

Skipper Worse

Alexander L. Kielland

Table of Contents

<u>Skipper Worse</u>	1
<u>Alexander L. Kielland</u>	2
<u>Chapter I</u>	3
<u>Chapter II</u>	8
<u>Chapter III</u>	13
<u>Chapter IV</u>	19
<u>Chapter V</u>	25
<u>Chapter VI</u>	31
<u>Chapter VII</u>	36
<u>Chapter VIII</u>	42
<u>Chapter IX</u>	48
<u>Chapter X</u>	51
<u>Chapter XI</u>	55
<u>Chapter XII</u>	60
<u>Chapter XIII</u>	65
<u>Chapter XIV</u>	70
<u>Chapter XV</u>	74

Skipper Worse

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- [Chapter I](#)
 - [Chapter II](#)
 - [Chapter III](#)
 - [Chapter IV](#)
 - [Chapter V](#)
 - [Chapter VI](#)
 - [Chapter VII](#)
 - [Chapter VIII](#)
 - [Chapter IX](#)
 - [Chapter X](#)
 - [Chapter XI](#)
 - [Chapter XII](#)
 - [Chapter XIII](#)
 - [Chapter XIV](#)
 - [Chapter XV](#)
-

Chapter I

"HERE, Lauritz, you young scamp, go aloft and clear the dogvane."

Skipper Worse was standing on his quarter-deck, a fresh north wind was blowing in the fjord, and the old brig was gliding along quietly under easy sail.

A chopping sea, caused by the ebbing tide, was breaking outside the cape which marked the entrance to Sandsgaard Bay.

As the Hope of the Family rounded the point, she seemed to feel that she was safe at home. Captain Worse winked at the helmsman, and declared that the old thing knew well enough where she was now that they were round.

The Hope of the Family was not quite like other ships. It might be that some looked smarter and lighter; indeed, it was not entirely beyond the range of possibility—though, as for Jacob Worse, he had never yet seen such a one—that, amongst the new-fangled English craft, one or two might be found that could sail just the least trifle better.

No further admission, however, would he make. Anything stronger, more seaworthy, or more complete than the Hope did not, and never would, float upon the sea. The sun shone brightly upon the buildings at Sandsgaard, on the garden and the wharf, and over all the pleasant bay, where the summer ripples chased each other to the land, hurrying on with the news that Jacob Worse had entered the fjord.

Zacharias, the man at the wharf, had, however, already announced the fact.

"Are you so sure about it?" asked Consul Garman sharply.

"We've made her out with the telescope, Herr Consul, and I'm as sure it's the Hope as that I am a living sinner. She is steering right in for Sandsgaard Bay."

Morten W. Garman rose up from his armchair. He was a tall, ponderous man, with crisp white hair and a heavy underlip.

As he took his hat and stick, his hand trembled a little, for the Hope had been away a very long time at sea. In the outer office the book-keeper was standing by the little outlook window; taking the telescope from his hand, the Consul spied out over the fjord, and then closing the glass, said:

"All right; Jacob Worse is a man one can depend upon."

It was the first time that a ship from those parts had sailed to Rio de Janeiro, and the perilous voyage had been due entirely to Jacob Worse's enterprise.

He had, however, been away so long that the Consul had given up the Hope, as he had given up so many other ships of late years.

Although he was now relieved of all anxiety on account of the ship and his trusty Captain Worse, his footstep was heavy, and resounded sadly as he left the office and strode through the entrance hall, whence a broad staircase led up to the next story.

Much more, indeed, than merely a profitable voyage would be required in order to console the embarrassed merchant, for his home at Sandsgaard was empty and desolate. Youth and social pleasures had fled, and little remained but bygone memories of gay friends and brilliant ladies; a faint odour of the past lingering in out-of-the-way corners, and causing his heart to beat again.

Ever since the death of his wife in the past summer, all the reception-rooms had been closed. Both his sons were abroad, Christian Frederik in London, and Richard in Stockholm; and Consul Garman, who had always been accustomed to gay company, found that living alone with the sisters of his deceased wife—two elderly spinsters who quarrelled over the management of his domestic affairs—was not very exhilarating.

As Jacob Worse, standing on the deck of his good ship, gazed at the stir along the wharves and round about the bay, his heart swelled with pride.

All the boats in the place came rowing out towards the brig. The relatives of his men, the mothers and the sweet-hearts, waved handkerchiefs and wept for joy. Many of them had, indeed, long since given up the Hope as lost.

No relations came out to welcome Skipper Worse. He was a widower, and his only son was away at a

Skipper Worse

commercial school in Lubeck. What he looked forward to was talking about Rio with the other captains at his club, but the chief pleasure in store for him was the yarns he would spin with Skipper Randulf.

What would Randulf's much-boasted voyage to Taganrog be, compared with Rio? Would not he—Worse—just lay it on thickly?

In his younger days Jacob Worse had been a little wild, and was now a jovial middle-aged man, about fifty years of age.

His body was thickset and short, his face that of a seaman—square, ruddy, frank, and pleasant. If any one could have counted the hairs upon his head, the result would have been surprising, for they were as close as on an otter's skin, and growing in a peculiar manner. They looked as if a whirlwind had first attacked the crown of his head from behind, twisting up a spiral tuft in the centre, and laying the remainder flat, pointing forwards, along the sides. It seemed as if his hair had remained fixed and unmoved ever since. About his ears there were rows of small curls, like the ripple-marks on sand after a breeze of wind.

When Jacob Worse saw the "ladies' boat" 1 waiting, ready manned, alongside the quay, he rubbed his hands with delight, for this preparation betokened a singular distinction; and when he saw the Consul step into this boat, he skipped round the deck in boyish glee. It was, in fact, unusual for the Consul to come on board to welcome the arrival of a ship. Generally some one was sent from the office, if neither of the sons was at home; for both Christian Frederik, and especially Richard, liked to board the ships far out of the fjord, that they might have a sail homewards and drink marsala in the cabin.

When the brig came to anchor, the ladies' boat was still a little way off; Skipper Worse, however, could no longer restrain himself. Laying hold of a shroud, he swung himself on the top rail and waving his hat, cried out, in a voice that rang out all over Sandsgaard, "We come late, Herr Consul, but we come safely."

Consul Garman smiled as he returned the salute, at the same time quietly removing the rings from the fingers of his right hand; for he dreaded the grip of Jacob Worse on his return from a voyage.

The delighted captain stood on deck, hat in hand, in a respectful attitude, whilst the Consul, with stiff and cautious steps, ascended the accommodation ladder.

"Welcome, Jacob Worse."

"Many thanks, Herr Consul."

The Consul surrendered his hand to be duly squeezed.

The crew stood round in a respectful circle to receive the friendly salute of the owner; they were already cleaned up and in their shore-going clothes, for so many friends and relations had boarded the brig as she was standing in, that there was no necessity for them to lend a hand in mooring the brig.

The manly, sunburnt faces bore a somewhat strange aspect here in the cool early summer time, and one or two wore a red shirt, or a blue Scotch bonnet brought from that wonderful Rio.

Their beaming faces showed what heroes they considered themselves, and they longed to get on shore to recount their adventures.

"Here's a young scamp," said Captain Worse, "who went out a cabin boy, but now we have given him the rating of an apprentice. The Consul must know that we had two deaths at Rio—the devil's own climate.—Come, Lauritz, step forward and show yourself."

A lad of about seventeen was at last shoved forward, awkward and blushing; much soaping had made his chubby red face shine like an apple.

"What is his name?" said the Consul.

"Lauritz Seehus," answered the lad.

"Lauritz Boldemand Seehus," added the captain, giving the name in full.

The men tittered at this, for they were in the habit of calling him "Bollemand," or "The Baker."

"We always give special attention to Captain Worse's recommendations, and if the young man will but follow the example of such a worthy officer"—here the Consul made a low bow to the captain—"the firm will advance him according to his merits. Moreover, when we come to pay off, the crew will receive a bonus, in consideration of the long and perilous voyage. The firm offers its best thanks to all for good and faithful service."

The Consul bowed to them all, and went below with the captain.

The men were much pleased, both on account of the bonus, and because it was unusual for shipowners thus to come on board and speak to common folk. It was not the habit of Consul Garman to trouble himself much about

Skipper Worse

the persons in his employ. Not that he was a hard master—on the contrary, he always returned a salute with courtesy, and had a word or two for everybody; but his manner was so extremely distant and lofty, that the least demonstration of friendliness on his part was a condescension accepted with gratitude and wonder.

Half an hour later, when he entered his boat again to go on shore, the men cheered him. Standing up, he raised his hat to them; he was, in fact, much moved, and was anxious to get home, and to be alone in his office.

The Consul took the ship's papers and a bag of gold on shore with him, for the venture had been a prosperous one. The firm "C.F. Garman" had not done so good a business for a long time. So far it was satisfactory, but it was not enough; for in spite of all Morten Garman's efforts during the years that had elapsed since his father's death, he had never succeeded in bringing life and vigour to the large and widely extended business.

The firm had suffered so much during the period of war, and from a reduction in the currency, that it was paralyzed for many years, and at one time indeed seemed past recovery.

The fact was that from the first its means were locked up in landed property to an extent which was out of all proportion to its diminished available capital. Besides this, there were debts which pressed heavily upon it.

Time brought no improvement; Morten W. Garman, who was an exceptionally able man of business, was compelled to put forth all his energy and diligence to maintain the ancient reputation of his firm.

So long as he remained young, the concern struggled on; but now that he was advanced in years, his wife dead, and his home desolate, it pained him to think that he might leave the business which had been his joy and pride, and which he had hoped to make so great and so enduring, bereft of its vitality and in a feeble and disorganized condition.

The household expenditure at Sandsgaard had always been considerable, for his attractive and vivacious wife had been fond of parties, masquerades, and entertainments, and her tastes had been fully shared by her husband.

The freer mode of life which came in with the century, as well as his position as the eldest son of a large mercantile family, had encouraged somewhat extravagant views of life, and in the town his ostentation had given rise to not a little derision and offence. Of this, however, nothing reached his ears.

Owing to his foreign education, and to his frequent journeys abroad, he brought back a peculiar atmosphere which pervaded his whole life, his views, and his opinions—which latter were, indeed, very different from those prevailing in the frugal little town, which at this period found itself in a state of fermentation, owing on the one hand to commercial progress, and on the other to a strong religious movement.

As yet, however, the old-fashioned mode of entertainment prevailed at Sandsgaard, where the civil and military personages of the grander sort kept up their ancient traditions at festivals where they ate well and drank deeply. Freedom and courtesy were so well balanced in this society, that little restraint was put upon conversation. A risqué word, the stray touch of a too daring hand or foot, or a whisper behind a fan, which was in truth a furtive kiss, with a hundred other trifling liberties, were permitted. Frivolity enveloped the company as with a silken veil, and yet everything moved as politely and as sedately as a minuet.

In this sort of life Consul Garman carried himself as easily and as adroitly as a fish in its native element.

When he sat in his office on the mornings of his great dinner parties, his pen flew over the paper, and on such occasions he indited his ablest letters.

His thoughts were so clear, and his mind so prompt and unembarrassed, that everything was arranged and ordered with the utmost precision.

In the same despatch in which he bespoke a cargo of coffee, he would not forget twelve packets of sealing-wax and two hampers of Dutch tobacco pipes for his store. He would descend without difficulty from instructions to a captain who had lost his ship, to the most minute details respecting certain stove pipes which he had seen in London, and which he wished to introduce into the town hospital.

But when the post had been despatched, and the hour of three—the usual hour for dinner parties—approached, and when the Consul had shaved himself carefully, and had applied himself to sundry pots and flasks of pomades and essences, he stepped up the broad staircase, dressed in a long-skirted blue coat with bright buttons, a closely fitting waistcoat, and a frilled shirt with a diamond breast-pin, his comely iron-grey hair slightly powdered and curled. Perhaps, too, he would be humming some French ditty of questionable propriety, thinking of the gallantries of his youth; and as he stepped daintily forward with his shapely legs, he would sometimes indulge in a hope that knee breeches would again come into fashion.

In spite of his gallantries, however, Consul Garman had been an exemplary husband, according to the standard

Skipper Worse

of the times; and when his wife died he really grieved for her, placing sundry tablets with affectionate inscriptions in those parts of the garden which were her special favourites.

After her death he gave up society, so that this item of expenditure diminished perceptibly. Two other items, however, showed a tendency to increase—the expenses connected with his sons, especially Richard.

His affections were now bestowed upon these sons. Richard was at once his pride and his weakness; a handsome exterior and easy temperament were a reflection of his own youth; and when Richard took his best horse and saddle, as well as his riding whip, which no one else was allowed to touch, he stole from window to window, as long as his son was in sight, pleased to observe his bearing and his seat on horseback.

With his eldest son, Christian Frederik, the Consul was, however, more strict.

He would write to Richard somewhat after the following fashion, when his extravagance became serious: "I can well understand that the carrière which you, with the sanction of your parents, have adopted, involves you in sundry expenses, which, although apparently unnecessary, may on a closer scrutiny be found, to a certain extent, warranted by circumstances. On the other hand, however, I would have you to consider whether you could not, at a perceptibly less cost, attain the same results as regards your future in the diplomatic profession. "Especially would I exhort you to keep regular accounts. Not so much that I desire to limit your expenditure, as that, according to my own experience, such accounts are an aid to self-control."

But accounts, and especially regular ones, were not to Richard's liking. Sometimes, indeed, he pretended to render them; but the letter soon drifted into jests and amusing stories, which diverted his father, and made him forget all about the money.

Christian Frederik, however, had sent regular monthly extracts from his account book ever since he had been at the Institute in Christiania, and these extracts were scrutinized by his father with unflinching rigour.

If there was any error in the address, not to mention any mistake in the posting up, or if any item appeared which seemed unusual or excessive, the son received a sharp admonition, warning him that inaccuracy or extravagance were absolutely unpardonable in a man of business.

This kept Christian Frederik in constant dread of his father, and sometimes he felt much hurt; but he would have been consoled had he known with what satisfaction the Consul examined these well-kept accounts, and with what care they were filed and laid aside in a certain drawer.

Christian Frederik, however, was the only person whom the Consul admitted to his confidence, and in the copious letters which he wrote to him at least once a month, he kept him informed upon business matters. Latterly, too, he had sometimes asked him his opinion upon one thing or another. The Consul was much interested, and to some degree disturbed, by the development of the town during the last two years. Moneyed strangers, who bought and cured herrings on their own account, shipping them off by thousands of barrels in the spring season, began to appear.

Large fortunes were made by the Haugians and others, who interlarded their business letters with Scripture phrases, and who had not the least idea of book-keeping.

The town was alive with stir and business, mixed up with religion, to the unceasing astonishment of the old merchant. Money, too, was abundant among these new folks.

At this period the anxieties of the Consul were revived, but he kept them to himself. On no account should Christian Frederik know what difficulties he often had to encounter.

The Hope lay safely moored, with her ensign at the peak, and flying the distinguished flag of the firm. Whilst the crew went on shore, a constant stream of visitors came on board, both from Sandsgaard and from the town.

The captain's white gig having been manned, he seated himself in the stern sheets, a large flag trailing in the water behind him. Lauritz Seehus, creeping in behind him, took the yoke lines, so that everything should be done man-of-war fashion. The six men pulled with a long stroke, their oars dipping along the surface of the sea as they feathered them.

It was in this style that Captain Worse had always looked forward to making his appearance on his return, and as he neared the quay he became highly elated.

It would never have suited him to be landed at Sandsgaard and to go on foot thence to the town, although it was the shortest and quickest way. It was one of his fancies to look upon Sandsgaard as an island, and, however bad the weather, he always went by boat to and from the town.

He could see that a flag was displayed at his own warehouse by the market quay—for he owned a straggling

Skipper Worse

old building which occupied one side of the market, and ended in a large five–storied structure projecting into the sea. Jacob Worse was, in fact, a rich man, partly from his own savings during many years as a captain, and partly from successful speculations of his own.

But when he was at home for the winter season, he busied himself with the fishery from the moment it began, buying, selling, and curing on his own account. The firm "C. F. Garman" did not trouble itself with the herring fishery; it traded directly and by commission in salt and grain, in addition to its banking and discounting business.

Captain Worse had in the course of years become a comparatively wealthy man, and when, as on this occasion, he had been away for a long time, he was anxious to learn how the persons in his employ had conducted themselves in his absence.

But his chief desire was to meet Captain Randulf; and every time he thought of it he slapped his leg and laughed aloud.

As it was summer, there were but few vessels in the harbour; most of these, however, hoisted their colours when they saw Jacob Worse's boat approaching. His acquaintances hailed him from wharf and warehouse on each side of the bay, and he saluted in return, beaming with pride and pleasure.

"Where are you going to lodge, Lauritz?" said he, as they approached the wharf, for Lauritz Seehus's home was away at Flekkefjord.

"I think I shall stay with Madame Torvestad, where I always used to lodge," said the lad.

"Oh, bother!" said Skipper Worse; "now that you are grown up you cannot stay with that old bundle of tracts."

Observing, however, a certain expression on the countenances of his men, he remembered himself, and added, "Ah, you scamp, it is for the girls' sake that you wish to go to Madame Torvestad's. Mind what you are about; remember that I command that ship too."

This was his joke, for Madame Torvestad rented a portion of the back of his house.

When Skipper Worse reached the market quay he met with a sad disappointment. Captain Randulf was away in the Baltic with a cargo of herrings.

Chapter II

"SARAH, are you going to the meeting this afternoon?" said Madame Torvestad to her eldest daughter.

"Yes, mother."

"Captain Worse has returned; I shall step across and welcome him home. The poor man is probably still in his sins. Only think, Sarah, if it should be granted to one of us to recover this wanderer from the fold!"

Madame Torvestad looked hard at her daughter as she said this, but Sarah, who stood at the kitchen dresser washing up the dinner plates, did not raise her eyes, which were dark and large, with long eyelashes, and heavy black eyebrows.

"You can just inquire among the friends if any would like to drop in and talk over the subjects discussed at this meeting, that we may strengthen and encourage one another."

"Yes, mother."

Madame Torvestad went into the sitting-room, which was rather dark, being at the back part of the building. For the rest, it was well and solidly furnished, very clean and orderly, but withal a little formal. She was the widow of an elder among the Brethren, and after her husband's death no other person had been forthcoming to supply his place. The number of the genuine Herrnhutters was neither large nor increasing, for the prevailing religious movement was rather in the direction of Haugianism.

There was, however, so much conformity of doctrine, and such a similarity in outward conduct, that the ordinary public could hardly see a shade of difference between the Herrnhutters and the Haugians; and, in truth, there was a gradual amalgamation of the two sects.

Originally there was no small difference between the Brethren and the followers of Hauge. Hauge sought and found his earliest and most devoted disciples among the peasants. The Brethren, on the other hand, consisted chiefly of well-to-do townspeople, who, under their German leaders, and by their frequent visits to Christiansfeldt and other stations of the Herrnhutters, had attained a higher degree both of intellectual and social culture.

But at a later period, when Hans Nilsen Hauge's revivals had overrun the land, and had emerged from innumerable troubles; especially, too, when Hauge's long imprisonment and subsequent death became known, as well as the disgraceful persecution which blameless and God-fearing people had undergone at the hands of the authorities—the movement gained adherents among those who had hitherto looked with contempt and aversion upon the peasant fanatics and visionaries.

All this contributed to an amalgamation of the two sects; Hauge's followers were, moreover, always inclined to tolerance and brotherly love when they met with living Christian faith. The Herrnhutters, on their part, were neither strong nor numerous enough to maintain a completely independent position, even had they desired it.

It was for such reasons that Madame Torvestad sent her daughter to the new Haugian meeting-house; and in the same way the converts of both persuasions came to her own small meetings. She retained certain words and phrases which reminded those who frequented them of her long residence in Gnadau, and she was also in the habit of reading aloud to her guests certain small tracts which she herself had partly translated from the German.

Madame Torvestad passed from the parlour to the workroom, where the servant girl sat weaving steadily and skilfully. Distaffs and reels of yarn lay about, and on the table by the window materials for dressmaking; for this was a house where devotion was mixed up with constant and useful work.

"Where is Henrietta?" asked Madame Torvestad.

"She went out to learn why the vessels in port have hoisted their colours," said the girl.

"Ah, Martha, how the hearts of the young are drawn to worldly follies!"

In the mean time, Sarah continued her work, humming a psalm tune. This week it was her turn to manage the kitchen; she took it turn about with the girl, for Henrietta was as yet too young.

Sarah was twenty-six years of age. Although a laborious and regular life had made her strong and robust, she was very pale, for she seldom went out of doors, and never farther than the church or meeting. Her comely face contrasted pleasantly with the full chin, which bore a trace of the commanding expression of her mother. She wore her hair quite smooth, with plaits coiled round the back of her head.

Skipper Worse

The charm of Sarah's face and figure was not such as is apparent one year and vanishes the next; on the contrary, there was something about her soft rounded features, pale clear complexion, and steadfast eyes resulting in a calm, attractive beauty which promised to be lasting.

Standing at the dresser amid the clatter of plates and cups, humming her psalm tune, she did not hear the footsteps of a man ascending the kitchen stairs; but when the door opened, she turned round, then blushed a little, and cast her eyes down upon the ground.

The man in the doorway, who was tall and broad-shouldered, also cast his eyes down, and said: "Look here, Sarah, I bring you 'Life in Death,' the book we were speaking of. I hope you will like it."

"Thanks, Hans Nilsen," answered Sarah, without looking up from her work. She could not take the book in her hands because they were wet, so he laid it on the bench by her side and went away.

She listened to his step as he went up the stairs to the attic, for Hans Nilsen Fennefos was one of Madame Torvestad's lodgers. Sarah dried her hands hastily, and took up the book, dipping into it here and there with evident interest and pleasure.

It was written by Hauge himself, of whom Fennefos often spoke, but for whom her mother did not seem to care much; at all events she possessed none of his works.

Sarah had, however, something else to do than to read; so she laid the precious little volume, which Fennefos had bound with his own hands, upon the window seat by her side, and renewed her work and her hymn, a little more vigorously than before.

Sometimes she leant forward, and as she turned her head on one side, gazing up at the narrow streak of blue sky which was visible between the roofs, her dark eyes shone with a guileless, rapturous light, as if they were piercing the vault of heaven itself.

Soon, however, another footstep became audible on the stairs below, and this time Sarah heard it distinctly. It was Henrietta—there could be no mistake about that. Two or three careless hasty steps, then a stumble, and then much clatter, then more steps; just as young girls blunder up a staircase when they first wear long gowns.

Henrietta, who entered heated, radiant, and out of breath, with her hair in a tangle, exclaimed; "Oh, Sarah, you should have seen it! Do you know who has come back?"

"Hush, hush! Henrietta," said Sarah, chiding her; "only think if our mother were to see you such a figure."

Upon this Henrietta began to smooth her unruly hair but, unable to restrain herself, she whispered with portentous eagerness: "I was in the market, right down by the quay—don't tell it to mother—and Skipper Worse came rowing—Skipper Worse has arrived from Rio, you know—came rowing in with a six-oared boat and a flag, and behind him sat Lauritz. I did not recognize him till he jumped on shore; he has grown so tall"—raising her hand up. "He saw me; indeed, I think he is following me here."

"Oh, Henrietta!" said Sarah, somewhat severely, knitting her eyebrows.

But the graceless Henrietta stuck her tongue out and stole into the passage, whence she hoped to reach the workroom unobserved. Sarah's look grew anxious; she could not comprehend her unruly sister. She herself had never been like this. Such a worldly disposition must needs be subdued.

Nevertheless, she sometimes felt touched when Henrietta boiled over with youthful animation, and almost felt a wish to share her high spirits.

There was the old Adam in her, which ought to be suppressed and overcome; but yet—but yet—

Presently she was again disturbed by the appearance of a round, sunburnt, smiling face at the kitchen door. But the smile vanished as Lauritz, looking sheepish and awkward, walked in. He had evidently expected to see some one else.

"Welcome home, Lauritz," said Sarah, in a friendly voice.

"Thank you," said Lauritz, in his deepest tones, as he stood rubbing his hands together in the doorway.

"Do you wish to see my mother?"

"Yes; I want to know if I can lodge here."

"My mother is in the sitting-room."

Lauritz Seehus was almost like a younger brother to Sarah, for he had boarded at Madame Torvestad's ever since his school days. His own home at Flekkefjord was not a happy one; his father drank, and there was a swarm of small children.

In a few moments Lauritz reappeared, crestfallen and wretched.

Skipper Worse

"What, Lauritz," said Sarah, "are you going away so soon?"

"Yes," said he, hurrying out, "I could not manage it."

As he descended the old well-known kitchen stairs, he thought himself the most unfortunate creature in the world; in fact, he wept—for the first time since his boyhood.

During the whole of the voyage he had dreamt of securing his old attic room again, of being constantly near Henrietta, and of presenting her with all the wonderful things he had brought back in his sea chest. He had dreamt of stealing out with her in a boat, or of gliding with her on a hand sledge on the moonlight winter evenings when Madame Torvestad was at meeting.

All these glorious plans had been carefully cherished and pondered over a hundred times, and pictured down to the smallest detail, as he paced the deck in the long and lonely night watches.

Now, however, it seemed as if there was no more hope or pleasure for him, either in this world or the next.

Sarah seemed to take pity on him. Her mother came out and said:

"You saw Lauritz, Sarah?"

"Yes, mother."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No; I merely gave him a welcome."

"Do you think that he is changed?"

Sarah hardly knew what to answer, but her mother added with severity: "Say no, my child; repentant sinners have a very different appearance."

In her heart Sarah could not but allow that her mother was in the right, especially when it occurred to her that Lauritz and Henrietta were no longer children, and that sinful affections might take the place of the old companionship.

Since she had entered the room she had also come to the conclusion that it was her duty to confide her misgivings to her mother. Now, however, she was spared this, and she was satisfied that it would be better for the young people that they should be separated.

But then, again, she remembered how miserable he looked, as he crept out of the kitchen, and she thought how disappointed Henrietta would be; for had he not always lodged there?

No doubt it would be for the good of both that temptation should be removed—but nevertheless—

By five o'clock Jacob Worse had returned home from the club; he could stand it no longer. Everything had gone wrong, and nothing had happened as he wished, from the time that he had set his foot on shore.

At the club he had met two Finn captains, whose ships were detained in the harbour, quite young fellows, who had lately arrived from America.

One of them, a mere puppy, with a beard of English cut and a gold chain, had been at Rio—and twice!

Oh! Randulf, Randulf, why were you away in the Baltic?

It happened to Skipper Worse as it happens to all easy temperaments. The slightest pleasure would put him in good humour, and help him over the greatest difficulties; but if, on the other hand, he encountered any trifling annoyance, everything seemed to go wrong, misfortune seemed to accumulate upon his head, and he thought that no one was ever so persecuted and maltreated by fate as himself—but for one day only. A night's rest generally restored his equanimity.

This was just one of his unlucky days from the moment when he heard of Randulf's absence. Nothing had satisfied him, either at the club, at the office, or at his warehouse; although there was absolutely nothing to complain of in the management of his affairs during his absence.

The people in his employ had, in fact, deserved much more praise than he had vouchsafed to them.

Grumbling and dispirited, he traversed the well-kept rooms. The sun was low in the north-west, and in the sunset glow he could distinguish the Hope's top-gallant yards over the point of land that separated the harbour from Sandsgaard Bay.

Nothing, however, could cheer him up. Moreover, after a while he bethought him how old Harbour-master Snell had led him aside into a corner at the club, and had whispered, as he laid his finger to his long red nose; "Pop-pop—Jacob, it was about time that you brought the old one some cash; they say—pop-pop—that he is in want of it just now."

"What in the world did he mean?" thought Skipper Worse, as he recalled the conversation. "Does the old

Skipper Worse

swindler think to persuade me that C. F. Garman is in want of cash?"

"What do you want, Lauritz!" cried he suddenly, seeing the lad at the door.

"Nothing, captain," said Lauritz, meekly, going out again.

But Worse following him, caught him in the passage, and pulled him back into the room.

That Lauritz did not want anything was true; but when in his sorrow and despondency he saw the captain, who had always been so good to him, passing the window to and fro, he ventured to approach him on the chance of meeting with some comfort.

Worse gripped him by the neck and looked at him.

"H'm! so there's another who has found little satisfaction in coming home. Come, let us have a drop of something together, my son, and you shall then tell me what is the matter."

Skipper Worse opened a door in the corner cupboard, produced two round Dutch glasses, and poured out some cherry brandy for Lauritz and some old Jamaica rum for himself.

"Now, then," said Worse, when they had emptied their glasses, "let's hear all about your troubles."

But instead of beginning his story, Lauritz suddenly replaced his glass on the shelf, seized the captain's, put it away also, slammed to the cupboard, and seated himself on a wooden chair near the door.

Worse thought the lad was going out of his senses; but before his wrath had time to break out, there was a knock at the door, and Madame Torvestad entered.

Lauritz had seen her pass the window, and respect for her was so thoroughly ingrained in him, that her appearance drove everything else out of his head.

