down and get your medicine." She tucked me up in spite of my protests. It was unbearably hot in the low−roofed loft and I could not bear having anything over me. The rug was a heavy as a feather bed.

"And now you're not to move until I come back." She opened the hatch and disappeared through the floor. It was always like that. I always had just to lie, or stand or sit whilst she had the amusing part of the game. I stretched myself and kicked the patchwork rug away. And then the dreadful thing happened. My heel hit something at the side and the King's picture split, with a dry scrunch, right across his bearded face. The pieces curled backwards to either side and disclosed an old, yellow newspaper. It seemed to me as if the world had come to a shivering standstill. Hesitantly I crawled over to see what I had done.

The King's face could not be saved. I bent down and with fumbling fingers, I tried to hold the pieces together, but some of the old King was missing. What would Grandpa say? Now it was quite impossible to conceal our visit to the loft and he had forbidden it. He must have had a reason for the ban. Perhaps he had put the picture there specially so that we should not touch it.

I struggled to my feet and moved a few steps away, horrified. I hoped wildly that the King would again look sadly at me when I turned round, but my hope was not fulfilled. I tried several times, but it was no good. Only the old newspapers stared at me.

And then suddenly I heard somebody calling my name. Grandpa was calling from the courtyard, and it was not yet his usual time for getting up. He had never before cut short his after−dinner rest. And he called me again, his

tired old voice coming nearer and nearer.

I stood petrified, nobody was going to get me to leave my hiding place. Agnes ought to be ashamed of herself, waking Grandpa to tell him that we had been up in his loft. And she little knew what had happened later on there, by my newspaper bed stood the headless King in his crimson cloak bordered with ermine.

The steps in the courtyard became more distinct Grandpa came through the door of the outhouse, Grandpa was touching the ladder up to the loft.

I still stood there. I was so frightened that I hardly dared to breathe when Grandpa slowly raised the hatch, stuck his grey head up through the floor and beckoned to me. His voice was not angry and that increased my fright, he was much more than angry, he was sad and distressed about it as he called to me: "Come down, my boy, we must have a talk together."

Step by step I climbed down the ladder. It was worse than I had expected. Grandpa didn't say a word. He didn't scold me and he didn't smack me. What ever would happen when he saw the broken picture? He took my hand, and we went out into the daylight, which blinded me. We walked slowly over the cobble−stones of the courtyard and in through the door to his office. It was a dreadful walk we were to be punished together, Agnes and I it was as bad as that.

She was there already, sitting on the settee under the window with Grandma, crying, and they didn't look up when we came in. Over on the big green desk lay a small sheet of white paper which slid across the top as we shut the door. It filled me with despair to think that our naughtiness was so bad that both the old people had got up.

"I have something to say to you." Grandpa took my face in his hands and his touch was loving and clumsy, as only a man's hand can be when it is difficult for human beings to help each other, and his voice was strange and croaky. His mouth trembled "I must tell you your Daddy is dead. We have just had a telegram." He looked helplessly at me and fumbled with the white paper which rolled itself into a ball in his broad hands "We have just had a telegram."

"Is Daddy ?" I looked round in bewilderment and understood. It was queer to see Grandpa with tears in his eyes and Daddy was dead no, I couldn't believe it, my Daddy.....

After that the day was as new as a shiny unused thing. We went about in the big house and were quite unlike ourselves, we spoke softly and were clean and neat, and we dared not settle down anywhere. The castle in the sand−pit never got finished.

And in the evening I told Grandpa about the King's picture. He sat at his desk looking vaguely at me, as if he didn't understand what I was talking about.

"The King," he said, "what do you mean?" He was very tired. The wrinkles in his face seemed suddenly to have become deeper. Slowly he took his spectacles off:

"Never mind, my boy, what does it matter now." That was all. And then his look again became distant, far away from the boy who had struggled with his fear in order to tell of his sin.

I felt a great, clean and rich happiness. In the midst of my sorrow I was overwhelmed by a tremendous sense of relief. Now it would not be hard to go on...to go to bed at night and get up in the morning. Father was dead, but now...now that was all right again.

And it was only many years later when doors closed themselves to the widow's son, that I fully understood how much I had lost on that hot August day when my ailing young father died and I tore the King's face with by heel.

PARIS

BY HANS SCHERFIG Translated by Eileen Macleod

I arrived in Paris early in March. The chestnut trees along the Boulevards were just coming into leaf. The children were playing in the parks. Funny little men with marvellous beards were sitting in front of the sidewalk cafes, drinking aperitifs. The neat green omnibuses swept along the streets and over the bridges, and sometimes they broke down. Everything was as it had been when I was last in Paris, and just as it ought to be. The strong men in pink tights have arranged their cannon−balls and weights on the pavement. They display their muscles and limber up, vowing that they will lift a two−thousand pounder, if the spectators throw a sufficient number of SOUS on to a little mat. But when it comes to the point, they always lift only the smallest cannon−balls, with exaggerated posturing and effort.

The little policemen at the cross−roads swing their white batons and quarrel passionately with drivers, and kiss girls waiting to cross the street.

The CONCIERGE−women have put their folding stools out on the pavement in the sunshine, and sit knitting impetuously and clouting their children with long French loaves.

Respectable gentlemen stand in the diminutive street conveniences, and they bow courteously over the top of the screen when a lady of their acquaintance passes by.

Ancient blind women and quite small boys go round emptying the post− boxes. Sometimes they come to blows and then the letters fly in all directions. But there are some post−boxes they forget altogether, and no wonder, since they are placed at knee−height and decorated and camouflaged to look like something else. A newspaper reports that one of these hidden little post−boxes has been run into by a car. It had not been emptied for thirty years, but now all the letters have been collected and will be delivered to the addressees, provided that they are still at their old addresses.

On the Seine embankments men stand patiently with their fishing rods, staring down into the light brown water and catching nothing. Poor old crones, oddly arrayed in rags and tatters, and with moustaches, sleep on the quays or under the bridges, or sit in the sun on the pavement, drinking red wine and eating dry bread. Or they may spread a newspaper out in the gutter and relieve themselves, without anybody finding this at all remarkable.

On the Boulevards dignified elderly gentlemen perambulate in top hat and frock−coat, red order−ribbon and green carpet slippers.

In the restaurants elegant women sit with their small children, drinking liqueurs and playing cards with the children for money.

On the walls of houses and on hoardings politicians squabble by means of six−foot posters which they call "open letters" "TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MINISTER: YOU ARE A PIMP YOU LIVE OFF WOMEN! "and below this is printed a letter from the Minister's lady−friend. "YOU ARE ILLITERATE MR. EDITOR" replies the assailed Minister on another poster "YOU ARE A CORSICAN BANDIT, WHO CAN NEITHER READ NOR WRITE! YOU HAVE TO BRIBE OTHER BANDITS TO COMPOSE YOUR LIBELS, IMBECILE!" And the Editor can only answer on an oblong poster "MR. MINISTER, YOU ARE A SCOUNDREL. A BEAST!"

In the Luxembourg Gardens, old gentlemen play croquet with great solemnity, or sail little toy boats in the basin of the fountain. They are all knights of the Legion of Honour.

On some street corners bearded men stand, selling fresh fried potato chips in greasy paper cornets. And on other street corners stand tarts, making strange offers to the men passing by.

Handsome brown Maroccans with white teeth and hooked noses wander with dignity from cafe to cafe selling sheepskins and ugly little rugs to tourists.

Picturesque peasants from the Pyrenees, wearing brigand−like costumes and wide brimmed hats go round with tiny donkeys, peddling earthenware jars and jugs shaped like hens.

Glaziers pushing barrows move along shouting, and selling window−glass to people who have managed to smash their windows during a matrimonial tiff.

LIBERTE, EGALITE, FRATERNITE, it says on the State Pawnshop and on other public buildings, and underneath DEFENCE D'URINER.

A scent of burnt fat and fried potatoes floats from the open windows where people sit laughing and gesticulating and carrying on discussions across the width of the street. And there is a fragrance of fresh vegetables, and of petrol and hot asphalt. And all the cats of Paris make their contribution to the common perfume. A soft bluish mist lies over the whole city, quite a light haze, which blurs the outline of the houses, roofs and chimneys.

I walk slowly along the streets with my little suitcase in my hand sniffing it all in, and I am full of the joy of my return.

And then I am stopped by a little man in a blue smock. He wants a light for his cigarette. And when he has got it he asks: "Are you thirsty, MONSIEUR?" And so we go and have a drink together.

THE ENGLISH BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN IN 1807

BY MOGENS KLITGAARD Translated By J. F. S. Pearce

One lovely evening it all began. Sivertsen is standing in the street when the first bombs whistle through the air. He stands there, unable to move, and a few moments later the streets are lit up by the light of incendiary bombs. The air trembles with the crash of falling bombs. Then the whole town is silent, as if to take a breath. As if it were drawing a deep sigh in preparation for what is to come.

Then screams ring out. And then there is the clatter of feet along the streets as people run along. Then everybody starts to dash about aimlessly. Some run out of the houses, and some into them. A few people stand in the streets gazing up, unable to tear themselves away from the sight of the bombs as they fall through the sky, and the trails of light they leave behind them.

Fires are burning already.

It seems to be near The Church of Our Lady.

No, it's by St. Petri.

It's in both places.

It's in several places.

There are lots of fires. There are fires everywhere. Five fires, ten fires, fires in all directions. And there are guns going off in all directions. There are fires and explosions in all directions.

Then a bomb bursts right in front of Sivertsen.

Strangely enough, Sivertsen doesn't move from the spot. The bomb has stripped the front wall off a house hardly a hundred yards from him, yet he still stands there. Stones and earth and splinters of wood rattle down in the streets, and bombs and incendiary bombs tear through the air, leaving behind them streaks of fire, but Sivertsen still stands there. Not because he is afraid. Not because he is a coward. A strange feeling of cold futility renders him motionless. He is not paralyzed or petrified; he sees everything that is going on, rats pouring along the gutters in brown masses, a man with an injured arm screaming as he runs past him, a woman on her knees mopping blood and dirt from the legs of a little girl there is a bustle of life and noise all around him, and his observation is remarkably clear; he suddenly perceives small things that he had never taken notice of before, a half−smothered tuft of grass between the paving−stones, the hair of the kneeling woman, the sturdy vitality of the rats' curving backs.

And suddenly he is seized by a powerful feeling of the joy of being alive. He puts his hand to his neck and grips it, to feel the life in it. His neck is warm, and he feels the blood pulsing under his finger− tips, as it beats out the rhythm of life within him; he has a powerful feeling of exhilaration, and from somewhere within him there arise thoughts of Caroline, and the warmth of her skin, and this great consciousness of life turns his thoughts to warmth and greatness, and this leads to a desire, a wish to meet Caroline's soft warmth, an urge to assert his existence.

Another bomb explosion sets him running.

He turns the corner into Laederstraede. A dog runs alongside him. It doesn't bark; it is frightened and keeps at his side, putting itself under his protection.

He runs on. He feels strangely light and strangely clear−headed and decisive. His mind is alert, and ready for any challenge. Nothing shall prevent him from living.

THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

BY MOGENS KLITGAARD Translated By J. F. S. Pearce

It was a cold drizzling January morning, typical Copenhagen weather for the time of year, when a lorry drew up in front of a small draper's shop in the old part of the city. The grey light of morning had just dispersed the dense, watery gloom from the muddy street. On mornings like these, people don't bother much about what their neighbours are up to, and nobody took much notice when the contents of the little shop, together with some poor furniture were carried into the lorry. The strong, burly forms of the remover's men could be seen struggling in the semi−darkness with boxes and tied−up bundles of bedding, and then a woman came out of the narrow shop door, carrying in her arms a few flower−pots with some miserable flowers in them.

As it began to get lighter, the rain started. A man came along and stuck a notice on the shop window: To Let.

Of course, it was all the fault of the hard times. Month after month the turnover had decreased. Lundegaard had done his best to keep things going, God knows; he wasn't the man to give up at the first fence he had taken goods on credit, he had borrowed from his family, he had tried a sale, he had had thousands of hand−bills printed, and his son had distributed them around the district all to no avail. More and more bills came in, and more and more

customers stayed outside.

The last few years had been Hell on Earth for the Lundegaards. Their work was wearisome and unprofitable, and their income was so small that it was as much as they could do to keep body and soul together. Poul, their son, had been out of work almost continuously since he finished being an apprentice. Their daughter, Anna, was doing a little better. She had a job in a large store, and her wages at least covered most of her modest needs.

During this time, their life had been nothing but toil and drudgery, dirt and poverty. And still their struggle had been in vain. Their last hope had been the Christmas shopping rush.

One grey January morning, their poor possessions were moved to a flat with a view over the back yards of a side street in the Vesterbro district.

January in Copenhagen is a wretched month, and in a Vesterbro back yard it is sheer Hell. The people freeze and starve, the air is heavy and damp around the filthy houses, and even the rats have a poor time of it surprisingly, the priests are the only people who seem to get on well in this part of the town. There is no shortage of relief work, and the workers in the vineyard of the Lord do not renounce their temporal needs for spiritual ones. Is it not written that a man must look to his own? God is merciful towards the needs of his priests.

Religion is the opium of the masses. Mrs. Lundegaard stood in need of that opium. There was a meeting of the Friends of God every Friday in the Chapel of the Nazerenes, where they would bewail the sins of the world. She had always had a healthy and practical outlook, but this had changed completely with the closing of the shop.

Twenty−five years ago, when she had married Lundegaard, they had been solid, well−set−up members of the middle class. Business was good, and they had two charming, healthy children. Then they had had their dreams about extending the business, acquiring a better social standing, and perhaps having a pretty little house somewhere on the outskirts of the town, with a lawn and flagpole. They had been industrious and energetic, and no doubt happy, although they hadn't realized this until afterwards, and in the evenings, after the children were in bed, they would take out their bank−book and enjoy themselves seeing how their capital was increasing, and in these evening hours they used to dream their pipe−dreams.

They never got so far as owning a villa, but they did have a little summer−house that they cycled out to in the evenings after the shop was closed and the books made up.

The war, of course, was responsible for their financial success, which promised such a happy future, but as the impact of the World War faded, so the volume of their trade declined.

But it wouldn't get really bad, after all; they were of a good, solid family, and quite well off. In Lundegaard's opinion, their poor trade just now was only the result of a transitional phase, and, thank God, they had a little behind them to see them over it.

But trade never did pick up. It became worse and worse, and their troubles piled up as the months passed. It's the crisis, Lundegaard said, and read aloud an article in the paper describing how many small shops had had to close down. By then the children were grown up, but owing to the difficult times, they got a poor start in life. They had to sell the summer−house, they had to sell the cycles, and the family had to be content with short excursions to the surrounding countryside.

In any case, they gradually lost their taste for amusement and outings. Lundegaard used to lay awake at nights, thinking things over. He became nervous and irritable, he got bags under his eyes, and he took to the bottle in an attempt to deaden his anxiety about the future.

It was almost a relief for the children when the blow fell. Anna's wages just covered the rent of the little back flat, Poul had his dole, and if Lundegaard could get a job rent−collecting or something, they would probably be able to prevent the situation from getting really desperate.

Then it became apparent that such work was not easy to find. It was necessary to put down fidelity money as a guarantee but eventually things began to look a little more promising. Lundegaard's brother and brother−in−law put together the necessary money, although rather reluctantly, and it became clear through their attitude that they were not having too good a time of it either. Lundegaard's brother was a bank official, and his brother−in−law a civil servant. Their wages had been cut, and furthermore there was the inflation, which put up the price of groceries, so the money did not go very far.

II

The winter dragged by wearily for those people whose lives were lived in the dirty stone abysses of Vesterbro's slum district.

Every day Lundegaard set off on his tiresome round. Up stairs, then down. He had doors slammed in his face, and he collected more curses than rents. His wife struggled heroically to keep up the family's air of middle−class respectability. She scrubbed and washed the damp little rooms, and patched, mended and brushed their worn−out clothes. The children only came home to sleep. Anna used to go out with a boy− friend, and Poul spent his evenings with friends of his own age, hanging round the gate.

One day, whilst on his busy way through the town, Lundegaard passed their old shop. It had already found a tenant, and now it was a florist's. He had been unable to resist the temptation to try and find out about it from people in the street. They told him that the flower trade wasn't really a profitable one, and that the new tenant seemed to be feeling the pinch already. He was said to be a jobbing gardener, who had got tired of working himself to death for other people, and had decided to try his luck with the few coppers he had been able to set aside from his wages, but luck didn't seem to be coming into it much, at least, the former jobbing gardener would stand for hours in the window, staring gloomily out into the street, and the number of customers who were attracted by his modest window display was extremely small. But there was no doubt that, at bottom, he was an optimist, since he had got married on the strength of the future success of his business, and, as far as could be seen, his wife was expecting a child before long. If success were born of toil and hard work, everything would have been all right, for the gardener went to the market every morning, and kept the shop clean and attractive, and made a really good show of the flowers in the window, but then, who can afford flowers in these hard times?

It was some slight comfort to Lundegaard that his successor had not had any better luck with the place than he himself had. That showed that it was the place and the times that were at fault, and not Lundegaard's lack of business sense.

So he could hardly keep a note of triumph out of his voice when he told his wife how their old shop was getting on. But his wife didn't like being reminded of their former life in the world of commerce. It recalled to her mind's eye the beautiful sights, the summer−house, their social position, the lawn, and the garden house surrounded by hollyhocks, and the memory of this lost Eden clouded her eyes, and brought a lump to her throat.

"There, there," Lundegaard comforted her. "We were never much to write home about, you know."

"But we did have a shop, and money in the bank," she said, weeping. "Now look where we are."

The poor rent collector didn't know what to do or say. He stroked her hair awkwardly, and said he thought things might turn out all right after all.

He himself didn't really believe that, though. Not when he was honest with himself. They had toiled and laboured to bring their dreams to life, and in the process, they had lost their vitality. They were now both approaching the half−century, and it wasn't easy to see how they were to get a fresh start.

