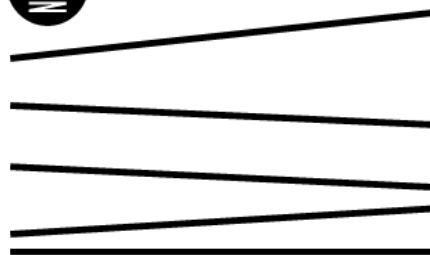


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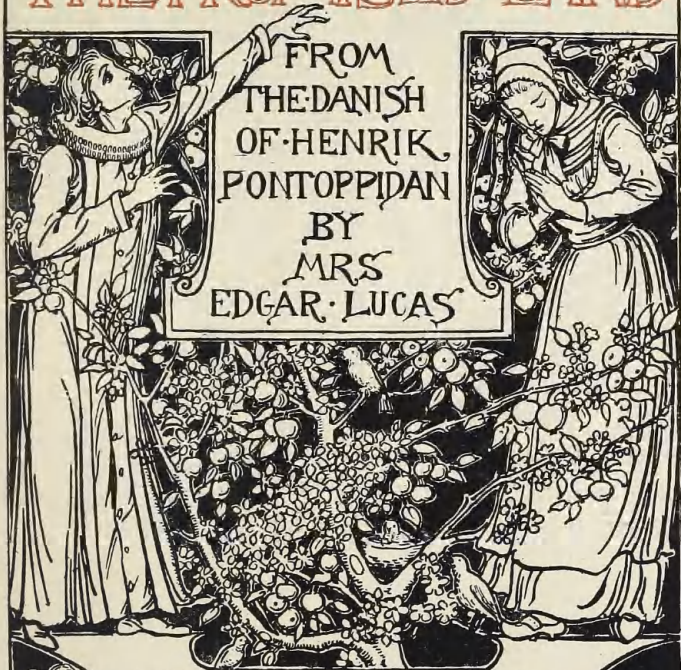





VILLY ERICHSEN
STATION 1895

HANSINE
AND HER
CHILDREN

THE PROMISED LAND



FROM
THE DANISH
OF HENRIK
PONTOPPIDAN
BY
MRS
EDGAR LUCAS



ILLUSTRATED BY NELLY
ERICHSEN

J. M. DENT & CO. 69, GREAT EASTERN ST.
LONDON 1896.



NOTE

In reading all names

a has the sound of *a* in father.

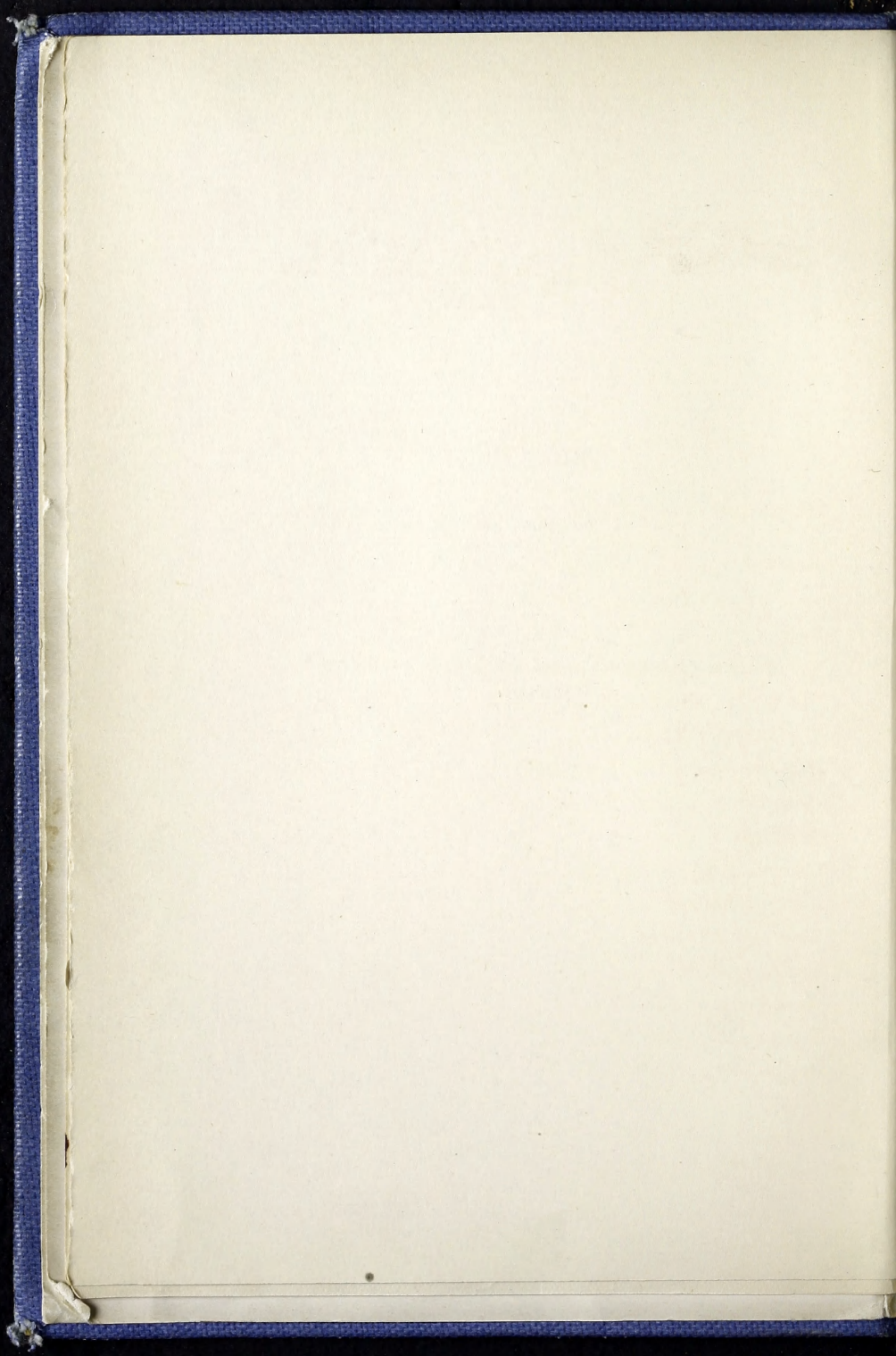
e " " *a* in pane.

i " " *ee*.

u " " *oo*.

y " " *ü*.

All final *e*'s accented, thus Hansine is pronounced
Hanseen*é*.



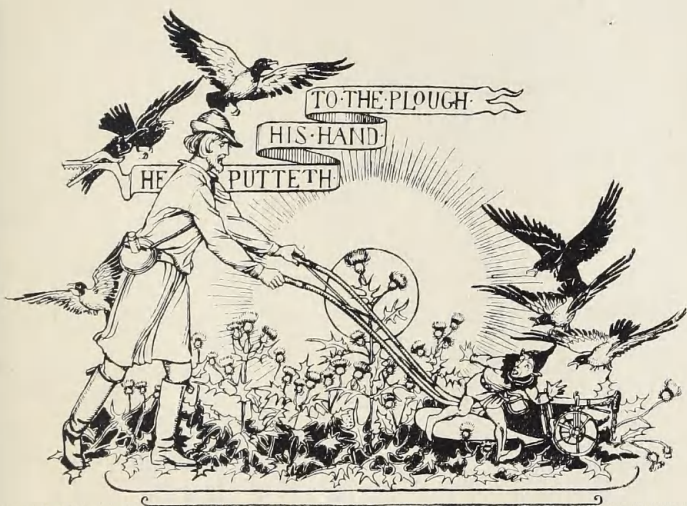


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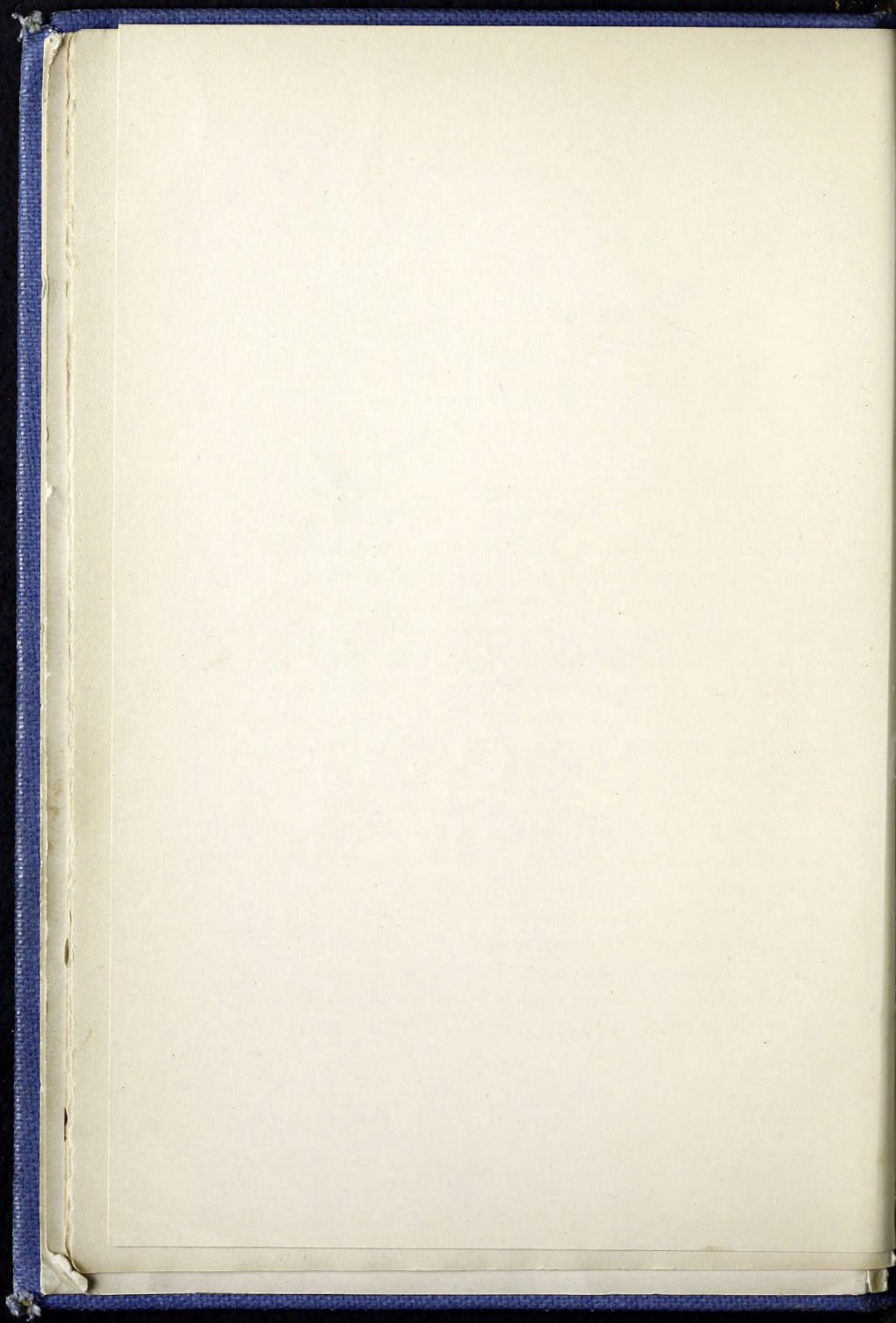
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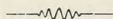


· BOOK ·
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THE PROMISED LAND



CHAPTER I

A MAN was following the plough up and down the big fields north of Veilby. He was a tall man with a youthful figure, dressed in a patched sackcloth smock, red muffatees, and clumsy Wellington boots with the loops sticking up on both sides of the baggy knees of his trousers. He wore a faded beaver hat, under the wide brim of which his long hair, bleached by sun and rain, fell to the collar; a large light beard floated over his chest, and from time to time was blown over his shoulder. He had a thin face, a high arched forehead, and large, light, gentle eyes.

A flock of Royston crows were wheeling about, a few yards above his head; every now and then, first one, then another would swoop down on to the newly turned furrows behind him, only hopping aside when he twitched the reins to make his slow, lumbering horses go faster.

This man was the parish priest of Veilby and Skibberup—Emanuel as he allowed himself

to be called by his parishioners; "The Modern Apostle," as his less friendly disposed colleagues in the neighbourhood maliciously dubbed him.

In spite of his dress and unkempt hair and beard, it was easy to see that he was no mere peasant. His figure was too supple, and the shoulders too sloping for that. His hands were certainly purple and swollen, but they were not so out of proportion as those of persons who have laboured from the cradle. Nor was his face of a uniform dark leathery tint like a peasant's skin; it was patchy and freckled.

It was a cold raw morning in the beginning of March. Sheets of mist were every now and then driven over the land by gusts of west wind. At one moment the plain was enveloped in so thick a grey fog that one field could not be seen from the other; in the next, the wind would drive it away, only leaving thin wreaths of mist creeping over the furrows. Occasionally a pale sunbeam would slowly pierce the dark clouds and flicker over the fields.

At those moments, from the high-lying Parsonage fields, one could see the whole parish mapped out and stretching away to the distant church by the Fiord, which looked like a pale ghost in the mist. Somewhat nearer, between two hills, there was a peep of the foam-flecked Fiord itself. In the west were the three hills of Skibberup, and a bright spot of red marked the tiled gables of the new Meeting House on the ridge of the hill.

Emanuel was too much absorbed in his thoughts to notice the shifting changes in the landscape. Even when he stopped a moment to breathe his horses, his glance wandered over the fields without seeing them. He had trodden these undulating hills for seven years; his eye was so much at home that sunshine gave way to shower without his observing the change. Towards mid-day he was roused by the voices of a little party approaching by the field path.

First came a sturdy little girl, four or five years old, who by the help of a rope over her shoulder, was dragging an old basket-carriage with a baby in it. With the effort of dragging the carriage through the deep mud, her hood had slipped off her wind-blown yellow hair, and she had to let go the rope every moment to pull up her red stockings which kept falling down over her wooden shoes. The carriage was pushed behind by another child, a boy, who had a knitted cap with flaps tied tightly down over his ears, and a bit of wadding which was stuffed into one flap, half covered his cheek.

An erect young peasant woman brought up the rear. She walked a little way behind the others on the very edge of the road; she had a little flowered shawl on her head, the corners of which fluttered in the wind. She walked along humming to herself, and sometimes singing aloud without lifting her eyes from the knitting in her brown hands.

It was Hansine and her three children, Emanuel's whole family.

When the little caravan had almost reached the end of the field where Emanuel was ploughing, the children let go the carriage and sat down on a stone by the roadside, whence they could see their father, who was working towards them from the other end of the field. Their faces were blue with cold and their noses were running. As they sat there in their worn old wooden shoes and patched clothes, they were just like any of the other village ragamuffins. It would certainly never have occurred to any one that they belonged to the palatial Parsonage, whose red roof and high poplar avenues rose above the slate roofs of the peasants' farms.

Emanuel waved his hat gaily to them from a considerable distance, and when he reached the end of the ridge he stopped his steaming horses, and called :

"Anything new, Hansine?"

Hansine had remained standing by the roadside, moving the carriage backwards and forwards with her foot,—the little one was impatient at the stopping of the carriage.

She counted her stitches on one needle, and then answered with her unsophisticated peasant accent:

"No, not that I know of. . . . Oh yes, the weaver was round, he said he wanted to talk to you."

"Indeed," said Emanuel, absently looking back at the field to measure what he had done. "What had he got on his mind?"

"Oh, he didn't say much. I was to tell you

to go to the Parish Council Meeting at three o'clock."

"I suppose it's about the poor relief then," he threw in, "or perhaps the vestry. Didn't he say anything about it?"

"No, he said nothing, he just sat and stared about him a bit, and then went away."

"Oh, well, he's a queer fellow. . . . I say, Hansine!" he interrupted himself in a different voice, "Do you remember my talking about this new system of manuring that I read about in the farming paper? The more I think about it the better I like it. And it's much more natural isn't it, to put the manure fresh on to the fields and plough it in at once, rather than storing it up in great heaps till the strength has evaporated, besides poisoning the air all the time. Do you remember according to the paper, the land used to lose three millions a year by the old method? I can't imagine why nobody came to think of such a simple thing before. I believe these dung-heaps were a simple outcome of the system of villenage. As the peasants always had to serve their lords before they could attend to their own affairs, they were obliged to put off their work day after day, and heap up their stuff till they could steal a few hours to look after their own affairs. As the origin of the heaping up was gradually forgotten, the peasants came to think it a matter of great importance to store it up. In short, these stinking heaps are relics of the

days of serfdom, like so many other rotten things we are trying to free ourselves from to-day. Oh—it's a glorious time to live in, Hansine! To be a witness of enlightenment, and see by degrees how the dawning ideas of truth and justice, in great things and small, are breaking down the yoke of slavery, and preparing mankind for brighter and happier times!"

Hansine moved a needle, and answered by an absent smile. She knew how easily Emanuel's enthusiasm was roused by the new ideas of the day, and she was used to listening silently to the explanation of the great results he expected. "Well, it's time to unharness the horses," he said, after looking at a great silver watch, first holding it to his ear in true peasant fashion.

"Now, Laddie, can you come and give father a hand!"

The boy was still sitting on the stone by his sister. He was dreamily watching the crows as they flitted about the ploughed field a little way off, and did not hear his father call. He sat immovable, resting the ear with the wadding over it on his hand, with the solemn expression children wear when they are recalling past sufferings.

He was rather small for his age, and though a year older, he was of a slighter build than his sister, who had the robust limbs and brightly coloured cheeks and eyes of a village child. He was the image of Emanuel. He had the same

high, intellectual forehead, and the same gentle expression ; he had also inherited Emanuel's soft brown wavy hair, and large light eyes, which in the sunlight were almost colourless.

"Don't you hear, my boy ? . . . Father is calling you," said Hansine, as he didn't move.

At the sound of his mother's voice he tore his hand away from his ear, with a poor little attempt at a smile which roused her attention.

"Does your ear still hurt, my boy ?" she asked cautiously.

"No, not a bit," he said eagerly. "I don't feel anything now."

"Are you coming, then, Laddie ?" Emanuel called again from the plough.

The urchin rose at once, and walked with measured steps over the furrows to the horses, and began to undo the traces—as gravely and conscientiously as a little carter.

This boy was the apple of Emanuel's eye, and the pride of the village ; partly because of his unpeasant-like appearance, and also because of his extreme good temper. He was called after Hansine's old father, Anders



LADDIE

Jörgen, but both at home and in village he was also called "Laddie,"—a name Emanuel had given him at his birth, and which pleased every one so much that his baptismal name was forgotten.

At the sight of the wadding over his ear, Emanuel exclaimed :

"What's that, my man? Has your ear been bad again?"

"Yes, a little," answered the boy softly, as if ashamed.

"It's very tiresome about that ear, but it's nothing much, is it?"

"No, it's quite gone now. I don't feel it at all."

"That's right, my boy; you must be a brave lad, and don't fuss about a trifle. Weaklings, you know, are no good in the world, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And then, you'll remember, we have to drive to the mill this afternoon. We two haven't time to be ill."

Hansine's knitting-needles moved faster than ever, and when the others ceased speaking she said :

"I do think it would be best for Laddie to stay at home to-day, Emanuel. He hasn't been a bit well all the morning."

"Well, but dear! . . . you hear it's all over now. And I'm sure the fresh air can only do him good. The fresh air is the Almighty's cure, as the old proverb says. . . . Laddie has been

moping in the house, and that's made him rather white-faced. That's all!"

"All the same, I believe it would be better if we dealt more carefully with him, Emanuel. And I do wish you'd make up your mind to talk to the doctor about him. He's had this business with his ear for nigh on two years, and it can never be right to go on like that."

Emanuel did not answer at once. It was a subject they had often discussed before.

"Well, of course, Hansine . . . if you really wish it, I should never think of opposing it. But you know I've no particular faith in the doctoring business, and you know my opinion of Doctor Hassing. Besides, earache is such a common affair with children, and will go away of itself, if you only give nature time and rest to heal the damage. Your mother says just the same, and she has many years' experience. Catch hold of that rein my boy. I shall never believe that the Almighty would have created men so imperfect that they would always be wanting the doctor to set them to rights again, as soon as they were a little out of order. We've got some more of that oil which Maren Nilen had from old Grete on Stryn island. It did the boy good before; at any rate, let's wait till there's something really the matter, and not worry ourselves over a bit of a cold, eh? . . . Come here, then, little man." At his last words he took the boy under his arms and lifted him on to the back of the near horse.

Hansine was silent. In these little skirmishes about the children Emanuel always had the last word. He was too rapid in argument for her, and expressed himself so easily, besides having so many reasons for his opinion, that even if she did not agree with him, she was often reduced to silence by his fluency.

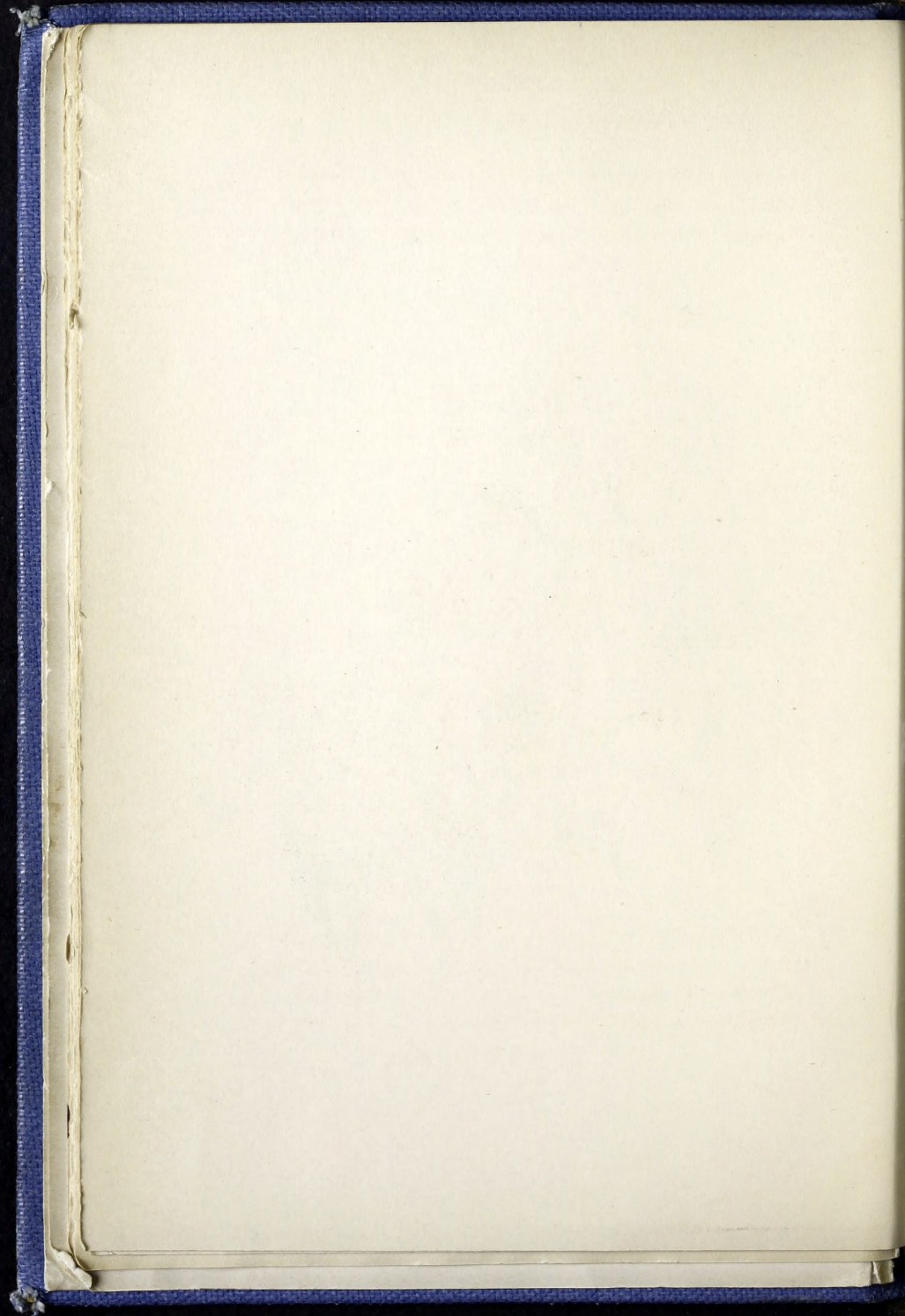
The fog again swept over the fields in soft woolly masses, as the little party wandered back to the village.

The boy rode in front with the horses, and Emanuel followed with the little carriage, which he jogged along with one hand, while he carried his daughter Sigrid on his shoulder. Her nickname was Dumpling. She took off his hat and waved it about with little shouts of delight to amuse the little one, who answered her back from the carriage.

Hansine followed a little way behind with her knitting.

She carried herself just as erect as in her maiden days, and moved with the same decided and measured gait. But the expression of her dark-complexioned face had changed somewhat; it was even more introspective and a little depressed. Naturally, her seven years of married life and the birth of three children had not left her former youthful bloom entirely untouched. Her cheeks were thinner, and her serious eyes were even more deep-set. But she was still an uncom-





monly pretty woman ; and according to peasant standards, she wore her twenty-five years with unusual honour, and it was not surprising that in



Skibberup, her native place, they were very proud of her. There were certainly some, who not able to reconcile themselves to her reserve, which they attributed to pride—secretly deplored Emanuel's

choice when he chose a bride from among the congregation.

When Emanuel and his children passed through the arched gateway of the Parsonage, Niels, the farm labourer, was sitting on the edge of the big watering-trough under the pump, busily studying the *People's News*," which was spread out on his knee. He was a dark-haired fellow of twenty or so, of middle height, square-shouldered and broad-backed, with a turn-up nose, red cheeks, and an incipient beard.

The big courtyard where in Archdeacon Tönnesen's time, order and tranquillity always reigned, befitting its position as belonging to the church, now looked like all the other peasants' yards. Implements of every kind and bundles of hay were thrown all over the place hugger-mugger. Several doors stood open, and a continual lowing of cattle waiting for their mid-day hay, all bore witness to the press of work. Here and there the brine from pickled herrings was thrown on the uneven pavement to kill the weeds, and the chickens were scratching about outside the brew-house in a heap of kitchen refuse.

"What's that you're so deep in, Niels? Is there anything new in the papers?" asked Emanuel, when he had put down Sigrid and lifted Laddie off the horse.

The man looked up from his paper and answered by an uncommonly broad grin.

"Oh, ho, Mr Philosopher! Have you been on

the war-path again? Who has your lance been turned against to-day then Niels, come let me see!" said he, when he had slipped the harness off the horses.

The man moved a little and stretched out the paper which Emanuel began to read while the little boy led the horses to the trough to drink.

"Where is it? . . . Oh, here! 'High schools and moral responsibilities.' Yes, yes the beginning isn't bad . . . really very good . . . yes, indeed! there you're right. Well you're no coward, Niels! . . ."

The man watched the changes in his master's face from his seat at the corner of the trough, and every time Emanuel nodded assentingly or made exclamations of approval, his little black eyes, which were almost buried in his cheeks, sparkled.

"That article does you honour," said Emanuel at last, as he smilingly gave him the paper back. "You are regularly cultivating yourself to become an author. Yes, yes, only beware of drowning yourself in the ink-pot, my friend. Ink is a dangerous poison at times to play with."

He was interrupted by Hansine, who had taken the path through the garden, and who now appeared on the stone steps to call them to dinner.

"Then we must be quick and get the mares in, my boy," he said to Laddie.

"I say, Niels . . just go and call old Soren, he's hoeing turnips in the field."

CHAPTER II

ABOUT three in the afternoon a quiet man was sitting in the window of the well-known parlour of Jensen, chairman of the Parish Council. He was tall, thin and pale, dressed in a home-made suit of the roughest kind of dark homespun, with a high collar and tight sleeves. Outside his coat he had one of those black quilted chest preservers, which are hardly ever seen in these days. He wore tight celluloid wristbands, which seemed to have squeezed all the blood into his gigantic hands.

He was stooping forward resting his arms on his legs with his hands tucked in between his knees. His head was rather flat, and in proportion to the length of his body, remarkably small. His hair and beard were a grizzled red, his face was distorted and besprinkled with light freckles.

There was something almost uncanny about the absolute immobility of the man, and the dull gaze with which he stared straight before him out of his half-shut eyes, an effect which was intensified by the dim light creeping in through the thickly bedewed windows, and the stillness in which the house was wrapped. With his flat head, distorted mouth, and swollen eyelids, he looked like a lynx on the watch, looking out from his lair in the primeval forest, over the limitless steppes.

It was Hansen the weaver.

This best parlour, which had formerly been the

scene of so man gay carouses, had entirely changed its character in the last few years. The polished mahogany chairs still stood in a row against the wall, and the gilt clock ticked in aristocratic seclusion on the chiffonier between two lightly draped plaster shepherdesses. But in the place of the card table between the windows, where many a jolly night had been spent with cards and toddy in the company of Aggerbölle the vet., Villing the shopkeeper, the late octogenarian schoolmaster, Mortensen, and their host; a huge writing table now stood laden with papers. There were bookshelves against the other wall crammed with account books, registers, and bundles of newspapers, which gave to the room a serious, office-like look.

It was in reality something of the kind, and a corresponding change had also come over Jensen himself.

The stormy political risings which were brought about by the enlightenment of the peasant class, and which in the last few years had spread all over the country, had at last roused his slumbering conscience and called him forth to do battle for the independence of his class. As he was undoubtedly the richest peasant in the parish, and known for more liberality than was usual in a peasant, he very soon came to take a prominent part in the district; and as in addition, he possessed an innate talent for public life, and shewed that he had "the gift of the gab," he had gradu-

ally forced himself up, to be the acknowledged political leader in the neighbourhood, whose name might be constantly seen in the papers, as that of "the well-known peasant leader, Hans Jensen of Veilby."

He had not, however, reached this leading position, without passing by the original instigator of the revolt among the congregation, namely, Hansen the weaver. Several people when they first saw the sudden rise of Jensen, had feared that the headstrong weaver would not tamely submit to be set aside in so gross a manner; but to the universal surprise on this occasion, the weaver took it with quite unaccustomed calm. Still greater was the astonishment when it was discovered that it was the weaver himself who had helped Jensen to take part in public life, as—with great solemnity—he pointed out to him, that in his independent position, he was actually bound to give his services to the constituency, when the old Bishop, the present member, retired—an event which was to be expected before long.

It almost looked now, when the dangers were over, and the "People's Cause" was triumphing, as if the weaver were voluntarily allowing the others to reap the honours and rewards which were the fruit of his years of labour. With an amount of unselfishness which called forth the wondering appreciation of the congregation, he drew himself year by year further into his shell,

and even declined the smallest of the honorary posts which were liberally offered him in recognition of his services. He only took upon himself the humblest duties of a veteran in the furtherance of the cause. He voluntarily acted as general messenger, and helped the various committees with their accounts and correspondence; he also continued faithful—with even increased vigilance—to his detective duties among the congregation, by constantly popping up with his distorted smile where he was least expected.

It was almost half-past three before all the members summoned were assembled. They were the so-called "Select Committee," six in number, chosen by the congregation, whose special duties were, to watch over their political interests, to arrange electoral meetings, bring down speakers, control the lists of electors, and conduct business with the other democratic centres.

After they had all arrived, Jensen came in from an adjoining room—in white shirt sleeves, an apple-green plush waistcoat, a gold chain, and a starched front which had bulged out over his waistcoat during his midday nap. He went round shaking hands with each and saying, "Good-day, and welcome": they then, at his invitation, took their seats round an oval table in the middle of the room. They all seemed to be in an unusually solemn frame of mind. The weaver had been questioned before Jensen came in as to the purpose of the meeting; and by his vague

answers it had been gathered that it would be unusually important.

As chairman of the committee the host took his seat at the head of the table. His heavily-built figure, curly hair, and clean shaven chin looked quite stately in this position. Certainly his long, drooping nose was as purple as ever and his face as red—vexatious reminiscences of his past; but to make up for it, his bearing, his movements, and his manner of conducting business had gained that easy suavity which comes with habit in public life.

Emanuel, who had exchanged his working smock for a light grey coat, sat on his right—and beyond him a fat little Veilby peasant with bushy eyebrows and chubby red cheeks. On his left were two young, fair-haired Skibberup farmers, and Nielsen the tall carpenter, whose dark Viking beard had grown several inches longer in the course of years, and now almost reached his waist. The weaver sat at the foot of the table in his capacity of secretary.

“Then we’re all assembled,” said the president in his searching voice, glancing round the table. “We have a very important communication to make to you, friends. . . . Yes, please, Hansen begin!”

The last words were addressed to the weaver, who now drew a large sheet of paper from his tail pocket and carefully unfolded it, after which, in a slow, monotonous voice he read the following manifesto:—

"Confidential.

"We have received from the leading men of our party, instructions to discuss, among the various democratic committees, a number of reports of disquieting political rumours which have lately found their way into several of the newspapers. In consideration of the gravity of the times, and the importance of the matter, it has been thought right to bring this information before the notice of the local committees without delay. The gist of the matter is, that it is within the bounds of possibility that plots are being hatched in both houses between the government and the conservative party, which are calculated to cause serious anger and anxiety to every free man. Of course nothing is yet certainly known, as all these negotiations are carried on with the utmost secrecy; but signs are not wanting, in the sudden unwillingness of ministers to yield in parliamentary debates, even in trifles. If other significant traits are taken into consideration, it seems not impossible that the government are really concerting with the conservative party to oppose the "People," and to combat the growing influence of the masses on the government of the State, by an arbitrary repeal of the universal Franchise. Every man in the land who is true to the cause of freedom will know how to judge of such a proceeding. We therefore call upon all committees to assemble, and—as a support to our members

in the House—to send out a powerful intimation of the unalterable purpose of the People to fight to the uttermost against the conduct of those in power. As to the best way of dealing with the matter, we leave that to the discretion of each committee ; only, in accordance with the opinion of our friends in parliament, we advise, that opportunity should be given to members of the party to pass a resolution to give our members continued and powerful support in the battle for the uncurtailed freedom and rights of the People.

A similar appeal is being sent to all committees, and it is hoped that such a protest, such a thousand voiced warning to our opponents, coming from every quarter of the country, may yet bring them to their senses, and induce them to abandon their nefarious intentions.

Long live freedom and right ! Long live the memory of our never to be forgotten lamented King, Frederick, giver of the constitution ! Beloved of the people !

P. V. B.—Johansen, Advocate.

The contents of this paper roused the utmost excitement among the committee. Even before the conclusion Emanuel burst out quite pale with emotion.

“ But that is sedition ! . . . It is treason to the country ! ”

“ Yes, there you’re right . . . no honourable man can call it any thing else,” chimed in Jensen. And with a wave of the hand and voice that

recalled the platform, he continued, "But it shews us friends that we acted perfectly rightly, in showing a rigid front to such a party, whose only aim is to clamour for power, even if they can only get it by playing fast and loose with the welfare and future of their country. Such people are no longer our countrymen . . . they are Denmark's foes!"

"Hear, hear," came from the depths of the carpenter's beard like a hollow echo.

"Never . . . never will the Danish people submit to such infamy!" continued Emanuel, quite beside himself. "I propose that we call together the party this very evening and inform them what is at stake. There is no time to waste. We will rise as one man and show that we will defend our honour and our rights to the uttermost."

"Softly Emanuel—softly," said the president, laying his hand soothingly on his arm. "Before everything we must beware of going too far! only be calm, that will lead you furthest in politics! we must not forget that at present we do not know anything definite, and you mustn't put your gun to the shoulder before you see the bear, says an old proverb.

For my part, I have a suspicion that it may be nothing but rumour which the friends of the government have set afloat to frighten our men in the house, and perhaps a bit of a trial balloon sent up to test the feeling in the country! We

must remember that that's the way things are done in politics!" continued he, grandiloquently and waving his hand. What we have to do first and foremost, is to scrutinise our opponents' tactics. Don't let's forget that, friends!"

"But if they're not empty rumours . . . if they act on their threats in earnest—send the parliament home, and put might in the place of right, . . . what then? . . . what then?"

The president looked firmly at Emanuel for a moment. Then he said slowly, with great self confidence, letting his hand drop heavily on the table:

"If that should happen—which God forbid—then three hundred thousand countrymen will rise and say, 'Now it is enough! now we must fight to the death the question, who is to be master, you or ourselves . . . am I not right?'"

At his last words he turned to the Skibberup men, who all answered with a loud "hear, hear," while the fat little Veilby man nodded approvingly.

"I now propose—that we call a meeting for Sunday evening next: I will willingly take upon myself the task of explaining the situation, after which we will bring forward the proposed resolution. Moreover, I am of opinion that we shall do well to keep this information private, so as not to alarm the party too much—and perhaps even unnecessarily. The honourable head committee evidently thought so too. I do not doubt that

our opponents will lose their taste for entering on new engagements, when they hear the voice of the people through our meetings. Don't you agree with me friends?"

Four of the members expressed their approval, and Emanuel was at last infected with their courage, and became calmer. He was not in the habit of speaking on political subjects, and he had in fact only been elected on the political council on account of his great services in other ways. He had great difficulty in taking any interest in the parliamentary debates or the newspapers, to say nothing of the "tactics" of which the president and the other members thought so much.

He never could bring himself to doubt that right—as in the psalm—in "God's good time would conquer," and he had no faith in the efficacy of even the cleverest devices, either to hasten or delay it.

