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APPRENTICESHIP

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Translated from the Danish by Bernard Miall.

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II. APPRENTICESHIP

I

On that windy May-day morning when Pelle tumbled out of the nest, it so happened that old Klaus Hermann was clattering into town with his manure-cart, in order to fetch a load of dung. And this trifling circumstance decided the boy's position in life. There was no more pother than this about the question: What was Pelle to be?

He had never put that question to himself. He had simply gone onward at hazard, as the meaning of the radiant world unfolded itself. As to what he should make of himself when he was really out in the world —well, the matter was so incomprehensible that it was mere folly to think about it. So he just went on.

Now he had reached the further end of the ridge. He lay down in the ditch to recover his breath after his long walk; he was tired and hungry, but in excellent spirits. Down there at his feet, only half a mile distant, lay the town. There was a cheerful glitter about it; from its hundreds of fireplaces the smoke of midday fires curled upward into the blue sky, and the red roofs laughed roguishly into the beaming face of the day. Pelle immediately began to count the houses; not wishing to exaggerate, he had estimated them at a million only, and already he was well into the first hundred.

But in the midst of his counting he jumped up. What did the people down there get for dinner? They must surely live well there! And was it polite to go on eating until one was quite full, or should one lay down one's spoon when one had only half finished, like the landowners when they attended a dinner? For one who was always hungry this was a very important question.

There was a great deal of traffic on the high-road. People were coming and going; some had their boxes behind them in a cart, and others carried their sole worldly possessions in a bag slung over their shoulders, just as he did. Pelle knew some of these people, and nodded to them benevolently; he knew something about all of them. There were people who were going to the town—his town—and some were going farther, far over the sea, to America, or even farther still, to serve the King there; one could see that by their equipment and the frozen look on their faces. Others were merely going into the town to make a hole in their wages, and to celebrate May-day. These came along the road in whole parties, humming or whistling, with empty hands and overflowing spirits. But the most interesting people were those who had put their boxes on a wheelbarrow, or were carrying them by both handles. These had flushed faces, and were feverish in their movements; they were people who had torn themselves away from their own country-side, and their accustomed way of life, and had chosen the town, as he himself had done.

There was one man, a cottager, with a little green chest on his wheelbarrow; this latter was broad in the beam, and it was neatly adorned with flowers painted by his own hand. Beside him walked his daughter; her cheeks were red, and her eyes were gazing into the unknown future. The father was speaking to her, but she did not look as though she heard him. "Yes—now you must take it on you to look out for yourself; you must think about it, and not throw yourself away. The town is quite a good place for those who go right ahead and think of their own advantage, but it thinks nothing of who gets trodden underfoot. So don't be too trusting, for the people there are wonderful clever in all sorts of tricks to take you in and trip you up. At the same time you want to be soft-spoken and friendly." She did not reply to this; she was apparently more taken up with the problem of putting down her feet in their new shoes so that the heels should not turn over.

There was a stream of people coming up from the town too. All the forenoon Pelle had been meeting Swedes who had come that morning in the steamer, and were now looking for a job on the land. There were old folk, worn out with labor, and little children; there were maidens as pretty as yellow-haired Marie, and young laborers who had the strength of the whole world in their loins and muscles. And this current of life was setting hither to fill up the gaps left by the swarms that were going away —but that did not concern Pelle. For seven years ago he had felt everything that made their faces look so troubled now; what they were just entering upon he had already put behind him. So there was no good in looking back.

Presently the old man from Neuendorf came along the road. He was got up quite like an American, with a portmanteau and a silk neckerchief, and the inside pockets of his open coat were stuffed full of

papers. At last he had made up his mind, and was going out to his betrothed, who had already been three years away.

"Hullo!" cried Pelle, "so you are going away?"

The man came over to Pelle and set his portmanteau down by the side of the ditch.

"Well, yes; it's time to be going," he said. "Laura won't wait for me any longer. So the old people must see how they can get along without a son; I've done everything for them now for three years. Provided they can manage all by themselves—"

"They can do that all right," said Pelle, with an experienced air. "And they had to get help formerly. There is no future for young people at home." He had heard his elders say this. He struck at the grass with his stick, assuming a superior air.

"No," said the other, "and Laura refuses to be a cottager's wife. Well, good-bye!" He held out his hand to Pelle and tried to smile, but his features had it their own way; nothing but a rather twisted expression came over them. He stood there a minute, looking at his boots, his thumb groping over his face as though he wanted to wipe the tormented look away; then he picked up his portmanteau and went. He was evidently not very comfortable.

"I'll willingly take over the ticket and the bride," shouted Pelle merrily. He felt in the deuce of a good humor.

Everybody to-day was treading the road along which Pelle's own young blood had called him—every young fellow with a little pluck, every good-looking wench. Not for a moment was the road free of traffic; it was like a vast exodus, an army of people escaping from places where everyone had the feeling that he was condemned to live and die on the very spot where he was born; an army of people who had chosen the excitement of the unknown. Those little brick houses which lay scattered over the green, or stood drawn up in two straight rows where the high-road ran into the town—those were the cottages of the peasant folk who had renounced the outdoor life, and dressed themselves in townified clothes, and had then adventured hither; and down on the sea-front the houses stood all squeezed and heaped together round the church, so close that there looked to be no room between them; there were the crowds who had gone wandering, driven far afield by the longing in their hearts—and then the sea had set a limit to their journey.

Pelle had no intention of allowing anything whatever to set a limit to his journeying. Perhaps, if he had no luck in the town, he would go to sea. And then one day he would come to some coast that interested him, and he would land, and go to the gold-diggings. Over there the girls went mother-naked, with nothing but some blue tattoo-work to hide their shame; but Pelle had his girl sitting at home, true to him, waiting for his return. She was more beautiful even than Bodil and yellow-haired Marie put together, and whole crowds followed her footsteps, but she sat at home and was faithful, and she would sing the old love-song:

"I had a lad, but he went away
  All over the false, false sea,
Three years they are gone, and now to-day
  He writes no more to me!"

And while she sang the letter came to the door. But out of every letter that his father Lasse received fell ten-kroner banknotes, and one day a letter came with steamer-tickets for the two of them. The song would not serve him any further, for in the song they perished during the voyage, and the poor young man spent the rest of his days on the sea-shore, gazing, through the shadow of insanity, upon every rising sail. She and Lasse arrived safely—after all sorts of difficulties, that went without saying—and Pelle stood on the shore and welcomed them. He had dressed himself up like a savage, and he carried on as though he meant to eat them before he made himself known.

Houp la! Pelle jumped to his feet. Up the road there was a rattling and a clanking as though a thousand scythes were clashing together: an old cart with loose plank sides came slowly jolting along, drawn by the two most miserable moorland horses he had ever seen. On the driver's seat was an old peasant, who was bobbing about as though he would every moment fall in pieces, like all the rest of his equipment. Pelle did not at first feel sure whether it was the cart itself or the two bags of bones between the shafts that made such a frightful din whenever they moved, but as the vehicle at last drew level with him, and the old peasant drew up, he could not resist the invitation to get up and have a lift. His shoulders were still aching from carrying his sack.

“So you are going to town, after all?” said old Klaus, pointing to his goods and chattels.

To town, yes indeed! Something seemed to grip hold of Pelle’s bursting heart, and before he was aware of it he had delivered himself and his whole future into the old peasant’s hands.

“Yes, yes—yes indeed—why, naturally!” said Klaus, nodding as Pelle came forward. “Yes, of course! A man can’t do less. And what’s your idea about what you are going to be in the long run—councillor or king?” He looked up slowly. “Yes, goin’ to town; well, well, they all, take the road they feel something calling them to take.... Directly a young greyhound feels the marrow in his bones, or has got a shilling in his pocket, he’s got to go to town and leave it there. And what do you think comes back out the town? Just manure and nothing else! What else have I ever in my life been able to pick up there? And now I’m sixty-five. But what’s the good of talking? No more than if a man was to stick his tail out and blow against a gale. It comes over them just like the May-gripes takes the young calves— heigh-ho! and away they go, goin’ to do something big. Afterward, then old Klaus Hermann can come and clean up after them! They’ve no situation there, and no kinsfolk what could put them up—but they always expect something big. Why, down in the town there are beds made up in the streets, and the gutters are running over with food and money! But what do you mean to do? Let’s hear it now.”

Pelle turned crimson. He had not yet succeeded in making a beginning, and already he had been caught behaving like a blockhead.

“Well, well, well,” said Klaus, in a good-humored tone, “you are no bigger fool than all the rest. But if you’ll take my advice, you’ll go to shoemaker Jeppe Kofod as apprentice; I am going straight to his place to fetch manure, and I know he’s looking for an apprentice. Then you needn’t go floundering about uncertain-like, and you can drive right up to the door like the quality.”

Pelle winced all over. Never in his life had it entered his head that he could ever become a shoemaker. Even back there on the land, where people looked up to the handicrafts, they used always to say, if a boy had not turned out quite right: “Well, we can always make a cobbler or a tailor of him!” But Pelle was no cripple, that he must lead a sedentary life indoors in order to get on at all; he was strong and well-made. What he would be—well, that certainly lay in the hands of fortune; but he felt very strongly that it ought to be something active, something that needed courage and energy. And in any case he was quite sure as to what he did not want to be. But as they jolted through the town, and Pelle—so as to be beforehand with the great world—kept on taking off his cap to everybody, although no one returned his greeting, his spirits began to sink, and a sense of his own insignificance possessed him. The miserable cart, at which all the little town boys laughed and pointed with their fingers, had a great deal to do with this feeling.

“Take off your cap to a pack like that!” grumbled Klaus; “why, only look how puffed up they behave, and yet everything they’ve got they’ve stolen from us others. Or what do you suppose—can you see if they’ve got their summer seeds in the earth yet?” And he glared contemptuously down the street.

No, there was nothing growing on the stone pavements, and all these little houses, which stood so close that now and then they seemed to Pelle as if they must be squeezed out of the row—these gradually took his breath away. Here were thousands and thousands of people, if that made any difference; and all his blind confidence wavered at the question: where did all their food come from? For here he was once more at home in his needy, familiar world, where no amount of smoke will enable one to buy a pair of socks. All at once he felt thoroughly humble, and he decided that it would be all he could do here to hold his own, and find his daily bread among all these stones, for here people did not raise it naturally from the soil, but got it—well, how *did* they get it?

The streets were full of servants. The girls stood about in groups, their arms round one another’s waists, staring with burning eyes at the cotton-stuffs displayed in the shops; they rocked themselves gently to and fro as though they were dreaming. A ’prentice boy of about Pelle’s age, with a red, spotty face, was walking down the middle of the street, eating a great wheaten roll which he held with both hands; his ears were full of scabs and his hands swollen with the cold. Farm laborers went by, carrying red bundles in their hands, their overcoats flapping against their calves; they would stop suddenly at a turning, look cautiously round, and then hurry down a side street. In front of the shops the salesmen were walking up and down, bareheaded, and if any one stopped in front of their windows they would beg them, in the politest

manner, to step nearer, and would secretly wink at one another across the street.

“The shopkeepers have arranged their things very neatly to-day,” said Pelle.

Klaus nodded. “Yes, yes; to-day they’ve brought out everything they couldn’t get rid of sooner. To-day the block-heads have come to market—the easy purses. Those”—and he pointed to a side street, “those are the publicans. They are looking this way so longingly, but the procession don’t come as far as them. But you wait till this evening, and then take a turn along here, and ask the different people how much they’ve got left of their year’s wages. Yes, the town’s a fine place—the very deuce of a fine place!” And he spat disgustedly.

Pelle had quite lost all his blind courage. He saw not a single person doing anything by which he himself might earn his bread. And gladly as he would have belonged to this new world, yet he could not venture into anything where, perhaps without knowing it, he would be an associate of people who would tear the rags off his old comrades’ backs. All the courage had gone out of him, and with a miserable feeling that even his only riches, his hands, were here useless, he sat irresolute, and allowed himself to be driven, rattling and jangling, to Master Jeppe Kofod’s workshop.

II

The workshop stood over an entry which opened off the street. People came and went along this entry: Madame Rasmussen and old Captain Elleby; the old maid-servant of a Comptroller, an aged pensioner who wore a white cap, drew her money from the Court, and expended it here, and a feeble, gouty old sailor who had bidden the sea farewell. Out in the street, on the sharp-edged cobble-stones, the sparrows were clamoring loudly, lying there with puffed-out feathers, feasting among the horse-droppings, tugging at them and scattering them about to the accompaniment of a storm of chirping and scolding.

Everything overlooking the yard stood open. In the workshop all four windows were opened wide, and the green light sifted into the room and fell on the faces of those present. But that was no help. Not a breath of wind was blowing; moreover, Pelle's heat came from within. He was sweating with sheer anxiety.

For the rest, he pulled industriously at his cobbler's wax, unless, indeed, something outside captured his harassed mind, so that it wandered out into the sunshine.

Everything out there was splashed with vivid sunlight; seen from the stuffy workshop the light was like a golden river, streaming down between the two rows of houses, and always in the same direction, down to the sea. Then a speck of white down came floating on the air, followed by whitish-gray thistle-seeds, and a whole swarm of gnats, and a big broad bumble-bee swung to and fro. All these eddied, gleaming, in the open doorway, and they went on circling as though there was something there which attracted them all—doubtless an accident, or perhaps a festival.

"Are you asleep, booby?" asked the journeyman sharply. Pelle shrank into his shell and continued to work at the wax; he kneaded away at it, holding it in hot water.

Inside the court, at the baker's—the baker was the old master's brother—they were hoisting sacks of meal. The windlass squeaked horribly, and in between the squeaking one could hear Master Jörgen Kofod, in a high falsetto, disputing with his son. "You're a noodle, a pitiful simpleton—whatever will become of you? Do you think we've nothing more to do than to go running out to prayer-meetings on a working day? Perhaps that will get us our daily bread? Now you just stay here, or, God's mercy, I'll break every bone in your body!" Then the wife chimed in, and then of a sudden all was silent. And after a while the son stole like a phantom along the wall of the opposite house, a hymn-book in his hand. He was not unlike Howling Peter. He squeezed himself against the wall, and his knees gave under him if any one looked sharply at him. He was twenty-five years old, and he took beatings from his father without a murmur. But when matters of religion were in question he defied public opinion, the stick, and his father's anger.

"Are you asleep, booby? I shall really have to come over and teach you to hurry!"

For a time no one spoke in the workshop—the journeyman was silent, so the others had to hold their tongues. Each bent over his work, and Pelle pulled the pitch out to as great a length as possible, kneaded some grease into it, and pulled again. Outside, in the sunshine, some street urchins were playing, running to and fro. When they saw Pelle, they held their clenched fist under their noses, nodded to him in a provocative manner, and sang—

> "The cobbler has a pitchy nose,
> The more he wipes it the blacker it grows!"

Pelle pretended not to see them, but he secretly ticked them all off in his mind. It was his sincere intention to wipe them all off the face of the earth.

Suddenly they all ran into the street, where a tremendous, monotonous voice lifted itself and flowed abroad. This was the crazy watchmaker; he was standing on his high steps, crying damnation on the world at large.

Pelle knew perfectly well that the man was crazy, and in the words which he so ponderously hurled at the town there was not the slightest meaning. But they sounded wonderfully fine notwithstanding, and the "ordeal by wax" was hanging over him like a sort of last judgment. Involuntarily, he began to turn cold at the sound of this warning voice, which uttered such solemn words and had so little meaning, just as he did at the strong language in the Bible. It was just the voice that

frightened him; it was such a terrible voice, such a voice as one might hear speaking out of the clouds; the sort of voice, in short, that made the knees of Moses and Paul give under them; a portentous voice, such as Pelle himself used to hear coming out of the darkness at Stone Farm when a quarrel was going on.

Only the knee-strap of little Nikas, the journeyman, kept him from jumping up then and there and throwing himself down like Paul. This knee-strap was a piece of undeniable reality in the midst of all his imaginings; in two months it had taught him never quite to forget who and where he was. He pulled himself together, and satisfied himself that all his miseries arose from his labors over this wretched cobbler's wax; besides, there was such a temptation to compare his puddle of cobbler's wax with the hell in which he was told he would be tormented. But then he heard the cheerful voice of the young shoemaker in the yard outside, and the whole trouble disappeared. The "ordeal by wax" could not really be so terrible, since all the others had undergone it—he had certainly seen tougher fellows than these in his lifetime!

Jens sat down and ducked his head, as though he was expecting a box on the ears;—that was the curse of the house which continually hung over him. He was so slow at his work that already Pelle could overtake him; there was something inside him that seemed to hamper his movements like a sort of spell. But Peter and Emil were smart fellows—only they were always wanting to thrash him.

Among the apple trees in the yard it was early summer, and close under the workshop windows the pig stood smacking at his food. This sound was like a warm breeze that blew over Pelle's heart. Since the day when Klaus Hermann had shaken the squeaking little porker out of his sack, Pelle had begun to take root. It had squealed at first in a most desolate manner, and something of Pelle's own feeling of loneliness was taken away from him by its cries. Now it complained simply because it was badly fed, and it made Pelle quite furious to see the nasty trash that was thrown to it—a young pig must eat well, that is half the battle. They ought not to go running out every few minute to throw something or other to the pig; when once the heat really set in it would get acidity of the stomach. But there was no sense in these town folk.

"Are you really asleep, booby? Why, you are snoring, deuce take me!"

The young master came limping in, took a drink, and buried himself in his book. As he read he whistled softly in time with the hammer- strokes of the others. Little Nikas began to whistle too, and the two older apprentices who were beating leather began to strike in time with the whistling, and they even kept double time, so that everything went like greased lightning. The journeyman's trills and quavers became more and more extraordinary, in order to catch up with the blows—the blows and the whistling seemed to be chasing one another—and Master Andres raised his head from his book to listen. He sat there staring into the far distance, as though the shadowy pictures evoked by his reading were hovering before his eyes. Then, with a start, he was present and among them all, his eyes running over them with a waggish expression; and then he stood up, placing his stick so that it supported his diseased hip. The master's hands danced loosely in the air, his head and his whole figure jerking crazily under the compulsion of the rhythm.

Swoop!—and the dancing hands fell upon the cutting-out knife, and the master fingered the notes on the sharp edge, his head on one side and his eyes closed—his whole appearance that of one absorbed in intent inward listening. But then suddenly his face beamed with felicity, his whole figure contracted in a frenzy of delight, one foot clutched at the air as though bewitched, as though he were playing a harp with his toes —Master Andres was all at once a musical idiot and a musical clown. And *smack!* the knife flew to the ground and he had the great tin cover in his hand— *chin-da-da-da chin-da-da-da!* Suddenly by a stroke of magic the flute had turned into a drum and cymbals!