Anything rather than that she should see they were drinking. Even Worse himself would not have wished Madame Torvestad to find him hob-nobbing with the young man, and comprehending the position of affairs, he winked amiably at Lauritz, as he conducted Madame Torvestad to a seat upon the sofa.

She wore a black silk cloak, a dark grey hat with a wide brim, and a broad satin ribbon under her chin.

Her dress and bearing gave the impression of solid well-being, and steadfast purpose.

The somewhat full double chin, and the carriage of her head, gave her a masterful look. In this she differed from others of her sect, who strove to convey the idea of humility both outwardly and inwardly. Moreover, it had become the fashion among the Haugians of the west country to speak in a soft, lisping tone.

Madame Torvestad never allowed herself to forget that she was the widow of an elder among the Brethren, and it was her ambition to constitute both herself and her house a centre of the religious movement. She therefore thought much of her own small meetings, which were half-religious, half-social. For the same reason she took in lodgers, although as far as money was concerned there was no need to do so.

Lauritz had not been admitted upon these grounds; she took him at the earnest request of friends in Flekkefjord. Generally, her lodgers were spiritually minded young men, often wandering lay-preachers, who came and went, remaining a few days among the Brethren in order to exhort and edify one another.

By such means as these, Madame Torvestad had succeeded in making her house a place of rendezvous for the Brethren in the town, and herself one of its most influential matrons, one whom the elders often consulted.

She was always a little less austere with Skipper Worse than with others, either because she had been his tenant for so many years, or that she considered such behaviour more likely to win him over, or perhaps, for some other reason.

At all events, it was strange how seldom she brought Scripture phrases into her conversation with him. She tolerated, indeed she sometimes even smiled at the gallant captain's pleasantries, when they were of a harmless sort.

After she had spoken a few words of welcome, and chatted with him on sundry matters which had occurred during his absence, she concluded by asking whether, as he was alone, he would come to supper at her house. It would greatly please her daughters.

"Anybody else coming?" inquired Worse, suspiciously. "Possibly two or three of the Brethren might drop in on their way back from meeting."

"Thank you, indeed," muttered the skipper, with some signs of irritation; "but you know that I am not fit for such company, madame."

"Do not say so, Captain Worse; let us rather hope that you may be fitted for company where the word of God is heard." This she said with much cordiality, at the same time watching him closely.

Skipper Worse

Skipper Worse was a little embarrassed, and paced round the room. It was not easy to give an answer; he could not abide her meetings, but he was at a loss for a decent excuse.

At this moment Lauritz rose from his chair, and made as if he would take his departure.

"No, no, Lauritz!" cried the captain; "you can't leave yet. We must have a word or two together. Where are you bound?"

"I must go to the town and seek lodgings for the night," answered Lauritz, gloomily, but still a little emboldened by the cherry brandy he had drunk.

"What! aren't you going to lodge at Madame Torvestad's? Can't he, madame?"

"No," she replied drily. "You know that those who lodge with me are chiefly religious persons. I do not take in sailors."

"Yes; but your house has hitherto been like a home to Lauritz. It is hard for the poor lad on his return to find himself turned out into the street."

Worse now understood the young man's troubles, and, in his good nature, would willingly endeavour to help him. But Madame Torvestad made no response; she gathered up the folds of her cloak and prepared to depart.

"Well, good-bye, Captain Worse," said she; "I am heartily glad to welcome you home again. In half an hour or so I expect Sarah and a few friends from the meeting. Do you feel no inclination to join them, and to offer thanks to Him who has protected you in the tempest, and has brought you home unhurt over the stormy sea?"

"Yes, yes—of course, madame; you see—but—" and Jacob Worse stood and fidgeted about.

"Come now, you will not refuse," said she, holding out her hand, and looking at him with an expression of kindness.

But Worse still held back, and said, half in jest: "I am sorry to seem so obstinate; but I think that you too, Madame Torvestad, are also a little obstinate in your refusal to give house room to this poor lad. Come, let us make a bargain. I will attend your meeting if you will allow Lauritz to lodge with you. Will you say 'done,' Madame Torvestad?"

"I would willingly do more than that, Captain Worse, if it would tend to satisfy you," said she, offering him her hand. Then, turning to Lauritz, she added, in her usual tone: "Mind, I do this for the captain's sake. I trust that you will so conduct yourself that I may not have to repent of it. You can have your old room; it is quite ready for you."

Saying this, she left the room.

But the captain and Lauritz paid another visit to the cupboard. This exhilarated Worse, and when he saw with what unbounded glee Lauritz rushed off towards the wharf, in order to bring up his sea chest, containing all his treasures, he forgot for a moment how dearly he had paid for his young friend's little loft in the attic.

Chapter III

HANS NILSEN FENNEFOS came of a family that had long since become followers of Hauge, on the occasion of one of his visitations to their neighbourhood. From his earliest childhood he had heard of the beloved teacher; his mother used to sing the hymns he had written, and Fennefos himself was named after him.

There was, therefore, much that might seem likely to make him a disciple; but the boy had a headstrong and passionate disposition, and up to his twentieth year his wild and thoughtless life was a source of grief to his mother.

One night, however, it happened that he came home late from a dance, and as he crept up to his bedroom, he heard his mother singing, as she laid awake: "Commit thou all thy goings, Thy sorrows all confide, To Him who rules the heavens, The ever-faithful Guide. For He who stills the tempest, And calms the rolling sea, Will lead thy footsteps safely, And smooth a way for thee." It was a hymn lately introduced into the neighbourhood, and one which his mother, as he knew, prized greatly; but hitherto he had never taken any special notice of it.

At the sound of his mother's voice, the recollections of the dance and the fumes of drink vanished, and, as he listened, the words took a marvellous hold of him.

He wandered all night in fear and sorrow round his father's house, and it was not until the rising of the sun that he was enabled to find any peace.

It was the first time that he had been absent a whole night. As he entered the room, his mother rose up from her seat, and was about to rebuke him; but when she saw his altered look and bearing, she only said gently: "My son, the Lord has visited you this night."

From that time forward Hans Nilsen went no more to dances. After many years of tribulation and inward struggles, he at last gained confidence, and spoke with his friends and others of the one thing needful. He appeared also at the meetings, and it was the general opinion that so captivating a speaker had not been heard among them for many a day.

But the elders, mindful of Hauge's injunctions, would not permit him to go forth among the Brethren round about the country until he was thoroughly grounded in doctrine, and until a change of life had manifested itself in him.

He was more than twenty-five when he was first sent out; and after five or six years of almost uninterrupted wanderings from place to place, partly by invitation, and partly as he was led by the Spirit, he had become a well-known and highly valued lay-preacher over all the west country and northward, even beyond Trondhjem.

The times had long since longed for when a clergyman, accompanied by a bailiff or a drunken lieutenant, could break up the meetings, revile the lay-preacher, spit in his face, and cause him to be driven out of the parish.

But if the lay-preachers were less exposed to outward violence than in the old days of persecution, there were dangers of another sort, which in many ways made their position difficult.

The clergy had not changed their minds; but as they could no longer imprison or publicly revile "these enthusiasts, deceivers, and hypocrites," they preferred to scheme against and vilify them in private.

A new ordeal of patience and long-suffering was thus imposed upon the Brethren, especially upon their leaders and preachers; for as their numbers increased, it could not but happen that some disciples would fall into open sin, or be discovered to be hypocrites and impostors.

On such occasions the clergy were on the alert; active and energetic, both in public and in private, they gave currency to disparaging stories about the Haugeians, men who despised the house of God, and worshipped Him in their own dismal meetings, where all sorts of profanities were said to be carried on.

From the official class this spirit of suspicion, and often of hatred, spread itself among educated people, to the injury of these peaceable and thoroughly worthy folks.

From such sources the current literature also proceeded to picture the ignorant lay-preachers, and to draw comparisons with the regular deans and pastors, the men of light and peace. The writers of the day, as a rule, knew but little about the lay-preachers, and relied on these descriptions; the clergyman they were well acquainted with.

Most people knew him from holiday visits to the parsonage, which stood out as bright spots in the memories

Skipper Worse

of their younger days—the journey thither in summer by moonlight through the woods, and in winter over the crisp white snow, with accompaniment of thinkling sledge—bells.

It was thus that they knew their pastor, genial, friendly, and earnest. What a capital talker he was at the social board, and how ready to join in harmless merriment! How pleasant, too, was the great roomy parsonage, full of youthful mirth, tempered by the gentle gravity of their reverend host!

He was the central point of attraction for all, not only for the cares of wives and daughters, but in all the joys and sports of youth. "Father's" presence was looked upon as necessary to complete enjoyment.

His meerschaum pipe was kept filled for him, and when it went out, the children rushed to light it again with paper spills. When the wife, with a practised hand, enveloped him in his furs and wraps as he drove off to his other church the day after Christmas, all gathered round him, in an affectionate circle.

Nor could any one forget the quiet Saturday afternoons when all left the house in order not to disturb the pastor, who was preparing his sermon in the study, the smoke of his pipe stealing out of the keyhole like a blue serpent. Nor could they forget the Sunday mornings when his reverence took his dose of egg—flip before church, in order to clear his voice.

But this genial pastor could be quite another man when he sat alone among his peasants, discussing school or parish affairs; for language such as one would hardly expect from a man of light and peace might then be heard inside his study.

Sometimes it happened that, if on such occasions the young people gathered in the hall to seek their coats and cloaks for some outing, a frieze—clad peasant would come tumbling out of the study, and a momentary glimpse of a red face and a violently agitated dressing—gown would be obtained through the open door.

Then the wife or one of the daughters would say: "Poor father! that is one of those horrid Haugians, who give him so much trouble in the parish."

This feeling against the sectaries did not die out, even after the movement had become respected and honoured by the university.

The new teachers and clergy who were indebted to Hauge and his movement, not only for greater sincerity in doctrine and in its application, but who had even adopted the humble exterior and meek tones which prevailed from the time that Haugianism began to wane, seemed suddenly to forget that the Christian life, on the feeble remains of which they took their stand, was something that the people, after a long struggle, had gradually acquired of themselves.

Like their imperious predecessors, they coolly began to assume that they alone were the people's pastors and guides, and that any one who would so much as touch a hair of their heads, who would deprive them of one iota of their power and authority, destroyed—yes, destroyed the people's respect for all that was sacred, and disturbed with a presumptuous hand the ancient, beautiful, and patriarchal relations between the flocks and their beloved pastors.

But when Fennefos first began his wanderings, he encountered clergy of the old school who lay in wait for every word and deed, causing all the injury and annoyance in their power, both to him and to his friends.

The utmost circumspection became necessary, and the young preacher had to bear up against much strife and opposition. His undaunted spirit was, however, in proportion to his vast bodily strength.

Old people declared that he reminded them of Hauge in his earlier days, before he had been enfeebled by persecution.

For this reason the letters from the elders at home, which preceded Fennefos's visits to the Brethren at a distance, always urged that the young man should be exhorted to submit to those in authority, in order to avoid strife and offence.

He gradually learnt to control himself, and, in many instances, even succeeded in preventing disputes between the clergy and their flocks.

This had always been Hauge's desire, and Fennefos, like all the rest of the Brethren, conformed to it.

In this way, like many other lay—preachers, he so prepared the minds of the people that a pastor could almost everywhere, and without any exertions on his own part, find a little nucleus of Christian folk prepared to attach themselves to any teachers who would not merely, like the former clergy, give them stones for bread.

Sometimes, however, he found it difficult to control himself. In his earlier days at home, at Fennefos, he had learnt from the older people all the circumstance of Hauge's life. He knew the names not only of all the bailiffs

Skipper Worse

and magistrates, but especially of the clergy, who had scoffed at, persecuted, and almost worried to death, the beloved teacher.

And now, as he journeyed through the land, he encountered the same names. Both bench and pulpit were filled not only in spirit, but in the body, by the actual successors of the odious persecutors of the past generation.

This often made his young blood boil again; and when, at the meetings, plain and free speech prevailed, he observed the same glow among his companions. Still they rebuked and restrained one another; for the powers that be are ordained of God.

When he journeyed in West Norway, Fennefos always stayed awhile with Madame Torvestad. The town was a central point in the widely ramified religious movement, and gradually her house became more of a home to him than his native place, Fennefos.

Here, too, he received letters and communications from the Brethren round about the country, when anything went wrong with them, or when they particularly wished him to preach to them.

He was in the habit of visiting or writing to them; and here the elders sent to him, if they happened to have a trustworthy envoy.

It was not, however, the Brethren or Madame Torvestad that attached him so much to the place; in fact, he was more at home among the peasantry.

He had, indeed, great objections to Madame Torvestad. Upon some points she was too lax; and she was full of German mysticism, which he could not endure. Above all, she was too imperious and ambitious, both among the disciples and in her own house.

What really attracted him was Sarah; not that he was actually in love with her, of this he was confident. But she was so penetrated by the spirit of the movement, and so well versed in the Bible and in religious books, that he knew of no one with whom it was more delightful to converse.

Sarah stood very high in the estimation of the Brethren, and it was a real pleasure to the older people to hear her at the meetings. It was, however, but seldom that she spoke, and she had not much that was original to say; but she knew so many hymns, texts, and passages of good books by heart, and, above all, she was so familiar with the Scriptures, that among all the Brethren her equal was hardly to be found.

On the table, in Madam Torvestad's sitting-room, there was a fixed desk, and upon it an open Bible; this was Sarah's place, and by her side Madame Torvestad had this day placed a comfortable chair for Skipper Worse.

Several women had arrived, who seated themselves round the room, laid their hands on their laps, and sighed. Near the stove a couple of young girls packed themselves by the side of Henrietta, on a bench that was too short for them; and a small boy, with a sallow face, whose parents dragged him from meeting to meeting, seated himself on the extreme end of a bench by the door.

By-and-by the men began to arrive in succession. There were the brothers Endre and Nicolai Egeland, who had the largest store in the town; Sivert Jespersen, who in a few years had made a fortune out of herrings; and four or five of the most eminent followers of Hauge, either artisans or shopmen.

Madame Torvestad shook hands with them all, and found seats for them, not a very easy task after a while, although the room was spacious and the chairs abundant.

Hans Fennefos entered, saluted Sarah, and at the same time inquired for whom the armchair was placed by her side.

"Skipper Worse is coming this evening," said Sarah, without looking up.

Hans Nilsen was surprised, and a little disquieted, although he hardly knew why. Madame Torvestad, who received him graciously, did not take her usual seat, but moved about in a restless manner, until at last Jacob Worse arrived.

As he opened the door, an involuntary desire to escape seized him. He had come from his own airy room, bright with the twilight afterglow. Here it was dark and stuffy. Two tallow candles in brass candlesticks threw some light on the table and the reading-desk, but out in the room nothing was visible, save a row of faces along the wall.

Escape, however, was out of the question; for Madame Torvestad, with a friendly gesture, took him by the hand and led him in. Moreover, every one knew him, and all the men came forward to shake his hand, and to welcome him home again.

His presence at the meeting gave general satisfaction; for Jacob Worse was an important man in the town, and

Skipper Worse

hitherto he had rather belonged to those who opposed and derided the Haugians.

They nodded and smiled at Madame Torvestad, who greatly enjoyed her triumph.

Sivert Jespersen was especially pleased—he and Worse were acquaintances of old, up at the northern fishery; and Sivert Gesvint, as he was nick-named, was, when outside the meeting-house, a lively and enterprising man. Whilst, on the one hand, his tongue was always ready with texts and hymns, he was no less ready at a pinch to give any one a helping hand, or to "carry on" recklessly if it was a question of sailing out first to the fishing grounds.

Skipper Worse growled a little and rubbed his head, when Sivert Gesvint pressed his hand and welcomed him with effusion. There was an old affair between them about a consignment of salt, respecting which Skipper Worse declared that Sivert had cheated him; indeed, he had told him as much, to his face, many times, when they had met at the fishing. Sivert Gesvint, however, used only to smile, and pat him on the shoulder.

Madame Torvestad now led Worse to the armchair. He felt extremely ill at ease, and inwardly cursed both Madame Torvestad and Lauritz, which latter sat on a low stool behind two stout females, where he could catch a glimpse of Henrietta.

Sarah bashfully welcomed Skipper Worse, who patted her on the head; he had known her ever since she was a small child.

When they were all seated, and order was restored, Madame Torvestad said: "Now little Erik Pontoppidan, what was the subject discussed at the meeting?"

"Sanctification," said the pale boy near the door, in a prompt but mechanical manner.

"What hymn did they sing, Henrietta," said her mother; "you remember of course?"

Henrietta had indeed been at the meeting, but being quite absorbed by the sad news that Lauritz could not lodge with them, she had derived but scanty benefit from it. When she returned home and learnt that after all he had received permission, she was so delighted that now her mother's question came upon her like a bucket of cold water.

She turned very red, and felt as if her senses were leaving her.

Madame Torvestad looked severely at her for a while, and then turned to Erik Pontoppidan, who gave the first line of the hymn, without hesitation, the moment he caught her eye.

People nodded and smiled approvingly at the boy. His mother, a stout, pale woman, and his father, Endre Egeland, were proud of him. Erik Pontoppidan himself, however, took it very composedly.

Except Lauritz, no one looked at Henrietta, who felt very much ashamed, and crept behind her two friends. Madame Torvestad now struck up a hymn, in which all the company joined. To Jacob Worse's ear, all these voices in the low room, the subdued tones of the women, and the rough bass of the men, sounded weird and unpleasing.

They sang so very slowly that it seemed as if the hymn would never finish, especially as Sivert Jespersen, in a manner peculiar to him, threw in certain shakes and quavers at the end of each verse.

One of the elders had delivered an address at the meeting, and, as she did not happen to be present, Madame Torvestad inquired whether any one could tell her something of what he had said. She turned towards Fennefos, as did several others; but he sat unmoved, with his lips firmly closed, and looking as if he would not utter a word that evening.

"According to my poor opinion," said Sivert Jespersen, "the old man spoke well and simply; it was on the work of the Spirit, as little Erik remembered so well. He took for his subject Luther's words on the article, which says: 'I believe that of my own strength and wisdom I can neither believe in Christ nor come to Him;' and he showed clearly, at least in my opinion, both from Scripture and from our daily experience, our miserable shortcomings in the spiritual as well as in the temporal life, so long as we put our trust only 'in the arm of flesh and in our own feeble judgment.'"

At this point Nicolai Egeland, who was not very highly gifted in a spiritual sense, exclaimed: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

He knew, in fact, no more than five or six texts, and these he brought in as they occurred to him, often quite inappropriately; but the Brethren knew his sincerity, and were lenient with him. He was not one of those servants to whom many talents had been entrusted.

One of the women sighed, and said: "Yes, that is true, indeed, Sivert Jespersen; we should not trust to our own

wisdom in spiritual things."

Madame Torvestad now took up the conversation, as she sat turning over the leaves of sundry small books, which lay on the table by her side, just opposite to where Sarah was seated.

Some of these were tracts, and some, books of hymns; and as she met with any passage that struck her, she wove it into her conversation in such a manner that it seemed to be half her own utterance and half a quotation.

"A Christian should always bear in mind," she began, "that much that is high and mysterious can never in this life be comprehended by feeble man. We should, therefore, never attempt to fathom it, but should resign ourselves to the might and truth of God, who has brought us into contact with it. Yes, directly our own wisdom begins to dwell upon the possibility of that which is revealed to us, we may be sure that temptation and Satan are at hand—the old wily serpent who deceived Eve; and we should instantly invoke the protection of the Almighty against death and hell itself. To this end may grace be vouchsafed to all of us."

"Amen," said Nicolai Egeland.

"But," asked Sivert Jespersen, turning to the younger people, "how should we receive this grace?"

"It is the work of the Holy Spirit," said a voice by the door.

"Very properly answered, little Erik. And what do you mean by the Spirit's work?"

"Sanctification."

"And of how many parts does sanctification consist? can you give me an answer to that also?"

"New birth, justification, and regeneration."

Everybody was pleased with the quickness of the boy, who sat without moving a muscle of his face, his mouth open, and generally prepared to give answers much as an instrument responds to its keys.

At this point Nicolai Egeland became ambitious, and thrust himself into the conversation, quoting the longest text he knew—"By man sin came into the world;" but Madame Torvestad interrupted him quietly:

"Very wonderful is the state of the regenerate man; he is the slave neither of sin nor of worldly affections, not even indeed of innocent things. When I say that he is not a slave, I do not assert that in a moment of weakness he may not be overtaken by sin, but that he will not continue in it. If surprised by the flesh or the devil, he may fall into sin; but he will rise up and lay his troubles before God, and seek forgiveness. So long as he is thus established again in faith, and enjoys peace with God, he remains superior to sin, and continues to walk in the Spirit."

Sarah watched Fennefos, for she was certain that he would not approve of the book her mother was reading from. He made no signs, however; and in the feeble glimmer she could see only the vigorous, clear cut profile, somewhat turned upwards, as if gazing at the ceiling.

When it became manifest that he would not speak that evening, the conversation dragged on without animation for about another quarter of an hour.

All this time Sarah sat by the Bible, and, in the course of the conversation, looked out a text here and there, sometimes on her own account, and sometimes when one of the company sought to have his memory refreshed. She readily found all that was required, and in many cases was able to repeat the passage at once by heart.

Skipper Worse could not understand what they were talking about, and he became very weary. The only thing that kept him awake was Sarah's shapely fingers moving deftly among the pages of the sacred book.

But at last, as he was on the point of dropping asleep, Madame Torvestad proposed that they should conclude with a hymn.

Sarah took a hymn-book, and held it up for the captain, and the singing began.

As Worse was sitting half asleep, watching Sarah's fingers, she suddenly turned her great dark eyes upon him, and said: "Sing with us."

In a moment Skipper Worse was wide awake, and began to hum, as she moved her fingers along the lines. He had never been very good at such singing, and when he came to sacred words he felt ashamed to pronounce them with his sinful lips.

But he was awake, and, more than this, he began to be at his ease. Now and then he looked up at Sarah's well-turned shoulders, her white neck, and the throat which swelled so gracefully as she sang.

They sat so close to each other, as she bent towards him with the hymn-book, that Skipper Worse was conscious of something pleasant in her company, the first homelike feeling he had experienced that day.

There was another person also who enjoyed himself thoroughly, although he did not give a very close attention to the meeting, and this was Lauritz Seehus in his corner.

Skipper Worse

He was so elated after his first disappointment, that he did not find the meeting as wearisome as usual—he could see Henrietta.

Moreover, the sacred words and the singing made so great an impression on one who had long been absent from such things that he was much affected, and thanked the Almighty, who had sent him a brief but bitter trial, that he might the better learn how all things worked together for his good.

As soon as the hymn was finished, the daughters of the house brought in tea and bread and butter. After a grace from Endre Egeland, they all ate well, and drank much tea; and at nine o'clock the party broke up.

When Worse returned to his own rooms, and saw Madame Torvestad's guests crossing the market-place as they left her house, he hardly knew whether to be amused or angry at having been compelled to spend his first evening on shore among such people.

There among them he observed Endre Egeland, whose moral reputation was none of the best, and Sivert Jespersen, who had overreached him so confoundedly in the matter of the salt.

"If Randulf should hear of all this!"

Nevertheless, he could not help remembering how pleasant it had been by the side of Sarah, and he felt how dull and lonely were his own spacious rooms.

Chapter IV

THE FOLLOWING evenings, Skipper Worse visited the club again, and enjoyed himself amazingly. It was only on the first evening, when he met with the two young captains from America, that things had been so contrary.

By-and-by, as his old friends rallied round him, he spun many a yarn about Rio. He also sang a couple of English songs with a Spanish refrain, which he had learnt from a very nice young lady whom he had met with, swinging in a grass hammock slung between two palm trees.

These two songs rather took at the club, where there was singing almost every evening; and when the company had mastered the Spanish refrain, their chorus made the spoons rattle again in the steaming tumblers of toddy.

There was Harbour-master Snell, the Exciseman Aarestrup, and the Custom-house Officer Preuss, the chief of the fire brigade, and several captains and shipowners.

Of course, it was soon noised about the town that Skipper Worse had been at the Haugian meeting, and he had to submit to a good deal of rallying in consequence.

He preferred to join in the laugh, for there was nothing to gain by losing his temper, and at last the reprobate even gave an imitation of Endre Egeland's grace.

Moreover, he was not entirely displeased to find it the prevalent opinion in the club that Jacob Worse was a sly old dog, who had visited the sectaries for a certain young woman's sake.

Madame Torvestad had not molested him of late. When they met, she merely invited him to look in whenever it was agreeable to him; and when he did not respond to these invitations, she manifested no annoyance.

When he got all his things on shore, he sent Lauritz to Sarah, with a box covered with shells. This was the greatest treasure which he had brought from Rio.

Madame Torvestad, on Sarah's behalf, thanked the captain for the handsome present he had made, remarking at the same time, in a somewhat admonitory tone, that such fine things were calculated to arouse worldly thoughts and vanity in the young.

In the course of the summer he became reconciled to the absence of Randulf. The interval of tranquillity at home was not irksome to him; his business prospered, and his voyage to Rio procured him a certain amount of consideration among his fellowtownsmen.

He did not hear often from his son in Lubeck; but the bills he had to pay for him showed that he was alive, and apparently enjoying life pretty freely.

Their mutual relations had never been of a very intimate description, partly because the father had been so much away from home, and partly because the son had been much spoilt and indulged by the mother, who was an affected, sentimental sort of person, full of romantic notions, and whose thoughts ran only on knights and damsels, combats, moonlight, long tresses, trapdoors, and winding staircases.

Once upon a time she had fascinated Worse when he was a mate, during a certain boating excursion by moonlight. Such a fine lady, with such large bright eyes, and such long auburn hair, he had never seen, either in the Baltic or the Mediterranean.

She had consented to become his for life or death on that occasion, when, after the company had taken coffee on a little island, he bore her in his arms, and waded out to the boat with her, instead of waiting until it could be brought to the shore.

It reminded her a little of Romarino, who, encircling Miranda's slender waist with his strong right arm, swung himself into the saddle with his gentle burden, and rode out through the castle gates upon his snorting steed.

It proved, however, a most unfortunate expedition for both of them. He was as little like a knight-errant as she was to a sea captain's wife. When she had devoured all the romances in the lending library, she lapsed into a sickly dreaminess, from which she aroused herself only to lament and bewail her fate; and it was this which drove Jacob Worse to sail on long voyages.

On one occasion, when he was expected home from Lisbon, a child was born to him, and his wife hastened to have it christened "Romarino."

Skipper Worse

This went to Worse's heart. He could take no pleasure in the pale little creature in its cradle, on account of its name, which seemed to separate the child from him, and to remove it to the fantastic world of the mother. In fact, to hear Skipper Worse utter the word Romarino was one of the most ludicrous things imaginable.

When the feeble, querulous mother died, Romarino was fifteen years of age. He was then sent to Copenhagen to live in a family which received him at the request of Consul Garman. It was out of the question that he should remain in the great lonely house, his father being away so much at sea.

At the present time he was about twenty, and just before Jacob Worse had sailed on his long voyage to Rio, Romarino had paid a visit to his home.

He was a pale little creature, with light hair. He wore an olive green coat, yellow waistcoat, and light grey trousers, strapped over his boots. His extravagantly tall fluffy hat was so perched on the top of his head that it was a wonder it did not fall off more frequently.

In this costume he created a great sensation in the little fishing town, strutting about flourishing a thin cane, and surveying everybody and everything with disdain.

Moreover, he could not speak Norwegian properly.

His father's feelings were divided between admiration and embarrassment; but the admiration received a serious blow when Thomas Randulf swore that Romarino used pomatum on his pocket-handkerchief.

However, Worse still thought a good deal of his son, although he could have wished that there was more of his own sailor spirit in him.

He often thought that if he could have resigned the Hope to a son, such a one as Lauritz Seehus that son ought to have been.

Romarino Worse was, however, what he seemed to be, an idler who spent his father's money; while in his heart he despised the simple captain, as he had long since been taught to do by his mother.

When Skipper Worse had settled himself down to his life in the town, he often wondered what was the matter at Sandsgaard. It was not at all as it used to be; what in the world ailed the place?

Madame Garman's death had, of course, made a great difference, but would hardly suffice to explain the dullness and constraint which prevailed there.

At last he began to feel uneasy. It was not only that Harbour-master Snell had, on the occasion of the first evening, hinted at the pecuniary difficulties of C.F. Garman, but the same story reached him from all sides. At first he ridiculed it; but little by little it began to make some impression on him.

Several times when he had gone in his boat to Sandsgaard, he had determined to speak to the Consul.

Heavens! if the firm of C.F. Garman really was in want of money, Jacob Worse had plenty at hand, and could procure more. But he never could muster up courage enough to put the question.

It was the established custom at Sandsgaard, that whenever Worse's boat was seen entering the bay, Zacharias, the man at the wharf, was ordered to take a large cod out of the fish-tank; for this was Jacob Worse's favourite dish.

The Consul's two sisters-in-law, the spinsters Mette and Birgitte, were always delighted when he came, although they were prodigiously angry with him when he teased them, as he always did.