On the proposal of one of the Skibberup farmers, it was decided to give even more importance to the meeting, by inviting two strangers to speak. For a moment they even contemplated asking no less a person than their own member, the old Bishop. But though in the course of recent stormy debates, he had shown that he still wore the red garibaldi shirt of his youth under his velvet robes and diplomatist's coat, he had hitherto never allowed himself to be persuaded to leave what he called his "Archimedian" standpoint, outside both parties. So this idea was soon

abandoned as fruitless. They thought they might induce a couple of other democratic members to come, and sent a message to headquarters at once. The president offered both to fetch the guests from the station in his carriage, and to give them a dinner, which offer won murmurs of approval.

When the hour for the meeting had been settled, and Hansen had entered the minutes, the president closed the meeting.

"Well, we've got that pig killed," he said gaily, as he rose. "And I think we want a bite and a sup after it, gentlemen."

This was his way of alluding to the "little refreshment" which was inevitable in this house, and had been prepared in the adjoining room. The door was thrown open by a portly peasant woman with a gold embroidered cap, a hooked nose, and a treble chin, who was the president's housekeeper.

The table was set out as usual, with rich and heavy viands under the lamp, the yellow light of which struggled with the last rays of a red sunset. The table looked doubly inviting in the variegated light, and the company took their seats with appetites sharpened by the long sitting.

Even Emanuel got into quite a lively frame of mind at last. He looked round at these broad-shouldered men who, in spite of all that threatened their future—sat there quiet and composed—perfectly secure as to the right of their cause. He was filled anew with admiration for the unfailing

equanimity with which these people always met their fate.

Never had he even for a moment seen them lose their composure. Even under the hardest blows of fate they maintained a salutary calm, a manly self-control, such as he had great difficulty in himself acquiring.

The dishes were emptied with great energy, and new ones brought in by "big Sidse," who had managed Jensen's house since the death of his wife. This corpulent female was stealthily watched by the weaver all the time; he hardly spoke a word during the meal, but left both food and drink almost untouched. When his neighbour wanted to pour him out a glass of brandy, he put his hand over the glass with a feline smile—he had lately become a total abstainer, and in spite of Jensen's chaff, would not be induced to deviate from his usual rule, even in honour of the day.

Emanuel on the other hand, drank his "Snaps" with the others, as he usually did on these occasions . . . not because he cared for the brandy but he was unwilling to do differently from his company. As far as that went, he could follow, with an easy conscience, the customs even of the Veilby peasants, for they had become much more moderate in the last few years. He had on the whole taken up a good many peasant customs, sometimes knowingly, and at others, unconsciously. He had even got over his own dislike to

tobacco ; and when the meal was over and coffee on the table, and Jensen sent the cigars round, he drew a wooden pipe from his pocket and filled it from a packet of "smoking mixture" which he always carried.

At this point the weaver rose. With the excuse that he had someone to see before night, he shook hands all round and retired through the kitchen.

Out there he remained standing in the middle of the paved floor with his head on one side, and fixed the housekeeper with a glance from his half-shut eyes which made this mass of flesh tremble in every limb.

"Good Lord, Hansen . . . why d'ye stare at a body like that?" she said, ready to cry, and in alarm held a tea-cloth before her face.

The weaver quietly put his hat on and left without a word.

It was dark outside. The wind had dropped, and it was quite calm. A few large snowflakes were falling which melted as soon as they reached the ground. The snow came faster and then changed to a drizzle, as the weaver walked home with his hands behind him, along the solitary path over the hills to Skibberup. Every now and then a smile crossed his face, and his red eyes had the expression they always wore when he was ruminating over his plan of campaign in private.

CHAPTER III

IT was a dark night and pouring with rain when Emanuel reached the Parsonage, and mounted the steps to the front door with a stranger.

Inside the lordly entrance hall, where at one time the mahogany pegs were adorned by Archdeacon Tönnesen's big bearskin coat and Miss Ragnhild's garden hat, and where tidy matting used to cover the black and white marble pavement in front of the door, a simple stable lantern was now burning. The mahogany pegs were now filled with a miscellaneous collection of common men's caps and women's many coloured head squares, and on the tiles were a whole pile of dirty wooden shoes of all kinds, from the big clumsy labourer's with iron bands and a wisp of straw inside, to small women's shoes with leather toes lined with red flannel. The usual visitors who assembled two or three times a week after their work was done to be edified by conversation, reading and singing, had already arrived, and were sitting in rows along the walls of the large drawing and dining rooms which were poorly lighted by a single petroleum lamp.

Nothing remained in the large rooms, except the smoke-blackened cornices and the frescoes over the doors, to recall the "Salon" where Miss Ragnhild used to display her extravagant costumes among soft carpets, damask curtains, and

inlaid furniture. Round the four naked walls a simple wooden bench ran, above which the blue distemper was worn off to the height of a man's shoulders. The four high windows, two on each side of the garden door—which in winter was blocked up—were covered at the top with a small red cotton valance. Under one window stood a white, scoured oaken table at the upper end of which the bench had taken the form of a kind of high seat. Besides this there were a few rush-bottom chairs and—as in the home of Hansine's childhood—one old-fashioned arm-chair by the stove and a green-painted corner cupboard by the kitchen door. A six-branched pewter chandelier hung from the middle of the ceiling.

This room—the “great room” or “hall,” as the people called it, because in its stern simplicity it was the outcome of Emanuel's passion for antiquity—was, in fact, the living room of the family. All the other rooms except the former morning room, which was now the family bedroom, were empty and uninhabited, or were used for storing up seed, wool, or feeding stuffs. Emanuel had indeed inherited for his own use the room which in the Archdeacon's time had been known and feared as the “study,” but the whole of its furniture consisted of a couple of dusty bookshelves, and an American cloth sofa. He very rarely occupied it except for the half hour after dinner when he took a little nap. His sermons and lectures were always thought out while following

the plough or on his wanderings among the sick and the poor ; for, as he said, he had turned his back on bookshelves since he had discovered that finer lessons of wisdom could be learnt of the birds in the air, or the cows in the byre, than of all the learned books in the world.



HANSINE
SPINNING
IN HER
CORNER.

. . . On this particular evening there were about fifty people of both sexes and all ages assembled. The young girls were all in a row, along the short wall, looking like a garland of flowers, the dark heads and the fair heads alike bent over pieces of fine crochet work which they could

hardly hold in their stiff red fingers. Notwithstanding the bad light there was an air of great cheerfulness and comfort.

The married women had their fixed seats on the wall nearest the stove, where they laboured steadily at huge pieces of knitting, talking meanwhile to their neighbours about housekeeping and dairy work, in the usual lachrymose voices which peasant women always adopt in company. Hansine had her accustomed seat in the arm-chair and was spinning at her wheel. She was dressed just like the others in a common linsey dress and a checked cotton apron; on her head she had a tight little black cap, and her dark brown hair was smoothed down in two stiffly formed bands above the temples, after the fashion of the district. She did not take much part in the conversation of the others, and there was often something absent in the glance with which she looked up from her yarn, when the door opened and some old labourer came in, in shirt sleeves, or a couple of round-cheeked girls stepped in with a nod and a broad grin.

The young men were gathered round the long oak table in the window. They were in the full light of the lamp which stood on the table next to a large jar of water with a wooden lid. The loudest gossip proceeded from this part of the room and the blue smoke from their pipes curled thickly round their heads of shaggy hair. In a place apart in the darkest corner of the room, two persons were sitting whose appearance and

behaviour plainly shewed that it was not usual for them to be there. They were greeted by Emanuel on his entrance with special cordiality, he shaking hands with them and saying how glad he was to see them. They were two miserable-looking creatures, whose dripping rags had formed pools of water on the floor round their feet. One was as tall and thin as a well pole; the other, short, stout, and bald, with a lump as big as an egg over his eye. Both of them sat with their hands on their knees looking at the ground with embarrassed faces; but now and then, when they thought themselves unobserved, they would steal a sidelong glance at each other with a suppressed smile.

They were both well-known persons in the neighbourhood—"Beery Svend" and "Brandy Pér"—who belonged to the fixed number of *mauvais sujets* in the parish. They belonged to the party who waited outside Villing's shop every morning till it opened, with bottles hidden under their garments. They lived, with others of their kind, in a collection of mud hovels on the outskirts of the village. One was a wooden-shoe maker, the other a thatcher; but their most important source of income was stealing potatoes from the peasants' pits, and shearing the tethered sheep on dark nights; and there were many who suspected them of having darker crimes on their consciences.

These circumstances were not unknown to

Emanuel. In fact he had not been long in the country before his eyes were sufficiently opened to see that even there, poverty breeds misery and spiritual debasement. From the very first he had made great efforts, supported by the congregation, to win the confidence of the lost and strayed, and by mildness and indulgence, to smooth the way for them back to the paths of virtue. He had spared no personal pains to attain this end, and it was one of his greatest disappointments that in all these years he had not succeeded in getting over the hostility these people had shown towards all efforts to help them.

So he was doubly delighted every time—as in this case—he fancied he could see any signs of reconciliation. He did not remember at the moment that, as Chairman of the Poor Relief Committee, he had recently renewed an allowance to both these persons, and it never occurred to him that their presence to-night might be looked upon as a sort of receipt for assistance given.

There was another unaccustomed guest to-night, and that was Aggerbölle the veterinary. He sat smiling at one end of the bench next to the shuttered garden door, with his arms crossed over his broad chest, oblivious of the fact that in this position he mercilessly displayed a great rent in his coat under the arm. His hair and beard were quite white, and stuck out unclipped on every side, his eyes were like staring glass balls and the hairless part of his face was covered with boils.

It is difficult to say which of these people made the most deplorable impression—the two thieves, or this man so strangely tossed about by fate. Certainly the vet. wore elastic-sided leather shoes, cuffs and collar; he even had a *pince-nez* stuck into the breast of his buttoned-up frock coat. But the heartrending shabbiness of his clothes and the whole of his stiffly-held figure displayed such deep and hopeless degradation that it might rouse the pity of a pauper even.

In spite of all his efforts to appear at his ease in this company, he only succeeded indifferently in hiding a suppressed bitterness. It was not by his good will that he was there at all. His presence among the “dunderheads,” as in his hatred and contempt he had dubbed these modern “intellectual” peasants, was due to one of those mischances by which, as it seemed, his implacable fate pursued him through life. After being shut up all the dull day in his tumble-down house among the deserted fields in contemplation of his miserable, hopelessly ruined home, because for certain good reasons he dared not meet the baker who was in the neighbourhood with his cart that day, he had at last ventured out about nightfall. With the excuse of having to see a patient, and after tenderly kissing his children, and taking the heart-rending farewell of his wife, without which he never left home even for an hour, he took the road to his

old friend and sympathiser Villing, to seek a little consolation there, and, if possible, to obtain what he was fond of calling "a little oblivion." But it unfortunately happened that he met Emanuel just outside the Parsonage gates, and he patted him on the shoulder in delighted surprise, and exclaimed : "It is really good of you, dear friend, to come and see us at last. We have missed you for a long time. You're heartily welcome."

On the verge of despair after the long day, Aggerbölle was screwing up his courage to say that he was on the way to a patient, when Emanuel mentioned that he had just come from a meeting at Jensen's. The thought that the weaver was probably also of the party cooled his ardour, and, under the circumstances, he thought he would have to give up all thought of escape. He sat there now with a convulsive smile, trembling with rage, which made all his boils stand out blue. Of all the humiliations imposed upon him by his poverty, none seemed so pitiless and degrading as this. He asked himself if all justice had disappeared from the world, since he was forced to put up with sitting here like a schoolboy on a bench, with cow-herds, milk-maids, and stinking stable lads. Or was it merely a delirious dream that he was the son of a district judge, and a man who had taken a degree ; and that these self-same "Dunder-heads," who now coerced him as well as the whole country, once used to stand before him,

hat in hand, and looked upon it as an honour if he invited them into his room. . . . The conversation round the walls had gradually dropped, and finally there was a dead silence. They were all waiting for Emanuel, or some one else, to tell a story or read something.

Niels, the Parsonage man, seized this opportunity to try and attract Emanuel's attention to himself, by drawing the newspaper a little way out of his breast pocket, just far enough to shew a little corner. Sometimes, if there was a dearth of entertainment, they would read a good article out of one of the papers, which would give a subject for discussion.

Emanuel did not, however, notice his efforts. After having moved about for a time from bench to bench among the guests, joining in their conversations here and there, he took his place on the high seat with his pipe, and fell into a fit of deep abstraction. The meeting at Jensen's was still surging through his mind, and his thoughts were fixed on the future in gloomy apprehension.

"Aren't we going to do anything at all to-night?" came a pert voice from the girls' bench at last.

The impatient exclamation, and the laughter which followed it, roused Emanuel from his reverie. He looked and said, with a smile:

"You're right, Abelone! Let us start something! . . . Haven't you anything to tell us to-night, Anton?" he said, turning to a brown-

bearded clerical-looking little man in a white tie and skullcap, who was sitting with his hands folded over the bowl of his pipe, leaning back in an old basket chair at the other end of the table. This man was the new parish schoolmaster, the well-known Anton Antonsen, formerly a private teacher, who had been nominated by the Parish Council as Mortensen's successor. In answer to Emanuel, he first pressed his thick lips together, and sent out the tobacco smoke from the corners of his mouth in little puffs like the smoke of powder from the mouth of a cannon. Then he laid his head on one side with a sly smile, and said in broad dialect :

"Naa, naa, a won't trouble ye to-night."

His droll little person in connection with a certain dry humour made him an exhilarating element, whose little jocular speeches, proverbs, and humorous readings had become almost indispensable at every festival in the countryside.

"Oh, I say, Anton," said a man who had not yet stopped laughing, "Ye might read us a bit to-night. It's ever so long since ye've given us ought. Ye're forgetting that ye owe us that tale about Stine, how she went to the High School."

"Ay, ay, let's have it! Out wi' it, Anton!" cried several voices at once.

The schoolmaster shut one eye and looked round with a smile, which broadened as the clamour increased.

"Weel, weel, then, bairns," he said at last, when

even the women by the stove joined in the request, "if there's naebody else wi' ought to say, a'm sure a'll not hould back. A wunnot hae it on ma conscience that Stineshouldn't get to the High School!"

"But shan't we hae a song first," cried the same pert voice from the girls' bench. It belonged to pretty Abelone, the Parsonage servant, a strapping girl of twenty, with black ribbons in her flaxen hair and a large rose in her bosom, and the bright leather belt indispensable to a pupil of the High School.

"Yes, let's have a song," agreed Emanuel. "Let it be a national air! I'm sure we want one in these times. What shall it be?"

"Thou Heroes grave by the ocean shore," proposed one.

"Yes, that'll do; we all know it by heart. You lead off, Abelone."

The room became quite silent as soon as the song came to an end. The youths settled themselves with their arms on the table, and the girls dropped their work, or else stuffed it into the pockets under their aprons, and then folded their hands in their laps, so as to give all their attention to Anton while he was reading.

As a reader and reciter the schoolmaster stood alone, and could only be compared to the old High School director at Sandinge. But while the latter, in telling his folklore tales and sagas, almost took the roof off with his own breathless excitement and his peculiar piping voice, which

echoed through the lecture-hall like a war trumpet, and conjured up before them the giants, the dwarfs, and the valkyrie maidens of the sagas in so life-like a manner that the whole brilliant Asgard race might have been passing before them, the schoolmaster's strength lay in his plain, moralising stories of everyday life which had become so much the fashion. He imitated the characters—especially the comic ones—in so masterly a style, and used his comical little figure to make his personifications life-like, in a way quite new there.

He had contributed largely by these means to the introduction of works by modern writers, and had to a great extent driven out the old romantic poetry from these evening assemblages. Emanuel at first tried to wake the interest of the people, but had never thoroughly succeeded in doing so. He had not been able to understand his friends' want of appreciation of those old poems, instinct with life, to which he owed so many hours of happiness in his childhood. But as he gradually became more and more taken up with everyday life and its struggles, he began to see that these purposeless, fantastic tales of nightingales, fairies, and moonshine, were in fact too far removed from the feelings and ideas of the people of to-day. Besides, his eyes had been opened to the heathen spirit in which the passions of men and women were portrayed and, as a rule, glorified by the old poets. Time after time he had been struck by the

immodesty with which the personal charm of the women was enlarged upon . . . and it probably was a similar feeling which caused the coldness of the Friends towards them, and the bashfulness with which they discussed them. . . . In the works of the modern writers these sober, realistic pictures, often written by men themselves of the people . . . and especially in the social dramas of the great Norwegian writers, they lived over again their own daily struggles and moods. In them he also found the moral earnestness, the popular point of view, the craving for truth and justice, which touched their deepest heartstrings.

CHAPTER IV

THE same evening Villing and his wife were sitting in their warm, cosy little parlour behind the shop. A tall lamp with a red paper shade was burning on the centre table and shedding a cheerful glow on the mistress as she sat on the sofa, knitting; while Villing was in the arm-chair on the other side of the table, reading the newspaper aloud.

All was empty and silent in the shop. The lamp was turned down, and smelling horribly as it hung from the ceiling among currycombs, and hanks of string. Behind a large cask of brandy in the darkest corner sat the spectre-like shop boy, who

was regularly renewed from the capital every second or third year ; but who nevertheless was always the same thin, timid cadaverous creature who for nearly twenty years had been seen wildly dashing about Villing's shop. At this moment he had fallen asleep with his head against the wall, his mouth wide open, and his hands stuck deep down into his pockets, as if in the fervent hope that he would never have to take them out again.

For the last couple of hours no one had disturbed him either in his dreams. Villing's shop which formerly was always full of customers, now stood empty the greater part of the day. By the redistribution of the parish, the big Co-operative Store at Skibberup had by degrees only left him the farthing trade of the village poor, a small coal business, and the sale of corn brandy and Bavarian beer.

It did not however look as if these bad years had weighed very heavily either on Villing or his wife. His own little broad-headed figure with the yellow whiskers, had rather gained in rosy fleshiness ; certainly his wife had been obliged to take to spectacles when she worked, but her face retained its soft resigned expression, as if she too had found rest in the belief in what her husband usually called "The superiority of professional training," and "ultimate conquest."

The paper which Villing was reading was a Copenhagen conservative journal, whose minute details of events in the capital had long been the

favourite, and indeed the only reading of the couple. For many years they had, from measures of precaution, not subscribed to the paper, but had it secretly sent by a business friend in the form of packing paper. To-night they were having a special treat, the account of a brilliant court ball, at which all the grandeur and magnificence of the capital had been assembled. Villing, who at these readings never omitted the solemn and vibrating voice with which illiterate people shew their reverence for print, had seized the opportunity to employ all his declamatory talent. Holding one whisker tightly, he rolled out the sentences descriptive of uniforms, stars, medals, brilliant gowns, and jewelry, with the greatest gusto.

"Her gracious majesty the Queen, who was unusually animated, and looked younger than ever, wore a white lace petticoat and a train of richest mauve brocade, five yards long, opal ornaments and a pale mauve aigret in her hair," he read. "Think of that, Sine, a mauve brocade train, five yards long, if we only reckon twelve yards of the usual width—at—let us say 45 kr. a yard, that makes 540 kr. for the stuff alone!"

Mrs Villing, who was resting her cheek on one knitting needle, and in this position looked over the rim of her spectacles, fixing her eyes on the ceiling, added :

"And fifteen yards of lace at 25 kr. a yard, makes 375 kr."

"915 kr. altogether then."

"At least."

"For the stuff alone! you may call that splendour indeed. But let's have some more. 'Her royal highness the Crown Princess wore blue satin, the train brocaded with silver lilies.—Silver lilies, do you hear?—On her head she had a diadem of brilliants, and the same precious stones on neck and arms. A great sensation was made by her ear-rings, which consisted of one diamond each, as big as a sparrow's egg!— Did you ever hear anything like it, Sine! Diamonds as big as sparrow's eggs! It's as much as to say that you have a country house, nay, a whole village hanging at each ear. That must be a wonderful feeling, don't you think so?"

Here he stopped and raised his head to listen. Merry voices were heard on the other side of the pond, as a party of girls went singing through the village.

"I suppose the Ranters' meeting is over for to-night," he said, and looked at the clock. It's high time too, past nine o'clock. Now let's get on, I hope we shan't be disturbed again."

At this moment the cracked bell over the shop door began to ring. Villing hurriedly shut up his paper, ready to pop it into the drawer in an instant.

Mumbling voices were heard in the shop, and the jingling of bottles; then the bell rang again, and the door was shut.

"Elias!" shouted Villing with his stentorian voice, holding the paper behind his back.

The shopboy's ghostlike face appeared at the half open door, with his hair hanging about his sleepy eyes.

"Who was that?"

"It was Beery Svend and Brandy Pér . . . they came for a pint."

"All right, you can shut up for to-night and go to bed, but don't forget to put the candle out boy!—goodnight!"

As soon as the door was shut, Villing took up the paper again, but no sooner had he begun to read than the shop bell began to jangle again. This time the door was torn open noisily, the counter flap thrown up, and a man admitted. Villing turned pale and had hardly time to throw his paper into a drawer before the door was opened.

"Oh, it's you," he said with a sigh of relief when he saw Aggerbölle's broad figure dripping with rain. "We hadn't expected you. . . . How in the world do you come to be out at this time of night?"

"I? . . . oh, I've been seeing a patient," mumbled Aggerbölle, looking about for a place to put his hat and stick down.

"It's villanous weather! Downright hellish weather! Not fit to drive a creature out in. And the mud! One's not fit to go into a decent person's house. But I thought I'd just look in."

"It was very kind of you to come and see us, Aggerbölle," said Mrs Villing, with a warning glance at her husband, who didn't take the least pains to hide his ill-temper at the visit—"You know we are so much alone now, and we are always glad to see you. We were just talking about you when you came in. Sit down and tell us how you all are in this bad weather."

Aggerbölle appeared not to hear this, but took a chair by the table, and with a gloomy and absent air continued to mutter curses at the weather, nervously groping about in his right hand trouser pocket as if his thoughts were busy with something there.

At last he pulled out his hand and threw down a 2 kr. piece on the table.

"If you'll give the hot water and a cigar, Villing, I'll give the brandy. We want something strong on a night like this I think."

The shopkeeper and his wife exchanged questioning glances, and there was a moment's pause. Then Mrs Villing rose and went into the kitchen, while Villing with a dexterous twist took up the coin with one hand and whipped it into the other and thence into his purse.

Aggerbölle's eyes followed the piece of money with a reluctant glance till Villing's leather purse closed upon it. Then he looked silently at the floor.

"Well, how are you getting on, old fellow?" said Villing, leaning forward and slapping him on the knees in a friendly way.

"How am I getting on?" asked the vet. as he straightened himself up with a start as if he wanted to get out of the way of the other's touch. "Confoundedly, of course! How should it be otherwise?"

"Ah well, we business people have our troubles too. Prices go down everywhere . . . what is it to come to? I was just saying to my wife the other day, how tiresome it is that one has to pay ready money for everything. One would be glad to help a friend in difficulties, or tide a good customer over temporary embarrassment—help in deed as well as in word. But what is one to do when a fellow can hardly scrape through himself. I don't at the moment know how I shall pull through at quarter day. And it's very hard at my age with twenty years of honourable work to look back on. I'm cleaned out, absolutely cleaned out!"

Aggerbölle, to whom this speech was not new, mumbled some unintelligible words in his beard, and cast impatient glances at the kitchen door.

At last Mrs Villing appeared with a tray; Aggerbölle seized a glass, just covered the bottom with water, filled it up with brandy, and without waiting for any clinking of glasses, or drinking of healths carried it to his lips with a shaking hand and half emptied it. Then he bit the end off a cigar which Villing in the meantime had given him, lighted it at the lamp, and puffing at

it, threw himself back in his chair with his arms crossed, in his favourite position.

"Well," he burst out, rendered talkative at once by the spirit. "Is there anything new?"

"Anything new? Let me see!" said Villing, stirring his mixture. "Oh, the latest is that there has been a meeting of the Parish Council to-day."

"Do you call that new? Devil a bit! It seems to me they have a meeting every day, . . . when they don't have two! The beasts of peasants have nothing else to do in these days. They send their milk to the co-operative dairies, and the pigs to the common slaughter-houses. . . . So they've plenty of time to do the consequential. By God, it was a different matter in the old times, old fellow, eh?"

"It was the Select Committee, I believe."

"Select Committee!" burst out Aggerbølle. "Are we to be dragged to another political farce? It's not more than a week since we had a meeting here! . . . Isn't it just what I was saying?" he continued, grinding his teeth and clenching his fist. "It's enough to worry the liver out of one's body to think of all the 'Dunderheads' have done in the country. It's not enough that they've murdered—yes, I say murdered the last traces of good old Danish joviality, . . . but you have to sit and listen to all their damned braying into the bargain. What would old Didrik Jacobsen have said to it? D'ye remember old Didrik, Villing? Ah, he was a fine

old blade. And his big Christmas feasts with the good old-fashioned roast legs of pork weighing three stone a-piece, with red cabbage, snaps, old Christmas ale, followed by first-rate coffee punch to console one for all the disappointments and troubles in life. And then Shrovetide, when one didn't close an eye for five nights running! Those were the times to live in, I say!"

Villing and his wife exchanged mournful glances. These words of Aggerbölle's roused tender memories in their minds too. It was in their shop that most of the good things had been bought, and it had been one of their greatest joys in life to sit down in the evening on their little sofa side by side, after one of these monster feasts, where sometimes over a hundred persons had eaten and drunk prodigally, and with their account book before them make out their long-winded accounts, and add up the columns of figures as long as their arms.

"And then Sören, Heaven's hound as we used to call him," continued Aggerbölle, carried away by his reminiscences. "Do you remember, Villing, when he killed a fat ox for his brandy carouse. . . . And what do you get now? A drop of lukewarm coffee and a sweet biscuit, . . . and for the rest pious comic songs, jocular speeches, friendly words, and sweaty hands to shake! That's an example to set the rising generation. Instead of working as the old people used to do, and amusing oneself like them, they sit

there singing themselves fat, and turning up their eyes enough to make you sick. And these are the new 'Progressives!' This is the marrow of the land! Down with the rabble! Down with the rascals, I say!"

The recollection of the two hours slow torture he had been forced to endure at the Parsonage embittered him beyond measure. Villing 'hushed' him in alarm, and he became somewhat doubtful about his last brave words. He suddenly pulled himself up, and for a few minutes there was silence, as if the shadow of the weaver were passing through the room.

"How are they all at home, Aggerbölle?" asked Mrs Villing again, after a pause, so as to lead the conversation into a new channel.

The vet. made a deprecating movement with his hand, and turned away his head with the painful contortion which his face always wore at mention of his wife.

"Don't let's talk about it, Mrs Villing! it distracts me, . . . my only consolation is, that all I suffer—on account of bad times—and let me add, my own weaknesses—I suffer for the sake of my poor wife and my innocent little children. If it hadn't been for them, I should have risen and spit my contempt in the faces of the scoundrels, you may depend upon that, Mrs Villing. But I have promised myself once for all that, for the sake of my poor wife and children, I will drain the bitter cup to the dregs. No, indeed! You make a mis-

take, my good Mrs Villing! I'm not such a brutal tormentor, that for the sake of my pride I would let my little Sophie suffer more than she already does!"

"But, my dear Mr Aggerbölle, I never said—" objected Mrs Villing, gently.

"No, no, my good lady! you don't know my Sophie, . . . that's the fact! You haven't loved her as I have for twenty years of bitter sorrows and anxieties. Then one learns to thank God for a good and faithful wife, . . . and that my Sophie has been! A pattern wife and mother . . . noble, self-sacrificing, an angel of patience and so lovely as she still is upon her bed of pain. . . ."

The brandy was having its usual effect upon him. He put up his *pince-nez* to hide the tears which were starting up. His voice was husky, his words and gestures shewed the fiery passion he still bore to his wife, though they had a somewhat uncomfortable effect upon those who knew the little pining remnant of humanity which bore the name of Mrs Aggerbölle.

"My poor wife is always ill now," he continued, abandoning all efforts to hide his emotion. "You know she suffers from these fearful visions, or hallucinations when she is alone. You may fancy that it is fearful for me to think off, for she is quite helpless. We live in such an out of the way place . . . it's dreadful! The other night when I went home from you . . . it was rather late I think . . . I saw a long way off that there

was a light in the bedroom. I thought something must be wrong, and when I got in—Ah, I shall never forget the sight! I found my little wife sitting up in bed, as white as a sheet, her teeth chattering. I rushed up to her and clasped her in my arms, but at first she couldn't speak, she was shaking all over. 'My beloved Sophie,' I called—'what has happened?' At last she got strength to say that she had heard someone moving about the house, saw frightful faces at the windows, and that someone had shouted to her that they would murder her and her children.—All delirious fancies of course, but so terrible—so heartrending to witness!"

He no longer tried to control himself. The tears rolled down his shaggy beard, and he leant forward, burying his face in his hands.

"My good Mr Aggerbölle," said Mrs Villing, while her husband patted him on the knees encouragingly and said: "Don't take on so my dear fellow! You'll see that the summer will set your wife up again. When the spring comes we forget all the troubles of the winter."

But he did not hear their words. He had fallen into a kind of stupor which was one of the forms of drunkenness in him. All at once he looked up. His face which was blue when he came in, had become fiery red, and reeked of the spirit.

"But do you know what I think?" he said in a strange voice, looking from one to the other and lifting up his hand. "There's some witch-

craft in the air here . . . some devilry going about."

"But Mr Aggerbölle, I say!" whimpered Mrs Villing. "You said that the other day too; you make us feel quite uncanny."

"Forgive me, my dear Mrs Villing, you do not understand me, I neither believe in ghosts nor spirits with grinning heads under their arms . . . that kind of folly I leave to the 'Dunderheads.' But I say there is some other sort of sorcery in the air here which steals one's life blood, Mrs Villing. Something which draws heart, and blood, and marrow out of one's body if one has not been cradled under these skies. You may depend upon my words! I have always felt it! Why should my poor Sophie and I have got on so badly otherwise?"

He again hid his face in his hands, while his heavy sobs sounded like hollow groans of pain.

"But, dear Mr Aggerbölle!" exclaimed both Villing and his wife with real sympathy, as they tried to reason with him.

"For heaven's sake don't give way so, my dear friend . . . mix yourself another glass and get these ideas out of your head. We must have one of our little games. We all want a little amusement."

As if waking from a dream, Aggerbölle lifted his head and ran his fingers through his hair with a gesture peculiar to him. With a gloomy look he first glanced up at Villing and then at the clock.

"I ought to be thinking of . . . I believe I promised my wife— —" he murmured.

"Oh you can't go home in your present state, my dear fellow. You would be infecting your wife with your melancholy. We can't allow that. Remember that I won 5300 kr. from you the other day, you must have your revenge! . . . Little Sine, get out the cards and mix another half-glass for Mr Aggerbölle."

The sight of the cards quickly overcame Aggerbölle's power of resistance.

These little card parties were not such a self-sacrifice on the part of the Villings as they would have had people to believe. Certainly they had been obliged to give up playing for money, as Aggerbölle's total bankruptcy crushed every hope of gain ; but their old interest in the game was roused anew, after they hit on the happy device of keeping a kind of account, and making the stakes of dazzling value, and so tickling their fancy and satisfying their craving for figures and addition.

After Villing had made a trip into the shop to assure himself that the boy was really asleep, they took their seats round the table and dealt out the cards for a game.

"I announce," growled Aggerbölle immediately.

"I ask leave too," murmured Mrs Villing.

"Oh, I go above you," chimed in Villing, and was about to take the two cards on the table.

But Aggerbölle laid his spongy hand over them and said :

"You take yourself out of the mess. . . . I'll play what I have."

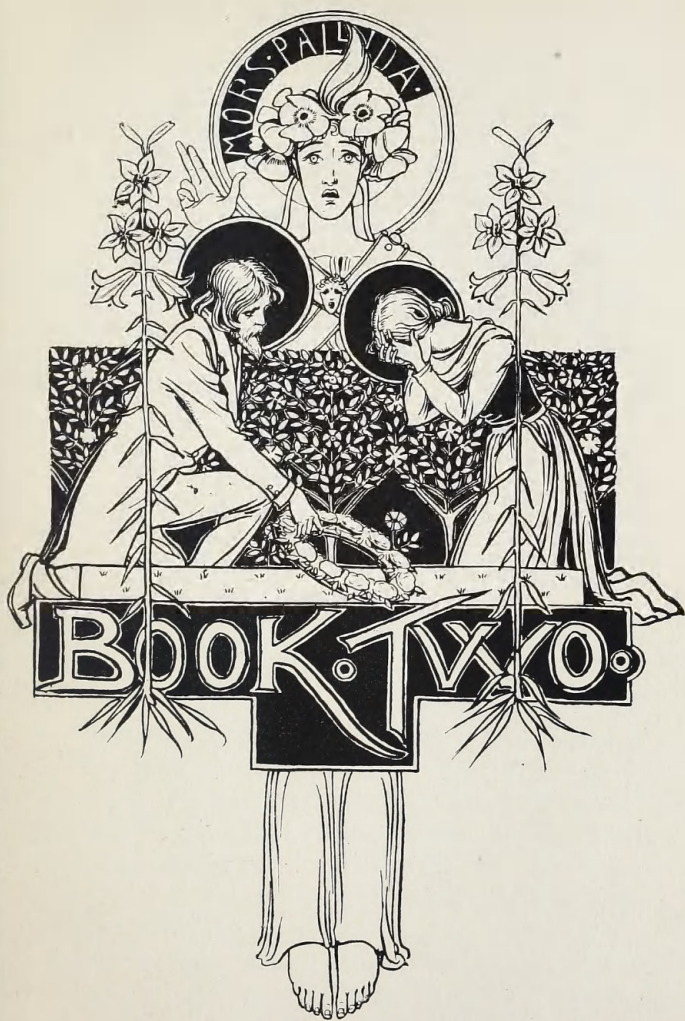
"Stop the ship, skipper, we're rolling," laughed Villing. "You seem to have got the lucky place to-day."

Aggerbölle put on his *pince-nez* again, which he had started a couple of years before to add to his importance in the eyes of the "Dunderheads." He laughed with all his flaming face, and never heard the clock strike ten warning strokes.

When he had won his trick and made his opponent "Jan," he put both his big hands on his sides, and looked gleefully from one to the other, and said :

"I say, friends . . . we're very cosy here !"





CHAPTER I

AFTER some days of mild spring weather, a strong northerly gale sprang up at sunset. Hansine was alone at home with the children, who had been put to bed early. Emanuel and the servants, as well as the usual evening guests, were gone to the great "Protest" meeting in the Skibberup meeting-house. The people had been streaming into it in the course of the day without intermission from all the country round. Ever since the morning conveyances had been arriving, many of them dropping people at the Parsonage, who wished to call upon Emanuel, or take part in the service at Veilby Church. Besides which the two members of Parliament, who had been sent to speak—peasants from the west coast—had been there on a long visit, and in the afternoon a party of pupils had come over from the Sandinge High School with greetings and messages from the old invalided director. All these people either had to have coffee or something to eat, so there had been a great deal to do all day—as much as at an inn on a market day.

Hansine had been looking forward to a quiet evening after the long and busy day. It was not

often that she could secure quiet, nor did she by any means share Emanuel's delight in always having the house full of people. She often wished he would open the doors less wide for the many friends who by degrees had accustomed themselves to go in and out of the Parsonage as if it were their own home. . . . But now, when she was alone and the children in bed, and she had lighted the lamp and seated herself at the long table with some darning, she felt rather low-spirited and lonely in the big empty house, where she had never felt thoroughly at home. Although it had been her home for seven years she never could rid herself of a feeling that she was an unbidden guest in these lofty halls, which had been destined to house grand people, and to ring with music and conversation. It appeared to her sometimes that all the former inhabitants—but especially Provst Tønnesen and his proud daughter—still haunted the house and watched her with threatening glances from the dark corners. She often wondered how Emanuel could be so contented here, notwithstanding that everything was so different from the quiet secluded peasant life which at first they had both pictured to themselves. She many a time sent a sad thought—especially after a troubled day—to the little house overgrown with wild roses by the stream among the green hills, which they thought of buying when they were first engaged ; and when her fancy painted

how happily and peacefully they might have lived in the small cosy rooms, away from these crowds of people, with the open shore for neighbours, she felt more than ever imprisoned in the empty Parsonage.

Added to this, to-night there was the noise of the rising storm, which howled round the house and brought in its train all kinds of sounds from the out-houses. A shutter was banging about in the barn, and from the shaking of the front door she perceived that Niels had again forgotten to shut the outer gates. A cow was lowing in the byre — and all these trifles roused the



housewifely anxiety, which the feeling of responsibility for the management of this great house so often caused her. She wondered if Abelone had remembered to milk the broken-winded cow before she went away, and if she had looked after the ashes properly which were thrown out in the afternoon. Abelone had become so abstracted lately, and was always busy looking out of the window as soon as Niels appeared in the yard. . . . If only Niels was not being spoilt by all the fuss which was made of him since he began to write in the

papers. He had already become very neglectful over his work she thought. . . . She was interrupted in her thoughts by a moaning sound from the bedroom, to which the door was ajar. It was Laddie wailing in his sleep. He had been to Skibberup in the morning with his father, so that he might run about on the shore with the fishermen's children during the service. But on their return he had disappeared, and had not been to be found all the afternoon. Only at dusk, after Emanuel had left, did she find him sitting at the top of the attic stairs, with his hands over his bad ear and his face swelled with crying. She had put him to bed at once, and dropped a little of old Strynö-grethe's flax-seed oil into his ear, after which he soon fell asleep. But he kept on moaning in his sleep, and this new outbreak of the boy's old suffering contributed to her depression this evening.