Pelle was doubled up with laughter: then he looked in alarm at the knee-strap and again burst out laughing; but no one took any notice of him. The master's fingers and wrist were dancing a sort of devil's dance on the tin cover, and all of a sudden his elbows too were called into requisition, so that the cover banged against the master's left knee, bounced off again and quick as lightning struck against his wooden heel, which stuck out behind him; then against Pelle's head, and round about it went, striking the most improbable objects, *dum, dum, dum*, as though in wild, demoniacal obedience to the flute-like tones of the journeyman. There was no holding back. Emil, the oldest apprentice, began boldly to whistle too, cautiously at first, and then, as no one smacked his head, more forcefully. Then the next apprentice, Jens—the music-devil, as he

was called, because anything would produce a note between his fingers —plucked so cleverly at his waxed-end that it straightway began to give out a buzzing undertone, rising and falling through two or three notes, as though an educated bumble-bee had been leading the whole orchestra. Out of doors the birds came hopping on to the apple-boughs; they twisted their heads inquisitively to one side, frantically fluffed out their feathers, and then they too joined in this orgy of jubilation, which was caused merely by a scrap of bright blue sky. But then the young master had an attack of coughing, and the whole business came to an end.

Pelle worked away at his cobbler's wax, kneading the pitch and mixing grease with it. When the black lump was on the point of stiffening, he had to plunge both hands into hot water, so that he got hangnails. Old Jeppe came tripping in from the yard, and Master Andres quickly laid the cutting-board over his book and diligently stropped his knife.

"That's right!" said Jeppe; "warm the wax, then it binds all the better."

Pelle had rolled the wax into balls, and had put them in the soaking-tub, and now stood silent; for he had not the courage of his own accord to say, "I am ready." The others had magnified the "ordeal by wax" into something positively terrible; all sorts of terrors lurked in the mystery that was now awaiting him; and if he himself had not known that he was a smart fellow—why—yes, he would have left them all in the lurch. But now he meant to submit to it, however bad it might be; he only wanted time to swallow first. Then at last he would have succeeded in shaking off the peasant, and the handicraft would be open to him, with its song and its wandering life and its smart journeyman's clothes. The workshop here was no better than a stuffy hole where one sat and slaved over smelly greasy boots, but he saw that one must go through with it in order to reach the great world, where journeymen wore patent-leather shoes on workdays and made footwear fit for kings. The little town had given Pelle a preliminary foreboding that the world was almost incredibly great, and this foreboding filled him with impatience. He meant to conquer it all!

"Now I am ready!" he said resolutely; now he would decide whether he and the handicraft were made for one another.

"Then you can pull a waxed end—but make it as long as a bad year!" said the journeyman.

The old master was all on fire at the idea. He went over and watched Pelle closely, his tongue hanging out of his mouth; he felt quite young again, and began to descant upon his own apprenticeship in Copenhagen, sixty years ago. Those were times! The apprentices didn't lie in bed and snore in those days till six o'clock in the morning, and throw down their work on the very stroke of eight, simply to go out and run about. No; up they got at four, and stuck at it as long as there was work to do. Then fellows *could* work—and then they still learned something; they were told things just once, and then—the knee-strap! Then, too, the manual crafts still enjoyed some reputation; even the kings had to learn a handicraft. It was very different to the present, with its bungling and cheap retailing and pinching and paring everywhere.

The apprentices winked at one another. Master Andres and the journeyman were silent. You might as well quarrel with the sewing-machine because it purred. Jeppe was allowed to spin his yarn alone.

"Are you waxing it well?" said little Nikas. "It's for pigskin."

The others laughed, but Pelle rubbed the thread with a feeling as though he were building his own scaffold.

"Now I am ready!" he said, in a low voice.

The largest pair of men's lasts was taken down from the shelf, and these were tied to one end of the waxed-end and were let right down to the pavement. People collected in the street outside, and stood there staring. Pelle had to lean right out of the window, and bend over as far as he could, while Emil, as the oldest apprentice, laid the waxed-end over his neck. They were all on their feet now, with the exception of the young master; he took no part in this diversion.

"Pull, then!" ordered the journeyman, who was directing the solemn business. "Pull them along till they're right under your feet!"

Pelle pulled, and the heavy lasts joggled over the pavement, but he paused with a sigh; the waxed-end was slipping over his warm neck. He stood there stamping, like an animal which stamps its feet on the ground, without knowing why; he lifted them cautiously and looked at them in torment.

"Pull, pull!" ordered Jeppe. "You must keep the thing moving or it sticks!" But it was too late; the wax had hardened in the hairs of his nape

—Father Lasse used to call them his “luck curls,” and prophesied a great future for him on their account—and there he stood, and could not remove the waxed-end, however hard he tried. He made droll grimaces, the pain was so bad, and the saliva ran out of his mouth.

“Huh! He can’t even manage a pair of lasts!” said Jeppe jeeringly. “He’d better go back to the land again and wash down the cows’ behinds!”

Then Pelle, boiling with rage, gave a jerk, closing his eyes and writhing as he loosed himself. Something sticky and slippery slipped through his fingers with the waxed-end; it was bloody hair, and across his neck the thread had bitten its way in a gutter of lymph and molten wax. But Pelle no longer felt the pain, his head was boiling so, and he felt a vague but tremendous longing to pick up a hammer and strike them all to the ground, and then to run through the street, banging at the skulls of all he met. But then the journeyman took the lasts off him, and the pain came back to him, and his whole miserable plight. He heard Jeppe’s squeaky voice, and looked at the young master, who sat there submissively, without having the courage to express his opinion, and all at once he felt terribly sorry for himself.

“That was right,” buzzed old Jeppe, “a shoemaker mustn’t be afraid to wax his hide a little. What? I believe it has actually brought the water to his eyes! No, when I was apprentice we had a real ordeal; we had to pass the waxed-end twice round our necks before we were allowed to pull. Our heads used to hang by a thread and dangle when we were done. Yes, those were times!”

Pelle stood there shuffling, in order to fight down his tears; but he had to snigger with mischievous delight at the idea of Jeppe’s dangling head.

“Then we must see whether he can stand a buzzing head,” said the journeyman, getting ready to strike him.

“No, you can wait until he deserves it,” said Master Andres hastily. “You will soon find an occasion.”

“Well, he’s done with the wax,” said Jeppe, “but the question is, can he sit? Because there are some who never learn the art of sitting.”

“That must be tested, too, before we can declare him to be useful,” said little Nikas, in deadly earnest.

“Are you done with your tomfoolery now?” said Master Andres angrily, and he went his way.

But Jeppe was altogether in his element; his head was full of the memories of his boyhood, a whole train of devilish tricks, which completed the ordination. “Then we used to brand them indelibly with their special branch, and they never took to their heels, but they considered it a great honor as long as they drew breath. But now these are weakly times and full of pretences; the one can’t do this and the other can’t do that; and there’s leather colic and sore behinds and God knows what. Every other day they come with certificates that they’re suffering from boils from sitting down, and then you can begin all over again. No, in my time we behaved very different—the booby got held naked over a three-legged stool and a couple of men used to go at him with knee-straps! That was leather on leather, and like that they learned, damn and blast it all! how to put up with sitting on a stool!”

The journeyman made a sign.

“Now, is the seat of the stool ready consecrated, and prayed over? Yes, then you can go over there and sit down.”

Pelle went stupidly across the room and sat down—it was all the same to him. But he leaped into the air with a yell of pain, looked malevolently about him, and in a moment he had a hammer in his hand. But he dropped it again, and now he cried—wept buckets of tears.

“What the devil are you doing to him now?”

The young master came out of the cutting-out room. “What dirty tricks are you hatching now?” He ran his hand over the seat of the stool; it was studded with broken awl-points. “You are barbarous devils; any one would think he was among a lot of savages!”

“What a weakling!” sneered Jeppe. “In these days a man can’t take a boy as apprentice and inoculate him a bit against boils! One ought to anoint the boobies back and front with honey, perhaps, like the kings of Israel? But you are a freethinker!”

“You get out of this, father!” shouted Master Andres, quite beside himself. “You get out of this, father!” He trembled, and his face was quite gray. And then he pushed the old man out of the room before he had struck Pelle on the shoulder and received him properly into the handicraft.

Pelle sat there and reflected. He was altogether disillusioned. All the covert allusions had evoked something terrifying, but at the same time impressive. In his imagination the ordeal had grown into something that constituted the great barrier of his life, so that one passed over to the other side as quite a different being; it was something after the fashion of the mysterious circumcision in the Bible, a consecration to new things. And now the whole thing was just a spitefully devised torture!

The young master threw him a pair of children's shoes, which had to be soled. So he was admitted to that department, and need no longer submit to preparing waxed-ends for the others! But the fact did not give him any pleasure. He sat there struggling with something irrational that seemed to keep on rising deep within him; when no one was looking he licked his fingers and drew them over his neck. He seemed to himself like a half-stupefied cat which had freed itself from the snare and sat there drying its fur.

Out of doors, under the apple-trees, the sunlight lay green and golden, and a long way off, in the skipper's garden, three brightly dressed girls were walking and playing; they seemed to Pelle like beings out of another world. "Fortune's children on the sunbright shore," as the song had it. From time to time a rat made its appearance behind the pigsty, and went clattering over the great heap of broken glass that lay there. The pig stood there gobbling down its spoiled potatoes with that despairing noise that put an end to all Pelle's proud dreams of the future, while it filled him with longing—oh, such a mad longing!

And everything that possibly could do so made its assault upon him at this moment when he was feeling particularly victorious; the miseries of his probation here in the workshop, the street urchins, the apprentices, who would not accept him as one of themselves, and all the sharp edges and corners which he was continually running up against in this unfamiliar world. And then the smelly workshop itself, where never a ray of sunlight entered. And no one here seemed to respect anything.

When the master was not present, little Nikas would sometimes indulge in tittle-tattle with the older apprentices. Remarks were made at such times which opened new spheres of thought to Pelle, and he had to ask questions; or they would talk of the country, which Pelle knew better than all of them put together, and he would chime in with some correction. *Smack!* came a box on his ears that would send him rolling into the corner; he was to hold his tongue until he was spoken to. But Pelle, who was all eyes and ears, and had been accustomed to discuss everything in heaven or earth with Father Lasse, could not learn to hold his tongue.

Each exacted with a strong hand his quantum of respect, from the apprentices to the old master, who was nearly bursting with professional pride in his handicraft; only Pelle had no claim to any respect whatever, but must pay tribute to all. The young master was the only one who did not press like a yoke on the youngster's neck. Easygoing as he was, he would disregard the journeyman and the rest, and at times he would plump himself down beside Pelle, who sat there feeling dreadfully small.

Outside, when the sun was shining through the trees in a particular way, and a peculiar note came into the twittering of the birds, Pelle knew it was about the time when the cows began to get on their feet after their midday chewing of the cud. And then a youngster would come out from among the little fir-trees, lustily cracking his whip; he was the general of the whole lot—Pelle, the youngster—who had no one set over him. And the figure that came stumbling across the arable yonder, in order to drive the cows home—why, that was Lasse!

Father Lasse!

He did not know why, but it wrung a sob from him; it took him so unawares. "Hold your row!" cried the journeyman threateningly. Pelle was greatly concerned; he had not once made the attempt to go over and see Lasse.

The young master came to get something off the shelf above his head, and leaned confidentially on Pelle's shoulder, his weak leg hanging free and dangling. He stood there loitering for a time, staring at the sky outside, and this warm hand on Pelle's shoulder quieted him.

But there could be no talk of enjoyment when he thought where good Father Lasse was. He had not seen his father since that sunny morning when he himself had gone away and left the old man to his loneliness. He had not heard of him; he had scarcely given a thought to him. He had to get through the day with a whole skin, and to adapt himself to the new life; a whole new world was before him, in which he had to find his feet. Pelle had simply had no time; the town had swallowed him.

But at this moment his conduct confronted him as the worst example of unfaithfulness the world had ever known. And his neck continued to hurt him—he must go somewhere or other where no one would look at him. He made a pretence of having to do something in the yard outside; he went behind the washhouse, and he crouched down by the woodpile beside the well.

There he lay, shrinking into himself, in the blackest despair at having left Father Lasse so shamelessly in the lurch, just for the sake of all these new strange surroundings. Yes, and then, when they used to work together, he had been neither as good nor as heedful as he should have been. It was really Lasse who, old as he was, had sacrificed himself for Pelle, in order to lighten his work and take the worst of the burden off him, although Pelle had the younger shoulders. And he had been a little hard at times, as over that business between his father and Madame Olsen; and he had not always been very patient with his good-humored elderly tittle-tattle, although if he could hear it now he would give his life to listen. He could remember only too plainly occasions when he had snapped at Lasse, so unkindly that Lasse had given a sigh and made off; for Lasse never snapped back—he was only silent and very sad.

But how dreadful that was! Pelle threw all his high-and-mighty airs to the winds and gave himself up to despair. What was he doing here, with Father Lasse wandering among strangers, and perhaps unable to find shelter? There was nothing with which he could console himself, no evasion or excuse was possible; Pelle howled at the thought of his faithlessness. And as he lay there despairing, worrying over the whole business and crying himself into a state of exhaustion, quite a manful resolve began to form within him; he must give up everything of his own —the future, and the great world, and all, and devote his days to making the old man’s life happy. He must go back to Stone Farm! He forgot that he was only a child who could just earn his own keep. To protect the infirm old man at every point and make his life easy—that was just what he wanted. And Pelle was by no means disposed to doubt that he could do it. In the midst of his childish collapse he took upon himself all the duties of a strong man.

As he lay there, woe-begone, playing with a couple of bits of firewood, the elder-boughs behind the well parted, and a pair of big eyes stared at him wonderingly. It was only Manna.

“Did they beat you—or why are you crying?” she asked earnestly.

Pelle turned his face away.

Manna shook her hair back and looked at him fixedly. “Did they beat you? What? If they did, I shall go in and scold them hard!”

“What is it to you?”

“People who don’t answer aren’t well-behaved.”

“Oh, hold your row!”

Then he was left in peace; over at the back of the garden Manna and her two younger sisters were scrambling about the trellis, hanging on it and gazing steadfastly across the yard at him. But that was nothing to him; he wanted to know nothing about them; he didn’t want petticoats to pity him or intercede for him. They were saucy jades, even if their father had sailed on the wide ocean and earned a lot of money. If he had them here they would get the stick from him! Now he must content himself with putting out his tongue at them.

He heard their horrified outcry—but what then? He didn’t want to go scrambling about with them any more, or to play with the great conch-shells and lumps of coral in their garden! He would go back to the land and look after his old father! Afterward, when that was done, he would go out into the world himself, and bring such things home with him—whole shiploads of them!

They were calling him from the workshop window. “Where in the world has that little blighter got to?” he heard them say. He started, shrinking; he had quite forgotten that he was serving his apprenticeship. He got on his feet and ran quickly indoors.

Pelle had soon tidied up after leaving off work. The others had run out in search of amusement; he was alone upstairs in the garret. He put his worldly possessions into his sack. There was a whole collection of wonderful things—tin steamboats, railway-trains, and horses that were hollow inside—as much of the irresistible wonders of the town as he had been able to obtain for five white krone pieces. They went in among the washing, so that they should not get damaged, and then he threw the bag out of the gable-window into the little alley. Now the question was how he himself should slip through the kitchen without arousing the suspicions of Jeppe’s old woman; she had eyes like a witch, and Pelle had

a feeling that every one who saw him would know what he was about.

But he went. He controlled himself, and sauntered along, so that the people should think he was taking washing to the laundrywoman; but he could only keep it up as far as the first turning; then he started off as fast as he could go. He was homesick. A few street-boys yelled and threw stones after him, but that didn't matter, so long as he only got away; he was insensible to everything but the remorse and homesickness that filled his heart.

It was past midnight when he at last reached the outbuildings of Stone Farm. He was breathless, and had a stitch in his side. He leaned against the ruined forge, and closed his eyes, the better to recover himself. As soon as he had recovered his breath, he entered the cowshed from the back and made for the herdsman's room. The floor of the cowshed felt familiar to his feet, and now he came in the darkness to the place where the big bull lay. He breathed in the scent of the creature's body and blew it out again—ah, didn't he remember it! But the scent of the cowherd's room was strange to him. "Father Lasse is neglecting himself," he thought, and he pulled the feather-bed from under the sleeper's head. A strange voice began to upbraid him. "Then isn't this Lasse?" said Pelle. His knees were shaking under him.

"Lasse?" cried the new cowherd, as he sat upright. "Do you say Lasse? Have you come to fetch that child of God, Mr. Devil? They've been here already from Hell and taken him with them—in the living body they've taken him there with them—he was too good for this world, d'ye see? Old Satan was here himself in the form of a woman and took him away. You'd better go there and look for him. Go straight on till you come to the devil's great-grandmother, and then you've only got to ask your way to the hairy one."

Pelle stood for a while in the yard below and considered. So Father Lasse had gone away! And wanted to marry, or was perhaps already married. And to Karna, of course. He stood bolt-upright, sunk in intimate memories. The great farm lay hushed in moonlight, in deepest slumber, and all about him rose memories from their sleep, speaking to him caressingly, with a voice like that contented purring, remembered from childhood, when the little kittens used to sleep upon his pillow, and he would lay his cheek against their soft, quivering bodies.

Pelle's memory had deep roots. Once, at Uncle Kalle's, he had laid himself in the big twins' cradle and had let the other children rock him—he was then fully nine years old—and as they rocked him a while the surroundings began to take hold of him, and he saw a smoky, raftered ceiling, which did not belong to Kalle's house, swaying high over his head, and he had a feeling that a muffled-up old woman, wrapped in a shawl, sat like a shadow at the head of the cradle, and rocked it with her foot. The cradle jolted with the over-vigorous rocking, and every time the rocking foot slipped from the footboard it struck on the floor with the sound of a sprung wooden shoe. Pelle jumped up—"she bumped so," he said, bewildered. "What? No, you certainly dreamed that!" Kalle looked, smiling, under the rockers. "Bumped!" said Lasse. "That ought to suit you first-rate! At one time, when you were little, you couldn't sleep if the cradle didn't bump, so we had to make the rockers all uneven. It was almost impossible to rock it. Bengta cracked many a good wooden shoe in trying to give you your fancy."

The farmyard here was like a great cradle, which swayed and swayed in the uncertain moonlight, and now that Pelle had once quite surrendered himself to the past, there was no end to the memories of childhood that rose within him. His whole existence passed before him, swaying above his head as before, and the earth itself seemed like a dark speck in the abysm of space.

And then the crying broke out from the house—big with destiny, to be heard all over the place, so that Kongstrup slunk away shamefaced, and the other grew angry and ungovernable. … And Lasse … yes, where was Father Lasse?