Lundegaard became quite melancholy. Only now did he realize the full extent of their misfortune. Flitting, putting their wretched back rooms in order, and his efforts to find work had completely occupied his thoughts, and only now did the fact penetrate his mind that they were seeing the ruin of their lives' work.

Yes, they were indeed ruined. All that they could expect of life now was a struggle against poverty and dirt. He felt a dull feeling of protest growing within him. What had they done to deserve such a fate? They had been honest and industrious people, hadn't they? Surely a hard, working life entitled them to a peaceful old age? The world seemed to have have gone mad. Now he had to chase up and down stairs to earn his bread. The otherwise amiable and peaceful Lundegaard was beginning to be invaded by an unspoken feeling of rankling bitterness. The big stores stole trade from decent people, and employed their children at ten shillings a week. The big stores were able to carry on. They expanded and expanded, whilst one little shop after another had to close, and their owners might go their ways, wherever they liked if they hadn't held on so long that the work−house was the only way open to them.

III

It was an ordinary sort of January day for Copenhagen, with slush on the ground, and the air damp and misty. The thermometer on the Tollbooth registered between 38 and 40 degrees, pork went up a penny a pound, the newspaper seller in his little wooden kiosk on the corner was quite blue with the cold, and the paths in the parks were covered in a layer of white, which turned to water wherever you put your feet. The Exchange reported debentures as being brisk, and stocks as being stable, and a little tobacconist in Osterbro gassed himself. He was tired of life, and business was poor.

It was late afternoon, and Mrs. Lundegaard had had to put the light on to see; even at mid−day the rooms were only poorly lit. They really ought to economize in lighting, but there was so much that had be done. Patching and darning. From time to time she had to go out into the kitchen to see to supper.

She had the table laid by six o'clock. Anna had come in, and was sitting by the window mending a silk stocking. Mrs. Lundegaard thought she was beginning to use a lot of make−up lately. It must cost a lot. Neither of them said anything. They each lived their own lives. But they always had to be thinking of money. It was difficult to make the household money stretch far enough. The food had, above all, to be filling, and it was a pity that the girl, who put nearly all her wages into the home, always had to take such a poor lunch to work with her it was like parading their poverty before her companions at the shop. Mrs. Lundegaard thought she might try and do a little better with Anna's lunch. But then there was the money to think about. She might be able to earn a little by taking in sewing. The greengrocer's wife said that one of the big clothing stores in Vesterbrogade was looking for people to do sewing at home. Her eyes weren't so good as they had been, but she could get glasses. They wouldn't cost a lot, and the sick club would pay some of it. Poul had come in, and was doing something in the bedroom, but Lundegaard still wasn't in.

He still wasn't in at half past six.

Mrs. Lundegaard looked anxiously at her daughter. Anna didn't like having her supper late. She always had to go out as soon as they had finished their meal. Poul didn't care when they ate he didn't seem to care about anything. They might as well begin, and Lundegaard would probably walk in whilst they were eating.

They had their meal in silence. They finished it, and cleared the table, and still he wasn't in.

−Lundegaard didn't come in until late at night. He was drunk. She had never seen him like that before. His clothes were dirty, and he talked nothing but nonsense.

Lundegaard woke up in the night, and tried to force his attentions upon her. She wept, and her thoughts turned again to religion. A life of purity and beauty, in spite of poverty. God, and self−discipline, might help. They had lived a worldly life, and this was their punishment. A husband who drank and misbehaved himself, a man of his age; a daughter who was never at home, and a son who was almost a stranger to his mother.

IV

"For my part, I wouldn't give a damn if we did have a war, and the sooner the better," said Nielsen, pushing out his lower lip, as he did when he wanted to play the strong man. "It might clear the air, and everything's so upside down now that it couldn't be any worse anyway."

"You must be a mad to think of such a thing," said Poul. Nielsen was a clerk, out of work, and lodging in the front part of the house. They stood leaning up against the gate.

"Yes, perhaps," said Nielsen. "Mad, or desperate. I'm looking at the matter from my point of view, as it affects me. The others can take whatever view they like. I think you put things nicely and concisely, but your way of doing so annoys me just a little. You are always talking about 'we' and 'us'. There isn't anyone who will lift a finger to help you unless he can get something out of it. And for my part, I don't care what happens, things can't get any worse. I've been out of work for eight months, I owe money left and right, I've had a summons from the police court, and I go and wait at the Labour Exchange four or five hours every other day. My landlady here, who was so considerate when I was working, is all the time trying to provoke me to do something that would give her a pretext to turn me out. And I don't blame her, either, she can't pay her rent with my excuses. If I meet one of my old acquaintances in the street, I hardly have a chance to get beyond 'Good Morning', when they say: 'Well, old fellow, I've got to get along now.' My girl−friend left me after I'd been out of work five months. I can quite see her point of view; it was no good a girl like her being engaged to an out−of−work clerk, who wasn't even in a trade union, because, when he had work, his friends didn't think it was quite nice. And if I had the luck of the Devil, and went and got a job, well, you know what a clerk gets yourself. It might have been all right if I'd had a steady job, and perhaps had a chance to worm my way on, or else elbow my way forward but when you're 29 to start with, and out of work for eight months, then it's useless, hopeless. No, let this damned war come as soon as it likes, it must clear the air one way or another. It'll make a change at any rate, and that'll be something."

Poul went up to Nielsen's room. Nielsen went into the kitchen to try and get two cups of coffee out of his landlady. Poul had a look around the room. Even if there was nothing in the world to be miserable about, that room would soon get you down. If you looked out of the window, there was a concrete yard, a garage for lorries, dustbins, and a lavatory. Across the yard was the back part of the house, where he lived, and an electro−plating works. Goodness knows how many different people had lived in that room in the course of years. The walls were decorated with three different pictures of the King of Rome, and a photograph of a hotel in Hjorring. In one corner was a green wash− stand, with an enamel bowl and ewer, and on the little shelf above it were Nielsen's razor, comb, tooth−brush and so on. It was hardly surprising that Nielsen preferred to stand around in the gateway.

When Nielsen came back with the coffee, they sat down and started to talk about girls. But they discussed them rather as if they were something belonging to the past, or the distant future, than anything else. Nielsen showed him photographs taken when he was in work, and used to go on outings with his girl. Poul had seen these pictures before, but he looked at them again, out of politeness. It was almost as if Nielsen possessed nothing else worth looking at but these snaps of a girl sitting squinting into the sun from a grassy bank in the woods, or lying in a bathing costume on the beach at Solrod. There was also a rather older picture of a football team for which Nielsen had once played. Nielsen was third from the left, marked with a little cross.

They could hear a wireless in the back part of the house playing a popular tune.

"We were brought up to be respectful and decent," Nielsen said. "That is just what is making a mess of our lives. We ought to be ruthless, cynical and merciless. There are plenty of opportunities in a town like Copenhagen, if only you aren't green enough to wait for them to turn up of their own accord. You don't want to stand in a tidy queue waiting for your turn, you want to throw regulations and morality to the winds and use your head instead. Morality was invented by the people who want to keep all the best opportunities for themselves."

Poul said nothing. He rarely did have much to say. He looked after himself, took care to be at home at mealtimes, sat for hours over a cup of coffee, and nothing with it, in the milk−bar on the corner, or else stood or lounged about in the gateway.

V

Lundegaard did not feel too well after the previous evening's events. He sat looking out of the window, and didn't seem to know how to deal with the situation. Whether to adopt a distant attitude, or whether to be repentant. The matter wasn't all that straightforward. The fact was, he had used some of the money he had collected. Apart from that, money was running out right and left; there was still the gas bill from the shop to be paid. He had been given time to pay it, as with so many other bills. What use was that, though, things were never going to get any better.

Mrs. Lundegaard didn't mention what had happened. She did say that she was thinking of trying to get some sewing work to do at home. They discussed it a little, but they decided they would have to buy a treadle machine on the hire purchase, because the old hand machine wouldn't be much use. Lundegaard thought they might be able to raise a loan of ten pounds or so, and by that means clear off all their financial worries at one blow. Once they were settled, perhaps things might be a little easier again.

Lundegaard knew that it was possible to raise such a loan. He might use the furniture, or the fidelity money his brother and brother−in− law had put up as security. It was no use going to a bank, of course; banks didn't go in for that sort of thing. But Lundegaard knew the address of a money−lender. Everybody knows where money−lenders and abortionists can be found. The poor of Copenhagen have their own "Advertizer". It lacks government approval, admittedly, but nevertheless it has no trouble reaching its subscribers.

VI

Mr. Salomonsen owned housing property, and also indulged in a little money−lending from time to time. Providing reasonable security was offered. He sat in his comfortable chair in his comfortable room, and listened quietly to Lundegaards story. He didn't actually have much to do with that sort of thing; he didn't care for it, misunderstandings arose so easily, besides, what security was there that he would get his money back? He had done people favours like that before, and had received nothing but thanklessness and hard words in exchange.

Lundegaard became more emphatic, and put his case more forcefully.

Mr. Salomonsen meant what he said. Where was the security for his money? How was it unreasonable to fix a rate of interest proportionate to the risk he was running? When people came to him for help, as they were always doing, then surely his help was needed. Mr. Salomonsen knew and approved of the parable of the unfaithful steward. Mr. Salomonsen was a good Christian. Mr. Salomonsen was a useful citizen. Some banks looked askance on his activities, and the banks had great influence with the press. Once Mr. Salomonsen had been a little boy playing in the Sondermark, and the other boys used to set on him, because he was weaker than them, and didn't know how to stand up for himself. And now one of those boys might pay a visit to his office. In those days young Salomonsen used to say the Lord's Prayer every night, and though he didn't do that now, he thought it couldn't do any harm, at least. Mr. Salomonsen and his wife, formerly his housekeeper, went to church at all the

great church festivals.

He really had to have some security. Lundegaard had thought the fidelity money would do. Besides, he had a good job. He was only temporarily embarrassed. Besides, wouldn't the furniture do for security? It had cost enough.

Mr. Salomonsen looked at his watch. He always went to the billiards saloon in the afternoon, to play a game with one of his great friends. And perhaps a hand of poker in the back room afterwards. Mr. Salomonsen liked playing poker. It was an absorbing game. And he was a cautious player.

Lundegaard went to considerable trouble to try and think of something that would satisfy Mr. Salomonsen as security. The only steady financial factor in their poverty−stricken world was Anna's wages. A mortgage on her wages? Anna would never agree to that. He might be able to borrow from a bank after all, if his brother and brother−in− law would stand as security for him. That would be the second time. He could remember the expression of injured pride on their faces that he should call upon family ties to such a mean end. He wasn't going to ask them again. He had to have that loan from Mr. Salomonsen, and then clear it off again as quickly as he could. There in Mr. Salomonsen's cheque−book, tucked in his waistcoat pocket were the ten pounds that could put an end to all his troubles. They might find their way into his own pocket, and settle all his worries. And he had used some of the firm's money, too.

Mr. Salomonsen considered the matter of a mortgage on Anna's salary deeply, and then sat down at his desk and drew up several documents.

On his way home, Lundegaard went into the Central Station and put Anna's name to one of them she would never find out, anyway.

VII

Whenever you spoke to anybody, they all said: There's going to be a war sooner or later there's sure to be a war. But in their hearts many of them cherished a fond hope that it wouldn't really come to that after all. In any case, they took no action to prepare for it.

Some sections of the people wanted a war. The depressed classes, unemployed people who were up to the ears in troubles which they had no hope of getting out of, and who were only kept going by the thought that whatever happens the sun'll keep on rising in the morning and setting at night; people who were in constant fear that their embezzlement would be discovered before long; little people, whose difficulties mounted up from day to day, and to whom suicide sometimes seemed to be the only solution and, of course, there were the speculators.

It was just about then that a well−known Copenhagen editor wrote that a good sharp war would have a refreshing effect, and that it would increase trade and production, provide work for idle hands and increase profits. There was a man in a tram, who said: If only we could be sure of remaining neutral, as we were in the Great War. the sooner it comes the better. Do you remember Copenhagen in 1915−16? Life was worth living then. Then he hummed a snatch of a war−time song: 'Let's drink and dance the whole night through'. And he was a well−dressed man, a respectable man, with a trustworthy face and kindly eyes.

Some people hated war, and feared it, and read war preparations into everything. Building a bridge, making a road, flying displays and military parades on Sundays to let the Tommies' families see how keen they were, and what a fine time they were having. There were pacifists who said that people ought to be conscientious objectors, and people from the workers' organisations, who said the arms ought to be used in a better direction.

Lundegaard overheard many conversations about the approaching war. At the office, in the pubs where he used to go with a few chance acquaintances to have a glass of beer to warm himself up. They never brought up such subjects at home. Anyway, the papers were always full of re−armament everywhere. The newspaper−seller on the corner, a Communist, said that you would know when the war was going to start, because the shipping companies' shares would go up. Those sharks in the exchange knew all about making money out of wars. But there were other things to do than to watch the price of shipping shares. Lundegaard felt almost as if it were something that didn't concern him. Now he could get some money and be rid of the worst of his tormenting debts.

It had become the fashion to talk about the coming war, just as people talked about the weather, accidents and the six−day cycle race. All the current phrases were bandied about. People kept to the time− honoured conventions, and came out with the usual wise but hackneyed observations on the day's news, and no one contradicted them. No one spoke honestly and independently, in fact, no one had any opinions. Why should they bother, when they could find them ready−made in the leaders in the papers? On the whole, conversations consisted of exchanges of standard clever remarks. If there was a railway accident, it was 'Terrible. Think of their poor families!' If there was a fraud trial, it was 'You'd never believe that a man like that, with a large steady income would do such a thing. Let's hope he gets a good stiff term of imprisonment. He'll get off with a fine, though, you see, or else they'll let him out of prison when the fuss's died down. If it'd been a poor man, it'd have been different.' If the subject of war came up, it was 'There'll be another war, all right. There'll always be wars as long as there are two people left alive on the earth.'

It seemed almost as if everybody was going round hiding their real thoughts and their own little private selves under a cover of current catch−phrases. After all, people don't know much about each other. They live side by side, day in and day out without ever really knowing each other. That was one of the advantages of these conventional remarks; nobody need ever reveal his true self. No one knew that Mrs. Lundegaard took money from the scanty housekeeping to give to the collection at the Nazarenes' chapel; no one knew that Lundegaard was a regular customer of the girl in the mauve dress, who, after dark, at least, always stood on the corner of Vesterbrogade; and no one knew that Poul had plans to leave home and to force his way into a fuller life, even by methods that the law regards as deserving of prison, if need be.

And as to Anna, no one knew that every morning on her way to the shop she used to give her lunch packet to the old woman who sits by the church, and that she used to buy daintily made sandwiches that could stand the inquisitive gaze of her fellow shop−girls. No one knew very much about Anna anyway. She was always civil towards her parents, but never told them anything about herself. She went off in the mornings, came home for her meal, and then disappeared again. She slept in the dining−room, and Poul slept in the kitchen, and no one noticed what time she came home.

FRANCISCA

BY MARCUS LAUESEN Translated by John Poole

Sometimes, when George was not at home, Francisca would walk restlessly up and down in her sitting−room. She was nearly sixty, and white−haired, but whenever she became restive and started wandering about, her face suddenly looked younger. She had no idea of the almost classical beauty which took possession of her features on these occasions since, although her gaze was alert, she saw nothing. Nor was she able to account for the disturbed state of her mind. Deep down in the tangled skeins of her memory there was something that told her that this restless walking about came from habit, but she could no longer remember how or when the habit had started. The passing years had dulled her. She was getting old.

There were many things in her sitting−room that Francisca was very attached to: some large pictures from Italy, the busts of her children, the grand piano; but she saw none of them. During the many hours she spent pacing the

room she was like a sleepwalker; she moved about without touching a thing. Only when she grew tired and knocked against a chair or a door−post did she realise where she was. Then she would sink down into one of the deep armchairs, her head shaking, and begin to laugh. It was a wild, brittle laughter, and it meant that she had been silly again. But it only happened when George was not at home.

Francisca lived a life of habit; she had done so for a long time. Her habits were good habits though, and they had kept her young and strong through the years. She had learned them from George. We are seldom grateful to a person from whom we have picked up a habit, and any gratitude there may have been soon becomes a habit itself. From time to time Francisca would say to a friend: "I think my husband is right− −it does help you really ought to try an orange every night before you go to bed." But as she said it she did not think of George.

She still got up early in the morning and went out for a brisk walk, whatever the weather; just for ten minutes to get some fresh air. It was always the same walk because it was bad to receive too many new impressions so early in the day. When she first started twenty years ago, Francisca had sometimes walked further, but when, at George's suggestion she only went down the avenue to the end of the cemetery and then turned back, it had struck her how no morning was quite the same as another. She used to look over the cemetery hedge and see how much things had changed: fresh wreaths were laid on old graves, tombstones were set up, new graves were dug, untidy cypresses were cut down, paths were widened. It was supposed to be a quiet district, but a great deal happened none the less.

Now it was different. In the course of twenty years events repeat themselves, and the time came when Francisca did not notice anything on her morning walk. George was right; it was pleasant just to be able to walk and not think of anything in particular.

The morning, George would say, is the best time for writing letters. One must attend to one's correspondence, and it is best to get it done before there is any likelihood of visitors arriving. In the afternoon George was at home and Francisca had to play for him.

It is two o'clock as the two of them sit down to their lunch. The maidservant serves them without a word and is given no instructions. It is best not to talk when one is eating. Not until the coffee is on the table does George say:

"The students seem quite interested this year, though I have the feeling that they do not yet appreciate the really fundamental thing in music, you know, Francisca; influence, background, in fact history."

"How strange!" says Francisca. "It is so very important, isn't it?"

"To−day," continues George, "to−day I was explaining to them what Beethoven's themes meant to Schubert, and would you credit it, one of the girls thought that it did not matter so long as the music was beautiful."

Francisca laughs.

A little later she sits down at the piano. She is to play to George while he makes his notes for to−morrow's lecture. Francisca has learned to play properly, with correct accentuation, and on most days wins praise from George for her playing.