She had never reconciled herself to Emanuel's fancy for taking the children about with him wherever he went in all weathers—and still less did she understand his allowing them to romp about with the poor children, and exposing them to so much that was unpleasant. She remembered from her own childhood the many ugly things which were prevalent among the poor; and when she saw Laddie and Sigrid running about with them just as she herself had done in patched clothes and stockings in holes, she could not keep back a certain feeling of dissatisfaction

with the difference between her, and Emanuel's actual life, and the pictures she had formed for herself on the benches of the High School, of the higher intellectual life, which by her marriage, she had expected to realise.

Time after time she had made up her mind to speak to Emanuel about the children's bringing-up, but her heart had always failed her. As soon as he entered the room with his cheerful, happy manner, quite absorbed in his great work she lost confidence in herself. In the face of the unshaken confidence and cheerful self-sacrifice with which he threw himself into his lofty vocation, she could never find words for her every day troubles.

. . . She raised her head. A series of little shrieks were making themselves heard in the bedroom, she quickly laid her work aside and rose. But when she reached Laddie's bed she was surprised to find him apparently sleeping quietly. She did not understand it, but she calmed herself by thinking that she could not have heard aright, and was just turning away when the boy threw himself on his back, ground his teeth, and again gave three frightened shrieks.



LADDIE
ON
THE
STAIRS.

"But child! . . . whatever is the matter?" she cried, and raised him up to wake him.

The boy rubbed his eyes and looked about in surprise, and said at last :

"I'm quite well."

"What did you call out for then? . . . Did you have a bad dream? Have you any pain?"

He did not seem to hear her. His eyes had suddenly grown very big, and he stared straight before him with a mingled expression of fear and lively interest.

"Mother!" he whispered.

"Yes, what is it, my boy?"

"A fly has got into my head."

"Nonsense, child. It's something you're dreaming. Lie down again and go to sleep, you'll forget all about it then."

"No, it's really true. . . . I can feel it all the time. I expect it can't get out, mother."

His face worked, the mouth widened, and after a short struggle with his pride, he threw himself into her arms and began to cry. She stroked his hair and tried to comfort and soothe him, and with his usual good temper he soon dried his eyes and laid himself down under the clothes. With a little sigh he folded his hands under his cheek and in a few minutes fell asleep.

Hansine remained standing by the bed. The boy's words and strange behaviour had inspired her with new fears. She did not know what to think of him. . . . And standing there looking at

him with the light from the sitting-room shining on to his pillow, she made a new resolution that she would no longer put off having certainty as to his condition. This very evening she would talk to Emanuel about her fears, and she would not desist until the doctor was fetched to her child.

CHAPTER II

It was nearly ten o'clock, and Hansine was again sitting by the lamp darning the children's stockings, when Emanuel came home.

"God's peace be here!" he said on entering; an old greeting of the peasants' which he had adopted. He remained standing a moment in the darkness near the door, with an extinguished lantern in one hand, and an oak stick in the other. His light beard streamed wind-tossed over his dark, monkish cloak, the hood of which covered his head like a cowl.

"Has Niels come home?"

"No, I have not heard anyone."

"Nor Abelone?"

"No."

"Poor child! she will find it difficult to struggle against the wind. It's blowing half a hurricane, and so dark you can't see your hand before you. My lantern blew out down under

the ridge, I could hardly find my way.—Well, ‘All is rest, home is best.’”

He put the lantern down on a bench near the door and laid aside his cloak and stick.

“I’ve got plenty to tell you!” he continued excitedly, as he came nearer blowing on his frozen fingers. It was not before he came quite close to her and was about to lay his hands on her head and give her his usual kiss of greeting, that he noticed her perturbed and absent expression.

“What is the matter, dear? Has anything happened since I have been away?”

“Oh, it’s Laddie again, Emanuel.”

“Laddie! what is the matter with him? He can’t be lost? I didn’t see him all the afternoon.

“No, I discovered how that was. . . . I found him on the attic stairs after you left. His ear was bad again, and I had to put him to bed. I don’t know what’s the matter with him; I’ve never seen him so strange as he is this evening.”

“What do you say? Let me see him!”

He was taking the lamp off the table, but she held his hand back.

“You won’t want that. It might wake him, I have lighted the night lamp in there.”

She rose and followed him into the bedroom, where the boy lay, asleep with both hands under his cheek and his knees drawn up—in the dim light of a little flame swimming on a layer of oil in a glass of water, which stood behind his pillow.

Not a line in his face shewed a trace at this moment of anything but sound and healthy sleep.

"Why, he's sleeping like a god!" whispered Emanuel, stooping over the little iron bed to listen to his breathing. "There can't possibly be anything the matter with him. You've alarmed yourself for nothing, Hansine!"

"I can't make it out, he was talking quite wildly before and shrieking fearfully. It comes over him by fits and starts."

"Then it's the spring air you may be sure! It generally makes children's sleep uneasy. You'll see in the morning by God's help he'll be quite brisk again."

"I seriously think all the same that the doctor ought to see him."

"How pretty he looks!" continued Emanuel, who, like most great talkers, seldom heard other people's remarks. He had put his arm round Hansine's waist and was looking with a happy smile at the three little golden heads lying there buried in the white pillows. "Just like a little angel in our Father's bosom. Isn't it a beautiful sight! Can you understand Hansine how anyone with children can deny God? To my mind there is always a reflection of the light from beyond.—such a beautiful revelation of the heavenly peace on a sleeping child's face. . . . It reminds me of an answer our dear old High School director once made to a man who asked him what eternal happiness would be like. 'Like this,' he said,

pointing to a child which had fallen asleep at its mother's breast. I thought it was so beautifully expressed.—Well!" he interrupted himself, letting Hansine go, "How are the other two little fairies? I suppose they're all right. You can hear Fattie snoring well enough. I've quite longed for the dear little creatures. I've hardly seen them to-day."

He moved about on tiptoe round the beds while he spoke, bending over the three little beings whom he often called his "three golden treasures." He took a caraway cake out of his pocket by each bedside, and put it half under the pillow, so that the children might see them as soon as they woke.

"I just looked in at the baker's a moment, I didn't want to come home empty handed. Now we'd better leave them. I have such a lot to tell you about to-night. Come along."

They went back into the sitting-room, and he began walking up and down the big room, the better to give her a detailed account of the events in the meeting-house. Hansine only listened with half an ear. She had not given up her intention, and was determined to lead the conversation back to Laddie at the first opportunity.

"But do you know what was the greatest success of the whole meeting?" exclaimed Emanuel, stopping in the middle of the room with his hands on his sides and bending forward. "Try to guess, Hansine."

"Oh, that's no use . . . you'd better tell me."

"Your Father!"

She looked up from her darning.

"Father?"

"Yes—no other than your dear, old, blind Father!"

"Father spoke?"

"Yes, indeed! . . . I wish I could give you any idea of the enthusiasm, nay downright jubilation, his appearance called forth. It was really most affecting."

"But can Father speak?" asked Hansine in growing astonishment.

"It was not so much the words. It was his whole appearance and his extreme agitation. You see the chairman had just spoken rather lengthily, and the resolution was about to be read, when your father who was sitting just under the platform, stood up because he couldn't hear. His movement was misunderstood in the hall, people thought he was going to speak, and they began shouting on all sides—'Up on to the platform! Up on to the platform!'—In short, before your father had time to object, he was led up into the Tribune by two men. He didn't make any great opposition . . . and you know his bashfulness, so you can imagine his attitude and the feeling of the meeting. I shall never forget that moment."

"But—but, what did he say?"

"Well, as I said before it was not so much the words—as the sight of that old blind man with

his snow-white hair, appearing there as a living witness of the days of slavery which he almost himself experienced. It was like a voice from the grave, when he lifted his shaking hand and shouted with his old man's voice: 'Are we to have the 'wooden horse'* again. Is that the idea? Are we peasants to be cattle again for the nobles?'—He didn't say much more, but you should have heard the thundering.

"No, no, that we never will!" rang through the Hall. I only wished that the enemies of Freedom might have been present, to hear the iron wills in that cry;—they would have seen then, how hopeless their opposition is. . . .

"Oh, what a fortunate man I am!" he burst out going along to Hansine and laying his hand on her head. "Never can I thank the Lord enough that he led me out of that Sodom, where life is a daily struggle with death and annihilation. How different it is here where everything is in its origin—all is spring, breaking day, and song of larks! And how beautiful to be permitted according to one's poor abilities, to help to build up the promised kingdoms of truth and justice! . . . When I think of myself in former days, I seem to be a new creature, and to have thrown off an old, vile slough. And next to God, I owe you thanks for all this happiness my dearest

* Wooden horse. A favourite instrument of torture in the days of serfdom. Equivalent to "Riding the Rail" in England,

one! . . . Now you look down and blush, but it's true all the same, you are the Princess without whom I could never have won my half kingdom!"

CHAPTER III

It was only next morning that Hansine took courage to urge with sufficient persistency her desire that the doctor should be sent for. Emanuel was almost angry at first. He reproached her for her never ending solicitude, the weakness of her faith in the mercy of Providence, and her inclination to believe in the devices of man rather laying everything trustfully in God's gracious hands.

He spoke so convincingly with such faith and in so sorrowful a tone that Hansine felt quite guilty, and began to cry.

But he was softened at once at the sight of her tears and kissed her. By this he made matters worse, and she turned away with despairing sobs.

He was quite surprised. He was not used to see her give way to her feelings. He had hardly ever seen her cry since that moment on the evening of their engagement, when she had involuntarily betrayed her love by her passionate and irrepressible weeping— The recollection of that happy hour now made his heart tender, and he bent over her, stroking her hair and cheek,

"But, my dear, my dear, had I known that my words would hurt you so, I would never have said what I did. I did not mean to hurt you. And you know—don't you, that if it really will give you any satisfaction to hear Doctor Hassing's opinion, that it would never occur to me to oppose you. I will tell Niels to put the horses to at once. Then the doctor will be here this morning."

When Hansine heard the carriage roll through the archway a quarter of an hour later, she set to work with Abelone to tidy the rooms for the doctor's reception. It was the first time that she expected a visit from a stranger, who might look upon her home with unfriendly eyes; and she knew that exception might be taken to various things. The floor of the big room was sprinkled with water and swept, and the benches dusted—there was no more to be done to it. But in the bedroom clean linen was put on all the beds, and Sigrid and little Dagny were brought in from the yard to be smartened a little. She would have preferred to put their Sunday clothes on, but she thought Emanuel would not like it, so she contented herself with scrubbing their faces and putting on clean pinafores. Laddie, she was obliged to leave as he was. He had been fairly quiet in the latter part of the night, and now slept so soundly that she was loath to wake him.

She thought of Emanuel too, but she had seen him cross the yard in his usual working smock

and big field boots. She knew it would be useless to try and get him to make any alteration in his dress out of regard for the doctor, so she had to console herself with the reflection that as it was Monday, both smock and boots were fairly clean.

There was a threefold reason for Emanuel's pronounced objection to seeing the doctor of the neighbourhood in his house. In the first place he had a great aversion to the whole profession, because it appeared to him that modern Society made it of too much importance, and that it was the cause of much of the effeminacy and dissolute living which undermined the cultivated classes in the present day. He was convinced that the almost idolatrous confidence with which they threw themselves into the arms of doctors and chemists was a serious danger to their sound moral development. So many people were under the impression that they could patch up their mental and bodily excesses by the help of pills, potions, and electricity, and that therefore they could afford to disdain the only true permanent healing measures—self-control, frugality, and bodily exercise. Besides this, he had a special reason for shunning Dr Hassing. He was the only person outside the circle of "friends" with whom he came in contact, by meeting him occasionally among the sick and dying ;—and the doctor's bearing and carefully tended person, his measured gait, and conventional phrases forced him unplea-

santly into renewed contact with the social forms which he despised and had fled. He was reminded of persons he had known formerly—and he did not wish to disturb the calm of that sepulchral chamber in which he had long since laid all bitter memories of the past to rest.

Finally, it was the general opinion of the neighbourhood that Dr Hassing was a very mediocre practitioner, whose real interests lay in collecting and surrounding himself with works of art, rebuilding his villa, giving dinner-parties, and taking an annual trip in foreign countries—in short, in spending as pleasant a life as possible with the help of a considerable private fortune.

It was therefore no small sacrifice Emanuel made to Hansine in consenting to send for this man to see his dear Laddie, as to whose sound constitution he was so convinced that it almost seemed ungrateful to the Almighty to doubt it. So he did not go to the stables in his usual good spirits to feed the cattle and get the straw down from the loft. He also had the annoyance of discovering various pieces of damage wrought by the storm in the night.

It could not be denied that the formerly stately Parsonage began to have a somewhat dilapidated appearance. Emanuel had come here at a very unfavourable time for farms, with falling prices and an increased demand for improvements. Besides, he had been pursued by a series of misfortunes with his cattle, and had come to grief

over experiments in feeding and new ways of manuring, which he had tried to introduce for the benefit of the community. Also his housekeeping was more costly than he really was aware of, and although he had his mother's heritage to fall back on, and though he never spared himself, and was in the stable by five in the morning, yet he could not manage the work with the assistance he had hitherto been able to afford.

The fact was that, true to his purpose, he obstinately declined to accept any stipend for his ministerial work beyond the free use of the Parsonage and the land. So as to share the life and means of the "friends," he maintained himself exclusively by the land, and immediately on his institution had required the peasants to pay their tithes and offerings into the Poor Relief Fund, which defrayed the expenses of the congregational charities. Above all, he was anxious to be looked upon, not as a priest, but as a peasant, who, like the churchwardens and fire inspectors, had had posts of honour and trust bestowed upon them by the congregation. He generally called himself their "Templeserver," and was highly pleased with the word, because, as he said—it put an end to "his reverence" so effectually.

CHAPTER IV

It was ten o'clock when Niels came back with the doctor, who sat at the back of the wagon in his own swing chair, wrapped in a big fur coat and brown gloves. When the doctor had alighted the two men shook hands in an equally stiff and reserved manner, and then went up the steps in silence. The doctor took off his fur coat in the entrance hall, and revealed a tight-fitting black coat and a large satin tie with a diamond pin. He was a man of about forty, with a fine figure, sharply cut features, and small whiskers. From the first moment he evidently took great pains not to betray any surprise at Emanuel's peculiar costume, and when he entered the "Hall" he also appeared not to notice anything unusual in it. In his care not to show the least misplaced curiosity, he even dropped the gold pince-nez from his prominent nose, and with an effort to be unconstrained, said :

"Well, we'd better go and look at the little chap."

"It is my wife who wishes to have your opinion about my son," answered Emanuel, hurt by the doctor's tone. "I don't think there is much the matter with him . . . probably an ordinary spring cold."

"Well, we shall see."

"Hansine rose from a chair by the boy's bed when the doctor appeared at the door. He remained standing a moment on the threshold—

and this time he did not succeed so well in hiding a certain surprise. It was clear that rumour or his own fancy had pictured something quite different as the much talked-of clergyman's wife of Veilby.

"Your son is ill," he said with sudden sympathy, after approaching and shaking hands with her. "I hope it is nothing much . . . a common cold your husband thinks."

He took a chair and sat down by the bed, where the boy was still asleep; nor did he wake when the doctor, after taking off a huge pair of cuffs, began to feel his head and his pulse with his long white hands. When the wadding over the bad ear was touched, he slowly opened his eyes, and then lay for a long time without moving, looking at the strange man. He only seemed to become fully conscious when his eyes fell upon his mother at the other side of the bed. He again looked at the mysterious stranger, examined his black coat, his diamond pin, and his large white teeth, while a dawning fear rose in his pale blue eyes.

Hansine raised him carefully into a sitting posture, and said brightly,

"Don't be frightened, my boy. It is the doctor who wants to look at your ear. All that earache is so tiresome, and the doctor is a nice man who will make it better."

Then the boy seemed to understand it all. His mouth widened, and the tears came into his eyes.

But when he discovered Emanuel at the foot of the bed, he quickly swallowed his tears. It was as if he understood that it would please his father if he showed himself as a brave and fearless lad to the stranger. The doctor in the meantime had begun to examine the bad ear. When the wadding was removed there was a flow of an evil-smelling discharge.

His face took a critical expression.

"How long has this been going on?" he asked.

"We have noticed it on and off for two years," answered Hansine.

The doctor looked up as if he could not believe his ears.

"For two years?"

"Yes."

He glanced up at Emanuel, who misunderstood it, and with a quiet nod confirmed his wife's words.

Hansine began telling him about the beginning of the illness, its periodic recurrence, and the disturbance of the previous night. The doctor listened attentively, but seemed to have his thoughts elsewhere. When she stopped he asked for a candle, and waved it backwards and forwards before the boy's eyes, then held both his hands for some time on the back of his head, and finally examined the part at the back of the ear with great care. The skin was slightly distended here on account of an incipient swelling.

Up to this point Emanuel had stood quietly with his hands behind him looking on. He had

made up his mind that Hansine should have her way this time; and though he was sorry for the boy, who sat there with big tears in his eyes, struggling to preserve his equanimity, he had not disturbed the doctor in his examination.

But when the doctor took out his instrument case and produced various sharp-pointed instruments, he could no longer remain passive.

"Is that really necessary?" he asked in a tolerably aggressive tone.

The doctor looked up in astonishment.

"Yes," he answered shortly, and asked for warm water, a towel, and several other things which all pointed to an operation. Emanuel stood irresolute. Was he really to allow this person to do violence to his son? He hardly dared look at the boy, who at sight of the instruments had turned as white as a sheet, and begged for protection with his eyes. But he was almost more tortured by seeing the readiness with which Hansine helped the doctor, the cold-bloodedness with which she put her child into the hands of this charlatan.

When the doctor approached with the first instrument—a sharp silver needle—the last remnant of Laddie's courage forsook him, and he threw himself into his mother's arms. Emanuel then left the room; he would not be a witness to the ill-treatment for which Hansine must be responsible. He went into the sitting-room, and when he heard his son's first heartrending scream

there, he went on into his own room, and walked up and down to deaden the sound from the bedroom. He was most violently agitated. He could not understand Hansine. He felt as if he was put into the background in his own house, and shamefully betrayed by those in whom he trusted most implicitly.

In about a quarter of an hour he heard voices in the sitting-room, and on going in found the doctor with his hat in his hand giving final directions to Hansine. He took leave at once on his appearance.

"I think you are too sanguine about your son's illness," the doctor continued in the passage, whither Emanuel had followed him in silence. "I did not express myself so plainly in your wife's presence . . . but I consider it is my duty not to conceal from you that his condition is not without gravity. He is suffering from a long-standing, hardened, and, I fear, somewhat malignant inflammation, which unfortunately has been allowed to spread all over the internal passages. How the case will run it is of course impossible for me to say at present; but after the turn the illness has latterly taken, we must be prepared for an imminent crisis. For the moment I have done what I could by piercing the drum, to secure a free passage for the discharge, and I have also ordered leaven to his feet and cold bandages to relieve the pressure on the head. . . . I cannot do more to-day. Everything now de-

pend on keeping the child as quiet as possible, until we see what course the inflammation will take. Should there be the slightest sign of rigidity during sleep—not to mention actual convulsions—you must send for me at once. It is this calamity and its attendant fever which we must try to avert at any price.

CHAPTER V

THE doctor's decided tone, and apparent absolute certainty as to the boy's condition, necessarily had a certain effect upon Emanuel. As soon as the doctor had driven off he went back to the bedroom. He found Laddie lying on his back with his head bound up, and apparently sunk in wonder.

When the child saw his father he smiled, and when Emanuel sat down cautiously by the bed and asked him how he was, he sat up without help and began to tell him quite brightly, and with some importance, all that the doctor had done to him.

"But what in the world is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Emanuel turning to Hansine, who came in from the kitchen with Sigrid and little Dagny, who had been sent to Abelone during the doctor's visit. "The child is quite lively! What was all that rubbish about fever and convulsions and I don't know what."

"Did the doctor say anything about that?" asked Hansine, stopping suddenly in the middle of the room.

"Oh," he rambled on, "but that's a way doctors have, if only they can get people to believe them. Who's that coming now?" Heavy steps and the sound of a stick were heard in the big room. A moment later a stout elderly woman appeared at the door. "Grannie!" cried Emanuel and the children, at the same time stretching out their arms towards her.

"Ay, indeed it's me!" she said in her childlike voice, nodding and smiling to them all. "We heard tell of your sending for the Kyndlöse doctor at the Stous, an' I just had the chance of a lift to the mill, so it didn't take me long to get on me things. Seemed like I wanted to know what was the matter."

"Oh, I hope to God all the fuss is about nothing. Laddie has had a little of his old ear-ache, and Hansine frightened herself about him and would have the doctor."

"Thank the Lord and praise him! Then it's nothing worse. Me and Daddy got a bit scared as ye may think. We're not much used to doctor's visits here."

She undid the big silver clasp of her heavy green linsey cloak, took the little shawl off her head, and smoothed her iron-grey hair with her fingers. It was as thick as ever in front under her gold-embroidered cap with the wide red ribbon

tied at one side. She had become more portly than ever in the course of years, and both hands and feet were swelled up with dropsy to such an extent, that she could not move outside the house without a stick.

"Oh, so he's the one supposed to be bad, and who must needs hae the doctor fetched," she said, dropping heavily on to a chair by the little iron bed, when she looked at the boy for a time. His pleasure in seeing his grandmother, to say nothing of a little bundle tied up in a handkerchief which she had on her knee, brought the colour to his cheeks and made him quite lively. "I'm sure *he* doesn't look very bad. You're a reg'lar little silly Hansine to let yourself be scared like that. You're just like the Copenhagen folks who tear away both to doctor and chemist as soon as they've got a bit of an ache. If the boy hadn't got all those trappings on his head, he'd be quite a Sunday bairn."

Hansine was sitting by the big bed nursing the baby.

"All the same the Doctor said he wasn't a bit well, and we ought to have sent for him long since." She tried to defend herself, although the boy's bright looks and the unconcern of the others had begun to make her waver.

"Oh, the doctor," laughed her mother, fondling Sigrid, who was leaning against her in an ingratiating way, staring at the little bundle with hungry eyes.

"If everything came about as folks preach we'd all have been in our black graves long since. Why, only the other days, Per Persen's bit lassie was thought to have swallowed a needle. The doctor stuffed her wi' potatos and doughy bread till the bairn was like to choke . . . and then they found the needle, as large as life, in grand-mother's pincushion. . . . I'm blest if they didn't."

"That wasn't the doctor's fault," murmured Hansine.

"Well, well, may be not. Then I mind about Sören Seiler—it was in old Dr Vellöv's time, who was thought to have more learnin' than this here Hassing. Vellöv said Sören hadn't three days to live, and all the family were that busy dividing the property and writing out the inventory, hearth-stoning the big room for the funeral—aye, and I believe the coffin was ordered too—and three days later Sören was about again in his usual way with his pipe in his mouth; and he's walking about to this day, though he must be nigh on ninety. What d'ye say to that story? No, it's to be wished these good doctor folks wouldn't carry it off so high, but let the Lord rule over life and death, then perhaps there wouldn't be so much misery."

"Yes; quite true; my very words," said Emanuel, who was walking up and down with his hands behind him.

"It's my mind that we'd far better stick to the good old home-made things rather than all this

new doctoring, with their medicines and poison stuffs. For all me haste, I didn't forget to bring along some soothing syrup and some angel balsam. I didn't know what might be the matter. Then I just stepped in to Maren Nilen and brought a bit of her worm's-grease . . . it's a fine thing for festerings." . . . While she talked she undid her little bundle and took out various packets which smelt strongly of herbs. At last she produced three pink sugar pigs and gave one to each of the children. Laddie took his with the shy smile with which he always expressed his thanks, while Sigrid snatched at her's and dashed away with it to the other room.

"Well, and how is all at home, Else?" asked Emanuel, to change the subject. He had looked at Hansine and felt quite sorry for her, because she had evidently begun to repent of her obstinacy. Dear old grandfather must be quite proud of the success of his speech the other night. It was a solemn moment for all of us."

"Oh, ay, he was as pleased as any bairn. He'd never expected to come out as a speaker. But he's thankful that the Lord was willing to use him as his instrument, and put the right words into his mouth at the moment. Such graciousness is enough to please and comfort a man in his old age."

They were interrupted by Abelone, who came to the door and said dinner was ready. The grandmother got up to go. Emanuel tried to

persuade her to stay and dine, but she had promised Kristen Hansen to meet him again by the mill when he came back, and it was high time for her to start.

"I must get home an' quiet Daddy, too. He's thinking all the time that there's something ever so bad the matter."

She clasped her cloak and put the little shawl over her head again. At the door she turned and nodded to Laddie, and said :

"Now mind you come an' see us o' Sunday, Laddie, an' you shall have a biesting's cake, if the red cow calves."

Then she turned to Emanuel, and said :
"Daddy has sold the brindled cow, but they're very bad prices this year."

CHAPTER VI

THE upper end of the long table was covered with brown oilcloth, upon which stood two earthenware dishes of steaming cabbage soup, half a rye loaf, a saucer of coarse salt, and the usual jar of water with a wooden lid. Emanuel took his seat at the head of the table. Under the window on his left sat Niels and old Sören the cowherd ; he was all joints and knuckles, with a head at the top which was not much more than a couple of huge jaws. The lower part of his face and the

upper part of his neck down to the prominent Adam's apple was black with a thick growth of stubble. He had a red nose, and over his low yellow forehead his hair tumbled, looking as if ashes had been strewed over his head. But his ears were the most curious part—large, flat, wounded patches of skin, both in shape and colour like bats'-wings.

Hansine and the two children were on the other side of the table with Abelone; and besides these there was a little old body with a green shade over her eyes, and two children from the street—who, according to the custom of the poor—had come in of their own accord at the dinner hour, and were evidently quite at home. Laddie remained in bed. He had settled himself to rest soon after his grandmother's departure, and had fallen asleep embracing his sugar pig.

With bent heads, all at the table folded their hands, while Emanuel in a loud voice said grace :

“We seat us here in Jesu's name,
To eat and drink unto the same.
To honour God, ourselves to save.
We thank him for the food he gave.”

“Amen,” they all said in chorus, and the old woman with the shade added to herself, “God grant we have our fill.”

At first they ate in silence. The only sounds were the scraping of the horn spoons against the plates, and the supping of many

mouths. Sören was particularly audible. He held a piece of warm pork in his left hand, and between each spoonful or so of soup he dipped it in the saucer of salt and gnawed a piece off it. Even Emanuel helped himself of the dishes with the ravenous appetite and the craving to fill the stomach which comes of constant hard, bodily labour and an innutritious diet. Niels, on the other hand was too much taken up to-day with his literary efforts, to have any thoughts for the care of his body. He sat there with his back rounded and his arms on the table, slowly moving the spoon to and from his wide mouth, while his little black eyes stole from Emanuel to Abelone, and back again to Emanuel—as if expecting him to turn the conversation to his new article.

But Emanuel had quite other thoughts. He had decided to go to Skibberup in the afternoon to hear if anything new was known there from parliamentary circles. He had lately found it very difficult to stay quietly at home; every day brought new and disquieting rumours. First it was said that the King had already sent for the leader of the people's party; then, that the existing government had decided to brave the wish of the people by passing laws in the future by their own authority. And the 31st of March was approaching, the end of the financial year—a day which perhaps would mark a boundary between two ages.

“Have none of you any news from Copen-

hagen?" he asked when he had finished eating. "You, Sören? you generally know all about politics!"

"Eh, well a man picks up one thing an' another," answered Sören with his immense mouth full of food, lifting his eyebrows at the same time in an attempt to give himself a diplomatic air. He was uncle to a member of parliament, and this circumstance caused him to be looked upon as an oracle in political matters among his friends. "A' fancy they're makin' ready for a birth in parliament, an' mayhap us electors might be called in to a christenin' afore long!"

"You mean parliament will be dissolved . . . new elections, eh? Do you think the government will try that measure again? What good would that do?"

"Oh—no, but it wasn't a bit too soon that the workin' man got his say in the country."

"No, there you're right, Sören! They ought to have had it long ago, and then there wouldn't have been all the bitterness there has been."—Well shall we say "Tak for mad," he broke off, seeing they had all finished eating. Even Sören had at last laid down his spoon, after first licking it and then wiping it with his thumb.

A short prayer was again said, and then every one went his own way.

Emanuel as usual sought the oilcloth sofa in his own room, so as, before he went to Skibberup,

to take "a peep into dreamland," in the High School phraseology.

Sören sauntered across the yard with the heavy steps of reflection, into the barn where summer and winter he took his mid-day nap on a bundle of straw, and where he regularly drove away the cat with his snores.

Niels went to his own room, a little white-washed space beside the stable, which he had arranged as much like a study as possible; a washhandstand by the window was made into a writing-table, there was a shelf of nicely bound books, and a long row of pipes carefully arranged according to their length along the wall. Above the bed was hung a framed photograph of Sandinge High School. It shewed the ivy-covered gateway with a group of teachers and pupils. The old director was in the middle, with his round face, and long curls, and huge hat. Under the picture, in gold letters, were the words with which he always took leave of his pupils:

"Be on your guard and keep up a good heart."

When Niels had filled his longest pipe, and put back the canister of tobacco into its place on the window sill, he sat down before the little table and stretched out his fat legs at ease. After sitting so for some time and filling the room with impenetrable clouds of smoke, he drew the "People's News" out of his breast pocket, spread

it out with affectionate care on to the table, and began to read.

“SUNDAY HOLIDAYS IN THE COUNTRY.

“A CALL TO THE YOUNG.

“To-day I am going to write about Sunday holidays in the country. How sad it is to see, as one often may in the country, the young men, ay, and maidens too, who ought to have better thoughts, wasting their hours of liberty on Sunday afternoons and week days too when the work is done, on all kinds of worldly and useless vanity, such as playing skittles in the public alleys for money or spirits, so that it often happens that the men get tipsy and go about shouting like animals, and indulging in much other ribaldry of the worst sort. Such sights must rouse the indignation of every spiritually-minded person ; for one would think they must have something higher to think of and to strive after, especially in these times when the torch of freedom is lighted all over the country to gather every one to battle for the freedom and rights of the people. Here in this district we do not, thanks to our good teachers and leaders, see anything of the sort, which is unworthy of a free people. But in other parishes such things are still prevalent, and therefore I send this appeal to the young, that we may all join on this point too, and fight for the victory of the spirit over the

darkness of slavery, so that we may sing with the poet,

““Oh may all the blessed be led
To the city of beauty and light!””

“Yours obediently

“N. NIELSEN DAMGAARD.

“Veilby Parsonage, 1st March 1885.”

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Emanuel came home at bedtime from Skibberup, Laddie was asleep, not having been awake all the afternoon.

“Do you see!” he said to Hansine. “He’s wise enough to sleep it off. You’ll have him out of bed again to-morrow!”

Hansine did not answer, but she by no means shared his sanguine expectations. This whole day of sleep seemed to her too unnatural, and it woke in her mind the alarming recollection of a child, the brother of her friend Ane, who died of a brain disease in her girlhood, and whom she had helped to nurse. She had tried to wake him several times in the course of the afternoon to take some food, but he had only half opened his eyes, for a time, and looked at her with a strange, dull glance, and utterly refused to eat, but he had

once or twice drank greedily, and settled off to sleep again directly.

Towards midnight she and Emanuel were awakened by a strange noise which they could not explain. It sounded like chopping in the kitchen. Suddenly it dawned upon Hansine that it was Laddie's little bed which was in unceasing motion.

"Light the night-lamp," she said. "It is Laddie."

Emanuel struck a match, and by its light they saw the child's arms fighting the air. She was out of bed in an instant and by his side. She quickly took away the pillow from his head, and held his arms down to his body which trembled from head to foot.

Emanuel, who in the meantime had succeeded in lighting the lamp, could not imagine what was going on. At first he thought the child was playing, and when he saw Hansine take a hairpin from her hair and force the round end into his mouth, he cried—

"In Heaven's name, what are you doing, Hansine? What is the matter with the child?"

The oil flame blazed up at this moment, and by the brighter light he saw now that Laddie's face was quite dark, his teeth were clenched, and the lips covered with foam. Then the doctor's words in the morning came into his mind.

"It's surely not, . . . it's not convulsions, Hansine?"

She nodded.

"You must fetch the doctor," she added shortly, as Emanuel did not move. "And you must be quick. . . . Laddie is very ill."

"Yes—yes," he said, as if waking from his trance, quickly threw on some clothes, and groped through the dark of the big room to wake the servants. Seeing a light in the man's room he began to call from the top of the steps:

"Niels! . . . Niels!"

It sounded like a cry for help in the quiet night, and before he had crossed the yard the man appeared at the door in alarm. He was in his shirt sleeves with an open book in his hand, and smoking a long pipe which almost reached the ground.

"You must put the horses to at once, Niels, and fetch the doctor. Laddie is very ill."

"Fetch the doctor?" said Niels, looking at Emanuel's disturbed countenance. "But you can't find your way to-night, it's so dark. You can't—"

"It's got to be done. You must call Sören, and he must go with you with a lantern. . . . The horses know part of the way."

"Yes, but—" he was renewing his objections, but Emanuel cut him short at once.

"Do as I say, and don't waste time in objections!" said he, in such sudden and violent anger that the man was rendered speechless. "You hear that Laddie is very ill, and the doctor must be fetched without delay. Wake Sören at once and tell him to get up directly."

When he got back to the bedroom Hansine was still bending over the bed, holding Laddie's arms.

"Don't you think I should send for your mother, too? Wouldn't it be a comfort to you?"

"No, what's the good. But you must call Abelone, and tell her to light the fire and heat some water in the large new pot."

"Yes—yes."

He met Abelone in the kitchen, she had been wakened by the noise in the house. She was in a petticoat and had a candle in one hand; with the other she was holding her short bedgown together over the bosom.

"Laddie is never worse?" she asked, pale with alarm.

"Yes, you must light up at once and heat some water in the big kettle, but make haste."

"Is he very ill?"

"Yes, don't you hear. Be quick," said he, in an unusually peremptory tone. "It's wanted as quickly as possible."

He went back to the bedroom where Laddie at last was quiet, and seemed to be peacefully



LADDIE'S
BEDSIDE

sleeping. Hansine, who had managed to throw on some clothes, sat bending over him at the head of the bed. With her chin resting in her hand and her elbow on her knee, she was looking at the child with the constrained, almost hard, expression her face always wore in moments of intense emotion.

Emanuel approached cautiously and sat down on the other side of the bed.

"Can you understand it, Hansine? Can you conceive how it has come about? When I left in the middle of the day he was well and lively . . . and now! Whatever do you think it can be?"

"I don't know," she said—and as if he had touched a thought she had not courage to pursue, she added directly, "Did you wake Niels?"

"Yes, he must be ready to go soon."

Just then the child's arms and shoulders began to work again, the little hands were clenched, the eyelids were raised over the unnaturally dilated pupils. . . . Signs that a new attack was coming on.

Emanuel could no longer endure the sight. He again groped through the outer room to the steps, and when he saw Niels and Sören still rummaging about in the coach-house with a lantern, he shouted in desperate impatience, "Good God, what are you about? How long will it be before you get off? . . . You must tell the doctor to come at once, Niels, the child is in frightful convulsions."

The boy got worse and worse in the succeeding hours. Even after repeated hot baths the fits increased in length and severity. His face was almost black, and in spite of all their care he had bitten his tongue in one of the fits, and a little blood was oozing out of the corners of his mouth.

Emanuel had to exert all his will power not to collapse in his wild despair at the frightful mystery which the child's fate was to him. He had not yet given up the hope that all might pass off as quickly as it had come on. He tried to console himself and Hansine with the thought that some children, with even slight indisposition, were very liable to convulsions; and he remained by her side to help in nursing. But as the hours went by without a sign of improvement, his courage gave way, and he now placed all his hopes on the doctor's aid. Long before there was any chance of his coming, he started up at every sound outside, thinking it was the carriage; at the end of the fourth hour he took up his hat and went out. He couldn't rest for the thought that an accident must have happened to Niels, or that the doctor had not been at home. Otherwise he couldn't imagine why they had not arrived long ago. He stood on the steps, holding his breath and listening . . . but not the slightest sound reached him. He went round the gable end and felt his way through the overgrown garden till he reached a little mound, from whence in

the day the Kyndlöse road was overlooked. He stared out into the dark night with a beating heart, in the hope of catching a glimpse of a lantern. But heaven and earth were merged in one without a glimmer of light.

All at once it seemed as if this impenetrable darkness, this inexorable silence caused something within him to give way. Like a person who suddenly sees a yawning abyss at his feet, he pressed his hands to his forehead and groaned almost unconsciously :

“ Oh, it is too terrible ? ” . . .

It was almost morning when the doctor came. The delay was caused by a mishap on the outward journey, Niels having driven into such a deep ditch that they had to wake up some people who lived near to help them out again.

As soon as the doctor saw the boy he gave him a dose of musk, which almost immediately relieved him. The rigid limbs relaxed, the eyes closed and he fell asleep.

For several minutes after they all sat silent round the little bed, watching how the usual expression came slowly back to his drawn face. It seemed as if none of them had courage to break the deep silence ; or as if they were all under the influence of the curious light in the room like a sepulchral chamber. The little oil lamp on the green table was dying out and threw a wan light on their faces ; the day was dawning outside, and the window frames were marked out

against the blinds like two shadowy crosses in the pale morning light.

Emanuel, who for the last hour had been beside himself at the sight of the child's sufferings, sat holding Hansine's hand in both his, pressing it feverishly—as if in that way to gain strength to ask the doctor the question which for the last hour had been trembling on his lips. At last he summoned up courage, and asked shortly what the doctor thought of his son's state.

Dr Hassing glanced furtively at him and Hansine—as if to judge how far he dared tell them the truth.

"Well, it can't be denied,"—he said, and it sounded as if he had to force out the words. "Your son is very severely attacked . . . and I cannot conceal from you that——"

"But the boy has an excellent constitution," Emanuel interrupted him, as if to ward off an unfavourable (hopeless) opinion: "With the exception of this earache he has never had anything the matter with him. Besides, both my wife and I are perfectly strong and healthy—so there is no possibility of hereditary taint."