With one leap, Pelle was in the brew-house, knocking on the door of the maid's room.

"Is that you, Anders?" whispered a voice from within, and then the door opened, and a pair of arms fastened themselves about him and drew him in. Pelle felt about him, and his hands sank into a naked bosom—why, it was yellow-haired Marie!

"Is Karna still here?" he asked. "Can't I speak to Karna a moment?"

They were glad to see him again; and yellow-haired Marie patted his cheeks quite affectionately, and just before that she kissed him too. Karna could scarcely recover from her surprise; he had acquired such a

townsman’s air. “And now you are a shoemaker too, in the biggest workshop in the town! Yes, we’ve heard; Butcher Jensen heard about it on the market. And you have grown tall and townified. You do hold yourself well!” Karna was dressing herself.

“Where is Father Lasse?” said Pelle; he had a lump in his throat only from speaking of him.

“Give me time, and I’ll come out with you. How fine you dress now! I should hardly have known you. Would you, Marie?”

“He’s a darling boy—he always was,” said Marie, and she pushed at him with her arched foot—she was now in bed again.

“It’s the same suit as I always had,” said Pelle.

“Yes, yes; but then you held yourself different—there in town they all look like lords. Well, shall we go?”

Pelle said good-by to Marie affectionately; it occurred to him that he had much to thank her for. She looked at him in a very odd way, and tried to draw his hand under the coverlet.

“What’s the matter with father?” said Pelle impatiently, as soon as they were outside.

Well, Lasse had taken to his heels too! He couldn’t stand it when Pelle had gone. And the work was too heavy for one. Where he was just at the moment Karna could not say. “He’s now here, now there, considering farms and houses,” she said proudly. “Some fine day he’ll be able to take you in on his visit to town.”

“And how are things going here?” inquired Pelle.

“Well, Erik has got his speech back and is beginning to be a man again—he can make himself understood. And Kongstrup and his wife, they drink one against the other.”

“They drink together, do they, like the wooden shoemaker and his old woman?”

“Yes, and so much that they often lie in the room upstairs soaking, and can’t see one another for the drink, they’re that foggy. Everything goes crooked here, as you may suppose, with no master. ‘Masterless, defenceless,’ as the old proverb says. But what can you say about it—they haven’t anything else in common! But it’s all the same to me—as soon as Lasse finds something I’m off!”

Pelle could well believe that, and had nothing to say against it. Karna looked at him from head to foot in surprise as they walked on. “They feed you devilish well in the town there, don’t they?”

“Yes—vinegary soup and rotten greaves. We were much better fed here.”

She would not believe it—it sounded too foolish. “But where are all the things they have in the shop windows—all the meats and cakes and sweet things? What becomes of all them?”

“That I don’t know,” said Pelle grumpily; he himself had racked his brains over this very question. “I get all I can eat, but washing and clothes I have to see to myself.”

Karna could scarcely conceal her amazement; she had supposed that Pelle had been, so to speak, caught up to Heaven while yet living. “But how do you manage?” she said anxiously. “You must find that difficult. Yes, yes, directly we set out feet under our own table we’ll help you all we can.”

They parted up on the high-road, and Pelle, tired and defeated, set out on his way back. It was broad daylight when he got back, and he crawled into bed without any one noticing anything of his attempted flight.

III

Little Nikas had washed the blacking from his face and had put on his best clothes; he wanted to go to the market with a bundle of washing, which the butcher from Aaker was to take home to his mother, and Pelle walked behind him, carrying the bundle. Little Nikas saluted many friendly maidservants in the houses of the neighborhood, and Pelle found it more amusing to walk beside him than to follow; two people who are together ought to walk abreast. But every time he walked beside the journeyman the latter pushed him into the gutter, and finally Pelle fell over a curbstone; then he gave it up.

Up the street the crazy watchmaker was standing on the edge of his high steps, swinging a weight; it was attached to the end of a long cord, and he followed the swinging of the pendulum with his fingers, as though he were timing the beats. This was very interesting, and Pelle feared it would escape the journeyman.

“The watchmaker’s making an experiment,” he said cheerfully.

“Stop your jaw!” said the journeyman sharply. Then it occurred to Pelle that he was not allowed to speak, so he closed his mouth tight.

He felt the bundle, in order to picture to himself what the contents were like. His eyes swept all the windows and the side streets, and every moment he carried his free hand to his mouth, as though he were yawning, and introduced a crumb of black bread, which he had picked up in the kitchen. His braces were broken, so he had continually to puff out his belly; there were hundreds of things to look at, and the coal-merchant’s dog to be kicked while, in all good faith, he snuffed at a curbstone.

A funeral procession came toward them, and the journeyman passed it with his head bared, so Pelle did the same. Eight at the back of the procession came Tailor Bjerregrav with his crutch; he always followed every funeral, and always walked light at the back because his method of progression called for plenty of room. He would stand still and look on the ground until the last of the other followers had gone a few steps in advance, then he would set his crutch in front of him, swing himself forward for a space, and then stand still again. Then he would swing forward again on his lame legs, and again stand still and watch the others, and again take a few paces, looking like a slowly wandering pair of compasses which was tracing the path followed by the procession.

But the funniest thing was that the tailor had forgotten to button up the flap of his black mourning-breeches, so that it hung over his knees like an apron. Pelle was not quite sure that the journeyman had noticed this.

“Bjerregrav has forgotten—”

“Hold your jaw.” Little Nikas made a movement backward, and Pelle ducked his head and pressed his hand tightly to his mouth.

Over in Staal Street there was a great uproar; an enormously fat woman was standing there quarrelling with two seamen. She was in her nightcap and petticoat, and Pelle knew her.

“That’s the Sow!” he began. “She’s a dreadful woman; up at Stone Farm——”

Smack! Little Nikas gave him such a box on the ear that he had to sit down on the woodcarver’s steps. “One, two, three, four— that’s it; now come on!” He counted ten steps forward and set off again. “But God help you if you don’t keep your distance!”

Pelle kept his distance religiously, but he instantly discovered that little Nikas, like old Jeppe, had too large a posterior. That certainly came of sitting too much—and it twisted one’s loins. He protruded his own buttocks as far as he could, smoothed down a crease in his jacket over his hips, raised himself elegantly upon the balls of his feet and marched proudly forward, one hand thrust into the breast of his coat. If the journeyman scratched himself, Pelle did the same—and he swayed his body in the same buoyant manner; his cheeks were burning, but he was highly pleased with himself.

Directly he was his own master he went the round of the country butchers, questioning them, in the hope of hearing some news of Lasse, but no one could tell him anything. He went from cart to cart, asking his questions. “Lasse Karlson?” said one. “Ah, he was cowherd up at Stone Farm!” Then he called to another, asking him about Lasse —the old cowherd at Stone Farm—and he again called to a third, and they all gathered about the carts, in order to talk the matter over. There were men here who travelled all over the island[1] in order to buy cattle; they

knew everything and everybody, but they could tell him nothing of Lasse. “Then he’s not in the island,” said one, very decidedly. “You must get another father, my lad!”

[1] Bornholm

Pelle did not feel inclined for chaff, so he slipped away. Besides, he must go back and get to work; the young master, who was busily going from cart to cart, ordering meat, had called to him. They hung together like the halves of a pea-pod when it was a question of keeping the apprentices on the curb, although otherwise they were jealous enough of one another.

Bjerregrav’s crutch stood behind the door, and he himself sat in stiff funereal state by the window; he held a folded white handkerchief in his folded hands, and was diligently mopping his eyes.

“Was he perhaps a relation of yours?” said the young master slyly.

“No; but it is so sad for those who are left—a wife and children. There is always some one to mourn and regret the dead. Man’s life is a strange thing, Andres.”

“Ah, and potatoes are bad this year, Bjerregrav!”

Neighbor Jörgen filled up the whole doorway. “Lord, here we have that blessed Bjerregrav!” he shouted; “and in state, too! What’s on to-day then—going courting, are you?”

“I’ve been following!” answered Bjerregrav, in a hushed voice.

The big baker made an involuntary movement; he did not like being unexpectedly reminded of death. “You, Bjerregrav, you ought to be a hearse-driver; then at least you wouldn’t work to no purpose!”

“It isn’t to no purpose when they are dead,” stammered Bjerregrav. “I am not so poor that I need much, and there is no one who stands near to me. No living person loses anything because I follow those who die. And then I know them all, and I’ve followed them all in thought since they were born,” he added apologetically.

“If only you got invited to the funeral feast and got something of all the good things they have to eat,” continued the baker, “I could understand it better.”

“The poor widow, who sits there with her four little ones and doesn’t know how she’s to feed them—to take food from her—no, I couldn’t do it! She’s had to borrow three hundred kroner so that her man could have a respectable funeral party.”

“That ought to be forbidden by law,” said Master Andres; “any one with little children hasn’t the right to throw away money on the dead.”

“She is giving her husband the last honors,” said Jeppe reprovingly. “That is the duty of every good wife.”

“Of course,” rejoined Master Andres. “God knows, something must be done. It’s like the performances on the other side of the earth, where the widow throws herself on the funeral pyre when the husband dies, and has to be burned to death.”

Baker Jörgen scratched his thighs and grimaced. “You are trying to get us to swallow one of your stinking lies, Andres. You’d never get a woman to do that, if I know anything of womankind.”

But Bjerregrav knew that the shoemaker was not lying, and fluttered his thin hands in the air, as though he were trying to keep something invisible from touching his body. “God be thanked that we came into the world on this island here,” he said, in a low voice. “Here only ordinary things happen, however wrongheaded they may be.”

“What puzzles me is where she got all that money!” said the baker.

“She’s borrowed it, of course,” said Bjerregrav, in a tone of voice that made it clear that he wanted to terminate the conversation.

Jeppe retorted contemptuously, “Who’s going to lend a poor mate’s widow three hundred kroner? He might as well throw it into the sea right away.”

But Baker Jörgen gave Bjerregrav a great smack on the back. “You’ve given her the money, it’s you has done it; nobody else would he such a silly sheep!” he said threateningly.

“You let me be!” stammered Bjerregrav. “I’ve done nothing to you! And she has had one happy day in the midst of all her sorrow.” His hands were trembling.

“You’re a goat!” said Jeppe shortly.

“What is Bjerregrav really thinking about when he stands like this looking down into the grave?” asked the young master, in order to divert the conversation.

“I am thinking: Now you are lying there, where you are better off than here,” said the old tailor simply.

“Yes, because Bjerregrav follows only poor people,” said Jeppe, rather contemptuously.

“I can’t help it, but I’m always thinking,” continued Master Andres; “just supposing it were all a take-in! Suppose he follows them and enjoys the whole thing—and then there’s nothing! That’s why I never like to see a funeral.”

“Ah, you see, that’s the question—supposing there’s nothing.” Baker Jörgen turned his thick body. “Here we go about imagining a whole lot of things; but what if it’s all just lies?”

“That’s the mind of an unbeliever!” said Jeppe, and stamped violently on the floor.

“God preserve my mind from unbelief!” retorted brother Jörgen, and he stroked his face gravely. “But a man can’t very well help thinking. And what does a man see round about him? Sickness and death and halleluiah! We live, and we live, I tell you, Brother Jeppe—and we live in order to live! But, good heavens! all the poor things that aren’t born yet!”

He sank into thought again, as was usual with him when he thought of Little Jörgen, who refused to come into the world and assume his name and likeness, and carry on after him…. There lay his belief; there was nothing to be done about it. And the others began to speak in hushed voices, in order not to disturb his memories.

Pelle, who concerned himself with everything in heaven and earth, had been absorbing every word that was spoken with his protruding ears, but when the conversation turned upon death he yawned. He himself had never been seriously ill, and since Mother Bengta died, death had never encroached upon his world. And that was lucky for him, as it would have been a case of all or nothing, for he had only Father Lasse. For Pelle the cruel hands of death hardly existed, and he could not understand how people could lay themselves down with their noses in the air; there was so much to observe here below—the town alone kept one busy.

On the very first evening he had run out to look for the other boys, just where the crowd was thickest. There was no use in waiting; Pelle was accustomed to take the bull by the horns, and he longed to be taken into favor.

“What sort of brat is that?” they said, flocking round him.

“I’m Pelle,” he said, standing confidently in the midst of the group, and looking at them all. “I have been at Stone Farm since I was eight, and that is the biggest farm in the north country.” He had put his hands in his pockets, and spat coolly in front of him, for that was nothing to what he had in reserve.

“Oh, so you’re a farmer chap, then!” said one, and the others laughed. Rud was among them.

“Yes,” said Pelle; “and I’ve done a bit of ploughing, and mowing fodder for the calves.”

They winked at one another. “Are you really a farmer chap?”

“Yes, truly,” replied Pelle, perplexed; they had spoken the word in a tone which he now remarked.

They all burst out laughing: “He confesses it himself. And he comes from the biggest farm in the country. Then he’s the biggest farmer in the country!”

“No, the farmer was called Kongstrup,” said Pelle emphatically. “I was only the herd-boy.”

They roared with laughter. “He doesn’t see it now! Why, Lord, that’s the biggest farmer’s lout!”

Pelle had not yet lost his head, for he had heavier ammunition, and now he was about to play a trump. “And there at the farm there was a man called Erik, who was so strong that he could thrash three men, but the bailiff was stronger still; and he gave Erik such a blow that he lost his senses.”

“Oh, indeed! How did he manage that? Can you hit a farmer chap so that he loses his senses? Who was it hit you like that?” The questions rained upon him.

Pelle pushed the boy who had asked the last question, and fixed his eyes upon his. But the rascal let fly at him again. “Take care of your best clothes,” he said, laughing. “Don’t crumple your cuffs!”

Pelle had put on a clean blue shirt, of which the neckband and wristbands had to serve as collar and cuffs. He knew well enough that he

was clean and neat, and now they were being smart at his expense on that very account.

“And what sort of a pair of Elbe barges has he got on? Good Lord! Why, they’d fill half the harbor!” This was in reference to Kongstrup’s shoes. Pelle had debated with himself as to whether he should wear them on a week-day. “When did you celebrate hiring-day?” asked a third. This was in reference to his fat red cheeks.

Now he was ready to jump out of his skin, and cast his eyes around to see if there was nothing with which he could lay about him, for this would infallibly end in an attack upon the whole party. Pelle already had them all against him.

But just then a long, thin lad came forward. “Have you a pretty sister?” he asked.

“I have no sisters at all,” answered Pelle shortly.

“That’s a shame. Well, can you play hide-and-seek?”

Of course Pelle could!

“Well, then, play!” The thin boy pushed Pelle’s cap over his eyes, and turned him with his face against the plank fence. “Count to a hundred—and no cheating, I tell you!”

No, Pelle would not cheat—he would neither look nor count short— so much depended on this beginning. But he solemnly promised himself to use his legs to some purpose; they should all be caught, one after another! He finished his counting and took his cap from his eyes. No one was to be seen. “Say ‘peep’!” he cried; but no one answered. For half an hour Pelle searched among timbers and warehouses, and at last he slipped away home and to bed. But he dreamed, that night, that he caught them all, and they elected him as their leader for all future time.

The town did not meet him with open arms, into which he could fall, with his childlike confidence, and be carried up the ladder. Here, apparently, one did not talk about the heroic deeds which elsewhere gave a man foothold; here such things merely aroused scornful laughter. He tried it again and again, always with something new, but the answer was always the same—“Farmer!” His whole little person was overflowing with good-will, and he became deplorably dejected.

Pelle soon perceived that his whole store of ammunition was crumbling between his hands, and any respect he had won at home, on the farm or in the village, by his courage and good nature, went for nothing here. Here other qualities counted; there was a different jargon, the clothes were different, and people went about things in a different way. Everything he had valued was turned to ridicule, even down to his pretty cap with its ear-flaps and its ribbon adorned with representations of harvest implements. He had come to town so calmly confident in himself—to make the painful discovery that he was a laughable object! Every time he tried to make one of a party, he was pushed to one side; he had no right to speak to others; he must take the hindmost rank!

Nothing remained to him but to sound the retreat all along the line until he had reached the lowest place of all. And hard as this was for a smart youngster who was burning to set his mark on everything, Pelle did it, and confidently prepared to scramble up again. However sore his defeat, he always retained an obstinate feeling of his own worth, which no one could take away from him. He was persuaded that the trouble lay not with himself but with all sorts of things about him, and he set himself restlessly to find out the new values and to conduct a war of elimination against himself. After every defeat he took himself unweariedly to task, and the next evening he would go forth once more, enriched by so many experiences, and would suffer defeat at a new point. He wanted to conquer—but what must he not sacrifice first? He knew of nothing more splendid than to march resoundingly through the streets, his legs thrust into Lasse’s old boots—this was the essence of manliness. But he was man enough to abstain from so doing—for here such conduct would be regarded as boorish. It was harder for him to suppress his past; it was so inseparable from Father Lasse that he was obsessed by a sense of unfaithfulness. But there was no alternative; if he wanted to get on he must adapt himself in everything, in prejudices and opinions alike. But he promised himself to flout the lot of them so soon as he felt sufficiently high-spirited.

What distressed him most was the fact that his handicraft was so little regarded. However accomplished he might become, the cobbler was, and remained, a poor creature with a pitchy snout and a big behind! Personal performance counted for nothing; it was obvious that he must as soon as possible escape into some other walk of life.

But at least he was in the town, and as one of its inhabitants— there

was no getting over that. And the town seemed still as great and as splendid, although it had lost the look of enchantment it once had, when Lasse and he had passed through it on their way to the country. Most of the people wore their Sunday clothes, and many sat still and earned lots of money, but no one knew how. All roads came hither, and the town swallowed everything: pigs and corn and men—everything sooner or later found its harbor here! The Sow lived here with Rud, who was now apprenticed to a painter, and the twins were here! And one day Pelle saw a tall boy leaning against a door and bellowing at the top of his voice, his arms over his face, while a couple of smaller boys were thrashing him; it was Howling Peter, who was cook's boy on a vessel. Everything flowed into the town!

But Father Lasse—he was not here!

IV

There was something about the town that made it hard to go to bed and hard to get up. In the town there was no sunrise shining over the earth and waking everybody. The open face of morning could not be seen indoors. And the dying day poured no evening weariness into one's limbs, driving them to repose; life seemed here to flow in the reverse direction, for here people grew lively at night!