In the evenings George works, while Francisca sits and reads books that he has recommended. Sometimes she falls asleep, but she always wakes up before it is time for George to come and eat his orange with her. She always tells him how interested she has been in the piece she has just been reading. Then George retires to his bedroom. When Francisca shortly afterwards comes to say good−night, he turns over on to his right side because it is bad for one to sleep with one's weight on the heart.

It had been a lovely morning. Francisca walked amid falling leaves, heard Autumn rustling the cemetery trees, saw the red virginia creeper on the neighbouring houses and thought vaguely of the time when she herself had wanted a creeper on the walls of her own house. A new grave had been dug just beyond the cemetery hedge; surrounded by its rampart of yellow clay, it was ready waiting for its corpse. Francisca saw all this, but gave it no thought, for she had come out to enjoy the air, the sharp Autumnal air. She turned as usual at the last gate to the cemetery and made for home, walking perhaps a little slower than usual because she still loved a chill, gusty Autumn morning, could still feel how the season had swept the summer heat from the atmosphere. She swung her stick at the yellow leaves as they fluttered on to the footpath and caught a chestnut leaf, splitting it neatly in two. In among the trees she could see the clear, greenish light that is peculiar to September and October mornings, and knew it was in the skies over all the countries where it was now Autumn, over all the fields and houses. Perhaps she even breathed in more deeply a few times, though even this was not unusual. As she opened her own front gate she glanced at the dahlias which were never allowed to droop and which had to be tied up many times while they were in flower. She made a mental note that at the end of the week they would have to get a man to come and sweep the leaves from the lawn. George looked after everything in the garden, and it all had to be just so.

She went indoors to write her letters, To−day she must write to the children. They wrote so often themselves, and Francisca enjoyed every letter she received from Stockholm, Rome and Paris. All three daughters had so much to tell her, and they told it all so well and so clearly. Surprising that young people, unpractised in the art of writing, instinctively used the right words, even if the same word was used a little too often. It was, for example, amusing to see how Grethe was always using the word COME in her letters. At last we came to Rome, Mother dear, and as we came out on to St. Peter's Square it was like coming into a completely new world...

George was right, the younger generation had fewer words in its vocabulary, expressed itself naively and awkwardly. But was it not more important, was it not the great thing, thought Francisca, that they had gone out to face life in the big world, went from place to place, from riches to riches. One really had to forget about the clumsy way they expressed themselves.

To−day there was another letter from Grethe, a good letter, telling of wonderful days in Rome. It reminded Francisca of a very distant youth. She warmed at the letter, but it awakened no desires in her, brought forth no sigh of longing. She just enjoyed being an old mother hearing news of the land of her childhood from one of her own children. With moist eyes she began to write My dear little Grethe, Your letter to− day has given me so much pleasure. I have only just finished reading it and sharing your experiences with you. What a strange meeting you had on the Spanish Steps! I had a similar experience on that very same spot over thirty years ago so much happens in foreign countries. These recurrences are wonderful things for us who are getting old and for you young ones who will be old some day. You have experiences both on your own account and on ours too...

It was as if she could hear what she had just written, as if the sentences echoed inside her after all, she had been as good as talking to Grethe for she realised that the letter would have to be written all over again. One could not use the word experience so many times. Then she glanced at the last page of her daughter's letter. She had read it before; knew perfectly well what was on it and had given it no special thought; did not do so now. None the less she stopped writing as she felt a strange empty sensation in her breast. But there was nothing on the page that she had not seen before "P.S. Please give my love to Father and thank him for the music. Tell him that I have not had time to go to a concert yet."

Feeling suddenly chilly, Francisca got up and, putting a white shawl over her shoulders, she walked over to the door as if to gain warmth from the exercise. Then the aimless wandering began again; the suppressed sobs and the unbearably harsh laughter.

It was not until the early evening that she had calmed down sufficiently to continue the letter. But when that time came she did not alter a single word.

For no sooner had she started her meaningless laughter and felt how very silly it was of her to behave in this fashion when the door bell rang. The laughter was unusually violent, and when her maid announced Professor Sell, she had to ask the girl to show him into George's study and to say that Mrs. Jass would see the Professor in a moment. She had the greatest difficulty in controlling herself; there was really no reason why she should, except that she ought to appear calm and dignified in front of one of George's colleagues. It would look most odd if she were to come into the room laughing. She walked up and down her sitting−room a few times, pulled her dress straight, arranged her shawl attractively on her shoulders so that it hung down over both arms, straightened herself up, set her mouth determinedly, and clasped her hands in front of her in an attitude of pious meditation. She unclasped them again almost immediately to strike herself on the forehead Francisca, what is the matter with you? Both tears and laughter were in her throat, that unaccountable feeling of revolt that always welled up inside her every time she felt the vitality of youth come over her.

She was ready now and walked forward. She opened the study door and greeted the Professor with a nod of welcome. As she did so the desire to laugh came over her with a rush, but she fought it back and turned it into a friendly smile for her visitor. She did not see the distress on the Professor's face, did not think it unusual that he was in black, not unusual that he stood in the doorway instead of sitting down. But men were such queer creatures.

"Good morning, Professor," it surged up over her again "Please excuse me, we old ones laugh sometimes at..."

"Good morning, Mrs. Jass," the young Professor kissed her hand "I have something important to..."

"You do understand, don't you, that we old ones laugh sometimes at nothing. I suppose it is our subconscious at work. I would rather like to read about it all some day."

"Mrs. Jass, I do not know how..."

"And I do believe that it is a sure sign that one is getting old when one begins to laugh at nothing "

Then she looked at the Professor. He stood struggling with some difficult word or other. His long thin body was shaking all over as he stared at the floor.

"What is the matter, Professor Sell? You are usually so cheerful when you come to see us."

"Mrs. Jass, a heart...it's my painful...how can I put it...Please keep calm, Mrs. Jass."

A sharp little giggle was on the way. Francisca Jass, who always had control over every word she uttered, could not help being amused at the stammering Professor. It reminded her of when George had proposed; he had begun by explaining the theme of "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik".

"Mrs. Jass, it is my painful duty to inform you that your husband had a heart attack this morning from which he did not recover."

Professor Sell had finished the whole sentence before Francisca thought of George. The giggle which she had suppressed lingered for a brief moment on her face. She was not shocked, not afraid.

"My husband," she said, in a whisper, "but he was perfectly well this morning."

"Suddenly, Mrs. Jass, in the middle of the second period."

Francisca turned away and stared into a book−case. Black bindings, dusty at the edges, a packet of violin strings, an ebony mute, a flute lying on top of a history of music; some withered laurel leaves on Beethoven's death−mask, a piece of polished wood which reflected her white shawl and in which she could see her hands fall and clasp each other, a little bronze bust of Wagner, some sheet music Bruckner's seventh symphony. She turned and looked in another direction, saw the long black desk, the volumes on the theory of music, a picture of the boy Mozart with his violin, a picture of the young Francisca, an open music−ruled exercise book with an ascending line of semi−quavers in a violent crescendo followed by a few lonely open notes, and George's red and blue marks all over it, a large N. B. in the margin, an open note−book with a rough draft of his comments: "a) this crescendo is not typical of Beethoven; more like Mozart, b) the treatment of the theme shows clear traces of Haydn, c) note the difference between the treatment of the theme in the Andante of the 'Kreutzer' Sonata and in the 'Moonlight'." A baton, some unused music paper, a draft of a letter, some indents for sheet music, a list of the students at the Conservatoire. Continuing her gaze round the room till she came back to Professor Sell, Francisca was totally unable to comprehend what had happened. It was all so unexpected; it was not in the rules. If only George had written; but no, that would have been impossible. The game Death played had no rules; or was it perhaps that Man had not learned them? Never before had an unusual happening struck her so forcibly, never had something irrelevant forced its way so brutally into her life. When she said to Professor Sell: "It is all so unexpected", it was as if she was pronouncing a word that she had never before understood. It had a strange ring as its echo came to her from the study walls: unexpected, unexpected a word which seemed to apply to more than the event about which she had just been told. She did not feel any grief because she did not know what had happened.

"Professor Sell, would you mind going now? Thank you so much for coming and telling me I must try and collect myself please excuse me there is so much..."

"It must be very difficult for you, Mrs. Jass please accept my deepest sympathy."

An hour later Francisca was still in George's study. She had not yet told anyone of her loss. She had not changed either outwardly or inwardly. By saying it over and over again to herself, she had learned to realise that George was dead, and as if to rid herself of this knowledge she sent a message to George's sister asking the family to make the necessary arrangements as she was not a fit state to make them herself. She asked them to see that visitors were kept away, and that George's body was taken at once to the crematorium chapel. Later in the day she herself would be able to come and help lay out the body. But for the first few hours they must not ask her to do anything.

She realised now that what had happened was that her husband had died while she herself sat reading her daughter's letter and was being hysterical with idiotic laughter. Somebody had brought the sad news to her, and she had heard it boldly and distinctly before she had even thought of George. It dawned on her now why she felt no grief at his death. When something happened to one of her children, she knew about it before the news reached her, but her husband could fall dead not twenty minutes away, and her mind remained untroubled. The news could actually be in the house, in the next room, without her being able to sense it through a closed door. She could stand there repeating to herself: "George is dead, Francisca," without a pang, without the feeling that something was missing from her life, from her soul. She could stand and gaze at George's belongings and tell herself that these things were as dead as he was, and it did not cause her pain. The old lady began to be afraid.

Unconsciously, as if at somebody's silent bidding, she began to pace up and down his study, playing all the time with a thought which had its root in the past. She found it difficult to follow it back very far. Rather irritably she shook her head as she felt her thoughts fly headlong over the longest period of her life to land gently in semi−darkness where a little girl was playing with her dolls underneath a flowering mulberry tree. A big dog called Barry came and took one of her dolls in his mouth and carried in into the conservatory. She tried to collect her thoughts again, but it was no different. Now and again there were glimpses of George, working, doing his duty, giving advice. She saw him conducting a student's orchestra, a tall erect figure with an immobile expression and a hand that moved not rhythmically but like a machine carving the tempo into beats and bars of cold, deliberate,

superior music. She saw the same man sitting at his desk, as upright as a schoolboy who dares not lean forward. He had a music−ruled exercise book in front of him, and was busy writing marks above and below the notes. She saw George look on while the servant girl performed her weekly task of rolling up and packing sheets of music, writing at his dictation the address of one of the children. She saw him walk round the garden planning the layout of the beds, heard him say time after time "There is no flower like the hollyhock, Francisca, none whatsoever," and she was reminded of how certain of her wishes, springing from a love of other kinds of flowers and shrubs, had slowly died within her. Then her thoughts were back in that semi−darkness, first in her mother's room where flowers of all kinds bloomed on the window−sill, then on the sea, in a tiny boat, with a careless little girl who had rowed too far out and saw that the sea was enormous and that the waves covered murky, green depths.

Francisca did not calm down completely until late in the afternoon. By then, it was all over, and she no longer needed an explanation for everything that had happened to her and for her own behavior in particular. She would never again have to laugh without knowing the reason why.

After her thoughts had flown backwards in time for a while, often without pausing at her life with George, she began to pursue them in the other direction. Perhaps the picture on the writing desk might help her. Nowadays they said that she had hard eyes and she had seen this for herself. The steel−grey eyes had taken their colour from the sea, and now as she saw how she looked when she was young, she knew that there had been changes in her which could never be wiped out. Her eyes had once been gentle, though restless. The sea had taught them to reflect life's changeability. On her brow, now higher, there had in those days shone a bright clear light. Her mouth had always been ready for laughter, a whole−hearted, gay laughter which used to break through the barriers of elder people's deadly earnest like a liberating army. She could not stop thinking about this laughter of hers, for it was the only thing she still had left. It was harsh and brittle now, but she still found it easier to laugh than to cry.

She delved deeper into her memory for those moments when she had laughed with all her heart, and the only ones she could think of were those when she had been alone with her children. When she was with them, her laughter was full of youth, not idiotic and meaningless, just happy. As she followed the course of her life year by year there was less and less which made her think of George.

How had it all come about? Francisca could now see her fate as one shared by so many others. Life had treated her kindly. She had been most fortunate. She had seen many parts of the world. As a young girl she had been prodigal of her energies and her enthusiasm, and when George began to come into her home she had admired this serious, tranquil man just as every gay, high−spirited girl always admires strong, silent men, believing that they have greater depths and more goodness than other men. The girl longs to feel the man's protective strength, and to obtain it she is prepared to give up some of the high spirits which some day she is bound to lose anyway. George was a clever man, he knew so much and could teach her so much. Francisca loved music, played as well, and when she could not understand everything that George said to her she thought it was only because of her stupidity. And so began the long evenings when he sat and explained every aspect of music to her, and she listened, or perhaps did not listen, and instead was overcome with a mass of things that she did not understand. Her capacity for enjoyment died slowly; not her zest for life, though possibly that too, later, but the other kind of enjoyment, the happiness that is like the smiling, carefree, frolicsome, freshness of birds, flowers and children. Francisca thought of how she must have killed a large part of her life with listening. She looked in vain for the instruments of death and could only see moments in time, a whole host of lethal moments. The two of them had found a home. George planned the garden. Francisca had made suggestions and once had George yielded to one of them. But more often he explained to her that what she wanted was not wise. She wanted to have roses, but George considered that only a professional gardener could produce really large, beautiful roses and that there was no pleasure to be obtained from the efforts of the amateur. Well, even if one did not get any pleasure from them, Francisca had once, as a child, had a wild rose. Yes, as a child, Francisca, but that is rather a different story, is it not? Now she recalled that in the years that followed, she herself had said more than once: there is nothing quite like a hollyhock. George considered that it was best to arrange one's week and one's day on a fixed plan. It made

life so much easier and enabled one to find time for everything that one wanted to do. The human body needed rest, a great deal of rest at regular intervals. It was therefore important never to vary the times of going to bed at night and of getting up in the morning. Francisca had gone against George's wishes in this matter on one occasion only. They were at a concert which was due to continue until after bed−time and George went home. Francisca stayed behind; she wanted to hear the beautiful music to the end. George did not reproach her, but explained his reasons to her carefully and considerately, and she had to admit that he was right. She never went...

Francisca laughed again. She sat at the dead man's desk and laughed. Something had happened inside her; there had been a tiny change. She now had a reason to laugh: no, not at George, because she was fond of him, not at something she remembered, because it could not be important enough, but at herself. She laughed because, day in and day out, she had been so silly as to subject herself to the will of somebody who had no more right to life than she.

Nothing else happened to Francisca. Nevertheless it took the better part of a day before she got the idea settled in her mind. Then she realised that all her good habits and beliefs were of no consequence. For while a person is still trying to get used to life, Death can interrupt. She did not feel angry with George, but felt no love for him either. She did not know what grief was. She had never known anything. Perhaps George had protected her against much when he taught her to live her life according to a schedule. Life in the wide world was full of dangers. Shivering a little, she thought of her children who travelled abroad, and who refused to live in sensible security. She was tired now. Nothing else happened to her, for she was very tired.

When a few hours later she went into the garden to pick flowers for George's coffin, she saw the flame−red virginia creeper on the neighbour's house. Slightly bent, like a beggar woman, she went and asked the strange people next door for a piece of the creeper, just one little piece. They gave it to her, and later she went and arranged it round George's head as he lay in his coffin. The fiery leaves put restless life into his features. Francisca could not understand it; could not understand that so little could make a face look so different.

SONIA

BY KNUD SONDERBY Translated by A. I. Roughton

Chance led me to experience my two most remarkable fishing adventures in the company of two young men, brothers, but encountered in widely different corners of the earth.

The one place was on Thorup Beach at Bolbjerg, and that man was called Thomas, a young fisherman, who whiled away a summer's day, looking, in a friendly way, after us holiday makers of the same age as himself, and getting much quiet amusement from it.

We sailed his cutter and fished for cod, even though there was no "r" in the month, and he sat with his knee over the tiller and shifted the quid in his mouth with much ostentation and a strong sense of the comic. He had a long crooked nose, and every time he looked at us, and the thought "Holidaymakers" struck him, he had to push his nose even further to the side in order to keep a straight face. From some very earnest and completely veracious accounts of our life we had given him, he had come to believe that it was the thing a kind of town slang among us to tell tall stories, and from time to time after this he poured out the most extraordinary nonsense about mermaids and mermen, sea snakes and hell horses, all of which was intended as an answer to the incredible lies, we had, in his opinion, tried to put across him, he wasn't born yesterday either.

On one occasion I swam out with the rope of a net in my hand, reached the first sand bank and swam some yards against the current so that I was nearly drowned, swam in again and then we began to haul in. Ah! these holidaymakers! Now for some fun. Thomas rubbed his nose and just stood with his hands in his pockets, shifted

his quid and grinned. There'd never be any fish in it, just faith and hope. But chance had it that I had gone slap into a shoal. The water splashed silver as the net was hauled in, and there in the drag net lay about a hundredweight of little fish, about as big as anchovies, which Thomas threw tenderly back into the water, it was a bleeding shame we could only use a paleful for bait, and, he explained, unhappily at the same time they would die if they were only so much as a second out of the water, and they did too, for they were washed up on the shore and lay on the beach like thousands of silver coins, the sea−gulls came in screaming clouds hanging in the air above them, and behind the sea−gulls one could see the outline of an island.

And up in Greenland I was suddenly reminded of all this by a long crooked nose with a mouth beneath in which solemnly shifted a quid. I went straight up to the man. He must be Thomas' brother. Yes, certainly he was. And while I bubbled over with explanations and the pleasure of meeting him, the nose with solemnity and reserve called a halt, there was no recognition on his side. Whose brother was I?

I was entertained and astonished to meet all again up here. The company's whaler "Sonia", with an easygoing West Jutland crew, Captain Larsen, from Svinklov, a tremendous man, with wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and a mass of sandy hair on the back of his powerful hands. Could anything move him, could anything excite the backbone of Jutland? One was to have an opportunity to see that something could.

There on the "Sonia", with her crew from Northwest Jutland I had experience of the most gigantic hunt known to man.