After paying his respects to the ladies, Jacob Worse always made for the office, which, with its door usually open, was close to the sitting-room. Here he conned the almanac and when he found that it was the day of Saint Crispin or Saint Hieronymus, or some such other saint, he used to rub his hands saying:

"Is it, indeed? I remember him when I was in Italy—one of the grandest of the lot. Yes, we must certainly have some toddy this evening."

Consul Garman would smile, and the old book-keeper, Adam Kruse, seated behind his desk, would prick up his ears.

He was always invited to take a glass when the captain was there.

Worse, who was free of the house, would then take the keys of the office cupboard, and bring out certain old-fashioned square Dutch flasks.

In the evening, he played cards, with the spinsters, the Consul looking on and laughing heartily, whilst the captain played so unfairly, and so befooled the good ladies, that their very capstrings quivered with rage.

At other times, the Consul and Worse would talk politics, and discuss the Hamburg "Nachrichten," whilst the old book-keeper, with his tumbler and his long clay pipe, sat in silence in his humble corner behind the big clock.

Skipper Worse

In the old sitting-room, which looked out upon the harbour, two tallow candles were placed every evening on the table near the sofa, where the Consul was wont to sit; and when there were guests, two more were placed on the toddy-table by the stove.

Above the white panelling, which was carried up as high as the tops of the straight-backed chairs, the walls were covered with canvas, painted green. The grey window-blinds which had lately come from Copenhagen, were decorated with representations of Christiansborg, Kronborg, and Frederiksborg. A tall wayfarer under a tree in the foreground gazed across the water at the castle, while three ladies with long shawls, and bonnets like the hoods of carriages, walked towards the right. In the corner by the stove stood a winder for yarn, which the two sisters used when they were not running after one another, looking after the household work.

After his wife's death, the Consul had never succeeded in dividing this duty satisfactorily between them. When Birgitte had inspected the table linen and silver, and had looked over the washing, etc., she felt an uncontrollable desire to see that too much butter was not used in the kitchen; and when Mette, during her week, had controlled the household expenses and the cooking, she could not sleep until she had counted over the spoons and napkins.

This led to no little confusion in domestic matters, and to serious bickering between the sisters, of which, however, only distant echoes reached the Consul.

There was but one subject on which they were in accord, and that was the canary bird. In the course of years they had possessed many, and every time the cat took one they protested that never again would they expose themselves to such a calamity.

But, according to Captain Worse's calculation, the period of court mourning for the canary bird lasted precisely three weeks, after which a new one was installed. They were always hens; for the sisters objected to males of every description; moreover, they objected to the singing.

Their present canary was quite the most delightful little creature they had ever possessed. In addition to all its other perfections, there was one which embarrassed them—it could lay an egg.

But the crafty little thing would not provide a nest, but laid its eggs in such places that they were soon destroyed.

This greatly distressed Birgitte and Mette, who devised many plans to induce the bird to act more circumspectly.

They placed cotton and fine wool all about the room, and even endeavoured to construct small nests of wool and horsehair. But the incorrigible little creature seemed to take an especial delight in eluding them, and in laying eggs in out-of-the-way places.

This grieved the sisters, and in moments of irritation they went so far as to blame one another.

One evening at the club, the harbour-master inquired maliciously: "Is old Adam gone to Bergen?"

"Yes; he went last week," answered Worse.

"What in the world does he go there for?"

"Business, of course. C.F. Garman has many transactions in Bergen."

"Borrow money, perhaps?"

"Come, harbour-master, we have had enough of this!" exclaimed Jacob Worse.

But the other, taking no notice of him, went on.

"No knowing; bad times for all. Spoke to Captain Andersen, Freya, just come from Bergen. Old Adam wanted two thousand dollars, they say, if he could only get them; but he could not, not a rap. No; those Bergensers are not to be taken in."

This was too bad. Worse went home. It was in everybody's mouth that things were going ill with the firm C.F. Garman, and if its credit was impaired, it was high time for him, Jacob Worse, to come to the rescue.

Next morning he presented himself at the office, and entering, shut the door towards the sitting-room, as well as that to the inner office. He desired to have a few words quite alone with the Consul.

His manner was so very strange that morning—a mixture of hesitation and craftiness—that it made the Consul lean back in his armchair, and inquire if anything had happened to him.

"No, nothing whatever, nothing," answered Worse as he stood and shifted uneasily from one leg to another; "it was only something I wished to ask the Consul."

"We are always ready to meet all the reasonable wishes of our old friends, as far as it lies in our power. Sit

Skipper Worse

down, Captain Worse."

"Well, it was just this. I was thinking of going to the fishing this winter on my own account, and—so—so—"

"I opine that Captain Worse knows that when he has been at home in the winter season we have never raised any objection to his trading on his own account at the herring fishery, nor do we now."

"Yes, thank you; I am quite aware of it; many thanks, but that was not it. H'm! A deal of money will be wanted, Herr Consul."

At these words a somewhat rigid expression stole over the Consul's face; but Worse mustered up his courage, and fired off his big gun.

"Will the Consul lend me two thousand dollars on my note of hand?"

Morten Garman gave a start in his armchair. "What! does Jacob Worse also want to borrow money?"

"Yes. You see, Herr Consul, everybody wants money for the autumn fishing, and I particularly wish to cope on equal terms with Sivert Jespersen and the others up there."

"Yes, that is just how it is," exclaimed the Consul; "that is how it is nowadays! One wishes to outstrip the other, and so they borrow and speculate; but when the day of reckoning comes, then comes the pinch."

"As for that, Herr Consul, the firm must be aware that Jacob Worse is good for two thousand dollars, and a little more besides."

"No doubt, no doubt," answered the Consul. "But now we have demands upon us for money from all sides, there seems no end to them; it is really more than we can do these bad times."

Jacob Worse was beginning to be pleased with the success of his little comedy, and now proceeded farther with it.

"It is very sad," said he, "that I should have to turn elsewhere. People will say that I have quarrelled with the firm, or, perhaps, they will believe some of the lies concerning C. F. Garman which are going about."

"What do you mean? What do they say about the firm?" asked the Consul, quickly.

"Ah! well, for example, it was reported in the club yesterday that a certain person had gone to Bergen in order to borrow money for certain people."

Consul Garman turned his face away and looked out into the garden, where the first yellow leaves of autumn were beginning to fall.

Never before had he seen danger so imminent; his easy disposition and his pride had never permitted him to realize that the firm C.F. Garman, the old Sandsgaard house, was hanging by a thread, and that it was possible for it to collapse in a vulgar insolvency.

"Yes," he muttered, "it was a mistake, sending Kruse to Bergen; but—" And then all of a sudden, as if weary of bearing his burden alone, he turned full round upon Worse, and said: "Things are not so prosperous with C.F. Garman as you suppose, Jacob."

He called him Jacob, as in the old days when Jacob Worse was a sailor lad, and he, Morten Garman, a schoolboy.

The cunning Skipper Worse had now reached the decisive point. He tore open his coat, produced a bundle of banknotes from his breast pocket, threw them on the table in front of the Consul, and said: "Five thousand dollars to begin with, Herr Consul, and twice as much more if necessary, when I have had time to scrape it together."

His face beamed with pleasure, and he laughed with an internal chuckling sound; his joy, however, was suddenly damped when the Consul pushed the notes from him, and inquired in his iciest manner:

"What does all this mean? What do you wish me to do with this money?"

"Use it, borrow it, keep it as long as you will, Herr Consul."

"Oh! that is what I am to understand, is it? You have allowed yourself a little diversion at our expense; very fine, indeed, Herr Captain Worse. Things are not come to such a pass with the firm that it must borrow of its own people."

The crafty captain sat for a moment quite dumbfounded; but he could bear it no longer. His spirit was up, and bringing his fist down with a thump, he exclaimed: "Morten, you are a little too bad with your confounded airs! If the firm wants money, is it unreasonable to borrow it of me, I who have gained every farthing I possess in the service of your father and you?"

"But don't you understand," said the Consul, who was getting rather excited; "cannot you see how our credit would suffer, if it were known that one of our own captains had helped the firm out of difficulties?"

Skipper Worse

"Stuff and nonsense with your credit; cash beats credit any day. My money is as good as yours, Morten Garman; and if you won't have it, you are not the man I take you for."

Jacob Worse was now beside himself with eagerness, and, without either of them noticing it, the ceremonious style was dropped, and they talked in familiar language.

"Come, come, Jacob, don't let us quarrel," said the Consul, pulling up his neckcloth. It was the first time that any one had thus got the better of him.

He looked at the money, and then gazed out upon the garden. A long pause ensued.

Skipper Worse had got up and stood with his back to the table, examining a map on the wall. The old clock in the sitting-room ticked terribly slowly.

At last Consul Garman got up, and approaching him, said: "Listen, Jacob Worse. I will take your money if you will enter into partnership with me."

"What! what do you say? Partnership? Are you mad, Herr Consul?"

"Listen to me. You invest your capital—that is to say, as much of it as you please—in the business, and to that extent you become a partner in the firm of Garman and Worse.

The rest we can arrange at leisure."

"No, no, Herr Consul; I never intended this. Change the name of the firm indeed! It is out of the question, and you don't mean it, either."

"Yes, I do mean it. It is the only way in which the affair can be arranged. Let us sit down and examine the matter calmly. It is absolutely intolerable to me to borrow money of you; but, on the other hand, there is no reason, as far as my own feelings are concerned, or as regards the external relations of the firm, why we, at a busy and, shall I say, a critical moment, should not admit into the house, a man who for many years has worked with us, or why we should not, as a consequence of the agreement, add his name to ours, so that for the future the business should be carried on under the name of 'Garman and Worse.'"

"Yes; but—but—all the rest is practicable; but the name—your father's name!"

"Possibly my father would not have done it, but I will have it so. This arrangement is—h'm—the saving of the firm; I am bound to acknowledge it, and I therefore urge you to agree to my proposal."

"But my good Herr Consul," resumed Worse, who had suddenly come down again to his former position, and could not reconcile himself to the notion of entering into partnership with Morten W. Garman, the Consul himself.

The other, however, held firmly to his purpose; and as he made a request, there was nothing for it but to accept the offer.

They remained in conversation a long time, discussing future arrangements. The Consul said plainly that he did not expect Jacob Worse to mix himself up with the business, an idea which made him laugh outright, as it would never occur to him to interfere.

As he rowed back to the town, it seemed to him that he was quite a different Jacob Worse to the one who had rowed from it. Certain ambitious views of his new dignity began to assert themselves, and he sat repeating: "Garman and Worse," wondering what sort of impression it would make on Randulf.

Nevertheless, he was not entirely happy; it was too much—it had come upon him too suddenly—and he did not care to talk about it.

Consul Garman, however, made no secret of the change in the firm, and the next day the news was announced in the two local papers, each about the size of an ordinary cabbage leaf.

It is easy to conceive what a welcome opportunity this event afforded for festive meetings, and for extra libations and singing at the club.

Jacob Worse was fêted at the club, speeches were made in his honour, and, as the drinking went on, was chaffed unmercifully. Envy is always very witty, and his elevation became by no means a source of unmixed pleasure to him.

And from Randulf, that old rascal who had written from Riga that he was on the point of sailing, came tidings that he had been in collision with a Rostock trader, and that he had put back to Bolderaa, where he must discharge and repair. It only required that he should be frozen up there for the winter to make the disappointment complete.

When Romarino heard of the arrangements that had been made, he wrote to his father, as if acknowledging him for the first time in his life.

Skipper Worse

Worse, however, was hurt when addressed in the following terms: "For a mere sailor, I must admit that on this occasion you have managed pretty well for yourself."

Madame Torvestad redoubled her attentions; and when the autumn came, with its rain and bad weather, Jacob Worse found it pleasant enough to drink tea with madame and her daughters, when there was no meeting.

They bantered him so terribly at the club.

Chapter V

LATE in the autumn, when the sun set in lurid clouds full of storm and rain, the little town was shrouded in a darkness which was only relieved by a small lantern, which glimmered on the wall at the door of the town hall.

Otherwise it was dark, pitch dark, in the narrow, crooked streets, and down by the wharves, where one might fall headlong into the sea if tipsy, or a stranger.

In the small shops train-oil lamps or tallow candles were burning, in the larger ones suspended "moderator" lamps were beginning to be used.

A faint light was thus thrown upon the puddles, and those who were well acquainted with the street could pick their way dryshod.

Most people, however, wore long boots, and came tramping along, so that they could be heard splashing through the mud.

Here and there a small lantern might be observed swinging along, at one moment lowered carefully in order to seek a path in the worst places, at others casting its inquisitive light in the faces of the passers-by, or against the sides of the low wooden buildings.

Ladies with cap baskets, from which knitting needles were sticking out, might be seen going to evening parties; or servant maids carrying lanterns, and followed by little girls with thin white legs and big goloshes on their feet, on their way to the dancing-school.

After seven o'clock there was scarcely any light in the shops, and the streets seemed deserted. Now and then a ray of light was cast upon the mud and puddles when the door of a tavern, where sailors and toppers quarrelled and rioted, was thrown open.

About this time the night watch would sally out of the town hall, in order to take up its beat. It was composed generally of old seamen or ship carpenters, who were past their work, men with hoarse, thick voices, bent with age and hard of hearing.

They crept along very slowly, clad in long, thick, frieze coats, bearing lanterns in their left hands, and thumping along the pavement with their ponderous staves.

At certain appointed corners they cried out the hour and the state of the weather, each in his own peculiar fashion, so that he could be understood in his own beat, but nowhere else in the whole world.

When those who had been at parties came home at the usual respectable hour of about ten o'clock, the lanterns reappeared in the streets. When they fell in with a watchman, they wished him good night, the young people asking the hour in order to tease him, the older ones inquiring seriously about the direction of the wind.

After that the town became dark and silent. A drunken man would reel from one side to the other until he fell down a cellar trap-door, into the gutter, or into the sea. If by chance he stumbled upon the watch, he soon found himself in the lock-up.

But it was not so easy to stumble upon the watch; for they had their secret sleeping-corners, from which they only issued in case of emergency, when they thought the time was come for crying out something, or when the shuffling sound of leather boots was heard approaching.

This was the watch which went the rounds, the fire watch of the town consisting of four or five ancient watchmen, who had no voices left.

They wore their coat collars turned up, and their fur caps drawn down, so that they could hardly notice a fire until it singed their very beards. Nevertheless the town reposed in perfect security.

Perchance, however, some one would wake up and begin to think of the quantity of rye which lay in the warehouses, or there came a series of visions, clear and definite, such as appear to us in the darkness of the night; first, an ember somewhere smouldering, spreading, and then setting fire to the walls, seizing and enveloping the house, and consuming the rye, salt, barrels, the store, and everything.

Then a shuffling noise of stiff leather boots and staves along the pavement, all coming nearer every moment, and then passing out of hearing.

Ah! the fire-watch going the rounds. All right, one can sleep now in peace and comfort.

Or perhaps a child would wake up in a troubled dream, and would lay and listen, terrified by hideous

Skipper Worse

imaginations of thieves and robbers climbing in at the kitchen window to kill father and mother with long knives. But outside the watchman cries: "Two o'clock, and a still night."

Ah! the watch; yes, of course, that was the watch; so no thieves or robbers can come in at the kitchen window. All bad people must stay at home, or the watch will take them to the lock-up. Yes, it was not bad people, only good and kind folks and watchmen.

So it sleeps on again in peace and dreams no more.

But when they did come, those three terrible cannon shots which announced a fire, shaking and even bursting in the windows, unbounded terror prevailed. High above the dark streets the hazy sky was glowing like a sea of fire.

The drummer, Long Jorgen, beat furiously with the thicker ends of his drumsticks; men with hoarse voices, and boys with shrill notes like those of sea-gulls, rushed through the streets shouting: "Fire! fire!" Outside the engine-house, people carrying lanterns were assembling, swearing, and shouting for the keys.

They hang behind the fire inspector's bed.

Off, then, to the fire inspector's.

In the pitchy darkness, the messenger encounters him, and running full tilt against him, knocks the bunch of keys into the mud. Whilst search is made for them with three lanterns, some sailors break open the doors, and the engine is run out with a dismal rumbling sound.

Old women in their nightcaps run into the streets, with a washhand basin or a flatiron. In the houses all flock to the parents' bed-chamber. The smaller children sit up in bed and cry, whilst the elder girls, half dressed, their hair hanging down their backs, and white and trembling with fear, strive to comfort them.

But the mother sets to work to make coffee-hot coffee is good for everything, and under all circumstances.

From time to time the father returns home to report how things are going on.

Long since the boys have dressed themselves and disappeared. It is a holiday to them, a festival of terror. The red sky overhead, the darkness of the night, the flames which now and then pierce the canopy of smoke, the men rushing about and shouting—all this fills them with an excitement equal to ten romances.

Determined to attempt something prodigious, to distinguish themselves by something manly beyond conception, they rush into houses where there is neither fire nor danger, and fasten upon the most immovable and impossible objects.

The fire inspector stands by the engines and takes command; two rows of men and lads pass the water forwards, and return the empty buckets. At the seaside, or down by some well, the younger sailors take it in turn to fill the buckets, until they are wet through and their arms benumbed.

Officers of the Citizen Corps, in their blue tail coats with white facings, run here and there, and with their long swords are in the way both of themselves and of every one else.

But the sailors plunge into the very fire itself; entering the houses, they strive to rescue the contents until the roofs fall in. They climb up on the neighbouring houses with wet sails, and pull down sheds and boardings.

Thomas Randulf and Jacob Worse were known from their boyhood as the most daring on such occasions.

They were always the first on the spot, carrying out the aged and the invalids, and afterwards taking the hottest and most dangerous posts. In fact, they were the real commanders, although the fire inspector had yellow and crimson feathers in his three-cornered hat.

At such time the merchants were in greater anxiety than the rest of the population. Insurance was not usual; indeed, some of the sectaries looked upon it as sinful. Others said that their insurance was in the hands of the Almighty.

But when the wind set in their direction, and the wooden houses blazed up, one after the other, the wisest and the best of them lost their heads, and ran about throwing sacks of corn and flour into the sea, labouring to destroy, whilst they forgot to save the cash in the office close at hand.

Through the flame and smoke, through the uproar and the shouting, is heard the booming of the great cathedral bell. Two or three slow peals, then a long pause, and then more quickly intermittent single peals, a dismal, hope-dispelling sound.

It is not an alarm bell rousing people to come to the rescue, it is rather the church's prayer for mercy, a despairing appeal to God to stop the raging flames.

But the winter nights could also show a different life in the dark little town. It might be Christmas time, or just

Skipper Worse

after New Year's Day, when the northwest wind was bringing snow-storms every half hour, the stars shining brightly between whites.

Suddenly a boat would appear in the inner fjord, another and yet another, then a small smack, followed again by a couple more boats, each steering for its own destination in the harbour, and groping its way to the ring-bolts under the warehouses and along the quays.

A man would jump on shore and run at full speed up into the town, his huge sea-boots leaving marks as of elephants' feet on the newly fallen snow. The watchman would hold up his lantern and survey the wayfarer, whose boots, trousers, and even his sou-wester, shine with countless starlike, silvery specks.

The watchman smiles, and, as he is a knowing old fellow, cries out, when he reaches the corner by Skipper Worse's house, "Wind north-west! The herring is on the coast!"

More boats and smacks arrive; the rattling of anchors and chain cables is heard in all directions. Men knock at the walls of the warehouses, and people sally forth with lanterns, doors are thrown open, and the light falls on the men yonder in a boat, and on the heaps of fat, glittering spring herrings.

Up in the town the merchant's house resounds as the man with the sea-boots picks up a stone and hammers at the wall. He strikes boldly, knowing that he brings welcome news.

All arouse themselves, thinking at first that it is a fire; but the master of the house springing up, throws the window open.

"Ivar Östebö sends his compliments. He has bought four hundred barrels on your account."

"Do you know the price?"

"Three marks eighteen shillings. We are lying off the northern warehouse with eighty barrels; the rest is close behind."

"How is the wind?"

"North-westerly, with snow-storms."

"Run off to Lars up on the hill, and bid him rouse up the women; he knows what to do"

Upon this the window shuts down again, and the man in the sea-boots hurries on, knocking against other men also running in the dark.

The merchant begins to put on his working clothes, which are always at hand. His wife calls to him to put on two of his thickest woollen coats, which he does; for he well knows what it is like in the warehouse, with the wind at north-west with snow-storms.

The wind increases in gusts, and the snow is whirled about.

Boats and smacks arrive in such numbers before the northwest wind, that the harbour is full of noise and shouting, the plashing of the waves, the sound of furling sail, and the clanking of chain cables as they rattle through the hawseholes.

In the upper stories of the warehouses lights appear. Oil lamps are placed in all directions, and people begin to arrive—men, old women, and girls.

The magazine of salt is opened, the cooper rummages among the barrels, and the men in the boats grow impatient; they cry out that they are going to begin, and the first herrings are shot upon the floor. The whole town to its farthest corner is now on the alert; lights shine in the small windows, and innumerable coffee-pots are set by the fires. Bustle and hilarity prevail; the herring has arrived, the herring that all have been expecting, and from which all hope to get something.

The girls and women who have to clean the fish put on their working dresses amidst noise and laughter, although the cold makes their teeth chatter. Over everything they fold thick handkerchiefs, as a protection to the head so that only the eyes and nose are visible; for if the brine of the fish touches the hair, it causes a sore.

When they are ready they hasten in a crowd to the warehouse, where they have entered into a contract beforehand. At once they join the party to which they belong, and take their places in the midst of the herring, which come higher than their wooden shoes, amidst barrels and bowls of brine.

The unfortunate tallow candles placed on sticks in the heap of fish are always in danger of being upset, or of being put out by being snuffed with wet fingers.

They are soon supplied with short, sharp knives, and they proceed to clean the herrings with great rapidity.

The snow is presently covered with huge footmarks, and the new layer brought by each passing shower is soon trampled into mud.

Skipper Worse

Only up in the town and in the wider streets round about the school is there enough for the boys to carry on their snow-balling, when at last the morning arrives.

When the pale and sallow youngsters at the top of the school come toiling along, with their dull burdens of Greek and Latin books, their thoughts running upon a bygone literature, and their brains crammed with grammar, half consisting of rules and half of exceptions to those rules; and when they meet a troop of girls on their way homewards, after having worked among the herrings half the night, it may happen that the noisy girls will put their heads together and laugh at them.

They have drawn down their handkerchiefs, so that their mouths are now free. Chattering and laughing, they march up the middle of the street, warm and rosy-cheeked after their labours, besprinkled with fish scales up to the eyes.

Many of them are about the same age as the learned young gentlemen, but they feel so much their superiors, that they laugh at the half-admiring, half-contemptuous looks which they provoke.

The students feel this a little, but they find a solace in quoting "Plebs plebis," or "Semper mutabile," or some such other classic witticism.

They know that the herrings have come during the night, and they see the harbour swarming with vessels, and the town astir with business.

But what of that? Was it for them to think of vile lucre? Their world lay far above the common herd; they are on the road to Parnassus and despise the grovelling souls—the mob—who toil and drudge, stooping over their work like the beasts that perish, uncheered by a single ray from the sacred altar of the muses.

This contempt for the masses they cherish until they have to descend from Parnassus and enter the public service. Then they learn to discourse eloquently on the benefits of commerce, whilst in reality they are completely indifferent to it.

Scarcely any of the official classes, except the clergy, to whom on such occasions offerings flowed more liberally, rejoiced in a good fishing season. When the herring was abundant, and money was plentiful in the country, so that everybody was able to clear off incumbrances and to lay by something, the lawyers complained of bad times.

But when, on the other hand, the people were badly off, when the fishing or the harvest failed, when a tightness of money stopped supplies, so that bankruptcies, distress warrants, and forced sales by auction, with heavy law charges were frequent, then it was that the lawyers thrived.

With the exception of the official class, and of the few families that lived upon pensions or dividends, there was a feeling of joy over all the town when the herrings arrived. All were interested in a prosperous fishing, which should bring the fulfilment of long-cherished hopes, or relief from embarrassments.

First and foremost everything relating to the sea—and this comprised the whole town—was in a state of activity, from the fishermen themselves to the dealers in salt and the speculators. All moved in a sort of delirium so long as the fishing lasted.

Not only skippers, but even young mates, were entrusted with vessels, and the most daring feats were performed in order to arrive first at the fishing-ground, and to secure a full cargo.

Men misled one another with false information, occasionally came to blows, and drank deeply when time and opportunity offered.

In the club, the evenings were noisy; all the rooms were full, and people even sat on the edge of the billiard-tables, which was contrary to rules.

Every new-comer was expected to bring tidings of the fishing, of the prices, and of how many shoals were surrounded by the nets, also, if there were any news from the north.

These were the only available sources of information, and business was regulated accordingly. Sometimes they were correct, sometimes altogether wrong.

Sometimes the fishing was best after it had been declared that the herrings had spawned and gone out to sea. Sometimes, again, there was no fishing, even when enormous shoals were reported; and people were left with dearly purchased salt and empty barrels.

At the club after the dinner hour, and when business was considered over for the day, there was a good deal of drinking and singing.

There was almost always some young skipper who, stepping forward, would, in the deepest and gruffest tones

Skipper Worse

at his command, ask permission to treat the company to a glass. They know that he has made more than a hundred dollars on one cargo, so he can afford to be free with his money.

When the punch-bowl is placed before the seniors of the party, Harbour-master Snell and the master pilot, a song in praise of the herring is struck up; they empty their glasses after the fashion of their forefathers, and sing in honour of "Gamle Norge," of the shipping trade, and of the constitution.

Late into the night the windows rattled again with the chorus, and the longer they sat the louder they sang, beating time on the table with the thick tumblers.

But there were others in the town who never drank, nor set their feet in the club, and yet whose interest and welfare lay in the fishing. These were the Haugians, the holy ones, as scoffers called them.

Besides Sivert Jespersen and the brothers Egeland, who carried on a large salting business in addition to their store, many other Haugians speculated in herrings. Generally they had been peasant boys, who had come to the town to take service with some of the elders, and had thus learnt the Haugian frugality, exactness, and diligence. As soon as they could start some little business on their own account, they advanced rapidly.

At the fishing, where the life was very wild, they took their part, although they were much ridiculed, because they sang hymns instead of drinking and using bad language.

Gradually people began to see that these good folks were not to be despised. There was nothing whatever against them; they were neither rioters nor spendthrifts; their boats were always ready, and their gear in good order, and although they neither swore nor drank, they would sail a boat with the most daring.

While they bore themselves peaceably and quietly they were ever ready to assert their rights, and people thought twice before they meddled with them.

Sivert Jespersen, too, had been a peasant lad who had worked himself up from nothing. He now owned two large warehouse in the town and several salting-houses in the north. Moreover, he had several shares in sundry vessels.

He no longer went to the fishing himself, as he was over sixty, much bent, and very rheumatic, like most of those who had frequented the winter fishing in their youth.

But when the herring came in, he strolled up to the warehouse in his old-fashioned coat and fur cap, and on such occasions he was radiant with good humour. The whole building is full of people, herrings, salt, and barrels; noise and shouting, the sound of coopering and of hoisting and lowering by ropes.

The floors and steps are wet and slippery with brine and with the blood of herrings dripping down from one floor to another. Fish scales cover the walls, and everywhere there is a smell as if one were in the belly of a whale.

Amidst all this, Sivert Gesvint moves about with a tallow candle in his hand, up and down and round about the whole house, humming a psalm tune as he goes.

There is some disturbance among the fish-girls; they are either quarrelling or playing some practical joke, but so roughly that two barrels packed with herrings are upset, and the contents scattered on the floor and into the salt tubs, making a sad mess.

"Come, come," says Sivert Jespersen, approaching them, his voice mild and soft as usual; "you must treat the gifts of God with care, so that they may not be injured or wasted. Is it not so, dear children?"

He looks from one to the other with his cold grey eye and fixed smile, while the girls silently busy themselves in gathering up and repacking the fish.

It was always considered much more disagreeable to be called "dear children" by Sivert Jespersen than to be called "young devils" by any one else.

Although in their quiet way they thrive, and seemed to conduct their affairs with much prudence and discretion, the business affairs of these Haugians rested upon anything but a solid foundation. Two years of failure in the fishing, or a disastrous fire in their uninsured property, and many apparently large fortunes would melt away almost to nothing.

They felt this themselves sometimes, when the herring were late in coming, or when, in the spring time, they found the till empty and the barrels of herrings unsold, and when everything depended upon the rise or fall of prices in Russia or Prussia.

At such times their hands trembled when the post, which only came once a week, arrived. They spent sleepless nights, and it was especially at such times that they would sing hymns.

When they assembled at daily meetings, they read, they prayed, they sang; and as they sat and looked at one

Skipper Worse

another, each knowing how much his neighbour had at stake, knowing, too, how peaceful and guileless they were, and how God had hitherto protected them, they were satisfied that He would not now abandon them—"if not for my sake," some speaker would say, "yet for the sake of others." Then they felt strengthened in prayer, and smiling affectionately at each other, would depart to their homes, greatly comforted.