About half-past six in the morning the master, who slept downstairs, would strike the ceiling with his stick. Pelle, whose business it was to reply, would mechanically sit up and strike the side of the bedstead with his clenched fist. Then, still sleeping, he would fall back again. After a while the process was repeated. But then the master grew impatient. "Devil take it! aren't you going to get up to-day?" he would bellow. "Is this to end in my bringing you your coffee in bed?" Drunken with sleep, Pelle would tumble out of bed. "Get up, get up!" he would cry, shaking the others. Jens got nimbly on his feet; he always awoke with a cry of terror, guarding his head; but Emil and Peter, who were in the hobbledehoy stage, were terribly difficult to wake.

Pelle would hasten downstairs, and begin to set everything in order, filling the soaking-tub and laying a sand-heap by the window-bench for the master to spit into. He bothered no further about the others; he was in a morning temper himself. On the days when he had to settle right away into the cobbler's hunch, without first running a few early errands or doing a few odd tasks, it took hours to thaw him.

He used to look round to see whether on the preceding evening he had made a chalk-mark in any conspicuous place; for then there must be something that he had to remember. Memory was not his strong point, hence this ingenious device. Then it was only a matter of not forgetting what the mark stood for; if he forgot, he was no better off than before.

When the workshop was tidy, he would hurry downstairs and run out for Madame, to fetch morning rolls "for themselves." He himself was given a wheaten biscuit with his coffee, which he drank out in the kitchen, while the old woman went grumbling to and fro. She was dry as a mummy and moved about bent double, and when she was not using her hands she carried one forearm pressed against her midriff. She was discontented with everything, and was always talking of the grave. "My two eldest are overseas, in America and Australia; I shall never see them again. And here at home two menfolk go strutting about doing nothing and expecting to be waited on. Andres, poor fellow, isn't strong, and Jeppe's no use any longer; he can't even keep himself warm in bed nowadays. But they know how to ask for things, that they do, and they let me go running all over the place without any help; I have to do everything myself. I shall truly thank God when at last I lie in my grave. What are you standing there for with your mouth and your eyes wide open? Get away with you!" Thereupon Pelle would finish his coffee—it was sweetened with brown sugar—out of doors, by the workshop window.

In the mornings, before the master appeared, there was no great eagerness to work; they were all sleepy still, looking forward to a long, dreary day. The journeyman did not encourage them to work; he had a difficulty in finding enough for himself. So they sat there wool-gathering, striking a few blows with the hammer now and then for appearance's sake, and one or another would fall asleep again over the table. They all started when three blows were struck on the wall as a signal for Pelle.

"What are you doing? It seems to me you are very idle in there!" the master would say, staring suspiciously at Pelle. But Pelle had remarked what work each was supposed to have in hand, and would run over it all. "What day's this—Thursday? Damnation take it! Tell that Jens he's to put aside Manna's uppers and begin on the pilot's boots this moment—they were promised for last Monday." The master would struggle miserably to get his breath: "Ah, I've had a bad night, Pelle, a horrible night; I was so hot, with such a ringing in my ears. New blood is so devilishly unruly; it's all the time boiling in my head like soda-water. But it's a good thing I'm making it, God knows; I used to be so soon done up. Do you believe in Hell? Heaven, now, that's sheer nonsense; what happiness can we expect elsewhere if we can't be properly happy here? But do you believe in Hell? I dreamed I'd spat up the last bit of my lungs and that I went to Hell. 'What the devil d'you want here, Andres?' they asked me; 'your heart is still whole!' And they wouldn't have me. But what does that signify? I can't breathe with my heart, so I'm dying. And what becomes of me then? Will you tell me that?

“There’s something that bids a man enter again into his mother’s womb; now if only a man could do that, and come into the world again with two sound legs, you’d see me disappear oversea double-quick, whoop! I wouldn’t stay messing about here any longer…. Well, have you seen your navel yet to-day? Yes, you ragamuffin, you laugh; but I’m in earnest. It would pay you well if you always began the day by contemplating your navel.”

The master was half serious, half jesting. “Well, now, you can fetch me my port wine; it’s on the shelf, behind the box with the laces in it. I’m deadly cold.”

Pelle came back and announced that the bottle was empty. The master looked at him mildly.

“Then run along and get me another. I’ve no money—you must say—well, think it out for yourself; you’ve got a head.” The master looked at him with an expression which went to Pelle’s heart, so that he often felt like bursting into tears. Hitherto Pelle’s life had been spent on the straight highway; he did not understand this combination of wit and misery, roguishness and deadly affliction. But he felt something of the presence of the good God, and trembled inwardly; he would have died for the young master.

When the weather was wet it was difficult for the sick man to get about; the cold pulled him down. If he came into the workshop, freshly washed and with his hair still wet, he would go over to the cold stove, and stand there, stamping his feet. His cheeks had quite fallen in. “I’ve so little blood for the moment,” he said at such times, “but the new blood is on the way; it sings in my ears every night.” Then he would be silent a while. “There, by my soul, we’ve got a piece of lung again,” he said, and showed Pelle, who stood at the stove brushing shoes, a gelatinous lump. “But they grow again afterward!”

“The master will soon be in his thirtieth year,” said the journeyman; “then the dangerous time is over.”

“Yes, deuce take it—if only I can hang together so long—only another six months,” said the master eagerly, and he looked at Pelle, as though Pelle had it in his power to help him; “only another six months! Then the whole body renews itself—new lungs—everything new. But new legs, God knows, I shall never get.”

A peculiar, secret understanding grew up between Pelle and the master; it did not manifest itself in words, but in glances, in tones of the voice, and in the whole conduct of each. When Pelle stood behind him, it was as though even the master’s leather jacket emitted a feeling of warmth, and Pelle followed him with his eyes whenever and wherever he could, and the master’s behavior to Pelle was different from his behavior to the others.

When, on his return from running errands in the town, he came to the corner, he was delighted to see the young master standing in the doorway, tightly grasping his stick, with his lame leg in an easy position. He stood there, sweeping his eyes from side to side, gazing longingly into the distance. This was his place when he was not indoors, sitting over some book of adventure. But Pelle liked him to stand there, and as he slipped past he would hang his head shyly, for it often happened that the master would clutch his shoulder, so hard that it hurt, and shake him to and fro, and would say affectionately: “Oh, you limb of Satan!” This was the only endearment that life had vouchsafed Pelle, and he sunned himself in it.

Pelle could not understand the master, nor did he understand his sighs and groans. The master never went out, save as an exception, when he was feeling well; then he would hobble across to the beerhouse and make up a party, but as a rule his travels ended at the house door. There he would stand, looking about him a little, and then he would hobble indoors again, with that infectious good humor which transformed the dark workshop into a grove full of the twittering of birds. He had never been abroad, and he felt no craving to go; but in spite of this his mind and his speech roamed over the whole wide world, so that Pelle at times felt like falling sick from sheer longing. He demanded nothing more than health of the future, and adventures hovered all about him; one received the impression that happiness itself had fluttered to earth and settled upon him. Pelle idolized him, but did not understand him. The master, who at one moment would make sport of his lame leg and the next moment forget that he had one, or jest about his poverty as though he were flinging good gold pieces about him—this was a man Pelle could not fathom. He was no wiser when he secretly looked into the books which Master Andres read so breathlessly; he would have been content with a much more modest adventure than a journey to the North Pole or

the center of the earth, if only he himself could have been of the party.

He had no opportunity to sit still and indulge in fancies. Every moment it was, “Pelle, run and do something or other!” Everything was purchased in small quantities, although it was obtained on credit. “Then it doesn’t run up so,” Jeppe used to say; it was all the same to Master Andres. The foreman’s young woman came running in; she absolutely must have her young lady’s shoes; they were promised for Monday. The master had quite forgotten them. “They are in hand now,” he said, undaunted. “To the devil with you, Jens!” And Jens had hastily thrust a pair of lasts into the shoes, while Master Andres went outside with the girl, and joked with her on the landing, in order to smooth her down. “Just a few nails, so that they’ll hang together,” said the master to Jens. And then, “Pelle, out you go, as quick as your legs will carry you! Say we’ll send for them early to-morrow morning and finish them properly! But run as though the devil were at your heels!”

Pelle ran, and when he returned, just as he was slipping into his leather apron, he had to go out again. “Pelle, run out and borrow a few brass nails—then we needn’t buy any to-day. Go to Klausen—no, go to Blom, rather; you’ve been to Klausen already this morning.”

“Blom’s are angry about the screw-block!” said Pelle.

“Death and all the devils! We must see about putting it in repair and returning it; remember that, and take it with you to the smith’s. Well, what in the world shall we do?” The young master stared helplessly from one to another.

“Shoemaker Marker,” suggested little Nikas.

“We don’t borrow from Marker,” and the master wrinkled his forehead. “Marker’s a louse!” Marker had succeeded in stealing one of the oldest customers of the workshop.

“There isn’t salt to eat an egg!”

“Well, what *shall* I do?” asked Pelle, somewhat impatiently.

The master sat for a while in silence. “Well, take it, then!” he cried, and threw a krone toward Pelle; “I have no peace from you so long as I’ve got a farthing in my pocket, you demon! Buy a packet and pay back Klausen and Blom what we’ve borrowed.”

“But then they’d see we’ve got a whole packet,” said Pelle.

“Besides, they owe us lots of other things that they’ve borrowed of us.” Pelle showed circumspection in his dealings.

“What a rogue!” said the master, and he settled himself to read. “Lord above us, what a gallows-bird!” He looked extremely contented.

And after a time it was once more, “Pelle, run out, etc.”

The day was largely passed in running errands, and Pelle was not one to curtail them; he had no liking for the smelly workshop and its wooden chairs. There was so much to be fetched and carried, and Pelle considered these errands to be his especial duty; when he had nothing else to do he roved about like a young puppy, and thrust his nose into everything. Already the town had no more secrets from him.

There was in Pelle an honorable streak which subdued the whole. But hitherto he had suffered only defeat; he had again and again sacrificed his qualities and accomplishments, without so far receiving anything in return. His timidity and distrust he had stripped from him indoors, where it was of importance that he should open his defences on all sides, and his solid qualities he was on the point of sacrificing on the altar of the town as boorish. But the less protection he possessed the more he gained in intrepidity, so he went about out-of-doors undauntedly—the town should be conquered. He was enticed out of the safe refuge of his shell, and might easily be gobbled up.

The town had lured him from the security of his lair, but in other matters he was the same good little fellow—most people would have seen no difference in him, except that he had grown taller. But Father Lasse would have wept tears of blood to see his boy as he now walked along the streets, full of uncertainty and uneasy imitativeness, wearing his best coat on a workday, and yet disorderly in his dress.

Yonder he goes, sauntering along with a pair of boots, his fingers thrust through the string of the parcel, whistling with an air of bravado. Now and again he makes a grimace and moves cautiously—when his trousers rub the sensitive spots of his body. He has had a bad day. In the morning he was passing a smithy, and allowed the splendid display of energy within, half in the firelight and half in the shadow, to detain him. The flames and the clanging of the metal, the whole lively uproar of real work, fascinated him, and he had to go in and ask whether there was an opening for an apprentice. He was not so stupid as to tell them where he

came from, but when he got home, Jeppe had already been told of it! But that is soon forgotten, unless, indeed, his trousers rub against his sore places. Then he remembers it; remembers that in this world everything has to be paid for; there is no getting out of things; once one begins anything one has to eat one's way through it, like the boy in the fairy-tale. And this discovery is, in the abstract, not so strikingly novel to Pelle.

He has, as always, chosen the longest way, rummaging about back yards and side streets, where there is a possibility of adventure; and all at once he is suddenly accosted by Albinus, who is now employed by a tradesman. Albinus is not amusing. He has no right to play and loiter about the warehouse in the aimless fashion that is possible out-of-doors; nor to devote himself to making a ladder stand straight up in the air while he climbs up it. Not a word can be got out of him, although Pelle does his best; so he picks up a handful of raisins and absconds.

Down at the harbor he boards a Swedish vessel, which has just arrived with a cargo of timber. "Have you anything for us to do?" he asks, holding one hand behind him, where his trousers have a hole in them.

"Klausen's apprentice has just been here and got what there was," replied the skipper.

"That's a nuisance—you ought to have given it to us," says Pelle. "Have you got a clay pipe?"

"Yes—just you come here!" The skipper reaches for a rope's end, but Pelle escapes and runs ashore.

"Will you give me a thrashing now?" he cries, jeering.

"You shall have a clay pipe if you'll run and get me half a krone's worth of chewing 'bacca."

"What will it cost?" asks Pelle, with an air of simplicity. The skipper reaches for his rope's end again, but Pelle is off already.

"Five öre worth of chewing tobacco, the long kind," he cries, before he gets to the door even. "But it must be the very best, because it's for an invalid." He throws the money on the counter and puts on a cheeky expression.

Old Skipper Lau rises by the aid of his two sticks and hands Pelle the twist; his jaws are working like a mill, and all his limbs are twisted with gout. "Is it for some one lying-in?" he asks slyly.

Pelle breaks off the stem of the clay pipe, lest it should stick out of his pocket, boards the salvage steamer, and disappears forward. After a time he reappears from under the cabin hatchway, with a gigantic pair of sea-boots and a scrap of chewing tobacco. Behind the deck-house he bites a huge mouthful off the brown Cavendish, and begins to chew courageously, which makes him feel tremendously manly. But near the furnace where the ship's timbers are bent he has to unload his stomach; it seems as though all his inward parts are doing their very utmost to see how matters would be with them hanging out of his mouth. He drags himself along, sick as a cat, with thumping temples; but somewhere or other inside him a little feeling of satisfaction informs him that one has to undergo the most dreadful consequences in order to perform any really heroic deed.

In most respects the harbor, with its stacks of timber and its vessels on the slips, is just as fascinating as it was on the day when Pelle lay on the shavings and guarded Father Lasse's sack. The black man with the barking hounds still leans from the roof of the harbor warehouse, but the inexplicable thing is that one could ever have been frightened of him. But Pelle is in a hurry.

He runs a few yards, but he must of necessity stop when he comes to the old quay. There the "strong man," the "Great Power," is trimming some blocks of granite. He is tanned a coppery brown with wind and sun, and his thick black hair is full of splinters of granite; he wears only a shirt and canvas trousers, and the shirt is open on his powerful breast; but it lies close on his back, and reveals the play of his muscles. Every time he strikes a blow the air whistles— *whew!*—and the walls and timber-stacks echo the sound. People come hurrying by, stop short at a certain distance, and stand there looking on. A little group stands there all the time, newcomers taking the place of those that move on, like spectators in front of a cage of lions. It is as though they expect something to happen— something that will stagger everybody and give the bystanders a good fright.

Pelle goes right up to the "Great Power." The "strong man" is the father of Jens, the second youngest apprentice. "Good-day," he says boldly, and stands right in the giant's shadow. But the stonecutter pushes him to one side without looking to see who it is, and continues to

hew at the granite: *whew! whew!*

"It is quite a long time now since he has properly used his strength," says an old townsman. "Is he quieting down, d'you think?"

"He must have quieted down for good," says another. "The town ought to see that he keeps quiet." And they move on, and Pelle must move on, too—anywhere, where no one can see him.

> "Cobbler, wobbler, groats in your gruel,
> Smack on your back goes the stick—how cruel!"

It is those accursed street-urchins. Pelle is by no means in a warlike humor; he pretends not to see them. But they come up close behind him and tread on his heels, and before he knows what is happening they are upon him. The first he knows about it is that he is lying in the gutter, on his back, with all three on top of him. He has fallen alongside of the curbstone and cannot move; he is faint, too, as a result of his indiscretion; the two biggest boys spread his arms wide open on the flagstones and press them down with all their might, while the third ventures to deal with his face. It is a carefully planned outrage, and all Pelle can do is to twist his head round under the blows—and for once he is thankful for his disgracefully fat cheeks.

Then, in his need, a dazzling apparition appears before him; standing in the doorway yonder is a white baker's boy, who is royally amused. It is no other than Nilen, the wonderful little devil Nilen, of his schooldays, who was always fighting everybody like a terrier and always came out of it with a whole skin. Pelle shuts his eyes and blushes for himself, although he knows perfectly well that this is only an apparition.

But then a wonderful thing happens; the apparition leaps down into the gutter, slings the boys to one side, and helps him to his feet. Pelle recognizes the grip of those fingers—even in his schooldays they were like claws of iron.

And soon he is sitting behind the oven, on Nilen's grimy bed. "So you've become a cobbler?" says Nilen, to begin with, compassionately, for he feels a deucedly smart fellow himself in his fine white clothes, with his bare arms crossed over his naked breast. Pelle feels remarkably comfortable; he has been given a slice of bread and cream, and he decides that the world is more interesting than ever. Nilen is chewing manfully, and spitting over the end of the bed.

"Do you chew?" asks Pelle, and hastens to offer him the leaf-tobacco.

"Yes, we all do; a fellow has to when he works all night."

Pelle cannot understand how people can keep going day and night.

"All the bakers in Copenhagen do—so that the people can get fresh bread in the morning—and our master wants to introduce it here. But it isn't every one can do it; the whole staff had to be reorganized. It's worst about midnight, when everything is turning round. Then it comes over you so that you keep on looking at the time, and the very moment the clock strikes twelve we all hold our breath, and then no one can come in or go out any more. The master himself can't stand the night shift; the 'baccy turns sour in his mouth and he has to lay it on the table. When he wakes up again he thinks it's a raisin and sticks it in the dough. What's the name of your girl?"

For a moment Pelle's thoughts caress the three daughters of old Skipper Elleby—but no, none of them shall be immolated. No, he has no girl.

"Well, you get one, then you needn't let them sit on you. I'm flirting a bit just now with the master's daughter—fine girl, she is, quite developed already—you know! But we have to look out when the old man's about!"

"Then are you going to marry her when you are a journeyman?" asks Pelle, with interest.

"And have a wife and kids on my back? You are a duffer, Pelle! No need to trouble about that! But a woman—well, that's only for when a man's bored. See?" He stretches himself, yawning.

Nilen has become quite a young man, but a little crude in his manner of expressing himself. He sits there and looks at Pelle with a curious expression in his eyes. "Cobbler's patch!" he says contemptuously, and thrusts his tongue into his cheek so as to make it bulge. Pelle says nothing; he knows he cannot thrash Nilen.

Nilen has lit his pipe and is lying on his back in bed—with his muddy shoes on—chattering. "What's your journeyman like? Ours is a conceited ass. The other day I had to fetch him a box on the ears, he was so saucy. I've learned the Copenhagen trick of doing it; it soon settles a man. Only you want to keep your head about it." A deuce of a fellow, this Nilen, he

is so grown up! Pelle feels smaller and smaller.

But suddenly Nilen jumps up in the greatest hurry. Out in the bakery a sharp voice is calling. “Out of the window—to the devil with you!” he yelps—“the journeyman!” And Pelle has to get through the window, and is so slow about it that his boots go whizzing past him. While he is jumping down he hears the well-known sound of a ringing box on the ear.