A gleam of pity which he could never succeed in entirely hiding with regard to Emanuel came into the doctor's eyes behind his gold *pince-nez*. "Well," he said slowly, dropping his eyes before the glance which tried to force him to believe in the boy's strength. "Of course much may be hoped for with a good constitution."

As the doctor had foreseen, no particular change

took place for the next few days in the boy's condition. He mostly lay in a heavy torpor produced by the musk, with half open eyes, without taking nourishment or being conscious of his surroundings. When the dressings on his ear were touched, a faint shadow of the little forced smile, with which he always used to assert that he "did not feel any pain now" would flit across his face, but otherwise it was entirely expressionless, and the light of life in his half closed eyes seemed already quenched.

Hansine nursed him day and night with her usual patience and self control. To look at her, no one could have said that she was cognisant of her child's fate; and yet, from the first convulsions, she had been aware that he had only a few more days to live.

Emanuel on the other hand hoped almost to the last. Even when the doctor, on his next visit informed him in cautious terms that he must be prepared for his son's death very shortly, he did not give up his faith in the boy's power of resistance, and the strength of his prayers. At every glimpse of returning life in the child's face, he saw a sign that heaven had heard his prayers. It seemed as if he could not believe that the Almighty would bereave him of this child, which ever since its birth—because it was the eldest—had been to him a special pledge of the blessing and grace of God.

It was not until the unmistakable signs of death



EMANUEL
AND
LADDIE

appeared, that he gave way utterly to despair. He sat by the bed for hours, sobbing aloud, so that at last Hansine began to have fears for his reason. . . . All work in the yard and stables was stopped as far as possible, because every sound from the outer world increased his pain. He wanted all the doors and gates shut, and not even the closest friends of the house were admitted when they came to ask after the boy, because he couldn't bear the sight of a strange face. At last in the evening of the following day, while the sun was sinking behind the hills in the west, and tinging the scudding clouds with red, the boy sank peacefully to rest. When Emanuel saw death approaching, and felt the cold of the grave creeping over the child's limbs, the dread of its annihilation roused him to a last desperate struggle to save it. He took it up in his arms wrapped in a blanket, and pressed it to him as if to shelter it from the embrace of death. Hansine implored him to be calm and to lay the child down again, but he did not hear her. With the tears streaming unceasingly down his face, he walked up and down the floor, with the child in his bosom, now lulling it, then praying and singing, as if by his pain and despair, he would extort God's mercy . . . until all at once he felt the little body relax in his arms, and the head sink on the breast with a long sigh, which announced that the last hope was over, and the boy was dead.

Then his spirit bowed humbly before the will of the Almighty. His tears stopped; quietly he laid the little body on the bed, closed the eyes, and laying his hand on the thoughtful forehead, said:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII

THE funeral was to take place that day week, from the home, with the usual tolling of bells for an hour, and a big lunch to all the followers preceding it. In his deep depression, Emanuel would much have preferred that it should take place as quietly as possible. But he had always spoken too eagerly in favour of keeping up the old peasant customs, to be able to break them now; and some dissatisfaction had already been aroused, by his unwillingness to see any of his friends who came to offer their sympathy during the last few days of Laddie's life.

A great bustle therefore prevailed at the Parsonage for a few days, in cleaning the whole house and cooking as for a wedding or christening. Emanuel was in a way grateful to Hansine because during these days she ordered everything so calmly; and so self-sacrificingly took everything upon her shoulders. But at the same time he

could not help wondering how in her sorrow, she could turn her thoughts to all these everyday matters, and he was almost wounded, because she did not shed a tear, when Laddie was laid out and wrapped in the winding sheet.

In his overwrought condition he could not free himself from the painful thought that he was alone in his great sorrow ; and although he saw the injustice of it, and fought against it, he spent most of his time on the sofa in his own room, or in the garden, so as to give way to his grief in solitude.

He liked to be in the garden best . . . and the big, secluded, almost overgrown park which surrounded the Parsonage, like a small primeval forest. He wandered up and down for hours, in the most remote alleys, where the smell of cooking from the kitchen, and the gossip of the cleaners could not reach him.

The hand of spring had already touched the earth, the grass was shewing signs of green, and the little blackthorn bushes were shooting out a yellowish fringe of leaves, and the air was scented with violets and half-wild primulas. Larks were singing in the blue sky, and starlings and tomtits were twittering in the tree tops, and a warm breeze brought a message of new life from the earth. But Emanuel felt nothing of all this ; for him the garden paths only rang with Laddie's voice, it was the child's face he saw among the trees, and every day his sobs broke out anew at

the sight of a little upturned heap under a thorn bush, where shortly before Laddie's illness he had buried a crow. He could still plainly see



the traces of his little wooden shoes, and the marks of his fingers where he had carefully patted down the earth and planted a cross made of a split withy. The cross still stood there, untouched since he had left it; a little way off was a whip of his own manufacture, which he had forgotten, with five rusty nails in a heap.

. . . On the day of the funeral all the flags waved half-mast high in the village, and by mid-day the roads and paths were black with vehicles and pedestrians. The

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streets of Veilby were strewn with fir branches, and even the little children had come in their best clothes, and were running about excitedly with various sweetmeats in their hands. In-

side the Parsonage, the doors between the rooms were thrown open, and even then there was hardly room for the crowd. The yard and the meadow were full of conveyances and neighing horses.

Laddie's coffin, which was placed on two black stools in Emanuel's room, was soon entirely covered with wreaths of artificial flowers, and crosses of beads on gold and silver pasteboard; some had printed inscriptions, and a few, poetry. There was a constant crowd round it, chiefly of women, who with folded hands, admired the unusual display and read the inscriptions in whispers: "sleep sweetly," "an angel thou wast like," and so on.

The lunch was set out on long tables in the great room, and Emanuel and Hansine stood at the entrance to receive the sympathising greeting of their friends. Grandmother Else, Abelone, and a few labourers' wives attended to the waiting, and Else's voice was heard saying aloud through the subdued buzz of conversation:

"Take your seats if you please, friends! make yourselves at home!"

There was an unusual sense of oppression over the company. Rarely at any funeral were so many perturbed faces seen, or so much anxious whispering heard. It was not only grief for the death of the boy which caused this dejection, it was due to constant disturbing rumours from Copenhagen parliamentary circles. It was known that yesterday must have decided the struggle, but

no communication had yet reached them. There was, however, reason to fear the worst. The increasingly threatening language in the House, of the friends of the government, and the rebuffs administered by the ministry in the face of every attempt at reconciliation, forboded a real intention to thwart the people and to substitute Might for Right.

The chairman of the Parish Council was standing with his hands behind him on the verandah, to which the door had been opened for the occasion; he was surrounded by people who wanted to hear his opinion on the situation. His nose was remarkably pale, and his otherwise boisterous voice was unusually subdued. He regularly answered the anxious enquiries with an attempt to preserve a re-assuring calmness.

"Let us wait a little, friends! And whatever happens . . . let us be calm! Don't let us be excited or carried away to excesses, that's the chief thing! If we only hold firmly to our demands, our enemies will be obliged to give in some time—be sure of that."

The weaver was asked for on every side. It was known that he had gone to the country town in the morning, and it had been calculated that he might be back before dinner-time. But nobody had seen him yet, and the bells had begun to toll, and the people had to mount their vehicles without seeing him.

It was a clear, sunny day, with a blue sky, the

fields were turning green, and the larks were singing loudly. Amidst all this rejoicing, the long dark funeral train, which moved slowly at a foot's pace southwards along the winding road, had a doubly sad effect. It was Emanuel's wish that the boy should be laid to rest in old Anders Jörgen, his grandfather's burial-place at Skibberup, in the churchyard on the Ness. He had long had a particular affection for this solitary spot with its wide view over the Fiord, and its deep, solemn silence, broken only by the wild screams of the gulls on the beach.

After an hour's drive the train reached the churchyard. A band of young girls led the way strewing sprigs of fir and moss, and the procession followed singing a hymn. At this moment a rumour ran like wildfire through the people that Hansen, the weaver, had arrived. Whispered questions and answers went from mouth to mouth, and even before the coffin was lowered into the ground they all knew that "the impossible" had happened, a violation of the constitution was accomplished, the parliament sent home, and the government was making laws by its arbitrary power and calling in the taxes.

Very scant attention was paid to the little speech, in which Emanuel—struggling with his tears—took leave of his son, and thanked him for the six years they had passed together "in happy fellowship"; and hardly were the three shovels of earth thrown on to the coffin and the silent prayer

ended before the party dispersed with loud exclamations of indignation.

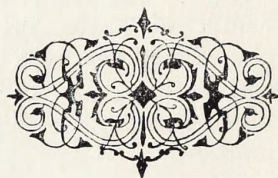
One of the few who happily did not notice the disturbance was Emanuel, who remained standing by the grave with Hansine, Else, and the blind grandfather, while some men of their most intimate acquaintance according to custom proceeded to fill it in with shovel and spade. He did not move until the men had accomplished their task, and finally laid all the shovels crosswise over the mound during a moment's silent prayer.

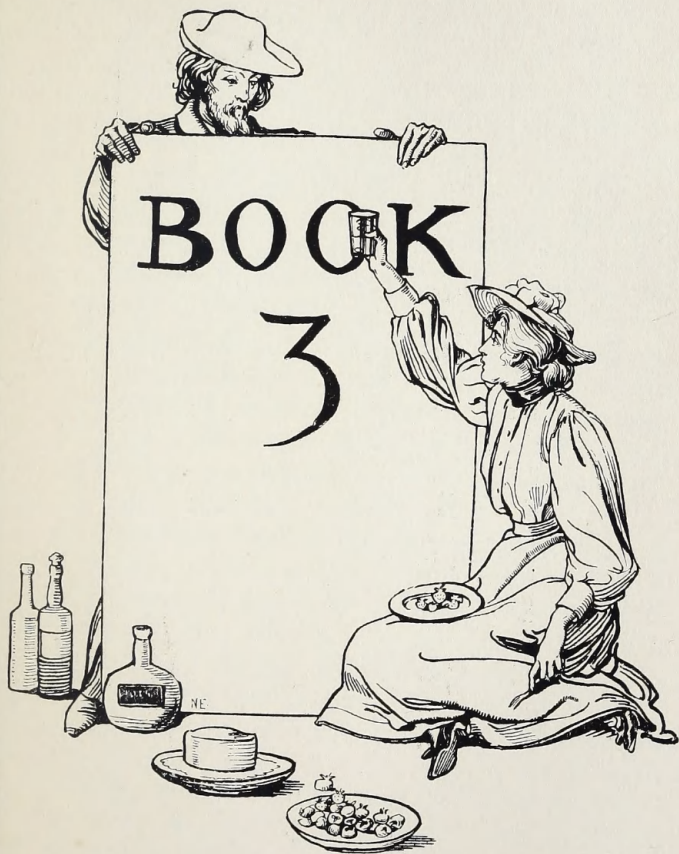
In the meantime people had crowded outside the gates. In the general confusion they all sought the Chairman of the Parish Council, who was nowhere to be found. It was discovered at last that, immediately after the end of the ceremony, he had mounted his conveyance and driven home. The weaver had disappeared too—according to some—accompanied by Maren Smeds. Of all the "Select Committee" only the fat little Veilby peasant, with the childish red cheeks, was to be found. This man had been elected to the political committee chiefly as an acknowledgment of his services in the milk trade, and he was so bewildered on suddenly finding himself surrounded by a group of young men clamouring for information that he almost began to cry.

It was quite correct that the weaver had left with Maren Smeds — the little, ugly, poorly-dressed woman, who at one time used regularly to address the meeting, and who always met the

strongest opposition on account of her attacks, full of hatred, on the speakers. This woman, whose life had been an incessant swaying from one extreme standpoint to another, had at length found a haven as a "Saint." She and three or four other persons held daily prayer meetings in her hovel among the desolate fields, where, in loud, piercing voices, which could be heard a long way off, they read portions of the Bible, sang hymns, and poured out curses upon the rest of the ungodly congregation. It therefore caused some astonishment that the weaver should latterly have taken her under his protection. Some even asserted that he sometimes took part in the prayer meetings; in any case, they were often seen walking together along the high field path leading to her cottage.

They were walking there now—Maren in front continually gesticulating with her claw-like hand and talking incessantly. The weaver followed her silently. He had, as a matter of fact, gone with her to avoid other company, and when they had reached a point where they could not be seen from the church, he took leave of her in Jesu's name, and went over the fields towards Skibberup. He stopped a moment on the top of a hill where there was a view of the long dale with the church road. He watched the groups of dejected looking men and women in their black clothes, with a triumphant smile, as they slowly wended their way homewards.





CHAPTER I

ONE afternoon in the middle of July Emanuel and Hansine were walking along the road from Skibberup church where they had been to lay fresh wreaths on Laddie's grave. They were walking silently on different sides of the steep road—Emanuel in his long light grey coat, Hansine in a church hood and a black shawl, which she held together in front with her brown, somewhat bony hands. There was a burning sun and not a cloud in the sky ; a thick layer of white dust was raised by their footsteps like clouds of flour.

When they reached the top of the hill Emanuel stopped under a solitary mountain ash which threw a slight shade over the road. He remained standing for a long time with his hat and stick resting on his back, without stirring ; buried in contemplation of the fruitful landscape. On all sides he saw ripe or ripening fields. The whole district was changed to an endless sea of corn, which rocked the sunshine on its yellow waves.

"Isn't it a beautiful sight?" he said at last in a subdued voice. "It seems as though one could feel the richness of the soil in the air? . . . and listen to the larks over Niels Jensen's rye there !

. . . Isn't it curious I always feel in a solemn mood when I see the harvest approaching. It is so strange to see the fruit of a whole long year of labour and struggle ripening, so to speak, all at once before our eyes. And it is stranger still to think of the wonderful and indomitable power of nature which is here revealed to us. Whether the winter has been bitter or mild, . . . the summer wet or dry . . . year by year the corn ripens at the same time, nay, even on the same date. And each kind of grain has its own ripening day! Isn't it almost a miracle?" . . . He was silent a moment and then continued: "There is really a deep lesson contained in it for us!" And after another silence he went on—

"I think I will take this subject for my sermon on Sunday. Much can be said on it—and perhaps especially at this time—which will be good for all of us."

He continued his walk, stopping now and then before the different fields with bursts of admiration. He put on his white straw hat again, and turned the wide brim down to shade his eyes, which had been rather weak lately. His somewhat tired look shewed that he had not got over the heavy trials of the last few months.

Hansine followed him patiently on the other side of the road, notwithstanding his frequent stoppages; she listened to him attentively, with an enquiring expression when he spoke. She was silent herself . . . until Emanuel suddenly fell

into rather melancholy reflections on comparing his own meagre crops with the fruitfulness he saw around him.

"Oh, but it's not so bad as all that," she said in a cheering tone, which sounded quite strange in her mouth; nor did it produce quite a natural effect. "The rye is pretty good; it's only the six rayed which is a little stunted."

"But look at the clover! We only had five loads this year, against twelve last, and fourteen the year before. It's a sad falling off."

"But then you've had so many other things in hand these years, Emanuel . . . politics, and that sort of thing. I suppose that will be changed now, and you'll see, when you have more time to look after the land you'll get as good crops as any one. It seems to me we're settling down here now, . . . and no harm either. I daresay you think so too, Emanuel!"

As so often happened, he did not hear the end of what she said, and continued his own train of thought.

"I must try a different succession of crops next year. Do you remember a new system of manuring I spoke to you about once. I wonder if I should try it seriously. . . . We can't go on as we have been," he said with sudden impatience. "We must pull ourselves together. I have been very lazy myself lately; but I feel that's over. I'm longing to begin afresh." They had been walking for some time between two walls of rye

above a man's height, over which yellow and many-coloured butterflies were gambolling in the sunshine like flying pansies. Then the view again opened out over the dale northwards, where Skibberup, with its many little white-washed houses and orchards, and its new, imposing Meeting-house, was reflected on the bosom of the widely-stretching pond.

At the foot of the hill, where the road branched, one way leading to the village and the other to the western boundaries, Emanuel stopped again.

"By-the-bye . . . didn't you say you were going to see your parents?"

"Yes, aren't you coming? I think they're expecting us."

"No, I haven't time to-day. I have so much to think about. I want to make my sermon as powerful as possible, so that it may be rightly understood, . . . and I'm still quite unprepared. But remember me to them, and say that I'll look in on them in the course of the week.—I say!" he shouted after her when she had gone a little way, "if you can remember it tell your father that I've not forgotten the rye seed I had of him in the spring. He shall have it back as soon as I get the first load in."

CHAPTER II

HANSINE continued her walk towards Skibberup without turning at his words.

To avoid going through the village she took a grass path which ran behind the meadows and thickly-planted gardens. She knew of old that at this hour all the women of the place would be sitting in their doorways with their infants or their knitting, gossiping to each other across the street—and she had an ever-growing distaste to meeting her former companions.

She only found her father at home.

The old man was sitting in the half dark room in an arm-chair by the bed half-asleep; he was in his shirt-sleeves and knitted drawers, and had a fur cap pressed down on his rough mane, and he was surrounded by a swarm of flies, which flew buzzing about the room at her entrance.

"Is that you, Hansine?" he said, raising his white eyebrows over the blind eyes. "What? Are you alone? Where's Emanuel?"

"He hadn't time to-day. I was to remember him to you. He'll look in in the course of the week, he said."

"Oh, it's that way. Well, well, mother'll be comin' directly. She's just slipped in to Sören's to fetch the paper. I believe there's a speech of Barré's in it. Has Emanuel said ought about it?"

"No, I don't think he's seen the paper to-day."

"He gives it them hot does Barré—by what I've heard tell. But that's as it should be. It's not too much for them—the scoundrels. For what else are they? Thieves and rascals! But what was it I said . . . do you mind, Hansine? . . . Are we to have the wooden horse again, said I? Are we peasants to be beasts of burden for the nobles?"

He got up with some difficulty and trudged about with his stick in a great pair of slippers. His little, bent, and shrunken figure trembled with anger, and he stammered over the words he couldn't get out of his toothless mouth. With one hand on his back he moved up and down at the darkest end of the room, talking incessantly, repeating long portions of speeches by different members which he had learnt by heart and kept in his retentive memory. Hansine took off her things and sat by the window.

The sight of her father had lately made her more and more uncomfortable; she thought him quite changed since he had been unable to go about the farm on account of his blindness, and especially since he had come out as a speaker at the great "Protest" meeting.

Without listening to him, she sat looking out of the window into the shady little garden, where the egg-shaped spots of sunshine crawled over the grass and the paths, and where the hens scratched

about under the gooseberry bushes—just as they used to do when she sat at the same window in her girlhood mapping out her future in golden dreams. She sat now thinking of that time, and of the first year of her marriage, when Emanuel and she lived alone, with and for each other, and life was every day a revelation of rich and unknown happiness. She lived over again in memory the peaceful evenings of the first winter when they sat together round the lamp while Emanuel read his books aloud, or told her about his childhood. She thought of the quiet sunset hours of the first summer on the Parsonage hill, of the Sunday visits to her parents, of all this life—so like a fairy tale now—which she had never given up hoping might yet return. Sometimes, especially since Laddie's death, she had also fancied she saw in Emanuel a longing for the peace and happiness of the old days. But she saw every day now more plainly that his thoughts went their own way. She did not know whither they were leading; but in the sense of her powerlessness with regard to the impatient depression which grew upon him, she had no rest for the thought that he was hiding something from her . . . brooding over an incipient want, which he had not the courage to confess to her, a dawning longing for the life and the people whom, mainly for her sake, he had left.

The kitchen door was opened, and Else put her big head in.

"Oh, is it you, Hansine? Well, we'd been expecting you. . . . But where's Emanuel?"

"He hadn't time to-day. He will come in one day this week. He asked to be remembered."

Else's face quickly took a severe expression, and disappeared from the doorway. After a few minutes she said from the kitchen, where she was rummaging about with the dishes :

"It's strange how busy Emanuel's got lately. He ne'er seems to hae time to come an' see us old folks. It looks queer, I'm thinkin'."

Hansine did not answer. She knew there had been a little misunderstanding latterly between Emanuel and her mother, because Emanuel did not like her taking Laddie's death as a matter of course, in the same way as she had always insisted on the harmlessness of his illness. Certainly he himself looked upon what had happened as an inevitable stroke of the unfathomable will of God; but at the same time he thought that she ought to have been surprised, as it was she who specially supported him in his hopeful view of the boy's state.

"But the paper, mother . . . the paper!" called out Anders Jörgen, who had groped his way back to the arm-chair, and was waiting for the coming treat.

"Ay, I'm coming, daddy. I've on'y got to set up the milk for the calves. . . . Hae ye heard anything of Ole?"

"No, deed hae I not. I expect he's gone to

the mill. Hae ye remembered to feed the pigs?"

"Ay, sure enough," said Else, coming to the door tying her apron round her extensive waist.

"Now, let's hear!" exclaimed the old man gaily, when he heard the paper rustling under Else's arm. "He gives it them hot, I warrant. Ay, Barré's a good un'! He says like me—do you mind?—Is it the wooden horse?"

"That's well enough, Daddy, but be quiet now," Else interrupted him, sinking heavily into a chair by the stove, with her usual exclamation, "Aa Herre Zósses ja."

With the show of dignity which had come over her since Hansine had been a clergyman's wife, which was again increased when Anders Jörgen had come forward as a speaker, and had had his name in the papers, she carefully spread out the paper on her lap, put Anders Jörgen's old brass spectacles on her nose, and in a drawling voice began to read an article of six columns, "Our Leader's speech at Vemmelöv."

CHAPTER III

EMANUEL had left the high road and taken a solitary field path, so as to be undisturbed in working out his sermon for Sunday. He had lately often gone to church somewhat unprepared, and had himself suffered from the want of power and inspiration in his discourses.

He did not succeed to-day either in concentrating himself on his work. His thoughts wandered constantly, without his being aware of it. Every moment he caught himself deep in contemplation quite remote from the Sunday's gospel. First it was some trifling thing, such as a gay butterfly, which enticed him to stop and follow its airy flutterings, or revel in its colour . . . now against the blue sky . . . now against the golden corn. Then the self-conscious way in which the red roof of the new Meeting-house stuck up among the trees caught his eye, and plunged him into his usual brooding over the curious, almost indifferent calmness with which his friends, and those of his party all over the country, were submitting to their political humiliation, and looking on at their most sacred laws being trampled under foot.

He could not understand them on this point. Although he had been bowed to the ground by the loss of his dear boy just at the time of the *coup d'état*, he had immediately felt it to be his

duty to urge them by every Christian and legal means in their power to oppose the law-breakers. But then the "Select Committee" had come to him one day and begged him not to get up an agitation. They had—so they said—"by written communications with other circles," come to the conclusion that for the present it would be right to bend to those in power, as they had no means of raising active resistance. Even Nielsen the carpenter, from whom he had rather expected a too unbridled outburst of wounded pride, consented—although with gloomy looks—to the injunctions of the others, and explained that, as matters now stood, it would be better to let their opponents have a little more rope.

He also had a visit from Hansen the weaver, late one evening, in which, with his usual mysterious manner and much beating about the bush, he announced a "change of tactics." On the same occasion he dropped some hints about the Chairman of the Parish Council having hardly shewn himself worthy of his position. And, finally, brought out some enigmatical allusions as to his private life, which he said would not bear looking into, and was unfortunate for a man who was the political leader of a large circle of the spiritually awakened—allusions which Emanuel did not understand, nor did he care to enter into them more closely. He made up his mind to have nothing more to do with the politics of the people, in which he had never been particularly

interested, and of the worthlessness of which he now had abundant proof. The cause to whose furtherance he had consecrated his life would grow and ripen independently of all law-giving and law-breaking—just like the seed of the earth, which offered to mankind its swelling grains, in spite of the winter's cold or the drought of summer.

One thing these months had taught him. He knew now there was still much dormant power to be roused in the people, much self-confidence and self-esteem before there could be serious hope of the dawn of the new times he had thought so near. Possibly he might one day see it. But he would not be disheartened nor weary. There was joy even in the conviction that he was preparing the way for the victorious march of truth and justice on earth. There was joy and recompense in the announcement even of the coming of the kingdom of peace.

He had reached the broad bay which shot in between the bare hills of Skibberup and the flat, idyllic wooded hills of the neighbouring parish of Kyndlöse. He remained standing on the sand, which glittered in the sun, lost in indefinite dreams of the future. His eye followed his old friends the silvery gulls, as they wheeled silently round some point in the air as if they were guarding some important secret. He gazed out over the wide shining surface of the water towards the distant blue mountainous clouds, which now and

then rose above the horizon, and then slowly sank again. It was like an aerial kingdom of beauty rising enticingly from the deep and again fading away. Like magic forms beckoning and disappearing, . . . or, as in a dream, hearing distant voices call and softly die away. "Why sorrow?" they seemed to say. "Why weary oneself with the burdens of others? Cast away your heavy pilgrim's staff and come out here, where happiness dwells high above the clouds, and where sorrow hides itself in dark valleys where none may see it. Come out here where life is a festive rest round sparkling wells, and dancing in green meadows." . . . He woke from his dreams with a start, and left the beach. The day was beginning to decline, and it was time to go home.

He quickened his pace, and hurried to the high road. He would try to reach the Parsonage before sunset, so as to help Sören with feeding the cattle.



CHAPTER IV

HE had not gone far when he was surprised by the sight of a lively party of five or six persons of both sexes seated round a cloth spread in a meadow a little way off the road.

A lady, or rather a very young girl in a white dress and blue waistband, had just got up and

was making a speech. She held a wine-glass in her uplifted hand, and in the other a man's grey hat, which she lifted on and off her head with a solemn bow, amid the laughter and applause of the rest of the company—two ladies and a couple of men. On the grass behind the ladies was an upturned red silk parasol, and by the side of it a spiral walking-stick was stuck into the ground with a lady's pale blue hat on it. At a little distance, a smart shooting carriage and two little roan Russian ponies were standing under the shade of a pollard willow, guarded by a coachman in plush breeches and drab gaiters.

A sort of shyness came over Emanuel on suddenly coming upon these town-dressed people in his own domains. He turned his head away, and appeared not to notice them.

"Allow me, therefore, most noble friends,"—he heard the young girl say—"to empty . . . to drink a health to our beloved and amiable host."

She stopped suddenly; the laughter also ceased, and a dead silence fell upon them.

Emanuel, who perceived that he was seen, crossed his hands behind his back and went by without either slackening or quickening his pace in the slightest degree.

All at once he seemed to hear some one call out his name.

He did not look back. He was certain he had made a mistake. He had nothing to do with those people.

But shortly afterwards he heard the voice again, and this time quite plainly. At the same time it sounded curiously familiar.

"Mr Hansted! . . . Pastor Hansted!"

He turned sharply, half defiantly, and saw a man coming towards him, waving his hand gaily. He had the sun in his eyes, and could not at once see who it was. A tall, somewhat stout man with whiskers, measured gait and stately carriage. It was not till the stranger was quite close to him and offering his hand with slightly embarrassed cordiality that he recognised Dr Hassing.

"How do you do, Pastor Hansted? How are you? It's a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you."

Emanuel was at first so astonished at the meeting, and particularly by the doctor's extraordinary cordiality, that he quite forgot to answer.

"I come to you as a messenger," said Hassing, showing his large white teeth when he smiled. "We have a little family party there, and the ladies would like to have the pleasure of speaking to you. . . . Will you not do us the honour of drinking a glass of wine with us? You will find an old acquaintance."

Emanuel's inclination was to give a short refusal. He was not at all tempted by the prospect of meeting an old friend in this company. But as he had no reasonable excuse to

offer, and did not wish to hurt the Doctor who had shown so much attention to Hansine and himself during Laddie's illness, there was nothing for it but to accept the invitation.

The meeting of the two men was carefully watched by the party round the cloth, and when they saw them both approaching, the ladies took up their parasols, while the remaining man—a youth in a melon coloured summer suit—rose, and pulling down his long cuffs retired behind the young lady, leaning on his spiral stick as if in readiness to come to the rescue if required.

"If you make me laugh, Alfred, I shall beat you," she whispered to him when the doctor and Emanuel were within a few steps.

"Yes, but, good heavens! . . . he's a regular antediluvian animal," he whispered behind the hand, with which he was twirling his small fair moustache.

"Just look . . . a Voice from a theological College!"

"Be quiet, I say."

"Hush!"

At this moment the two men reached the circle. One of the ladies—a little brunette, dressed in brown silk, with soft outlines, and sweet, gentle, womanly features—came forward and shook hands with Emanuel.

"My wife," said the doctor.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," she said, in such a gentle voice that it was almost

like a strange accent. "We have been neighbours for some years now, and I have always been astonished that we have never met. One generally comes across people in the country I think."

Emanuel lifted his hat an inch from his head without a change in the grave, somewhat amazed expression, beneath which he sought to hide a feeling of uncertainty into which he was thrown by the unaccustomed ceremoniousness and the polite phrases.

Dr Hassing continued his introductions in a lively voice.

"Allow me to introduce you, Pastor Hansted, —first to the youngest member of our little party, my wife's amiable cousin, Miss Gerda Zoff, whom you interrupted a few minutes ago in a remarkably successful speech. It is a pity you did not come a few minutes sooner, you missed a masterpiece of oratory. — And this same cousin's cousin, my own hopeful nephew, Mr Alfred Hassing. If you subscribe to any sporting paper you must certainly often have met his world renowned name in the cycling columns."

Emanuel looked at the young pair somewhat disdainfully, their greetings certainly betrayed more curiosity than deference. "Good heavens," he thought, when he saw the baggy melon coloured clothes, the pointed shoes, and monster studs—"so these are fashions for the Heroes of the day!"

"And here at last," continued the doctor, as he turned towards a tall, slim, very fashionably dressed lady, who had kept behind Emanuel during the other introductions, as if purposely keeping out of sight till the last.—"Well, here you need no introduction."

Emanuel faced her, and was turned to stone. The doctor was right, any introduction was here superfluous. As the slender lady stood there smiling in the red light thrown by her parasol—dressed in white with large mauve stars, a wide brimmed white lace hat perched upon her chestnut hair—dignified, and mistress of herself from the firm glance of her beautiful blue-gray eyes, to the frill at the border of her gown, which was so subdued, and at the same time so daring in its cut and the arrangement of its colouring, as to enhance the slimness of her figure, and the creamy pallor of her complexion . . . she was so exactly like herself in former days, that Emanuel at once recognised Miss Ragnhild Tønnesen.

"Of course you can't imagine how I have suddenly appeared here," she said, giving him her slender, smoothly gloved hand, with her old air of comradeship. "You might almost be ready to look upon me as a spy, otherwise. . . . I must tell you at once how it comes about. I had the pleasure of making Dr and Mrs Hassing's acquaintance in the spring, and as they were kind enough to invite me here, I could not resist the

temptation. I have only been here two days. I can assure you there has not been the least indiscretion on my part so far. . . . Are you satisfied now?"

Her easy, joking tone, and the perfect conviction of making an impression on him which was apparent in her whole bearing, at once offended Emanuel, and strengthened him in that feeling of self-esteem which the young people's inspection had called forth.

He kept his astonishment under, and answered with fairly successful dissimulation :

"I do not understand how I could suspect you of any kind of espionage, Miss Tönnesen. It is so natural that you should wish to revisit your former home, that it hardly seems to require any explanation."

His speech was harder and colder than he had either meant or calculated ; and when he noticed the constraint which it produced on the whole company, he was preparing to add a few softer words.

But he just happened to see the young cyclist nudge his cousin, and whisper a remark to her which made her convulsively bite her pocket-handkerchief.

The blood rushed to his cheeks. Irrepressible anger such as he had not felt since his youth burst out within him, making his heart beat fast.

"Shan't we sit down again?" said the doctor, in his untiring efforts to bring about a more easy

tone. "You will drink a glass of wine with us, Mr Hansted? . . . Oh, Johan!" he called to the coachman; "bring another glass and——"

"Thank you, I do not drink wine," interrupted Emanuel curtly.

"Indeed!"

This was followed by a moment's painful silence, and no one knew where to look. The doctor stood with a blank countenance, pulling his whiskers, while he furtively looked at Miss Tönnesen with a comically puzzled glance, as much as to say, "We have made fools of ourselves. But what did I say?"

Emanuel stood motionless, looking straight before him, without noticing the perplexity of the others. His anger had quickly turned against himself. What business had he here? he thought. What did he want among these people with whom he had not a single thought or feeling in common, nay, whose very language had become so strange to him that it almost sounded like a foreign tongue.

It was Miss Ragnhild with her old readiness who got them out of their difficulty.

Stepping forward she said: "I think Pastor Hansted spoke a word in season, . . . we have all had enough wine. I propose that we make use of this lovely evening to take a little walk. We can send the carriage on, and persuade Pastor Hansted to walk part of the way back with us. You will come, won't you? Our roads

are the same, at first in any case—if I am not mistaken.”

The proposal was instantly accepted by the Hassings; the doctor again sent Miss Ragnhild a furtive glance—this time a grateful one.

Miss Tønnesen's words also came as a relief to Emanuel. He saw that in this way he could most quickly and easily get away from the party. If he accompanied them to the place where the Kyndlöse road crossed his boundaries the demands of politeness would be satisfied, and he could still get home early enough to feed the cattle and partake of the evening porridge.

The coachman was called up and had his orders, and then they started.

The cyclist immediately drew his aunt's arm within his, and strode off with her in front of the others, so as to ease his mind.

“Who on earth is this sheep? . . . Is it he you called ‘an original and interesting man’? Why, he's a complete idiot!”

“You always use such strong expressions, my dear Alfred,” answered Mrs Hassing, gently reproaching him. “He is perhaps not very talented, and may be rather peculiar . . . I don't know anything about that. But in any case, I must acknowledge the way he has sacrificed himself to his opinions. . . . You must admit that, Alfred.”

“I believe, upon my honour, that you already have a *tendresse* for him, Aunt. Isn't it so? You might even invite him to supper.”

"We shall be obliged to ask him if he goes far with us. But it is not to say that he will accept the invitation. I shan't object to his coming. There are many subjects on which I should like Pastor Hansted's opinion."

"Ah, you are thoroughly bitten then! Yes, Aunt, you have a soft and indulgent heart! But you quite forget Uncle Joachim!"

"Uncle Joachim!" and her face became somewhat doubtful. "You are right—I really didn't think of him."

CHAPTER V

It was not long before Miss Ragnhild and Emanuel found themselves walking alone a good way behind the others. The doctor, who at first walked with them, talking to Emanuel about the harvest and the fine weather, had been called away by the lively young girl to admire her discoveries of flowers.

As long as the doctor was near, Miss Ragnhild was silent and looked pensively at the ground. Even after he had gone she remained silent a while, a smile now and then flitting over her face.

Suddenly she lifted her head, and said with a little laugh:

"You certainly are a curious person, Mr

Hansted ! For seven years I have been looking forward to the day when I should take you by surprise out here, and then you receive me as if we had only parted three days ago. I may tell you that you put me in an awkward position just now ; I had of course prepared the others for a grand scene of recognition ! . . . Well, I admit it was my own stupidity," she continued, as Emanuel remained silent. "I ought to have remembered, that in many ways you were unlike other people. And with regard to unreliability, you have not changed in the least."

Emanuel did not notice the little effort she had to make, to speak in the same easy tone which they formerly used to each other. He was too much taken up with the awkwardness he was feeling at walking alone with her here after all these years, and listening again to the defiant, and yet ingratiating voice with its peculiar metallic ring. Without allowing himself to be affected in the slightest degree by her words, he said :

"It seems that we have had somewhat the same impression of each other, Miss Tønnesen. Both before, when I first saw you, and now on hearing you speak, I see that you are exactly the same as you were seven or eight years ago."

"I daresay," she answered with a shrug of the shoulders : "What, after all, should have changed me ? I am Miss Tønnesen now, as I was then ;

and the intervening romance of my life might be written on the back of a visiting card. Such is life to us, unmarried women. . . . But with you it is another matter. I am not such a stranger to your experiences as you might think. A year ago I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of your sister, General-consulinde Torm, and your brother, the Kammerjunker. Your sister and I have since then become good friends. She is charming, is she not? I am quite in love with her refined womanly nature. As you may imagine, we have talked of you from time to time. . . . She often regrets that she so seldom hears from you."

Emanuel became attentive. It suddenly occurred to him, that perhaps—in spite of her ridicule—the young lady might have come as a spy. And—was it possible that his family had a finger in it?

"So before I came here, I knew what a big—an influential man you had become; what a revolution you have brought about in the district since father left, and how all your parishioners worship you . . . in short, that you and they, have in every respect realized your wishes, nay, even with good 'measure running over,' as one says. They have even given you the name of 'Apostle,' I have been told."

A little start went through Emanuel. After a moment's silence, he said:

"But I thought you had your wishes satisfied

too, Miss Ragnhild. You were so pleased to get away from this neighbourhood which you hated, to go to town, to the centre of Danish culture, to society, fashion and the theatres; you have our world-famed Tivoli next door, so I don't understand——"

"Well, yes," she interrupted him, with a little impatient toss of the head. "As I said, it is a different matter for me. Besides, I have not complained, so I do not know to what you are alluding. As things go, I have a very good time. I can tell you that I have become a philosopher in my old age. . . . A stoic, I think it is called. That is to say, I have gradually accustomed myself to be that rock of offence which I and my kind have once for all become to our dear contemporaries . . . yes, I almost feel a little proud of belonging to those who foretell the imminent downfall of the great Babylon."

Emanuel wanted to say something. But his thoughts had lost the habit of moving nimbly, and before he had put a sentence together, Miss Ragnhild spoke again.