They were not disappointed; for year after year they thrived, and their capital increased. Those who had salted one thousand barrels one year would take three thousand the next. They were on the look-out at all points; they pressed forward at all hazards; and while they seemed so quiet with their psalm-singing and gentle mode of speech, they were, in truth, energetic, even desperate, speculators.

This was thoroughly displeasing to Hans Nilsen Fennefos, not that it was against Hauge's rule that the Brethren should enter into trade, on the contrary.

But this was not the old style of industry, with its reasonable desire for moderate profits. The money came too easily, and in too great abundance, Fennefos observed also that luxury was beginning to creep in among the Brethren; there were even dinner parties, where the eating was excessive.

The fact was that these frugal people were so unaccustomed to joints and puddings, that when they found they could afford them, they took a half-childish pleasure in ordering dinners like those supplied to the great houses.

Fennefos reasoned with and rebuked them; but although they listened, smiled, and thanked him, no change resulted.

Moreover, in the public life of the town, these quiet men, who had become rich unnoticed, began to assert themselves, and it was found that, for many reasons, they had to be considered. Their gentle manners and humble address ceased to provoke ridicule.

By degrees, as the Haugians advanced in worldly affairs, and lost in spiritual life, a superficial piety, proceeding from them and from their movement, crept into society, both in town and country—a sort of perfunctory formalism, which seemed to prosper.

Such was the condition of the place at that time—an old town of new ideas, narrow, crooked, unenlightened, and yet religious; at the same time fresh and bright, looking down upon the blue sea with its gallant ships and hardy seamen.

It should be seen on a summer day, in bright sunshine and a clear northerly wind, when the gulls fly out over the fjord and backwards and forwards along the front of the white-painted warehouses of the harbour, where they are unloading salt, and the wind bears the sound of the sailors' chorus, "Amalia Maria, from Lisbon we come," as the salt rustles along the broad wooden trough down into the lighters alongside, with a never-to-be-forgotten merry sound; the whole town smelling somewhat of herrings, but chiefly of the sea, the fresh North Sea.

Those who had been long away from home, and who had travelled the whole world round, declared that such an air is to be met with nowhere else.

Chapter VI

SARAH and Henrietta sat in the workroom winding yarn. Henrietta talked in a whisper. Their mother sat writing letters in the parlour, the door of which was open. She was a little hard of hearing.

". . . And, then, you must know—yes, is it not strange what people will do? for they stole a rope. Just fancy!"

"Who, Henrietta?"

"Why, Lauritz and the others."

"Stole, did you say?"

"Are you out of your senses?" said Henrietta, scandalized at the suggestion. "Do you suppose that Lauritz steals? No; they only took a rubbishy piece of old rope not worth sixpence, which was hanging behind the door of Skipper Worse's storehouse. The rich Skipper Worse, as if such a thing were worth notice!"

"But, Henrietta, you know that it does not depend upon its value. Every one who steals—"

"Is a thief; yes, I know!" exclaimed Henrietta. "But now you must know what they did with the rope; Lauritz told me yesterday afternoon, when I was in the kitchen getting tea ready."

"Whilst there was a meeting here!" said Sarah, in a tone of remonstrance.

Henrietta nodded assent. "On no account must you tell our mother. Lauritz is so funny, I can't help laughing at him. Just imagine! they stretched a rope across the street when it got dark, and two of them held each end. When any one came whom they disliked, they tightened it, and tripped him up. After a time the Commissioner came—you know, the one who is so cross and red-faced—and he tumbled head over heels, and broke his arm."

"I think you must be out of your senses, Henrietta. Surely you do not think it was right to do such a thing?"

"Yes, quite right. You know what a horrid man he is; all the boys in the town hate him, and so do I. At the sessions he sits swearing and scolding incessantly, and when he is at his worst—just think!—he lays about him with his whip. Bah! it serves him right; I wish he had broken both arms, the brute!"

Sarah was thoroughly shocked. At this moment her mother seemed as if she were about to rise from her chair, and the sisters resumed their work diligently.

Sarah sat thinking that this affair of Henrietta's was very wrong, and she doubted whether it was not her duty to tell her mother. Madame Torvestad was strangely lenient towards her younger daughter; she had once said, "As for Henrietta, I am under no apprehension; she is easily influenced, and will in due time improve. It was very different with you, Sarah; for you had a stubborn disposition, which required early discipline. I am thankful to say that neither I nor your excellent father spared the rod, and a blessing has followed it, in that you have become what you are."

This she said with unusual effusion; generally the relations between the mother and daughter were a trifle stiff. They could talk to one another both on worldly and spiritual matters, but there was no real familiarity between them.

Sarah had been brought up under the strongest sense of the duty of children to their parents, and she regarded her mother with veneration. She would sooner have cut off her hand than oppose her, but she could not cast herself on her neck as she often wished to do.

When Henrietta, in the exuberance of her spirits, kissed and embraced her, she experienced a wonderful pleasure, but she would tear herself away, knowing that her mother did not like such demonstrations.

When they had worked on for a short time in silence, Henrietta whispered again:

"He was drunk on Saturday."

"Who?"

"Lauritz."

"Oh! how do you know it?"

"He told me himself."

"But has he no feeling of shame?"

"Well, it was not so bad as all that; he was not downright drunk, you know, only a little 'tight,' as they say."

It was evident that Henrietta was rather proud of him.

Before Sarah could regain her composure after this last shock, her mother called to her.

Skipper Worse

"Sarah, come here and help me! Where is it that our Lord speaks of the vine?"

"The fifteenth chapter of St. John."

"Read it to me."

Sarah began, and as she was reading, her mother, although apparently absorbed in her letter and in listening, was watching her closely.

Madame Torvestad was in the habit of writing many letters, which were held in much estimation by the Brethren around. They were read out at the meetings, and afterwards carefully preserved, for lending to those who required good counsel. Her letters were indeed kindly and full of affection.

When Sarah read the twelfth verse, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you," her mother stopped her.

"Yes, that was the verse I was thinking of." She looked down on her letter almost as if she was thinking over what she had written. Sarah was conscious that what her mother said was also directed at her.

"Brotherly love is the first fruits of the true Vine, and that is the love to which the apostle alludes. But, dear brethren, consider how and why you love another, whether because he is a child of God, or whether for earthly reasons, and, mark well, whether when you find that he loves God, he becomes so dear to you that all his other qualities are forgotten."

Sarah blushed a deep red, and bent over her Bible. She was about to read the thirteenth verse, when her mother said: "Thanks, Sarah; you need not read any more, it was only that these reflections on brotherly love made me wish to refresh my memory from Holy Writ."

She proceeded in the same tone, half to Sarah and half to herself: "See, the tempter has again prepared his snares; be watchful, and pray for guidance, that you fall not into them. Sinful affection lies in wait behind brotherly love, just as the serpent concealed itself among the pleasant fruits of the tree of knowledge. See, then, that you love in the spirit, and not in the flesh. If you love in the spirit, and if you meet with one who seeks the same God, you should love that seeker; and should he be only—" here her words became very impressive—"should he be only a distant seeker, yes, even a wanderer, who but dimly catches a glimpse of the light, and who follows it but feebly, and be his appearance, conversation, and natural mind ever so doubtful, you should love him for the sake of Him who first loved you.

"Thanks, my child, for your assistance. Now go back to your work, and pray that it may be given to you to know what brotherly love is, and that you may not go astray."

When Sarah reached the door, her mother added: "It surprises me that when you and Henrietta are alone together you do not sing a hymn. In my younger days we used always to do so. It lightens labour, and drives away evil thoughts."

Soon afterwards the sisters, in low, clear tones, sang a hymn, which they knew to be a favourite with their mother.

When Henrietta was unable to remember the words, she hummed the tune; while Sarah, who was very pale, sang on with downcast but flashing eyes.

Neither of the girls had observed that Hans Nilsen Fennefos had come up the steps, and was standing outside on the landing.

He stopped and listened to the singing; it reminded him of that night long since, when he heard his mother singing. He was much affected, Sarah's soft voice seemed like his mother's, and his eyes filled with tears.

When he reached his own little room, he sat for some time, distracted by conflicting thoughts. How he wished that at that moment his mother were at his side to counsel him! She, however, had died two years since, and those who stood by her death-bed declared that she had sung herself into heaven.

Hans Nilsen had come from a meeting of the elders. He himself was one of their number, not by reason of his years, but because of his faith, his uprightness, and his experience, conjoined with true wisdom.

A letter had reached him from his native place, complaining that a certain lukewarmness was beginning to manifest itself among the Brethren thereabouts.

It begged imploringly that some man or woman might be sent, who would be able to rekindle the dying flame before it was utterly quenched.

They would prefer Hans Nilsen, but, at the same time, would be grateful for any one whom the elders might send to them.

Skipper Worse

When this letter was read out, the oldest man among them, a veteran who had known and laboured with Hauge, said: "Now, my dear Hans Nilsen, what is your opinion? Does the spirit call upon you to respond to the appeal of our brethren, or do you know of any other person more fitted for the work?"

"I think that Hans Nilsen seems very well content to be where he is," said Sivert Jespersen, without raising his eyes from the pages of the sermon-book which he was turning over.

Nothing more was spoken; but they were so well acquainted with one another, understood so well the least hint or the slightest inflection of voice, that the pause which followed was as suggestive and as interesting to them as a discussion.

At last Fennefos stood up, and said: "I will search myself, and pray for guidance; to-morrow, or perhaps this evening at the meeting, I may, God willing, give you my answer."

He sat down, purposing in all sincerity to examine himself, and to seek guidance.

He had already observed here and there something of the disapprobation which had manifested itself in Sivert Jespersen's remark. The majority, no doubt, would gladly retain him; but there were some to whom his presence was oppressive.

From such quarters came whispers that Madame Torvestad's house might be dangerous to a lay-preacher, and might tempt him to weakness.

As soon as Hans Nilsen observed this, he had at once thought of Sarah. He had searched his own heart with the utmost rigour, but he could not be certain that the pleasure he experienced in her company was not the beginning of a sinful affection, or, if not so, whether it were what it ought to be, a heartfelt friendship and a true feeling of devotion for a woman who was purer and better than all others.

In the mean time, he was unable to arrive at any decision, and he began to be pained and disturbed in mind. At last, one day, he went straight to Madame Torvestad, asking if she would advise him to marry, and, if so, whether she could recommend any Christian-minded woman as his helpmate.

Madame Torvestad was not taken by surprise; it was a common custom among the Haugians, and especially the Herrnhutters, to follow the guidance of the elders in such matters. Malicious persons in the town even declared that the lamented Torvestad had got his wife in a lottery at Christiansfeldt.

It seemed so natural for Madame Torvestad to think of her own daughters, and first and foremost of Sarah, that Hans Nilsen's question seemed almost as good as a proposal for her.

She answered evasively; she did not believe that so well-known and so highly valued a preacher could be permitted to give up his journeyings throughout the country. He must be aware, she said, that when a man is married it is not easy for him to absent himself from home. Nor could she at that moment think of any woman who would suit him.

Hans Nilsen was surprised and disappointed. He could not see why Madame Torvestad should not give her daughter to him, and it never occurred to him that she might harbour other designs. He did not for a moment think of opposing or attempting to overcome her determination; on the contrary, he strove to convince himself that she was in the right, and with some effort he succeeded.

A week had passed since the conversation with Madame Torvestad, and during this time Hans Nilsen had examined himself closely. He came to the conclusion that if he had been drawn to Sarah by any earthly feeling, the disappointment must needs have caused him grievous pain.

That he did not feel some grievous pain, he was not prepared to say. He would have been exceedingly happy if all had gone as he wished; but now that he was near Sarah, and felt no unusual desire either to approach her or to fly from temptation, he was satisfied that his thoughts were pure, and he began to feel more at peace with himself, although somewhat depressed.

But that letter which had arrived to-day, and the evident suspicion which had lurked behind Sivert Jespersen's words, and his own feelings when he listened to Sarah's singing! All his doubts broke out afresh, and as he sat on his small hard sofa, when the evening shades began to fall, tumultuous feelings arose, and thoughts hitherto strange to him arose in his mind, accusing and answering each other.

Why did he not depart and obey the call, journeying from cottage to cottage throughout the dark winter? Why did he not hasten to the poor anxious souls scattered about the country, struggling in their loneliness with doubts and temptations? Why did he not long, as formerly, to combat with the powers of hell?

Was it not, after all, as Sivert Jespersen had said? Was he not living too much at ease where he was; and was it

Skipper Worse

not Sarah—Sarah alone that made him so contented and so happy in everything around him?

He felt that one of the evil moods which sometimes visited him, especially when he was younger, was near. He wrung his hands, and prayed that the spirit might guide him, and that all might be made clear to him. He writhed as if in pain, and his breathing became short and laboured.

Thoughts, evil thoughts, which were not his own, stormed around him, and instead of earnest self-examination, he was only able to recall the doubts and scoffings which he had encountered. Confused phantasms crowded his brain; and when he strove to come to a decision, to find solid ground somewhere, everything vanished, he lay powerless, bound hand and foot, and Satan's self appeared deriding him.

Then, crying aloud: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" he threw himself, crushed and exhausted, upon the sofa, burying his face in his hands.

But as he closed his eyes, small rays of light blazed under his eyelids, glimmered, vanished, and then returned, until it seemed to him that suddenly—in the darkness—he could read in his closed eyes the word "Go." He sprang up, and looking around in the dimly lighted room, repeated "Go! go!" His brain became clearer, his peace of mind returned, his prayer had been heard. The spirit had guided him, and had dispelled the darkness. He knelt down and gave thanks.

He threw off his coat and waistcoat, opened the window, and let the rain fall on his face; he could now see his way clearly. Here he was in danger; he must go, and the sooner the better. Now once more, God be thanked, he longed to struggle with the powers of hell.

He lighted his candle, and shaved himself with an unshaken hand. He was calm, a little exhausted, but wonderfully happy and contented. Afterwards he washed and dressed himself anew.

His forehead was not very high, but broad and open; his hair dark and wiry, for which reason he kept it cut short. His nose was large and aquiline, his mouth from his lips thin, and his chin well formed and powerful.

As his lips were beardless, his teeth were plainly visible, close-set, well-formed peasant teeth; and there were many persons who liked to fix their eyes on his mouth when he spoke or sang at the meetings. It was a mouth red and white, fresh and clear, which never touched tobacco or spirits.

Cleanliness was especially the characteristic of the man, not only in his clothes and linen, but in his face, with its regular features and closely shaved chin. From his eyes, which were grey and bright, a pure, earnest light shone, and there were those who did not care to face them.

He had nothing of that inquisitive, offensive gaze with which many of the Brethren seemed to bore into a sinner, as if they were piercing downwards into a deep abyss of secret vice and wickedness. The look of Hans Nilsen, on the contrary, gave the impression of expecting to meet with the same purity as that from whence it came.

Perhaps it was for this reason that so many looked to one side when they stood in front of him.

Nearly all the Haugians in the town were at the meeting, for it was a Saturday. There was a movement of satisfaction among them when Fennefos went to Endre Egeland, who stood by the little desk, about to read out a sermon, and asked permission to say a word.

All roused themselves, in order to enjoy the words of the popular preacher; it was long since they had heard him, for of late he had not been much inclined to speak in public.

But their joy was not unmixed when Hans Nilsen began: "Beloved brothers and sisters, I stand here in order to bid you farewell."

Still they were pleased to hear him, the elders nodding their heads approvingly, and smiling at one another.

It was the old sound, the well-known weighty words as of Hauge's own time, before much and many things had weakened and corrupted the pure wine.

Hans Nilsen differed in manner from those who generally conducted the meetings. His voice was not forced, nor his head bowed down, and a smile never rested on his features. Tall and grand, he stood among them with few and simple gestures; and as he turned his head, the light of his clear, grey eyes lit up the distant corners of the room.

First, he exhorted them earnestly, and as one in authority; then he thanked them warmly for their kind and faithful brotherly feeling, turning himself as he said it, in such a way that all noticed it, towards Sivert Jespersen; and, again, he especially thanked those who had held out a helping hand when he was almost stumbling and going astray.

Skipper Worse

Lastly, he offered up a prayer, which was long remembered among them. It was one of those moments when his words were winged, and his whole being glowed with love and fire.

They afterwards flocked round him, in order to press his hand, or to get just one word from him; for no one knew how long he would be absent. When a lay-preacher so valued as Fennefos began such a journey, he might be led from district to district round the whole country; for all were desirous to hear him, and there would be many who would urge him to come to them, when it was known that he was on his travels.

There was, therefore, sorrow and tears among them; for Fennefos was, in truth, one of the strongest supports of the community. With respect to many others, Endre Egeland or Sivert Jespersen, for example, there was some drawback; at least, people had always something to say against them, and they were envired by slander and ridicule.

But on Hans Nilsen, not the smallest stain had ever appeared. The new clergyman in the town, who seemed to have some sympathy with the Haugians, spoke of him with the utmost respect; and of this the Brethren were not a little proud, for it did not happen every day that a lay-preacher was praised by a regular pastor.

Hans Nilsen was to depart in two days, as soon as the elders had prepared his credentials, as well as the books and tracts which he was to distribute.

It was the end of October, and he proposed to journey along the coast, from farm to farm, as far as Christiansand, gathering the Brethren together as opportunity offered.

From Christiansand he intended to travel over Soetersdal, and at Christmas he expected to reach his native place.

Chapter VII

MADAME TORVESTAD was really in earnest when she declared how much she valued Hans Nilsen's presence in her house, and that she grieved at his departure.

That his removal at this juncture was extremely convenient was a fact that, on the other hand, she carefully concealed.

She was scheming to the utmost to secure Skipper Worse for her daughter.

Her motives were very complicated. She would talk of her interest in the poor erring soul that could only be saved by such means. Those, however, who knew her best, knew well that her strongest passion was a constantly increasing desire for power and influence.

From her point of view Jacob Worse was well worth capturing, especially since he had entered into partnership with Garman. Not only would such an alliance strengthen the Brethren outwardly, but—what was more important in her eyes—it would greatly enhance her own position if this new and wealthy brother should be added to them by her efforts.

That she would succeed in making a brother of Jacob Worse, Madame Torvestad never for a moment doubted. She had some experience of the world, and she had known many elderly men who had married even younger women. She would work upon him through her daughter, and her influence would extend itself from her humble apartments over the whole house.

The Brethren would be grateful to her, and the cause of religion would be furthered.

Sarah foresaw all that was coming; after those words about the vine, she was in no doubt as to what was in store for her.

When Hans Nilsen left, he presented her with his greatest treasure, an autograph letter from Hauge to his mother.

The paper was old and worn, and the ink had faded. Fennefos, who was a skilful bookbinder, had himself made a handsome case, in which to keep it, and had printed her name and a text on the cover.

The womenfolk talked about this. It seemed strange that Hans Nilsen should part with such a treasure.

Those who made any allusion to the affair in Madame Torvestad's presence, met with such an icy reception that they were not encouraged to pursue the subject.

Sarah was in a distracted state, pleased with the gift and with the kind words he had spoken to her when he left, but otherwise she was wretched, hopelessly wretched. At night when she lay in bed, she wept, and prayed for strength to control herself.

One night her mother entered her bed-chamber; it was dark, and Sarah, who was bathed in tears, heard nothing until she spoke. "You can see now that I was right, my child. Thank the Lord that your eyes were opened in time to the danger."

She said this in such an imperious and reproachful tone that Sarah started up in her bed, and continued to sit up for some time without weeping, whilst harsh and bitter thoughts took possession of her.

It was the old Adam! but she could not struggle against it. She allowed the evil thoughts to take their course—wherever they would, over all the faults she had detected among the Brethren or suspected in her own mother; over Skipper Worse, with his oaths and his flavour of stale tobacco—smoke, until he seemed quite unbearable—away, far away into forbidden regions, where there was sunshine and joy, where she was alone with a tall, strong man.

She threw herself back on the bed, dreaming and drowsy. When she awoke in the morning, a mountain of misery seemed to weigh upon her.

At first, Jacob Worse was unaware of the happiness in store for him. Many hints from Madame Torvestad were necessary before it dawned upon him that the fair Sarah, whom he had seen grow up from childhood, might be the wife for him.

But when he was awake to it, the sentiment which both blinds and invigorates old men took possession of him.

There was a successful fishing that year, and Jacob Worse was indefatigable and in high spirits. Thoughts of

Skipper Worse

the snug room at Madame Torvestad's, his comfortable place by the side of Sarah, the soft white hands which brought him his tea—in which, as a great favour, Madame Torvestad permitted a few drops of rum—all tended to make him happy; and even when he was most actively engaged among the herrings, a quiet almost dreamy smile, which few observed and none understood, would steal over his weather-beaten face.

Never before had he been so enterprising or so successful. This year he salted on account of the firm and for himself, and brought a quantity of herrings. Brisk and cheerful, he brought life and gaiety with him wherever he went, and all agreed that Jacob Worse was a fine old fellow.

It was not safe, however, to call him old to his face. "Old, forsooth!" he would say, pushing his glass from him, when any one was so ill-advised as to propose the health of "Old Worse."

Whenever during the fishing season he could find an opportunity for going into the town with a cargo of herrings, he would hasten to finish his work at the warehouse, and to wash himself.

He scrubbed himself with soap, and changed from top to toe. At the same time, he was not quite certain that a little of the flavour of the herring might not cling to him, and so—if Randulf should but hear of it!—he sprinkled himself with scent, which Lauritz in all secrecy had purchased for him.

Dressed, shaved, washed, and combed, with his grizzled hair sticking up stiffly from above his ears—in such guise Captain Worse, of the firm of Garman and Worse, sallied forth across the yard to woo.

On these occasions there was something almost chivalrous about him, which became him well, and would have become him even better had he been paying his attentions to the mother instead of to the daughter.

But to marry a serious, elderly widow was something which had never occurred to the gay captain, and of this Madame Torvestad had long been conscious.

Now that she had got him on the track, and had observed the youthful ardour with which he followed it, madame changed her tactics, began to hold back, would not understand his hints, and, when they became obvious, raised innumerable objections.

Sarah should be purchased dearly. First, there was the great difference of age; she must say it was greater than she had any idea of; she never could have believed that Captain Worse was so much over fifty.

That, however, was of comparatively little consequence. The most important point was his religious state, his habit of swearing, his worldly mindedness, manifested in his devotion to all things pertaining to this life.

Worse admitted that he was not one of the best of men, but, at the same time, he protested that he was very far from being the worst; moreover, he might improve.

He would indeed have to improve, if it came to a question of marrying Sarah. He would have to change many of his ways.

Worse promised everything; he felt certain that he could submit to any number, even of the longest meetings, if he could but have Sarah by his side, and could take her home with him afterwards.

The affair, however, made no progress. Worse hardly knew whether it moved backwards or forwards. In the meantime he was completely infatuated, and trotted about after Sarah like an old turkey cock.

What Sarah's own feelings might be was not much discussed by her mother and her admirer. Madame Torvestad "knew her daughter;" and Jacob Worse, the elderly gallant, fancied that when Sarah blushed, was constrained when she was alone with him, and refused his presents, it was only girlish prudishness, of which he had seen instances, both in the Baltic and in the Mediterranean.

Although Consul Garman seemed to keep up such slight intercourse with the town, he had his feelers out, and all that happened there, both small and great, was pretty well known at Sandsgaard. The two sisters, Birgitte and Mette, especially interested themselves in everything without exception.

It came, therefore, to the Consul's ears that Jacob Worse was courting, and it both displeased and made him anxious. That his partner should enter upon any new matrimonial alliance was very distasteful to him, as it would tend to complicate matters; and his especial fear was that these good people—he knew the family well—would be the ruin of his excellent captain.

Consul Garman almost hated the sectaries, although he knew but little about them. It revolted him to think that religion, which was given to man for enlightenment and instruction in virtue and rational conduct, should be so misused by ignorant fanatics and enthusiasts as to pervert and distract the lower classes, who were rather in need of sound and practical guidance.

He therefore sent a boat for Captain Worse, as soon as he learnt from his sisters—in-law that he was likely to

Skipper Worse

marry Madame Torvestad's daughter.

When Worse arrived, the Consul began to talk with much eagerness about a certain vessel which was for sale at Bremen. They got hold of the register, looked into dimensions, discussed age and value, and finally came to the conclusion that it might prove fit for the business of the firm.

The one became infected with the eagerness of the other. It was not often that the Consul plunged so deeply into a novel scheme; but before Worse knew what he was about, it was proposed that he should leave either to-morrow or the day after, in a Bremen schooner, which lay in the roads waiting for a fair wind, in order to purchase the vessel, if it answered the description given, and if there were no other reason to the contrary.

Having done this, he was to navigate it to Sandsgaard, or, if an opportunity offered, he should take a good cargo on board and sail—no matter where.

Full of zeal and energy, Worse departed, in order to make his preparations for the voyage. When he found himself again in the boat it occurred to him, all of a sudden, that he would be separated from Sarah. The good ship lost its interest, and the affair assumed a doubtful aspect. His zeal cooled, and he conjured up a thousand difficulties as they rowed across the bay.

Consul Garman, however, rubbed his hands; he had taken matters in time. He sat down and proceeded to make calculations about this Bremen ship, wondering whether the venture would prove successful.

In the afternoon, Madame Torvestad observed that Worse's servant-girls were very busy in the yard, brushing his clothes and preparing his kit.

"Is the captain going away, Martha?" she inquired, in a friendly tone, speaking from the verandah, which ran round the portion of the building which she occupied.

"Yes," answered Martha, rather sulkily. Madame Torvestad was no favourite with the servants.

"Ah, indeed! and do you know whither?"

"No; but it is going to be a long voyage, longer even than the last, I believe."

Martha had a suspicion that this would annoy Madame Torvestad, and she was right. Madame was in a state of the utmost consternation, still she maintained her composure, returning to her apartments, and standing for some time, in order to consider what she should do.

"Sarah, put the kettle on. Captain Worse is going away. Martha says so, but I think she must be mistaken. What is your opinion?"

"Mine, Mother!"

Madame Torvestad would have said more, but the expression of Sarah's face was so peculiar that she desisted. "Sarah is prudent," she thought to herself. "It is not necessary."

Upon this she smoothed her hair, took her cloak, and left the room. She went out the back way, and so round to the front door; she did not care to pass through the yard, where Martha was.

Jacob Worse was in an irritable condition; he was talking with the head man at the warehouse, who managed for him during his absence. His own private business in the town was not affected by his admission into the firm.

Sandsgaard, with all its various branches of business, remained as before, entirely under the control of the Consul. The partnership, in fact, confined itself to certain departments in which Jacob Worse's capital was actually employed, especially to those pertaining to their business as shipowners.

When Jacob Worse saw Madame Torvestad, he dismissed the warehouseman, and saluted her in an excited manner.

"I come to wish you a prosperous and happy voyage, Captain Worse."

"Thanks—h'm—many thanks, madame. I would otherwise—"

"Will it be a long voyage?"

"It is impossible to say. He wishes me to—"

"Who did you say?"

"The Consul—Consul Garman; he is sending me to Bremen to purchase a ship."

"Sending!" said Madame Torvestad, with an incredulous smile. "I did not know that one partner could 'send' another."

"Partner! oh yes! You see, he is Consul Garman, and I am Skipper Worse; and it will never be otherwise. Moreover, when it comes to purchasing a ship, it is just the job for me."

"You surprise me, and it distresses me that you do not tell me the real reason of your departure. I think we

Skipper Worse

might have expected it of you."

He stared at her with his mouth open.

"You must know this, Captain Worse," she continued, "that I am satisfied you would not undertake this voyage unless you wished to get out of your engagement with us altogether."

She was about to proceed in this somewhat menacing manner, but the captain sprang up, excited, and red in the face.

"No, Madame Torvestad! I tell you what it is—you do me a confounded injustice. Pardon me, I should not have sworn, but I cannot help it. From the very first I have worried and schemed until I was black in the face, in order to escape this voyage; and then you come and tell me that I am behaving with deceit and devilry. I think everybody is mad to-day."

He stamped round the room, clawing at his hair; but Madame Torvestad eyed him with satisfaction—a weight had been removed from her heart.

A certain nervousness and uneasiness which had oppressed her when she entered vanished at once, and she resumed her usual imperious manner, as a mother should who has to deal with a wavering suitor.

"After all we have talked of lately, I must say I was much surprised on hearing of this sudden voyage."

"Do you suppose that I have not thought of this? I assure you, Madame Torvestad, that when I think that I am about to leave without so much as a definite promise, it almost drives me mad. The devil may take the Bremen ship, if I can find an excuse or some way out of it."

"Ah, twenty years ago, Jacob Worse would have found some way out in such a case, I am sure."

This was to attack him on his weakest side. That any one should consider him too old, touched him to the quick; and he proceeded to give Madame Torvestad so warm a description of his feelings, that she was constrained to stop him in all haste.

"Good, good, Captain Worse! Yes, yes; I don't doubt it!" she kept on exclaiming. "But more than earthly love is necessary, however real it may be. The man to whom I could with confidence entrust my child, my Sarah, must also be joined to her in the love of God; and, you know, I have often told you that your life as a seaman is full of temptations, and little likely to bring forth good fruits."