When Pelle returned from his wanderings he was tired and languid; the stuffy workshop did not seem alluring. He was dispirited, too; for the watchmaker’s clock told him that he had been three hours away. He could not believe it.

The young master stood at the front door, peeping out, still in his leather jacket and apron of green baize; he was whistling softly to himself, and looked like a grown fledgling that did not dare to let itself tumble out of the nest. A whole world of amazement lay in his inquiring eyes.

“Have you been to the harbor again, you young devil?” he asked, sinking his claws into Pelle.

“Yes.” Pelle was properly ashamed.

“Well, what’s going on there? What’s the news?”

So Pelle had to tell it all on the stairs; how there was a Swedish timber ship whose skipper’s wife was taken with childbirth out at sea, and how the cook had to deliver her; of a Russian vessel which had run into port with a mutiny on board; and anything else that might have happened. To-day there were only these boots. “They are from the salvage steamer—they want soling.”

“H’m!” The master looked at them indifferently. “Is the schooner *Andreas* ready to sail?”

But that Pelle did not know.

“What sort of a sheep’s head have you got, then? Haven’t you any eyes in it? Well, well, go and get me three bottles of beer! Only stick them under your blouse so that father don’t see, you monster!” The master was quite good-tempered again.

Then Pelle got into his apron and buckled on the knee-strap. Everybody was bending over his work, and Master Andres was reading; no sound was to be heard but those produced by the workers, and now and again a word of reprimand from the journeyman.

Every second afternoon, about five o’clock, the workshop door would open slightly, and a naked, floury arm introduced the newspaper and laid it on the counter. This was the baker’s son, Sören, who never allowed himself to be seen; he moved about from choice like a thief in the night. If the master—as he occasionally did—seized him and pulled him into the workshop, he was like a scared faun strayed from his thickets; he would stand with hanging head, concealing his eyes, and no one could get a word from him; and when he saw an opportunity, he would slip away.

The arrival of the newspaper caused quite a small commotion in the workshop. When the master felt inclined, he would read aloud—of calves with two heads and four pairs of legs; of a pumpkin that weighed fifty pounds; of the fattest man in the world; of fatalities due to the careless handling of firearms, or of snakes in Martinique. The dazzling wonder of the whole world passed like a pageant, filling the dark workshop; the political news was ignored. If the master happened to be in one of his desperate humors, he would read the most damnable nonsense: of how the Atlantic Ocean had caught fire, so that the people were living on boiled codfish; or how the heavens had got torn over America, so that angels fell right on to somebody’s supper-tray. Things which one knew at once for lies—and blasphemous nonsense, too, which might at any time have got him into trouble. Rowing people was not in the master’s line, he was ill the moment there was any unpleasantness; but he had his own way of making himself respected. As he went on reading some one would discover that he was getting a wigging, and would give a jump, believing that all his failings were in the paper.

When the time drew near for leaving off work, a brisker note sounded in the workshop. The long working-day was coming to an end, and the day’s weariness and satiety were forgotten, and the mind looked forward—filling with thoughts of the sand-hills or the woods, wandering down a road that was bright with pleasure. Now and again a neighbor would step in, and while away the time with his gossip; something or other had happened, and Master Andres, who was so clever, must say what he thought about it. Sounds that had been confused during the day now entered the workshop, so that those within felt that they were participating in the life of the town; it was as though the walls had fallen.

About seven o'clock a peculiar sound was heard in the street without, approaching in very slowly *tempo;* there was a dull thump and then two clacking sounds; and then came the thump again, like the tread of a huge padded foot, and once more the clack-clack. This was old Bjerregrav, swinging toward the workshop on his crutches; Bjerregrav, who moved more slowly than anybody, and got forward more quickly. If Master Andres happened to be in one of his bad humors, he would limp away, in order not to remain in the same room with a cripple; at other times he was glad to see Bjerregrav.

"Well, you are a rare bird, aren't you?" he would cry, when Bjerregrav reached the landing and swung himself sideways through the door; and the old man would laugh—he had paid this visit daily now for many years. The master took no further notice of him, but went on reading; and Bjerregrav sank into his dumb pondering; his pale hands feeling one thing after another, as though the most everyday objects were unknown to him. He took hold of things just as a newborn child might have done; one had to smile at him and leave him to sit there, grubbing about like the child he really was. It was quite impossible to hold a continuous conversation with him; for even if he did actually make an observation it was sure to be quite beside the mark; Bjerregrav was given to remarking attributes which no one else noticed, or which no one would have dwelt upon.

When he sat thus, pondering over and fingering some perfectly familiar object, people used to say, "Now Bjerregrav's questioning fit is coming on!" For Bjerregrav was an inquirer; he would ask questions about the wind and the weather, and even the food that he ate. He would ask questions about the most laughable subjects— things that were self-evident to any one else—why a stone was hard, or why water extinguished fire. People did not answer him, but shrugged their shoulders compassionately. "He is quite all there," they would say; "his head's all right. But he takes everything the wrong way round!"

The young master looked up from his book. "Now, shall I inherit Bjerregrav's money?" he asked mischievously.

"No—you've always been good to me; I don't want to cause you any misfortune."

"Worse things than that might befall me, don't you think?"

"No, for you've got a fair competence. No one has a right to more, so long as the many suffer need."

"Certain people have money in the bank themselves," said Master Andres allusively.

"No, that's all over," answered the old man cheerfully. "I'm now exactly as rich as you."

"The devil! Have you run through the lot?" The young master turned round on his chair.

"You and your 'run through it all'! You always sit over me like a judge and accuse me of things! I'm not conscious of having done anything wrong; but it's true that the need gets worse every winter. It's a burden to have money, Andres, when men are hungry all about you; and if you help them then you learn afterward that you've done the man injury; they say it themselves, so it must be true. But now I've given the money to the Charity Organization Society, so now it will go to the right people."

"Five thousand kroner!" said the master, musing. "Then there ought to be great rejoicing among the poor this winter."

"Well, they won't get it direct in food and firing," said Bjerregrav, "but it will come to them just as well in other ways. For when I'd made my offer to the Society, Shipowner Monsen—you know him—came to me, and begged me to lend him the money at one year. He would have gone bankrupt if he hadn't had it, and it was terrible to think of all the poor people who would have gone without bread if that great business of his had come to a standstill. Now the responsibility falls on me. But the money is safe enough, and in that way it does the poor twice as much good."

Master Andres shook his head. "Suppose Bjerregrav has just sat himself down in the nettles?"

"Why? But what else could I have done?" said the old man uneasily.

"The devil knows it won't be long before he's bankrupt. He's a frothy old rogue," murmured the master. "Has Bjerregrav got a note of hand?"

The old man nodded; he was quite proud of himself.

"And interest? Five per cent.?"

"No, no interest. For money to stand out and receive interest—I don't

like that. It has to suck the interest somewhere or other, and of course it's from the poor. Interest is blood-money, Andres —and it's a new-fangled contrivance, too. When I was young we knew nothing about getting interest on our money."

"Yes, yes:

> 'Who gives to other folks his bread
> And after suffers in their stead,
> Why club him, club him, club him dead!'"

said the master, and went on reading.

Bjerregrav sat there sunk in his own thoughts. Suddenly he looked up.

"Can you, who are so well read, tell me what keeps the moon from falling? I lay overnight puzzling over it, so as I couldn't sleep. She wanders and wanders through the sky, and you can see plainly there's nothing but air under her."

"The devil may know," said Master Andres thoughtfully. "She must have strength of her own, so that she holds herself up."

"I've thought that myself—for obligation isn't enough. Now we can do that—we walk and walk where we are put down, but then we've the earth under us to support us. And you are always studying, aren't you? I suppose you have read nearly all the books in the world?" Bjerregrav took the master's book and felt it thoroughly. "That's a good book," he said, striking his knuckles against the cover and holding the book to his ear; "good material, that. Is it a lying story or a history book?"

"It's a travel book. They go up to the North Pole, and they get frozen in, and they don't know if they'll ever get home alive again."

"But that's terrible—that people should risk their lives so. I've often thought about that—what it's like at the end of the world—but to go and find out—no, I should never have had the courage. Never to get home again!" Bjerregrav, with an afflicted expression, looked first at one, then at another.

"And they get frost-bite in their feet—and their toes have to be amputated—in some cases, the whole foot."

"No, be quiet! So they lose their health, poor fellows!—I don't want to hear any more!" The old man sat rocking himself to and fro, as though he felt unwell. But a few moments later he asked inquisitively: "Did the king send them up there to make war?"

"No; they went to look for the Garden of Eden. One of the people who investigate writings has discovered that it is said to lie behind the ice," declared the master solemnly.

"The Garden of Eden—or they call it Paradise, too—but that lies where the two rivers fall into a third, in the East! That is quite plainly written. Consequently what you read there is false teaching."

"It's at the North Pole, God's truth it is!" said the master, who was inclined to be a free-thinker; "God's truth, I tell you! The other's just a silly superstition."

Bjerregrav maintained an angry silence. He sat for some time bending low in his chair, his eyes roaming anywhere so that they did not meet another's. "Yes, yes," he said, in a low voice; "everybody thinks something new in order to make himself remarkable, but no one can alter the grave."

Master Andres wriggled impatiently to and fro; he could change his mood like a woman. Bjerregrav's presence began to distress him. "Now, I've learned to conjure up spirits; will Bjerregrav make the experiment?" he said suddenly.

"No, not at any price!" said the old man, smiling uneasily.

But the master pointed, with two fingers, at his blinking eyes, and gazed at him, while he uttered the conjuration.

"In the name of the Blood, in the name of the Sap, in the name of all the Humors of the Body, the good and the bad alike, and in the name of the Ocean," he murmured, crouching like a tom-cat.

"Stop it, I tell you! Stop it! I won't have it!" Bjerregrav was hanging helplessly between his crutches, swinging to and fro, with an eye to the door, but he could not wrest himself away from the enchantment. Then, desperately, he struck down the master's conjuring hand, and profited by the interruption of the incantation to slip away.

The master sat there blowing upon his hand. "He struck out properly," he said, in surprise, turning his reddened hand with the palm inward.

Little Nikas did not respond. He was not superstitious, but he did not like to hear ridicule cast upon the reality of things.

“What shall I do?” asked Peter.

“Are mate Jensen’s boots ready?” The master looked at the clock. “Then you can nibble your shin-bones.”

It was time to stop work. The master took his stick and hat and limped over to the beer-house to play a game of billiards; the journeyman dressed and went out; the older apprentices washed their necks in the soaking-tub. Presently they too would go out and have a proper time of it.

Pelle gazed after them. He too experienced a desperate need to shake off the oppressive day, and to escape out of doors, but his stockings were nothing but holes, and his working-blouse had to be washed so that it should be dry by the following morning. Yes, and his shirt—and he blushed up to his ears—was it a fortnight he had worn it, or was this the fourth week? The time had slipped past so…. He had meant to defer the disagreeable business of washing only for a few days—and now it had mounted up to fourteen! His body had a horrible crawling feeling; was his punishment come upon him because he had turned a deaf ear to the voice of conscience, and had ignored Father Lasse’s warning, that disgrace awaited those who did not keep themselves clean?

No, thank God! But Pelle had received a thorough fright, and his ears were still burning as he scrubbed his shirt and blouse downstairs in the yard. It would be well to take it as a timely warning from on high!

And then blouse and shirt were hanging on the fence, spreading themselves abroad as though they wanted to hug the heavens for joy in their cleanliness. But Pelle sat dejectedly upstairs, at the window of the apprentices’ garret, one leg outside, so that part of him at least was in the open air. The skillful darning which his father had taught him was not put into practice here; the holes were simply cobbled together, so that Father Lasse would have sunk into the earth for shame. Gradually he crept right out on to the roof; below, in the skipper’s garden, the three girls were wandering idly, looking over toward the workshop, and evidently feeling bored.

Then they caught sight of him, and at once became different beings. Manna came toward him, thrust her body impatiently against the stone wall, and motioned to him with her lips. She threw her head back imperiously, and stamped with her feet—but without making a sound. The other two were bent double with suppressed laughter.

Pelle understood perfectly what this silent speech intended, but for a time he courageously stood his ground. At last, however, he could endure it no longer; he threw everything aside and next moment was with the girls.

All Pelle’s dreams and unuttered longings hovered over those places where men disported themselves. To him nothing was more ridiculous than to run after petticoats. Women, for Pelle, were really rather contemptible; they had no strength, and very little intelligence; indeed, they understood nothing but the art of making themselves ornamental. But Manna and her sisters were something apart; he was still enough of a child to play, and they were excellent playmates.

Manna—the wild cat—was afraid of nothing; with her short skirts and her pigtail and her skipping movements she reminded him of a frolicsome, inquisitive young bird—Skip! out of the thicket and back again! She could climb like a boy, and could carry Pelle all round the garden on her back; it was really an oversight that she should have to wear skirts. Her clothes wouldn’t keep on her, and she was always tumbling into the workshop, having torn something or other off her shoes. Then she would turn everything upside down, take the master’s stick away, so that he could not move, and would even get her fingers among the journeyman’s American tools.

She was on good terms with Pelle the very first day.

“Whose new boy are you?” she asked him, smacking him on the back. And Pelle laughed, and returned her look frankly, with that immediate comprehension which is the secret of our early years. There was no trace of embarrassment between them; they had always known one another, and could at any time resume their play just where they had left off. In the evening Pelle used to station himself by the garden wall and wait for her; then in a moment he was over and in the middle of some game.

Manna was no ordinary cry-baby; not one who seeks to escape the consequences of her action by a display of tears. If she let herself in for a scuffle, she never sued for mercy, however hardly it went with her. But Pelle was to a certain extent restrained by the fact of her petticoats. And she, on one occasion, did not deny that she wished she could only be a little stronger!

But she had courage, and Pelle, like a good comrade, gave as good as he got, except in the workshop, where she bullied him. If she assailed him from behind, dropping something down his neck or pushing him off his wooden stool, he restrained himself, and was merely thankful that his bones were still unbroken.

All his best hours were spent in the skipper's garden, and this garden was a wonderful place, which might well hold his senses captive. The girls had strange outlandish names, which their father had brought home with him on his long voyages: Aina, Dolores, and Sjermanna! They wore heavy beads of red coral round their necks and in their ears. And about the garden lay gigantic conch-shells, in which one could hear the surging of the ocean, and tortoise-shells as big as a fifteen-pound loaf, and whole great lumps of coral.

All these things were new to Pelle, but he would not allow them to confound him; he enrolled them as quickly as possible among the things that were matters of course, and reserved himself the right to encounter, at any moment, something finer and more remarkable.

But on some evenings he would disappoint the girls, and would stroll about the town where he could see real life—or go down to the dunes or the harbor. Then they would stand dejectedly at the garden wall, bored and quarrelsome. But on Sundays, as soon as he had finished in the workshop, he would faithfully appear, and they would spin out their games, conscious of a long day in front of them. They played games innumerable, and Pelle was the center of them all; he could turn himself to anything; he became everything in turn—lawful husband, cannibal, or slave. He was like a tame bear in their hands; they would ride on him, trample all over him, and at times they would all three fall upon him and "murder" him. And he had to lie still, and allow them to bury his body and conceal all traces of it. The reality of the affair was enhanced by the fact that he was really covered with earth—all but his face, which was left bare only from necessity—they contented themselves with covering that with withered leaves. When he cried afterward over the state of his fine confirmation clothes, they brushed him with solicitous hands, and when he could scarcely be comforted they all three kissed him. With them he was always referred to as "Manna's husband."

So Pelle's days went by. He had a certain grim humor rather than a cheerful mind; he felt gloomy, and as though things were going badly with him; and he had no one to lean upon. But he continued his campaign against the town, undaunted; he thought of it night and day, and fought it in his sleep.

"If you're ever in a difficulty, you've always Alfred and Albinus to help you out," Uncle Kalle had said, when Pelle was bidding him good-bye; and he did not fail to look them up. But the twins were to-day the same slippery, evasive customers as they were among the pastures; they ventured their skins neither for themselves nor for anybody else.

In other respects they had considerably improved. They had come hither from the country in order to better their positions, and to that end had accepted situations which would serve them until they had saved sufficient to allow them to commence a more distinguished career. Albinus had advanced no further, as he had no inclination to any handicraft. He was a good-tempered youth, who was willing to give up everything else if only he could practise his acrobatic feats. He always went about balancing something or other, taking pains to put all sorts of objects to the most impossible uses. He had no respect for the order of nature; he would twist his limbs into all imaginable positions, and if he threw anything into the air he expected it to stay there while he did something else. "Things must be broken in as well as animals," he would say, and persevere indefatigably. Pelle laughed; he liked him, but he did not count on him any further.

Alfred had struck out in quite another direction. He no longer indulged in hand-springs, but walked decorously on his legs, had always much ado to pull down and straighten his collar and cuffs, and was in continual anxiety as to his clothes. He was now apprentice to a painter, but had a parting in his hair like a counter-jumper, and bought all sorts of things at the chemist's, which he smeared on his hair. If Pelle ran across him in the street, Alfred always made some excuse to shake him off; he preferred to associate with tradesmen's apprentices, and was continually greeting acquaintances right and left—people who were in a better position than himself. Alfred put on airs of importance which made Pelle long one fine day to cudgel him soundly.

The twins resembled one another in this—no one need look to them for

assistance of any kind. They laughed comfortably at the very idea, and if any one made fun of Pelle they joined in the laughter.

It was not easy to get on. He had quite shaken off the farm-boy; it was his poverty that gave him trouble now. He had recklessly bound himself as apprentice for board and lodging; he had a few clothes on his body, and he had not thought other requisites necessary for one who did not stroll up and down and gad about with girls. But the town demanded that he should rig himself out. Sunday clothes were here not a bit too good for weekdays. He ought to see about getting himself a rubber collar—which had the advantage that one could wash it oneself; cuffs he regarded as a further desideratum. But that needed money, and the mighty sum of five kroner, with which he had set out to conquer the world, or, at the worst, to buy it—well, the town had enticed it out of his pocket before he was aware of it.

Hitherto Father Lasse had taken all very difficult matters upon himself; but now Pelle stood alone, and had only himself to rely on. Now he stood face to face with life, and he struggled courageously forward, like the excellent boy he was. But at times he broke down. And this struggle was a drag upon all his boyish doings and strivings.

In the workshop he made himself useful and tried to stand well with everybody. He won over little Nikas by drawing a somewhat extravagant representation of his betrothed from a photograph. The face would not come out quite right; it looked as though some one had trodden on it; but the clothes and the brooch at the throat were capital. The picture hung for a week in the workshop, and brought Pelle a wonderful piece of luck: Carlsen, who ran errands for the stone-workers, ordered two large pictures, one of himself and one of his wife, at the rate of twenty-five öre apiece. “But you must show a few curls in my hair,” he said, “for my mother’s always wished I had curls.”