We were lying off Egedesminde one morning early. In the fjord the water flowed quietly before a moderate breeze, but out in the straits the great breakers came rolling in under the little grey ship, and rocked it like a duckling. It was a foretaste of what was to come.

It was only twelve o'clock when the whistle from the outlook forty− five feet above deck blew. Ping ping!

The "Sonia" swung round to follow his pointing finger. His arm was the compass needle. By this means we came so near that we on deck could see the whale's back as it came up and spouted the mixture of breath and water which shot up in a fine stream from its nostrils. It was a Finwhale. As long as a church spire, and once its tail rose right out of the water as it dived, and the mighty tail fin stood a moment in air above it. The wings of a mighty bird hovered for a moment like a beacon above the sea.

Down it dived and disappeared, came to the surface again several times in rapid succession in quite another place, breathed and blew the three, four, five seconds necessary to take breath and blow off again before going under again for several minutes. For a whole hour we followed it with the ship which shot hither and thither in order to get within twenty or thirty yards distance of it. Once it dived right under the ship, came to the surface again only a few yards away to port, and disappeared before we had time to turn round. It took one's breath away like something supernatural to see such a collosus so near a breath of the legendary past blew up from it. Of such a beast one should find only a handful of bones in the Natural History Museum, and nothing else save spectacled scientists' theories and their white fingers pointing to the glass show−case. But the earth lays bare a glimse of her soul, gives up a little of the past from her womb. There is a gray wind over foaming sea in the Arctic, and from the vasty deep, for a few seconds only, is handed like a token to mankind this symbol of another age, the swimming mastodon.

Behind the gun at the ship's stern stood the Captain and arched his back. Every shred of broad West Jutland calm had left him, as he stared tensely after the whale and guessed where it would come up next. Broad straddled, but elastic in knee and ankle, he waited the opportunity of the few precious seconds in which he could unloose the power of three pounds of gunpowder and send the explosive harpoon, big as an anchor, into the back of the world's largest mammal.

Time after time the Finwhale dived, came up and blew. Time after time "Sonia" wheeled and sprang forward in an effort to come within range. If we were near it, we went half steam ahead so that the beating of the screw in the water should not startle it further. When it disappeared in the deep, the ship took a new course. The experienced whaler knows by instinct which direction the wary whale will take, and when it will come to the surface again. When minutes had gone by after it had disappeared, the harpoon gun was pointing out over a particular bit of sea, there was nothing but rising and falling waves to see, but those waves and spray covered the sea depths, and from those depths might come something, and perhaps just at that spot. The biggest animal in the world. The harpoon pointed waiting, the Captain with his shoulder against the stock, like a cat about to spring. Usually the most popular man in Greenland, equable, radiating composure and mild benevolence, sandy hair on his powerful hands, smiling wrinkles round his blue eyes, so imperturbable in their calm that they usually looked a little over people's heads into the mild unchanging beyond but at this moment strength itself, his whole being charged with a frenzy of watchful tension, every sinew in his body as taut and effective as his finger on the trigger.

Blast!

And in yet a different place and out of range the whale had come up and disappeared. And again the "Sonia" swings round to begin the whole thing again. And it appears again for the last time, twenty five yards in front of the "Sonia" is a blast of air and water from its nostrils, up between the waves heaves his gigantic body, higher... higher, one, two...Three seconds.

The three pound charge exploded. The noise was swallowed in the air, the waves and the excitement, but the harpoon is off on its journey, has hit the whale, and right inside its body another three pound charge has exploded.

It is really only a split second before the whale disappears again. But at the culmination of a nerve−racking event it is as if one's sense of time becomes distorted. One's brain reproduces so rapidly that the pictures appear as if in slow motion. A split second becomes many seconds.

I remember the harpoon line standing like a bow in the air and every little curve which passed over it afterwards, and the wind which seemed to be carrying it somewhere. I thought it took a long time. Then the moment must have come in which the whale reacted to the harpoon and the internal explosion. It's body tightened and in a shower of spray it screwed itself under, and I remember the Captain in full gallop, jump back from the gun and the crew running over the deck.

How quickly the whale had in fact reacted, how rapidly it had dived, I could see afterwards on the whale line. It STOOD up from its place on the bottom of the ship, whistling like a driving belt over a playing drum, and up over a block on the mast, which shuddered and bent under the strain, down on to another block on deck and out from the ship's bows, where it shot stiff into the sea, sucked into the depths like a stick of macaroni, 300 yards, 600 yards, 900 yards. The hawser as thick as one's wrist becomes elastic when it is fully stretched.

The block on the mast, over which it rides, gives way too on its thick steel springs, but the Captain shouted just the same and the wireless buzzed; and the "Sonia" began slowly gliding after the Finwhale so that the line should not snap from a sudden jerk.

A long way off the beast came up and lay still on the surface and panted. It had only been shot in the blubber. The harpoon was in its back behind the dorsal fin and no injury done to vital parts from the explosion. From the "Sonia" they began to play it in. At the same instant the pain drove the whale to flight again. Again the line must be let out in order not to snap. 70−80 tons of living flesh hurtled hither and thither like a torpedo in the water. One saw the waves whipped to foam by its paroxysms of pain. When it began to get exhausted, and there was no further danger of the line snapping, then the whaler "Sonia", 100 tons, 90 foot of steel was hauled through the waves after it at a speed of eight to ten knots, while the screw stood still. Even when the 100 hp engine was set half steam backwards, there was strong speed ahead and so an hour went by. This of course told on the

Finwhale's strength, even so it was only after an hour and a half's running one could come near enough to launch a fresh harpoon and hit it fatally in the heart right behind the flipper. Then the blood ran from it. Both in the blast from its nostrils and in great pumps from the wound, so that suddenly scarlet waves licked its body. And still once more it tried to flee down to the secret depths, disappeared so that the rope rattled on the blocks and had to be slackened. For a minute it remained below, but the hunt was up. It came up again near the bloody mist which still pumped from it, a fresh patch of sea changed colour, and all around washed waves which were like a sunset, till suddenly the Finwhale turned over, rolled on its side in the bloodfilled sea, and was dead.

There were so and so many tons of oil, so and so many tons of blubber, besides free winter supplies of meat for a whole colony of Greenlanders and the end of the most awe−inspiring life one had ever seen.

Thomas' brother had been standing on the whale's belly, pumping air into its stomach through an iron tube so that it would float more easily. When he came back to the ship, and we were towing in, we stood together at the railing. He was still not so familiar with me as I with him. Nevertheless he rubbed his nose to one side and said confidentially: "They're so decent. And just think that if they had as much bad temper in their bodies as a human being, they could smash us to smithereens."

THE BIRDS

BY MARTIN A. HANSEN Translated by R. P. Keigwin

Espen, the boy, came home and said he had given up his job and secured a new one.

"Wagtails have got to wag," said his father. "It's not so long since it last happened and once before, as well. Who's to have the honour this time?"

"The parson at Kyndelby," answered Espen.

"The balmy priest, as they call him," said the father. "It's nice to have a sensible son who will look after the sheep that go astray. What'll your wages be?"

The boy was to have half what he got in his last place.

"Better and better," said the father. "I daresay you promised to pay his debts as well?"

"You're quite entitled to call it all off, if you like," said the boy.

"I can't do that, can I, when I've been so lucky as to have such a clever son," replied the father. "Besides, you're seventeen, and that's a good age."

"You forget, Father, that I'm nearly eighteen," said Espen.

"No, I don't in the least if I may venture to correct you," answered the father. "If you're nearly eighteen, it's obvious that you are seventeen. But now you'd better find a cloth to mop the floor with, for I'm afraid your mother will shed tears over this one."

"Have you gone and forgotten all those good sermons?" She had heard what the boy had said, and was crying.

"They sent me to sleep," was his reply.

"How can you talk like that to your mother?" she moaned.

"There's got to be an end," said the boy. "I prefer the parson at Kyndelby."

"His sermons are dreadful," said the mother.

"Yes, they are bad," admitted Espen.

"Why have you heard him, child?" she shrieked.

"Three and a half times," he said. "The half time was when I fell asleep in the middle. That was the first time; it was force of habit."

"It's almost worse than if you had become a pimp or a Catholic poor child!" she said. "But if you really mean to do it whatever happens, then do you think you can get us some good apples that will keep from the parsonage garden? They're said to be extra fine there."

The boy promised to, and when November came he went over to Kyndelby.

"Why do you give a little cough every time I see you?" asked the parson, when Espen had been there for a fortnight.

"All that's left over at the back ought to have been carted out long ago," answered the boy. He meant the stable manure.

"Ought it really?" said the parson. "How annoying! Why didn't you mention it, Mads?"

"Well, it had to heap up a bit first," exclaimed Mads. He was an old fellow who went about there on the farm. The parson worked the land himself, and he didn't do it well.

"What a pity!" said the parson. "But is it quite out of the question now?"

"No, it'll be all right, as long as Mads doesn't get in my way," said the boy.

"I resign," cried the old loafer.

"I suppose we're wrong," said the parson. "Mads has nothing else to live on. I have often felt, Mads, that you were a tremendous waster of time; but I couldn't bring myself to sack you."

"One must be thankful for small mercies," exclaimed Mads. "One has to wag one's tail and to play the flatterer and the beggar."

"What's that you say, you old villain?" shouted the parson. "Do you insult the man and the home that gives up everything for you, you rascal? Do you speak of beggars? Do you dare to imply that it was beggars who stole my eggs and cheese and sold them in the town? Perhaps it was a beggar who emptied the tobacco canister, you thieving ruffian?"

"I don't care a brass farthing what you say about me," answered Mads. "Good God! I haven't been paid a penny for nine months."

"One gets nothing but worry and blame," cried the parson, "worry and blame..."

"But the fact is," he continued to the boy, "I've really done old Mads a bitter injustice. He's loyal, he's extremely good. He's the handiest, most patient of men, and he really has a lot of wages owing. Did I accuse you of stealing, dear Mads? I'm sorry if I did, Mads, very sorry. I will put up your wages. Yes, couldn't we let Mads have wages without his having to do any work?"

"Why, yes," said the boy; "they would be well−earned." So the boy carted out the manure, spread it, and was a great stand−by in the fields. The parson came out with the horses to plough.

"I love ploughing," he said. As a matter of fact, he didn't know how to. The furrows were so crooked that the birds who came swarming after worms became dizzy. As the parson went past Espen, he heard him saying as he spread the muck: "This unmentionable stuff is too bad for anything Amen. It's all of it bad farming Amen."

"What's that you keep on saying?" asked the parson.

"I was preaching a sermon," replied the boy.

"It was a funny kind of sermon."

"That's something you understand, sir," said the boy; "and so may I say that that's a funny way to plough?"

"Well, I'm sorry," said the parson. "But perhaps you'll give me a lesson?"

The boy drove the plough for a while and straightened the furrows; and, although it was so misty that they might have been alone on a desert island, every furrow was now so straight that you could have fired a rifle−shot right along it.

"That looks splendid," said the tall parson, who had to quicken his step to keep up with them. "But now you must explain what you do."

"It's not a question of explaining," said Espen; "you must have it in you. But the horses have got to learn to step out and keep the whipple−tree straight. Then they hold up their heads and are proud of their job. Otherwise they'll get sullen and crotchety like Mads."

"I should like to know what I could teach you," said the parson.

"As you turn the plough, the traces should be taut," the boy went on, "then you can set the plough in the furrow with two fingers. Look here it gets up from the ground, and settles down again, as lightly as a gull."

"That must be delightful," said the parson. "What I can't make out is, why you want to work for me when you're so clever."

"Well, you see, once in a lifetime you've got to do something silly," was the boy's reply.

"No doubt," said the parson, "but it surely needn't be as silly as this. Aren't there any other reasons?"

"There are such a lot that have cleared out from here that it encouraged me to have a try."

"You'll be a weight on my conscience," said the parson, "for, you see, I may even not be able to pay you your wages. Whatever can I do for you? Would you like to learn Latin?"

"Yes, sir, I would."

"But surely there must be some other reason."

"Ye−es, maybe," said Espen slowly. "The fact is, sir, I don't find that your sermons are up to much."

"That's another thing you're good at. And so you think that my sermons are poor," said the parson sadly. "You're absolutely right. God help me, it's true enough."

"So many good sermons have sent me to sleep," said the boy, "that I'll gladly change them for some bad ones."

"I'm no Demosthenes or Abelard, dear me, no," said the parson, "and I realise that my superiors are very dissatisfied with me. You're right. I feel my inferiority when I go before the altar or into the pulpit... But whatever was that?"

"It was a toad," said Espen. They saw the squat little creature twitch its arms and legs in the furrow before the plough turned the earth up over it. The parson began to burrow in the soil with his hands.

"We must rescue you, little brother," he said. When he could not find the toad, he went home and fetched tools. At last, just as darkness was falling over the ploughland, there he was with the toad in his hand. It was alive all right, its heart beating away with continual little throbs from its chest...

"Now tell me frankly," said the parson, when they sat down at evening to do Latin in his study, "is it by any chance because of my daughter you have come to me?"

"I should think that would have been a good reason for staying away," answered the boy.

"Good," said the parson; "but, all the same, we will begin by declining the word amor, because that's the most important word of all."

Progress with Latin was extremely slow; the parson had so many other things to think about. The boy had plenty of aptitude; he had a good head for figures, and he was beginning to keep accounts for the farming. The outlook was black; but the boy wore himself to the bone to make it brighter.

It happened that the parson wanted to read some Homer to them, as they sat there one evening. "I love Homer," he said. "Since the Gospel was written, there have been no creators in the art of poetry. I suppose they have not been wanted. But Homer was a creator. Couldn't you imagine yourself being a Homer?"

"Ye−es, I could," said the boy. But he sometimes fell asleep over his books, like Homer himself.

"Never mind, I'll open your eyes for you," said the parson.

One night, later in the winter, he woke Espen and told him to get up and put on his warmest clothes. Outside there was fearful weather, and it was blowing hard. The parson also woke up the tramps, who were sleeping in the parlour. There were three of them. There was always somebody who came there for a meal and a bed. "Now you shall all see God write a poem," the parson shouted in to them. "You'll find some coats in the hall." His wife and daughter emerged in thick overmantles. The parson bowed to his wife, who was a fine−looking woman, and then he offered her his arm. "You can take Helen," he cried to the boy. After the parson and his wife went the three drowsy tramps, and then came Espen and the daughter. She held on to him tightly, and he was a bit doubtful about that. They made for the coast, dead against the wind. They had to lean right forward in order not to be blown off their feet. Helen squeezed the boy's arm she was a year older than he was and full of life and it wasn't long before she put her hand in his pocket. "Oh, how lovely and warm it is!" she said. "But what is it you have there?"

"I expect it's only some snail−shells. They aren't worth anything."

"But there's something else bigger. What is it?"

"Oh, I expect it's a stone with a curious hole in it."

"Well, but there's something jagged what's that?"

"Oh, that's nothing; it's a lobster−claw."

"You'll be my knight, won't you?" she said.

"If I'm equal to it," answered the boy.

"You're fair and strong and good−looking, you have clean nails," she said; "you can perfectly well be my knight. But then you ought to play the harp before me, or the flute. And you must wear my colour on your armour."

"What colour is it?"

"Red," she answered, delighted.

"Red like rust," said the boy.

"No, like blood," said the girl; "and then you must come riding to me with beautiful, costly presents."

"I've nothing but snail−shells and the lobster−claw," said Espen.

"Oh, if only we were betrothed," she said right up into his ear, so close that it tickled. It was blowing so hard that you had almost to shriek what is generally whispered.

"Yes, I dare say," said the boy.

"You may stand and sing at night under my window, if you like."

"Thanks very much."

"You may knock on the window, if you like."

"Thanks," he said.

"Oh, it's hard work walking ahead," she continued. "Put your strong arm round my waist, darling. Yes, like that. No, hold me tighter than that, my own husband."

So the boy had to hold her tighter than that, and he couldn't help noticing that the place was well suited for the purpose. There she was slim, but plumper both above and below.

As they approached the sea, whole clouds of foam came flying towards them. The parson led his little party up to the cliff, and there they had to remain. The whole of the foreshore was foaming surf. A portion of the cliff in front of them slid away, and one of the tramps just managed to save the parson's wife in time. A large tree sank slowly and toppled into the sea without their hearing the splash. A vast quantity of stones came running up the beach every time the sea drew breath. It was as black as if both water and clouds came floating straight out of the

kingdom of the dead, forcing along with them white flocks of sheep.

The parson stood like a tall, extinguished lighthouse at the edge of the cliff. He stretched up his long arm as though he would tear tatters from the sky. His hat was dashed from his head and flew away like a large bird into the darkness. But nobody could hear what it was he was shouting and explaining.

The eldest of the vagrants also wanted to speak. The blanket he had wrapped himself in bulged about him and made him enormously fat. He and the parson bawled at each other several times without the parson understanding him.

"I was only saying how it blows!" bellowed the vagrant with all his might. But when they saw a lantern swaying far out at sea, the parson wanted to go home and telephone to the coastguard. Helen slipped back into the boy's arm; they came last in the procession. As long as he held tight, she said nothing.

"Oh, it's been a wonderful trip," whispered the young girl into his ear, as they reached the shelter of the trees. And the boy discovered that he was kissing her.

"Go on, my knight," she said. The boy obeyed, and he couldn't understand how she could endure it. His snail−shells couldn't as he saw afterwards.

"Oh," said Helen, "I am a sea with lovely great waves in it. Only mind you don't let Mother catch you at it."

The parson insisted on their coming into the church. They must say prayers for those at sea. He lighted the candles and said: "Has any of you ever been a sailor?"

"Yes, I have," said one of the tramps.

"And so have I," said another.

"Then you are the ones to speak to God," said the parson.

"I will beseech the Almighty to keep them broadside to the waves," said the first.

"And to keep them in good spirits," added the other.

"Amen," said the parson.

After that nocturnal excursion the parson's good lady went into a decline; more and more she sickened, and towards spring she died.

"I am to blame for my wife's death," the parson told everyone he met. "Oh, don't take it like that," they replied, in order to say something.