"Ah, yes, madame, the flesh is weak in many respects," answered Captain Worse, who fancied he was quoting Scripture.

"Yes, that it is, Captain Worse—some of us more, some less; but just for that reason we should avoid a life which especially leads us to temptation. Fancy, if I had given you my daughter, and you had suddenly left her like this soon after the marriage!"

"No, madame; there would have been nothing of the sort, you may take your oath of that."

"If I were now—I merely put the case before you—if I were now to give my consent, do you believe that the Consul—that your partner would permit you to put off the voyage?"

"Of course, of course; that is understood." He was becoming excited at the prospect before him.

"Could I depend upon you?"

"Yes, by—"

"Stop; don't swear! I can believe you better without it. Sit down again, and listen to what I have to say.

"I have thought much of all this of late; a voice within me seems to say that an alliance with my daughter would be for the good of your soul. Yes, after much anxiety and deliberation, I had thought of fixing the wedding for next Sunday—"

"I beg your par—What do you say?" cried Worse, jumping up from his chair. "Ah, madame, you are a devil of a woman!"

"But now, when I find that a sudden order to go to sea can tear you away from your family, and expose you to danger and to temptations, which can easily—we know how easily—choke the good seed, I cannot think of entrusting my child, my beloved Sarah, to you."

"But, Madame Torvestad, I won't go! I will tell the Consul that he must get some other person. I swear to you I won't go!"

"Not this time, perhaps; but the next time that your partner wants—"

"Never! If I get Sarah, I promise—"

He stopped, and, as he looked out of the window, he caught sight of the Hope's top—gallant yards away out in

Skipper Worse

Sandsgaard Bay.

Madame Torvestad, smiling somewhat sourly, proceeded. "Do not promise that which you cannot perform and do not allow any consideration for our feelings to prevent your drawing back. No doubt Sarah would be prepared, but as yet she knows nothing with certainty. I have merely talked of the affair with some friends, and I had thought of celebrating the wedding very quietly, as is the custom with us; just the pastor and a couple of the Brethren. Your house is ready, and you would simply bring her to it."

"I promise you that I will give up the sea from the day that I marry your daughter," said Jacob Worse, giving her his hand.

He was beginning to think of bringing Sarah to his house, and having her there always, by his side.

But madame said: "It is a perplexing affair. I have heard of many sailors who were unable to give up the sea, although advanced in years, and possessed of worldly goods, as well as of wife and children. It is difficult to understand it. I should have thought that, on the contrary, a sailor would be grateful for a haven of rest after a stormy life."

"You are quite right, madame. It is just so; I see it now. Give me your daughter, and you will see how I shall improve in every way, just as you wish."

They shook hands, and Worse proposed that they should at once go across to Sarah. But when they reached the yard, where Martha received orders to put the clothes back into the house, he began to hesitate.

"What do you think she will say to it?" he inquired, in a low voice.

"Sarah will be faithful and affectionate to the man whom her mother, prayerfully, has chosen for her," said Madame Torvestad, in such a positive tone that he was much comforted.

Sarah heard them approaching. She had long expected them; and when they came, there was no trace of the tears she had been shedding. Pale as usual, and with downcast eyes, she entered the room, whither her mother called her.

"Sarah, here is a man who seeks you as his wife. I have promised on your behalf that you will be a good and faithful helpmate to him before God and man. Am I not right my child? You will comply with your mother's wish, and so obey the mandate of God."

"Yes, Mother."

"Take each other's hands, then. In God's name, Amen." Jacob Worse was much affected. He tried to say a few words about being a father to her, but when he reached the middle of the sentence, it struck him that it was not appropriate. When he essayed to utter something more suitable, there was no sense in it.

He therefore squeezed the hand of Madame Torvestad somewhat severely; and then, taking that of his betrothed more tenderly, was pleased to find how soft and delicate it was.

He comported himself very awkwardly all the evening; but he was so thoroughly happy, that he never noticed the expression of Sarah's pale face.

When he returned to his own house, he paced up and down in ecstasy. It was Tuesday—only four days to Sunday. He must put his house to rights; it was not half smart enough.

When he had left, madame sent Henrietta to bed; Sarah would have gone also, but her mother detained her.

"You should thank God for all His loving-kindness, Sarah."

"Yes, Mother."

"Will you not also thank me?"

Sarah stood silent and unmoved.

Her mother felt as if she had been pierced through.

"Sarah!" she said, sharply.

But when Sarah looked up, there was a something in her steadfast eyes which made her mother recoil; she said no more, except to bid her "Good night," and upon this her daughter left.

Madame Torvestad fell into a reverie. The memories of her own youth rose up before her, and they were not very pleasant. She, too, had been given to a man whom she did not know; he, too, was older than she was, but he had known how to deal with her in the right way. She remembered the tears she had shed at the first, and how in time all went well with her. She had been saved from worldly vanities, and from these she would now protect her daughter.

But in that look of Sarah's there was something which made her shrink, and which stung her deeply. She, who

Skipper Worse

was generally so confident about herself and all that she did, felt a painful misgiving.

All these newly revived memories, and a vague feeling that she did not fully comprehend this impassive daughter, made her slumbers uneasy, and troubled her with evil dreams.

Henrietta, who heard Sarah sobbing, crept into her bed, and strove to comfort her.

Chapter VIII

THE FIRST shadow which fell on Skipper Worse's happiness was the meeting with Consul Garman, when he went to report his betrothal to him.

"Good morning, Worse," said the Consul. "The Bremen captain has just been here; he will take you with the greatest pleasure, and as he is quite ready to go to sea, it might be as well if you drove out to Smörvigen to-day. Our carriage shall meet you in the town, and you will thus be ready to sail directly the wind is fair.

"Yes; thanks, Herr Consul; but—I'm—"

"Is there anything the matter?"

"Yes, unfortunately there is something the matter."

"Anything gone wrong?"

"No; rather gone right," said Worse, simpering. It seemed as if he was a little emboldened. "I am going to be married."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Consul, forgetting himself.

"H'm! going to marry. I never expected this. With whom, if I may venture to inquire?"

"With Madame Torvestad's daughter; the Consul knows that she lives in a portion of my house."

"Yes; but I did not know—I should hardly have thought that Madame Torvestad had a daughter of a suitable age."

"She is rather young—rather younger than I am," answered Worse, who was growing red in the face, "but otherwise a very sedate and serious girl."

"Her family belongs to the Brethren. Does Captain Worse propose to join the Haugians?"

"No, indeed," answered the other; and he would have smiled, but that the Consul's manner did not give him any encouragement.

"Well, that is your own affair, my dear Jacob Worse," said the Consul, rising up in order to give him his hand. "Accept my congratulations, and I hope you may never repent of the step you are taking. When is the wedding to take place?"

"On Sunday!"

"Well, that is rather sharp work. I trust you may never have to repent of it."

When he left, the Consul thought for a moment of running after him, and of enlightening him thoroughly about the Haugians and all their hypocrisies—from his point of view. But on consideration he desisted.

Morten W. Garman was a prudent man, who never wasted words. He had seen enough of Jacob Worse in their brief conversation, and he was well versed in the various symptoms of persons who were enamoured.

Jacob Worse did not regain his equanimity until he got back to his own rooms, where there was a detestable turmoil of charwomen and all sorts of workpeople.

But he went about happy and contented, now and then visiting the back building, in order to get a glimpse of his Sarah. It was not much that he was able to see of her; for there, also, every one was busy with needles and thread and with marking-ink, and she sat bending over her work.

In this way he spent his time, restless from very happiness. He was quite unconscious of the fact that his friends ridiculed him, predicting all sorts of misfortunes. He also forgot the uncomfortable interview with the Consul.

As for the ship at Bremen, which had interested them both so much, not another word, strangely enough, was ever again spoken about it.

On Sunday, they were married in Madame Torvestad's parlour, only a few intimate friends being present. In the afternoon, Sarah removed with Jacob Worse to his house.

At last Skipper Randulf returned, and Worse hastened to greet him. They plunged at once into conversation, narrating their mutual adventures; still it was not so pleasant as it might have been. The subject of Rio had grown rather out of date, and there was a certain constraint between them, until Randulf broke out: "Now, you old heathen! I hear you have married one of the eleven thousand wise virgins."

"Yes, my boy; she is one of the right sort," said Worse, winking at him.

Skipper Worse

"Well, take care that she does not make a fool of you, as Sivert Gesvint and the others did."

"Thank you for nothing; Jacob Worse knows what women are before to-day."

"Ah! do you know, Jacob, I sometimes think you were not very fortunate in your first wife."

"Don't talk about her, she was half mad. Mind you, Sarah is very different." And then he began a long story about all her perfections, sometimes sinking his voice to a whisper, although they were quite alone in Randulf's parlour.

Thomas Randulf, however, smiled incredulously, which secretly annoyed Worse; and the more earnest he became in describing his wife's merits and his own happiness, the more suspiciously did Randulf's long nose draw down towards the upturned corners of his mouth, until at last Worse, becoming bored with him, was about to leave.

"Oh, no! Come, just take a glass; there is no such hurry, Jacob."

"Yes, I must go; it is half-past eleven, and we dine at twelve."

"A-ha, it's beginning already!" cried Randulf, triumphantly. "You are tied to your wife's apron-strings. I suppose you don't dare take another glass for fear she may notice it. Ha, ha! you have done for yourself, Jacob, while I was away."

The result of this was that Worse remained until half-past twelve, and came home rather red in the face and with watery eyes.

His wife had waited dinner. She looked very grave, graver than usual; and when he essayed to tell her in a light airy way that Randulf was come, she added, to his great annoyance: "Yes, I can see that he has."

It was worse, however, when, without saying a word, she removed the decanter from the table. He was always accustomed to a dram at dinner.

However, he made no objection. Randulf's strong marsala had begun to work upon him, and he did not feel so confident of his powers of speech as to venture upon a remonstrance. They dined, therefore, in silence, and afterwards he laid himself down as usual on the sofa for a siesta.

Generally he took only a short nap, but on this occasion he did not wake up till five o'clock, when he was much surprised to find himself enveloped in a grey wrapper, and on a chair by his side a basin of gruel.

He lay still, and tried to collect his thoughts. His head throbbed, and his memory was neither clear nor perfect. He remembered that two boys had laughed at him when he jumped lightly over the doorstep outside the Brothers Egeland's store, and that he had felt much inclined to complain of them to the police. He had also a vision of a decanter which moved away, and vanished in a cupboard.

He was about to get up; but at this moment Sarah entered the room. "No, no; you are ill. You must keep quiet."

"Oh, nonsense, Sarah! there is nothing the matter with me. It was just—"

"I will go and fetch mother," she said, moving towards the door.

"No, no! What do we want with her? I would rather remain lying here, as you insist upon it."

He laid himself down again, and she reached him the gruel, which proved a great relief to his parched and fevered throat. He thanked her, and would have taken her hand but that he was unable to seize it.

She stood behind him, looking at his grey head, and it was well for him that he could not see her eyes.

Jacob Worse spent the rest of the day upon the sofa, and, after the lassitude caused by his morning excess, felt all the better for it. The next day he was all right again; but he did not dare ask for the decanter; it was gone, and it never reappeared.

From his son Romarino, Worse received a very disagreeable letter. This young gentleman pointed out to him the folly of taking a young wife at his advanced age, and, without the least compunction, bewailed the pecuniary loss which it might entail on him, Romarino.

Worse was very angry, and handed the letter to Sarah, who read it, whilst he walked up and down the room, fuming.

"Yes, you cannot expect it otherwise," said Sarah. "The young man was never taught anything better, either by you or by his mother. As you sow, so will you reap. Shall I answer the letter?"

"Yes; I should be very grateful to you, if you would, Sarah," said Jacob Worse. It was a great relief to him.

It was surprising to see how readily Sarah assumed her position, and how completely she changed everything, and put the house in order. It was, in fact, necessary; for there was much waste and mismanagement, as was

Skipper Worse

natural where the head of the house was a man, who was, moreover, often absent from home.

During the first weeks after the marriage, Sarah took no interest in anything. When her half-developed youth, her dawning wishes and hopes were suddenly and unmercifully crushed, a thick cloud seemed to descend upon her, obscuring her life, and leaving no prospect of escape, except by a welcome death.

But one day a new feeling was awakened in her. Returning home from shopping in the town, she found her mother making a clearance in her rooms, placing chairs along the walls, and laying her small books about upon the tables.

As Sarah entered, her mother said, and in a voice not quite so resolute as was her wont: "I think we will hold the meeting here in your rooms; they are larger and lighter than mine."

"Have you asked my husband?"

"My husband!" It was the first time, and there was such a stiffness and determination about these two words, that the widow unconsciously drew herself back.

Sarah quietly collected her mother's small books in a heap, which she placed on a seat by the door, put a couple of chairs back into their proper places, and, without looking up, said: "I cannot have a meeting in my house without having consulted my husband."

"You are quite right, dear Sarah," said Madame Torvestad, in an affectionate tone, but with quivering lips; "and I ought to have thought of it. I hope you will come over to us in the evening."

"If my husband will."

Upon this her mother left, taking her books with her. Sarah pressed her hands upon her bosom; for, quietly as the affair had passed off, both felt that there had been a struggle, and that the daughter had remained the victor. She stood for some time looking at the solid mahogany furniture, the curtains, mirrors, and the key-cupboard, the key of which she carried in her pocket. She opened it, and looked at the numerous keys which hung inside.

It was true that her husband, in the first fulness of his happiness, had said: "See, all this is yours, and you can do what you will with it; if there be any thing wanting, and you desire to have it, only speak the word, and it shall be yours at once."

She had never given much heed to these words. Of what good was it all to her? Could anything recompense her for her marred life?

It was the sight of her mother busying herself in her room that roused her, and henceforth she became alive to her position.

Before long the system of joint purchasing for the two households, which Madame Torvestad had at first managed, was brought to an end. Sarah undertook to manage her own affairs. Gently, but inexorably, the mother's rule was restricted to her own apartments.

Sarah was intelligent and well trained: she inherited all her mother's aptitude for rule and order. Hitherto she had never had an opportunity of manifesting it at home, her mother being always over her, and she had toiled like a servant girl, faithful and upright, yet with no other interest for the things under her charge than that they should not be injured.

Now, however, she had her own household, was her own mistress, and had, moreover, ampler means at her command than her mother had.

The rich Madame Worse, as people began to term her in the shops, was, in fact, a very different person, and much more important than the widow Torvestad. It was a consciousness of this that first gave Sarah a new interest in life, and tended to thaw some of that frigidity which had begun to settle upon her. When the first and the worst period was over, she buried her hopes and her youth as well as she could, giving herself up to prayer and study, whilst, at the same time, the management of her household affairs prevented her from sinking into melancholy.

This change was much to the advantage of Jacob Worse. The icy coldness with which she had treated him from the first had been occasionally apparent to him in the midst of his happiness; but now her behaviour was different—never indeed affectionate, scarcely even friendly, but she reconciled herself to him, made his home comfortable, and interested herself in his business affairs.

Jacob Worse explained them to her, and was never weary of expressing his surprise that women could show so much intelligence. It was not long before she was able to give him good advice, and it ended by his consulting her about everything.

In this way the year passed on, and the winter began. Sarah was as regular as formerly at the meetings, and,

Skipper Worse

when at her mother's she often sat in her old place by the Bible. Her comeliness increased, and her manner became more self–possessed, her dress also was improved; not that it was too conspicuous, for the most austere of the Haugians would not have been able to find fault with it; but the womenfolk, who understood such things, noticed that her linen was of the finest that could be procured, that the woollen stuffs she used were almost as costly as silk, and that when she wore a white collar round her neck, it was of real lace, worth a couple of dollars an ell.

The men, too, noticed something unusual about the young wife, and would say to their spouses: "Look at Sarah; you should dress like her; you should manage the house as she does." The mother also received her meed of praise for having brought up her daughter so well.

Skipper Worse did not always attend the meetings. Whenever he manifested a preference for the club, or for a visit to Randulf, Sarah raised no objection.

But, in truth, he preferred his own house, and throughout the winter, when the candles were lit early, he sat at the table with his work. Jacob Worse was very neat–handed, and in his youth had learnt something of ship–building. He now applied himself to the construction of a model, an ell and a half long, which he intended to rig and equip after the pattern of the Hope of the Family down to the smallest detail.

Sarah read aloud to him, knitting the while. It was Scriver, Johan Arndt, Luther, or some such other. Worse did not listen very attentively; but her voice was pleasant to him; and she looked so well when the light fell on her clear forehead and dark smooth hair.

At the club, they were far too facetious; even Randulf rallied him in a disagreeable manner. I do not know how it was, but Randulf's return had proved a disappointment; he was always making remarks about the marriage, he himself being a widower with grown–up children. His eldest son was a captain, and lived in the same town.

Another thing, too, annoyed him. Randulf was always speculating upon what sort of a fishing they might expect that year; and Worse remembered his promise to Madame Torvestad.

One day, however, Sarah let fall a few words, showing that she was prepared for his departure as usual.

"But I should tell you," said Worse, "that before I married, I promised your mother that I would never—"

"I know it. Mother told me all about it; but as she exacted the promise on my account, so I now release you from it. You are free to go if you wish."

Sarah had said as much to her mother when they talked the matter over. It was either because she had no objection to be rid of her husband for a time, or because in that respect also she wished to show herself independent of her mother.

At least this was the way in which the latter interpreted it, and it made her reflect more and more.

Worse now became very eager to talk of all that he would do at the fishing. Randulf thought to himself, "He has got leave."

The fishing that year was bad; the fish were unevenly dispersed, and much on the move. The weather, also, was stormy and bad. Things did not go well with Skipper Worse, his former luck deserted him, and, as some thought his former daring. It was the universal opinion that Worse was growing old.

"Ah!" said Randulf, at the club, "when so old a man gets so young a wife, it is all up with him"; and saying this he made a movement, as if wringing a clout and casting it from him.

Jacob Worse returned from the fishing with rheumatism, and took to the chimney corner. It was best for him to remain at home; and in the spring, when the Hope was going on a long voyage, he himself proposed that one of the other captains in the employ of the firm should take command of her.

Lauritz Seehus was promoted to be mate; in the winter he had been up to Bergen, and had passed in navigation. Before he went, he obtained a promise for life or death from Henrietta.

Neither did Worse go to sea the next spring. He complained of rheumatism and of pains in his stomach. The doctor could not make out what it was, but fancied there was something wrong with his liver.

In the mean time, he became more than ever infatuated about his wife. When his infirmities began with rheumatism and bad digestion, she nursed him as if she had been his daughter. Her tenderness made him doubly grateful and happy. Besides this, all the singing and reading which went on around him produced, in the course of time and without his observing it, a considerable effect upon him.

Jacob Worse had always thought of the Almighty as he might of Consul Garman, as an exacting master, who was, however, forgiving and placable, if one only kept clear of deceit and downright wickedness.

Skipper Worse

But now he learnt something very different. It was of no avail that he had been an excellent seaman, that he had never deceived a fellow countryman—Germans and Swedes he did not take into reckoning—and that he was upright and just in his dealings. Much, much more than this was required of him.

Often when they talked and read of the obstacles to conversion, and of the perils of the hour of temptation, he thought to himself: "Can this, can all this be true?"

He had little trust in Sivert Gesvint, and he did not rely much on the spiritual strivings of Endre Egeland, for he knew the other side of him too well.

But Sarah, Sarah who in all respects was perfection itself, said, literally said, that every day he must combat the old Adam and strive against Satan.

This began to trouble him, and he inquired if she perceived much of the old Adam in him?

She did, indeed; and he learnt to know more of himself than was agreeable. First, he learnt that he swore. He could now see that that was wrong. He endeavoured to overcome the habit, but it was too thoroughly ingrained in him; still he fancied that he improved even in this respect. So much, however, of the old Adam, even of Satan's self, remained in him, that he was ill at ease.

Sarah wished him to join in prayer and singing; but it was out of his power. He had not yet made such spiritual progress as was necessary, she said.

No, unfortunately, he had not; he wished he had. It would be the better for him.

When he observed how Sivert Jespersen handled sacred things at the meetings, when he listened to his fawning unctuous voice, and at the same time remembered how infamously he had cheated him in the affair of the salt, the desire for spiritual things evaporated, and Jacob Worse betook himself to his club.

The following day he was always treated as an invalid, and, in spite of all that he could say, whether in jest or earnest, he had to submit to gruel and the grey wrapper for a day, his wife sitting and knitting by his side.

At last he came to believe that he was ill whenever she said he was.

The letter which Sarah had written to her stepson had produced a good effect, and when Romarino, shortly after, came home, in order to set up in business on his own account, the relations between him and his young stepmother were perfectly amicable.

Romarino paid a little court to her in his frivolous way; but she did not observe it, or, at all events, took no notice of it. However, it brought a little of the spirit of youthfulness into the house.

Though Jacob Worse never took any step without consulting Sarah, it always seemed as if it was the old man who was difficult, whilst the two younger people agreed well enough.

But when Romarino set up for himself, and married a young lady, of whom all that was known was that she was gay and worldly minded, the mutual relations became more distant. The young and old Worses had no common interests, and seldom saw one another.

When Romarino bought a house and lived in grand style, old Worse shook his head.

It was some time before Madame Torvestad realized that she had completely misunderstood her daughter, but gradually she became conscious that there was no remedy. Ever since that look which she had noticed on the evening of the betrothal, Sarah had shaken off her authority, and had asserted herself as an equal.

Indeed, Madame Torvestad was soon nothing more than Madame Worse's mother.

She was wise enough to conceal her disappointment, and she promised herself that it should not recur in the case of Henrietta, who should have a husband more amenable to control, while she, Henrietta, should be under stricter rule than before. As a beginning, the poor child should learn to sit in Sarah's place by the Bible, when Sarah was not there.

For the last two years but scanty tidings had been received of Hans Nilsen Fennefos. He was said to be travelling in the north, farther north than he had ever been before, away up in the most benighted parts of Finmarken, as some declared.

Occasionally news of him reached the elders, but they did not communicate it at the meetings. Any one inquiring about Fennefos was recommended to mind his own business, or was told that the Lord's ways are inscrutable.

The fact was, that what the Brethren round about had to report about Hans Nilsen was anything but satisfactory.

He who formerly had moved from place to place as a messenger of love and peace, now left confusion and

Skipper Worse

terror behind him. It was said that he passed through the country like a hurricane, his speech was as of fire, many became crazy after hearing him, and one young girl was reported to have destroyed herself in consequence.

The clergy began to notice him in their reports. His former reputation for gentleness and moderation was injured; and scoffers cried triumphantly: "See, even he also!"

There was much consternation among the Friends when these tidings arrived, and it gradually became evident how much the elders had endeavoured to withhold from them.

Many wrote and urged Fennefos to come southwards again; they thought that when he met his old friends, his equanimity would be restored. But he did not come, and the country was full of reports about the infatuated preacher, who wandered singing from hut to hut through the snow, leading a band of haggard men and women with dishevelled hair, who wept and tore their clothes.

The elders then begged Madame Torvestad to write to him, and the next day she delivered to them a sealed letter. This was contrary to rules, but the circumstances were unusual, and no objection was raised. In the autumn the letter was despatched, and in the spring it was reported that Hans Nilsen was wending his way southwards.

It was Sarah, however, who had written the letter. It was done at her mother's request.

Chapter IX

FOR several years the fortunes of Garman and Worse prospered. Jacob Worse's money ran like a stream of fresh blood in the business, spreading itself through the limbs and invigorating the whole body, and the firm soon recovered its own renown, both at home and abroad.

The Consul's brow grew calm and unclouded, and his step was vigorous and youthful, as he mounted the great staircase to superintend the foreign workmen, who had come from Copenhagen to decorate the reception-rooms upstairs.

Christian Frederik was expected home in the spring; his education abroad was completed, and he had spend the last winter in Paris.

The Consul was delighted to have his son at home again, especially now that he could show him how prosperous the firm was and how the business flourished.

There was only one thing which troubled him, namely, Worse.

The Consul, in his heart, cursed the Haugians more than ever. It had happened as he feared—they had spoiled Skipper Worse as far as he was concerned.

His sisters-in-law, Birgitte and Mette, were of the same opinion. It was true that, after his marriage, Worse often visited Sandsgaard, and tried to show that he had not altered. But it was of no use; he could no longer adapt himself to the tone which prevailed there, and it was painfully apparent on both sides that the good old times had departed for ever.

On one occasion only had Sarah been to Sandsgaard, when the Consul gave a grand dinner in honour of the newly married pair. With downcast eyes she sat by his side in the brilliant dining-room, surrounded by grand ladies and gentlemen, whom she knew by sight in the streets or at church.

Jests, laughter, and mirth, the like of which she had never before encountered, reigned around, although the guests imagined that they put some restraint upon themselves that day, in deference to the well-known strictness of the young wife.

Jacob Worse, on the other hand, who was accustomed to it, and who was at his ease with them all, was well pleased, and nodded to her. She, however, scarcely raised her eyes during the whole of the dinner, and when they reached home, she announced to Worse that she felt as if they had visited the very purlieu of hell itself.

"Oh, Sarah! how can you say such things! they are all really good, kind people."

"No;" she said, sharply. "I suppose you know what a butt they made of you?" This was the impression made upon her when the judge, or some one else, had begged the honour of drinking a glass of wine with the old captain and the young bridegroom.

She never went there again; from the first she was acute enough to perceive that she could never get a footing in such society. Moreover, these gay, light-hearted people, who laughed loudly and drank the perilous wine, seemed almost fiendish to one who, from her childhood, had been accustomed only to grave and serious conversation.

Consul Garman constantly upbraided his sisters-in-law for not having given him earlier information of Worse's relations with the Haugians, for he fancied he could have cured him had he taken him in hand before the evil had gained the mastery.

In the mean time, Worse appeared to be content, which was very well so long as it lasted.

His loss was felt at Sandsgaard; and when he abandoned the sea and relinquished the Hope to others, the Consul gave him up as lost and useless.

The Consul was now more lonely than ever; absorbed in melancholy, he often paced up and down in the broad gravel paths by the pavilion in the garden.

It stood by a pond, round which grew a dense border of rushes. Formerly this pond must have been larger, for the Consul remembered that in his childhood there had been water on both sides of the building, and a bridge which could be drawn up. He had a dim recollection of ladies in a blue and white boat, and a tall man in a red silken jacket, who stood in the bow with an oar. Now, however, the pond was so small that a boat would have looked ridiculous. The Consul often wondered how it could have so diminished in size. It must, he thought, be the

Skipper Worse

rushes which encroached upon it; and although he continually told the gardener to keep his eye upon them, it was of no use.

The garden had been originally laid out in the French fashion, with broad rectangular paths, high thick hedges, alleys, and borders of box.

There was a circular open space, where four paths met; seats were placed around it, and in the centre stood a sun-dial.

In the outer part of the garden, especially towards the north-west, a thick border of trees encircled it, as with a frame. They were common native trees, placed there to protect the fine French garden and the exotic plants and flowers from the cold sea wind.

The pavilion by the pond lay to the west of the mansion, and although only a few paces distant; it was looked upon in old times as a sort of Trianon. Here they assembled to drink coffee, or to listen to music. The Company, filing along by the most ingenious roundabout paths over the bridge and about the pond, embarked in the boat, and were ferried across with three strokes of the oar, amidst innumerable compliments and witticisms.

Morten Garman remembered all this from his youth. He himself had endeavoured, but with only partial success, to keep up the old customs and manners.

People were changed, the pond was filling up, and even his father's stately garden seemed likely to become a wilderness.

On both sides of the gravel path leading to the pavilion there was a hedge, so thickly grown that, to the great disgust of the gardener, young ladies used to seat themselves on its top. At regular intervals the box bushes were clipped into pyramidal shapes, and it was here that the Consul delighted to pace up and down. Here, too, remained all that was left of the ancient grandeur.

The garden beyond was beginning to be somewhat irregular. The trees that had been planted to give shelter, now that their trunks were thick and their roots strong, spread on their own account; and as they could not face the northwest wind, their boughs stretched inwards upon the garden, over the rectangular paths and the winding dolls' hedges of clipped box.

It was not the gardener's fault that the plantation had so spread that it was now more of a park than a garden, and it would have been impossible to restore the former French model, except by cutting down the trees and planting anew.

When the Consul walked here in the calm summer evenings, he could, through the towering trees, catch a glimpse of the bright afterglow, which shed its light upon Sandsgaard Bay and westward over the sea, whose glassy surface heaved in long undulations.

He remembered the glorious view of the sea that in his youth could be obtained from the roof of the pavilion; it was, however, no longer visible, for it was with the garden as with the town, both growing and overgrowing, so that neither the one nor the other resembled its former self.

At the back of the pavilion there was a secret door in the panelling, the key of which the Consul always carried in his pocket. Many a light recollection of the gallantries of his youth rose up before him, when at rare intervals he now opened this small back door, from which a narrow spiral stair led to a chamber above, so narrow that it was now difficult for him to ascend it; but in his younger days—good Heavens!—how lightly he flew up and down it!

"Le nez, c'est la mémoire," he said, as he inhaled the odour of old mahogany, and paced up and down in the small remnant of the garden of his youth, stepping daintily with his well-shaped legs and dreaming of the period of low shoes and silk stockings.