Pelle could not promise the pictures in less than two months’ time; it was tedious work if they were to be accurate.

“Well, well; we can’t spare the money sooner. This month there’s the lottery, and next month the rent to pay.” Pelle could very well appreciate that, for Carlsen earned eight kroner a week and had nine children. But he felt that he could not well reduce the price. Truly, people weren’t rolling in money here! And when for once he actually had a shilling in hand, then it was sure to take to its heels under his very nose, directly he began to rack his brains to decide how it could most usefully be applied: on one such occasion, for example, he had seen, in a huckster’s window, a pipe in the form of a boot-leg, which was quite irresistible.

When the three girls called to him over the garden wall his childhood found companionship, and he forgot his cares and struggles. He was rather shy of anybody seeing him when he slipped across; he felt that his intercourse with the children was not to his credit; moreover, they were only “petticoats.” But he felt that he was lucky to be there, where there were curious things which were useful to play with—Chinese cups and saucers, and weapons from the South Sea Islands. Manna had a necklace of white teeth, sharp and irregular, strung together in a haphazard way, which she maintained were human teeth, and she had the courage to wear them round her bare neck. And the garden was full of wonderful plants; there were maize, and tobacco, and all sorts of other plants, which were said, in some parts of the world, to grow as thick as corn does at home.

They were finer of skin than other folk, and they were fragrant of the strange places of the world. And he played with them, and they regarded him with wonder and mended his clothes when he tore them; they made him the center of all their games—even when he was not present. There was a secret satisfaction in this—although he accepted it as a matter of course, it was a portion of all that fate and good fortune had reserved for him, a slight advance payment from the infinite fairy-tale of life. He longed to rule over them absolutely, and if they were obstinate he lectured them angrily, so that they suddenly gave in to him. He knew well enough that every proper man makes his wife behave submissively.

So passed the early summer; time was moving onward. The townsfolk had already, at Whitsuntide, provided themselves with what they needed for the summer, and out in the country people had other things to think about than trapesing into town with work for the artisans; the coming harvest occupied all their thoughts. Even in the poorest quarters, where no work was done for the peasants, one realized how utterly dependent the little town was upon the country. It was as though the town had in a moment forgotten its superiority; the manual workers no longer looked down on the peasants; they looked longingly toward the fields, spoke of the weather and the prospects of harvest, and had forgotten all their

urban interests. If by exception a farmer's cart came through the streets, people ran to the window to look after it. And as the harvest stood almost at their doors, it seemed as though old memories were calling to them, and they raised their heads to listen; those who could gave up their town life and went into the country to help in the work of harvest. Both the journeyman and the two apprentices had left the workshop; Jens and Pelle could comfortably manage the work.

Pelle saw nothing of this stagnant mood; he was occupied on all sides in keeping a whole skin and getting the utmost out of life; there were thousands of impressions of good and evil which had to be assimilated, and which made a balanced whole—that remarkable thing, the town, of which Pelle never knew whether he felt inclined to bless it or curse it,—or it always held him in suspense.

And amidst all his activities, Lasse's face rose up before him and made him feel lonely in the midst of the bustle. Wherever could Father Lasse be? Would he ever hear of him again? Every day he had expected, in reliance on Karna's word, to see him blundering in at the door, and when anybody fumbled at the door-knocker he felt quite certain it was Lasse. It became a silent grief in the boy's mind, a note that sounded through all that he undertook.

V

One Sunday evening, as Pelle was running down East Street, a cart loaded with household goods came jolting in from the country. Pelle was in a great hurry, but was obliged to look at it. The driver sat in front, below the load, almost between the horses; he was tall and had ruddy cheeks, and was monstrously wrapped up, in spite of the heat. “Hallo!” Why, it was the worthy Due, Kalle’s son-in-law; and above him, in the midst of all the lumber, sat Anna and the children, swaying to and fro with the motion of the cart. “Hullo!” Pelle waved his cap, and with one spring he had his foot on the shaft and was sitting next to Due, who was laughing all over his face at the encounter.

“Yes, we’ve had enough of the farming country, and now we’ve come to see if things aren’t better here in town,” said Due, in his quiet manner. “And here you are, running about just like you did at home!” There was amazement in his voice.

Anna came crawling over the load, and smiled down upon him.

“Have you news of Father Lasse?” Pelle asked her. This was always his question when he met an acquaintance.

“Yes, that we have—he’s just going to buy a farm up on the heath. Now, you devil, are you goin’ to behave?” Anna crawled backward, and a child began to cry. Then she reappeared. “Yes, and we were to remember father to you, and mother, and all the rest.”

But Pelle had no thoughts to spare for Uncle Kalle.

“Is it up by Stone Farm?” he asked.

“No—farther to the east, by the Witch’s Cell,” said Due. “It is a big piece of land, but it’s not much more than stone. So long as he doesn’t ruin himself over it—two have gone smash there before him. He’s arranged it together with Karna.”

“Uncle Lasse will know what he’s about,” said Anna. “Karna has found the money for it; she has something saved.”

Pelle couldn’t sit still; his heart leaped in his body at this news. No more uncertainty—no more horrible possibilities: he had his father once more! And the dream of Lasse’s life was about to be fulfilled: he could now put his feet under his own table. He had become a landowner into the bargain, if one didn’t use the term too precisely; and Pelle himself—why, he was a landowner’s son!

By nine o’clock in the evening he had finished everything, and was able to get off; his blood was pulsing with excitement…. Would there be horses? Why, of course; but would there be laborers, too? Had Father Lasse become one of those farmers who pay wages on a quarter-day, and come into town on a Sunday afternoon, their fur-lined collars up to their ears? Pelle could see the men quite plainly going up the stairs, one after another, taking off their wooden shoes and knocking on the door of the office—yes, they wanted to see about an advance on their wages. And Lasse scratched the back of his head, looked at them thoughtfully, and said: “Not on any account, you’d only waste it on drink.” But he gave it to them finally, for all that. “One is much too good-natured,” he said to Pelle….

For Pelle had bidden farewell to cobbling, and was living at home as a landowner’s son. Really, Pelle managed the whole business—only it wouldn’t do to say so. And at the Christmas feast he danced with the buxom farmer’s daughters. There was whispering in the corners when Pelle made his appearance; but he went straight across the room and invited the Pastor’s daughter to a dance, so that she lost her breath, and more besides, and begged him on the spot to marry her….

He hurried onward, still dreaming; longing drew him onward, and before he knew it he had travelled some miles along the high-road. The road he now turned into led him by pine woods and heath-covered hills; the houses he passed were poorer, and the distance from one to another was increasing.

Pelle took a turning a little farther on, which, to the best of his knowledge, led in the required direction, and hurried forward with awakened senses. The landscape was only half revealed by the summer night, but it was all as familiar as the mends in the back of Father Lasse’s waistcoat, although he had never been here before. The poverty-stricken landscape spoke to him as with a mother’s voice. Among these clay-daubed huts, the homes of poor cultivators who waged war upon the rocky ground surrounding their handful of soil, he felt safe as he had never felt before. All this had been his through many generations, down to the rags thrust into the broken window-panes and the lumber piled

upon the thatch to secure it. Here was nothing for any one to rack his brains over, as elsewhere in the world; here a man could lie down at peace and rest. Yet it was not for him to till the ground and to dwell amid all these things. For he had outgrown them, as he had outgrown the shelter of his mother's skirts.

The lane gradually became a deep cart-track, which meandered between rocks and moorland. Pelle knew that he ought to keep to the east, but the track went now to the south, now to the north. He soon had enough of it, noted his direction exactly, and struck off obliquely. But it was difficult to make his way; the moonlight deceived his eyes so that he stumbled and sank into hollows, while the heather and the juniper reached as high as his waist, and hampered every movement. And then he turned obstinate, and would not turn back to the cart-track, but labored forward, so that he was soon steaming with heat; clambering over slanting ridges of rock, which were slippery with the dewfall on the moss, and letting himself tumble at hazard over the ledges. A little too late he felt a depth below him; it was as though a cold wave washed through his heart, and he clutched wildly at the air for some support. "Father Lasse!" he cried woefully; and at the same moment he was caught by brambles, and sank slowly down through their interwoven runners, which struck their myriad claws into him and reluctantly let him pass, until he was cautiously deposited, deep down among the sharp stones at the bottom of a ravine, shuddering and thanking his stars for all the thorns that had mercifully flayed his hide in order that he should not split his skull. Then he must needs grope forward, through the darkness and running water, until he found a tree and was able to climb to the surface.

Now he had lost his bearings, and when that became clear he lost his head as well. Nothing was left of the confident Pelle of a while ago; he ran blindly forward, in order to reach the summit of the hill. And as he was hastening upward, so that he might take note of the crags that lay about him, the ground rose and closed above him with a frightful clamor, and the air turned black and full of noises, and he could not see his hand before his eyes. It was like a stupendous explosion—as though released by his cheerful stamping over the rocks, the earth was hurled into the sky and dissolved in darkness, and the darkness itself cried aloud with terror and eddied round him. His heart pounded in his breast and robbed him of his last remnant of understanding; he jumped for sheer unbridled terror and bellowed like a maniac. The black mass drove over his head, so that he was forced to duck, and gleaming rifts showed and disappeared; and the darkness surged like the ocean and cried continually aloud with a hellish chaos of sounds. Then it suddenly swung to one side, drifted northward, and descended. And Pelle understood that he had stumbled upon a rookery.

He found himself behind a great rock. How he got there he did not know; but he knew that he was a terrible duffer. How easily he could have brought confusion on the fifty-odd crows by tossing a few stones into the air!

He went along the slope, very valiant in his resolve, but with shaking knees. In the far distance a fox sat upon a cliff and howled insanely at the moon, and far to the north and the south lay a transient glimmer of sea. Up here subterranean creatures had their home; when one trod upon the rock it sounded hollow.

In the southern opening the sea lay silver in the moonlight, but as Pelle looked again it disappeared, and the low-lying plain was drowned in white. In every direction the land was disappearing; Pelle watched in amazement while the sea slowly rose and filled every hollow. Then it closed above the lesser hills; one by one it swallowed them, and then it took the long ridge of hills to the east, until only the crests of the pine-trees lifted themselves above it; but Pelle did not as yet give himself up for lost; for behind all his anxiety lay a confused conception of Mount Ararat, which kept up his courage. But then it became so dreadfully cold that Pelle's breeches seemed to stick to his body. "That's the water," he thought, and he looked round in alarm; the rock had become a little island, and he and it were floating on the ocean.

Pelle was a sturdy little realist, who had already had all manner of experiences. But now the fear had at last curdled his blood, and he accepted the supernatural without a protest. The world had evidently perished, and he himself was drifting—drifting out into space, and space was terribly cold. Father Lasse, and the workshop, Manna and the young master's shining eyes—here was an end of them all. He did not mourn them; he simply felt terribly lonely. What would be the end of it all—or was this perhaps death? Had he perhaps fallen dead a little while ago,

when he tumbled over the precipice? And was he now voyaging toward the land of the blessed? Or was this the end of the world itself, of which he had heard such dreadful things said, as far back as he could remember? Perhaps he was adrift on the last scrap of earth, and was the only person still living? It did not in the least surprise Pelle that he should be left where everybody else had perished; in this moment of despair he found it quite natural.

He stood breathlessly silent and listened to the infinite; and he heard the cudgel-like blows of his pulses. Still he listened, and now he heard something more: far away in the night that surged against his ears he heard the suggestion of a sound, the vibrating note of some living creature. Infinitely remote and faint though it was, yet Pelle was so aware of it that it thrilled him all through. It was a cow feeding on the chain; he could follow the sound of her neck scrubbing up and down against the post.

He ran down over the craggy declivity, fell, and was again on his feet and running forward; the mist had swallowed him unawares. Then he was down on arable that had once been woodland; then he trod on something that felt familiar as it brushed against his feet—it was land that had once been ploughed but had now been recaptured by the heath. The sound grew louder, and changed to all those familiar sounds that one hears at night coming from an open cowshed; and now a decayed farmhouse showed through the mist. This could not of course be the farm Pelle was looking for—Father Lasse had a proper farmhouse with four wings! But he went forward.

Out in the country people do not lock everything up as carefully as they do in town; so Pelle could walk right in. Directly he opened the door of the sitting-room he was filled with an uplifting joy. The most comfortable odor he had ever known struck upon his senses —the foundation of everything fragrant—the scent of Father Lasse! It was dark in the room, and the light of the night without could not make its way through the low window. He heard the deep breathing of persons asleep, and knew that they had not awakened—the night was not nearly over yet. “Good-evening!” he said.

A hand began to grope for the matches.

“Is any one there?” said a drowsy woman’s voice.

“Good-evening!” he cried again, and went forward into the room. “It’s Pelle!” He brought out the name in a singsong voice.

“So it’s you, boy!” Lasse’s voice quavered, and the hands could not manage the matches; but Pelle stepped toward the voice and clasped his wrist. “And how did you find your way here in the wilderness— and at night, too? Yes, yes, I’ll get up!” he continued, and he tried, with a groan, to sit up.

“No, you stop there and let me get up,” said Karna, who lay against the wall—she had kept silence while the men-folk were speaking. “He gets this lumbago, I can tell you!” she declared, jumping out of bed.

“Ay, I’ve been at it a bit too hard. Work comes easy when a man’s his own master—it’s difficult to leave off. But it’ll be all right when once I’ve got things properly going. Work’s a good embrocation for the lumbago. And how goes it with you then? I was near believing you must be dead!”

So Pelle had to sit on the edge of the bed and tell about everything in town—about the workshop, and the young master’s lame leg, and everything. But he said nothing of the disagreeable things; it was not for men to dwell upon such things.

“Then you’ve been getting on well in foreign parts!” said Lasse, delighted. “And do they think well of you?”

“Yes!” This came a trifle slowly. In the first place, respect was just particularly what he had not won—but why trumpet forth his miseries? “The young master must like me—he often chats with me, even over the journeyman’s head.”

“Now, think of that! I have often wondered, I can tell you, how you were getting on, and whether we shouldn’t soon have good news of you. But everything takes time, that we know. And as you see, I’m in a very different position.”

“Yes, you’ve become a landowner!” said Pelle, smiling.

“The deuce, yes, so I am!” Lasse laughed, too, but then he groaned piteously with the pain in his back. “In the daytime, when I’m working hard, I get along well enough, but as soon as I lie down, then it comes on directly. And it’s the devil of a pain—as though the wheels of a heavy loaded wagon were going to and fro across your back, whatever name you like to give it. Well, well! It’s a fine thing, all the same, to be your

own master! It's funny how it takes me—but dry bread tastes better to me at my own table than—yes, by God, I can tell you, it tastes better than cake at any other body's table! And then to be all alone on your own bit of land, and to be able to spit wherever you like to spit, without asking anybody's leave! And the soil isn't so bad; even if most of it has never been under cultivation, it has all been lying there storing up its power to produce since the beginning of the world. But about the people in the town—are they agreeable?"

Oh, Pelle had nothing to complain about. "But when were you married?" he asked suddenly.

"Well, you see," and Lasse began to stumble over his own words, although he had been prepared for the boy to ask this very question; "in a way we aren't exactly married. That takes money, and the work here is getting forward.... But it's our intention, I needn't say, as soon as we have time and money." It was honestly Lasse's opinion that one could just as well dispense with the ceremony; at least until children came, and demanded an honorable birth. But he could see that Pelle did not relish the idea; he was still the same pedantic little chap the moment a point of honor was in question. "As soon as we've got the harvest under shelter we'll invite people to a grand feast," he said resolutely.

Pelle nodded eagerly. Now he was a landowner's son, and he could make the shabby-genteel boys of the town envious of him. But they mustn't be able to throw it in his face that his father was "living with a woman!"

Now Karna came in with some food. She looked at the boy with much affection. "Now, fall to, and don't despise our poor table, my son," she said, and gave his arm a friendly pat. Pelle fell to with a good appetite. Lasse hung half out of the alcove, delighted.

"You haven't lost your appetite down there," he said. "Do you get anything decent to eat? Karna thought the food wasn't any too good."

"It's passable!" said Pelle obstinately. He repented of having betrayed himself to Karna that evening, when he was so depressed.

The desire to eat awoke in Lasse, so that little by little he crept out of the alcove. "You are sitting alone there," he said, and sat down at the table in his nightcap and pants. He was wearing a knitted nightcap, one end of which fell loosely over his ear. He looked like a genuine old farmer, one that had money in his mattress. And Karna, who was moving to and fro while the menfolk ate, had a round, comfortable figure, and was carrying a big bread-knife in her hand. She inspired confidence, and she too looked a regular farmer's wife.

A place was found for Pelle on the bed. He extinguished the tallow dip before he undressed, and thrust his underclothing under the pillow.

He woke late; the sun had already left the eastern heavens. The most delicious smell of coffee filled the room. Pelle started up hastily, in order to dress himself before Karna could come in and espy his condition; he felt under the pillow—and his shirt was no longer there! And his stockings lay on a stool, and they had been darned!

When Karna came in he lay motionless, in obstinate silence; he did not reply to her morning salutation, and kept his eyes turned toward the alcove. She ought not to have gone rummaging among his things!

"I've taken your shirt and washed it," she said serenely, "but you can have it again this evening. After all, you can wear this until then." She laid one of Lasse's shirts on the coverlet.

Pelle lay there for a time as though he had not heard Karna. Then he sat up, feeling very cross and got into the shirt. "No, stay there until you've drunk your coffee," she said as he attempted to get up, and she placed a stool by him. And so Pelle had his coffee in bed, as he had dreamed it was to happen when Father Lasse remarried; and he could not go on feeling angry. But he was still burning with shame, and that made him taciturn.

During the morning Lasse and Pelle went out and inspected the property.

"It'll be best if we go round it first; then you will see plainly where the boundary lies," said Lasse, who knew that the dimensions of the place would be a surprise to Pelle. They wandered through heather and brambles and thorns, striking across the moorland and skirting precipitous slopes. It was several hours before they had finished their round.

"It's an awfully large holding," Pelle said again and again.

And Lasse answered proudly. "Yes, there's nearly seventy acres here—if only it were all tilled!"

It was virgin soil, but it was overrun with heather and juniper- scrub, through which brambles and honeysuckle twined their way. Halfway up a perpendicular wall of rock hung the ash and the wild cherry, gripping the bare cliff with roots that looked like crippled hands. Crab-apple trees, sloe-bushes and wild rose-briars made an impenetrable jungle, which already bore traces of Lasse's exertions. And in the midst of this luxuriant growth the rocky subsoil protruded its grim features, or came so near the surface that the sun had scorched the roots of the herbage.