"Ah, yes, my boy," he said to Espen, as she lay at her last gasp, "I knew she wasn't strong, and yet I took her out with us to see Homer's Superior reciting hexameters. She's the finest soul ever bestowed upon earth, and yet that's how I've always been hot−headed and inconsiderate. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do," said the boy.

"It's good to hear you say it," said the parson, wiping his nest "But now go in to my wife. She's been asking for you."

"Take care of him," she said to the boy, who hardly dared to breathe inside the sickroom for fear of blowing out her life's candle, so frail did she appear. "Take care of him. He has a bird in his breast; take good care of that."

The boy drove home to his father and mother.

"Well," said the father, "your clothes haven't stopped shrinking. You ought to buy yourself a new suit that's big enough. You get good wages, don't you?"

"I haven't got any yet."

"What does that matter, as long as the money's safe," said the father. "Otherwise, I was thinking that, next time you turn tail, you might come home and dig us a new well. But you're not leaving yet, then?"

"No," said the boy. "I've come to ask if you'll lend me a hundred crowns or so."

"All right, I will," was the answer. "I've not got them, for things aren't too promising here, but I'll go out and borrow them for you at once. It's good for a son to know that his father enjoys people's confidence, in the same way as it's good when a father can say of his children: 'Look you, even if one or two splinters from that drone go to the bad, yet I know there is sound wood in him.'"

"I've got a stone here with a curious hole in it," said the boy. "I'll put it on the chest of drawers. It'll do as a pledge for the money, and when you look at it you'll know I'm coming home to dig the well as soon as I can. But you haven't asked me what I'm going to do with the money." His father said nothing. He combed the few hairs he had left and put on a dark coat to go out and borrow money.

"I should very much like to know, Espen," said his mother.

"I want the parson's wife to have a nice funeral," said the boy.

"Poor lady," said the mother. "She was the daughter of a bishop just fancy. But you have my blessing, too."

The boy had paid for the coffin, and he helped to carry it. He could hardly feel that he was carrying anything, so light had she become. So strong had the boy become.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, from dust shalt thou rise again," said the parson. Around him stood numbers of the poor and the vagrant. There was a large gathering.

The seams in the home gave way, now the wife was gone. The parson was deeply in debt; he gave a lot away, was cheated by others, and took no care of the rest. And he began to be eccentric. He refused to see anyone at the parsonage, he locked himself inside his study, and there he sat trying to draw a picture of his wife's face. If they had previously had pictures of her, these had now disappeared in the general confusion. The parson couldn't really draw her, but he went on trying. He kept tearing papers in half and throwing it out of the window and then he made a fresh attempt. When a long time had been spent in this way, the boy knocked at the door.

"Don't come and disturb me!" shouted the parson.

The boy went round to the window.

"What do you want?" called out the parson.

"There's a lot to be done," answered Espen.

"How dare you keep on at me, you young scamp?" shouted the parson. "You're a rude, importunate fellow. I should like to hear how much you know of the Creed. And how did it go with the Latin? Not to mention Homer, whom you fell asleep over. Go and do your work. After all, you get good wages."

"Do I?" said the boy. "It's nice to know that."

"And you're impudent as well," bawled the parson.

"I'm glad to be getting my wages," said Espen; "I should like them now."

"Bless my soul!" said the parson. "Then take one of the cows in the stable. How many are there left? Are there a couple? Take one of those and be off with you!"

The boy went indoors and packed up his belongings. As he was leaving the parsonage with his bundle, he met Helen. She had a wreath of dandelions round her neck.

"Tell me, my gallant, what you've got there in that package?" she cried.

"That? That's my armour."

"Are you going on a crusade?" she asked. "Oh, do come back quickly and set me free. I shall soon be out of mourning now, and I thought the day after to−morrow we really ought to get married. So now you must give me a love−token."

"Here's the lobster−claw," answered Espen. Shortly after, he was overtaken by the parson, who was carrying a weeding−fork. "Please, will you show me how to weed?" asked the parson. Espen took his things back into the house and then showed the parson how to weed.

"Now I can see my wife's face in the flowers," said the parson, when he had been weeding some time. He no longer shut himself up in his room. But it was the boy who did most of the work. He toiled enough for three on the land, and sang as well. "Attention take aim!" he said, and with that he let loose at thistles and quitch in the neglected fields. When the weather was fine, Helen came out to the boy. She was not very helpful. "I'm really a poppy," she said. "I have to mind and not lose my petals, though you become twice as strong when you have a poppy to look at."

She didn't wear very much, and she got quite brown. When the boy was harvesting hay in the marsh, where nobody could see them, she went crazy. "Now I know for certain," she said, "that my time of mourning is over. Oh, how I'll be sea again. Kiss me, Prince Paris." Then she went on: "Ah, what games we can have: you'll be like a thousand handsome knights, and I'll clip you in the middle, for I'm the scissors."

The boy left the hay standing rather too long, and they played at Adam and Eve the whole time.

"Your father will certainly have to know," said Espen.

"Do whatever you please, my idol!" she replied.

Espen shirked it for a few days; then he approached the parson. "I'm afraid I've been and broken one of the Commandments."

"Have you, my friend?" said the parson. "Only one of the Commandments? Which one?"

"I think it must be the fifth," said the boy.

"Espen, Espen why, Espen!" said the parson and laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Then you must have been very desperate and unhappy. And you acted no doubt in a fit of anger? Anger, anger that's in itself so terrible. Almighty God! It's not often that Peter can safely cut off Malthus's ear. My boy, my boy, even if you've done this terrible thing, which I have only been on the point of doing, yet I'll confess to you that I am no better than you. But tell me about it."

"Well, but I'm afraid I made a mistake," said Espen, retreating a little in order to avoid the parson's fatherly grasp of his shoulders, which he failed to do, for the parson followed after him. "Perhaps I ought to have said the seventh Commandment."

"You have not murdered but stolen," exclaimed the parson. "What's that you're saying, boy? Do you come here with a confession of common theft? And whatever's up with you, man? You make a mistake in the Commandments go rooting round with your snout in God's Commandments like a lazy pig. Here to my very face. You young fool! If I'd suspected it, I'd have lost no time in knocking the Commandments word for word into that thick chuckle−pate of yours."

"I'm not sure that would have been enough," said the boy.

"Possibly not, possibly not," said the parson. "Desperate remedies required, I can see. What have you stolen?"

"I can't very well tell you that," answered Espen. "You can't? Now, look at that!" cried the priest, striding testily up and down the room. "Then what in heaven's name makes you come to me?"

"I didn't want others to come and tell you before I did."

The parson stood at the window and collected his thoughts. "Stealing?" he said. "I would never have thought it of you and I can't believe it now. You've made another blunder. You meant of course the Commandment in between the sixth."

"Yes, that was it," said the boy.

"How I must have aged," said the parson, sitting down in his chair, "not to have thought of that first of all! But tell me, Espen, do you imagine you can leave off sinning by just telling me?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"I, too, am afraid not," said the parson; "No, I'm afraid not."

"It isn't so easy," said Espen.

"I know it isn't easy, my boy," said the parson. "But I didn't think you had yet gone so far. I must praise you for having behaved so nicely and correctly towards my daughter Helen."

"Yes, part of the time," returned the boy.

"Goodness me!" said the parson. "At your age, too. But then we must see that you two get married. For you want to, don't you?"

"Yes, we do," said the boy.

"I'm glad of that," said the parson, "very glad. It's a great relief to my mind. I've been so anxious about Helen since her mother left us. But I'll thank God, I will, for the son−in−law I'm getting. Now we must have a glass of wine."

The parson shouted to the maid to call Helen in, and he fetched some dusty glasses. From the bottom of a cupboard he produced a wine bottle.

"It's empty," he said. The next one was also empty. "They're all empty," he said, "but we must have a glass."

The maid came and said she couldn't find Helen, but someone had seen her going off for a walk in the wood with the grocer's son, who was home on a holiday.

"Very well, Anna," said the parson, "but now come and help me search everywhere for some good wine."

The boy went out. He, too, went for a walk in the wood, which was not large, but only a leafy grove with some old trees, with copse and hiding−places that he knew so well. But he didn't pry into the hiding− places, although he went right round the grove. The boy had by now grown into a fine thumping young fellow; he had put on weight, and he went and trod on all the dry twigs so that they creaked and crackled under him. Then he went home again.

Helen did not come back till evening. She was looking wonderfully well. The parson called them both in to him. He had not been able to find any wine. In its place he poured out raspberry juice into the glasses. Raising his glass, he looked at the beaming Helen and the sulky boy.

"Children," he said, "I am very happy."

"So am I," said Helen, "but why are we to drink wine now?"

"Already I can see in front of me," said the parson, "how I shall sit with my little grandchildren on my knees."

"Yes, you shall have them, lovely children," said Helen, "and they shall have a wonderfully handsome father."

"Well, well," said the parson, "Espen's not bad−looking, but wonderfully handsome?"

"Well, you see, dear, it isn't Espen," said the daughter. "What makes you think it is? Espen is charming you really are, Espen. But you're nothing but a peasant, and a peasant you'll remain. That's really a perfectly good nose you have and manly eyes and a firm mouth; but all the same it's a peasant's nose and a peasant's mouth, you must admit that yourself. There are men, let me tell you, who are much more distinguished−looking."

The parson emptied his wine−glass. "Good−night, children," he said, and then off he went.

"I don't mind you kissing me," said Helen, "but you really mustn't expect me to marry you. Can't you see that?"

"Skaal," said Espen, and drank his raspberry juice.

"You made me feel very embarrassed," said Helen. "We heard plainly the way you went creeping round the wood. But you were so clumsy that you kept on treading the whole time on dead branches. The student turned quite pale with anger. You must bear that in mind another time."

The boy watched over every straw, every seed, and toiled from dawn to dusk. What the creditors did not take, the parson gave away. And he began to add to his debts with wine−bottles, which arrived full but very soon became

empty. Perhaps he thought that in wine he might find a real remedy for the enthusiasms of his daughter. He talked, he threatened, he implored. But Helen had a passion for good−looking knights and made them happy. Finally she flew off. She flew with an admirer over land and sea to the capital. She sent home brief postcards in bright colours; she had marvellous adventures. And the parson preached several particularly bad sermons, saying that he was a bad, unhappy father and priest and a caricature of God. "Be not as I am, my brethren," he cried. Many people agreed with him entirely; and, as the worst reports got about of his daughter's life in town and he himself was not up to much, neither did he keep properly to the liturgy but disgusted the truly pious, he was at long last thrust out of office. And as the fellow was terribly in debt, impossible for Espen to keep above water even if he wore himself to the bone, they had to distrain for the debt by holding an auction over his personal chattels.

But then Helen came suddenly flying home to her father, whose large nose had acquired a remarkable tinge of blue. She had heard he was to be turned out of doors, but now of course she must help him.

A couple of years had now gone by, and Helen, radiant and beautiful, came driving up in a car that was as lovely as a ladybird and was her own. She had got it from a delightful man who gave her the most costly presents yes, anything for the asking. Her husband? Oh, bless you, no. Whoever could imagine that Helen would be so narrow and self− seeking as to get married? Why, suppose she were to meet an impoverished, large−hearted flute−player whom she wanted to make happy for the rest of his life. What then? She would have to be divorced; that would be so cumbrous and commonplace. But now she must find means for her father. How much did he need?

"My poor child," said the parson, "I can't do that."

"Yes, but why do you say 'poor'?" asked Helen. "I know well enough that there aren't so many perfect gentle knights as I thought. But I can assure you there are delightful people existing, who will gladly make me happy and whom I can make happy. Now you shall be happy, too."

"My poor little girl," said the parson, "I must not hide my poverty behind the shame of your riches. Would to God that in the shame of poverty you had come here to hide behind my rags."

"Shame, dear Father?" she said, "but, dearest, I am so gloriously happy to make others happy. It's so wonderful to be a pretty woman that I may positively become jealous of myself, I don't mind admitting. Oh, to be a sort of billowy ocean! To be a kind of postcard in pretty colours and to travel with the mail and make a sorrowing man happy! I'm a bird on the wing is there any shame in that?"

"My dear, sweet child," said the parson, "no doubt you have this flying craze from me. And here you can see how one's feathers moult and one is left sitting on one's rump. My vessel is so cracked that no power from God can any more be poured into it, to tell you truly what I ought to tell you. But are you really happy?"

"I could fly up and kiss the sun," she replied.

"If ever you're not happy," said the parson, "or have burnt your fingers, come to me."

"But, father darling," said Helen, "your clothes are too frightful! You really must let me help you."

"Oh, well, you might perhaps buy me a bottle of wine. Wine is so good for my health."

She gave him a happy kiss, and then she asked: "Who's that singing?" "It must be Espen," he answered. "He has been paid his wages; that's probably why."

"Dearest, I thought he had gone to America years ago."

"He's soon going," said the parson. "At last he's got his wages. I'm so proud to have been able to pay him wages. Not all of them, mind you no, very little, in fact. Didn't you notice that all my books are gone? Yes, I sold them, before you came, and made an inventory of all my things, and Espen knew nothing about it either. And I managed to take such good care of the money that I was able to give him more than half. But Homer I couldn't part with. I carry it about secretly the Iliad in my right−hand pocket, the Odyssey in my left, nearest to the heart, you see. And of course my Testament in an inner pocket."

Helen drove in her crimson ladybird to the grocer's and came back with a whole dozen bottles for the parson. Then she went across to Espen's room. He was sitting tying a lump of lead to the end of a string.

"Good heavens, what a man you've grown into!" she said. "But what's that to be?"

"A plumb−line," answered the boy. "The kind that's used for digging a well. How's the lobster−claw?"

"What lobster−claw?" she asked. "But what a man you've become! Such a fine profile, and such arms! And then your moustache though you are beautifully clean−shaven. I quite enjoy having a good look at you."

"How many knights have now played their harps for you?"

"Ever so many," she replied. "But I could love thousands and thousands of handsome men."

"Here's a good spade for digging wells," he went on. "I forged it myself and shaped the ash handle. It's a mighty fine one good enough for a peasant, anyway."

"So, then, you're going abroad," said Helen. "Well, then, I shall look after Father. He shall have a good time with me yes, I shall spoil him."

"I don't think you will," said Espen; "he's already gone to the dogs, but he's too good for that though. I must teach you to remember that another time."

With that the boy took Helen and laid her across his knees.

"Espen," she cried, struggling to get free, "I'm a poppy, you know that. I can put up with anything, when I'm happy. But you'll shake off my petals, if you hurt me."

"I have worn your colour on my armour," said the boy, and then he spanked her.

She crept up on to his bed and sat down there. "Helen," he said, "you're not to sit there gazing at me."

"Do you remember?" she asked.

"Helen, you're not to sit there looking pretty." But she did, and the boy failed to finish off the plumb−line. And now he was the only one for Helen. She wanted to stay on. But the boy took his departure.

"You've not got any fatter," said Espen's father, as the boy stood in his house. "The clothes will get round you better now; that's a good thing, anyway."

"Here's the money you lent me," said the boy, "and thank you for the loan." "That's all right," answered his father. "Now I'll put on a shirt−front and go and pay it back straight away. But you've given me too much."

"It takes in the interest, and interest on the interest, up to and including today," said the boy.

"Have you turned tail again?" asked the father.

"We can take measurements for the well," said Espen. "I have one more errand I must do. But the stone with the hole is still on the chest of drawers, you know. Where's Mother?"

"She's lying down," answered the father. "She's been running about like a roe−deer, but now we're dragging our hoofs a bit. Go in to her, while I run up and prevent any more interest running up."

The parson was all alone, when he took leave of the empty house. He also went round the garden, where he picked a rose from a bush that his wife had planted. He stuck it in his button−hole, clapped his hand to his Odyssey and departed.

"Oh, here you are?" he said. It was the boy; he was sitting on one of the stones outside the gate. The parson sat down with a sigh on the other stone. He was already leg−weary merely from walking across the yard.

"I thought you had played the fool long enough," said the parson.

"One has to be thorough," said the boy.

"This child HAS been," declared the parson, sniffing at the rose.

"I want to ask one thing," said Espen. "I want to know whether I may call you by your Christian name now."

"My dear boy," said the parson. "You've made me very happy. I feel as if I had been decorated."

"Where did you think of going to?" asked the boy.

"No idea," answered the parson. "But I suppose there's a place for beggars."

"I was to give their compliments and say that you are welcome to come to my parents' home," said the boy, "and to live there."

"Thank you," said the parson.

They sat and rested for a while on the stones at the gate.

"What I wanted to say to you," Espen began presently, "was that your good lady told me something just before she died. There was a person, she said, who had a bird in his breast, and one had to be careful of that. What do you think she meant?"

"Adele," said the parson, "she believed in me too much. I don't know exactly what she meant by that. She often said things like that. But she was the one all along. Things have been going badly downhill ever since, haven't they?"

"Yes, they have," said the boy.

"What were you driving at?" asked the parson.

"Trees often bear their sweetest fruit just before they fall," said Espen.

"Really!" exclaimed the parson. "You mean I ought to preach some more miserable sermons. Really! Are you quite right in the head, young fool? Oughtn't I to have some peace by this time? I feel as if my knees can hardly hold up my moth−eaten carcass. I thought you said I was welcome in your home. Yes, and I was so touched at the idea that I went half−dizzy on this stone. But, my dear sir, I don't trust you any longer. I cannot accept the invitation. No, I go to the land of Nod, that no one knows."

"I know how to work," said the boy, "plough, forge, dig a well, work out interest, go errands, find food for a bird that can't do it himself. But I can't tell people something they don't know, but which it would do them good to know."

"Do you mean to say I could do that, failure that I am!" said the parson. "But, in that case, explain to me how can a bad sermon be good?"

"All right," said Espen. "Suppose you get kicked out one stormy night, and a man bawls out some explanation you can't hear or follow. All the same, you still get to know something which you never knew before."