In the road outside stood a wayfarer, gazing upon the fjord. It was the well-known lay-preacher, Hans Nilsen Fennefos. Tall, gaunt, with bright searching eyes, he stood absorbed in thought, and leant against the post of the gate leading from the garden.

On his back he bore a large wallet, in which he carried his books and tracts. He was dusty and weary, with a long day's tramp in the sun.

For three years he had not visited these parts, and much had happened in the mean time. When, at a distance, he had learnt that Sarah had married Skipper Worse, he felt as if he had received a stab, and he suffered bodily pain, which almost overcame him. He immediately realized that this woman had enthralled his affections, and that his love to the Brethren, nay, to the Almighty Himself, was as nothing in comparison.

Skipper Worse

He was terrified, and cast himself on the ground in an agony of remorse and prayer. It seemed to him as if no punishment or penance could atone for such deception and for so great a crime.

Bitter feelings towards others also took possession of him, and with fiery zeal he began to preach repentance, rebuking sinners in language far more severe than was customary.

For three years he had maintained this vehement crusade against sin, both in himself and in others, and during this period he succeeded in shaking off the sinful affection. It now became evident to him that both he and the Brethren had hitherto manifested insufficient austerity in life and doctrine.

He had, therefore, responded to the call, and had journeyed southwards. His feelings when he read Sarah's letter were those of pity for her, and for all the Brethren in that part, who were wandering blindly in their sins and self-righteousness. But on his way south, travelling through friendly districts, among people who had known him of old and who received him with kindness, it could not but happen that his asperity should be mitigated; and as he passed through Sandsgaard, he stopped, overcome by memories which the sight of the familiar bay and of the church towers of the neighbouring town had revived.

Hans Nilsen searched his heart anew, but found nothing which should not be there. Sarah was as a sister or a brother to him; she was another man's wife, and he hoped that she might be happy.

Before he went on he happened to look over the hedge, and, amidst the trees, he discovered Consul Garman, pacing up and down.

Fennefos recognized him, and his feelings were roused again by the sight of the old man, so unconcerned in his sins, surrounded by riches, and absorbed in worldly contemplation, whilst he was drawing near the depths of hell with open eyes.

He seized his staff and went on. They should soon feel in the town that Hans Nilsen Fennefos had come back.

In the mean time, the last gleam of the twilight faded away, and the sky paled along the horizon, the spreading boughs of the beech trees swayed to and fro in the cold wind, and Consul Garman re-entered his house.

The garden lay in repose, the tree tops waved overhead, and, in the struggle for life, either forced themselves upwards or perished, stunted by the shade and drip of their companions.

Above and below branches stretched out, ever encroaching on the narrow space around the pavilion, where the pond was growing smaller year by year.

Chapter X

A LONG table was spread in the low, old-fashioned room of Sivert Jespersen. Although the table-cloth and the napkins were of fine damask, the knives were of a common sort, and the forks of steel. Here and there, at long intervals, stood a bottle of Medoc; besides this there was nothing but water, salt, and bread upon the table.

The host, however, was afraid that even this might appear too sumptuous. In ordinary life an oil-cloth covered his dining-table, and he was in the habit of taking potatoes out of the dish with his fingers, and peeling them with his pocket-knife. The dinner party to-day was to celebrate Hans Nilsen's return. No one could tell how strict he might not have become.

The elders had arranged that, at first, Fennefos should be invited to meet a limited circle of the most confidential and trustworthy of the community, in order to ascertain his present state of mind.

It was not worth while to let him speak at the meetings just yet. In fact, they were all afraid of him, and all felt a little conscience stricken.

Fennefos had been three or four days in the town, but nobody had seen much of him. He stayed a good deal at home, conversing with Madame Torvestad; he had also visited Worse's portion of the building across the yard.

When he and Sarah met for the first time, they were alone, and when she fixed her dark eyes upon him, there was a tremor in his voice. However, he soon overcame it, and talked calmly and earnestly, without looking much at her.

Sarah said scarcely anything, she was only listening to his voice. Skipper Worse entered, and gave a hearty welcome to Hans Nilsen, who was startled when he observed how old he had grown of late, for his mouth had fallen in and his face was sallow.

As they talked of the party which was to be given at Sivert Jespersen's next day, Worse walked up and down, rubbing his hair. It was evident that there was something on his mind.

"H'm, h'm," he repeated at intervals during the conversation. "It's the 24th of June to-morrow—yes that it is. Yes, it's St. John's Eve."

"Has St. John's Eve any particular interest for Captain Worse?" inquired Fennefos, who was anxious to be civil to Sarah's husband.

"Any interest? I should rather think it had, Hans Nilsen. Yes, for many years. It is Randulf's birthday, you see; and ever since we were boys— Well, it is not worth mentioning; those times have gone by."

"Probably, then, you would prefer being with Skipper Randulf to-morrow to going to Sivert Jespersen's?"

"I am ashamed to confess it, but I really would rather."

"No one, I think, will mind it if you do not go to Sivert Jespersen's," said Sarah, glancing at Hans Nilsen.

She was not sorry to be rid of her husband for a day.

Jacob Worse was as pleased as a child at this unexpected turn of events, and hurried off to Randulf, to tell him he had got leave to come.

Sarah and Fennefos remained together, and there was a little pause.

"Is your husband unwell?"

"Yes. I fancy he has some internal malady."

"You allude to his body. I am thinking of his soul. Is he still in his sins?"

"Yes, Hans Nilsen, I fear he is. The Word has no power over him."

"Have you tried to help him, Sarah?"

"Yes, indeed, but without much success."

"Perhaps you have not tried in the right way. He has been a strong man, and strong measures may be required to subdue him."

She would have discussed this further with him, but at this point they were interrupted by Madame Torvestad, who came to fetch Fennefos. They had an engagement to visit an orphanage for girls, which had been established by the Haugians.

Sarah accompanied them, not entirely to her mother's satisfaction. Latterly she had been thrust so much into the shade by her daughter, that she was doing all in her power to keep Fennefos to herself.

Skipper Worse

In the mean time, she pretended to be pleased, and all three went off together. Sarah felt a particular satisfaction in the company of Fennefos, although he devoted himself entirely to her mother, who talked to him in a low voice about the people they met on their way.

When they returned, Hans Nilsen bade Madame Torvestad farewell outside the house and followed Sarah to her own home.

They conversed for some time, Sarah telling him much about the Brethren, and informing him of what had occurred during his absence.

As she soon observed that he took a more severe and a darker view of everything, she herself also was led to give a worse aspect to what had occurred. She spoke of the great lukewarmness that prevailed amongst them, of the sordid desire for worldly gain, and of the sinful servility with which they sought the approval of men.

She told him also how they allowed themselves to be flattered and cajoled by the younger clergy, who sought to intrude themselves into their charitable undertakings and their missions to the heathen.

Fennefos listened to her, and thanked her when she had finished.

"But you, Sarah, how is it with you?"

"Thanks, Hans Nilsen," said Sarah, looking up at him; "of myself I can do nothing, but the Lord has been my strength, and I may venture to say that all is well with me."

He turned away quickly, and bid her farewell.

The dinner at Sivert Jespersen's the following day was silent, for all were in a state of suspense. The attention of all was fixed on Hans Nilsen, who sat by the side of Sarah, grave and taciturn, as had been his wont ever since his return.

Before the soup, a grace was read by an old man with blue hands—he was a dyer. Afterwards they sang a hymn. There should have been salmon after the soup; but, at the last moment, the host was troubled by certain compunctions, and, to the cook's intense disgust, forbade its being placed on the table.

There was, therefore, only roast mutton, of which a good deal was eaten. The cook had ventured to serve a salad with it, a dish which few of them had ever seen before.

One of the seniors said, jestingly: "What next! shall we eat grass like King Nebuchadnezzar?"

They laughed a little at this, and Madame Torvestad, taking advantage of the occasion, told them that in her younger days in Gnadau, she got little else to eat than such "grass" and other vegetables.

After this, the conversation was directed to the various institutions of the Brethren, to their leading men, and to the teachers and preachers of the olden time, men who in the last century had awakened a new life among the Christians in Germany.

Hans Nilsen either remained silent, or merely spoke a few words in a low voice to Sarah. But the others were anxious to talk on these subjects, which interested them all, and on which they were well informed.

Madame Torvestad was especially interested; in such subjects she was thoroughly at home, and she let no opportunity escape her of relating what she knew of the men who were so famous in her younger days.

"Yes, truly," said Sivert Jespersen, "many a blessed word remains to us from Johan Arndt, Spener, and Francke; also among the Herrnhutters of later times there have been many godly men."

"We might learn something from them, and they from us," said the old dyer.

"The other day, I read in a little book of mine of a vision that appeared to a pious follower of Francke. Shortly afterwards, this man learnt that Francke had died at the very moment when he had seen the vision." As she said this, Madame Torvestad took from her pocket one of her everlasting small books. Sivert Jespersen begged her to read the account of the apparition, if that happened to be the book of which she spoke.

It was the book; she had, in fact, brought it because she and the elders had agreed that by soothing and gentle words they should endeavour to bring back their dear friend and brother, Hans Nilsen, to a more settled frame of mind.

The guests prepared themselves to listen. Most of them had finished, but some of the men took a little more, and ate whilst she read. They began to be more at ease, and viewed Fennefos with less apprehension.

Madame Torvestad read well, without pronouncing the foreign words so incorrectly as some of the others, who were not so well educated.

"At last it happened that Elias'—that is Francke—'was taken away. This was in 1727. I, a dweller in darkness, caught a glimpse of him in the abode of the blest. I heard the great Prince of Peace, who was surrounded by an

Skipper Worse

innumerable multitude of the saved, say to them, "Ye blessed of my Father, ye love me, and I you, we rejoice together, and we have now a fresh occasion for our joy. In this our new Jerusalem, we shall rejoice to-morrow; for a great soul is just about to leave its earthly tenement, and will receive its crown." The whole host of heaven cried rapturously, "Amen, amen."

"But who, who shall this new and honoured saint be? My attention was now directed to three who were among the worthiest, adorned with crowns, and in the silken garb of archangels. Who is this, and this, asked my heart. Straightway I recognized them. Luther, Arndt, and Spener.

"Brothers," said Spener, "do you think that I can guess who the king means by this glorified friend that the day will reveal to us? It must be Francke who will be crowned, for he has conquered in the strife."

"So spake the beloved Philip Jacob, and the Lord, who was near him, said, "Thou art in the right."

"The whole heaven resounded with joyful acclaim; and so the day that Francke's soul had longed for arrived. A multitude of ministering spirits, ready and anxious to obey their Lord's behest, were directed to bring the soul of Francke. The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof sallied forth to fetch him."

Most of the company manifested their approval by smiles and gestures, but a few looked thoughtful, and Sivert Jespersen regretted that he had not come to a definite understanding beforehand with Madame Torvestad.

She was a woman of intelligence, who could usually be trusted to handle the most difficult subjects; in this case, however, she had shown her weakest side, and Sivert Jespersen knew only too well how much Fennefos disliked such extravagant rhapsodies.

In the mean time, however, Fennefos remained silent, and seemed to be absorbed in thought.

Amongst the others a tranquil geniality began to prevail. The sour Medoc was sparingly drunk, mixed with sugar and water; some drank home-brewed small beer, the majority only water.

As the affectionate and brotherly feelings which united them and took possession of many, they smiled and patted one another on the shoulder or cheek. By degrees they forgot their dread of Hans Nilsen, and felt glad to see him, although he remained silent.

No one could tell, they thought, to what the Lord might not have subjected him; and when his troubled spirit was more tranquil, they hoped that his former frankness might be restored.

Suddenly his voice was heard, and a deathlike stillness ensued.

"Beloved brothers and sisters—"

They knew the voice, and one and all thought: "Now it is coming!"

At first he spoke calmly and almost sadly of the first love. He reminded them how Hauge himself became conscious that in his later years the first love did not burn in him as in the earlier days of grace. He then drew a picture of the tribulations of the Brethren in the evil days gone by. He praised and thanked God that strength had been given to their forefathers, so that the light had not been extinguished, but now shone brightly throughout the land.

Next, he spoke of the temptations of the Brethren in the better times that followed, and all bowed their heads, thinking: "Now it is coming!"

It came, indeed, and like a hurricane. Blow after blow, his words fell upon them, now here, now there, on every point of weakness. Every allusion was understood, and none dared to look at the others. They had no time to wonder how he came to know so much, for he held their minds completely enthralled.

"What is there," cried he, "what is there of the first love among you? Think you, would he recognize his friends, if he were to walk the earth again in the flesh, he who aroused your fathers, and whom many of the elders among you have seen face to face?"

"Think you that the Saviour will acknowledge you in the day of judgment?"

"Woe, woe! The spirit has departed from you, and you have received an evil spirit, full of worldly cares, of pride and luxury; and, by reason of your misdeeds, the name of God has become a derision among the heathen.

"Have you forgotten the ancient enemy, or do you blindly imagine that the old serpent slumbers? Woe to you; for it is you who slumber, and your awakening will be like that of the rich man's in hell fire!"

Many of the women began to weep; the men sat and cowered as each blow fell.

But when he had finished, Sivert Jespersen, with a cringing smile, said: "I think now we had better sing a hymn."

At the third verse the cook entered with the dessert. The host made the most frightful grimaces, and shook his

Skipper Worse

head; for he was leading the singing, and had to mind his trebles and basses.

The cook understood the case well enough. She had submitted to giving up the salmon, but the devil himself should not cheat her out of her dessert. Her character would be utterly ruined in all the best families were it to transpire that, at a dinner of twenty-two persons, she had served only soup and a roast—no fish; no dessert!

Never would she stand such a thing! Red in the face, with smothered indignation, she brought in an enormous dish of rich pastry, which she placed right in front of Sivert Jespersen.

It caused an exceedingly painful impression, and the host almost lost his voice as he began the fourth verse. Nobody ventured to touch the dessert, and, after the hymn, the old dyer read a grace after meat.

When the coffee came, there was an oppressive silence; for some were seriously affected and distressed, others glanced uneasily at the elders. The women began to collect their cloaks, in order to proceed to the meeting-house, where there was to be a Bible-reading, Fennefos and some of the men accompanying them. But in the little office behind Sivert Jespersen's store, five or six of the elders were assembled. They lit their long clay pipes, and for some time sat smoking in silence. No one liked to begin the conversation.

"Does any one know the price of salt up at Bergen?" inquired Endre Egeland, who was always inclined to pass over anything unpleasant.

Apparently, however, no one knew anything about the price of salt. It was clear that something else had to be discussed.

"Yes; we all deserve it," sighed Sivert Jespersen. "I suppose that we have all been benefited."

"Yes, indeed," said another, "there is, in truth, much to correct and much to censure, both in you and me."

"You see the mote in your brother's eye, but not the beam in your own," said Nicolai Egeland, appropriately.

"It is not always that the advice and conversation of womenfolk softens a man," said the old dyer, quietly.

There was a pause, until all, even Nicolai Egeland, had taken in what was said. At last one of them remarked, "We shall require much help up on our farm this year, for the Lord has blessed both tillage and pasture."

It was a farm near the town, which was owned in common by several of the Haugians.

"What we most require is some one who can take a part in the work, and who, at the same time, knows how to meet the servants and labourers in worship during the hours of rest," said Sivert Jespersen.

Again a long pause. One looked at his neighbour, and he again into the corner, where the old dyer sat, until at last many eyes were turned in his direction.

It was not easy to see the old man as he sat blinking in the dense tobacco smoke, but, after a while, he nodded several times, saying: "Well, as it seems to be your wish, I will try to mention it to him." Upon this the others, who evidently felt relieved, began to talk eagerly about the price of salt.

Chapter XI

THE LITTLE white house of Skipper Randulf stood on an elevation, looking over the bay and the fjord. The two friends, who had dined, and dined well, were now enjoying their after-dinner nap, the host in his usual place on the sofa, the guest in a large armchair.

The window stood open, there was a warm sun, and the town lay still in the quiet summer afternoon. The flies buzzed in and out, and the window curtains moved gently in the breeze.

Large drops of perspiration stood on Jacob Worse's nose, as he lay back in his chair, with his mouth open, snoring frightfully.

Randulf snored also, but not quite so loudly. Over his eyes was spread a yellow silk handkerchief, which his old housekeeper always tied round his head, for without it he could not get his nap.

On the slope in front of the house, some boys, who were playing, noticed the strange noise made by the two sleepers, and collected, laughing and skylarking, under the window.

Suddenly Randulf's housekeeper fell upon them with a broom, and the boys scampered away, amidst shouts and laughter. Worse half opened his eyes for a moment, and then laid his head back again on the other side.

All was still again, until the snoring recommenced. The sound of oars, and the cries of sea-gulls out on the fjord, could be heard in the distance. The housekeeper stood sentry with the broom, and the worthy captains slept on for another half-hour.

At last, Randulf moved, lifted the handkerchief from his eyes, and yawned.

Upon this, Worse—half awake—said, with an assumption of superiority; "Well, you have slept! I began to think you would never wake up."

"Wake!" said Randulf, scornfully, "why, I could not get a wink of sleep for your snoring."

"I never snore," said Worse decisively; "besides, I have been awake all the time you were sleeping."

"Sleeping! I tell you I never slept."

"Come, I am the best judge of that, I who sat here and—"And snored; yes, that you did, and like a hero."

They wrangled on for a few moments, until they were both thoroughly awake.

Upon this they lit their pipes, and put on their coats—at Randulf's they always sat in their shirt sleeves, which was a treat to Worse. At home it was never allowed.

Afterwards the two old skippers sauntered about the wharves, peeped into the warehouses and the rope-walk, discussed the vessels in the harbour, and, with highly disparaging comments, examined a ship which was building by the wharf.

At every point they fell in with acquaintances, with whom they gossiped. Randulf was in excellent spirits, and Worse also roused himself, although he was not as he had been in old days.

Such a tour as this through the town was something new and unusual to him, for of late he had never been much beyond his own warehouse.

There was something strange about him, which he himself was unable to comprehend; but from the moment when he gave up the Hope to others, he had nearly lost all interest in his old calling.

Indeed, it was almost painful to him now to see a vessel in the fjord under full sail; formerly such a sight was the finest he knew.

To-day, however, Randulf had quite thawed him; he became lively, and even swore twice without being aware of it. This greatly comforted his friend. Like Consul Garman, Randulf grieved that Jacob Worse had, as he termed it, stranded himself.

He teased him no longer; it would be of no use. At the club, over a tumbler of warm toddy, Randulf would confide to his friends how sad it was to see so splendid a seaman as Jacob Worse spoilt by a pack of women.

He used to wind up his lamentations with "that confounded tub of a ship from Rostock," alluding to the Rostock trader, with which he had been in collision at Bolderaa.

It was his firm belief that if he, Randulf, had been at home, they should never have trapped Jacob Worse.

At seven o'clock they turned back to Randulf's little house, in high spirits, and ravenously hungry.

When they had again eaten—and Worse had not had such an appetite for many a day—they took their steaming

Skipper Worse

tumblers of toddy to the open window, and the blue smoke of their pipes came puffing out like cannon shots, first from the one and then from the other, like two frigates saluting.

After they had smoked on awhile in silence, Worse said: "The sea can be very fine on such a summer evening. Your health."

"The sea is always fine, Jacob. Your health."

"Well, as long as one is young."

"Young! why, you are not more than three years my senior; and that Thomas Randulf has no idea of sneaking to the shore for the next ten years, you may be certain."

"It is otherwise with me. There is something wrong in my inside, you must know."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Randulf. "I don't know much about liver and lungs, and all the trash they say we have in our insides, but what I do know is, that a seafaring man is never well on shore, just as a landsman is as sick as a cat when he comes on board. That is a fact, and it is not to be gainsaid."

Jacob Worse had nothing to say in answer to this speech, he only grumbled, and rubbed his hands across his stomach, "Have you tried Riga balsam?" inquired Randulf.

"Are you out of your senses? It is my inside that is bad."

"Don't you suppose that Riga balsam is good for the inside, too? If you only get the right sort, it is good for everything, inboard and outboard. I ought to know that. However, it is not your stomach that is wrong," added Randulf, profoundly, "it is rather your heart. It is these women who play the mischief with you, when they get you in tow; I have noticed it both in the Mediterranean and the Baltic.

This last affair, however, has been the worst. These pious ones, you see—"

"Mind what you say about Sarah. She has been a real blessing to me. What should I, an ailing old man, have been without her?"

"You would not have become an old man but for her," Randulf blurted out. But at this Worse looked so ferocious, that his friend took a long sip, and followed it by a fit of coughing.

"No, no," said Worse, when he, too, had refreshed himself. "She has been a good wife to me, both as regards body and soul. I have learnt much from her of which I was ignorant before."

"Yes, that's true, Jacob. You have learnt to sit behind the stove like an old crone, and to dangle at the apronstrings of the women. You have been dragged to meeting as tamely as a Spanish monk's mule; that is what you have learnt."

"Gently, Thomas," said Worse, nodding significantly. "You are proving the truth of my words. Such as you are, I was; but now I have learnt to feel differently, as you will, too, when the time comes. You will then understand what sinners we are."

"Sinners! Oh yes! But I am not so bad as many others, nor are you, Jacob. I have known you, known you well, for forty years, and a better man by land or sea is not to be found in all Norway. Now, you know it," he said, bringing his fist down on the window-ledge.

Worse was not entirely impervious to this flattery, but he muttered, as he shook the ashes of his pipe into the stove; "Yes, but much more than this is required, very much more."

"Listen to me seriously, Jacob Worse. You know Sivert Jespersen, also called Gesvint?"

"Yes, I should think I did."

"Perhaps you remember a certain two hundred barrels of salt which you bought of him?"

"Yes. I shan't forget them in a hurry."

"Answer me one thing, just one little thing; did he, or did he not, cheat you?"

"Horribly!" answered Worse, without hesitation.

"Now, then, answer me another thing. Which do you suppose the Almighty likes best, an honest seaman who holds his tongue and looks after his ship, or a hypocrite who cheats his fellow-creatures, and then sings hymns? Hey! Which do you think He prefers?"

"Neither you nor I can say, Randulf. Judgment is of the Lord, who searches the hearts and reins."

"Reins!" cried Randulf, scornfully. "Sivert Jespersen's reins—a pretty thing to search. The Lord is not one to be cheated."

Jacob Worse smiled. Theology was now put aside, and they mixed a fresh tumbler.

"But there is one thing you cannot get over, Jacob. It was a sin and shame that you gave up the sea so early.

Skipper Worse

Everybody who inquires about you says so."

"Does any one inquire about me?"

"Inquire about you! why, they talk about you from Copenhagen to Kronstadt. Do you remember the stout damsel at the 'Drei Norweger' in Pillau?"

"Was that where we danced?"

"No; that was at Königsberg. Good gracious!" said Randulf, compassionately, "have you forgotten it already? No; the stout individual at Pillau wept salt tears when she heard you were married. 'Ach du lieber,' said she. 'Was soll now the arme Minchen machen when the lustige Jacob Worse has gegiftet sich.'"

"Did she really say that?" cried Worse, touched. "However, it is not correct as you repeat it. I wonder, Thomas, you never learnt to speak German."

"I tell you what: I can get on well enough. I soon find out when they are trying to cheat me; then they come smirking and smiling with 'Guten Abis.' But when they say 'Das gloobis,' look out for yourself, for then they are most deceitful."

"Just let them try me. I know how to manage them," said Worse, boastingly. "Old Bencke in Dantzic learnt the truth of that. At first they cheated me in herrings, as they always do."

"Always," said Randulf, assentingly.

"In rye, too."

"Don't talk about it."

"But at last they introduced some new devilry into the bills of lading."

"What was that?"

"How in the world could I tell! I saw it was something new and out of the regular course, and so I would not sign it."

"No, of course not."

"The clerk, who was some sort of a Dane, stood ready with the pen, and tried to persuade me that it meant nothing, that it was for the benefit of the ship, and so on; all of which one could see was a lie.

"So it ended by my swearing that I would only have the bills of lading to which I was accustomed, and that rather than sign, the brig and the rye should remain in Dantzic Roads until they both rotted."

"Of course," said Randulf.

"But whilst we stood and disputed about this, old Bencke himself came out into the office, and the Dane explained the case to him. The old man became dreadfully angry, you may guess, and began to scold and curse in German. I, too, got angry, and so I turned round and said to him, in German, you understand—I spoke just like this to him: 'Bin Bencke bös, bin Worse also bös.' When he saw that I knew German, he did not say another word, but merely, turning round on his heel, bundled out of the room. Some one got another bill of lading, and that person was me."

"That was clever, Jacob," cried Randulf. It was a long time since he had heard that story.

They drank a tumbler in memory of old times, and for a while meditated in silence.

They were both very red in the face, and Worse looked quite fresh and well. The sallowness of his complexion was gone, but the short locks of hair about his ears were as white as froth.

At last Jacob Worse said: "When I look at such a table as that by the sofa, I cannot understand how it could be broken. You remember that night in Königsberg?"

"Yes; but you see, Jacob, we danced right against the table at full swing."

"Yes, you are right; it was at full swing," said Worse, smiling.

"But, good Heavens! how we ran away afterwards!" said Randulf, shaking with laughter.

"And how pitch dark it was before we found the boat! I wonder what that table cost?"

"You may well ask, Jacob. I have never been in the house since."

"Nor have I."

They now fell to talking of the wild doings of their mad youth, telling their stories only half way, or by allusions; for did they not both know them all by heart?

"What do you say to just another drop, Jacob?"

"Well, it must be a little one."

The host was of opinion that they might take just enough for a nightcap, and so went after the hot water.

Skipper Worse

It was now past ten o'clock, and as Worse had permission to stay till eleven, his conscience was perfectly clear. As he warmed up under the influence of Randulf's old Jamaica rum, he forgot both his internal malady and his anxieties for his soul.

At the third tumbler, Randulf proposed that they should talk English, which they proceeded to do with much gravity, but after their own fashion.

The last rays of the sun from behind the cloud banks, caused by the north wind, made the faces of the two friends look redder than ever, as they sat at the open window and talked their English.

The fjord below lay as smooth as a mirror, the outermost headlands and islands seeming to stand out of the water. Nearer the town, on the larger islands, and here and there to the eastward up in the mountains, the young people had lit St. John's Day bonfires, whose smoke went straight up, while the flames were paled by the twilight of the summer evening.

Boats full of boys and girls moved about. A sailor, who had brought an accordion with him, was playing; "While the North Sea roars," and other popular airs. A procession of boats followed him, and at times some of the people joined in with their voices.

Most, however, were silent, listening to the music, and gazing over the fjord out towards that "roaring North Sea," which woke up memories of hope and sorrow, of longings, uncertainty, love, and bereavement.

The Haugians had long since left their meeting-house. Some of Sivert Jespersen's guests had returned to sup at his house, others went straight home. Sarah and Fennefos met in the passage; both were conscious that there was some slight mistrust of them among the others. It was natural, therefore, that they should meet and keep together; indeed, when they reached the market-place, they turned off to the left, instead of going home, and strolled along the road leading to Sandsgaard.

Neither of them had an eye for the beauties of nature; they had always been taught that temptations lurk in everything which surrounds the Christian here below.

Sarah had not seen much; but Fennefos himself, who had journeyed throughout the land in all directions, had no higher conception of the beauty of nature than that a beautiful country was one that was fertile, and that an ugly one was one which was full of fields, lakes, and precipices, and devoid of rich pastures.

Nevertheless, the calm, pleasant summer evening was not without its effect upon them. They had again discussed the chief defects of their community, and how desirable it was that some one should take them seriously in hand.

But now the conversation flagged. They stopped and gazed over the fjord, where the fires were being lighted up. Boats rowed about, and song and music reached their ears. Sarah unconsciously heaved a deep sigh, and turned to go back to the town.

Hans Nilsen was about to say something about the sinfulness of the children of this world, but was unable to frame words. He abandoned the attempt, and, before he knew what he was doing, asked her if she was pleased with the letter he had given her when they last separated.

"Oh yes, Hans Nilsen!" she said, turning her face towards him, her colour heightened. She said no more, and he, too, became quite confused.

They turned towards the town. At the street door Sarah asked him if he would not come in for a moment. He followed unconsciously, and, when they entered the room, sat down on a chair.

He was glad to rest, he said, for he was weary. The evening rays lit half the room, but the back part was already dark. Sarah went out into the kitchen to see if the door was shut. The servants had gone upstairs, and the house was still and deserted, for it was nearly ten o'clock.

She brought some water and raspberry syrup, and Hans Nilsen, contrary to his custom, took a long draught. He was both tired and thirsty, he said.

Sarah sat at the other end of the sofa, and neither of them spoke. After a minute or two, the silence grew oppressive, and they began to converse again, but soon again lapsed into silence.

"What were you going to say?" inquired Hans Nilsen.

"I—I only asked if you would have some more syrup and water," said she, with some embarrassment.

"No, thank you. I ought to be going."

He got up and walked across the room. His hat lay on the table; but Fennefos moved, as if he hardly knew where he was, towards the window, and looked out on the pale evening sky.