"Don't let us discuss me. It is a frightfully uninteresting subject, I assure you. But tell me something about yourself. I hardly knew you just now, you have altered so much. You are as brown as an Indian. And that great beard, like a wild man of the woods! . . . So it's really true that for eight long years you have been happy in this desert, where I was ready to pine away with

—well, with many things. So different can human nature be! And you have never felt the least craving for any of the now much abused goods of civilization . . . such as sociability, . . . art, or good music? Not even my little Lark *Étude* of Schubert's? you used to be very fond of it at one time, I remember, and I have often played it to you!"

She looked at him over the ivory handle of her parasol while speaking, and again in glance and smile shewed all her charm.

Emanuel preserved his gravity immovably, and answered in his former measured tone:

"I don't see how I can miss the very thing which I am in possession of; if you will take the trouble to open your ears, Miss Tönnesen, you will hear the larks singing over your head at this very moment—far more beautifully than any virtuoso in the world can imitate them in any *Étude*; I have a perfect orchestra all the summer, playing outside my windows. Starlings in the treetops, blackbirds in the bushes, the little tits——"

"Yes, and the crows! Pray don't forget them! —and the cocks! Good heavens, the cocks!" she exclaimed, putting her fingers to her ears in comical despair. "Just now there is such a wretch that comes every morning while I am in my sweetest sleep and stands outside my window, shrieking, and screaming, and crowing. . . . Oh, it's like lying on a red-hot gridiron!"

This time Emanuel could not prevent his risible muscles relaxing a little.

He stopped a moment, and said, shaking his head, and looking at her for the first time :

"Truly! you have not changed, Miss Tønnesen. You have kept up your hatred for our splendid heralds of day."

"Yes, I admit, in these ways, I am as great a heretic as ever. As far as I am concerned, you are welcome to keep the singing birds, the green woods, and the so-called fresh sea-breeze with its disgusting smell of sea-weed—the flower-strewn fields—and whatever you like, if only I am allowed to remain within four walls, where I can gather round me cosily, all the things which suit my taste and my temperament. . . . You think I am past hope, now, don't you?"

Emanuel was about to answer, but again she was first.

"I could annoy you still more if I would. And why shouldn't I? . . . In my opinion, a great deal of all this about the beauties of nature, which artists have got us to believe in, is frightful hypocrisy on the part of most people. For my part, I never go beyond the streets of Copenhagen and see the bare fields, the sameness of the roads, and the absurd extent of desolate sky, without thinking of the cold mangling-room where I used to have my bath as a child. However much the sun shines, however green the fields, it all seems so barren, so desolate, and so sad, that it makes me

shiver. I quite admit that towns may be horrid too, dusty and dirty and smoke-blackened. But there you are not an absolute slave to sun or moon. There you have some idea of what a human being is . . . and the meaning of being lord and master of creation, which, after all, it is one's intention of becoming some day—at any rate that is my ideal of freedom!"

She worked herself up at last into such genuine passion that it, as well as her words, produced a most unpleasant impression upon Emanuel. By her words she had roused anew the memory of moments of weakness in his own life, when the sight of his corn laid by the hail, flooded fields, or trees overturned by a storm had led him into a similar misjudgment of the stern order of nature. He thought especially of that dark night in Laddie's illness when he stood listening and watching for the doctor on the mound in his garden. In his despair and perplexity much the same thoughts had surged through his own brain, and he therefore now felt it a double duty to meet her now with the full strength of his conviction.

They had reached the top of a hill whence there was one of those extended views in which the district was so rich. They had long passed the parish boundaries, and from the place where they stood they could see the whole of Veilby and the semi-island parish of Skibberup with its softly rounded but bare hills, its two church towers and

three wind-mills, and the swampy bog land which connected it with the outer world. On the other side in the west, was to be seen the flatter but more varied and smiling landscape of Kyndlöse, Vesterby, with one or two small woods, a brimming stream among green meadows, and a number of little, scattered, white cottages, besides the large village of Kyndlöse with its fiery red mission house, and a curious round church, the gilt weathercock of which glittered in the setting sun like a newly lighted star. Far away to the north and north-west, finally appeared, like a bank of dark clouds, a hazy belt of forest behind which the sun had just gone down, lighting up the horizon with flaming colours.

"And you have the courage to speak like that here!" said Emanuel, as with a wide sweep of the hand he pointed to the landscape in its gorgeous sunset colouring. The mists of evening had already begun to rise over the water meadows, and to spread themselves like gigantic spiders' webs over the blood-red, many branched stream. "You really can't find anything to satisfy you in such a scene as this. It can't rouse any thoughts or feelings in you other than an uncomfortable recollection of your childhood?"

Miss Ragnhild looked at the landscape for a moment with twitching eyes. Then she said with a bright little smile, which she generally put on when she was about to say something specially audacious:

"I certainly can't understand why that should be so wondrously beautiful that one should be forced, from the cradle to the grave, to fall into a state of delight every time one sees it. It doesn't appeal to me in the least. The combination of colours even offends my eye. This blue sky, that shrieking red horizon, all this orange-coloured corn, and the meadows down there like spinach . . . blue, red, green, and yellow! Those are just the colours which are used for the so-called Hottentot pocket-handkerchiefs. . . . You know, those flaring stuffs which the English send out to the wilds of Africa and which put our black fellow creatures into such a blessed state of mind. Don't you think, Pastor Hansted—it is my real opinion—that a phenomenon of nature like this sunset has no other meaning than that of being a higher form of diversion for semi-human beings, both black and white, and perhaps also for the animals? Such a fiery heaven, I have no doubt, answers to that sort of creature's ideas of splendour; it probably also rouses their softer feelings. . . . The nightingales begin to sing and the frogs to croak. . . ."

"I have no doubt you are right, Miss Tönnesen," Emanuel interrupted her with an ironical bow, and continued his walk; he saw it was no use trying to take her seriously. "It's only a pity that the Almighty did not have an opportunity of consulting you, when He created this bungle of a world which is only suitable for Kabyles and Hottentots. But

it just occurs to me—when I met you just now, you had condescended to sit down in quite a common grass field—nay, as far as I remember, both you and the others were in quite lively spirits. It appears therefore that a sojourn in the midst of nature can all the same have an enlivening effect on you.”

“Well, what can I say? There will always remain so much of the animal in us, I suppose, that at times we may wish for a meadow to sun ourselves in, or a wood to run about in. But what does that shew? I also know that lovers delight in wandering about by moonlight. Now I, who am not in love, think a moonlight night one of the most disagreeable things I know; it always reminds me of a death chamber.”

She stopped suddenly, burst into a little laugh, and said, “It is really too stupid. Here we are carrying on the same sort of nonsensical dispute as we used to eight or nine years ago . . . and with exactly the same result. Do you remember how we used to talk ourselves red in the face, and then turn our backs on each other in anger, and wouldn’t look at each other for days. Shall we make peace now? Now we’ve each got what we wanted—you your country, I my town—so we have nothing more to quarrel about.”

“Exactly my opinion,” said Emanuel dryly.

“Then, at last, we are agreed on one point! But I have talked too much. . . . You know it’s a way old maids have. Now, it’s your turn to be

entertaining, Pastor Hansted. Now tell me kindly about yourself. I know—from your sister, and, for that matter, I have heard the same here—what a happy family life you lead, that you have a couple of sweet little children, and that your wife continues to be famed for her good looks . . . in short, that you are a regular child of fortune.”

Emanuel did not intend to enter into any discussion with her on this subject. But the love of argument had been awakened in him, and he could not help saying :

“I can hear by your voice that you are surprised.”

“As you say it yourself, I will not deny it.”

“I can quite understand it. With your conception of family happiness, and your view that marriage is a kind of erotic game or amusement . . . views which I also at one time held, but of which I happily discovered the fallacy in time——”

“Excuse me, Pastor Hansted—but where did you acquire the habit of attributing a meaning to people which suits you, but which they have never expressed. You did it before, and again now. For what, in fact, do you know of my opinions on matrimony?”

“I should be very much interested in hearing them. They are no doubt highly original.”

She went on for a minute smiling to herself.

“Would it really interest you? Well, then, I

won't make myself precious. But I will begin by saying that you won't hear anything new. . . . You know that I am conservative in all my views, and perhaps on this point more so than on any other. My opinion as to what is requisite for matrimonial happiness is simply the same as that to which our grandparents gave the somewhat inflated expression in the words, "The harmony of souls." In our day I suppose we should call it something like "nerve sympathy."

"Nerve sympathy! Truly a delightful modern expression! If only one knew what it meant. Can't you give a little explanation?"

"Oh, yes," she laughed. "But I told you I had become a philosopher, so if I should not be very clear, you must excuse me, it is because of the depth of my thoughts. Well, then——"

She stopped, rested her cheek on her ivory-handled parasol, and looked straight before her with a thoughtful smile.

"In this way, then," she said, and continued her walk. "By nerve sympathy between two persons, I mean that everything these two persons see, hear, experience, read, etc., has a similar effect upon them both. The sight of such a landscape, for example, or the enjoyment of a piece of music, must put them into the same frame of mind; it must not enliven one and depress the other.—Am I expressing myself plainly?—All the manifold affairs of life, from the most trifling—such as the breaking of a plate—up to the most

fateful—sad or happy—must affect the feelings of both, must move their nerves with the same degree of emotion. To continue—the requirement for bringing about between two persons the state which used to be called ‘The harmony of souls’ is, therefore, that their nerves have the same kind of receptivity, and are just as easily moved by some impressions and just as little by others—Don’t you admire my logic?—But the kind and the degree of the receptivity,” she continued, as Emanuel did not speak, “is the result of our education, of our intercourse, of our occupations, reading, etc., . . . and not alone of our own, but of our parents, our grandparents, down to our most remote forefathers, is it not? You can now see——”

“Splendid!” Emanuel interrupted her, suddenly raising his head with a broad smile. “I understand now, that what is required for one person to be thoroughly happy with another, is that this other person must resemble him in every way. That is to say, must have the same education, the same friends; and to complete everything, the same father, mother, and ancestors—in other words, it must be himself! Yes, there you are right, Miss Tönnesen. Self-love—egoism—is without doubt, according to modern conservative views, the only lasting and trustworthy love. There I agree with you!”

Miss Ragnhild’s brows contracted somewhat moodily, and she made no answer.

"Now, allow me to moralize a little," continued Emanuel, with increasing liveliness. "I daresay, even from your point of view, you will admit that the highest object of man—and at the same time his joy and happiness—consists in developing himself, and in feeling the growth of his powers and the widening of his views . . . in short, in making the most of his possibilities. Am I not right?"

"Well, yes!"

"But from whose friendship—not to use such a bygone inflated word as love—from whose intimacy may one expect to reap the richest harvest for the development of one's spiritual 'Ego,' and therefore expect the greatest joy and happiness? Would it be from that person who sees, feels, thinks, and acts exactly as one does oneself? Would it not rather be from the person who would open up new views one never before had dreamt of, who would give one new thoughts and feelings, who, from a different education, would be able to enrich one's knowledge, widen one's limitations on every side, and, as it were, make one's world twice as large? I believe so—nay, I know it. I speak from dearly bought experience."

"But you are turning the matter upside down," said Miss Ragnhild, who had not listened to what he was saying.

At this moment they were interrupted by the doctor and his wife, who had been standing on the road waiting for them to come up.

"Now, we really can't allow you to run away from us, Pastor Hansted," said the doctor with the vague smile, which showed his large white teeth. "It is only a few steps to our door, and you couldn't get home now in time for supper."

Emanuel looked about him in astonishment. Without being aware of it, he had come nearly the whole way to Kyndlöse; its gilded weathercock was shining just in front of him almost like a full moon.

"You must not refuse us," chimed in Mrs Hassing, with all the cordiality she could put into her gentle voice. "If you think your wife will be anxious about you, we will send a messenger on horseback to her."

Emanuel hesitated a moment before accepting their invitation. He would much have preferred to decline. For seven years now he had shut himself up within his own circle of the "Friends" where he alone felt quite at home; and he did not wish to have any lasting acquaintance with the Hassing family. But on the other hand he was afraid they would look upon a refusal as the result of fright or shyness. He was sure Miss Ragnhild would look upon it in that light, and report it to his sister and the rest of the family. Besides which, he could not hide from himself that he was partly actuated by curiosity and a slight craving for diversion. He rather wanted to see Dr Hassing's so much talked of house with all its artistic decorations. Moreover, the conver-

sation with Miss Ragnhild was just beginning to interest him when it was interrupted, and he was not averse to have an opportunity of continuing the discussion.

CHAPTER VI

AN hour later, Emanuel sat at a delicately set-out supper table in Dr Hassing's well-lighted dining-room.

He had not entirely got over the feeling of constraint and discomfort which had involuntarily come over him on entering this house with its distinguished style of decoration, which in so many ways reminded him of his father's home—on again stepping on carpeted floors, among carved furniture and large mirrors, which reflected the whole figure in every direction—on being surrounded by paintings and statues of nude men and women—and on again sinking among the cushions of a velvet arm-chair. At first he was so disturbed by the sight of all the luxury that he regretted having allowed himself to be persuaded. But he was specially upset on being received in the hall by a smart parlour-maid, with short puffed sleeves, and a stiffly starched frilled cap, who came forward at once with many curtsies and conventional smiles to take away his hat and stick. She next proceeded to brush his coat,

constantly addressing him as "your Reverence." He had the strongest inclination all the time to take the brush from her and to say plainly :

"I say, my child, don't let us make fools of ourselves, I am in the habit of cleaning my own shoes—so surely I can brush the dust off my own breeches."

To one of his habits a similar spirit of opposition rose within him at the sight of the luxurious supper table, with its many tempting delicacies, its Venetian decanters, and costly china. He felt the responsibility he had taken upon himself in the eyes of the Cause and the Friends in accepting hospitality here in the enemies' camp. He answered all Mrs Hassing's interesting questions about his parishioners politely and even fully, but he kept on his guard all the time, and never for a moment relaxed the serious almost gloomy expression, which was his silent protest against all that he saw around him.

Dr Hassing's dining-room was decorated in a somewhat peculiar style, half Pompeian, half modern. Slender, long necked vases and jars were placed on small consol tables against the two long terra cotta coloured walls, while the walls at the ends of the room were covered with dark green cloth, and on this was hung a costly collection of old Faiéncé and Majolica dishes, and antique hand weapons. At the upper end of the table, Miss Ragnhild and the doctor were carrying on a lively dispute about modern music ; the

two young people at the lower end were mostly putting their heads together and talking in an undertone. Judging from their glances to each other, first tender and then reproachful, it seemed not unlikely that they were on the high-road to a closer relationship than that of cousins. Immediately opposite to Emanuel and Mrs Hassing sat a silent little lady in black, and by her side an elderly man of most peculiar appearance. He was about seventy years of age, tall, and stoutly built with an absolutely bald head which was so shiny that all the lights in the room were reflected in it. His purple face was divided in the middle by a broad mouth, which every moment opened up a view of a large thick tongue which prevented him from talking plainly. His eyes were small, with a slight squint, and his nose was a perfect parrot's beak; the skin of his neck hung loosely from his chin, in a purple pouch, like that of a pelican. To complete this face he had a tiny white imperial, and two little half-moon shaped whiskers, which according to an old court fashion stretched from below the ear to the middle of the cheek. A stiff black satin stock was in keeping with these aristocratic whiskers, an oval diamond pin stuck in it, with a little chain and a brooch fastened into the middle of his shirt front, and a large variegated silk handkerchief, with which he constantly, though without apparent reason, wiped the back of his neck. He was otherwise dressed in a plain grey coat, and neither

his linen nor his hands betrayed any strong sense of cleanliness.

This man was the "Uncle Joachim" so anxiously spoken of by Mrs Hassing and her nephew, a former landed proprietor with the title of Jægermester, who had recently, owing to a too gentlemanly weakness for blood-horses, expensive carriages, many servants, fine wines, illicit affairs of the heart, been obliged to sell his property, and now lived chiefly on the bounty of his family. Together with his sister—the little lady in black—he was for the present "on a visit" to the Hassings, which had already extended over several months.

In accordance with his other qualities, Uncle Joachim had always prided himself on belonging to "the few" who still swore allegiance to the most extreme reactionary views on every subject. He always called himself—at the same time striking his broad chest—"a representative of the ideas previous to the year of misfortune, '48;" and his feelings were not softened towards the ever-encroaching democracy by finding that it was a rich peasant who bought his property at the sale. Dr Hassing's home, which otherwise was hushed to all politics, had latterly resounded from morning till night with ragings against the peasants, the parliament, the high schools, and even the government. Although he was loyal to the King and government, he considered that they paid too much attention to the "agitators";

his plan would have been to transport them all in warships to Christiansö, there to break stones till they had amended their ways. He held that nothing short of this would be of the slightest avail.

This being so, there was really some cause for anxiety in the meeting of this man with Emanuel, and it was not long before their expectations were realized. As soon as the Jægermester heard Emanuel's name, his whole head became purple, and without shaking hands or answering the somewhat cool greetings of the latter, he rushed into the dining-room where Mrs Hassing was superintending the arrangements.

"What is the meaning of this?" he shouted with his indistinct speech, the loudness of which he never could estimate on account of his deafness. "Isn't this that mad rhapsodist and agitator from Veilby? Do you visit people of that sort? You ask me to meet a fellow like that? What is the meaning of it, Ludovica?"

"Now Uncle!" answered Mrs Hassing with decision quite foreign to her, and which therefore made a deep impression upon Uncle Joachim, "you know that neither Hassing nor I meddle with politics. But Pastor Hansted is an exceedingly cultivated and interesting man, from whose conversation one may gather both pleasure and information, without being bound to admire his views. I therefore beg, Uncle, that you will not in any way offend him, but bear in mind that to-night he is our guest."

The effect of this warning was apparent at the beginning of the meal, when he sat as stiff as a post, refusing all the dishes with a haughty and offended air. But when he saw that his silent protests were quite unnoticed—or perhaps in the long run they demanded too much self-denial—he suddenly changed his tactics, and helped himself greedily to every dish, clattered his knife and fork, and interrupted the others every moment with loud requests for bread, butter, “a little more *foie gras*, Ludovica,” to shew thereby that he cared nothing for the rhapsodist.

The conversation after a time became quite lively; Emanuel’s slow, thoughtful remarks were oftener heard among the lighter conversation of the others.

His conversation with Mrs Hassing had little by little drifted into the burning question of the day—the higher education of the people, especially of the peasant class. Emanuel freely expressed his views, and intentionally brought forward the importance he attached to the High Schools in this direction. Mrs Hassing was all attention. She belonged to that impressionable class who are at once roused to enthusiasm when they see others enthusiastic. When others spoke an expression of deep thoughtfulness always came into her regular, pretty, but not specially intelligent face, with its softly rounded cheeks and Madonna smile—as if by their words they were making plain to her something on which she had

long been pondering in vain. She sat like this now—one elbow resting lightly on the edge of the table, her cheek on her hand—and when now and then in her singing voice she raised “objections,” it was in reality less to oppose him than to give him a further opportunity of explaining his views.

But the others began to listen too. Emanuel’s unshaken earnestness and strong self-confidence, combined with his rough clothes and big beard to give an impression of manliness and power . . . nay, even his somewhat didactic manner of speaking, which he had acquired by constantly appearing as a teacher to the peasants, made him more and more interesting in their eyes. Besides, the subjects of his conversation were so new to them, his expressions were so fresh and surprising, that he involuntarily compelled their respect.

Even the young people stopped their whispering to listen to him, and the cyclist glanced at his aunt once or twice as much as to say:

“You were right, Aunt! . . . There’s stuff in the man!”

Miss Ragnhild, on the other hand, was visibly out of spirits. She leant against the back of her chair, nervously crumbling her bread with her long taper finger as more and more attention was directed towards Emanuel.

Emanuel was himself somewhat excited by the attention his conversation roused. Besides—forgetting his previous refusal out of doors—he had

drunk two or three glasses of wine in the course of the meal. His tone became easier, and after a time he put his sentences together with a clearness and emphasis which surprised himself.

But at the same time, a spirit of opposition rose in him, a feeling that it was his duty to tell these people the truth, which had been smouldering within him ever since he came. Why not point bravely to the burning spot? he asked himself. Had he the right to sit here in the midst of all this frivolity and refinement, without raising his voice against it? Was it not his duty to do what he could to wake these people from the security of their self-complacency, from their haughty ignorance of all which made the hearts of the people beat with joy and expectation.

A little uneasiness now arose round the table. Passing suddenly from his tolerably defiant praise of the High Schools and the spirit which had spread from them among the country people, he entered upon the great strife of the moment, between the government and the people.

They all looked nervously at Uncle Joachim. His head had again become purple and swollen like a balloon filling; and no sooner did Emanuel pause, than he leant over the table towards him.

"Excuse me, sir!" he burst out in his thick, lisping voice, putting his hand behind his ear—in the manner of deaf people—a highly unaristocratic fist, with tufts of long hair on every joint,—
"I hear that you are an ardent admirer of this

so-called Emancipation of the People and this . . . this, universal suffrage."

"Undoubtedly," answered Emanuel, a little impatient at being interrupted in this quarter.

"You will perhaps allow me to bring to your notice, sir, an example which will cause you to alter your views. I need only give you one example to shew you clearly how disastrous, nay, how destructive . . . this universal suffrage is, to the future, and the well-being of a country."

Mrs Hassing looked at her husband, to get him to stop Uncle Joachim. But the doctor, who behind his correct and dignified exterior hid a fair amount of youthful waggishness, appeared not to see it. He thought that it might be rather amusing to see a battle between these two men, both burning for the fray.

"I take the liberty therefore—quite shortly—to put before you the following fact," continued the Jægermester. "I once had . . . some time ago, hm! . . . a cowherd . . . a cowherd, do you understand? Perhaps a very sober and worthy person, but quite ignorant . . . with hardly the most elementary knowledge. With regard to legal matters, he knew just about as much of our constitutional laws, as about the Turkish or the Chinese! Now, I ask you," he continued with rising self-complacency, as from the general silence he discovered that he was making a point. "Is it really your opinion, that such a person ought to have as much influence on the

guidance of the State, as a man like . . . well, like our honoured host, Dr Hassing? I ask you."

He threw himself back in his chair, crossed his arms, and in this position sure of victory, awaited Emanuel's reply.

Emanuel would have preferred to answer the Jægermester's question with the indulgence which he deemed this person required. But he perceived the expectancy with which the others awaited his answer; and after a moment's consideration, during which he took a draught from his glass, he said:

"I consider that the cowherd, notwithstanding his ignorance, not only ought to have had equal rights with Dr Hassing—but if justice had been done—perhaps rather the double."

The answer came with such conviction, and sounded so paradoxical, that they all burst out into protests.

"You surely do not mean that," said even Mrs Hassing, while Uncle Joachim, with his hand behind his ear—leant over towards his sister and said, in a voice which he probably took to be a whisper: "What does he say? What is it he says?"

"It seems to me quite simple and obvious," continued Emanuel, again made more talkative by the opposition. "I do not understand why a man's birth should have any influence on his relation to the State. That a man is born in poverty, may be a misfortune to him, so there

would be the more reason to raise him than the reverse. As far as his ignorance goes, or rather, want of book knowledge—well, that only means that the State was not willing to spend more on his education. . . . But that is no reason for treating him like a step-child; on the contrary . . . It is always the poor and weak who suffer most in bad times, therefore it is no more than fair to give them by preference the casting vote. If justice is to play any part, it is neither those who know most or those who spend most, who ought to have the greatest influence on the government of the country . . . but those who risk most. Such is in any case my political science!"

"But then you are almost . . . you are really a socialist," said Mrs Hassing, who was sitting with her hand under her chin, looking up thoughtfully at the corner of the ceiling.

"Whether I am a socialist or not, I can't precisely say. If the views I have expressed are socialistic . . . well, then I am a socialist. I am not alarmed by the designation!"

"What does he say? . . . Does he say Socialist?" stammered the Jægermester again leaning towards his sister, whose sole occupation seemed to be that of a living ear-trumpet.

"But you must really admit, Pastor Hansted,"—the Doctor now took up the conversation—"that the People, in general,—in most cases at any rate,—are not in a condition to form a judg-

ment as to what is best for them. For that presupposes knowledge, experience, etc.,—in which, for instance, a country labourer must be entirely wanting. Of course there are always exceptions to be found; that I shall never deny; but, speaking generally, I am sure that our peasant class must be regarded as a great, inexperienced—and perhaps for the time—unmanageable child, who would inevitably precipitate itself into all kinds of disasters were it left to its own judgment. Don't you think I am right?"

"I do not know how the want of confidence in the peasant has arisen," answered Emanuel. "We do not get it from history. On the contrary, it teaches us how unjust that estimate is."

"You can't point to a single event where by meeting the wishes of the lower classes, and following their advice, the slightest harm has come to the country. But, on the other hand, example after example may be quoted where our country has been plunged into one disaster after another in the face of the warnings of the people. But this is not all! I dare to maintain that all that our country possesses in the way of talent, clear understanding, the spirit of enterprise, industry, and endurance may be entirely traced to the peasants. It can be historically proved, in ancient times as well as now, that there is hardly a single great personality, or a single great intellect who has risen above his contemporaries, but you may find the peasant blood in his lineage, by going

back only a generation or two. But we shall hardly find a single prominent person who has had his root in the higher classes for several generations. It is the industry of our peasants, their frugality and tenacious endurance which all our capable men have inherited ; . . . it was so in former times, and it is so still. Year by year, young, fresh, active life has been sent from the country to the towns . . . and every year these in return send out a collection of sickly wretches crippled in body or mind, to be set up again by country life and country air. It is just the same with our good, patient, Danish soil, which year by year sends its nutritious grain 'among the red roofs' . . . and gets it back as manure !"

He spoke with rising passion. Perhaps his transports were a trifle calculated ; but it was very becoming, as he sat there with his brown hair and light beard, flushed by his speech, the wine, and the earnestness of his convictions. Something of a real prophetic expression had come into his face, and the strong light had converted his eyes into blue shining stars.

A moment's silence arose after his speech. It was broken by the Doctor, who turned to Miss Ragnhild, and said :

"Well, what do you say now, Miss Tønnesen ? Let us hear your opinion on the subject."

She raised herself slowly from her languid position, and said :

"I hold with Pastor Hansted."

"What? . . . you too!" they all burst out; while Uncle Joachim, after having her words repeated by his sister, put his hands above his head and exclaimed: "God bless my soul!"

"Yes, I acknowledge it," she said quietly. "I am also of opinion that in a country like ours, with its endlessly long, dark winter and other hard conditions of life . . . that in this dear land of our birth, which perhaps, like the whole of the North ought never to have been civilized, but should have remained like a sort of big Greenland to which one could go in summer time for hunting and fishing, . . . Now what was I going to say?"

She looked round with a constrained smile.

"Yes, now I remember; it was only this . . . that, in a country such as Mr Hansted indicated, it is, as a matter of course, strong shoulders and broad foreheads which are of the greatest importance. And as Mr Hansted also pointed out, it is just what history teaches us, that here in Denmark everything soon perishes, is frozen to death or blown away, which does not measure forty inches round the chest, or twenty from ear to ear. I entirely agree with Mr Hansted that it is only by favour of the peasants that we poor wretches live. I have always had a lively perception of that."

There was again a moment's constrained silence after her words. They were not sure how much was to be taken seriously, or how much ironically.

However, the Doctor, seeing that the air was somewhat stormy, thought it well to break up before it got beyond a joke.

"Shall we adjourn to the next room?" he said.

They rose and bade each other "Velbekomme." Miss Ragnhild and Emanuel also shook hands with each other.

"My sincere compliments, Pastor Hansted!" she said. "I must acknowledge that . . . you have really become a ready controversialist!"

CHAPTER VII

THE large drawing-room was lighted by seven or eight lamps standing about on tables, all with dark shades over them. In this way there was a pleasant subdued light in the room, thoroughly conducive to peaceful rest in the velvet-covered arm-chairs, with which the room was liberally supplied.

There was a door between two windows, leading into a glass-covered verandah, which formed a perfect little winter garden, full of palms and tall-stemmed plants; a red lantern hanging from the roof shed a soft light, like a rising moon, among the flowering shrubs and shining leaves. This again opened on to the garden, on a much lower level. From the room there was a peep of

lawns with a stone vase, rose bushes, a honeysuckle arbour, and a couple of tall poplars, all bathed in the pale, almost solemn, light of a summer night.

"Now, I daresay you will be kind enough to give us a little music, Miss Tønnesen," said the doctor. "I daresay we all feel that we shall be the better for a little soothing."

"With pleasure," answered Miss Ragnhild . . . "if I could only remember anything!" she added, as she stood by the piano, bending her fingers about after the manner of pianists to make them supple.

Emanuel placed himself in an arm-chair near the verandah. He was not very well pleased at the idea of the music. He was still too much taken up with the conversation at the table, and would rather have continued the discussion. In the meantime the others had settled themselves comfortably in the easy chairs. Only Uncle Joachim had remained behind in the dining-room, where he could be heard easing his mind to his sister . . . but when Miss Ragnhild struck the first chords, Mrs Hassing went along, opened the door, and with a "hush!" silenced him.

Miss Ragnhild began by a few powerful runs up and down the piano, as if to clear the air. Then she sat a moment, with her hands on her lap, in silence, and the music already seemed to echo from afar.

Little Miss Gerda had hidden herself in the darkest corner of the room.

A striking change had come over the young girl in the course of the evening ; she had become wonderfully quiet and almost solemn. During the meal she had taken less and less interest in her cousin, and paid him but scant attention ; but, on the other hand, she watched Emanuel closely, and listened eagerly when he spoke.

Now she sat gazing at him with her big wondering eyes. She bent forward, resting her elbow on her knees. Her face was lighted up by a red glow from the lamp which stood near, the rest of her figure was in shadow. There was a family likeness to Mrs Hassing in every feature ; she had the same oval, madonna face, the soft lines of the mouth and chin betrayed the same tendency to sentimentality, but the nose was more powerful, the curves of the cheek firmer, the fire of dormant passion smouldered in her large velvety brown eyes, above which the dark eyebrows were pencilled like a pair of wings preparing for flight.

At the end of the first piece, while Miss Ragnhild and the doctor were exchanging a few remarks about the composer, she stole along to Mrs Hassing, who was sitting at the other end of the room.

"Auntie," she whispered, as she bent right over her, "is it really true that he is married to a peasant girl?"

"Yes, my child!"

"To a real peasant girl?"

"Yes, my child," repeated Mrs Hassing, patting her cheek.

She remained standing a moment with her hand on the back of her aunt's chair, looking at the ground. When Miss Ragnhild began another piece, she stole back to her seat to gaze at Emanuel again.

Her cousin, who was sitting a little way off, tried to attract her attention, but she appeared not to notice him. When he tried to reach her with a long feather brush, which he found in his neighbourhood, she darted such a lightning glance at him that he nearly fell off his chair, he was so taken aback.

At first Emanuel did not pay much attention to the music. The first piece was a modern composition, difficult to take in, which sounded to him like a cats' concert. He leant back in his chair and gave himself up to his thoughts. His glance wandered over the room, with its pictures and white statuettes on pedestals in the corners . . . and at the same time a heavy drowsiness crept over him. It was long past his usual bedtime, and the dimness of the room, the many new impressions of the day, the reaction after his extreme exertion, and perhaps also the effect of the wine at supper, soon made him so heavy and weary that he had to make a strong effort to keep awake.

But after a time he began to listen. Well-

known tones reached his ears . . . solemn, rushing harmonies which seemed to come from another world. At first he could not give a name to them, nor did he understand the state of emotion into which he was thrown by them—a mingling of sadness and rejoicing, which made his heart beat. Then he recognised Chopin's funeral march, a favourite of his sister's, which in his youth he had often heard her play in the mornings at home, . . . and then it seemed as if a change came over his surroundings. It was no longer Dr Hassing's drawing-room in which he was sitting, but his own old home ; it was his own sister Betty sitting on the stool at the piano between the candles. . . . Yes, even the scent of heliotrope wafted in from the verandah seemed to belong to his childhood and his father's house. The impression at last became so vivid that he could not rid himself of it ; it was just as if the music stole away his thoughts and his will. He felt himself enchained by a fascination over which he could not get the mastery.

As soon as the music came to an end he rose. He must go home.

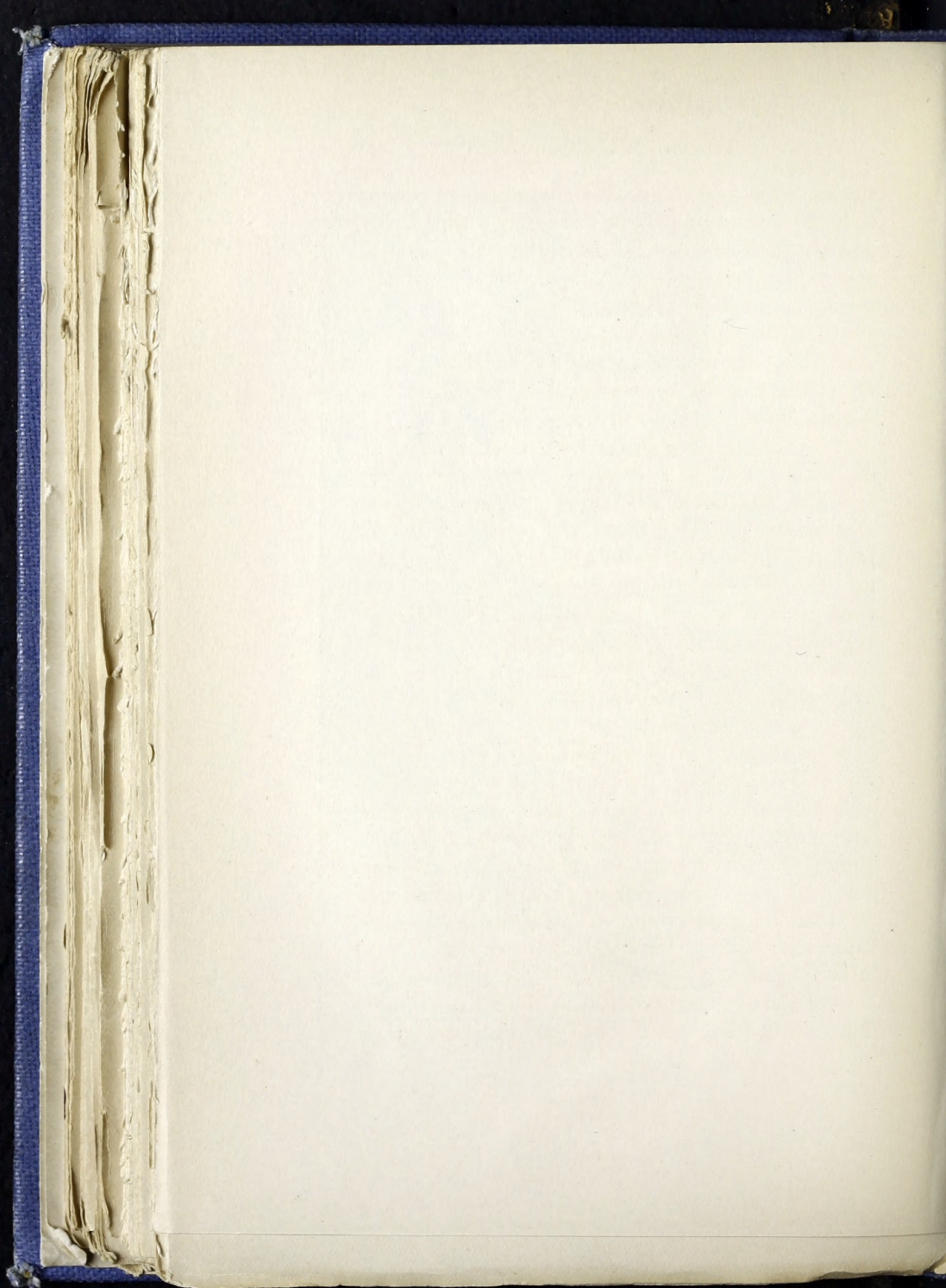
He took leave of the company in rather a headlong fashion, thanked his host and hostess, and a few minutes later was out on the road.

Even here he could not at once free himself from the enchantment, although as he walked he drove his oaken stick so hard against the ground, that its iron ferrule struck sparks against the



N. ERICHSEN
1845

Chopin's
Funeral March



stones. The quiet landscape in the pale solemn light of the summer night, the softly-dappled sky, and the dark cypress-like poplars by the roadside, at first heightened the effect of Miss Ragnhild's music, as it were bringing it to life. Its tones continued to pursue him along the winding road, and he was not quite himself till he had passed the parish boundaries and saw the homelike hills darkly massed against the horizon.

In the meantime he was the subject of a lively discussion in the doctor's drawing-room. Uncle Joachim had come on the scene, and had been allowed to give vent to his feelings—of which he took advantage to the fullest extent. To make up, Mrs Hassing sang Emanuel's praises, and even the doctor was obliged to admit "that he really was a very remarkable man, by no means without intelligence."

Directly after Emanuel left, Miss Gerda said good-night and went to bed.

Miss Ragnhild was rather silent; but then she had no cause to be particularly satisfied with her evening. What she had said to Emanuel was quite true—that for seven years she had been longing for the day when she could surprise him out here . . . and the prospect of so doing had contributed considerably in inducing her to overcome her dread of country life, and to accept Mrs Hassing's invitation.