"Boy!" said the parson and stood up. "I'm one of God's casuals. I'll wear away roads and streets till I drop. I don't exactly know what I mean to do. But God will whisper me that as I go along. Perhaps I shall scream like a crow about the vanity of life, or I shall twitter like a lark about the dawn of resurrection. Perhaps God will say that to that person you shall say nothing at all. I really can't tell how the bad sermons are to be, or whether I am to preach any. But now I'm going."

"I'll go with you," said the boy, "or it'll be no go at all."

"Such lovely old trees," said the parson, as they walked along the avenue of limes. "One feels like shaking hands with every leaf and having a nice long chat with the old dames. One should peruse them well; they are full of hieroglyphs and histories scored from top to bottom on their stems. And look at the clouds they really ARE clouds− −and you can see them framed among the trees. And the grass over there there's only one thing in the world it can pass for, and that is genuine green grass. And that oats, we've seen it so often, we know it inside and out; but it gives us new hearts, it's like seeing a face once more that one can never grow tired of. And there's a picture of Adele," he said, pointing to a small white−starred flower in the ditch.

"And there's another picture," said the boy, who caught sight of a poppy.

The flat stone with the curious hole in it was still lying on the chest of drawers, on the white table−centre which was changed for festive occasions. But there was dusting once or twice a week according as they were busy in the garden and field, and the stone was then rubbed with a damp cloth. There it lay for a while with bright colours showing in places red, blue, and a touch now and then of yellow and of silver. When it dried, it became grey once more. But this process of colouring was the stone's brief Sunday.

The stone had several hundred Sundays. Later it was allowed to stay grey. No more did the wifely hand come with the damp cloth. Occasionally, when the dust lay too thick, a bearded head came and blew the worst of it away.

At a hospital in the big town near by, in a ward with many other patients, the "balmy priest" lay ill. He lay sleeping with mouth half− open and nose sticking up in the air. Above the nose there was not much left of him. There was nothing more to be done. The other patients saw that it would evidently be to−night. They had been able to tell that by the nurses; one's eyes grow very sharp in hospital. Two people came in and sat down quietly by the slumbering parson, a man and a woman, on either side of the bed. They sat there for some time, but at length she touched the parson. His consciousness had difficulty in emerging from sleep. It crawled up the slope of wakefulness, drew near to the summit, the tired eyes opened but then it slid down again. At last he was properly

awake.

"My little girl," he said, "I knew you were here. I heard you singing out in the garden. It was this one." And the old parson started to hum a tune, but it wouldn't go right.

It was Helen. She kissed him.

"My little girl," he said, "then he's really found you at last." The old man pinched his lips in pain. Helen could hardly recognize him, his mouth was so fallen in. He hadn't a tooth in his head, and this defect had no doubt not improved his preaching.

"You look as young and well as ever," he went on. "And are you still happy?"

"Yes, I'm happy," she answered, and kissed him. That was how she looked to the dying man. But Helen was certainly not as young as ever. She was black under the eyes. And rather sallow. Helen was a trifle the worse for wear.

"And I am very happy," said the parson, "now I've got you both here together. At last. God bless you!"

"It's time you took a rest, old man," said the boy.

"That'll do," said the parson. "You mustn't think you can order me about now. You know, my dear, that Espen and I, we two have done a good spell between us. Good and long. Lots of roads and lots of streets. Is there anything coming up? No fields. Birds came flying with berries and seeds, and these may have struck root in a chink between the stones now and then. Yes, the call that was what he made me obey, and I was really more his servant than he mine. I preached terribly long, dull sermons, and he saw to everything and helped everywhere."

"It's time you took a rest, old man," repeated Espen.

"Will you please stop," said the parson. "Now I'm going to read to you. I still can, you know. You shall have a little Homer, to start with."

It didn't come to anything. He went off in the middle of it. On his table lay the Homer and his Testament. They were dirty and dog−eared. The covers were gone as well, but the boy had given them stout new bindings of sole−leather and bearskin. He had hammered out a bird on the binding. It was a tolerable likeness; you could see that it was meant to be the form of a bird.

It was in the act of spreading out its wings and soaring to its lofty nest...

The boy went with Helen to the place where she lived in a narrow street, up a great many worn−out stairs to her room, which did not at all appeal to him; the air was sickly sweet and heavy with the scent of powder.

"Is it all right to sit down?" asked the boy.

"Do what you like," said Helen. She was standing at a glass and colouring her grey lips.

"I've been searching for you," he said.

"How charming of you, Sir Knight," said Helen.

"Wherever we used to go," he continued.

"You're sitting on the bodice I've just ironed," she said.

"I'm sorry," said the boy. Then he simply had to get up; he had no desire to sit on that soft divan that was strewn with cushions.

"You ought to come away with me," he said.

"To your snail−shell?" said Helen, powdering herself. "There was a time, not long ago, when I was ready to. But you shook the petals off me, and since then the poppy hasn't got on so well, Mr. Lobster−claw. Now I don't care a damn."

"Helen," said the boy. "Just turn this way a moment."

Helen looked at herself in the glass. She gave her nose a couple of dabs; now she was a work of art that looked wonderful in the lamp− light.

"Do you think some knight or other will take a fancy to me now?" she asked.

Espen's father was woken up early one morning by a sound he could not understand. When he went and stood in his doorway, he saw there was a big heap of earth in the yard. On the top was the rich red clay, dug up in great lumps that lay glistening at the side. Behind the clay he could see the head and broad shoulders of a fellow he knew. And he went up to him.

"Well, young wagtail," he said, "your spade had got a bit rusty."

"It's clean now," said the boy.

More snow had drifted into the father's hair though there was not really much of it left, and the top of his head shone bright and gay. In among the clay was a big stone that Espen had scooped out. He took it and placed it up on the edge.

"That's a tidy bit of work for a weakling," said the father. "We must have that stone on the chest of drawers."

The sun was just rising. The boy was four spades deep in the well.

ORANGES

BY TOVE DITLEVSEN Translated by Ann and Peter Thornton

Jonassen, the greengrocer, had collected his 25 oranges from the market that morning. He drove home with them behind the huge lorries covered with their 'Fruit Vegetables' signs and gave his old sway− backed nag a vicious cut over the neck in order to get through the crowd. He was convinced that the lorries got a larger share than the horse−drawn carts. With his own eyes he had seen a great, red−haired lout heave a whole crate of oranges into his lorry. Everywhere in the pale wintry sunlight he glimpsed the flash of yellow and orange amongst the carrots, frozen brussels sprouts, and the stringy winter− leeks.

Already yesterday it had been in the papers that 'oranges have been distributed to all the greengrocers in the city'. A fine distribution, he'd say. It was about time the Government intervened. The whole community was corrupt and rotten to the core. Throughout yesterday there had been a continual stream of customers staring at him as though oranges were about to burst from his button−holes. For the sake of appearances they had bought some

cheap vegetables for making soup. "Cut the celery across, Jonassen, so I can see that it's not black inside." And "promise you'll keep a couple of oranges for me when you get them tomorrow, won't you Jonassen?"

Normally they never addressed him by name.

He sent his wife home as soon as he got back from market. He knew she was incapable of sharing out the 25 oranges justly; by that he meant, one to each of those customers who bought all their vegetables from him and didn't drift across the square to rival greengrocers every other day. Give her a chance and she'd bundle all 25 into the lap of the first comer. She couldn't tell a lie to anyone, and she couldn't resist a customer who addressed her kindly. He often claimed that she ruined the business for him. She looked too happy when customers approached the barrow, and far too miserable when they walked by; the customers hated is. The thing was to look as if one didn't give a damn whether one sold anything or not to look as if one were only standing there for pleasure. That was what he did.

He sat on an upturned crate, his nose purple with cold, rags wound round his swollen hands under the mittens, visualizing how it would look, this shop that they never got; a big stove, a white counter, pale green distempered walls perhaps even an errand boy, and outside, over the window, a tall sign, "J. JONASSEN. FRUIT VEGETABLES".

"What can I do for you, madam?"

"I'd like three pounds of potatoes."

"Certainly, madam."

"It must be terrible standing here in this cold, Jonassen."

His usual answer was that he was too busy to feel the cold, but this wouldn't wash with people who lived in the block across the square; they could see from their windows how business was going. "Oh well," he replied, turning his back as he weighed out the potatoes, "I'm still pretty hale and hearty. I'll manage." With a broad grin he handed Mrs. Klingspuhr her bag; what the devil had it got to do with her whether he froze or not. Perhaps she could suggest some other way for him to earn a living? He had once spotted her coming from the greengrocer opposite with a bunch of chervil sticking out of her basket. She had looked quite alarmed when he caught her eye, and ever since had never passed his barrow without buying something, unlike so many others who preferred to stand in a warm shop in the wintertime.

But she didn't get her orange.

He just couldn't stand her. Her pale face nestled in the deep fur collar of her coat like a flower in a buttonhole. Every afternoon he saw her sitting in her bay−window drinking coffee with her friends. Plenty of leisure for a married woman with no children. His wife was always chatting with her. His wife had a way of rubbing her frozen hands together and looking pathetic when she talked to customers, even in the summer, but then perhaps it was because of the heat. He swung his arms to get warm as he watched Mrs. Klingspuhr walk away. What would she have said if she had known he had 25 oranges lying in a row behind the cashbox? By the time the others told her he would 'unfortunately' have sold out. "How stupid of him, he had quite forgotten this morning." One still had some pride left; why should she and her friends gorge themselves with his oranges?

It wasn't because Mrs. Klingspuhr was Jewish. He just didn't like her. He had been just as indignant as everyone else when the Germans started routing out the Jews, and before that one had never considered whether so and so was a Jew or not. Of course they were easy enough to spot. They had a certain look about them, there was no denying it, like Eskimos or Chinese. Not that one held it against them but there was a difference, obvious to

anyone who had eyes in his head and knew how to sum people up at a glance; and the whole secret of business was to be able to see right through the customers and know in advance what they were going to say before they even opened their mouths. Take this Mrs. Klingspuhr for instance. She was obviously only spared because she was married to a gentile, now she had a way of always asking what a thing cost before she bought it, even if it was only a bunch of parsley. "It's the small things that give people away," he said to his wife. "Mrs. Klingspuhr is stingy like all Jews." His wife protested feebly which was always his cue to give rein to his undefined bitterness, and just to contradict her he snarled, "They are a foreign element in our midst and if they're not kept in their place they'll threaten our very existence."

Jonassen wasn't sure of the origin of these phrases. It was often like that. One heard so much talk during the course of the day: some of it was bound to leave a mark. Anyway it relieved one to say that sort of thing, the Devil alone knew why. It made one feel one was in the swim, that one wasn't born yesterday. It wasn't one's own fault one never got that shop. Secret forces were gnawing at the roots of the community; something was dragging one down like water running out of a bath, relentlessly, draining one's strength and energy. The Germans were a lot of thieves and cut−throats, but in some cases they knew what they were doing.

During the course of a day something was bound to leave it's mark. One has to discuss so many things and sometimes words crop up which might perhaps originally have had a quite different meaning, perhaps not. No matter, they can be used. They warm one inside. They come from nowhere. They are just in the air and they belong to one. In the long run, they seem to make life slightly more bearable, so one hangs on to them. Slowly they fall into place in the grey mosaic of the mind, adopting the colour of the other pieces and then one day, there one is, on an upturned crate, watching Mrs. Klingspuhr crossing the square and quite prepared, should the occasion arise, to defend those 25 oranges with one's life.

The greengrocer clenched his swollen fists in his pocket in blind, unaccountable fury. There was something about that woman he just couldn't stand. He looked malevolently at her at she walked away and thought of how they treated the Jews in Germany. He'd a good mind to hurl the whole lot in her face, all 25 oranges, blood oranges, and that would be letting her off lightly; what the Devil had it got to do with her whether he was cold or not?

Mrs. Nielsen came up to him with her two children. She only wanted a bunch of carrots. (Now the run on the oranges would probably start.) "Certainly, madam," Jonassen looked down benevolently at the two clean, fair−haired children and in sudden generosity reached behind the cashbox, drew out two oranges and handed them to them.

"These are for you but don't tell anyone!"

"Oh, that is kind of you. For the children? But they have never tasted one in all their lives. Makes one think, doesn't it?"

The greengrocer shook his head sadly as he wrapped up the carrots: "These are bad times. We must do what we can for each other." He caught himself rubbing his hands together in exactly the same way as his wife and angrily stuffed them in his pockets again. He closed Mrs. Nielsen's fingers over the change and whispered confidentially, "Mrs. Klingspuhr didn't get one." Then tearing a paper bag off the hook he took the oranges from the gaping children. He gave her the bag. "You had better distribute them," he said and in spite of Mrs. Nielsen's protests refused to let her pay for them. "They're a present," he said with a warm, genial smile, "I've decided to do a good deed each day, like the Boy Scouts," he laughed and looked at her as if they had just sworn a secret alliance.

"Ugh," said Mrs. Nielsen to her husband, "there is something about that greengrocer I can't stand. Think of it, he gave me two oranges today, actually GAVE them to me and then told me spitefully that he hadn't given Mrs. Klingspuhr any. Yet she buys all her vegetables from him as far as I know, and she's always so kind and friendly."

Her husband yawned behind his paper. "Oh well," he said indifferently, "I suppose he just doesn't like Jews."

"It can't be very nice for her," said Mrs. Nielsen thoughtfully, "sitting here, not knowing when the Germans will come and fetch her funny she doesn't escape to Sweden like all the rest."

"Bah! She'll manage. Jews always do." Nielsen turned over the page of his paper.

Mrs. Nielsen didn't answer. She looked out of the window. There was still some sun on the other side of the street. The Klingspuhr balcony overhead prevented the sun from ever reaching any further than the outer edge of the Nielsen's windowsill. She said, "What a pity we didn't get Schempinsky's flat when he left. Would you believe it, there had been a waiting list for it from the day the Germans came. Isn't it shocking? Actually reckoning with the misfortune of others." This time Nielsen lowered his paper. "What a lot of drivel," he said sharply. "He didn't clear out a day before he had to on that account, and someone has got to live in the flat till he comes back? One must see things as they are."

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Nielsen vaguely, "but still." She looked up at the underside of the huge sun−blocking balcony and remembered that the Klingspuhrs had one room more than they even though they had no children. It really seemed unfair. How lovely it would be to have a separate room for the children. She said hesitantly, "Do you think people have written themselves down for the Klingspuhr's flat?"

"Of course they have but you can always have a try. Call at the estate agents tomorrow. Better late than never." Mrs. Nielsen's kind blue eyes filled with wonder. It didn't seem right. Out of the window she saw Mrs. Klingspuhr on her way home with a full shopping basket. She stopped and joined the queue at the vegetable barrow. When her turn came, Jonassen made a deploring gesture with both hands and said something that made the other customers laugh. As Mrs. Klingspuhr crossed the road she looked up, saw Mrs. Nielsen in the window and nodded smilingly to her. Mrs. Nielsen inclined her head stiffly, hastily drew the curtain and stood rather irresolutely, her back to the window.

Of course in a way her husband was right. It couldn't do Mrs. Klingspuhr any harm if she were to put her name down for the flat. It was surely only a question of time before they started on the rest of the Jews, those German brutes.

The nursery was to be done in pale blue and white, with proper nursery wallpaper, small chairs and a rocking horse and perhaps in the not too distant future, a little pale blue cot.

Mrs. Nielsen smiled at the thought as she went into the kitchen, peeled the two oranges and scrupulously divided the segments into four equal portions.

NOTES on the Danish authors included in this Anthology

(Whenever it has been possible, Danish titles are translated into English, in inverted commas. English titles given IN ITALICS are those of works which have been published in English translation.)

AAKJAER, JEPPE (1866−1930), poet, novelist and short story−writer. He is a Jutlander, descending from a poor peasant family, and much of his personal experience is reflected in his novels and short stories, many of which are filled with social indignation. His main novels are VREDENS BOERN ("The Children of Wrath"), 1904, ARBEJDETS GLAEDE ("The Bliss of Toil"), 1914, and HVOR DER ER GJAERENDE KRAEFTER (1916). VADMELSFOLK ("People in Homespun"), 1900, was the first of a series of collections of short stories, many of them with a pronounced social tendency. His "Memoirs" are also among his most interesting prose works. He is greatest, however, as a lyrical poet, a Danish Robert Burns, whose songs have an unrivalled popularity in

Denmark.

OFF FOR THE DAY (Danish title: DA HYRDEDRENGEN SKULDE I SKOVEN) is included in the collection entitled HVOR BOENDER BOR ("Where Peasants Live"), 1908.

ABELL, KJELD (born 1901), playwright and essayist. He is first and foremost a playwright, and for his significance as such see CONTEMPORARY DANISH PLAYS, in which his play THE QUEEN ON TOUR is included. Apart from his plays he has also written several essays and articles for newspapers and periodicals, a book on the theatre, entitled TEATERSTREJF I PAASKEVEJR ("Theatre Sketches in Easter Weather"), 1948, a book about a voyage to the Far East, FODNOTER I STOEVET ("Footnotes in the Dust"), 1951, and DE TRE FRA MINIKOI (1957), a book about a visit to China.

ANTS AND CONTRARINESS (Danish title: MYRER OG MODSIGELSESLYST) was first printed in 1942 in the Swedish "Bonniers litterara Magasin".

ANDERSEN, KNUD (born 1890), novelist, short story−writer, and author of travel books. He held a post in the United Shipping Co., but gave it up and bought his own ship, "The Monsoon", with which he has sailed in many seas. He has written a number of books describing his own voyages, and also several novels and short stories about life at sea. The following of his novels have been translated into English: HAVET (1924; THE BRAND OF SEA, 1929), BRAENDING (1927; SURF, 1931) and VEJRET I VOLD (1937; IN THE GRIP OF THE GALE, 1939). His best short stories and sketches are included in the collection entitled MORILD ("The Sea Sparkles"), 1932.

CAMPANELLA is included in the collection MORILD.

ANDERSEN NEXOE, MARTIN see NEXOE, MARTIN ANDERSEN.