Skipper Worse

Sarah got up also, and went to the cupboard, which was between the windows, where she began to busy herself with one thing or another.

Observing that she was behind him, he turned round and went back to his seat.

"It has been fine, warm weather to-day," he said; but his voice was thick and strange, and, in spite of what he had drunk, his throat was dry.

Sarah answered somewhat unintelligibly, took up the tumbler he had used, and placed it on the sideboard, her hand shaking so that the glass clinked as she put it down.

Hans Nilsen got up again, moving about as if he were in a stupor, and at last stood opposite her, as if he were about to speak.

She turned her face towards him, and the light fell upon it.

His lips moved, but no sound issued forth, until at last he said: "You are very pale."

"What do you say?" she whispered. His voice was so indistinct that she could not understand him.

He essayed once more to speak, and then, suddenly taking her in his arms, kissed her.

She made no attempt to release herself; but he relaxed his hold, crying; "Lord, help us; what are we doing!"

When the door closed behind him, she hastened across the room, and listened. She heard him stumbling along the passage, heard the house door shut, and heard him pass by the window with a hurried step.

She turned towards the light, her hands were pressed against her heart, the corners of her mouth quivered as with a bitter smile, and young and vigorous though she was, she sank down upon the floor, sobbing.

When Jacob Worse, cheerful and rather "fresh," came groping his way home an hour later, he found his wife reading the Bible, with two candles on the table, and the curtains drawn.

"Good evening," said he, pleasantly. "Is the little wife still sitting up? Is it not bed-time, little Sarah?"

She continued to read, without looking up. Worse laid his hat down, faltering a little as he crossed the floor.

"We have had a very jolly day, Sarah."

"All three?"

"Three!" exclaimed Worse, stopping short; "why, there was only Randulf and I."

"You lie; there were three," said Sarah, calmly.

Jacob Worse was now seized with the unlucky idea that she was joking with him.

He approached her, smiling, and with boozy eyes, in order to put his arm round her neck.

"Hey! so you know more about it than I do. Where did you go to school that you are so wise? Who was the third? Hey!"

"The devil," answered Sarah, lifting her eyes suddenly. "The loathsome fiend was sitting between you."

Jacob Worse started back.

"You may be sure that it is he who has had the pleasantest day. He rejoiced when he heard your oaths, the foul words, and all the corruption of your hearts. Did you not see his crooked claws when he set the bowl before you, that you might wallow in the debasing drink? Did you not hear him laugh, when you sat befouling yourselves in the mire of your sin, ripening for the pains of hell?"

Worse involuntarily began to rub his stomach. He felt the old complaint there again.

"Oh, Sarah, don't say that!" he cried. But she continued fixing her large cold eyes upon him the while, in such a way that he held up his hand to shade himself from her gaze.

"How long, old man, will you trifle with the Lord? Have you no fear of the doom of the impenitent, or have you heard and learnt nothing of the terrors of the outer darkness?"

Worse crept, terrified, towards his room. Half drunk as he was, he could not make it all out; he only heard the fearful words, and knew that two flashing eyes were pursuing him.

Twice he piteously begged her to desist, but each time he got a new scare, until at last, crushed and wretched, he slunk away to his room, and crept into bed.

Chapter XII

EVERY night when she retired to rest, Henrietta repeated the promise she had given to Lauritz when he left. "I promise and swear to love you faithfully in life or death, and never to marry any other."

But every morning when she rose, she sighed and wept; for the way seemed dark before her, and she dreaded each day as it came.

On her twentieth birthday, her mother told her plainly that she must soon marry. Lauritz was away on a long voyage, he would be absent for two years, and even if he came back, she knew only too well that her mother would never consent to their union. Henrietta fluctuated between the downright promise and black hopelessness; at one moment much cast down, at another, cheering herself with the thought of her brave Lauritz, of how much he loved her, and how absolutely he confided in her.

Her figure was not so full as her sister's, but was rather slight and thin. Her bright vivacious countenance looked as if she was always on the alert.

She confided in Sarah, who spoke to her, and urged her to obedience.

But Henrietta was too sharp-sighted not to have observed how it fared with Sarah in her married life, and, moreover, there was not any especial force in Sarah's exhortation when she counselled obedience.

For some time after Sivert Jespersen's party, Hans Nilsen was not to be seen; he did not appear at meal times, and he never spent the night in the house.

Madame Torvestad should not have thought much of this as it had occurred before. Fennefos had many friends in the neighbourhood, whom he occasionally visited. What really troubled her was, that the old dyer had been several times to inquire after Hans Nilsen, and was unwilling to tell her the reason.

Madame Torvestad had now almost got over her disappointment about Sarah. When she found that her daughter had got the better of her, she was wise enough to be contented with the lustre reflected upon her by the good and prosperous marriage.

Although Henrietta by no means filled Sarah's place at the Bible desk, madame's small meetings continued to be attended, and she retained the esteem of the elders.

But latterly a change was going on which alarmed her. She became aware that what she had read at the dinner about Francke's journey to heaven, had produced a very doubtful impression.

Moreover, she discovered that the elders had met in council about Fennefos, without asking her to be present. The old dyer was evidently the bearer of a secret message to him.

Madame Torvestad considered the matter carefully, and made up her mind. When Hans Nilsen at last appeared, after a five days' absence, she met him on the steps, and led him into her room.

"When you were last in town, Hans Nilsen," she began, without any preface, "you asked me if I thought you ought to marry. I did not think it expedient at that time, but I now think differently."

He moved in his chair, and she now observed for the first time that there was something strange in his aspect.

He sat in a stooping position, half turned away from the light. The clear grey eyes, which generally looked so frankly on those with whom he talked, were cast down, and when he lifted them they were slowly turned to one side. Moreover, he was pale, but blushed at times, passing his hand over his face as if he would conceal it.

Her surprise was such that she forgot to proceed, and merely repeated; "I am now of opinion that the time has come."

Fennefos, on his part, thought she knew all as well as he did, and that every one would detect his misconduct by his outward appearance. And now, when she persisted in repeating that it was time for him to marry, he felt so overwhelmed with shame, that he hardly knew which way to look.

Madame Torvestad did not comprehend what she saw, but she discovered that by some means or other Fennefos had received a shock; perhaps it might make him the more easy to manage.

"You also asked me at that time, Hans Nilsen, if I knew of any Christian young woman who would suit you. I believe that I have now found one—my daughter."

He looked so wildly at her for a moment, that she was almost frightened. "Are you unwell, Hans Nilsen?" she said.

Skipper Worse

"No; I am only weary."

Madame Torvestad's suspicions were now aroused. "If it be that you have suffered worldly love to deceive your heart, pray to God, Hans Nilsen, to protect you, and to aid you in the strife with Satan. You should be able to withstand him, and to avoid such vile snares. Henrietta is indeed young, but with you I am satisfied that she would be in safe hands, and I hope and believe that she would be a blessing to you."

Fennefos had so far recovered himself that he was able to thank her. "In truth," said he, "he had not been thinking of marrying now. It was a serious matter."

"It is not good to be alone, least of all for men;" said Madame Torvestad, with emphasis. "You know that well enough, Hans Nilsen; and you remember what Paul says."

"Yes, yes," he said, interrupting her hastily. "If you think I ought to marry, I will pray that it may be for the best."

"I will speak to Henrietta," said Madame Torvestad.

"Thanks; but I would rather—"

"Well, then—I have confidence in you. She is yonder in the workroom."

"Now, at once? I thought that perhaps—"

"There is no reason for delay," said Madame Torvestad, as she opened the door, and, calling out the servant girl, led Fennefos in.

He suffered her to lead him as if he were a dog. "There could be no doubt," he thought, "that Madame Torvestad knew all"; and this feeling of shame, combined with his weariness, left him helpless in her hands. For four days he had wandered along the coast quite alone, shunning acquaintances, and living entirely with strangers. All this time, in fear and sorrow, he had striven to repent; but he returned uncomforted, unsettled, with a vague intention of packing up and going far away.

When he found himself face to face with Henrietta, who looked uneasily at him, he knew not what to say. But she, who of late had got sufficient intimation of what was intended, took courage and said, in a low voice; "Hans, I am betrothed. I have given my promise to Lauritz Seehus, for life or death," she added, fixing her eyes on him.

Hans Nilsen looked at the girl who so openly confessed her love, for life or death; in her innocence so greatly his superior.

"Listen, dear Hans," said Henrietta, laying her hand confidentially on his shoulder. "You have always been kind to me, and you are so good yourself. You will not take me in this way, I am sure; but you will protect me from my mother?"

"I certainly would not wish to make you unhappy, Henrietta; but you ought not to oppose your mother."

"But I will not, I cannot, marry any one but him whom I love."

"Listen, child," he now said quietly, looking sadly at her. It was not the first time that heart-stricken women had sought counsel of Hans Nilsen, and this day he was more than ever in a mood to sympathize with such. There is no suffering more bitter than that of our wounded affections in our youth, but there is strength and healing given to those who seek peace, if they bear their lot in obedience to the will of God, and to those who are placed over them. "You say you cannot marry one whom you do not love; but consider how often the heart deceives itself in youth and—"

"Yes; just look at Sarah, for example," said Henrietta, interrupting him. "Of what avail are all her riches and piety? I know that she is the most miserable woman on earth."

Hans Nilsen turned away; he was again completely disarmed.

Henrietta moved towards the window, and, gazing up at the sky, which was visible over the yard, struck one hand resolutely upon the other, and said, half aloud: "Besides, I have sworn it."

Hans Nilsen went back to Madame Torvestad, and merely said that he and Henrietta could not come to any agreement.

She wished to learn more from him; but he could bear it no longer, and left the room without answering her.

Upstairs, however, he did not find the rest he so much needed, for in his room the old dyer sat waiting for him.

"I have been anxious to see you, Hans Nilsen, and have sought you many times. There is a great desire among us to speak with you, and to meet you in confidential intercourse, but at present it seems to us that you are entirely taken up in this house with the conversation and society of the women."

Fennefos was so tired, that he was half asleep as he listened to the old man. He comprehended that they

Skipper Worse

wished him to leave Madame Torvestad's, and this he himself was anxious to do.

"There are a number of people up at our farm," continued the dyer, "and more will soon come when the harvest begins. Many of us think it would be well if we could find a reliable man who could work and who could preach during the hours of rest. Sivert Jespersen and the others have much to occupy them in the town, and so we thought we would ask Hans Nilsen to move up there."

"Willingly will I do it, if it be thought desirable."

"We were thinking that perhaps you could go to-morrow." Fennefos was rather taken by surprise, but, for the sake of peace, consented, and as soon as the dyer left, threw himself on the bed, and fell asleep.

Madame Torvestad stood for a moment, thoughtful as usual, when Hans Nilsen had departed; then, opening the door of the workroom, she said with a certain air of solemnity; "Henrietta, go to bed."

"Yes, mother," said Henrietta, who after the conversation with Fennefos, had fallen into the deepest despondency.

Trembling, she approached her mother to say "Good night," although the sun was still high in the heavens.

"I will not say 'Good night' to you, and you shall have no supper, either," said her mother, shutting the door.

This was the mode of applying correction in Gnadau, and Madame Torvestad remembered well how it would bend even the most refractory.

When Jacob Worse woke in the morning after the memorable birthday at Randulf's, he felt extremely unwell. His head was heavy and beating violently, and he felt the pain in his stomach.

His wife had long been up; and when Worse was really awakened, it was by two of the warehouse people, who came in and began to remove her bed.

"What are you about?" he inquired, petulantly.

"We are taking madame's bed into the other room."

"Nonsense!"

"Hush, hush!" said the old foreman. "The captain must not excite himself. You are ill, captain, and I was to tell you from madame that you must not talk."

Worse muttered something, and with sleepy eyes watched the departure of the bed.

When his wife soon afterwards entered the room, he said: "I shall be all right to-morrow, Sarah; it is only the first day that is so confoundedly bad. Bah! I will never touch toddy again. It's beastly, that's what it is."

"You are more ill than you suppose, both in body and soul, and I think you should seek healing for both, especially for your soul, before it be too late."

"Yes, dear, you know I will; but you must help me. Come sit by me, and read to me a little."

"Not to-day," she answered.

He lay in bed all that day, suffering much. The next day his head, at least, was clear, but the pains in his stomach troubled him, and he found it best to remain lying down.

From time to time Sarah visited his room, and he begged her piteously to come and sit by him; for when he was alone, he was troubled by many evil and dismal thoughts.

She seated herself by the window, with some small books—like her mother, she had also taken to small books.

"I suppose you will repent, and seek forgiveness for your sins, Worse; or will you persist in putting it off?"

"No, no, dear. You know how gladly I would repent. But you must help me, Sarah; for I know not what to do."

"Well, I will begin by reading to you from an excellent book on nine important points, which should arouse us to a feeling of our sinfulness, and lead us to repentance and amendment. Listen to me, not only with your ears, but with your stubborn heart, and may a blessing accompany the words."

Upon this she read slowly and impressively: "'The mercy of God first leads us to repentance; as the Apostle says (Rom. ii. 4), 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.'"

"'Secondly, the Word of God clearly points to contrition. As the prophets of old were sent, even so preachers and other means of grace are now sent to us, daily sounding forth His Word as with a trumpet, and arousing us to repentance.

"'We should take heed to the judgments which, ever since the beginning of the world, have fallen upon hardened sinners; for example, floods, tempests, thunder and lightning in the heavens above, and destructive earthquakes from underneath our feet.'"

Skipper Worse

"Lisbon," muttered Worse. He had a picture of the great earthquake over the sofa in the sitting-room.

"The fourth is the vast multitude of our sins which we committed when we lived in wantonness, drink, gluttony, and godlessness.

"The fifth is the shortness of life, calling us to repentance; for our life passes quickly away, and we spend our years as a tale that is told.

"The sixth is the small number of the saved; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that enter therein.

"For the seventh, death threatens us, and is a terror to the flesh. Its anticipation is bitter to all who are sunk in worldly pleasures."

Worse turned uneasily in his bed, as if he would interrupt her; but she continued—

"We should, therefore, think of the day of judgment, which "will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

"But the ninth and last is the pains of hell, which are insupportable.

"Scripture gives a terrible description of the state of the condemned in everlasting flames, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

"Don't you think you could find something else to read, Sarah?" said Worse, anxiously.

"The days of hell will never end," she continued.

"When as many years have passed and gone as there are beings in the world and stars in the firmament, when as many thousand years have passed as there are grains of sand in the bottom of the sea, there will yet be a million times as many more to come.

"Those who do not take this to heart will hereafter suffer for it. All drunkards and scoffers, as well as those who make their belly their god, those who are slaves to their passions, and all unbelievers, will then be revealed before the judgment-throne.

"The devil will stand on one side to accuse them, and their own consciences on the other to condemn them, and down below the gates of hell will stand open to swallow them."

"Sarah, Sarah! read no more!" cried Worse.

But she continued to read, and the words cut like a knife, The wrath of God, the flames of hell, and the never-ending sufferings of the damned were depicted in clear and terrible language.

"Sarah! for God's sake, stop!" shrieked Worse, sitting upright. The perspiration flowed down his cheeks, and he trembled so that the bed shook.

She fixed a stern eye upon him, and said, "I wonder if you have yet placed yourself in the hands of the living God?"

"Sarah, Sarah! What shall I do?"

"Pray," she answered, and left the room.

He lay and writhed with pain and fear, and when he heard her in the next room, called to her, begging her to have pity on him.

At last she came in again.

"Sarah, why are you so harsh with me? You were never so before."

"I never before dealt with you in the right way."

"Do you suppose that this is the right way?"

"I hope so."

"Well, you know best; but you must help me, Sarah. Do not leave me now!" And he clutched her hand with the grasp of a drowning man.

Some days after he was allowed to get up, and he followed her about the house; for he was uneasy when she left the room.

At times he sat in a corner with a good book in his hands not so much for the purpose of reading as for a protection against the assaults of Satan.

The fact was, that he now for the first time began to fancy that Satan was everywhere in pursuit of him.

When Sarah had succeeded in frightening him away from her, she became a little less severe, and it was only when he became troublesome that she talked or read in such a manner as almost to drive him out of his senses.

Skipper Worse

She herself went about in the deepest gloom all this time. She could neither pray nor sing, and at the meetings she heard, but gave no heed.

The one second she had been in Hans Nilsen's arms had suddenly revealed to her the deceit which had been practiced upon her. Her youth, her warm, unbounded affection for this man, had been repressed and crushed by religious exhortations, hymns, texts, and formalities.

But after all, they were only words which she now cast aside with contempt. Faith and hope had left her; and as to love, she knew that she loved one man only, and loved him to desperation.

Whilst Fennefos was away, she was in a state of fever. When he returned, he left her mother's house and moved up to the Haugian farm.

It was near the town, and Sarah, who rarely went beyond the neighbouring streets, now began to take long walks into the outskirts.

She would stand behind a boulder or a hedge, and would watch him while he laboured in the field. When she could not discover him, she would seat herself on a rock and gaze in all directions, or she would pick a flower and examine it, as if it were something new and rare. She watched him at the meetings; but he never spoke to her, nor did he ever turn his eyes in the direction where she was sitting.

No one observed anything peculiar about her; but as regarded Fennefos, the friends thought that a great change had come over him. The highly wrought austerity of manner with which he had begun had now left him; indeed, there was something almost humble in his demeanour.

Chapter XIII

THE FARM, which was owned in common by a number of the leading Haugians, was of a considerable size. In addition to the farm, they also carried on various industries.

Those, therefore, who had to superintend the business were fully occupied, and Fennefos undertook the duty with a zeal and vigour unusual even for him.

On the other hand, during the first weeks of his stay, he was unable to lead the devotions among the labourers, who, after the custom of the Haugians, assembled for meals and for family worship in a great room, where they all ate in common at a long table.

Hans Nilsen confined his energies to the manual work of the farm, and at the meetings he was silent and oppressed. But after a couple of months had passed in this way, he began to lift up his head again.

In the hard bodily labour, and in all the responsibility which rested upon him as superintendent, his strong, sound nature recovered its equilibrium.

Although he continually deplored his one moment of weakness, and although he condemned himself, he yet began to understand that such might happen even to the best; and as this occurrence had revealed to him his own frailty, and had sorely shaken his self-confidence, so it also brought with it doubts as to whether he was right in expecting so much from mortal man as had been his wont.

He bethought him of the poor anxious inquirers whom he had left up in the North, and it seemed to him a sin to impose such heavy burdens on them. Then he thought of the well-to-do, easy Haugians, and it seemed a sin to remain among them. Sometimes, again, in his hopelessness he thought that it was as bad for him to be in the one place as in the other, and he longed for something entirely different.

Having got thus far, it became necessary to consider his future life. Stay here, he could not. He was not uneasy on his own account, although after this he could not be sure of himself. For her sake, however, it was imperative that he should depart.

Separated they must be, that was clear; this he repeated to himself, but still he continued to stay on. Here there was work which would last over the harvest; and besides, whither in the world should he go?

When he left that place, there would be no spot in the wide world that could hold out any attraction to him, which could offer either home or friends. He would rather see no one, and live alone.

His heart was deeply wounded, and he often thought of Henrietta. He, too, was bound for life and death by an affection into which no evil thoughts should intrude. As for Sarah, he would pray for her.

In the meantime the elders regarded Hans Nilsen with concern. The address in Sivert Jespersen's house had done much harm; an impression went abroad that the Haugians were divided among themselves, and that Fennefos had separated from them.

There was a want of confidence among the Brethren themselves; those who had not been present wished to know what he had said, while those who had, gave evasive answers. There was much inquisitiveness and a great desire both among friends and foes to learn if there was really anything against so respected and well-known a man as Hans Nilsen.

Besides, since the meeting a change had taken place in his appearance. Something must have happened. Everybody had his own opinion, and the elders met to consult.

"I think," said Sivert Jespersen, looking round, "we are all agreed upon this, that there must be women at the bottom of the affair."

"I have heard it mentioned," said Endre Egeland, "that he has been very much in the company of Henrietta, Madame Torvestad's daughter."

"With Henrietta!" said Sivert Jespersen, in a somewhat incredulous tone.

The astonishment which this announcement produced led to a short pause.

"No, no," said the old dyer at last; "it is impossible to believe such a scandal."

"At any rate," said Sivert Jespersen, mildly, "we ought to consider how best to help Brother Hans Nilsen in all difficulties and temptations. I have thought, if it seems good to you, that we might meet up at the farm on Saturday afternoon, and, after having examined the accounts, we might have a little conversation with him."

Skipper Worse

"Let us be careful what we do," said the old man; "we know nothing for certain."

"No; I never meant that we should act indiscreetly—"

"I know that you are very prudent, Sivert Jespersen; but let us not forget that he is the most considerable man in our community, and that we must not lose him."

The Saturday when they met at the farm, according to agreement, was the last day of September. They had, therefore, to go into all the accounts of the farm, the dye-house, and the mill.

The accounts were in good order, and everything had been well managed. They thanked Hans Nilsen with the utmost friendliness.

When the books were closed and arrangements had been made for the future, they seated themselves round the room. Fennefos, who sat in the middle by the table with the account-books, raised his head, and looked calmly from one to the other.

No one failed to remark that his old expression had returned; the downcast, unsettled look which at one time they had observed was entirely gone. Sunburnt and vigorous, as he stood there among the pale-faced townsmen, he seemed more than ever full of power.

The old dyer, therefore, made signs to Sivert Jespersen, and began to move, as if he would depart.

But Sivert Jespersen had made up his mind to fathom Hans Nilsen's secret, or, at all events, to secure, for himself and the elders some hold upon the overbearing young man.

"We have been talking among ourselves," he began. "We have been talking about you, dear Hans Nilsen; yes, we have, indeed. We are all of opinion that you made use of very strong expressions that day—you remember, no doubt—at my house."

"I spoke with warmth, and if my words were too severe, I beg of you all to forgive me. I thought it necessary; but there was no want of charity in my heart."

"There is not one of us who supposes that there was, Hans Nilsen," said the old dyer.

"No, that there was not," continued Sivert Jespersen; "but what makes us anxious is the look of dejection which we have observed in you ever since. You are still young, Hans Nilsen, and we are old—at all events, we are all your seniors. We know full well to what temptations young blood is exposed, and if you have met with a downfall at the hands of Satan, we would willingly endeavour to raise you up again."

Hans Nilsen Fennefos looked from one to the other with a piercing glance, and it seemed to them that it rested for a painfully long time upon Endre Egeland.

"I thank you all, but God has been merciful. I require no such aid as that which you offer."

"How glad I am to hear it!" said Sivert Jespersen, with effusion. "But—do not be angry with me, dear friend—if we are outwardly preserved from falling, we should never forget what has been written about thoughts, words, and passions."

"Will any of you, I wonder, cast the first stone?" said Hans Nilsen, looking calmly round.

No one responded, and Sivert Jespersen's next neighbour touched him with his foot as a hint to stop. But it was too late. Fennefos had made up his mind, and, rising quickly, spoke thus—

"Dear brothers and friends, I did indeed use hard words the last time I addressed you. I came from scenes of poverty and found prosperity. I came from affliction, and found ease. I came from hunger and want, and I found myself at the rich man's table.

"I therefore remembered the rule which Hauge had left for our guidance: "The elders must not connive at any depravity among themselves, but must duly rebuke it. Those who have acquired the respect of the believers, and would be exemplary Christians, must take heed lest they accustom themselves to flattery and luxury; they must even submit to sharp admonitions and to hard fare."

"I spoke to you as my duty constrained me; but since that day the Lord's hand has fallen heavily on me, and, in my grievous sinfulness, I thought I should never again dare to stand forth and speak a word of rebuke to any one.

"That was the time when you saw me wandering amongst you, bowed down and forsaken. But God be praised, who has lifted me up. I will dare to hope that He will not cast me entirely aside as an unworthy instrument; but, dear friends, among you I can no longer tarry."

All looked uneasily at him.

"Surely you will not separate from the Brethren?" said the old man.

"No, that I will not do; but I must leave this place, both on account of my own infirmity, and because I fear

Skipper Worse

that after this I cannot warn and admonish you with sufficient power; for, dear friends, I am of opinion that in many respects you go sadly astray."

"Will you travel northward again?" inquired one. "Or, perchance, the Lord has turned your heart towards the poor heathen in Africa?" said another.

Hans Nilsen looked up at him, and said: "I am grateful to you for the suggestion. I will think over it, and will pray the Spirit to guide me aright."

This seemed to bring relief to everybody. The mission was their own, originated and established by the Herrnhutters and Haugians. If Hans Nilsen entered upon the mission, he would remain with them, and they would not lose him. They now felt, for the first time, how great a support he was to their cause.

Sivert Jespersen began at once to exhort him to allow himself to be sent on a mission to the heathen lands lying in darkness.

Whether it was the expression, "allow himself to be sent," or whether Hans Nilsen could not on this occasion tolerate Sivert, it is sufficient to say that he answered him rather sharply. "If I do go, there is but one who will send me forth—the Lord."

"Take great heed to your missions, dear friends; you should remember how the unbelievers, and not less the clergy, derided you when you began them.

"Already the fire you kindled has spread over the land, and help and funds pour in abundantly. See how these same clergy hasten like ravens attracted by the scent of prey. They will not suffer laymen to keep such Christian work in their control, whilst there is life and vigour in it; but would subject it to the rule of the Church, as they call it; that is to say, they will spoil your work and introduce their pride, strife, and intolerance. So long as all goes well, they will thrust themselves forward, exclaiming 'Behold us!' but if anything should go amiss, they will draw back, protesting that it must always be so when the people act upon their own judgment."

The old fire now came over him, and the elders looked round sadly one at another, grieving that they should lose such a brother. At last one said: "But where will you go, if you do not accept the mission at our hands?"

"I imagine," said Hans Nilsen, "that I shall have little difficulty in finding heathens everywhere. But let us now separate for the present, and may the God who enlightened our forefathers be with us all, so that we may do His will."

Upon this he gave his hand to them all, one by one, and took his departure.

It was a still, oppressive autumn afternoon, and the little gathering broke up, the Brethren strolling across the fields towards the town.

The Haugian farm, as it was called, looked well in the evening light, with its solid, well-kept buildings.

The soil was poor, but well cultivated; and small groups of trees stood here and there, by the well-ordered stone fences.

When the little company of elders reached the gateway in the road leading to the town, the old dyer stopped, and burst into tears; the others gathered round him.

"Here stood I," said he, "in the spring of 1804, with my father and Hans Nilsen Hauge; at that time, wherever you looked, it was all heather and broken ground.

"My father and Hauge had been talking of purchasing the moorland here, as was soon done. Hauge had given his advice and instructions as to the improvements and the work he considered necessary, very much those that have since been carried out.

"When we were about to return home, my father said: 'Yes, if God will but give His blessing to it.' I suppose he thought most of the things of this world, did father.

"It was a hazardous undertaking, and the Haugians had but little capital at that time.

"Hauge smiled, and said, cheerfully: 'I am not in the least anxious on that score, Ingebret, if you are alluding to worldly prosperity. I would rather pray that those who come after us may be protected against too great success and facility in the business of this world. You must bear in mind,' said he, 'you who are still young, that it requires a strong back to bear prosperity.'

"I can picture him now before me, standing just there. He was young himself in those days, and not so very much older than myself. Nevertheless, I was conscious that I stood in the exalted presence of one who was worthy of all honour, before whom I would fain bow myself.

"Something of the same feeling came over me to-day, when he spoke—young Hans Nilsen Fennefos. It is of

Skipper Worse

no use denying it; it is he who is in the right, and it is we who are backsliders and lukewarm."

The old man, shaking his head sadly, turned towards the town, the others accompanying him in silence.

Madame Torvestad aged very much under the vexations which now beset her. The Brethren had taken Hans Nilsen from her, and continued to act without consulting her. Moreover, the Gnadau system of treatment seemed to bear no fruit.

Henrietta, indeed, grew pale and thin, owing to much fasting and confinement; but, on the other hand, a defiant look appeared in her eyes.

One day her mother heard her singing a popular nautical ballad, on the devotion of a sailor's bride to her betrothed. Upon this, Madame Torvestad's patience broke down, and, losing her usual self-control, she went into the room, and gave Henrietta a box on each ear, saying: "I will soon teach you a very different song."

Henrietta sat as if petrified. She had often seen her mother in a state of irritation, and had received many a sharp blow in her younger days, but she had never seen her like this before. She did not expect much forbearance, but it never occurred to her that things could come to such a terrible pass.

In the course of an hour, Henrietta was called down into the sitting-room, where she found Madame Endre Egeland. The stout sallow-complexioned dame kissed her, and it was now broken to her that she was betrothed to Erik Pontoppidan Egeland, the most objectionable person under the sun.

When Sarah heard of this engagement, she went across to her mother. They shut themselves up in the parlour, but the interview was of brief duration. Madame Torvestad soon got the better of her daughter, and when it came to the point, and Sarah found herself seated opposite to her mother in the old room, she could not muster courage enough for a decisive attack.

Besides, what could she say? Could she divulge her own shame and sorrow?