Nor was it merely curiosity which had brought her. Since she took leave of the then curate,

seven years ago, she had carried about with her a certain feeling of shame, from which she was anxious to free herself. Soon after their parting it had become clear to her that the interest she had felt in him had not been based on such mere friendship as she had imagined, but that by the daily intercourse with him, a cool, northern breath of love had passed over her spirit, and she had often since felt degraded by the remembrance of it. There was something intolerably humiliating to her in the thought that she could have given even the smallest particle of her heart to a man who had married a peasant girl; she could not get rest for her soul before she had again raised herself by feeling her superiority to him . . . and alas! in this respect her meeting with Emanuel had by no means given her the hoped-for gratification.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE was no surprise at the Parsonage when Emanuel did not come back; and on his return Hansine did not even ask him where he had been. She was used to his being persuaded by the Friends to stay, wherever he dropped in, and by his entirely forgetting time and place. Next morning he told her where he had been and whom he had met . . . and after that he would

have liked to bury the whole story in oblivion. He woke up feeling that he had a bad conscience, and the more he recalled the occurrences of the evening, so much the more annoyed he was with himself for what he called his stupid presumptuousness.

"One can see how poisoned the air must be among such people," he thought. "Even after eight years one can't put one's nose among them without losing the mastery over oneself and falling into evil ways."

He took warning by what had happened to keep a better watch over himself for the future; and in many ways his visit to Dr Hassing's was not without its effect upon him. It roused him from the apathy from which he had so long suffered, . . . gave him fresh spiritual vigour to rise out of the state of inertia into which he had fallen since Laddie's death. He once again felt thoroughly happy and contented in his home, and every morning went out singing to the stables, and was never tired of giving Hansine comical descriptions of the doctor's house and family, especially of Uncle Joachim. He told her about the decoration of the rooms, and gave an accurate description of the supper-table and the various dishes. Though Hansine never asked questions about his visit, and observed him closely while he was talking, as if she did not quite believe in his mirth, he always came back to the conversation at the supper-table, and the remarks of the different persons.

On Sunday he preached—almost without preparation—with all his old power and fervour. The day's text was from the gospel of St Mark: the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness with five loaves and a few small fishes. According to his custom, he first brought the whole picture before his hearers, poetically painting the solemn silence of the desert, its illimitable blue sky, and its jagged rocks, on which the burning rays of the sun glowed from morning till night.

Then he went on in a changed voice—

“Then this about the five loaves, and the small fishes, which so many doubters can't swallow. ‘No,’ they say, ‘to satisfy four thousand people with so little food, and to have five basketsful over, is the talk of a madman. You may get the peasants to believe it, but try it on with us! . . .’ Yes, that's what those poor people say who don't know or won't acknowledge any other kind of hunger than that which they feel gnawing at their stomachs. But we who know the meaning of spiritual hunger and thirst—oh! we understand it all so well. We have all experienced those moments of weak despondency, we fancy that all around us is a stony desert, and we can't catch a glimpse of a cooling spring and think that not all the treasures of heaven and earth could satisfy the hunger of our souls. . . . Then one fine day some little thing happens, or we hear some refreshing words containing the blessing of our Lord, and lo! everything springs out into bud

before our eyes, and our heart . . . oh, it fills almost to bursting with hope and joy, enough for us to take of them in both hands and give to others! Yes, my friends, we all know such moments of weakness, do we not? But the only thing is to endure, and to hold fast by one's faith and hope. In my opinion we are going through just such a period of apathy in Denmark at present. We hear despondent voices everywhere saying, 'What is the use of it all? We are struggling for truth and justice here on earth, but we only see lies and arbitrariness flourishing around us. We have let ourselves be enticed into a pathless desert, which we can never pass through nor make fruitful. Let us give up the task, let us return to the yoke of the Egyptians and their fleshpots.' And the tempter, who is always at the heels of doubt, like a shadow, answers in his soft, coaxing, serpent's whisper: 'Yea, only bow down to me, and I will give you all the treasure of earth! . . .' No, no," he exclaimed in a louder voice, his cheeks suddenly flaming. "We won't give in! We trust in that God who sent manna to the Israelites, and satisfied the five thousand in the wilderness with his blessing. Besides, we are God's chosen people, whom He has favoured, and called to be His instruments, and we will thank and praise His name for ever. No, away with all weakness, away with all doubt."

After the service the people assembled as usual, outside the church door, to shake hands with him,

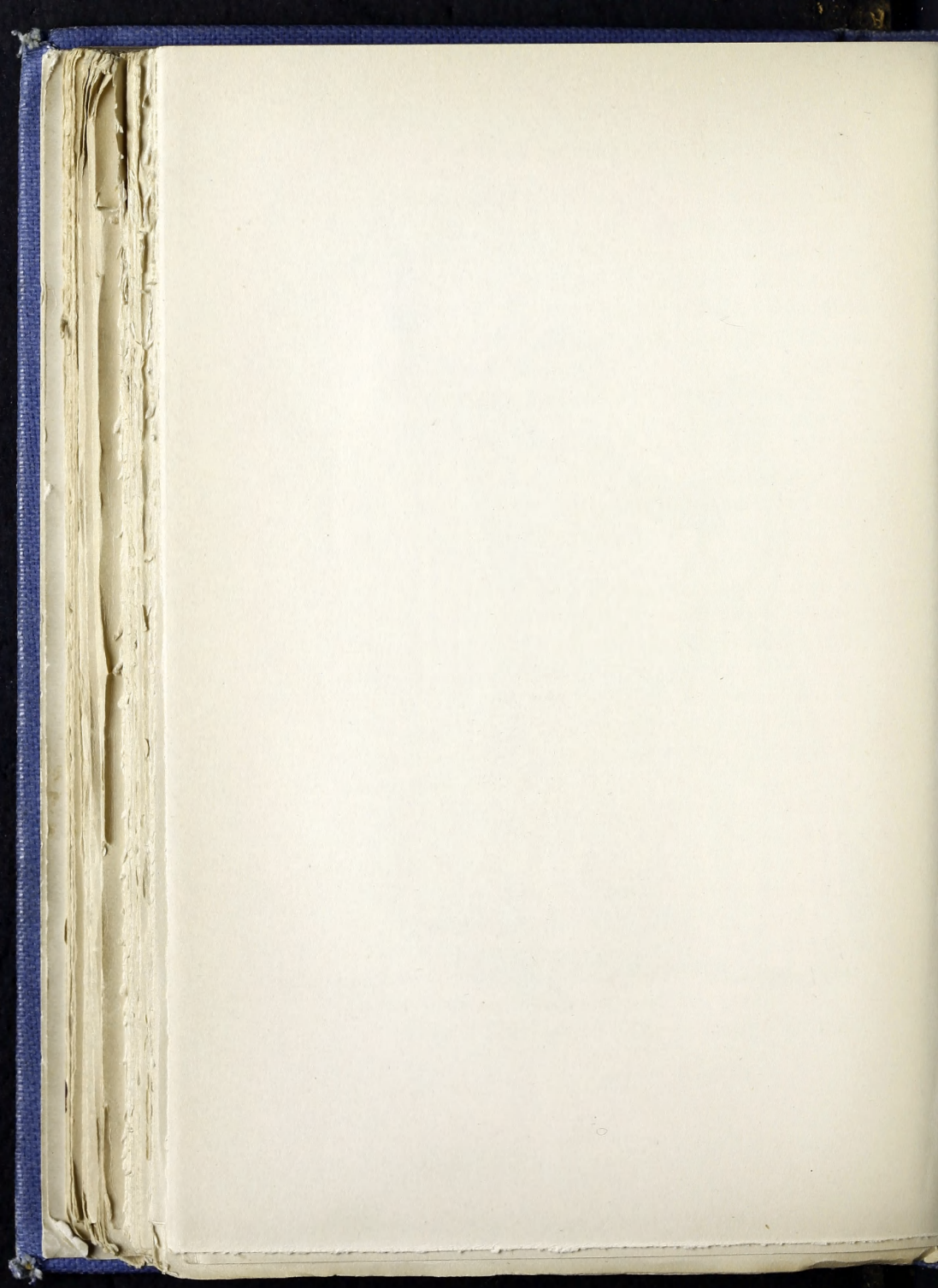
and thank him for his words. But some went away in anger, because they thought that his last words were aimed at the weaver and the other leaders of the change of political tactics . . . and lately, more and more of them felt their honour wounded by the least opposition on this point.

Emanuel himself had not noticed anything of their discontent, and for a long time had not felt so happy and light-hearted as now.

In the afternoon, he proposed at home in the Parsonage, that they should all—including Abelson, Niels, and Sören—go for a drive in the lovely weather, and take their afternoon meal out of doors. The big spring waggon was got out and washed, a basket was filled with food, and Hansine and the children dressed in their best clothes. This last was by Emanuel's special desire, "so that for once in a way we may shew that we have nice clothes"; and when he saw Hansine in a black silk apron, and the little beaded cap which had been part of her wedding costume, he put his hands round her waist and said: "I will bet anyone there's not a prettier parson's wife in the whole kingdom of Denmark." At four o'clock he crossed the yard himself to harness the horses. But he had hardly taken the halters off when Sigrid rushed in, in all her finery—with her eyes starting out of her head, and so breathless in her excitement, that she could hardly speak.

"Father!" she cried. "Two fine, fine ladies





have come. . . . Oh, you should see them! They have just gone into the sitting-room!"

Emanuel very nearly swore. He knew at once that it must be Miss Ragnhild, and one of the other ladies from the doctor's house.

"Is mother in the sitting-room?" he asked.

"Yes, she is. Oh, father, you should see . . . you should see!"

"Don't stand there making a fool of yourself," he interrupted her angrily, and the child, who had been clapping her hands and jumping about in delight became crimson, and stole away ashamed.

Emanuel gave himself plenty of time to finish what he was doing with the horses . . . but his heart beat uneasily. His thoughts, however, were not so much on the two ladies as on Hansine. What would she think of this visit? And how would she receive the visitors?

Now Abelone came pelting over the yard in her wooden shoes, and stuck her head and shoulders in over the half door of the stable.

"Is Emanuel here? . . . You must come in directly; two ladies have come——"

"Good gracious! how often am I to hear that?" he stopped her impatiently. "I know very well, Sigrid told me."

She looked at him in astonishment; she was not used to his speaking to her like that.

"How should I know that? Besides Hansine told me to come over and tell you."

She turned away offended, and clattered quickly back over the yard.

CHAPTER IX

IN the meantime Miss Ragnhild was sitting in the great room on one of the rush chairs by the table, doing her best to keep up a conversation with Hansine who had taken her usual place in the arm-chair near the stove. With her usual want of amiability towards strangers, she was taking very little pains to hide her astonishment at the visit. Old Sören was crouching on the bench under the window behind the table, in his not very becoming holiday clothes—an old, blue frieze coat with white seams, and a bright yellow neckerchief—staring at Miss Ragnhild and her young companion, Miss Gerda, as hard as he could.

Miss Ragnhild wore a kind of bead cape over a walking dress of green checked silk, and a black toque with tall up-standing bows. Miss Gerda had on the same white dress and pale blue hat which she had worn on the day of Emanuel's visit to Dr Hassing.

She sat on the edge of her chair, and her position, her burning cheeks, and the glance with which she looked round the large empty room, or

scrutinized Hansine and her peasant costume, all betrayed strong excitement. But when the door opened and Emanuel came in, her face fell. She had heard from Dr Hassing of the fantastic smock in which he dressed at home, and on his now appearing in the long grey cloth coat and closely buttoned waistcoat which she had seen him in before, she was deeply disappointed.

"Well, here you see me again, Pastor Hansted," exclaimed Miss Ragnhild rising. "We have certainly dropped in very unceremoniously, but your wife was kind enough to say that you are used to that here, so I hope we are not disturbing you. . . . You remember my little friend, Mr Hansted," she added, turning towards Miss Gerda, who had also risen at his entrance.

Emanuel greeted them in silence, and with a wave of the hand invited them to be seated again, taking his place on the bench at the upper end of the table.

"You have had a long way to walk," he said after a moment's silence.

"Oh, not so far as you think," laughed Miss Ragnhild. "It would have been beyond my powers to walk all the way from Kyndlöse, but we haven't done that. Dr Hassing had to visit a patient near here, and we could not resist the temptation of paying you"—she bowed slightly towards Hansine and Emanuel—"and my old home a little visit. We drove with the doctor to the "Ridge"—as far as I remember—and we are

to meet him there again. It is at least half an hour from here, and I am quite proud of having walked so far in the heat of the sun."

"Yes, it really is warm to-day."

She began talking about the neighbourhood and the novelties she had seen on the way. It seemed to her that everything was so changed since she used to live here; the village had especially astonished her. "It looks so much more comfortable," she said; and Emanuel explained that the gardens which had been burnt had grown up again, and the trees had gained in size.

Hansine took no part in the conversation, and Emanuel made no effort to draw her into it. On the contrary he avoided looking at her and mostly sat with his face turned towards the windows and the garden. He did not himself understand what it was in this visit which depressed him so much; or why he felt Hansine's glance wander backwards and forwards all the time from him to the two ladies. He hadn't concealed anything from her; he had told her every day what had passed on that evening. And what indeed had there been to make a secret of?

"There are a good many changes, too, here in the Parsonage," said he, noticing that Miss Ragnhild was looking about her with interest. "I don't suppose the changes will be to your taste . . . but every one has his own."

"There you are doing me an injustice, Mr

Hansted ! I like this room, for instance, very much. It is uncommon, but it appeals to me. There is an air of restful individuality about it. . . . I was just admiring it. You certainly understand the art of making much out of little."

Although Emanuel well understood that her words were only the phrases of polite speech, he was yet grateful for them on Hansine's account. But, all the same, he at once turned the conversation to other subjects.

In the meantime Miss Gerda's illusions were being rapidly dispelled. There was none of the prophetic glamour about Emanuel to-day which had taken such a hold upon her at the Hassing's supper-table. The big unfurnished room made her almost uncomfortable, it reminded her of an empty barn ; then the presence of Sören the cowherd made her feel quite creepy, and she also felt ill at ease under Hansine's glance, which was peculiarly searching.

After a time she was enlivened by watching little Sigrid, who was standing by Hansine in a pink cotton frock, with a black ribbon round her golden brown and well-oiled hair, hiding her face in her mother's lap. Every time she discovered that Miss Gerda was looking at her, she hid her face again ; but the next moment a large dark blue eye peeped out from behind her sunburnt arm, and as soon as she thought she was unobserved she stood on tiptoe and whispered something to her mother.

Hansine nodded absently, and stroked her hair caressingly—with a motherly tenderness which she seldom displayed towards her children.

The conversation by the table threatened every moment to come to a standstill, although Miss Ragnhild exerted herself to the utmost. Emanuel found it impossible to collect his thoughts. Hansine's silence made him more nervous every moment. He felt that she was reproaching him for something, what, he did not know. Besides which he felt the awkwardness of Sören's presence. Sören had always had bad habits, which they generally overlooked on account of his many good qualities; but it seemed to Emanuel that he had never displayed them so unpleasantly as he did to-day.

"Shall we go into the garden?" he said, rising. And with a slightly constrained smile, he added, "We can't show you such a model park as your father's used to be, Miss Tönnesen, . . . but at any rate it will be a little cooler out there."

"Oh, that will be delightful!"

They all rose, Hansine first, as Emanuel asked her if she would not go with them. Only Sören remained behind, his eyes fixed first on one lady, then on the other, till the last fold of their dresses had disappeared.

At the same moment Abelone stuck her head in at the kitchen door, where she had been on the look-out.

"Are they gone?"

Sören nodded silently, and winked meaningly towards the garden, after which Abelone came right in and went to the window.

"Well, there they go! . . . A can't see what Emanuel wants wi' two such baggages. They don't look no better than a pair o' hussies."

Her indignation did not sound very sincere. But Abelone had been altogether "rather queer in her head" lately, and Sören looked at her with a deeply sympathetic glance. It was, in fact, an open secret that she was suffering from an unrequited attachment to Niels the stableman, who, for some unknown cause, had lately become insensible to her mature charms.

CHAPTER X

THE first impression of Veilby Parsonage garden would not have pleased every one. Emanuel was right in saying that not much remained of the lordly Park which Archdeacon Tønnesen had left behind him. The hedges, which in his time were so carefully clipped, now sent straggling branches out on every side, grass had spread over the paths, dandelion and sandwort flourished on the lawns; the shrubberies had become impenetrable thickets, in which various song-birds had their nests; the ground under the big trees was strewn with branches and mouldering building boxes for the

starlings. The Chinese wooden bridge, which had been the pride of the "millionaire priest," was now little more than a collection of rotten planks. The only things which had braved the effects of time, and withstood its destructive hand, were three or four large stone vases like church-yard urns.

Miss Ragnhild and Emanuel, who happened to be walking a little in advance of the others, turned down the thickly overgrown hazel alley leading to the wide, open chestnut avenue which formed the boundary between the garden and the fields.

It was the same place where they used once to take their daily walks and hold their lively debates. Emanuel experienced a sudden irresistible emotion as he found himself walking alone with her again in these desolate empty paths, and by again hearing the mysterious murmur of a lady's rustling garments, and also by the faint odour of violets which used always to be perceptible in her presence in the old days. He walked—just as he used to then—with a slight stoop, and his arms behind him, looking at the ground; whereas Miss Ragnhild looked about freely, while holding up her dress with her left hand, just so much, that from behind, the frills of a starched skirt and the heels of her patent leather shoes were revealed.

She was all smiles and natural amiability, and not in the least as she had been the other day. The insight which her short visit had given her into the family life at the Parsonage had entirely



reinstated her in her own self-esteem, and she began to feel something of her former sisterly sympathy and her old desire to win his confidence, so as to be able to distract and cheer him a little.

Meanwhile the others had stopped by the sunny lawn in the nearest part of the garden. Hansine tried to begin a conversation with Miss Gerda, but after they had exchanged a few words without being in the least intelligible to each other, the young girl, at her wit's end, began to play with little Sigrid.

The two ran about in the sun playing Tiggy Touchwood, while Hansine sat on a bench in the shade, from whence she closely watched the young girl, scrutinized her costume, her happy smile, her airy movements, and her pretty white teeth.

After a time she was roused from her meditations by the sound of voices approaching. Miss Ragnhild and Emanuel were coming back through the closed hazel alley which ran just behind her.

"—We generally see each other once a fortnight," she heard Miss Ragnhild say. "As a rule we play duets together. But of course we gossip too . . . sometimes about you, as I daresay I have told you. I have always seen that your sister is tenderly attached to you. She often tells me how much she misses you, and longs to see you again."

"Indeed! does Betty talk about me?"

"Yes, it's natural enough; she hasn't seen you for years now. You really ought to go to town

sometime to see her. She needs cheering, poor thing. She is so desolate since—as I daresay you know—she had the sorrow of losing her only child. It was a heavy blow to her, she is still young, and needs somebody or something to fill up her life. . . . It can't be denied, you know, that the Consul-general has his weaknesses; besides, he is almost an old man and rather decrepit——”

The voices here became inaudible to Hansine. She again betook herself to looking at the two young creatures, who were sitting in the long grass. A moment later Sigrid rushed towards her, eyes and cheeks blazing with excitement.

“Mother,” she shouted. “Do you know what she says? She says she has a big doll that can go to sleep like a real person, and a doll's house with real tables and chairs and a kitchen. And do you know what she says? It's got a pond to it with ducks and a boat. Do you believe it's true, mother?”

“Are you coming, Sigrid?” called Miss Gerda from the lawn.

Without waiting for her mother's answer, the child ran back to the girl, and in her wildness, threw herself right on to her knee.

Now the voices again approached in the hazel alley. It was Emanuel's words this time which Hansine first caught.

“——Granted that in itself there's not much harm in that way of living, you will admit that

alone with regard to one's less fortunate fellow-men, one ought to withhold people from giving themselves up to such a display of luxury, as for example—my brother-in-law's. The sight of such lavishness makes the yoke of poverty doubly heavy to those who have to struggle and strive all the year round to get dry bread; it breeds bitterness, envy, and bad feeling——”

“No, no, I don't believe a word of what you say. A scene which I once saw just occurs to me; it was in a great labour yard where a number of by no means well-to-do people were working in the heat of the sun, loading carts with gravel, heavy blocks of stone, and so on. Just as I passed, two charmingly dressed young girls, probably the owner's daughters, came through the yard, laughing and talking . . . undoubtedly a pair of 'useless' creatures, like little Miss Gerda here. I saw how all the work-begrimed labourers raised their heads and gazed at them; but I can assure you, I didn't see the least trace of envy in a single face. On the contrary, it was evident that the sight of the two pretty, happy creatures, gay as birds, cheered them in the midst of their toil; they looked after them with the kindly glance with which we all greet a swallow as it skims gaily past us on the road. People like that know quite well that they are made of very different stuff from the young daughters of their master; and if they are not absolutely worked up to it, they would no more think of complain-

ing of it, than any sensible people would entertain bitter thoughts of the swallows, because the Almighty has made them with a pair of nimble wings, and has given us two heavy legs as a means of progression. Am I not right?"

Emanuel began an eager answer, but they had got too far off for Hansine to hear his words.

Shortly afterwards they appeared at the upper end of the lawn, and when they saw her they came towards her over the grass.

"Ah, there you are, Mrs Hansted," said Miss Ragnhild. "Your husband and I have been quarrelling fearfully. Pastor Hansted and I never agree on any point."

She sat down by Hansine on the bench, and without giving her time to answer, began hurriedly talking about the garden, its shade and its primitive character. She soon rose, saying:

"Well, it's time for us to get off, Dr Hassing won't wait for us.—Gerda," she called, "we must say good-bye."

She began to take leave. When she gave her hand to Emanuel, he said:

"No, I will go a little way with you. I will shew you a path which will save you half the distance."

"Oh, that will be capital!"

A minute later they were gone, and Hansine turned to go in.

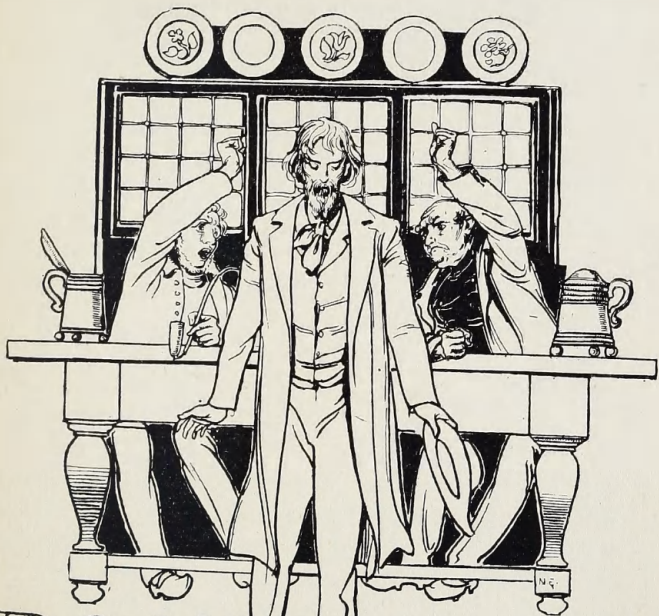
She stopped by the garden fence, and looked over the fields, where the strangers were dis-

appearing along the path through the high corn.

"Mother!" said Sigrid, who was holding her hand. . . . "Mother!" repeated the child, pulling her skirt. "Do you know what she said? She said that I should come and see her in Cop'n'hagen, and she would give me the big doll, she said."

Hansine did not hear her. She followed Emanuel with her eyes, he was walking between the two ladies, talking with youthful eagerness and lively gestures, stopping every moment to point out something in the landscape.





BOOK FOUR.

CHAPTER I

THE rye harvest began in rain, and it looked as if it would end in rain. Every morning the sun rose in a clear sky, falsely heralding a fine day. But no sooner had the peasants driven out their waggons into the fields and bound up their first load, than up came heavy lowering clouds above the horizon, and throughout the day fierce showers of hail fell, while the thunder rolled unceasingly in the distance, first in one quarter, then in the other.

One of these days in the afternoon, Niels the Parsonage stableman was lying on his back on his bed, with his clothes unbuttoned, and one hand under his head. He had passed a couple of hours in this position, and, as usual, had filled his little chamber with impenetrable clouds of tobacco smoke ; and although it was long past the mid-day hour of rest, he did not think of rising. He was quite lost in his favourite occupation—building castles in the air. He saw before him a large room, the walls lined from ceiling to floor with well bound books . . . a room with two high windows and a thick carpet covering the floor, just like the study of the learned priest at Kyndlöse,

whither he had once gone to get his certificate of baptism. There was a large square table in the middle of the room with a green cloth, loaded with folios ; in one corner of the room there was a large globe, the size of a cartwheel. The curtains were drawn, a lamp was burning on the table, at one end of which he saw himself in a dressing gown and embroidered slippers sitting in a large arm-chair, reading a very old Greek book. It was the middle of the night, and all was silent around him ; only an owl now and then hooted as it flew over the house. On the shelves he saw his own works handsomely bound. Some were religious books bound in black with gold lettering, some were learned works, and others were great social dramas and novels chastising the community, such as the Norwegians write——

He was torn from his dreams by hearing the clattering of wooden shoes in the yard and then a lengthy creaking and groaning sound. It was Abelone at the pump.

He lay still, smiling to himself . . . he reposed calmly, feeling with satisfaction that he had happily got out of the temptation which Abelone at one time was to him. He had not found it easy to give her up, though she was poor. But he saw plainly that if he gave in to his weakness, he would probably never rise above his ignominious position of "Niels the stableman." He must be free and independent, or, at any rate, make

quite a different match if he was to reach the goal he had set himself to win—to make the name of Niels Damgaard famous throughout the land. He had difficulties enough to contend with as it was. If, for instance, his name had been Frithiof, or Arne, or Bjørnstjerne, it would have been much easier to impress it on people's memories.

He sometimes grew quite cold when he reflected how nearly he had thrown himself away on Abelone. But now at last he had gained a complete victory over himself. He had become blind to her ingratiating glances, and contented himself with lying here in the hours of rest listening to her clattering steps in the yard. He pictured vividly to himself her powerful figure, red cheeks, and heaving bosom; and shutting his eyes, he almost felt her kisses and the delight of her embraces.

He started up hastily, buttoning his clothes. He again heard steps in the yard, but this time a strong heavy tread . . . Emanuel's.

He stole along to the window to peep out behind the white curtain, and saw his master coming hurriedly round the gable end with rapid steps. His ears began to burn; in the very middle of the yard lay the harness, betraying that he had not gone out to the fields yet . . . and lately Emanuel had become so unreasonable, and had such singular ideas, there was no knowing him. Happily he neither looked to the right nor

to the left, but went straight up the steps into the house.

Niels smiled a smile of relief, then stretched himself with a tremendous yawn and went into the stable.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Emanuel, in his stocking feet, went into the living room and saw Hansine sitting in her arm-chair with a bowl on her lap shelling peas, the excited expression immediately left his face.

"Oh, there you are, my dear!" he said, and nodded to her with a smile, and then went into the bedroom.

He soon came out again in his grey coat and leather boots, engaged in tying on the red neckerchief, which he invariably wore instead of a collar.

"Are you going out?" asked Hansine.

"Yes, I am obliged to go. I have to go to the Fen cottages. There's some botheration with the people again; they won't take work. And now just at harvest time, it really won't do."

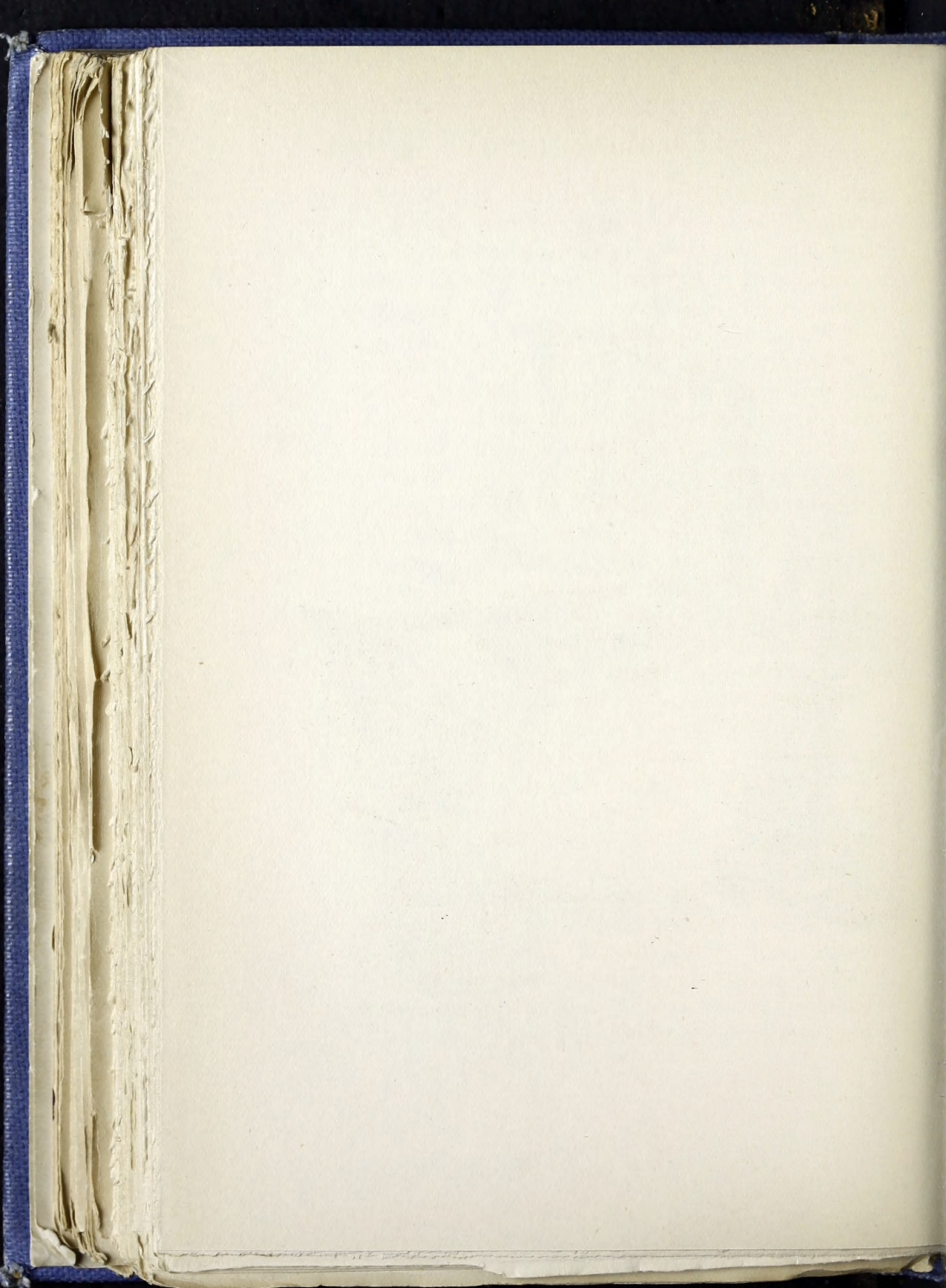
He was just going out of the door when Hansine said:

"Oh, by-the-bye, don't let me forget to tell you that young Rasmus Jørgen was in here this morning while you were in the fields. I was to

HANSINE
SAT &
SHELLING
PEAS.



NELLY ERICHSEN
AUG 1895.



tell you that he must have back that load of barley straw he lent you sometime last winter. He could not do without it any longer he said."

Emanuel stood with his hand on the lock, getting redder and redder.

"A load of barley straw, do you say?"

"Yes; you seem to have promised it to him in the spring," continued Hansine. "But he must have it now, or he will be obliged to buy."

"But barley straw at this time of year . . . Where in the world should I get it from? I suppose you said that to him too?"

"No; I only said I would give you the message."

But I don't understand it at all," burst out Emanuel, letting go the door and walking backwards and forwards. "It's not like young Rasmus Jörgen a bit. You must have offended him somehow, Hansine, and made him say it in anger. . . . It is very curious that you never can learn to be pleasant to people. It has become quite a morbid eccentricity. You offend one after another of our friends, and it always falls to me to make it up again. I'm really getting tired of it. God knows, how——"

He stopped suddenly on discovering Sigrid, who was sitting on a stool by one of the windows, busily sewing coloured stitches on to a bit of rag.

"Well, it's no use talking about it," he concluded in a low voice, and left the room—banging the door behind him.

In a few minutes he came back, went up to Hansine, and put his hand on her head.

"Forgive me!" he said. "I did not mean what I said, I spoke hastily. Don't be angry with me. Will you promise me that? . . . I have had so many worries to-day," he continued, again beginning to pace up and down the long room. "Just fancy, when I got down to the low lots just after dinner, there was the barley still not set up in shocks, though I particularly told Niels this morning, it was to be done immediately. Now, of course, it's soaking wet at the top after the rain this morning—everything is swimming in water down there; it really is too bad, isn't it? We can't go on like this with Niels and his idleness; I must speak to him seriously some time when I have an opportunity! I believe it's all this newspaper scribbling which has turned his head. And I hear he has begun to attend Maren Smed's prayer-meetings. Maren seems to have got a great following lately; I am always hearing of first one and then of another who has been there. The weaver's at the bottom of it all, I believe. I don't know what kind of a conspiracy he is hatching, but I am sure he is the originator of the malicious reports against the chairman of the Parish Council, which I told you about the other day. I remember now that once in the spring he hinted at something of a dishonourable character between him and big Sidse. A stop must soon be put to these disorders in the con-

gregation. Otherwise we shall be swamped in squabbles! . . . Well, I must be off."

He nodded again both to Hansine and Sigrid, and left the room.

Not a muscle had moved in Hansine's gloomy face, in which the lines had perceptibly deepened during the last few weeks. She was getting accustomed both to Emanuel's sudden outbursts of anger, and to his rapid repentance for the same . . . she also thought she perfectly understood the cause of his irritable frame of mind.

For a long time after Emanuel left there was dead silence in the room. Little Dagny was sleeping in her flower-painted wooden cradle by Hansine's side, and Sigrid sat by the window absorbed in her work. She was in fact under punishment for having again come in from her play by the village pond, with her clothes soiled; when Hansine scolded her, she answered with a naughty word, which she declared she had learnt from the wheelwright's boys. It was Emanuel himself who had ordered that she was to be kept in all the afternoon; and he also said, that no doubt it would be better in future to keep a more watchful eye on her playfellows.

Suddenly the child dropped her work on her lap, put her head on one side, and began gazing fixedly at the ceiling. After a time she rose and went along to her mother.

"Mother," she said softly. "Do you remember

her, the fine lady who came that day, . . . the one that played with me in the garden?"

"Yes, child, I do. You have talked about her so often."

"Yes, but do you remember, mother, that she said I was to go in to Copenhagen, and I should have the big doll, she said. I might stay with her always . . . and I could have the doll's house too, she said."

"I don't think she did. There you're saying something that isn't quite true, Sigrid," said Hansine, looking at her reprovingly.

The child reddened and looked down.

"For that matter . . . it might do you good to go away for a bit," continued Hansine. "Then you would not learn so many bad things, and you would have to take care of your clothes."

These words of her mother's again brought her imprisonment to her mind; Sigrid blushed redder than ever, and crept back to her stool shamefacedly.

Again there was complete silence in the room. Only the buzzing flies were heard against the window panes, and the sound of Abelone's scrubbing-brush in the kitchen.

"Mother," said Sigrid, again in a low voice. "If I never make my frock in a mess again, or say any more naughty words, may I go to Copenhagen?"

Hansine could not help smiling a little.

"Are you so anxious to go to the lady in Copenhagen, Sigrid?"

"Yes, indeed, I am; she was so pretty. Wasn't she, mother?"

"Yes. But how do you think you can go to such places. You saw how fine the ladies were, and they're all like that in Copenhagen . . . the children too, I can tell you. You would have to be as nice as they are first, or they wouldn't have anything to do with you."

"Can't I grow into a fine lady too, mother?" asked Sigrid, with wide open eyes.

Hansine did not answer at once.

"Oh, yes, I daresay you could," said she, becoming thoughtful again.

CHAPTER III

MEANWHILE, Emanuel was well on his way to the Fen cottages.

In the need for solitude which had been growing upon him latterly, he left the highroad and walked along the narrow paths which formed the boundaries between the fields; he was even careful to keep out of the way of the little scattered groups of harvesters. Nor was it cheering at present to meet the people. The old enmity between the villagers of Skibberup and those of

Veilby, which the common bond of politics had for a time kept under, now burst forth with renewed force after the collapse of the league; and on several occasions Emanuel had tried in vain to mediate between them. The quarrelsome Skibberup people had begun the wrangle by insisting that the Veilby people had taken upon themselves to exercise too much influence in all the affairs of the congregation; and it was also mainly from them that the offensive attacks on the chairman of the Parish Council proceeded, and the attempts to drive him from his position.

Moreover, there was another reason why Emanuel avoided the highways. He did not wish to run the risk of meeting Miss Ragnhild again. He felt that he had perhaps already involved himself somewhat deeply with her, and the society to which she belonged; and he fancied that she was still in the neighbourhood. At any rate it was not many days since he had heard that she had been seen driving about with the doctor on his rounds.

After a good half hour's walk he reached the so-called Foxhills, a collection of wart-like mounds where the ground fell away towards the Fen district. He stopped here a moment and looked towards the idyllic little copse and the scattered cottages of the Kyndløse-Vesterby parishes, whose walls looked doubly clean and white to-day against the dark rainy sky. He could also just catch a glimpse of the large village of Kyndløse

with its old round church and many high poplars, notwithstanding the mist . . . also the serpentine road along which he had wandered on that evening with Miss Ragnhild—the steep hill on the top of which he had stopped to point out the landscape in its glowing sunset colours . . . nay, at last he even fancied he could plainly see Dr Hassing's villa close to the church, in the distinguished seclusion of its extensive garden. He suddenly withdrew his eyes and began walking down towards the swamp.