"That's a proper little Paradise," said Lasse; "you can scarcely set foot in it without treading on the berries. But it's got to be turned into arable if one is to live here."

"Isn't the soil rather middling?" said Pelle.

"Middling—when all that can grow and flourish there?" Lasse pointed to where birch and aspen stood waving their shining foliage to and fro in the breeze. "No, but it'll be a damned rough bit of work to get it ready for ploughing; I'm sorry now that you aren't at home."

Lasse had several times made this allusion, but Pelle was deaf to it. All this was not what he had imagined; he felt no desire to play the landowner's son at home in the way Lasse had in mind.

"It'll be trouble enough here to manage about your daily bread," he said, with remarkable precocity.

"Oh, it won't be so difficult to earn our daily bread, even if we can't hold a feast every day," said Lasse, affronted. "And here at any rate a man can straighten his back without having a bailiff come yapping round him. Even if I were to work myself to death here, at least I've done with slavery. And you must not forget the pleasure of seeing the soil coming under one's hands, day after day, and yielding something instead of lying there useless. That is indeed the finest task a man can perform—to till the earth and make it fruitful—I can think of none better! But you—have you lost the farmer's instinct in town?"

Pelle did not reply. Although there might be something fine and splendid in working oneself to death over a bit of land, just so that something different might grow there, he himself was glad that he did not possess this farmer's instinct.

"My father, and his father, and all of our family I have ever known, we've all had something in us so that we've been driven to improve the soil, without thinking of our own comfort. But it certainly never entered the mind of one of us that we should ever hear it ill spoken of—and by one of our own people too!" Lasse spoke with his face turned away—as did the Almighty when He was wroth with His people; and Pelle felt as though he were a hateful renegade, as bad as bad could be. But nevertheless he would not give in.

"I should be no use at all here," he said apologetically, gazing in the direction of the sea. "I don't believe in it."

"No, you've cut yourself loose from it all, you have!" retorted Lasse bitterly. "But you'll repent it some day, in the long run. Life among the strangers there isn't all splendor and enjoyment."

Pelle did not answer; he felt at that moment too much of a man to bandy words. He contained himself, and they went onward in silence.

"Well, of course, it isn't an estate," said Lasse suddenly, in order to take the sting out of further criticism. Pelle was still silent.

Round the house the land was cultivated, and all round the cultivated land the luxuriant heather revealed disappearing traces of cultivation, and obliterated furrows.

"This was a cornfield once," said Pelle.

"Well, to think of your seeing that right off!" exclaimed Lasse, half sarcastically, half in real admiration. "The deuce of an eye you've got, you truly have! I should certainly have noticed nothing particular about the heath—if I had not known. Yes, that has been under cultivation, but the heath has won it back again! That was under my predecessor, who took in more than he could work, so that it ruined him. But you can see now that something can be done with the land!" Lasse pointed to a patch of rye, and Pelle was obliged to recognize that it looked very well. But through the whole length of the field ran high ridges of broken stone, which told him what a terrible labor this soil demanded before it could be brought under cultivation. Beyond the rye lay newly-broken soil, which looked like a dammed-up ice-field; the plough had been driven through mere patches of soil. Pelle looked at it all, and it made him sad to think of his father.

Lasse himself was undismayed.

"As it is, it needs two to hold the plough. Karna is very strong, but even

so it's as though one's arms would be torn from one's body every time the plough strikes. And most of it has to be broken up with pick and drill —and now and again it takes a bit of a sneeze. I use dynamite; it's more powerful than powder, and it bites down into the ground better," he said proudly.

"How much is under cultivation here?" asked Pelle.

"With meadow and garden, almost fourteen acres; but it will be more before the year is out."

"And two families have been ruined already by those fourteen acres," said Karna, who had come out to call them in to dinner.

"Yes, yes; God be merciful to them—and now we get the fruit of their labors! The parish won't take the farm away again—not from us," he said. Lasse spoke in a tone full of self-reliance. Pelle had never seen him stand so upright.

"I can never feel quite easy about it," said Karna; "it's as though one were ploughing up churchyard soil. The first who was turned out by the parish hanged himself, so they say."

"Yes, he had a hut on the heath there—where you see the elder-trees —but it's fallen to pieces since then. I'm so glad it didn't happen in the house." Lasse shuddered uncomfortably. "People say he haunts the place when any misfortune is in store for those that come after him."

"Then the house was built later?" asked Pelle, astonished, for it had such a tumble-down appearance.

"Yes, my predecessor built that. He got the land from the parish free for twenty years, provided he built a house and tilled a tonde of land a year. Those were not such bad conditions. Only he took in too much at a time; he was one of those people who rake away fiercely all the morning and have tired themselves out before midday. But he built the house well"—and Lasse kicked the thin mud-daubed wall—"and the timber-work is good. I think I shall break a lot of stone when the winter comes; the stone must be got out of the way, and it isn't so bad to earn a few hundred kroner. And in two or three years we will make the old house into a barn and build ourselves a new house—eh, Karna? With a cellar underneath and high steps outside, like they have at Stone Farm. It could be of unhewn granite, and I can manage the walls myself."

Karna beamed with joy, but Pelle could not enter into their mood. He was disillusioned; the descent from his dream to this naked reality was too great. And a feeling rose within him of dull resentment against this endless labor, which, inexperienced though he was, was yet part of his very being by virtue of the lives of ten, nay, twenty generations. He himself had not waged the hard-fought war against the soil, but he had as a matter of course understood everything that had to do with tilling the soil ever since he could crawl, and his hands had an inborn aptitude for spade and rake and plough. But he had not inherited his father's joy in the soil; his thoughts had struck out in a new direction. Yet this endless bondage to the soil lay rooted in him, like a hatred, which gave him a survey unknown to his father. He was reasonable; he did not lose his head at the sight of seventy acres of land, but asked what they contained. He himself was not aware of it, but his whole being was quick with hostility toward the idea of spending one's strength in this useless labor; and his point of view was as experienced as though he had been Lasse's father.

"Wouldn't you have done better to buy a cottage-holding with twelve or fourteen acres of land, and that in a good state of cultivation?" he asked.

Lasse turned on him impatiently. "Yes, and then a man might stint and save all his life, and never get beyond cutting off his fly to mend his seat; he'd most likely spend twice what he made! What the deuce! I might as well have stayed where I was. Here, it's true, I do work harder and I have to use my brains more, but then there's a future before me. When I've once got the place under cultivation this will be a farm to hold its own with any of them!" Lasse gazed proudly over his holding; in his mind's eye it was waving with grain and full of prime cattle.

"It would carry six horses and a score or two of cows easily," he said aloud. "That would bring in a nice income! What do you think, Karna?"

"I think the dinner will be cold," said Karna, laughing. She was perfectly happy.

At dinner Lasse proposed that Pelle should send his clothes to be washed and mended at home. "You've certainly got enough to do without that," he said indulgently. "Butcher Jensen goes to market every Saturday; he'd take it for you and put it down by the church, and it would be odd if on a Sunday no one from the heath went to church, who could bring the bundle back to us."

But Pelle suddenly turned stubborn and made no reply.

“I just thought it would be too much for you to wash and mend for yourself,” said Lasse patiently. “In town one must have other things to think about, and then it isn’t really proper work for a man!”

“I’ll do it myself all right,” murmured Pelle ungraciously.

Now he would show them that he could keep himself decent. It was partly in order to revenge himself for his own neglect that he refused the offer.

“Yes, yes,” said Lasse meekly; “I just asked you. I hope you won’t take it amiss.”

However strong Karna might be, and however willing to help in everything, Lasse did greatly feel the need of a man to work with him. Work of a kind that needed two had accumulated, and Pelle did not spare himself. The greater part of the day was spent in heaving great stones out of the soil and dragging them away; Lasse had knocked a sledge together, and the two moorland horses were harnessed up to it.

“Yes, you mustn’t look at them too closely,” said Lasse, as he stroked the two scarecrows caressingly. “Just wait until a few months have gone by, and then you’ll see! But they’ve plenty of spirit now.”

There was much to be done, and the sweat was soon pouring down their faces; but they were both in good spirits. Lasse was surprised at the boy’s strength—with two or three such lads he could turn the whole wilderness over. Once again he sighed that Pelle was not living at home; but to this Pelle still turned a deaf ear. And before they were aware of it Karna had come out again and was calling them to supper.

“I think we’ll harness the horses and drive Pelle halfway to town— as a reward for the work he’s done,” said Lasse gaily. “And we’ve both earned a drive.” So the two screws were put into the cart.

It was amusing to watch Lasse; he was a notable driver, and one could not but be almost persuaded that he had a pair of blood horses in front of him. When they met any one he would cautiously gather up the reins in order to be prepared lest the horses should shy—“they might so easily bolt,” he said solemnly. And when he succeeded in inducing them to trot he was delighted. “They take some holding,” he would say, and to look at him you would have thought they called for a strong pair of wrists. “Damn it all, I believe I shall have to put the curb on them!” And he set both his feet against the dashboard, and sawed the reins to and fro.

When half the distance was covered Father Lasse wanted to drive just a little further, and again a little further still—oh, well, then, they might as well drive right up to the house! He had quite forgotten that the following day would be a day of hard labor both for himself and for the horses. But at last Pelle jumped out.

“Shan’t we arrange that about your washing?” asked Lasse.

“No!” Pelle turned his face away—surely they might stop asking him that!

“Well, well, take care of yourself, and thanks for your help. You’ll come again as soon as you can?”

Pelle smiled at them, but said nothing; he dared not open his mouth, for fear of the unmanly lump that had risen in his throat. Silently he held out his hand and ran toward the town.

VI

The other apprentices were able to provide themselves with clothes, as they worked on their own account in their own time; they got work from their friends, and at times they pirated the master's customers, by underbidding him in secret. They kept their own work under the bench; when the master was not at home they got it out and proceeded with it. "To-night I shall go out and meet my girl," they would say, laughing. Little Nikas said nothing at all.

Pelle had no friends to give him work, and he could not have done much. If the others had much to do after work-hours or on Sundays he had to help them; but he gained nothing by so doing. And he also had Nilen's shoes to keep mended, for old acquaintances' sake.

Jeppe lectured them at great length on the subject of tips, as he had promised; for the townsfolk had been complaining of this burdensome addition to their expenditure, and in no measured terms had sworn either to abate or abolish this tax on all retail transactions. But it was only because they had read of the matter in the newspapers, and didn't want to be behind the capital! They always referred to the subject when Pelle went round with his shoes, and felt in their purses; if there was a shilling there they would hide it between their fingers, and say that he should have something next time for certain—he must remind them of it another time! At first he did remind them—they had told him to do so—but then Jeppe received a hint that his youngest apprentice must stop his attempts at swindling. Pelle could not understand it, but he conceived an increasing dislike of these people, who could resort to such a shameless trick in order to save a penny piece, which they would never have missed.

Pelle, who had been thinking that he had had enough of the world of poor folk, and must somehow contrive to get into another class, learned once again to rely on the poor, and rejoiced over every pair of poor folk's shoes which the master anathematized because they were so worn out. The poor were not afraid to pay a shilling if they had one; it made him feel really sad to see how they would search in every corner to get a few pence together, and empty their children's money-boxes, while the little ones stood by in silence, looking on with mournful eyes. And if he did not wish to accept their money they were offended. The little that he did receive he owed to people who were as poor as himself.

Money, to these folk, no longer consisted of those round, indifferent objects which people in the upper strata of human society piled up in whole heaps. Here every shilling meant so much suffering or happiness, and a grimy little copper would still the man's angry clamor and the child's despairing cry for food. Widow Hoest gave him a ten-öre piece, and he could not help reflecting that she had given him her mid-day meal for two days to come!

One day, as he was passing the miserable hovels which lay out by the northern dunes, a poor young woman came to her door and called to him; she held the remains of a pair of elastic-sided boots in her hand. "Oh, shoemaker's boy, do be so kind as to mend these a bit for me!" she pleaded. "Just sew them up anyhow, so that they'll stick on my feet for half the evening. The stone-masons are giving their feast, and I do so want to go to it!" Pelle examined the boots; there was not much to be done for them, nevertheless he took them, and mended them in his own time. He learned from Jens that the woman was the widow of a stone-cutter, who was killed by an explosion shortly after their marriage. The boots looked quite decent when he returned them.

"Well, I've no money, but I do offer you many, many thanks!" she said, looking delightedly at the boots; "and how nice you've made them look! God bless you for it."

"Thanks killed the blacksmith's cat," said Pelle smiling. Her pleasure was contagious.

"Yes, and God's blessing falls where two poor people share their bed," the young woman rejoined jestingly. "Still, I wish you everything good as payment—now I can dance after all!"

Pelle was quite pleased with himself as he made off. But few doors farther on another poor woman accosted him; she had evidently heard of the success of the first, and there she stood holding a dirty pair of children's boots, which she earnestly begged him to mend. He took the boots and repaired them although it left him still poorer; he knew too well what need was to refuse. This was the first time that any one in the town had regarded him as an equal, and recognized him at the first glance as a fellow-creature. Pelle pondered over this; he did not know

that poverty is cosmopolitan.

When he went out after the day's work he took a back seat; he went about with the poorest boys and behaved as unobtrusively as possible. But sometimes a desperate mood came over him, and at times he would make himself conspicuous by behavior that would have made old Lasse weep; as, for example, when he defiantly sat upon a freshly-tarred bollard. He became thereby the hero of the evening; but as soon as he was alone he went behind a fence and let down his breeches in order to ascertain the extent of the damage. He had been running his errands that day in the best clothes he possessed. This was no joke. Lasse had deeply imbued him with his own moderation, and had taught him to treat his things carefully, so that it seemed to Pelle almost a pious duty. But Pelle felt himself forsaken by all the gods, and now he defied them.

The poor women in the streets were the only people who had eyes for him. "Now look at the booby, wearing his confirmation jacket on a weekday!" they would say, and call him over in order to give him a lecture, which as a rule ended in an offer to repair the damage. But it was all one to Pelle; if he ran about out-of-doors in his best clothes he was only doing as the town did. At all events he had a shirt on, even if it was rather big! And the barber's assistant himself, who looked most important in tail-coat and top-hat, and was the ideal of every apprentice, did not always wear a shirt; Pelle had once noticed that fact as the youth was swinging some ladies. Up in the country, where a man was appraised according to the number of his shirts, such a thing would have been impossible. But here in town people did not regard such matters so strictly.

He was no longer beside himself with astonishment at the number of people—respectable folk for the most part—who had no abiding place anywhere, but all through the year drifted in the most casual manner from one spot to another. Yet the men looked contented, had wives and children, went out on Sundays, and amused themselves; and after all why should one behave as if the world was coming to an end because one hadn't a barrel of salt pork or a clamp of potatoes to see one through the winter? Recklessness was finally Pelle's refuge too; when all the lights seemed to have gone out of the future it helped him to take up the fairy-tale of life anew, and lent a glamor to naked poverty. Imagination entered even into starvation: are you or are you not going to die of it?

Pelle was poor enough for everything to be still before him, and he possessed the poor man's alert imagination; the great world and the romance of life were the motives that drew him through the void, that peculiar music of life which is never silent, but murmurs to the reckless and the careful alike. Of the world he knew well enough that it was something incomprehensibly vast—something that was always receding; yet in eighty days one could travel right round it, to the place where men walk about with their heads downward, and back again, and experience all its wonders. He himself had set out into this incomprehensible world, and here he was, stranded in this little town, where there was never a crumb to feed a hungry imagination; nothing but a teeming confusion of petty cares. One felt the cold breath of the outer winds, and the dizziness of great spaces; when the little newspaper came the small tradesmen and employers would run eagerly across the street, their spectacles on their noses, and would speak, with gestures of amazement, of the things that happened outside. "China," they would say; "America!" and fancy that they themselves made part of the bustling world. But Pelle used to wish most ardently that something great and wonderful might wander thither and settle down among them just for once! He would have been quite contented with a little volcano underfoot, so that the houses would begin to sway and bob to one another; or a trifling inundation, so that ships would ride over the town, and have to moor themselves to the weather-cock on the church steeple. He had an irrational longing that something of this kind should happen, something to drive the blood from his heart and make his hair stand on end. But now he had enough to contend against apart from matters of this sort; the world must look after itself until times were better.

It was more difficult to renounce the old fairy-tales, for poverty itself had sung them into his heart, and they spoke to him with Father Lasse's quivering voice. "A rich child often lies in a poor mother's lap," his father used to say, when he prophesied concerning his son's future, and the saying sank deep into the boy's mind, like the refrain of a song. But he had learned this much, that there were no elephants here, on whose necks a plucky youngster could ride astraddle, in order to ride down the tiger which was on the point of tearing the King of the Himalayas to pieces so that he would of course receive the king's daughter and half his kingdom as a reward for his heroic deed. Pelle often loitered about

the harbor, but no beautifully dressed little girl ever fell into the water, so that he might rescue her, and then, when he was grown up, make her his wife. And if such a thing did really happen he knew now that his elders would cheat him out of any tip he might receive. And he had quite given up looking for the golden coach which was to run over him, so that the two terrified ladies, who would be dressed in mourning, would take him into their carriage and carry him off to their six- storied castle! Of course, they would adopt him permanently in place of the son which they had just lost, and who, curiously enough, was exactly the same age as himself. No, there were no golden coaches here!

Out in the great world the poorest boy had the most wonderful prospects; all the great men the books had ever heard of had been poor lads like himself, who had reached their high estate through good fortune and their own valor. But all the men in town who possessed anything had attained their wealth by wearily plodding forward and sucking the blood of the poor. They were always sitting and brooding over their money, and they threw nothing away for a lucky fellow to pick up; and they left nothing lying about, lest some poor lad should come and take it. Not one of them considered it beneath him to pick up an old trouser-button off the pavement, and carry it home.

One evening Pelle was running out to fetch half a pound of canister tobacco for Jeppe. In front of the coal-merchant's house the big dog, as always, made for his legs, and he lost the twenty-five-öre piece. While he was looking for it, an elderly man came up to him. Pelle knew him very well; he was Monsen the shipowner, the richest man in the town.

"Have you lost something, my lad?" he asked, and began to assist in the search.

"Now he will question me," thought Pelle. "And then I shall answer him boldly, and then he will look at me attentively and say—"

Pelle was always hoping for some mysterious adventure, such as happens to an able lad and raises him to fortune.

But the shipowner did nothing he was expected to do. He merely searched eagerly, and inquired: "Where were you walking? Here, weren't you? Are you quite certain of that?"

"In any case he'll give me another twenty-five öre," thought Pelle. "Extraordinary—how eager he is!" Pelle did not really want to go on searching, but he could not very well leave off before the other.