Sarah went upstairs to Henrietta, who made no answer to what she said, except, "I will not, I will not. I have sworn it." She was ill and feverish.

Sarah undressed her and put her to bed, but her mother wished to nurse her herself, and Sarah was obliged to leave, even more depressed and unhappy than before.

As the weeks passed on, her heart became more and more hardened.

Fennefos recovered his clear, pure looks, and, when in her company, seemed to ignore her presence.

One day it was rumoured that he was about to become a missionary. Sarah heard of it, and she grew more and more gloomy. She hated her mother, and detested her husband, comporting herself, however, with such calmness that no one could have imagined what thoughts were surging through her brain.

Jacob Worse had now entered upon an earnest struggle with the devil. By degrees it became evident to him that the evil one was always at work, both inside and outside his innermost heart.

They strove together, the devil and Worse, from morning until evening, and at night when he dreamt. Generally the captain got the worst of it.

When he became aware of his snares in time, he occasionally outwitted the crafty fiend. Thus it occurred one day, when he was with Skipper Randulf, who had induced him to take a turn through the town, talking and leading him farther and farther towards the wharves, that he suddenly discovered his danger. He heard a couple of boys who passed him say that a ship was about to be launched, and it was easy to perceive in this a stratagem of the evil one. It was an old trick of the devil to lead his thoughts to the sins of his early life, by means of things pertaining to ships and the sea.

He had, therefore, long since laid aside the half-finished model of the Hope up in the garret; and when he saw that the devil tempted him through Thomas Randulf, he turned round suddenly, and hastened home to Sarah. Randulf grieved over his friend, and, in the evening at the club, said "It is all up with Jacob Worse; take my word for it, he is not long for this world. I saw it to-day."

"I don't think so," said another; "he looks a little pale and poorly, but—"

"Yes, I tell you I saw it to-day, by his trousers."

"What rubbish you talk, Randulf!" said the chief pilot, who was seated at the card-table.

"Rubbish!" said Randulf, pugnaciously. "Your word is better than mine, is it? I tell you that when a man is doomed, his trousers hang loosely about him."

They all laughed, and some one suggested that when people are ill they grow thin.

"No, no," cried Randulf, with much warmth; "what I allude to has its own peculiar appearance. The trousers

Skipper Worse

look so heavy, so empty, and so long, that they seem as if they would slip down, and three heavy folds rest upon the feet.

When I see this, I know that a man has not long to live.

You may take this as a fact."

When the bad weather began in October, Jacob Worse went out but seldom; he had grown chilly, and kept much to his room.

He read the small books as much as he could, but they did not avail to bring him that spiritual comfort for which he strove so hard.

At the meeting it was strange to see, amidst the peaceful, benignant faces, this woe-begone old man, with his thick white hair and his deeply furrowed placid cheeks, looking wistfully from one to the other, and listening anxiously, hoping some day to hear the words which should bring peace to his soul.

But from old times the devil had too secure a hold upon him, placing oaths upon his tongue and evil thoughts in his heart.

At the meeting, when Sivert Jespersen was reading out a sermon, the devil would lug in those two hundred barrels of salt, or so distorted his vision that Endre Egeland would seem to be staring at the girls with his small green eyes.

At night, when the wind howled around his house, it seemed to him that the devil would take him out on the sea on board the Hope; and he experienced a pleasure in lying and thinking how well he used to sail the good ship, and how grand she looked in a heavy sea.

Sometimes Satan tempted him to pride when Garman and Worse did a good stroke of business, or to wrath and indignation when Romarino came and asked for money or endorsements.

The devil even made use of Thomas Randulf to corrupt him. One day, when Worse met him in the market-place, opposite his street door, he hurried back into his house; for it seemed to him as if Randulf had long, crooked claws.

It was best to be at home, especially if Sarah was there. There, if he was very vigilant, he was able to keep the devil at arms' length.

All this time, however, his malady was gaining ground; he slept badly, and his appetite failed him. The only thing he relished was pea-soup and salt pork, such as he had been accustomed to at sea, and he brightened up every morning when he smelt the peas in the kitchen.

One day, however, it occurred to him that this, too, might be one of the temptations of the evil one, leading his thoughts away from the one thing needful, and back to the sinful recollections of his past life.

The next time the pea-soup was placed on the table, he could scarcely touch it.

The devil was in the peas, too.

Chapter XIV

"MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FREDERIK,

"SINCE your lamented mother's death, whose too early demise we ever deplore, I do not know when I have felt myself more contented or in such good spirits.

"In every man's life there is a certain point where his character and inner nature undergo a change and become altered. His interests continue as before, the amount of energy with which he approaches his work need not lessen; and yet when he arrives at the turning-point, he sees with other eyes, and is, in some respects, actuated by other feelings.

"This transition, of which I can here give but a very imperfect description, is the inevitable result of the change from youth to old age, and this it is which of late years, ever since your mother's death, has slowly and gradually manifested itself in me.

"With feelings of gratitude to a merciful Providence, I am able to say that I feel happy in having become an old man.

"But my heart is chiefly filled with gratitude when I consider how much bodily health and strength, and especially mental vigour, I still retain, so that nothing of what has hitherto occupied my thoughts has yet become alien or indifferent to me.

"I enjoy more peace of mind, the brain, undisturbed by passion, is better fitted to perform its functions, and the somewhat precipitate ardour of youth has given place to the circumspection of mature age.

"I write to you to-day, my dear son, more explicitly, and upon subjects different from those on which we usually correspond. I am led to do so, partly with a desire to inform you of what you are about to undertake, and partly because this letter may be one of the last which we shall exchange at a distance; for it is now my wish, and my paternal injunction, that you, in conformity with our prearranged understanding, should return home in the ensuing spring.

"I leave it to your choice to decide whether you will return from Paris by Copenhagen, or whether you will go to England, and come thence in one of the lobster-smacks.

"It will be a great joy to me to see you at home again, and in good health. I hope also that you, on your part, will be contented and happy, and prepared to take a part in the business.

"I have never forgotten that when I, in my youth, returned from a long absence in foreign parts, Sandsgaard seemed to me an out-of-the-way and neglected corner of the great world.

"But the experience of life has taught me that a man who is endowed with a philosophical spirit and high principles, will easily accommodate himself to whatever fate has prepared for him.

"I venture to hope that even if you should come direct from Paris, you will not deem Sandsgaard an entirely unworthy residence; for of late I have renovated and decorated the mansion, so that it seems only to want a throng of young and happy people to conjure up those times on which my memory loves to dwell, although clouded by bereavement and sorrow.

"However, why should I again recall a grief which must always cast its shadow on my life?

"Let us look forward to the future, which, for you younger people at all events, seems likely to bring happier days.

"Perhaps, also, in the contemplation of your felicity, I may find some compensation, and solace for many tears.

"Without doubt, you will have remarked that in our recent correspondence I have, with a definite purpose, endeavoured to impart to you such a general knowledge of our business as was practicable, without being too prolix.

"I look upon you already as my fellow-worker and associate in labours, for which your letters, and the accounts you have sent me, as well as the reports of your superiors during your residence abroad, encourage me to believe that you are not unfitted and still less unworthy.

"You are aware that the firm has prospered, a matter which a merchant does not care to talk of, but between us two, I may say that the firm has met with extraordinary success.

Skipper Worse

"You will, therefore, find—to your agreeable surprise, I trust—that many branches of the business which hitherto I had been unable to develop adequately, by reason of the want of funds, have now, like plants under a fertilizing shower, made auspicious growth, owing to the abundance of ready money.

"You will, therefore, on your arrival, find a wide field for your young energies, and you will be spared the anxiety and care which I, for many years, unknown to you or to any other person, have undergone.

"I now come to that point in my letter which may be termed the chief or cardinal point, namely, our relations with Worse.

"In our correspondence we have never treated particularly of this affair; nevertheless, I seem to have observed that it was only your filial respect which restrained you from criticising my conduct in admitting Jacob Worse into the firm.

"For this reason, my dear Christian Frederik, I will speak out once for all, and say that it was neither more nor less than the salvation of the firm.

"It may be that there is something humiliating in this avowal; but, for my part, I can only say that it would have been far more humiliating and more injurious to our credit to have secretly accepted a subvention from one of our own employés.

"It was I, therefore, who proposed the change in the firm; for I considered such an open proceeding, not only more in consonance with our reputation, but also with the highest commercial principles. I will not deny, however, that the change of the firm's name cost me a struggle, and I am not blind to the complications to which it may lead.

"I have of late carefully considered all this, and it is my purpose to inform you in this letter of the present condition of affairs, and briefly to confide to you the plan which I propose to follow, and which I hope to carry out in the future.

"Our old Jacob Worse is very ill, and, after a visit which I paid to his sick-bed a few days since, I can have but little doubt—I regret to say—that his days are numbered. His marriage, as I both thought and predicted, has brought him little happiness.

"His wife, as you know, is one of the religious enthusiasts, and of late years she, in conjunction with her mother and the rest of the pious folks, have succeeded in spoiling our old Worse to such an extent that I do not care to sully this paper by a description of his lamentable decadence. I shall, therefore, restrain my grief and anger, and will confine myself to business matters.

"When Jacob Worse dies—and, considering his present condition, one can only wish him a speedy and painless departure—it will be necessary to divide his property between his widow and the son of his first marriage, which may entail complications as regards the firm.

"In order to avoid this as much as possible, I have made up my mind to offer to young Romarino Worse, when the time arrives, a sum of money in lieu of a position in the firm. I am inclined to think that he will acquiesce, partly because, according to my slight knowledge of his character, a considerable sum, either in cash or convertible security, will be much appreciated by him.

"As I have already said, I know but little of the young man, still I have formed an impression that young Worse is not a person with whom we should like to work.

"Although I believe that so long as Providence vouchsafes to me strength to continue at the head of the firm, we should know how to manage him, yet I would not embarrass you with a companion in whom we could not place entire confidence.

"I hope to accomplish this change by the time you arrive, and I hope, moreover, that it will meet with your approval.

"On the one hand, there is no doubt something decidedly unpleasant in our recent alliance with Worse, but, on the other, we must never forget that it was old Jacob Worse's money that saved us, and I enjoin you herewith to keep an eye on the family; we ought to stand by them, both by word and deed.

"When this affair is arranged, my mind will be at ease; and I hope that we have yet before us a fair number of years in which to work together in the firm of Garman and Worse.

"If, as I suppose from your last letter, you have already reached Paris, you will, no doubt, have enjoyed the pleasure of meeting with your brother Richard at our legation, whither I send this letter.

"I am convinced that you will mutually derive much benefit and satisfaction from each other's society in the

great city.

"Your brother Richard, by reason of his connections, will be able to introduce you to circles which would otherwise be inaccessible to a stranger. On the other hand, I do not doubt that your presence may, in many respects, be advantageous to your younger brother.

"The career which Richard has adopted entails much greater expense and a more luxurious mode of life than is necessary or becoming to a merchant. Nevertheless, I would put it to you, whether you could not, by means of brotherly counsels impress upon Richard the propriety of greater economy. Do not misunderstand me, or suppose that it is my desire that you should mar your brief intercourse by lecturing him, nor do I wish that your communications should lead him to think that I am dissatisfied with him.

"On the contrary, I wish that you may both employ your time in Paris in acquiring those pleasant impressions for which that city affords such an excellent opportunity, to such an extent and with such moderation as befits gentlemen in our position, avoiding that useless extravagance which only testifies to a vain desire for ostentation unsuitable to persons of refinement.

"As your brother's stay in Paris will apparently be of longer duration than yours, I will cause the letter of credit, which the firm sends by this post, to be made out in his name; and whilst I am on the subject of your younger brother, I will make a confidential announcement to you.

"After my death, you will find no reference to Richard in my accounts. His education has, for many reasons, been far more expensive than yours. Nevertheless, it is my desire that, like good brothers, you should share and share alike. I enjoin you, however, to deal out to your brother by degrees the portion which may appertain to him.

"For your brother Richard, with all his talents and excellent qualities, has, I fear, but little aptitude for acquiring and retaining this world's goods. You, my dear Christian Frederik, who have been endowed with this facility, must, therefore, act as a guardian to your brother. Remember me kindly to the dear boy, and ask him to seek some musical friends who will assist you to purchase a good piano of Erard's, which you will see carefully packed and sent off, or perhaps, you can bring it with you in the spring, when you return home.

"Our old piano does not satisfy modern requirements, and, moreover, ever since your mother's death it is painful to hear tones which too sadly remind me of my great loss.

"For several weeks we have experienced severe and continuous storms, and we have heard of many wrecks and disasters along the coast. Happily none of our own vessels are in these waters; but people are anxiously awaiting news of many ships belonging to this town, which are on their way from the Baltic.

"You will be surprised to find how much the trade and shipping of the good town has increased during these last few years, and I fancy that much of what happens, or is attempted here, will seem as strange to you as it does to me.

"That which especially excites my wonder and anxiety is the religious enthusiasm which, in my youth, was confined to peasants and uneducated people.

"So far from disappearing or being cured, as one would expect and hope, it seems rather to expand, and to gain adherents amongst those whose intelligence should protect them from such folly.

"I have also heard that some of the younger clergy have approved of—nay, have actually joined—this absurd and hurtful revival. Every true patriot must greatly deplore this; for just as a judicious enlightenment is beneficial to the common people, so, on the other hand, is it injurious when hypocrites and ignorant persons devote themselves to the Holy Scriptures, which they can neither understand nor apply rightly.

"And if it really should happen—though I can scarcely credit it—that the clergy allow themselves to be dragged down by ignorance and enthusiasm, I should greatly fear that it will be to the detriment of our dear fatherland.

"In the meantime, you will understand that, in a certain sense, there is a great distance between Sandsgaard and the town, and I trust that you will find the atmosphere here as fresh and pure as ever.

"And now, my dear son, I will conclude with an affectionate salutation from myself and your two aunts. The good ladies are in 'court mourning,' as Jacob Worse used to term it in the old days; nevertheless, they are looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you once more.

"I have a suspicion that they are planning a marriage for you, for they are devoted to small children.

"I, too, to speak plainly, have a great wish that new life, laughter, and the sound of tiny footsteps should be heard once more in the old house."Your loving father,"MORTEN W. GARMAN."

Chapter XV

A STORM can be endured, however severe it be, if one is safe on the land.

But when it rages week after week, day after day, and night after night, so that no one can declare when one storm ends and the next begins, there are few who are exempt from an oppressive nervous feeling of anxiety, especially if, under such circumstances, they happen to live in a small town built of wood, close down by the open fjord, with the sea in front of them.

Then the heavens lower, so that the clouds course along the earth, and rain and spray drift far inland. Rifts in the leaden sky show fiery storm-streaks during the day, and the night is dark as death.

But the worst is when one lies helpless in bed, and the tempest rages in the small crooked streets, shaking the eaves and tearing off the tiles.

When one has not slept well, too, for many nights, and the day has been spent looking from the barometer up at the grey sky, or out on the deserted streets; when here and there a red spot on the mud marks a broken tile; when one hears tales of misfortune in the town and in the harbour, or of how narrow an escape from fire there was last night—fire in such a storm—then it is that one doubts whether the world is not out of course, whether everything will not fall asunder or be upheaved, and the sea pour in over the low reefs, sweeping churches, houses, and all out into the fjord like chips.

"The wrath of God is upon the land," said the Haugians, as they held on their hats on the way to the meeting.

In the entrance passage, the wind lifted the ends of the women's shawls over their heads, so that they entered the low, half-lit meeting-hall in a somewhat dishevelled state. Here they sat, packed close together, while the reader had either to raise his voice or to cease for a time altogether, when the wind shook the doors and windows, and wrestled with the ash trees outside.

In the pause which followed, he began to read again, but without life or freedom. Uneasiness prevailed as they looked one at another, the women crept together as each blast struck the house, and the men had much to think about.

Many ships owned by the Haugians were on their way home from the Baltic and St. Ubes. People waited and waited, but nothing arrived; whilst the tempest grew worse and worse with ever-increasing gales, between south-west and north-west. If they have not found a harbour of refuge in time, God have mercy both on them and us.

Even Sivert Jespersen was without a smile on his countenance, sitting still, and pushing his hands up his coat sleeves until they reached the elbows; he seemed as if clutching at and grasping something.

Madame Torvestad, with an austere and imperious aspect, sat in her place; many gazed at her, but she maintained her composure. He, however, whom all wished to see among them, was absent.

Eight days before, Fennefos had quietly taken leave of the Brethren, and had embarked for England in a Dutch ship, which had been lying in the harbour. It was his intention to proceed from England to India. He had not, however, left the country; for the Dutchman had been compelled to take shelter from the storm, and Fennefos lay weather-bound at Smörvigen, a few miles from the town. He had even visited it two days since on some business.

The tempest had been somewhat moderated during the forenoon, but in the evening the wind went to north-west, and blew harder than ever.

Heavy seas came into the bay, causing the vessels and lighters to roll, and breaking on the open stone foundations under the wooden storehouses, here and there even washing up through the floors above, on account of the unusually high tide.

The wind whistled terribly through the rigging of the great ships, and the moorings and fenders creaked and grated.

Along the gallery of Jacob Worse's warehouse, a slender white form groped its way down the steps, and stood on the ground floor, which seemed to rock every time the sea rolled in underneath.

Mustering all her strength, she contrived to draw aside so much of the hanging door of the warehouse that she could squeeze herself through the opening.

Supporting herself with one hand, as she leant over the dark water, she repeated once more her oath before she

Skipper Worse

let go: "I promise and swear to love you faithfully in life and death, and never to marry any other person, Lauritz—my own Lauritz."

Saying this, she loosed her hold, a heavy sea swept her under a lighter, and she sank.

Later in the evening, some seafaring folk, who had been on board a vessel to look after its moorings, saw something white, which surged up and down by the stone steps at the market quay.

From the quay the news spread over the whole town, even more quickly than such news generally travels; for all were in such a state of consternation and excitement, owing to the long—continued tempest, that the report of a corpse seemed to chime in with the general feeling, and the tidings swept over the town as if borne upon the wings of the tempest.

Children who were going to bed heard the servant girls in the kitchen wringing their hands, and crying "God preserve us!" but when they inquired of their mothers what it was all about, they were told that it was something with which small children could have no concern, and, believing that it must be something very terrible, they crept trembling under the blankets.

Many versions of the story were circulated. Some said that she had left her bed in a fit of madness—she was ill of a nervous fever—whilst Madame Torvestad was at the meeting and the servant girl away.

Some only muttered and shook their heads, and these latter gradually formed the majority.

Others thought that it was another instance of what went on among the Haugians.

Henrietta Torvestad had committed suicide; of this no doubts were entertained. Perhaps her mother had tried to force her to marry Erik Pontoppidan. Yes, the overbearing Madame Torvestad was blamed, she and the Haugians, the gloomy, deceitful Haugians who grudged any joy, either to themselves or others. It was they who had caused the death of the poor girl; it was they who were the evil genius of the town, which seemed as if a curse rested upon it.

Corpses floated in the bay, and tempest followed tempest incessantly, as if the day of judgment were at hand.

In spite of the weather, many people were abroad in the streets, in order to procure further information, and they found a group with a couple of lanterns down by the marketplace.

The Haugians heard the news just as they came home from the meeting. Sivert Jespersen put on his great coat again, turned up the collar, and hurried off through the dark streets to Madame Torvestad.

Many others besides him had ventured out. Men and women of the Haugians were afraid to stay at home alone with this terrible news, which, in some measure, caused them to feel conscience—stricken.

They went out in order to ascertain the truth, and to learn how the elders received it. They met many persons in the streets near the market—place, and a number of people bearing lanterns, who had collected near Madame Torvestad's house.

Whenever any of the Haugians approached, they threw a light on their faces, calling out their names with scornful and opprobrious words. In order to enter, the Haugians were obliged to take a circuitous route, and when they reached the door, a couple of the Brethren opened it when the voice was recognized, shutting it quickly again.

Indoors they felt more secure, for Worse's premises were built in a square, with a court—yard in the centre, like a fortress. But here, too, there was distraction and terror. Madame Torvestad was said to have gone out of her senses. She sat upright by the side of the bed, watching the water as it dripped from the corpse, and would not allow any one to touch it.

The old dyer was the only person she would suffer to be with her.

In the chief part of the house Jacob Worse lay, and fought his last fight with the devil. He was in a room looking upon the court—yard, for in the rooms towards the market—place they did not dare show lights, in order not to excite the crowd, which was increasing, and from which menacing utterances broke forth at times.

In a short time the principal men and women of the Haugian community assembled. They went about with pale faces, in anxiety and bewilderment, and no one was capable of taking the lead. In the meantime the storm raged on, and the house shook to its foundations.

Jacob Worse lay on his death—bed, his features pale and drawn. For many days he had suffered great pain, which was now gradually leaving him, and both the doctor and the nurse declared that it was his last night.

But the struggle was not yet over; one could see this by the anxious way in which his eyes were turned from one to the other, when Sarah was out of the room.

Skipper Worse

Sometimes he seemed to lapse into deep terror, throwing himself from one side to the other, muttering something which they could not understand, and rubbing his hands together.

"He is possessed by Satan," said one of the women.

This was the general opinion, and some searched in the Bible or in one of the many little books for texts or hymns applicable to persons possessed by the evil one.

But the majority were occupied with the terrible fate of Henrietta, or were watching the tumultuous crowd outside.

Sarah moved among them with a distracted air; she seemed, indeed, as if petrified with grief. It was not grief, however, that distracted her. The separation from Fennefos, and Henrietta's death conjoined, inflicted a stunning blow, which both chilled and hardened her.

Her dying husband yonder in his bed, the frightened men and women, the uproar in the street, were matters of indifference to her, and she could almost have smiled at them.

Out of doors things grew worse. A couple of boys began to batter the wall; others, approaching the windows, climbed up and pressed their faces against the panes.

The Haugians crept away into corners, and Sivert Jespersen lay almost under the table.

"Some one must go out and speak to the crowd," said one of the older women.

Sivert Jespersen was the man to do it, as he was the oldest of them, but he would not venture forth; he knew only too well that his presence would only make bad worse.

The old dyer was with Madame Torvestad; it would be better to ask him to make the attempt.

It never occurred to any of them to apply to the police, for no one in the town, and least of all the Haugians, was accustomed to seek help in that quarter.

There must also have been some of the better class in the crowd that filled the street and the greater part of the market-place, in front of Skipper Worse's street door; for some of the lanterns were of the expensive hexagonal sort, and of polished brass.

While they were debating whether they should fetch the old dyer, the people outside ceased their uproar, and nothing was heard but the hasty footsteps of people leaving the street and hurrying to the market-place, where they crowded round somebody; and the lanterns being directed on the central spot, it was comparatively light.

Here, taller than all the rest, the Haugians recognized their own Hans Nilsen Fennefos.

He was speaking to the people. The tempest drowned his words, but they knew his power over the wills of men; and whilst they all, both men and women, pressed to the windows, they thanked God for this succour, and congratulated one another, as if their lives had hung on a thread.

Sarah remained alone in the sick room. She was absorbed with the idea that she would see Fennefos again. She was terrified; she almost trembled, and thought she would be unable to bear it.

Worse gazed at her, but finding no consolation in her distracted looks, he shut his eyes, and seemed as if dozing.

Fennefos, entering by the street door, was received in the unlighted passage by many friendly hands and affectionate greetings.

The first thing he said was: "Why do you sit here in the dark; are you afraid of the light?"

After the whispering which had hitherto prevailed, it sounded as if he spoke in a loud voice.

Two women went for lights, and the blinds were drawn down.

"You have come just at the right moment, Hans Nilsen," said Sivert Jespersen, clapping him on the shoulder.

"How pleasant are the feet of those who bring glad tidings!" said Nicolai Egelend.

"I come rather with evil tidings," said Hans Nilsen, looking gravely from one to the other; "although I see that there is grief enough already in this house. We heard yesterday at Smörvig that your ship Ebenezer is cast away to the South of Bratvold. Not a man was saved. I, therefore, came here that you might make provision for the widows and the fatherless.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, praised be His Name," said Nicolai Egelend.

Sivert Jespersen turned away, and went out into another room. He seemed to be occupied with some calculation.

In the street the people had begun to disperse. Fennefos was known and, in a measure, respected.

That one whom all knew to have departed as a missionary to India had now suddenly reappeared, produced

Skipper Worse

also a certain effect; there was, moreover, something about the man which enthralled all his hearers. He spoke a few impressive words as to how ill it became them to add to the burden when the Lord's hand fell heavily on a brother's house.

The better sort of lanterns disappeared, and the ordinary ones soon followed; indeed, there was no temptation to remain in the market-place on such a night.

Gradually the crowd broke up, some of them venting their feelings by hammering at the wall as they passed Madame Torvestad's corner.

Fennefos had seated himself among the Haugians in the sick chamber, and addressed them again.

Henrietta's death had moved him deeply, and every word he uttered thrilled with emotion and pity, finding its way to all the sorrowing hearts.

All listened. Some wept in silence. Sarah alone sat with half-averted face and unmoved features. Sometimes she turned towards him; but he looked at her as he looked at the others, frankly and openly.

Her deep-set eyes penetrated him, as if with a wail of the deepest despair. Now that she was about to be free, all was lost. Would he not help her?

He would not; not as she wished.

He spoke to them as if he were already far away, and it seemed to them as if they heard the much-loved preacher speaking words of peace from distant lands. After this, he rose, and bid them "Good night" and "Farewell."

A great and painful surprise ensued. Was he about to leave them again? Would he deprive them of that peace of which he had just been the messenger?

They gathered round him with entreaties and endearments, talked of the storm and of the dreadful weather, adding: "You will hardly find the way, Hans Nilsen, this pitch dark night."

But he answered them gently, with his mother's hymn. "For He who stills the tempest And calms the rolling sea, Will lead thy footsteps safely, And smooth a way for thee."

At the door he turned once more, looking affectionately on them all. Coming lastly to Sarah, who stood close by him, he reached out his hand to her for the last farewell. The old innocent friendship of their youth reappeared in his look—at once so kindly and so frank, yet full of sorrow and of heartfelt sympathy.

When the others followed him out in the passage, Sarah turned back, took a light, and went upstairs. Here she broke down, weeping for poor Henrietta, for herself, and for all the misery around her.

Nothing remained to her but that bright, pure look, in the remembrance of which her grief lost the hardness which had beset her, and her thoughts reverted to the old times, when she and Fennefos were as brother and sister.

In this condition a couple of women found her, by the linen closet, weeping; and one said to the other: "See how she loved him!"

She started up in a confused manner, but quieted herself again when she found that they alluded to her husband.

Several women who had small children at home now left, as the streets were empty; but the majority of the company preferred to remain in the house all night, in order to watch and pray with poor Skipper Worse, and to be at hand in case of need.

From time to time one would go across the yard to listen at the door of Madame Torvestad's apartments, and they were comforted by hearing the voice of the old dyer, which proved that Madame Torvestad had come to herself again.

At midnight coffee was brought into the room, and they took it in turns to go in and drink a cup, in order to keep awake.

In the room of the dying man some sat reading good books, or one of them would offer up a prayer for the sufferer, that the Lord might soon release him and mitigate the pangs of death.

Jacob Worse had been lying perfectly still for a couple of hours, and they could not tell whether he was conscious. Sarah sat by the bedside, and took his hand in hers. It was the first time she had shown anything like spontaneous affection; but it was now too late, he was too far gone to observe it.

As the night drew on, the tempest abated, and the reading and prayers lessened. All had undergone so much mental fatigue, that weariness asserted itself, now that the storm was on the wane, and the sick man was lying calm and still.

Skipper Worse

One and then another fell into a doze; Sivert Jespersen also closed his eyes, but not in sleep. He was busied with calculations.

The reading now ceased, and all was perfectly silent. Suddenly they all sprang up, for yonder, from his death-bed Jacob Worse cried out:

"Lauritz, you young scamp, go aloft and clear the dogvane!"

They hastened to his bedside, bringing lights; pale and terrified, they gazed on the dying man, thinking it was the devil himself who spoke through him.

Sarah had cast herself down by the bedside in prayer.

Jacob Worse was completely changed; his glazed eyes were half open, and the look of pain had departed from his face; he seemed to be the self-possessed Skipper Worse of old days. The thick white hair was arranged in seemly order, and his hands lay upon the coverlet as if he had finished something.

At this, the last moment, the devil had relaxed his hold; and whilst the malady wrestled for the last time with the strong limbs of the dying man, and his brain made its last effort, a crowd of ill-defined recollections and bewildered thoughts whirled past, and a sudden vision brightened the last moments of the sufferer.

It was the vision of that celebrated return from Rio, the proudest moment of his life.

He was standing again on the deck of the Hope, a fresh north wind was blowing in the fjord, and the old brig was gliding in under easy sail.

He opened his eyes, but did not see the wan faces which had gathered around him. He saw the sun shining over Sandsgaard Bay, where the summer ripples hastened towards the shore, with the news that Jacob Worse was in the fjord.

He tried to raise his head, in order to see the better; but, sinking back upon the pillows, he muttered with a happy and contented smile:

"We come late, Herr Consul, but we come safely." And, so saying, old Skipper Worse sailed out of the world.