Just beneath him, on both sides of a little half dried up stream lay the Fen cottages—a collection of miserable earthen hovels, which, in their dilapidation, leant one against the other, as if pondering on their fate. The ground round about the cottages was a hopeless rubbish heap of old straw, potsherds, and withered potatoe haulm, among which some ragged, bare-headed children were running about playing.

Emanuel always fell into melancholy reflections at the sight of



all this misery. In spite of all that he and the congregation had done to help the distress here, there was still not a house without rags instead of window panes, or without great holes in the roof. And, what was worse, after seven years of self-sacrifice and exertions, not a single one of the unhappy inhabitants of the mud cabins had shewn the slightest trace of appreciation of him as a man. . . . On the contrary, there were constant and increasing complaints of their nightly depredations among the potato mounds and bleaching grounds, and very often neither high pay nor soft words would induce them to take work with the peasants. He rushed down towards one of the nearest houses—a hut, the walls of which bulged out like a baker's oven, with tiny little windows and a moss-covered roof. A tall, bent, old man was standing at the gable end with an axe, chopping up faggots.

As he approached, a little fat cur—a fat spotted dumpling on four short legs—darted out between his feet, and, as if beside itself with rage, it danced round him shewing its teeth and barking in a hoarse, almost inaudible voice, so that Emanuel who never could find it in his heart to strike an animal, could not advance.

Although the old man saw him very well and could not fail to notice the dog, he neither called it in nor allowed himself to be disturbed at his work.

“Is this your dog, Ole Sören?” Emanuel at last called out, in rather an angry voice.

"No," growled the old man without looking up.
"I am a dog myself!"

At this moment a woman far advanced in pregnancy appeared at the door of the hut. But no sooner did her eye fall on Emanuel than she darted in again. Then a great bustle began inside; eager whispers mingled with the clatter of crockery. Startled faces also appeared at the other doors, and unkempt heads peeped round the gables.

Emanuel at last got rid of the raging dog and followed the woman into the house.

He detected a strong smell of spirits together with the odour of coffee and humanity as soon as he entered the little outer room, where he had to walk doubled up so as not to knock his head against the roof and its cobwebs. He knocked at a half-open door and walked into a very nearly dark cellar-like room with two broad straw beds, a flap table, a locker, and two bright red chairs.

It was the home of Beery Svend and Brandy Pér.

Although the first was married and had several children, and the other was a bachelor, these two inseparable friends had lived here together for many years in the same room and at the same table . . . nay, it was commonly believed that the good fellowship between them went much further, and had set its mark plainly upon more than one of the offspring of the married couple.

Beery Svend's little ill-favoured person with

the fat limbs and the huge lump over one eye rose with difficulty from the locker when Emanuel entered. He smilingly greeted the visitor with his head on one side and the upper part of his right arm stiffly pressed to his breast. The woman slunk out behind Emanuel's back as if ashamed of her condition.

"This is a pleasant surprise," he said, as he stretched out his dirty hand. "We never expected that the Pastor—Emanuel, I should say—would be givin' us a visitation to-day. But it comes just right; we all need a word of comfort in these times when the Lord has visited us with weaknesses of every kind——"

He was cut short here by Emanuel who had taken his seat on one of the red chairs and crossed his legs.

"I say, just let us have a serious talk, Svend! What is this I hear about you and Pér? You don't want to take work, they say! . . . what is the meaning of these tricks? Can't you soon shew us that you are decent fellows, so that we shan't always need to be having rows with you. I'm sure we've only done good to you . . . it wouldn't be too much if for once you shewed us some return. Don't you think so yourself?"

Beery Svend, who had again taken his seat on the locker, put on a sorrowful face and looked at the ground.

"As sure as I sit here a sinner before God . . . there's no one what would sooner toil and slave

than me," said he, while with his left hand he carefully rubbed his right arm, which he continued to hold stiffly against his body, as if he had it in an invisible sling. "But what's a poor cripple to do when the rheumatiz gets hold on him. You may believe it's a pitiful thing for a poor chap with a wife and children to look after——"

"Oh, come, it's not as bad as that, Svend," Emanuel broke in, looking at him sternly. "You were well enough to be at the fight the other day at Veilby public-house. . . . Yes, I've heard all about it. Pér was there too. Where is he now?"

Beery Svend, who was visibly upset by Emanuel's unusually severe tone, let his eyes fall on one of the two wide straw beds which stood side by side against the wall.

There lay Brandy Pér asleep on his back under a dirty coverlet. Nothing was to be seen of him but his thick matted hair and a pale flat face, on which a little shining purple nose was stuck like an over-ripe plum.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked Emanuel, who was feeling a little uncomfortable in the gloom and bad air of the room. "Is Pér ill too?"

"Yes, he's very bad with headache . . . and the ague too. It comes on him all of a sudden. He may be sittin' there as well as can be when his teeth begin to chatter, an' he shivers an'

shakes all over his body . . . it's a sight to see." —But Emanuel was no longer to be taken in. He had lately become watchful, even suspicious, and he soon saw that it was no fever patient before him, but a man lying there dead drunk under the covering, trying in vain to get the mastery over sleep and to raise his eyelids.

Suddenly he became so enraged at all this degradation, all these lies and deceptions, all the dirt and the smells, that he couldn't help easing his mind.

He got up and banged his chair against the floor.

"Now, look here, I'll just tell you two something! . . . You had better take care. Even our patience has its limits, and if you go on misusing our kindness and forbearance as you have been doing lately, everything must be at an end between us. Then the Poorhouse will have to look after you . . . we will have nothing more to do with you. Do you hear that?"

The fawning look disappeared suddenly from Svend's face; it was the first time that Emanuel had spoken to him in such an authoritative way. The great red lump on his forehead drooped lower over his eye, and his thick lips spread out into a malicious smile.

"Oh, it won't be as bad as that," he said, while—as if from habit—he went on rubbing his arm. "You know well enough what you can use us pore folks for."

"What's that you say?" asked Emanuel, with a start.

"What do I mean? Oh, I'm not such a fool either but I know what happens to folks in the Poorhouse. They lose their vote, I've heerd tell, . . . and I daresay it's true enough."

"That is so . . . but what do you mean by it?"

"I on'y mean that I daresay ye all like to get hold on our votes, . . . or else ye wouldn't be trying to please us in the way ye do, I fancy. Ye know well enough that at the elections a poor man's vote is worth as much as my lord's! . . . Oh, yes, ye know that well enough."

Emanuel stood speechless.

So this was the idea these people had of the charity of the congregation. On such miserable objects had they wasted their works of mercy, for such wretches had he given up his means, so that many a time he was almost in want himself!

He was pale with anger. He was quite unable to speak—the words were choked in his throat.

Then he suddenly took up his hat and rushed out of the room. Away, away! something shrieked within him. He could no longer endure these miserable human creatures; he must escape from all this swinishness, from all this filth which was suffocating him.

CHAPTER IV

HE had not gone far, however, before he began to slacken his pace; and when he came to the end of the path leading out of the Fens on to the higher ground, he stopped, took his hat off, and pressed his hand to his burning and beating forehead.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," he murmured to himself. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

He ought not to have forgotten these words of his Lord, he said to himself;—he continued his walk slowly, carrying his hat in his hand. Should he not go back? He had not acted as it became one who would humbly follow in his Master's footsteps. Was it not time to take in hand that demon, pride, which latterly had been pursuing him and throwing dust in his eyes, so that he could only see darkness and despair around him?

He had become so nervous in the last few weeks that he absolutely started when a man suddenly appeared on the path a little way in front, and his uneasiness was not allayed when in the short-necked and unnaturally long-limbed figure he recognised Hansen the weaver.

Emanuel put his hat on again and hastened his steps a little. He had always felt some little distrust of the weaver, whose peculiar and reserved



HANSEN.
THE
WEAVER.

demeanour was so different from his own open and straightforward nature. He had a feeling that this man was spying out his doings, and he could not make out what his hidden object was.

They greeted each other with a silent shake of the hand, and each kept his own side of the path.

"Well, how is all with you? Nothing new has happened, I suppose?" asked Emanuel, absently.

"Oh, something or other is always happening," answered the weaver; he stood there with his large red hands on his chest, the tips of his fingers stuck between his waistcoat and his black American cloth cuffs, and gazed at the fields. "But unfortunately that something is not always good."

Emanuel knew by his voice that he had evil tidings to impart.

"Indeed," he said.

"I can go part of the way back with you, if you like," continued the weaver. "I am not busy to-day.

"Very well—let us get on then!"

They walked for a time in silence.

"I hadn't expected to meet you so far from home, Emanuel. I've just seen the Kyndlöse doctor's carriage on the way to Veilby . . . and, as far as I know, there's no illness there."

Emanuel did not answer. It was by no means the first time he had had to endure much spiteful wit from his friends on account of his visit to Dr Hassing. Moreover, the weaver's words filled

him with new disquiet. Was it possible that the doctor and his party were paying him a return visit.

The weaver began to talk about the bad harvest prospects, about the rye, which was already getting black at the top on the low-lying ground, and about the heavy losses the peasants would suffer all over the country if the Almighty were not merciful enough to send the east wind.

Emanuel did not listen ; he knew the weaver's roundabout ways, and knew that he must arm himself with patience.

His thoughts in the meantime went their own way. He was reminded of what he had been thinking about, an hour before, when he had been despondently looking down on the squalid Fen cottages from the Foxhills, . . . now here, by his side, was a person who actually had raised himself up from the swamp of debasement. The weaver was born in the Fen cottages ; his father had been a swineherd on the Tryggerløse estate in Vesterby parish, and as a child he had herded the sheep on the desolate heaths. He had always been very chary of words when any reference was made to his childhood, but there was a general idea that he had once as a boy been present when his father was flogged by his master, and it was thought that this experience had tinged his later development. Emanuel felt a pang at this moment when he reflected that it had been a deed of violence, and not one of love to which this poor

child owed his spiritual elevation. His thoughts were arrested when the weaver suddenly stopped, and said :

" I suppose you know, Emanuel, that he has confessed his heavy sin? May God look upon him in his loving-kindness ! "

" What do you say ? Who has confessed ? "

" The chairman of the Parish Council of course. Who else were you thinking of ? "

" What has he confessed ? . . . I don't understand a word ? "

" He has at last humbled himself before the Lord, and brought himself to confess that he has been living in sin. People have long suspected it ; but one could hardly think it possible that a man standing as the political leader of a christian congregation could so forget the Holy Scripture about fornicators and the unclean. . . . So yesterday there seem to have been one or two who went to him, and in all christian brotherliness warned him that it couldn't go on any longer . . . he must clear himself from the frightful imputations which were brought against him. He couldn't deny that by degrees several things had come up which were not in his favour, and when at last he perceived that big Sidse had not kept so quiet a tongue as he had given her credit for, he was obliged to own up. "

" It can't be true ! " exclaimed Emanuel in a low voice, resting on his stick as if the earth were giving away under him.

"You may well say that," answered the weaver, again looking at the fields. "It's an occurrence which may well give us all something to think about."

They walked on for a time in silence.

Then the weaver began saying that the best way would be to call a meeting of the church-wardens, so as to have the matter thoroughly sifted. Everybody must agree, he said, that a man who had sinned so deeply could not continue to occupy the highest posts of confidence in the circle of the Friends, and now there must be no delay in wiping out the stain on the congregation.

Emanuel, who thought he could detect a malicious satisfaction in the weaver's tone at the thought of the chairman's downfall, could not help saying :

"It is curious to hear you so eager in this case, Jens Hansen, when all the time you are the cause of Hans Jensen having been pushed into the foremost places in the congregation. I remember, at the time, many of us had our doubts about it . . . his previous life had not been blameless ; but you always insisted that we were not to bother ourselves about that. He was just the very man, you said ; and we allowed ourselves to be quieted. If any mistake has been made, you are the one to bear the blame for it."

The weaver's crooked mouth drew itself up towards his ear.

"Nay, I don't deny that I backed up Hans Jensen . . . and I still maintain, that for the kind of politics he had to take the lead in, he was just the right man. Any driver is good enough to drive into the ditch, as they say! . . . But now it's another matter. What we have to do is to get out of the ditch, in my opinion."

At this moment Emanuel started violently. During the conversation they had reached the high road, and there, hardly a gunshot length away, was a carriage advancing towards them with a pair of roans and a coachman in livery.

He immediately recognised Dr Hassing's turnout. He even thought he could see Miss Ragnhild's fair head behind the coachman.

He struggled with all his might to hide his agitation from the weaver, and talked at random about "this meeting which we must have . . . there you're quite in the right, a meeting of the church council under these circumstances is, of course, necessary."

When the carriage came nearer it was apparent that he had made a mistake. There was no one beside the doctor on the wide seat; he was wrapped in a mackintosh, smoking a cigar.

When the doctor saw Emanuel, he called to the coachman and stopped the carriage.

"How d'ye do, how d'ye do, Pastor Hansted!" said he, putting out his gloved hand. "How are you? It's a long time since I've had the pleasure of seeing you . . . you are head over ears in your

rye harvest, I suppose. For your sake I hope you can swim . . . for it's somewhat moist under foot just now."

"Yes, it is . . . rather a trying harvest," answered Emanuel without looking up. "You are on your rounds, I suppose, doctor!"

"Yes, you've got a broken leg in your neighbourhood. A farm hand got a cow tether round his foot . . . well, it was only a couple of ankle bones, as they say out here, no very serious business! But now don't let me forget the most important thing. I have no end of messages to you from Miss Tönnesen who left us about a week ago. She asked me particularly to remember her very kindly to you when I saw you."

"Is Miss Tönnesen gone?" exclaimed Emanuel, involuntarily looking up.

"Yes, she had promised us to make a longer stay, but I believe she was pining for the town air. You know she is no lover of being 'out at grass,' as she said. She stayed long enough to receive the formal announcement of an engagement in our house, between my nephew and my wife's little niece . . . I daresay you remember seeing them the other day. They are rather young, both of them. But, good heavens! we get old soon enough, don't we?"

"Yes, indeed—that's just—just the point," said Emanuel, without knowing himself exactly what he meant.

The doctor nodded to the coachman and the carriage rolled on.

The weaver had been keeping a close watch upon the two men with his red eyes, from the side of the road ; and when the doctor had driven off he walked for a time by Emanuel's side in silence, clearing his throat and smiling.

"He's a smartish man that Hassing—to judge from appearance anyhow," he said at last.

"Oh, yes !"

"That makes it all the harder to understand how he can hold such fearful political opinions. It's very queer."

"I don't think Dr Hassing troubles himself about politics."

"No, that's just what I meant. Folks say, you know, that he only lives for the pleasures of this world. I've heard tell of his goings on at home, his good living, and his diversions . . . of the most spicy kind. And the talk that goes on is said to be of the most godless sort——"

He stopped when his ever watchful eye perceived that Emanuel was no longer listening to him. After a moment's silence he stopped and said good-bye in Jesus' name.

He went back the way he had come and gradually quickened his steps. The afternoon was already far advanced, and he still had a good deal to get through. His business now was to work up the feeling of the people before the church council was held.

Beyond this he had no anxieties. After having in this meeting with Emanuel arrived at a certainty on what he had long suspected, he did not doubt that the long abasement of the People's cause, here in this congregation, was at last drawing to a close.

CHAPTER V

EMANUEL went slowly homewards.

The sky had become overcast. Without his noticing it, a fine rain had begun to fall. When he reached home, and from the entrance heard Hansine's and the children's voices in the sitting room, he stopped and stood a moment irresolute. Then he turned softly and went into his half empty room on the other side of the passage. Here he sat down heavily on the dusty sofa and buried his face in his hands—astonished and terrified at himself!

He had been so certain that the struggle he had been having with himself for the last few weeks would be fought out on the day he heard that Miss Ragnhild had left the neighbourhood, . . . not that he thought she personally had any power over him, but the knowledge of her presence had kept him in a constant state of painful disquietude. He never knew when or where she would appear and draw him into the narcotic-laden atmosphere

by which he had already once or twice been stupified.

And now when at last he knew that she was



gone, he was seized by a feeling of emptiness, overwhelmed by a sensation of desolation which he could not master.

He remained sitting in the same position with his face in his hands while the dusk crept in closer and closer around him. He was so absorbed in himself and in the heavy restless beating of his heart that he never heard the door open and Hansine come in.

"Are you there?" she said, after standing a moment motionless, looking at his bent figure.

He started up with almost a cry of dismay.

"What is it? . . . Is it you?"

She stood for a moment without answering.

"Sören said you had come home," she then said. "We have been looking for you everywhere. Why don't you come in to the evening porridge?"

Emanuel's eyes sought to pierce the gloom of the room, so as to scrutinize her face. For the first time he heard her usually firm voice falter a moment.

"I am coming directly," he said, in a muffled voice.

She remained standing a while with her hand on the lock, as if expecting him to say something more to her. Then she opened the door lingeringly and went slowly out.

Half-way out she said, without turning towards him:

"Have you seen the doctor? He seems to have been in the village this afternoon."

"The doctor? . . . Yes, I have. How did you know?"

"Oh, it was only an idea," she said, and closed the door quietly after her.

Emanuel did not move ; he had turned pale.

After a time he rose, and walked up and down the room uneasily, and then stopped by the window, gazing out into the dark garden.

He saw that Hansine guessed all, and his heart bled when he thought what she must have been suffering in silence latterly. But now all must . . . should be over ! He felt that it would be the final decisive struggle with the unhappy heritage of his blood ; the last proof of his emancipation. And he would surely conquer.

CHAPTER VI

NEXT morning one of the Skibberup people came back from a visit to Sandinge, with the alarming intelligence that the old High School director, who had long been ailing, had suddenly become very ill and could not live. A few hours later an express came announcing his death. With this man disappeared one of the earliest champions of the enlightenment of the peasants ; he was in fact the actual founder of the "People's" movement in this part of the country. For a period of thirty years the "Awakened" had looked up to him with veneration, and though latterly he had not altogether approved of the way in which the

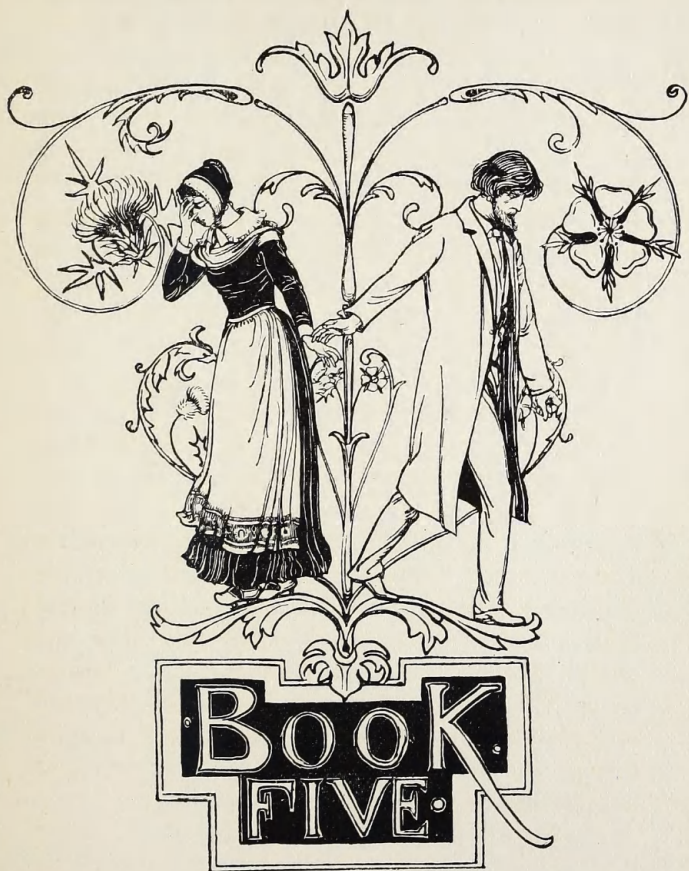
younger members gave themselves up to politics, instead of turning all their thoughts to what in his eyes was the only necessity of life, namely "spiritual advancement," yet there had never been the slightest break in the good understanding between himself and the Friends. On the contrary, the older he grew, and the more his large beard and long curls were touched with silver, so much the more inviolable was the reverence they all felt for him. To the young it was like hearing an old Saga when he used to tell them about the dark days at the beginning of the movement, when its champions were looked upon as corrupters of youth who deserved the stake. It sounded to them like a saintly martyrdom when he talked to them in his half-joking way of those early times when, after the manner of the Apostles, he wandered on foot from town to town, and had to give his lectures in outhouses and servants' rooms, pursued like a felon by the clergy and schoolmasters, despised and annoyed by the peasants themselves, who many a time had set their dogs on him to drive him out of the town.

So it was not merely the ordinary pain of losing a friend, which the news of his death called forth in every part of the district; it was that deep solemn grief which seizes people under a common misfortune. They all felt they had lost their chieftain; and to do honour

to his memory—partly also under the influence of certain anxieties, because of internal dissensions, which now, when the central and conciliating bond was wanting, would be certain to break out with renewed strength—a sudden truce was proclaimed between the opposition camps within the congregation. The weaver resigned his secret agitation, the meeting of the church-wardens was postponed, and a veil of oblivion was, for the time, even thrown over the misdeeds of the chairman of the Parish Council. The old director was the only topic of conversation; his photographs were taken down from the walls over the drawers, the more closely to examine the beloved features and the two black spots which purported to represent his youthful, dancing brown eyes. His old stories were repeated, his old letters re-read—little hasty scraps full of exclamations of delight, and warm assurances of friendship; and in the evening people sat outside their doors singing the songs he loved.

The message of death made a deep impression in Veilby Parsonage too. Although Hansine had long had a presentiment that her acquaintance with Sandinge High School would be dearly bought, and although just lately she had plainly seen the vanity of the expectations which the enthusiastic faith and conversation of the deceased had raised in her mind in her girlhood, yet she had never nourished any feeling of bitterness

towards him. In those moments when her future looked darkest, she had on the contrary always thought of her old teacher, as of one with whom in her hour of need she could find refuge and comfort. Now when he was gone, she remembered with gratitude all the good she had learnt of him; and she particularly fixed her mind on the exhortations to live in truth and self-sacrifice, on which he so constantly dwelt in his speeches to the young. Under the impression caused by his death, and in Emanuel's continued silence, which was full evidence to her whither his yearning was leading him, a resolution was ripening within her, which had occupied her thoughts day and night, since the visit of Miss Ragnhild and Miss Gerda. She told herself it was fruitless any longer to give herself up to a hope which had already often enough disappointed her, and that therefore it would be better both for her and for Emanuel, but especially for the sake of the children's future, that a decisive change should take place in their whole life. One day she would talk plainly to him about their relations to each other; and quietly and cautiously tell him what had been more and more borne in upon her, as the only expedient towards a new and happier life for all of them.



CHAPTER I

ONE day between the death and the burial of the High School director, when Emanuel went into the stable later than usual, he found Niels still in bed ; he gave vent to his long repressed impatience and admonished him severely.

An angry altercation ensued, in the midst of which Emanuel ordered him to take his things and leave the Parsonage. Niels took him at his word immediately, and Emanuel noticed the next day when he wished to engage a new man, that the occurrence had roused a strong feeling against him among a certain section of the people. Niels had always been a pet of the congregation, and many said plainly that Emanuel had sent him away from jealousy, because of the sensation caused by his newspaper articles. Niels was the hero of the day, especially in Maren Smed's ever-growing "Brotherhood-Community."

Although, otherwise, everything was apparently going on as usual at the Parsonage, all the adversity Emanuel had been experiencing, and the increasing severity of his mental struggles had made him almost unrecognisable. His eyes twitched and blinked, he could no longer bear

the sunlight, his face was ashen-grey and so thin that there were hollows in his cheeks above his beard. He had not yet exchanged any words with Hansine except on every-day matters. Something had latterly come over her which he could not understand. He saw that she was both seeking his confidence and drawing back from his advances; and he had found no opportunity of bringing out the explanatory and soothing words which he had made up his mind to say to her.

On the day of the funeral he was in a state of restless agitation from the earliest morning. The prospect of having to pass the whole day in the company of several hundred strangers, and of affronted, badly-disposed friends, but, above all, the thought that he would probably be expected to speak—to speak a word of comfort in the hour of depression—had all made him so nervous that he had not closed an eye all night.

It therefore came upon him as a relief that, just as he and Hansine were about to start for Sandinge, a messenger came in hot haste to say that Mrs Aggerbölle was dying, and he must go at once to administer the sacrament.

"Then you must cross by yourself," he said to Hansine. "I will come over later. You will find plenty of people to go with. Tell Jörgen at the ferry to leave me a boat, and I'll row myself over."

It was a dull gloomy day which involuntarily made one melancholy. The sun as usual had

risen in a clear blue sky ; but already heavy rain clouds were lowering over the half-mown fields, with their long rows of wet sheaves. Flags were flying half-mast high all over the village, and on the outlying farms and solitary houses ; and out on the grey fiord there was a whole fleet of fishing boats, which were being rowed with two or four oars towards the opposite shore, all of them filled with black-clad people bearing wreaths.

In the course of a quarter of an hour Emanuel—in his robes—reached Aggerbölle's dilapidated little house in the desolate and solitary outlying plantation ; he walked over the broken-down garden fence, over a row of decaying cabbages and potato stems, and went into the passage. Here he was met by a little humpbacked woman who came crying towards him and called out, " she is just dead ! "

He took off his hat and went softly through a half-empty room, with a patched carpet, into the bedroom. Aggerbölle was on his knees by the bed, with his arms round his wife's withered little corpse, sobbing and calling her name aloud. By the window sat or stood four fair-haired, uncommonly pretty, but very pale children.

They stared silently and immovably with their large melancholy eyes, as if they all, down to the smallest, a boy of six, who sat on a footstool with his hands under his cheek, were well aware of their fate.

Emanuel stopped a moment first at the foot of

the bed and bowed his head in a silent prayer. Then he went along and gently put his hand on Aggerbölle's shoulder.

"Bernhard!" he said.

But Aggerbölle took no notice. He continued to call his dead wife, and to kiss her hands and press them to his breast amidst his sobs.

Emanuel sat down to wait till he had become calmer and more able to listen to his consolations.

He rested his elbow on the handle of his umbrella, put his hand under his chin, and glanced round the room. He looked towards the beds, the children, and the adjoining room, the door of which stood open—and his heart contracted with pain at the deep, hopeless want which was everywhere displayed.

He knew that Aggerbölle and his wife had moved out there from the noise and temptations of the capital to live their lives in rural peace and happiness. He had often been told how, as young, happy, rosy-cheeked people, they had wandered down by the sea on moonlight nights, arm in arm, cheek against cheek, full of courage and faith in life, and with a determined and honest intention of building up their future on the rocky ground of perseverance. And year by year the ground seemed to slip away from beneath them; hope after hope had sunk in ruins, and of the abode of their happiness nothing now remained but this skeleton of a home, into which death, the final annihilator, had made his solemn entry.

He started. Aggerbölle had at last raised his head, and sat up on the edge of his wife's bed. With his hands on his lap, he was a picture of the most complete helplessness.

"Yes, now it has come, Emanuel!" he said, in a broken voice, while the tears coursed down his swollen cheeks. "The Lord has taken my Sophie from me. Now I am quite alone in the world with our innocent little children! . . . God give thee joy in heaven, my little Sophie! You have been a good and faithful wife. And how happy we once were . . . but in the day of trouble you stood by me, and I thank you for it—I thank you——"

He was again overwhelmed by his tears, and buried his face in his hands.

Emanuel rose, and again went to him and touched his shoulder.

"Bernhard!" he began.

But Aggerbölle would not let him speak.

With his face hidden in his hands, he continued to praise his wife, telling him about the happiness of their early married life, her beauty, and her enjoyment of life, her self-sacrifice and patience.

All at once he raised his head and said wildly:

"But I have always said so, . . . there is some sorcery in this country air, Emanuel . . . something which steals away the strength from those (whose) cradles have been rocked among the chimney pots. I have felt it myself, . . . and

my little Sophie felt it . . . it drains away soul, blood, and marrow from us, Emanuel. And we can make no stand against it . . . we are damned, damned !”

Emanuel turned pale. Aggerbölle had almost shrieked out the last words ; and now he threw himself upon the corpse again, taking up in his hands the small head, in a nightcap many sizes too large, and kissing the forehead and the sunken eyes passionately. He was so swallowed up in his sorrow that Emanuel saw it was useless to talk to him, and decided to go.

He only said, “ Good-bye, Bernhard, you will soon see me again.”

Then he shook hands with each of the children, stroked their pretty fair hair, and took the smallest one up in his arms and kissed him. “ God bless you !” he said, and softly left the room.

In the next room he was met by the little deformed woman, who began eagerly to tell him about Mrs Aggerbölle’s last hours of suffering.

“ Yes, now her struggles are over . . . and it’s a good thing ; for it was a sorry sight to see her at the last. It’s been a weary night, Emanuel. I was there myself when the Lord set her free. She was lying quite stiff, as if she was gone ; then she gave a great sigh, and was dead.

Emanuel did not listen to her story, and tried to get rid of her. But the woman pursued him, first into the passage, then into the garden, full of her news. She did not leave him till he was in

the road, then visibly relieved, she went back to the house.

Emanuel walked slowly towards the shore. He held his big blue cotton umbrella behind his back with both hands, and looked at the ground, while his eyes were filled with tears.

Why make oneself blind when one had been made to see? he thought. What was the use of going on lying to oneself . . . and to others? The scales had fallen from his eyes and he was terrified by what he saw! Yes, Bernhard was right. There must be magic in the air here; and he had been under the enchantment himself. He began to understand everything. He felt like one waking from a long heavy sleep, . . . like a captive mountaineer, who, after eight long years in the earthmounds of the gnomes, is suddenly brought to himself by hearing the bells of his native town.

CHAPTER II

WHEN he reached Sandinge a few hours after mid-day, the actual funeral ceremonies were just over. The old High School director had been laid to rest in the village churchyard, in the presence of a couple of thousand persons, among whom were at least fifty priests, all in vestments. Speeches—eleven in all—had been made both in the large hall of the school, which was decorated

with fir branches and pennons, and where the body had lain, and in the church and by the grave. Now the people were all partaking of the food they had brought with them in baskets. As the school buildings could not nearly hold all the people, they had, in spite of a continuous fine rain, scattered themselves about the garden and the adjoining fields, where they sought shelter under the trees and their umbrellas.

Many had been soaked on the way to the churchyard, and their boots were covered with mud from the clayey roads. The women had fastened their black skirts up round their waists, or drawn them right up over their heads. But neither the weather, nor the state of the roads had succeeded in robbing the mournful ceremony of its solemn character, or in depressing the spirits of the participators. In various directions was heard the singing of those who had finished their meal, or of the young girls who were wandering about the garden in long rows, too much overcome to eat.

In this multitude there were representatives of the great People's party of the most varied shades. Here were to be seen all kinds of figures, from a couple of Copenhagen liberal leaders—a lawyer with gold-rimmed spectacles, and a sugar merchant with *pince-nez*, who, together with their wives and a couple of young daughters, had driven from the station in a landau—down to soaking wet labourers, who had walked miles and given

up a day's harvest wages to follow their faithful friend to his last resting-place. There were schoolmasters, theological students, and High School directors, both of the old type with large beards and quiet beatified smiles, and of the newly-arisen modern type, with the manners and dress of men of the world. Here and there was a young priest, walking arm in arm with his fiancée, under one umbrella, humming the hymns which were being sung around them, looking tenderly at each other now and then—he in a wide-brimmed soft plush hat and with his trousers turned up, she with her skirt pinned up and long flat goloshes. There were peasant Members, who even here couldn't help putting their heads together and whispering to each other as they did in the "House." There were delegates from other parts of the country who had brought wreaths and greetings from distant friends; nay, there was even a great Norwegian writer, who at the moment was on a lecturing tour in Denmark—a giant with a huge bushy head of hair, an eagle's face, with spectacles and a white tie—who to the universal joy had appeared, and was attracting great attention by his appearance and loud voice. Wherever he showed himself, a solemn attentive crowd gathered round him, and he was particularly followed about by Niels and some other young men in rather an obtrusive manner; each strove to be the chosen one, upon whose shoulder he laid his hand when he spoke.

"Ah, this is brave!" he was heard to say in his broad sing-song dialect. "You're very fruitful here—I see that to-day. You are the old soil for the spiritual life of the north, mind that! We are young colonists up in our parts. And we have so much rock—such rocky ground?"

In such a large gathering, with so many well-known men, Emanuel's arrival of course attracted no attention; nor was his absence from the funeral ceremony noticed by any, save the members of his own congregation, among whom it had given rise to some cavilling.

He had not, however, stood long among the crowd under the long wooden verandah—or "gallery," as it was called—looking for Hansine, before a loosely-jointed person with dark blue *pince-nez* in addition to a pair of spectacles, darted towards him and clapped both his hands on to his shoulders—

"At last I meet you, Hansted! How are you! how are you! You know me again, don't you? We have been looking for you everywhere . . . you must come with me to see Lena Gylling. She has been asking after you all the time; she is so anxious to make your acquaintance."

Emanuel had hardly time to recognise one of his old university comrades before his arm was taken and he was hurried off up the steps into the crowded lecture hall, which was scented with the fir branches, and filled with the buzz of voices. He was introduced to an elderly, refined, and

handsome lady, wearing a peculiar velvet cap trimmed with lace, who was sitting in a corner of the room, surrounded by a number of very talkative persons who were all strangers to Emanuel. It was the well-known Mrs Gylling, a wealthy widow, who held a kind of popular court in the capital, and whose house was the centre of the democratic party. She greeted him with a mixture of youthful bashfulness and motherly warmth, and keeping his hand in hers, said :

"So at last I see you ! I have been most impatient to make your acquaintance, as you may imagine. Why do you shut yourself up in your Eden and never let us get some pleasure out of you ? You really ought to come and see us in town. We want young blood there too, I can assure you. I had the pleasure of speaking to your wife a little while ago, and I got a half-promise from her that she would prevail on you to come and speak to our community. Now I hope she has power enough over you to make you come ; . . . and remember me to her. She was so charming, both to look at and to talk to."

Emanuel hardly listened to her ; he was only anxious to get away. But first one and then another of the bystanders came up to shake hands with him, or pat him on the shoulder with exclamations of delight.

"Is this Emanuel Hansted ! How delightful ! You're just like what we thought you'd be !"

He did not know what to answer, and was quite uncomfortable at the advances of all these strangers. By good luck the Norwegian author came back at this moment from making the round of the garden, and at once drew all the attention to himself.

Emanuel seized the opportunity to slip away again to look for Hansine.

CHAPTER III

HE found her at last sitting in the shelter of a briar rose on the outer side of the garden wall, with a strange peasant woman of a large and powerful build, and wearing a head-covering which was different from the stiff hood-shaped ones generally worn in this neighbourhood ; her's was tied at the back in a large loose knot.

Even from a distance Emanuel was surprised to see the stranger holding Hansine's hand in her lap ; and when he got nearer, to see that they were both extremely agitated, and that the unknown had red eyes, as if she had been crying.

When he reached them she rose and stretched out her hand with a broad "How are you,"—her face at the same time turning fiery red, and all the freckles on her nose and under her pale eyes looking quite white.

Only now did Emanuel recognise the friend of Hansine's youth, the red-haired Ane, who had undergone the remarkable fate of being married to a "Skalling."

The Skallings were fisher-folk who inhabited a tongue of land right out by the open sea, from whence—just as in the time of the old inhabitants of Skibberup—they paddled about in near and distant fiords and sold the produce of their fishing round the shore. They were absolutely untouched by the new intellectual movements among the people, and were shunned by the rest of the coast population on account of their lawlessness and wild ways.

Seven or eight years ago—shortly after Hansine's marriage—Ane had met a handsome, young black-haired Skalling in the town, and to her great horror had fallen violently in love with him. She struggled for a long time against her inclinations, which from shame she had not even imparted to Hansine. But at last she could no longer withstand the young fisherman's daring advances, and one fine day, in a wild easterly storm, he sailed down in his boat and carried her back with him the same evening, soon after fetching away her old adoptive parents to a home in his seaweed thatched hut. The event had caused a painful sensation at the time in Skibberup and Veilby; no one had thought that Ane would let herself be hoodwinked like that by a pair of bright eyes, and she was sincerely pitied for the life she would

have to lead among these wild people. For some time after the parting she and Hansine exchanged letters, which on Ane's side grew shorter and shorter, until they at last ceased. Hansine understood very well that it was because she was ashamed to acknowledge that she was happy; and the thought of the doings of the friend of her childhood out there by the fresh open sea, had often, in the course of these years, made her feel her own lot doubly heavy, and the restless life in Veilby Parsonage doubly depressing.

Emanuel was a little disturbed by again seeing Ane in close companionship with his wife. He had become quite unused to the slightest display of intimacy on Hansine's part towards any one except himself; and he saw at once that the two had taken up the threads of their old friendship, and had opened their hearts to one another.

He had just unrobed, and now sat down on the stump of a tree beside them. He asked Ane, with a certain amount of compassion in his voice, how she was getting on in Skallingland. She answered, very well, and told him that she had five fine children and three sheep, and that she and her Matthias had built themselves a new house last summer; and that it was Matthias' own idea to bring her over to the old director's funeral, as he had some herring nets near, which he could examine at the same time.

She spoke quietly, with some shyness and without ever looking up at Emanuel; but she kept tight

hold of Hansine's hand all the time. Although she tried to conceal it, her tone plainly showed how the meeting with her old High School friends had disappointed her anticipations; and that she was only anxious to get back to her life on the shore,—her sheep, her children, and her Matthias.

Emanuel only listened carelessly; he soon fell back into his own thoughts. He sat with his cheek resting on his hand—a habit he had lately acquired—looking down at the ground.