BECKER. KNUTH (born 1891), poet and novelist. He was brought up in a zealously religious home in North Jutland, and was later sent to a reform school in Zealand. His main contribution as a prose writer is a long novel cycle, to some extent autobiographical, about the boy Kai Goetsche. The cycle was begun in 1932 with DET DAGLIGE BROED ("Our Daily Bread"), and continued with the volumes entitled VERDEN VENTER I−II ("The World Is Waiting"), 1934, UROLIGT FORAAR I−III ("Unsettled Spring"), 1938−39, NAAR TOGET KOERER I−II ("When the Train Leaves"), 1944, and MARIANNE (1955). The cycle is still in progress.

THE SHOW is Chapter 20 of DET DAGLIGE BROED.

BLIXEN, KAREN, Baroness Blixen (born 1885), short story−writer and essayist. After her marriage to Baron Blixen−Finecke she lived in Kenya 1914−31, and there she wrote her first book, SEVEN GOTHIC TALES, written in English and first published in America under the NOM DE PLUME of Isak Dinesen in 1934. This was followed by a book of reminiscences from her Kenya home, entitled OUT OF AFRICA (1937), and a new collection of short stories, WINTER'S TALES (1942). The novel entitled THE ANGELIC AVENGERS (1947), by the pseudonym Pierre Andrezel, is also attributed to her. A few recent essays and sketches, FARAH (1950), DAQUERROTYPIER (1951), and En BAALTALE (1953), have only appeared in Danish.

THE DREAMING CHILD (Danish title: DET DROEMMENDE BARN) is included in WINTER'S TALES.

BRANNER, H. C. (born 1903), novelist, short story−writer and playwright. He made his debut in 1936 with the novel LEGETOEJ ("Toys"), presently followed by another novel, BARNET LEGER VED STRANDEN ("The Child Is Playing on the Beach"), 1937. It was only his first collection of short stories, however, which gave him rank among the best psychological short story−writers of contemporary Denmark, its title is Om lidt er vi borte ("In a Little While We Shall Be Gone"), 1939. His second collection of short stories, entitled To Minutters Stilhed

("Two Minutes' Silence"), 1944, and his later novels, Drommen om en Kvinde ("The Dream about a Woman"), 1941, Historien om Borge ("The Story of Borge"), 1942, and Rytteren (1949; The Riding Master, 1951), are all of high artistic merit. Two long stories in the collection entitled Bjergene ("The Mountains"), 1953, and especially his latest novel Ingen kender Natten (1955; No One Knows the Night, 1957), are penetrating psychological analyses of the Occupation period. Vandring langs Floden ("A Stroll along the River"), 1956, is his latest volume of short stories. For his significance as a playwright see Contemporary Danish Plays, in which his play The Judge is included.

The Three Musketeers (Danish title: De tre Musketerer) is included in the collection entitled To Minutters Stilhed.

Bregendahl, Marie (1867−1940), novelist and short story−writer. She was married to Jeppe Aakjaer (q. v.) 1893−1900, and like him, she came from a peasant milieu in Jutland. She wrote a great many novels, the most important of which are, En Dodsnat (1912; A Night of Death, 1931), Billeder af Sodalsfolkenes Liv I−VII ("Pictures from the Lives of the Sodal People"), 1914−1923, and Holger Hauge og hans Hustru ("Holger Hauge and his Wife"), 1934. Her best Jutland stories are contained in the collections entitled I de lyse Naetter ("In the Pale Nights"), 1920, Med aabne Sind ("With an Open Mind"), 1926, and Mollen ("The Mill"), 1936.

The Boundary (Danish title: Skellet) is included in Med aabne Sind.

Buchholtz, Johannes (1882−1940), novelist and short story−writer. He is a brilliant narrator, and several of his novels have appeared in English translation, e.g. Egholms Gud (1915; Egholm and his God, 1921), Clara van Haags Mirakler (1916; The Miracles of Clara van Haag, 1922), De smaa Pile (1923; Secret Arrows, 1934), Susanne (1931; Engl. translation 1933), and Frank Dovers Ansigt (1933; The Saga of Dover, 1938). Some of his other important novels are Frank Dover og den lille Kvinde ("Frank Dover and the Little Woman"), 1934, Dr. Malthes Hus ("Dr. Malthe's House"), 1936, and God lille By ("Good Little Town"), 1937. His best short stories are included in the collections entitled Kvindesind og andet Sind ("Women's Minds and Other Minds"), 1926, Kornmod ("Summer Lightning"), 1930, Godtfolk (1934) and De hvide Spurve ("The White Sparrows"), 1944.

Life's Great Moments (Danish title: Livets store Ojeblikke) is included in De hvide Spurve.

Ditlevsen, Tove (born 1918), poet, novelist and short story−writer. She is a fine and sensitive lyrical poet, who has published, between 1939 and 1949, five collections of poems. Her main novels are Man gjorde et Barn Fortraed ("A Child Was Ill−treated"), 1941, and Barndommens Gade ("My Childhood's Street"), 1943. She has published three collections of short stories, entitled Den fulde Frihed ("Complete Freedom"), 1944, Dommeren ("The Judge"), 1948, and Paraplyen ("The Umbrella"), 1952.

Oranges (Danish title: Appelsiner) is included in Dommeren.

Dons, Aage (born 1903), novelist and short story−writer. He has lived in Lithuania, Germany, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Sweden, and this fact is reflected in several of his novels. He made his debut in 1935 with a novel entitled Koncerten ("The Concert"), soon after followed by one of his best novels, Soldaterbronden (1936; The Soldiers' Well, 1940). His other main novels are De Uonskede ("The Unwanted"), 1938, Her modes alle Veje ("Where All Roads Meet"), 1941, Frosten paa Ruderne ("The Frost on the Window Panes"). 1948, Og alt blev Drom ("And Everything Was Turned into a Dream"), 1949, Den svundne Tid er ej forbi ("The Past Is not Over"), 1950, and Farvel, min Anger ("Goodbye, My Remorse"), 1955. His best novels are contained in Den gule Billedbog ("The Yellow Picture Book"), 1943, and altid at sporge (" Always to Ask"), 1953.

"Journey's End" (Danish title: "Alderstrost") is included in Den gule Billedbog.

Fischer, Leck (1904−1956), novelist, short story−writer and playwright. Many of his numerous novels are concerned with the problems of the Danish middle classes, e.g. Karregade 23 (1930), Abehuset ("The Monkey

House"), 1931, En Dreng fra Gaden ("A Boy from the Street"), 1932, Kontormennesker ("People in an Office"), 1933, Det maa gerne blive Mandag ("Monday May Come"), 1934. These novels are examples of faithful documentary realism. His pre−war novel entitled Hvordan i Morgen? ("What about Tomorrow?"), 1938, is one of his best. A novel cycle about a Danish family was commenced in 1941 and left unfinished by his early death. His best stories are collected in the volume entitled Kongens Ansigt ("The King's Face"), 1943. For his significance as a playwright see Contemporary Danish Plays, in which his play The Mystery Tour is included.

The King's Face is the title−story in Kongens Ansigt.

Freuchen, Peter (1886−1957), novelist and short story−writer. He is a well−known arctic explorer who has taken part in many expedition to Greenland and other arctic districts. He has now settled permanently in America. Most of his literary work which also includes journalism and memoirs is based on his arctic experience. The following of his works have appeared in English translation: Eskimo (1931), The Sea Tyrant (1932), Ivalu, the Eskimo Wife (1936), Arctic Adventure. My Life in the Frozen North (1936), It's All Adventure (1938), White Man (1946), The Law of Larion (1952), Vagrant Viking. My Life and Adventures (1953), and Ice Floes and Flaming Water (1954). His best stories are collected in Eskimofortaellinger ("Eskimo Tales"), 1944.

The Story of the Remarkable Man Who Married a Fox (Danish title: Historien om en maerkelig Mand, som giftede sig med en Raev) is included in Eskimofortaellinger.

Hansen, Martin A. (1909−55), novelist, essayist and short story− writer. He was born in a peasant community in South Zealand, and he was a school teacher in Copenhagen 1931−46. Before the War he wrote two novels, Nu opgiver han ("Now He Is Giving Up"), 1935, and Kolonien ("The Colony"), 1937, but it is mainly due to the books he has written during and after the War that he now holds rank as one of the leading post−war prose writers of Denmark. His main works are the novels entitled Jonathans Rejse ("Jonathan's Journey"), 1941, Lykkelige Kristoffer ("Happy Christopher"), 1945, and Logneren (1950; The Liar, 1954); three collections of short stories, Tornebusken ("The Thorn Bush"), 1946, Agerhonen ("The Partridge"), 1947. and Sankt Hans Aften ("Midsummer Eve"), 1949, and two collections of essays, Tanker i en Skorsten ("Thoughts up a Chimney"), 1948, and Leviathan (1950). A large work containing tales of Scandinavian religious history, Orm og Tyr ("Serpent and Bull"), was published in 1952, Kringen, a book of Norwegian impressions, in 1953, and Konkylien ("The Conch") posthumously, in 1955.

The Birds (Danish title: Fuglene) is included in the collection entitled Agerhonen.

Henningsen, Agnes (born 1868), novelist. Her first important novel, entitled Polens Dotre ("The Daughters of Poland"), was publishedin 1901. Most of her novels are concerned with the erotic experiences of the emancipated woman; the most important among them are De Spedalske ("The Lepers"), 1903, Den elskede Eva ("Beloved Eve"), 1911, Den store Kaerlighed ("Great Love"), 1917, Den Guderne elsker ("Whom the Gods Love"), 1921, Den fuldendte Kvinde ("The Perfect Woman"), 1925, and Kaerlighedens Aarstider ("Love's Seasons"), 1927. Her candid and charming memoirs, commenced in 1941, are still in progress.

Spring is extracted from Chapter I of Kaerlighedens Aarstider.

Herdal, Harald (born 1900), poet, novelist and short story−writer. He is a Copenhagen proletarian by birth, and most of his prose works express social indignation. His main novels are Tirsdag ("Tuesday"), 1932, Man skal jo leve ("We've Got to Live"), 1934, En lidt almindelig Historie ("A Rather Common Story"), 1934, Log (1935), Den forste Verden ("The First World"), 1936. En Egn af Landet ("Somewhere in the Country"), 1939, Tusmorke ("Twilight"), 1943, Barndom ("Childhood"), 1944, and Ukuelige Menneske ("Invincible Man"), 1949. He has published many volumes of poetry, and his poems range from Socialist agitation to personal love lyrics. His best stories are collected in the volume entitled Bisser og andre Fortaellinger ("Tramps and Other Stories"), 1948. He has published two volumes of reminiscences 1945−46.

The Tin Boxes (Danish title: Blikdaaserne) is included in Bisser og andre Fortaellinger.

Hjorto, Knud (1869−1932), novelist, essayist and short story−writer. He was the son of a Zealand farmer and earned his living as a school− master for a number of years. He is a keen and intelligent observer, whose main novels are Stov og Stjerner ("Dust and Stars"), 1903, To Verdener ("Two Worlds"), 1905, Hans Raaskov (1906), Gron Ungdom og graa Sjaele ("Green Youth and Grey Souls"), 1911, Den gule Kronike ("The Yellow Chronicle"), 1923, Hans Heilum's Nat ("Hans Helium's Night"), 1924, and Svundne Somre og gamle Vintre ("Past Summers and Previous Winters"), 1931. He was a keen amateur philologist and has written several essays on language problems. He has written altogether nine volumes of short stories.

The Tailor's Summer (Danish title: Jens Sfraedders Sommer) is included in the collection entitled Kringelveje, first published in 1929.

Jensen, Johannes V. (1873−1950), poet, novelist, essayist and short story−writer. He is a North Jutlander, from the district called Himmerland, the scenery and people of which are the subject of his Himmerlands−historier ("Himmerland Tales"), 1898−1910. His first important novel, entitled Kongens Fald (1901; The Fall of the King, 1933) deals with a theme from Danish history; two other novels, Madame d'Ora (1904) and Hjulet ("The Wheel") take place in America. His main work as a novelist is a cycle of novels, entitled Den lange Rejse I−VI (1908−22; The Long Journey I−III, 1922−24), in which he describes the long journey of humanity, from the baboon stage of man in pre−glacial times to the time of Christopher Columbus. He travelled all over the world, and this fact is reflected in his early travel book Skovene ("The Forests"), 1904, and in his Eksotiske Noveller ("Exotic Short Stories"), 1907. Between 1906 and 1950 he published nine volumes of what he calls Myter ("Myths"), i. e. concentrated essays, or tales, of high poetic quality. In addition, he also published a large number of collections of essays proper, most of them dealing with his Darwinian philosophy. His best poems are collected in Digte ("Poems"), 1948. In 1944 he was awarded the Nobel prize.

Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men (Danish title: Julefred), first printed 1900, is included in Himmerlandshistorier; Fujiyama (Danish tide: Fusijama), first printed in 1907, is one of his Myter.

Jensen, Thit (1876−1957), novelist and short story−writer. She is the sister of Johannes V. Jensen, mentioned above. In many of her controversial novels she discusses topical problems, such as birth control, death penalty, and the position of women in the modern society. DEN EROTISKE HAMSTER ("The Erotic Hamster"), 1919, may be taken as an example of these early novels. During the last two decades she has written a number of imaginative historical novels, such as JOERGEN LYKKE (1931), STYGGE KRUMPEN (1936), VALDEMAR ATTERDAG (1940), DROTTEN ("The King"), 1943, RIGETS ARVING ("The Heir of the Kingdom"), 1946, AF BLOD ER DU KOMMET ("Blood Thou Art"), 1951, ATTER DET SKILTE− −(1953), and DEN SIDSTE VALKYRIE ("The Last Valkyrie"), 1954.

THE KNIGHTS OF RIND WELCOME A KINSMAN (Danish title: DE RINDS KNABER HYLDER BLOD AF DERES BLOD) is Chapter 6 of the novel AF BLOD ER DU KOMMET.

JORGENSEN, JOHANNES (1866−1956), poet, novelist, essayist and short story−writer. He was the leading spirit of the Danish Neo−Romantic Movement of the 1890s, and his early poems reflect a desperate longing for a religious creed, which he found ultimately in Roman Catholicism. Since his conversion in 1896 most of his prose works have been tendentious: his LIGNELSER ("Parables") and stories, his books of travel, his many biographies of saints, and his Autobiography. The following of his works have appeared in English translation: PILGRIMSBOGEN (1903; PILGRIM WALKS IN FRANCISCAN ITALY, 1908), DEN HELLIGE FRANS AF ASSISI (1907; ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, 1912), LOURDES (1910; Engl. translation 1914), DEN HELLIGE KATARINA AF SIENA (1915; SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA, 1938), KLOKKE ROLAND (1915; FALSE WITNESS, 1916), I DET YDERSTE BELGIEN (1916; THE WAR PILGRIM, 1917), MIT LIVS LEGENDE I−VII (1916−28; JOERGENSEN. AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY I−II, 1928−29), and DEN HELLIGE BIRGITTA AF

VADSTENA I−II (1941−43; SAINT BRIDGET OF SWEDEN, 1954). Since 1913 he lived mainly in Italy.

ST. PETER AND MORDECAI (Danish title: SANCT PEDER OG MARDOCHAI) is included in the collection entitled JOACHIMS HJEMKOMST ("Joachim's Homecoming"), 1933.

KIDDE, HARALD (1878−1918), novelist and short story−writer. At Copenhagen he studied theology, and he had his debut in 1900 with a volume of poetic sketches in the style of J. P. Jacobsen. Together with his Swedish−born wife he spent a year in Varmland in Sweden in 1914. His main novels are AAGE OG ELSE I−II ("Aage and Else"), 1902−3, De Blinde ("The Blind"), 1906, Loven ("The Law"), 1909, Helten ("The Hero"), 1912, and Jernet ("Iron"), 1918, which latter novel was intended as Part I of a tetralogy which was left incomplete because of his early death. His best stories are included in the collection entitled Vandringer ("Walks"), 1920.

THE LOST SON (Danish title: Den fortabte Son) is included in Vandringer.

KIRK, HANS (born 1898), novelist. He gave up a career as a Civil Servant, and his first novel, Fiskerne ("The Fishermen"), 1928, was based on first−hand knowledge of a small fishing community in his native Jutland. This novel, which has already become a Danish classic, expresses his Marxist and Freudian views, as do his later novels, Daglejerne ("The Day Labourers"), 1936, and De nye Tider ("The New Times"), 1939; these two novels were meant as the first two parts of a trilogy, but the last part has never been published, for the manuscript was destroyed when he was held a political prisoner during the Occupation. A humorous novel, entitled Borgmesteren gaar af ("The Mayor Resigns") was published in 1941, and in 1948 his serious writing was resumed with the historical novel entitled Slaven ("The Slave"). His novel, Vredens Son ("The Son of Wrath"), 1950, is an interpretation of Jesus as the first Communist, and Skyggespil ("Light and Shade"), 1953, an autobiographical novel.

The Birth of a New Era is extracted from Daglejerne.

KLITGAARD, MOGENS (1906−45), novelist and short story−writer. His early years were those of a vagabond, and he had had a variety of different jobs before, in 1937, he wrote his first novel, entitled Der sidder en mand i en sporvogn ("A Man in a Tram"), a social novel about the Danish middle classes in the 1930s. Two of his best novels are set against an historical background, i.e. De rode Fjer ("The Red Feathers"), 1940, and Ballade paa Nytorv ("Hullabaloo in Nytorv"), 1940. In all his other novels he is concerned with contemporary conditions, e.g. Gud mildner luften for de klippede faar ("God Softens the Air for the Shorn Sheep"), 1938, Elly Petersen (1941) and Den guddommelige hverdag ("Divine Weekdays"), 1942. He spent some years in Sweden during the Occupation and there contracted an illness which took away his life shortly after the Liberation.

THE ENGLISH BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN IN 1807 is extracted from De rode Fjer; THE NINETEEN THIRTIES is extracted from Der sidder en mand i en sporvogn.