“By the way, Hansine,” he said, suddenly looking up. “Mrs Gylling, from Copenhagen, tells me you have been talking to her. How do you like her?”

“Oh, pretty well!”

After a moment's silence, he continued:

“What did you find to say to each other?”

“Well, that's not easy to say, so many people spoke to me; but it seemed to be all about nothing.”

“No one can accuse you of being enthusiastic, at any rate!” he said, with a forced smile.

“No; I don't suppose I am.

Again Emanuel was silent for a time.

The somewhat cool interest which Hansine took in the People's cause and its champions was nothing new to him; it had often surprised and grieved him. Nor did he yet understand her in the least on this point. He could not imagine what it was that had disappointed her; and at

this moment he felt keenly how far they had latterly drifted apart, and what a long time it was since they had had any confidential conversation with each other.

He promised himself that from that day he would leave nothing undiscussed between them. Now when all other ties were breaking, now when they found themselves standing alone, they must come together again in full mutual understanding; and in his life with her and the children his soul should find satisfaction and peace. . . .

In the meantime the weather had cleared up. The clouds had dispersed, the blue sky was appearing here and there; and Emanuel saw crowds of people flocking from the garden towards a tumulus in an adjoining field, from which the old director used to speak in the summer on national festivals.

"I suppose we must go and see what is going on!" he said.

"I thought it was time to be getting home," said Hansine.

"Yes, I think it is."

Just then three soldierly Skibberup youths passed them at quick march, with swinging arms and resounding steps.

"Are you going to sit there?" they shouted in passing. "I suppose you don't want to hear!"

Then they got up and followed them.

CHAPTER IV

THE crowd of people who gradually assembled round the stone on the barrow consisted mainly of Veilby and Skibberup people. The visitors from Copenhagen and the Norwegian author had left an hour ago to catch their train, and others whose homes were distant had driven off one after another.

Still there were some strange faces among them, and notably one which attracted much attention; young, stout, and pale, with a suspicious look and thick powerful lips. It belonged to the much talked of Ole Madsen, a labourer's son, a curate in West Jutland, who had lately become the great hope of the People's Cause. He was standing with his hands behind his back, talking to Hansen the weaver; his long black coat and flat black hat gave him a certain resemblance to a Roman Catholic priest.

Emanuel's arrival was observed by most of those present, and he couldn't avoid feeling that he was expected to speak. He had himself, at the sight of so many of his congregation, felt a necessity to address them . . . openly to lay his doubts before them and to free his position from all misconstruction. Was it not his plain duty, he asked himself? Would it not be cowardice to delay for a single day expressing his new views on the People's Cause and its future?

He forced a way through the crowds and mounted to the speaker's place amidst a deep silence.

He began by a tribute to the friend round whose bier they had met to-day. He said they must all be deeply grateful to the Almighty for this man whose life had been one of pure love, utter unselfishness, and faithful affection.—But had the deceased never been disappointed in his hopes, he then asked ; had his faith never suffered shipwreck ? He had got the impression, he added, that the old High School director, in his later years, had been a little depressed and no longer looked to the future with those bright hopes which before had helped him lightly over all the adversities of life. Nor was it any use to deny that the People's Cause was at the moment passing through an hour of tribulation. Its friends had a great defeat behind them—great expectations dashed to the ground—and, like every defeat, this one had also sown suspicions and dissensions among the vanquished. But instead of attempting to hide the truth, and to get out of its gravity by lies, and hurling complaints at one another, for each one's share in the common misfortune ; they should all examine themselves closely, and try to find out where they had trespassed, where they had made a mistake, and what in the future was to be done to remedy the defect.

There began to be some disturbance among the

crowd. He had already been interrupted once or twice by somewhat uproarious shouts.

He continued, however, without noticing them.

"I won't mention the mistake in 'tactics' which we have made by undervaluing our opponents' strength, by not sufficiently remembering that the community we wish to overthrow is built up upon timbers and piles having their foundations in old time. Nor will I allude to the fact that we have perhaps been too ready to stamp with selfishness those who did not in all points share our views. There are no doubt among these, not a few who acted with the most upright desire to work out good and to seek out God's ways, and from whose toleration we might perhaps take example."

"Dr Hassing!" a voice in the crowd called out, an allusion which was understood and immediately raised a laugh.

Emanuel turned pale. He recognised his former man Niels' harsh voice, and was obliged to stop a moment to calm and control himself.

Then he continued :

"But what I specially wish to allude to, is the great internal rupture which the People's party—and here I mean the peasant class in particular—in my opinion is suffering under, and which has been fatal to it. We have been far too pleased with ourselves. We have been far too certain that we were in the right . . . and therefore we could not understand that the Lord did not give us what we asked for at once. Nay, let me use

the right word . . . we have thought too much of ourselves, we have been too presumptuous; we have latterly been too busy sweeping at our neighbour's door, dusting his house and searching his heart, and in so doing we have forgotten our own."

He went on talking for a little time—quietly and with self-command—although the interruptions became more frequent and noisy. But when at last he was hardly allowed to speak, he concluded abruptly by hoping that all friends of truth and justice among the vanquished, might learn that not self-righteousness but self-esteem, not arrogance but toleration, were the means to raise them and lead to eventual conquest.

When he stepped down he read in the glances he met on every side, and in the way in which the crowd fell back before him, that by his words he had broken every bond, between himself and the congregation. . . .

Loud shouts of approval suddenly burst out. Hansen the weaver was mounting to the speaker's place in his deliberate manner. The sight of the old champion, who for so many years had not spoken at any meeting, acted at this moment like an electric shock, and the people crowded round him in expectant excitement, so as not to lose a word or an expression of his face.

He stood, just as in former days, for a long time silent, with one hand on his back, holding his chin in the other, while his glance roamed

over the crowd with a smile. At last he said slowly in his innocent voice:

"Well, that was a very queer speech we've just heard from Emanuel. I stood there pinching my ears and thinking I couldn't be hearing right; and at last I said to myself: 'You're asleep, Jens! you're dreaming that you're listening to our old friend Archdeacon Tønnesen.'"

"Hear, hear! Bravo!" the Skibberup people thundered.

"This is just how it is, ye see; I can't help thinkin' of another speech Emanuel made, ever so many years ago, . . . it was the very first time he spoke to us in our old Meeting House. He sang a different song then . . . then peasants were the very best sort o' folks Emanuel knew. . . . Ah, we were that nice and that honest, it was a'most too much of a good thing. Why, I daresay a good many of you can mind that speech; folks thought a good deal of it then. I don't mind sayin' that for my part I wasn't near



so taken with it ; and so Emanuel's words to-day aren't so much of a surprise. It's always like that with folks that fill their mouths too full ; they have to spit some of it out again !—Well, then there was what Emanuel said about our being so taken with ourselves, and everything had gone wrong because of it. We ought to learn of the good people in the towns, he said, and then the Almighty would be sure to give us what we asked for.—Oh, no, I've not got much faith in that. My idea is, on the contrary, that we've been far too ready to let ourselves be led by the nose by these Copenhagen people who've turned up here in the last few years, calling themselves friends of the People's cause, and without more ado made themselves leaders, . . . and in my opinion that's why everything's gone wrong. It's been a sort of a fashion among the town folks to make themselves friends of the people, and I daresay we country folks were a bit flattered that so many fine clever people busied themselves about us ; we were ready to go out of our five senses just to please them. We thought it a mighty fine proud thing when a lawyer in gold spectacles or his fine wife came and patted us on the back and called us "little friend." Then when into the bargain they came and settled here like one of ourselves, and even married one of our girls, . . . why, then we were so mightily honoured we didn't know which leg to stand on.—But it was a kind of disease, and I always thought if we only gave it

time it would wear itself out again. And I fancy I've seen signs lately that we were comin' to the end of the farce we'd been such innocents as to let ourselves be fooled by. And I think that we can begin, little by little, our old honest work of fighting against the tyranny of the educated, and spiritual pride . . . don't ye think so too, friends?"

"Yes, yes!—hear, hear!" again resounded from the audience, who for a time had been silent.

Emanuel's face was deeply flushed. The weaver's insults, and the approving shouts of his former friends, hit him like the lashes of a whip, and he had the greatest difficulty in preserving his self-command.

At the same time a voice within him said, What are you enraged by? Isn't it your own work of which you see the consummation here? You are only reaping what you sowed. Don't complain, go away quietly . . . go away and be ashamed of yourself!

"Let us get away from here," said Hansine, by his side.

"Then there's all that about toleration that Emanuel talked so much about," continued the weaver. "Well, toleration is all very well. But as the saying has it, 'you mustn't let any one sit so close to you that he sits your thighs off.' It's not so long ago when the peasants in one place, denying the faith of their childhood, elected

a freethinker, a regular bad atheist; and then, when some people thought it was going rather too far, what happened?

"Didn't our dear pastors and the learned gentlemen at the university say, 'Blow it all—don't let us ask people about their faith; it would be impertinent and rude. What will our opponents think of us?' . . . Now that's the sort of new-fangled learning we've had so much of from Copenhagen, right down materialistic principles, one may say . . . but they don't agree with my reading of the catechism. And I'll just repeat here what our guest, Pastor Ole Madsen, whispered to me a moment ago during Emanuel's speech. 'Beware of false prophets,' he said. And for my part I'll add, beware of all that talking too much about toleration . . . for they've generally got something or other on their conscience. Mark that!"

Although the smile had hardly left his face a moment, one could tell both by his voice and the way he pointed to the sky every time he named the Almighty, with what suppressed passion he spoke—and the crowd stood round open mouthed, as if rooted to the spot.

Emanuel and Hansine had left, and gone back towards the school. On the way they met Ane, who had left the field before them to fetch her things, and who now came back to say good-bye. Emanuel bid her good-bye absently, and immediately went on—he was impatient to get

home. But Hansine held Ane's hand a long time, and said in her quiet calm manner :

"Then it's a bargain—when you hear from me?"

"But are you really in earnest?" exclaimed Ane, both pleased and uneasy. "I didn't quite believe it before."

"Yes, I mean it—if you will have me?"

"Won't I, my chickie? You may be sure I will. . . . But what do you think Emanuel will say?"

"I don't know, but I will write to you. Good-bye! So long!"

Emanuel meanwhile had stopped a little way off, and turned round to wait for Hansine. He saw the dark mass of people crowded round the barrow, and the weaver's swaying figure sharply outlined against the horizon, and he was filled with deep sadness. He remembered the time when he came out here in the belief that here, at any rate, he would find the human heart in all its pristine purity and simplicity; and now, up there, stood a master in intrigue and scandal triumphing over him! He thought how he had come out to preach the gospel of love; and up there stood the apostle of hatred, stretching out his blood-red hands towards heaven, urging on strife and oppression.

Emanuel and Hansine did not speak to each other on the long road from the school to the shore. Only, after they got into their boat, and

when Emanuel had rowed a little way out into the fiord in the quiet evening air, Hansine, who was sitting in the stern, smoothing the fringe of her shawl, said :

“ Have you nothing to say to me, Emanuel ? ”

He stopped rowing and rested his arms on his oars while he looked out to sea.

“ Yes ; there is no other way now. . . . We must go away,” he answered, out of his own thoughts.

“ What have you thought of doing ? ” she asked, in a little while.

“ Indeed, I don’t know. I suppose I must try and get another living . . . a small place, somewhere or other in Jutland, on the heath or among the sand dunes ; I suppose they won’t deny me that ? ”

“ You shouldn’t do that, Emanuel.”

“ What do you mean ? . . . Why should I not ? ”

“ No ; for it will soon be just the same as it is here. It won’t be long before you will be dissatisfied and only want to get away.”

He looked at her with a searching glance ; she had put in words his own gnawing thoughts, which he had not had courage to divulge. The prospect of beginning a fresh life in a new solitude—in a new, wide, silent desert,—made him shudder.

“ What do you want me to do then ? ”

“ I think you should go where your longings draw you, Emanuel ; . . . it’s no use trying to

HAVE YOU
NOTHING
TO SAY
TO ME?



hide it from each other any longer ; we may as well talk about it plainly. . . . You are longing to get back to your family and the other ways in which you feel at home, and it's only natural. So I think you shouldn't struggle with yourself any longer, Emanuel ; it will be no good. I think you will be able to get some work either in Copenhagen or some other large town, so that you can be together again with your old circle of friends. I can quite understand that you need it."

Emanuel lifted his head and looked at her in astonishment.

"But do you want to do that, Hansine?"

"I?" she said, bending still deeper over the fringe of her shawl, which she had been smoothing all the time :

"I want to do whatever will be best for all of us."

CHAPTER V

THE very next day Emanuel drove over to the diocesan town to see the Bishop, and to ask him to accept his resignation. Hansine walked restlessly up and down the long alleys nearly all the afternoon—wrapped in a little woollen shawl, as if she were cold,—waiting for his return. Every moment she went up the little mound from whence the road was visible to see whether the carriage was in sight.

At last, just before sunset, he came ; and half-an-hour later they were both walking in the chestnut avenue at the bottom of the garden, where they had gone to be undisturbed.

Hansine sat down on the rustic seat, which had been here ever since former days, while Emanuel, excited by his journey and full of experiences and news, walked up and down before her, telling her everything.

At first the old Bishop addressed him rather sharply. He said he was ungrateful, nay treacherous, and declared with great decision that his request could not possibly be granted. But he softened by degrees, and in the end sorrowfully agreed to everything.

"So now we are free, Hansine!" he concluded, stopping in front of her. "We can leave as soon as we get the permission."

She was leaning forward, with her arms resting on her knees, looking at the toe of her shoe, with which she was scraping up the damp earth.

"Well . . . that's just what I want to tell you, Emanuel," she began—and it was evident that she had difficulty in getting the words out ; "I can't go to Copenhagen with you."

"What's that? I don't understand you at all ! What do you mean?"

"I mean . . . not at once," she corrected herself, when she saw that Emanuel had not the slightest idea of her purpose. "Everything there is far too strange ; I should only be a burden to

you until you have arranged your affairs, and made a position and a home. . . . I should not be able to help you in anything. And, besides, I need a little quiet time to myself. Everything has been so disturbed lately."

"Well, there's perhaps something in that," said Emanuel, beginning to walk up and down again with his arms behind him.

"But I must tell you that this will hardly be a pleasant place of abode for you. I saw that in just driving through Skibberup; we no longer live among friends, but among bitter enemies."

"Oh, yes; I've thought of all that. I think I could go and stay with Ane for a while. We talked about it the other day; she said there were two rooms in their new house which they did not use; and I was welcome to have them she said."

"With Ane? Out in Skallingland! Among those dreadful people! Whatever are you thinking about, Hansine?"

"Oh, I don't suppose they are as bad as they are made, out, . . . they're not—Ane said so—and she doesn't seem to have come to any harm."

"But it won't do, all the same, Hansine; . . . it won't do, for the children's sake. Isn't it both your wish and mine that they should get away from the influences by which they have been hitherto surrounded . . . and, in Sigrid's case, it's high time they did. She's a dear, sweet

child, but she easily picks up bad habits, I've noticed."

"I've been telling you that for a long time, Emanuel."

"Yes, but then, I don't understand why you want to——"

"Well, what I thought was, that you'd better take them with you to Copenhagen. You will have to set up a home there . . . and I think it would be good for the children's sakes if I were to keep away from them for a while. For, you know, I can't set them in the right way about anything; I should rather hinder them in taking to their new friends, and in the education and cultivation which we both think right for them. So I thought that your sister . . . she would help you with their education; you know she lost her own child a little while ago, and I daresay she would make a good foster mother to them."

She maintained the same quiet, controlled voice the whole time, but she had grown very pale, and kept her eyes on the ground.

Emanuel was silent. She had again expressed the same thoughts which had occupied him, but which he had not had the heart to mention to her, for fear of hurting her feelings. He saw well that it would be very difficult for Hansine to manage a house under such strange circumstances, and that she would not be that support to the children which they would require, especially at first. He saw, too, that with her peculiar,

incomprehensible, and often repellent ways to strangers, she would prepare for herself—and perhaps also for him—many difficulties; moreover, he had been thinking all day with much anxiety how his friends would receive her, and on the whole, how they would take his return. He glanced at her, and when he saw her emotion, he went up to her and clasped her head tenderly.

“Put all these thoughts away, my dear. Don’t let us give way to all these worries. This is just the time for us to cling closer to one another. We must share both good and evil in the fight for our home and happiness. . . . Perhaps it won’t always be easy; but if we only hold together we shall pull through somehow, you will see!”

She had no longer the strength to gainsay him—was not even capable of preventing his bending over her and kissing her.

. . . They did not allude to the matter for the next few days, but they both prepared for departure. Hansine could see that it continued to occupy him, and as he became more unsettled and anxious every day about the step he was going to take, she held more firmly than ever to her decision.

It was not long before he led the conversation back to the same subject of his own accord. He said that perhaps, after all, it would be wiser not to set up housekeeping as long as their future was so unsettled, especially as long as he was without prospects or income. It had

occurred to him that till he had found work, either clerical or teaching in Copenhagen or some other town, he and the children might stay with his father, who lived alone in a large house, and would probably be glad to have them. He consoled her by saying that the separation would be short; as soon as he got to the capital he would try to get a post which would again enable them to live together in comfort and contentment.

Urged on by Hansine, he wrote a long letter the same day to his father, in which he fully—and so as to parry the sympathy of his family—somewhat self-consciously explained why he was returning with his children to Copenhagen, while his wife remained in the country. In conclusion, he asked if he and his children might enjoy the hospitality of his old home till he could make a new one for himself.

CHAPTER VI

BOTH he and Hansine waited impatiently for the answer. It was very unpleasant for them now in Veilby Parsonage. They quickly perceived that the people, especially those of Skibberup, had taken up his words as a challenge.

The postponed church council had been held without any notification having been sent to him; and altogether he was made to feel that they

wished to be rid of him. They even talked of calling in an independent priest to the ministry, and a deputation was being prepared to go to Ole Madsen, who, it was expected, would return a favourable answer.

At the service on Sunday the Ness Church was, just as in Provst Tønnesen's time, quite empty; orders had actually been sent out that no one was to attend, and Hansen the weaver had so completely regained his old supremacy that no one dared to oppose his commands.

From time to time, however, Emanuel received proofs both of grateful affection and of anger at the behaviour which was being shewn to him. When it became known that he had sent in his resignation, some of the Veilby people even took courage and began to collect money for the purchase of a silver coffee-pot and an arm-chair, which—just as in the case of Provst Tønnesen—they proposed to present to him on his departure.

The old feud between the Veilby and Skibberup people had broken out again more fiercely than ever, and the formerly harmonious congregation now found itself in a complete state of disruption. The chairman of the Parish Council, after his downfall, had gone back to his old life of drinking and card-playing, and he was drawing more and more of his friends after him to his orgies. Niels, on the other hand, who was always looked upon as a martyr to the good and holy Cause, had

taken the first upward step towards the goal of his dreams.

At the ever increasingly popular prayer-meetings of Maren Smeds he was beginning to educate himself as a wandering preacher, and to this end he had procured a wide-brimmed hat and dark-blue spectacles.

At the Parsonage the preparations for departure were in full swing. Emanuel, who had suddenly lost all interest in his work and only wished to be rid of the trouble of the fields and stables as soon as possible, sold all his standing crops to a neighbour, who, for part of the purchase money was to look after the land until his successor was appointed. He also turned cows, horses, and agricultural implements into money, and with it paid the rather numerous petty debts which, in the course of years, he had been foolish enough to contract indiscriminately among many of his former friends; and which more than anything had contributed to weaken his influence in the congregation.

Wild with delight at the prospect of Copenhagen, Sigrid rushed in and out, shaking her golden locks, and infecting with her mirth little Dagny, who had grown in the summer and now trotted about alone. As soon as Emanuel appeared, Sigrid sprang caressingly to him to get him to tell her about the delights which awaited her. Every day in the dusk after dinner he had to sit with her on his knee, telling her about the

Copenhagen streets, and all the people, the lighted shops, the tinkling tram-cars, the women shouting their wares, and the black dust men by the round tower, the harbour with the ships, the king's red liveried coachman, and the illuminations at Tivoli . . . and he was always so taken up with his



stories, which woke so many slumbering memories in him, that it grew quite dark before he noticed it.

Meanwhile Hansine sat quietly in her arm-chair, stitching at the children's Sunday clothes and knitting them new stockings, "so that their

grand relations in the capital should not be ashamed of them," as she once said. Emanuel could not understand how it was she remained so pale now, when they had every hope for a brighter future. He had even once or twice discovered her in tears; and when he asked what was the matter, she would not answer. He also wondered at the shyness, nay, almost repulsion with which she met all his advances. No sooner did he sit down by her and try to take her hand than she discovered an errand in the kitchen or elsewhere.

He came to the conclusion that it was nervousness at the break-up of their home and the approaching separation which she wanted to hide from him, and he tried in every way to soothe and cheer her. But it almost seemed as if his sympathy wounded her, and at last he found it best to leave her in peace.

The anxiously expected answer from Copenhagen came almost as soon as it could.

It was one of his father's usual missives on a large, square sheet of paper, inside of which there was a scented and much crossed note from his sister Betty. Emanuel, who sat down at once to read it aloud to Hansine, was so much moved by all the love and longing for him which they both breathed, that his eyes filled with tears in reading them.

His father's letter was in his usual rather stilted style. He wrote that he was now an old man with not many steps to the grave, and that a

greater pleasure could not have been given him than the prospect of again seeing his eldest son, whom he for so long had missed. Without in the least reproaching him for his self-conceit, he offered him a hearty welcome to his house.

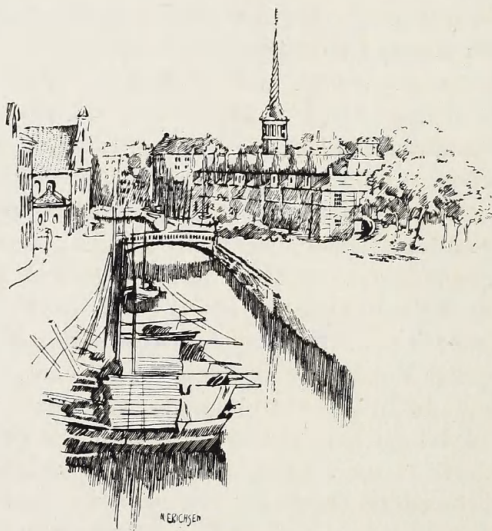
"Your two old rooms shall be ready to receive you at the shortest notice," he wrote, "and I need hardly add that your children will be beloved guests; rooms shall be prepared for them in your immediate proximity, and we shall do all in our power to make them happy among us. As you perhaps know I rented a not inconsiderable piece of garden ground a few years ago which belongs to the property, it was at one time rented by the late Konferentsraad Tagemann (whom I daresay you remember); so there is a sufficient playground for your children, and I shall see that the carpenter is sent for to put up a swing and anything else necessary for their amusement. Nor will they be in want of playmates, the Löbners on the third floor, and the Winthers on the ground floor have nice, well-behaved children, so I hope they won't miss the free country life too much. I quite understand your wife's decision to remain in the country for the present, and quite agree with it; she would hardly be satisfied with the strange life of a large town at once.

"This is all for to-day. Your brother Carl sends his love; he wishes to point out that all 'Kammer-yunkers' are not 'so wicked'—he particularly wishes me to use this word—as you

perhaps think, and he is looking forward to the day when he can invite you to the guard-room of the Amalienborg Palace to convince you of it.

"My love to all of you.—Your affectionate Father."

"Only think," burst out Emanuel at the end,



with a beaming glance at Hansine, who was sitting in her arm-chair bent over her work. "I am to have my old rooms with the view over the canal, the Exchange, and Kristiansborg Palace! What fun it'll be! . . . and isn't that grand about the garden? Just think how the children can

play about there! Don't you think it sounds delightful?"

Hansine only nodded. Her bosom swelled, and she closed her eyes like a person going through a mental struggle.

The letter from Betty was stamped with the depression caused by the loss of her child.

She wrote :—" You don't know how empty and sad our home has become since the Lord took my little Kai from me. I am longing for your little girls, so that I may again hear children's voices and laughter around me. Tell your wife not to be anxious about them—I know a mother's fears. We will guard them as well as we can while she is away from them. But I long most of all for you, dear brother, whom I have not seen for so many years. Miss Tönnesen, who saw you lately and who visits me a good deal, tells me you are so brown and have a big beard. How delighted I shall be to see you! And you'll be kind to me, won't you, Emanuel? I do so need your comfort. I am longing to lean my head against your shoulder and have a talk with you. Yes, Emanuel,—our Lord visits us. May we have the strength to bear our burdens!

" I don't think you need be anxious about your future; neither father nor my husband think so either. Yesterday, after father had received your letter and sent it up for me to read, we were dining out with Mr Justice Munck; the Dean, who is a friend of ours, sat next to me, and I was

so pleased with your letter that I couldn't help telling him that you were moving in to town. Curiously enough he seemed to have heard something about it beforehand, and seemed quite pleased about it. I asked him at last outright whether he thought you could get one of the smaller livings here in town, and he didn't think it at all unlikely. 'Your brother has such a good degree,' he said, 'and we want young and tried men here.' He laid special stress on '*tried*.' Altogether he talked so nicely about you (he remembers you when you lived at home) that I don't think the old views, which you have now changed, will go against you."

CHAPTER VII

THE day of departure came at last, in the beginning of September.

It was a very busy day, and full of emotion. Early in the morning Emanuel went to the Skibberup churchyard to take leave of Laddie's grave, and from there to see his father- and mother-in-law, and Hansine's brother Ole, who now managed his parent's property. These farewells were somewhat cool; Else especially was much affected by the general feeling in Skibberup, and although by Hansine's desire the visit to Skallingland was spoken of as only of short duration, a distrustful

expression came into her light eyes every time the stay with Ane was mentioned.

The deputation before referred to arrived at the Parsonage in the morning, with a plated coffee-pot and an arm-chair ; and at last, well on in the afternoon, the carriage came which Emanuel, to avoid being under any obligation to his neighbours, had ordered from a livery stable in the town, . . . it was a landau with silver mountings, and a coachman in livery.

Emanuel rushed about with all a traveller's feverish excitement among boxes and trunks. He wore a new black cloth coat, and his hair and beard were newly trimmed. He was followed everywhere by Sigrid, who would not let him out of her sight, just as if she was afraid he would leave her behind. She had hardly closed her eyes all night, but had asked what time it was every half hour ; and ever since early morning she had faithfully carried about her own private treasures—a little tin pail, a broken doll's head, and two match boxes filled with coloured pebbles—nor could she be persuaded to lay them down a moment.

Abelone, whom Hansine had persuaded to go with the children and stay with them for a time, went about crying nervously ; and in the empty stable, Sören the cowherd was sitting on the edge of a manger pondering on the manifold changes of life.

Hansine was perfectly calm all day, and made herself useful everywhere. Nobody could read in

her face that she was absolutely convinced she was to-day seeing her husband and children for the last time. . . . She knew that the children would soon forget her among all the strange people and new things which would occupy their minds; and when they grew older and accustomed to their surroundings, they would feel it a hindrance and a shame to have a mother who wore a peasant's cap and who spoke in peasant's dialect. But she had promised herself that they should never suffer for the faults of others. They should fully and entirely share in the bright joys of life, in which she had once dreamt she might herself share. And Emanuel? To him also she would soon be as a heavy burden which he would long to shake off. She had seen latterly, in a hundred ways, how in his thoughts he was already living in a world very far removed from hers, and which she would never be in a condition to share with him. She knew that he could not be long in his old circle without feeling the deep gulf which separated them; and it would therefore come to him as a relief when she one day wrote to him that she would never go back to him, that he was free, and that it would be fruitless on his part to attempt to make her alter her decision.

She reproached him with nothing. She only blamed herself for her arrogance in thinking that she could fill a place on the upper benches. Nay, she was not even surprised at what had just come to pass. Her wonder was that it had not

happened long before. The experiences of the last seven years had so often appeared curiously unreal to her. She would sometimes be overcome by the impression of still being the young girl in her father's house, and that her marriage, and all her life in Veilby Parsonage was only a long uneasy dream, from which she would be awakened by the crowing of some cock. When the moment of departure came, she kissed the children, and said good-bye to Emanuel, in so quiet a manner that it might really have been thought that the parting was only to be a short one. She followed them to the carriage, wrapped up the children well, and told Abelone to be sure to put on their clean pinafores before they reached Copenhagen.

When at parting, Emanuel was overcome by emotion, and continued to clasp her to him, and to kiss her on the forehead, she said to cheer him, that he was not to worry about her, she would get on very well.

"Look after the children, Emanuel," she said, at the last moment,—and then, as if in these words she had poured out all her remaining strength, she turned and went up the steps before the carriage started.

"Go up on to the mound in the garden—so that we may wave to you—till the last!" Emanuel called after her.

But she did not turn, and went quickly into the house.

The coachman cracked his whip, and the horses started off. When the carriage rolled under the arched gateway, Sigrid shouted hurrah!

On the way through the village the people mostly called out "Lykkelig Reise" as they passed; many even took off their hats in involuntary awe of the landau and the liveried coachman.

When the carriage reached the high-road, Emanuel said, "Out with the pocket handkerchiefs, children!"

As soon as they saw Hansine on the little mound, in the corner of the garden, they all began to wave. Why doesn't she wave back, thought Emanuel. "Wave children . . . wave!" he said, with his eyes full of tears.

But the figure on the mound did not move; . . . They had no answer to their "Paa Gensyn" (au revoir).

Hansine stood like a statue till the last glimpse of the carriage had disappeared in the distance; —then she went quietly down. Suddenly a dizziness came over her, and she sank heavily on to one of the little wooden steps which led from the path to the mound. Hour after hour, she remained sitting with her face buried in her hands, while the autumn wind moaned sadly through the trees above her. At sunset she rose and went towards the house. She was to spend the night at her parents' house, in the old room where she used to sleep as a girl. Ane's husband

would come the next day to fetch her in his boat and take her to her future home.

She fetched a little bundle of clothes from the

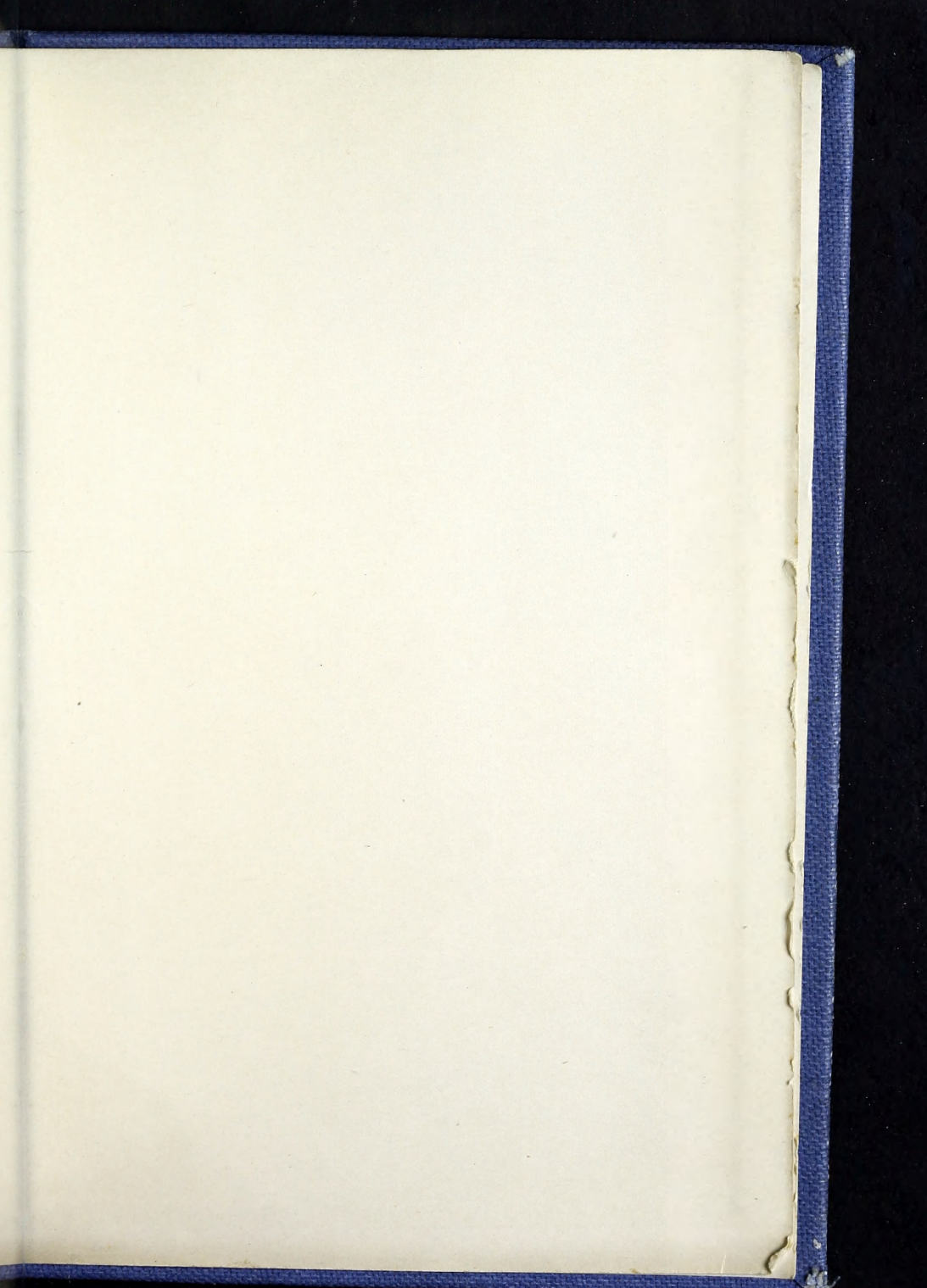


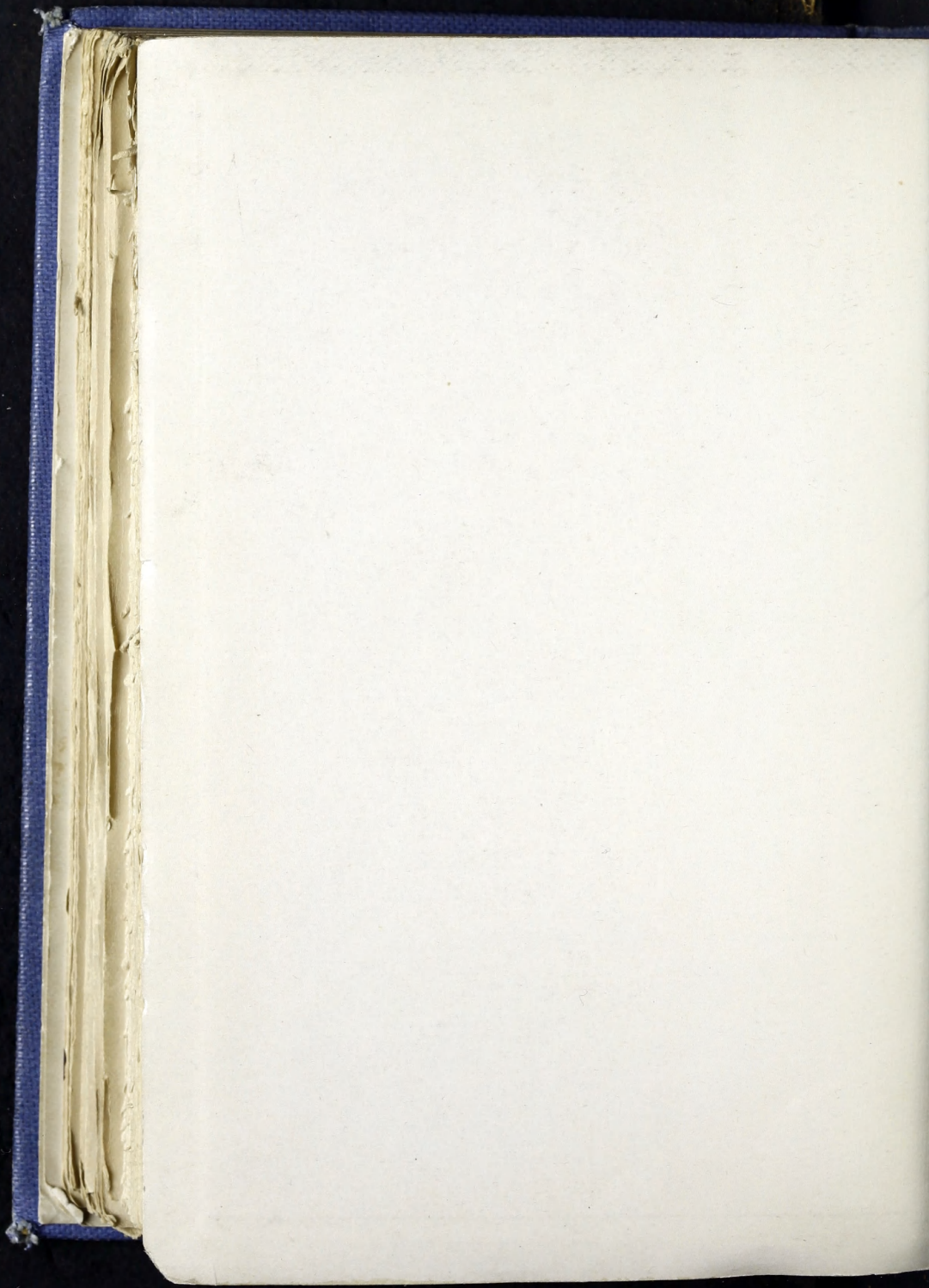
Ally Soren
Sparrow

SHE
LEFT
THE
PARSONAGE

empty bedroom, then went to the stable, and said good-bye to Sören, who was now sole master of the place, and left the Parsonage.

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