KNUDSEN, JAKOB (1858−1917), novelist, short story−writer and poet. He is a Jutlander, strongly influenced by the patriarchal conditions of his home, and by the ideas of the Grundtvigian movement in Denmark. He was originally a clergyman, but after his divorce he had to resign, and for a number of years he made his living as an itinerant lecturer. Most of his novels discuss Christian and moral rather than social or political, questions. His main novels are, Den gamle Praest ("The Old Parson"), 1899, Gjaering ("Fermentation"), 1902, and its sequel Afklaring ("Clarification"), 1902, Fremskridt ("Progress"), 1907, Laerer Urup (1909), To Slaegter ("Two Families"), 1910, Rodfaestet ("Rooted"), 1911, Angst ("Fear"), 1912, and its sequel Mod ("Courage"), 1914. His short stories, many of which are based on his experiences as an itinerant lecturer, are collected in the volumes entitled Jyder I−II ("Jutlanders"), 1915−17. INDOMITABILITY (Danish tide: Sejglivethed) is included in Jyder.

KRISTENSEN, TOM (born 1893), poet, novelist, short story−writer, essayist and critic. He was born in London, and after graduating from Copenhagen University he spent some years in the Far East. As a poet he is the greatest

exponent of Danish post−war Expressionism. He had written three significant novels, Livets Arabesk ("Life's Arabesque"), 1921, En Anden ("Somebody Else"), 1923, and Haervaerk ("Destruction"), 1930. His best poetry is collected in a volume entitled Mellem Scylla og Charybdis ("Between Scylla and Charybdis"), 1943, and his best stories and sketches are to be found in the volumes entitled Vindrosen ("The Compass Card"), 1934, and Hvad er Heta? ("What is Heta?"), 1946. He is a distinguished literary critic whose best essays are collected in the volumes entitled Mellem Krigene ("Between the Wars"), 1946, and Til Dags Data ("Until the Present Day"), 1953. THE DISASTER (Danish title: Ulykken) is included in Vindrosen.

LAUESEN, MARCUS (born 1907), novelist, short story−writer and poet. He had his debut as a lyrical poet in 1928, and his first great success as a prose writer was his prize novel entitled OG NU VENTER VI PAA SKIB (1931; WAITING FOR A SHIP, 1933). His other main novels are, EN MAND GAAR BORT FRA VEJEN ("A Man Goes Off the Road"), 1929, EN MAND OG HANS FJENDE ("A Man and his Enemy"), 1932, DE MEGET SKOENNE DAGE ("Those very Beautiful Days"), 1933, KAETTEREN FRA EISLEBEN ("The Heretic from Eisleben"), 1934, FREDEN ("Peace"), 1935, HAN OG HANS NAESTE ("He and his Neighbour"), 1938, and DEN RIGE VANDRING (1940). His best short stories are contained in the collections entitled GLAEDENS DAG ("The Day of Happiness"), 1933, and NOVELLER OG REJSESKILDRINGER ("Short Stories and Travels"), 1938.

FRANCISCA is included in Glaedens Dag.

MICHAELIS, KARIN (1872−1950), novelist and short story−writer. She was a cosmopolitan who travelled much she was in America 15 times and lived there during the last war. She had her debut in 1898 with the novel entitled HOEJT SPIL ("High Stake"), but it was only her fourth novel, entitled BARNET (1901; THE CHILD: ANDREA, 1904), which first made her a name, also outside Denmark. In addition to this novel, the following of her works have been translated into English: DEN FARLIGE ALDER (1910; THE DANGEROUS AGE, 1911), ELSIE LINDTNER (1912; Engl. translation 1912), BIRKEDOMMEREN (1901; THE GOVERNOR, 1913), METTE TRAP OG HENDES UNGER (1922; VENTURE'S END, 1927), DEN GROENNE OE (1937; THE GREEN ISLAND, 1935), and three of her popular children's books about "Bibi": BIBI, A LITTLE DANISH GIRL (1927), BIBI (1933) and BIBI GOES TRAVELLING (1934). Her main literary work is a cycle of novels, entitled TRAET PAA GODT OG ONDT I−V ("The Tree of Good and Evil"), 1924−30, the two first volumes of which have been published separately under the title VIDUNDERLIGE VERDEN (Engl. transl. LITTLE TROLL, 1946).

THE FIRST PARTY (Danish title: DET FOERSTE SELSKAB) is extracted from VIDUNDERLIGE VERDEN.

MUNK, KAI (1898−1944), playwright, poet and essayist. He was a country parson in West Jutland 1924−44, and since the beginning of the 1930s he was recognized as Denmark's leading contemporary dramatist. For his significance as such see CONTEMPORARY DANISH PLAYS, in which his play HEROD THE KING is included. Among his prose works not written for the stage there are many different kinds, such as travel books, e.g. VEDERSOE−JERUSALEM RETUR ("Return: Vederso−Jerusalem"), 1934; essays, e. g. 10 OXFORD−SNAPSHOTS (1936), LIV OG GLADE SAGE (1936), HIMMEL OG JORD ("Heaven and Earth"), 1938, MED SOL OG MEGEN GLAEDE (1942); sermons, e.g. VED BABYLONS FLODER (1941; BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON, 1945), MED ORDETS SVAERD(1942), TRE PRAEDIKENER (1943; FOUR SERMONS, 1945); memoirs, FORAARET SAA SAGTE KOMMER ("Spring Comes so Gently"), 1942. His collected works have been published in a "Mindeudgave" I−IX (1948−49).

A LITTLE BABY IS CHRISTENED AT IVER'S (Danish title: ET BITTE BARN BLIVER DOEBT HOS IVERS) is included in the collection entitled HIMMEL OG JORD.

NEXOE, MARTIN ANDERSEN (1869−1954), novelist and short story−writer. He was born in the slums of Copenhagen, but most of his childhood and early youth was spent on the island of Bornholm in the Baltic, first as

a shepherd's boy, then as an apprentice to a shoemaker, and eventually as a bricklayer. His two great novels are PELLE EROBREREN I−IV (1906−10; PELLE THE CONQUEROR I−IV, 1913−16) and DITTE MENNESKEBARN I−V (1917−21; DITTE: GIRL ALIVE! (1920), DITTE: DAUGHTER OF MAN (1922) and DITTE: TOWARDS THE STARS (1923)) both of them reckoned among the best proletarian novels of Europe. Among his other novels the following should be mentioned: MIDT I EN JAERNTID I−II (1929; IN GOD'S LAND, 1933) and MORTEN HIN ROEDE I−II ("Morten the Red"), 1945−48, the latter being a sequel to PELLE EROBREREN.

Most of his short stories are included in the collection entitled MULDSKUD I−III ("Molehills"), 1922−26. His travel books from Spain and the Soviet Union deserve also mention, e.g. SOLDAGE (1903; DAYS IN THE SUN, 1929), MOD DAGNINGEN ("Towards Dawn"), 1923, and TO VERDENER ("Two Worlds"), 1934. His memoirs were published in four volumes 1932− 39; the first two volumes, entitled ET LILLE KRAE (1932) and UNDER AABEN HIMMEL (1935), have been published in English in one volume entitled UNDER THE OPEN SKY (1938).

ADRIFT (Danish title: FLYVENDE SOMMER) is included in MULDSKUD II; it was first printed in a collection entitled AF DYBETS LOVSANG ("The Paean of the Depths"), 1908.

NIELSEN, CARL (1865−1931), composer. He is universally recognized as Denmark's greatest composer of this century. His best known works are the Symphonies I−VI (no. 2 is "The Four Temperaments", no. 3 the "Espansiva", no. 4 "The Inextinguishable" and no. 6 the "Sinfonia semplice"), the "Helios Overture", the choral works, "Hymnus amoris" and "The Sleep", the "University Cantata", the operas "Saul and David" and "Masquerade", and the music to Oehlenschlager's romantic play "Aladdin" and to Helge Rode's "The Mother". His many compositions to Danish songs have also gained much popularity. He wrote two books of literary significance, LEVENDE MUSIK (1925; LIVING MUSIC, 1953), and MIN FYNSKE BARNDOM (1927; MY CHILDHOOD, 1953). Nielsen's BREVE ("Letters") were published in 1954.

THE GOOSE−HERD FROM BRAMSTRUP (Danish title: GAASEDRENG PAA BRAMSTRUP) is extracted from his memoirs, MIN FYNSKE BARNDOM.

NIELSEN, JOERGEN (1902−45), novelist and short story−writer. The son of a small−holder in the middle of Jutland he was brought up in a strictly religious atmosphere, and his novels are to a great extent based on his childhood experience. His main novels are, OFFERBAAL ("Sacrificial Bonfire"), 1929, DE HOVMODIGE ("The Haughty"), 1930, EN KVINDE VED BAALET ("A Woman at the Bonfire"), 1933, EN GAARD MIDT I VERDEN ("A Farm in the Middle of the World"), 1936, DYBET ("The Depths"), 1940, and ET HUS SPLIDAGTIGT MED SIG SELV ("A House of Internal Conflicts"), 1945. His short stories have appeared in the following collections: LAVT LAND ("Low Land"), 1929, VI UMYNDIGE ("We Who Are not of Age"), 1934, and FIGURER I ET LANDSKAP ("Characters in a Landscape"), 1944.

A CATASTROPHE (Danish title: EN KATASTROFE) is included in the collection entitled FIGURER I ET LANDSKAP.

PALUDAN, JACOB (born 1896), novelist, essayist and short story−writer. After a stay in Ecuador and America he had his debut in 1922 with a collection of essays entitled DE VESTLIGE VEJE("The Western Roads"). His main novels are SOEGELYS ("Searchlight"), 1923, EN VINTER LANG ("A Long Winter"), 1924, FUGLE OMKRING FYRET (1925; BIRDS AROUND THE LIGHT, 1928), MARKERNE MODNES ("The Fields Ripen"), 1927, and JOERGEN STEIN I−II (1932−33). His many short prose works essays, short stories, articles and satires are mainly to be found in the following collections: FEODOR JANSENS JEREMIADER (1927), KRONIKER OG ARTIKLER ("Essays and Articles"), 1929, SOM OM INTET VAR HAENDT ("As if Nothing Had Happened"), 1938, Mit Kaktusvindue ("My Cactus Window"), 1944, Prosa. Korte Ting fra tyve Aar ("Prose. Short Contributions from Twenty Years"), 1946, Facetter ("Facets"), 1947, Han gik Ture ("He Went for Walks"),

1949, Retur til Barndommen ("Return to Childhood"), 1951, and Fremad til Nutiden ("Onwards to the Present Time"), 1953.

On the Square (Danish title: Her paa Torvet) is included in the collection entitled Facetter.

PETERSEN, NIS (1897−1943), poet, novelist and short story−writer. He began his career as a journalist, but spent several years roaming in various parts of Europe as a tramp. His remarkable poetry, which is now collected in one volume, entitled Samlede Digte ("Collected Poems"), 1949, appeared in various collections between 1926 and 1944. He has written two novels, Sandalmagernes Gade (1931; The Street of the Sandal Makers, 1932), the scene of which is laid in ancient Rome, and Spildt Maelk (1934; Spilt Milk, 1935), the scene of which is laid in Ireland. His short stories are contained in the collections entitled Engle blaeser paa Trompet ("Angels Blow the Trumpet"), 1937, Dagtyve ("Day Thieves"), 1941, and Muleposen ("The Nose Bag"), 1942.

The Bedside Prayer (Danish title: Aftenbonnen) is included in the collection entitled Muleposen.

POVLSEN, HANS (born 1886), novelist. He is a Jutlander who earned his living as a teacher for many years. He had his debut in 1918 with a novel entitled Sand ("Sand"). Since then he has written four more novels, Lykkelige Barn ("Happy Child"), 1923, Julie Pandum (1926), Himlens Fugle har Reder ("The Fowls of the Air Have their Nests"), 1936, and Ro, ro til Fiskeskaer (1943).

You Aren't Big Enough (Danish title: Du er for bitte) is extracted from Himlens Fugle har Reder.

RODE, EDITH (1879−1956), novelist and short story−writer. She was married to Helge Rode, a well−known Danish poet and author. In 1901, at the age of 22, she had her debut with the two novels, Wisse Wickmann and Maja Engell, and she has written several other novels since then, but her main greatness lies in her short stories and subtle sketches and also her reminiscences, the most notable of her books being, AF KUNDSKABENS TRAE ("From the Tree of Knowledge"), 1912, PIGE ("Girl"), 1914, DET BITTERSOEDE AEBLE ("The Bittersweet Apple"), 1926, AFRODITE SMILER ("Aphrodite Smiles"), 1929, LIVETS EKKO ("Life's Echo"), 1944, I TIDENS KLO ("In the Claws of Time"), 1949, and SMAA BOERN OG STORE ("Small Children, and Big Ones"), 1950. Her autobiographical sketches entitled DE TRE SMAA PIGER ("The Three Little Girls"), 1943, and DER VAR ENGANG ("Once upon a time"), 1951, are very charming, too. In 1948 she published a volume of essays entitled LIVSKUNST UDEN FILOSOFI ("The Art of Life without any Philosophy").

ILLUSION is included in the collection entitled I TIDENS KLO; it was first printed in AFRODITE SMILER.

SCHERFIG, HANS (born 1905), novelist and essayist. He was known as a painter for several years before he published his first novel, DEN DOEDE MAN ("The Dead Man"), 1937. With this novel he at once gained a name as one of Denmark's greatest contemporary humorists and satirists. It has been followed by three other satirical novels, DEN FORSVUNDNE ("The Vanished Civil Servant"), 1938, DET FORSOEMTE FORAAR ("The Lost Spring"), 1940, and IDEALISTER (1945; THE "IDEALISTS", 1949). Recently he has written a book on his travels in the Soviet Union (1951) and a collection of essays, entitled PAA VEJ IND I VANDMANDEN ("On Our Way into Aquarius"), 1951.

PARIS is one of the chapters in DEN DOEDE MAND.

SOYA, C. E. (born 1896), playwright, novelist and short story−writer. He has written a great many plays, both for the stage and for the radio; for his significance as a playwright see CONTEMPORARY DANISH PLAYS, in which his play TWO THREADS is included. He had his debut in 1923 with a tale called KVINDERNE I PERSIEN ("The Women of Persia"), and among his many collections of short stories the following deserve mention: GANSKE ALMINDELIGE MENNESKER ("Quite Ordinary People"), 1930, JEG KUNDE NEMT TA' 100 KRONER ("I Could Easily Take 100 Kroner"), 1931, HANDLINGEN FOREGAAR I DANMARK ("The

Action Takes Place in Denmark"), 1936, SMAA VENLIGE SMAAFISK ("Nice Small Fry"), 1940, SMIL SAA! ("Smile, please!"), 1944, HVIS TILVAERELSEN KEDER DEM ("If You're Bored by Existence"), 1952, and BLODROEDT OG BLEGROEDT ("Blood Red and Pale Red"), 1955. He has written some collections of aphorisms, and three novels, EN GAEST ("A Guest"), 1941, MIN FARMORS HUS ("My Grandmother's House"), 1943, and SYTTEN I−II ("Seventeen"), 1953−54.

WORLD FAME (Danish title: VERDENSBEROEMMELSE) is included in HVIS TILVAERELSEN KEDER DEM.

SOEIBERG, HARRY (1880−1954), novelist and short story−writer. He is a Jutlander by origin and was influenced by Socialist ideas in his early youth. His main contribution to Danish literature are his two great trilogies, DE LEVENDES LAND (1916−20) and SOEKONGEN (1926−30; vol. I transl. into English, THE SEA KING, 1928). Both novel cycles have a West Jutland background, and the author's romantic conception of nature is combined with a documentary and faithful realism. Also his novel entitled EN KVINDES KAMP ("A Woman's Fight"), 1938, partly autobiographical, is inspired with poetic feeling. His short stories have been collected in a volume entitled AF JORDENS SLAEGT ("The Families of the Soil"), 1945.

THE SCHOOL TEACHER AND HIS FAMILY TAKE A HOLIDAY BY THE SEA (Danish title: Adjunktfamiliens Sommerferie ved Havet) is included in SAMLEDE FORTAELLINGER.

SOENDERBY, KNUD (born 1909), novelist, playwright, essayist and short story−writer. He had his debut in 1931 with a novel called MIDT I EN JAZZTID ("In a Jazz Age"). Since then he has written four more novels: TO MENNESKER MOEDES ("Two People Meet"), 1932, EN KVINDE ER OVERFLOEDIG ("A Woman too Many"), 1935, DE KOLDE FLAMMER ("The Cold Flames"), 1940, and DEN USYNLIGE HAER ("The Invisible Army"), 1945. For his significance as a playwright see CONTEMPORARY DANISH PLAYS, in which his play A WOMAN TOO MANY (a dramatized version of the novel) is included. His essays, sketches and short stories are of high artistic merit; they are contained in three collections, GROENLANDSK SOMMER ("Greenland Summer"), 1941, FORSVUNDNE SOMRE ("Bygone Summers"), 1946, and HVIDTJOERNEN ("The May Tree"), 1950.

SONIA is included in the collection entitled GROENLANDSK SOMMER.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER REFERENCE:

Elias Bredsdorff: DANISH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION. A BIBLIOGRAPHY. (Copenhagen, 1950.)

Elias Bredsdorff, Brita Mortensen and R. Popperwell: AN INTRODUCTION TO SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE. (Cambridge, 1951.)

Joergen Claudi: CONTEMPORARY DANISH AUTHORS. WITH A BRIEF OUTLINE OF DANISH LITERATURE. (Copenhagen, 1952).

CONTEMPORARY DANISH PLAYS. AN ANTHOLOGY. (Copenhagen, London and New York, 1955). Contains an Introduction by Elias Bredsdorff, and the following nine plays: Sven Clausen: THE BIRD OF CONTENTION, Kaj Munk: HEROD THE KING, Kjeld Abell: THE QUEEN ON TOUR, C. E. Soya: TWO THREADS, Karl Schluter: OFF THE RAILS, Jens Locher: TEA FOR THREE, Leck Fischer: THE MYSTERT TOUR, Knud Sonderby: A WOMAN TOO MANY, and H. C. Branner: THE JUDGE.