"Well, well!" said the shipowner at last, "you may as well whistle for those twenty-five öre. But what a booby you are!" And he moved on, and Pelle looked after him for a long while before putting his hand into his own pocket.

Later, as he was returning that way, he saw a man bowed over the flagstones, striking matches as he searched. It was Monsen. The sight tickled Pelle tremendously. "Have you lost anything?" he asked mischievously, standing on the alert, lest he should get a box on the ear. "Yes, yes; twenty-five öre;" groaned the shipowner. "Can't you help me to find it, my boy?"

Well, he had long understood that Monsen was the richest man in the town, and that he had become so by provisioning ships with spoiled foodstuffs, and refitting old crank vessels, which he heavily insured. And he knew who was a thief and who a bankrupt speculator, and that Merchant Lau only did business with the little shopkeepers, because his daughter had gone to the bad. Pelle knew the secret pride of the town, the "Top-galeass," as she was called, who in her sole self represented the allurements of the capital, and he knew the two sharpers, and the consul with the disease which was eating him up. All this was very gratifying knowledge for one of the rejected.

He had no intention of letting the town retain any trace of those splendors with which he had once endowed it. In his constant ramblings he stripped it to the buff. For instance, there stood the houses of the town, some retiring, some standing well forward, but all so neat on the side that faced the street, with their wonderful old doorways and flowers in every window. Their neatly tarred framework glistened, and they were always newly lime-washed, ochrous yellow or dazzling white, sea-green, or blue as the sky. And on Sundays there was quite a festive display of flags. But Pelle had explored the back quarters of every house; and there were sinks and traps there, with dense slimy growths, and stinking refuse-barrels, and one great dustbin with a drooping elder-tree over it. And the spaces between the cobble-stones were foul with the scales of herrings and the guts of codfish, and the lower portions of the walls were covered with patches of green moss.

The bookbinder and his wife went about hand in hand when they set

out for the meeting of some religious society. But at home they fought, and in chapel, as they sat together and sang out of the same hymn-book, they would secretly pinch one another's legs. "Yes," people used to say, "such a nice couple!" But the town couldn't throw dust in Pelle's eyes; he knew a thing or two. If only he had known just how to get himself a new blouse!

Some people didn't go without clothes so readily; they were forever making use of that fabulous thing—credit! At first it took his breath away to discover that the people here in the town got everything they wanted without paying money for it. "Will you please put it down?" they would say, when they came for their boots; and "it's to be entered," he himself would say, when he made a purchase for his employers. All spoke the same magical formula, and Pelle was reminded of Father Lasse, who had counted his shillings over a score of times before he ventured to buy anything. He anticipated much from this discovery, and it was his intention to make good use of the magic words when his own means became exhausted.

Now, naturally, he was wiser. He had discovered that the very poor must always go marketing with their money in their hands, and even for the others there came a day of reckoning. The master already spoke with horror of the New Year; and it was very unfortunate for his business that the leather-sellers had got him in their pocket, so that he could not buy his material where it was cheapest. All the small employers made the same complaint.

But the fairy-tale of credit was not yet exhausted—there was still a manner of drawing a draft upon fortune, which could be kept waiting, and on the future, which redeems all drafts. Credit was a spark of poetry in the scramble of life; there were people going about who were poor as church mice, yet they played the lord. Alfred was such a lucky fellow; he earned not a red cent, but was always dressed like a counter-jumper, and let himself want for nothing. If he took a fancy to anything he simply went in and got it on "tick"; and he was never refused. His comrades envied him and regarded him as a child of fortune.

Pelle himself had a little flirtation with fortune. One day he went gaily into a shop, in order to procure himself some underclothing. When he asked for credit they looked at him as though he could not be quite sane, and he had to go away without effecting his object. "There must be some secret about it that I don't know," he thought; and he dimly remembered another boy, who couldn't stir the pot to cook his porridge or lay the table for himself, because he didn't know the necessary word. He sought Alfred forthwith in order to receive enlightenment.

Alfred was wearing new patent braces, and was putting on his collar. On his feet were slippers with fur edging, which looked like feeding pigeons. "I got them from a shopkeeper's daughter," he said; and he coquetted with his legs; "she's quite gone on me. A nice girl too— only there's no money."

Pelle explained his requirements.

"Shirts! shirts!" Alfred chortled with delight, and clapped his hands before his face. "Good Lord, he wants to gets shirts on tick! If only they had been linen shirts!" He was near bursting with laughter.

Pelle tried again. As a peasant—for he was still that—he had thought of shirts first of all; but now he wanted a summer overcoat and rubber cuffs. "Why do you want credit?" asked the shopkeeper, hesitating. "Are you expecting any money? Or is there any one who will give you a reference?"

No, Pelle didn't want to bring any one else into it; it was simply that he had no money.

"Then wait until you have," said the shopkeeper surlily. "We don't clothe paupers!" Pelle slunk away abashed.

"You're a fool!" said Alfred shortly. "You are just like Albinus—he can never learn how to do it!"

"How do you do it then?" asked Pelle meekly.

"How do I do it—how do I do it?" Alfred could give no explanation; "it just came of itself. But naturally I don't tell them that I'm poor! No, you'd better leave it alone—it'll never succeed with you!"

"Why do you sit there and pinch your upper lip?" asked Pelle discontentedly.

"Pinch? You goat, I'm stroking my moustache!"

VII

On Saturday afternoon Pelle was busily sweeping the street. It was getting on for evening; in the little houses there was already a fire in the grate; one could hear it crackling at Builder Rasmussen's and Swedish Anders', and the smell of broiled herrings filled the street. The women were preparing something extra good in order to wheedle their husbands when they came home with the week's wages. Then they ran across to the huckster's for schnaps and beer, leaving the door wide open behind them; there was just half a minute to spare while the herring was getting cooked on the one side! And now Pelle sniffed it afar off—Madame Rasmussen was tattling away to the huckster, and a voice screeched after her: "Madame Rasmussen! Your herring is burning!" Now she came rushing back, turning her head confusedly from house to house as she scampered across the street and into her house. The blue smoke drifted down among the houses; the sun fell lower and filled the street with gold-dust.

There were people sweeping all along the street; Baker Jörgen, the washerwoman, and the Comptroller's maid-servant. The heavy boughs of the mulberry-tree across the road drooped over the wall and offered their last ripe fruits to whomsoever would pick them. On the other side of the wall the rich merchant Hans—he who married the nurse-maid—was pottering about his garden. He never came out, and the rumor ran that he was held a prisoner by his wife and her kin. But Pelle had leaned his ear against the wall, and had heard a stammering old voice repeating the same pet names, so that it sounded like one of those love-songs that never come to an end; and when in the twilight he slipped out of his attic window and climbed on to the ridge of the roof, in order to take a look at the world, he had seen a tiny little white-haired man walking down there in the garden, with his arm round the waist of a woman younger than himself. They were like a couple of young lovers, and they had to stop every other moment in order to caress one another. The most monstrous things were said of him and his money; of his fortune, that once upon a time was founded on a paper of pins, and was now so great that some curse must rest upon it.

From the baker's house the baker's son came slinking hymn-book in hand. He fled across to the shelter of the wall, and hurried off; old Jörgen stood there gobbling with laughter as he watched him, his hands folded over his broomstick.

"O Lord, is that a man?" he cried to Jeppe, who sat at his window, shaving himself before the milk-can. "Just look how he puffs! Now he'll go in and beg God to forgive him for going courting!"

Jeppe came to the window to see and to silence him; one could hear Brother Jörgen's falsetto voice right down the street. "Has he been courting? However did you get him to venture such a leap?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, it was while we were sitting at table. I had a tussle with my melancholy madman—because I couldn't help thinking of the little Jörgen. God knows, I told myself, no little Jörgen has come to carry on your name, and the boy's a weakling, and you've no one else to build on! It's all very well going about with your nose in the air all the days God gives you—everything will be swept away and be to no purpose. And everything of that sort—you know how I get thinking when ideas like that get the upper hand with me. I sat there and looked at the boy, and angry I felt with him, that I did; and right opposite him there was sitting a fine bit of womanhood, and he not looking at her. And with that I struck my hand on the table, and I says, 'Now, boy, just you take Marie by the hand and ask her whether she'll be your wife—I want to make an end of the matter now and see what you're good for!' The boy all shrivels up and holds out his hand, and Marie, it don't come amiss to her. 'Yes, that I will!' she says, and grips hold of him before he has time to think what he's doing. And we shall be having the marriage soon."

"If you can make a boot out of that leather!" said Jeppe.

"Oh, she's a warm piece—look at the way she's built. She's thawing him already. Women, they know the way—he won't freeze in bed."

Old Jörgen laughed contentedly, and went off to his work. "Yes, why, she'd breathe life into the dead," he announced to the street at large.

The others went out in their finest clothes, but Pelle did not care to go. He had not been able to accomplish his constant resolution to keep himself neat and clean, and this failure weighed upon him and abashed him. And the holes in his stockings, which were now so big that they could no longer be darned, were disgustingly apparent, with his skin

showing through them, so that he had a loathing for himself.

Now all the young people were going out. He could see the sea in the opening at the end of the street; it was perfectly calm, and had borrowed the colors of the sunset. They would be going to the harbor or the dunes by the sea; there would be dancing on the grass, and perhaps some would get to fighting about a girl. But he wasn't going to be driven out of the pack like a mangy dog; he didn't care a hang for the whole lot of them!

He threw off his apron and established himself on a beer-barrel which stood outside before the gate. On the bench opposite sat the older inhabitants of the street, puffing at their pipes and gossiping about everything under the sun. Now the bells sounded the hour for leaving off work. Madame Rasmussen was beating her child and reviling it in time with her blows. Then suddenly all was silent; only the crying of the child continued, like a feeble evening hymn. Old Jeppe was talking about Malaga—"when I ran ashore at Malaga!"— but Baker Jörgen was still lamenting his want of an heir, and sighing: "Yes, yes; if only one could see into the future!" Then he suddenly began to talk about the Mormons. "It might really be great fun to see, some time, what they have to offer you," he said.

"I thought you'd been a Mormon a long time, Uncle Jörgen," said Master Andres. The old man laughed.

"Well, well; one tries all sorts of things in one's time," he said, and looked out at the sky.

Up the street stood the watchmaker, on his stone steps, his face turned up to the zenith, while he shouted his senseless warnings: "The new time! I ask you about the new time, O God the Father!" he repeated.

Two weary stevedores were going homeward. "He'll drive all poverty out of the world and give us all a new life—that's the form his madness takes," said one of them, with a dreary laugh.

"Then he's got the millennium on the brain?" said the other.

"No, he's just snarling at the world," said old Jörgen, behind them. "We shall certainly get a change in the weather."

"Things are bad with him just now, poor fellow," said Bjerregrav, shuddering. "It was about this time of the year that he lost his wits."

An inner voice admonished Pelle: "Don't sit there with your hands in your lap, but go in and look after your clothes!" But he could not bring himself to do so—the difficulties had become too insurmountable. On the following day Manna and the others called him, but he could not spring over the wall to join them; they had begun to turn up their noses at him and regard him critically. He did not very well understand it, but he had become an outcast, a creature who no longer cared about washing himself properly. But what was the use? He could not go on contending against the invincible! No one had warned him in time, and now the town had captured him, and he had given up everything else. He must shuffle through life as best he could.

No one had a thought for him! When washing was being done for his employers it never occurred to Madam to wash anything of his, and he was not the boy to come forward of himself. The washerwoman was more considerate; when she could she would smuggle in some of Pelle's dirty linen, although it meant more work for her. But she was poor herself; as for the rest, they only wanted to make use of him. There was no one in town who cared sufficiently for his welfare to take the trouble even to open his mouth to tell him the truth. This was a thought that made him feel quite weak about the knees, although he was fifteen years old and had courage to tackle a mad bull. More than anything else it was his loneliness that weakened his powers of resistance. He was helpless alone among all these people, a child, who had to look after himself as best he could, and be prepared for attacks from every quarter.

He sat there, making no effort to dispel the misery that had come over him, and was working its will with him, while with half an ear he listened to the life around him. But suddenly he felt something in his waistcoat pocket—money! He felt immensely relieved at once, but he did not hurry; he slipped behind the gate and counted it. One and a half kroner. He was on the point of regarding it as a gift from on high, as something which the Almighty had in His great goodness placed there, but then it occurred to him that this was his master's money. It had been given him the day before for repairs to a pair of ladies' shoes, and he had forgotten to pay it in, while the master, strangely enough, had quite forgotten to ask for it.

Pelle stood with bent back by the well outside, scrubbing himself over a bucket until his blood tingled. Then he put on his best clothes, drew his

shoes on to his naked feet, to avoid the painful feeling of the ragged stockings, and buttoned his rubber collar—for the last time innocent of any tie—to his shirt. Shortly afterward he was standing outside a shop-window, contemplating some large neckties, which had just been put upon the market, and could be worn with any one of four faces outward; they filled the whole of the waistcoat, so that one did not see the shirt. Now he would be disdained no longer! For a moment he ran to and fro and breathed the air; then he got upon the scent, and ran at a breathless gallop toward the sea-dunes, where the young folk of the town played late into the summer night that lay over the wan sea.

Of course, it was only a loan. Pelle had to sole a pair of shoes for a baker's apprentice who worked with Nilen; as soon as they were finished he would repay the money. He could put the money under the cutting-out board in his master's room; the master would find it there, would gaze at it with a droll expression, and say: "What the devil is this?" And then he would knock on the wall, and would treat Pelle to a long rigmarole about his magical gifts—and then he would ask him to run out and fetch a half-bottle of port.

He did not receive the money for soling the shoes; half the sum he had to pay out for leather, and the rest was a long time coming, for the baker's apprentice was a needy wretch. But he did not doubt his own integrity; the master might be as sure of his money as if it had been in the bank. Yet now and again he forgot to give up petty sums —if some necessity or other was pressing him unexpectedly. They were, of course, all loans—until the golden time came. And that was never far away.

One day he returned home as the young master was standing at the door, staring at the driving clouds overhead. He gave Pelle's shoulder a familiar squeeze. "How was it they didn't pay you for the shoes at the Chamberlain's yesterday?"

Pelle went crimson and his hand went to his waistcoat pocket. "I forgot it," he said in a low voice.

"Now, now!" The master shook him good-naturedly. "It's not that I mistrust you. But just to be methodical!"

Pelle's heart pounded wildly in his body; he had just decided to use the money to buy a pair of stockings, the very next time he went out —and then what would have happened? And the master's belief in him! And all at once his offence showed itself to him in all its shameful treachery; he felt as if he was on the point of being sick, so disturbed was he. Until this moment he had preserved through everything the feeling of his own worth, and now it was destroyed; there could not be any one wickeder than he in all the world. In future no one could trust him any more, and he could no longer look people straight in the face; unless he went to the master at once and cast himself and his shame unconditionally on his mercy. There was no other salvation, that he knew.

But he was not certain that the master would conceive the matter in its finer aspect, or that everything would turn out for the best; he had given up believing in fairy-tales. Then he would simply be turned away, or perhaps be sent to the courthouse, and it would be all up with him.

Pelle resolved to keep it to himself; and for many days he went about suffering from a sense of his own wickedness. But then necessity gripped him by the throat and brushed all else aside; and in order to procure himself the most necessary things he was forced to resort to the dangerous expedient of stating, when the master gave him money to buy anything, that it was to be put down. And then one day it was all up with him. The others were ready to pull down the house about his ears; they threw his things out of the garret and called him a filthy beast. Pelle wept; he was quite convinced that not he was the guilty person, but Peter, who was always keeping company with the nastiest women, but he could get no hearing. He hurried away, with the resolves that he would never come back.

On the dunes he was captured by Emil and Peter, who had been sent out after him by old Jeppe. He did not want to go back with them, but they threw him down and dragged him back, one taking his head and one his legs. People came to the door and laughed and asked questions, and the other two gave their explanation of the matter, which was a terrible disgrace for Pelle.

And then he fell ill. He lay under the tiled roof raving with fever; they had thrown his bed into the loft. "What, isn't he up yet?" said Jeppe, astounded, when he came in to the workshop. "No? Well, he'll soon get up when he gets hungry." It was no joke to take a sick apprentice his meals in bed. But Pelle did not come down.

Once the young master threw all considerations overboard and took

some food up to him. “You’re making yourself ridiculous,” sneered Jeppe; “you’ll never be able to manage people like that!” And Madam scolded. But Master Andres whistled until he was out of hearing.

Poor Pelle lay there, in delirium; his little head was full of fancies, more than it would hold. But now the reaction set in, and he lay there stuffing himself with all that was brought him.

The young master sat upstairs a great deal and received enlightenment on many points. It was not his nature to do anything energetically, but he arranged that Pelle’s washing should be done in the house, and he took care that Lasse should be sent for.

VIII

Jeppe was related to about half the island, but he was not greatly interested in disentangling his relationship. He could easily go right back to the founder of the family, and trace the generations through two centuries, and follow the several branches of the family from country to town and over the sea and back again, and show that Andres and the judge must be cousins twice removed. But if any insignificant person asked him: “How was it, then—weren’t my father and you first cousins?” he would answer brusquely, “Maybe, but the soup grows too thin after a time. This relationship!”

“Then you and I, good Lord! are second cousins, and you are related to the judge as well,” Master Andres would say. He did not grudge people any pleasure they could derive from the facts of relationship. Poor people regarded him gratefully—they said he had kind eyes; it was a shame that he should not be allowed to live.

Jeppe was the oldest employer in the town, and among the shoemakers his workshop was the biggest. He was able, too, or rather he had been, and he still possessed the manual skill peculiar to the old days. When it came to a ticklish job he would willingly show them how to get on with it, or plan some contrivance to assist them. Elastic-sided boots and lace-up boots had superseded the old footwear, but honest skill still meant an honest reputation. And if some old fellow wanted a pair of Wellingtons or Bluchers of leather waterproofed with grease, instead of by some new-fangled devilry, he must needs go to Jeppe—no one else could shape an instep as he could. And when it came to handling the heavy dressed leathers for sea-boots there was no one like Jeppe. He was obstinate, and rigidly opposed to everything new, where everybody else was led away by novelty. In this he was peculiarly the representative of the old days, and people respected him as such.

The apprentices alone did not respect him. They did everything they could to vex him and to retaliate on him for being such a severe task-master. They all laid themselves out to mystify him, speaking of the most matter-of-fact things in dark and covert hints, in order to make old Jeppe suspicious, and if he spied upon them and caught them at something which proved to be nothing at all they had a great day of it.

“What does this mean? Where are you going without permission?” asked Jeppe, if one of them got up to go into the court; he was always forgetting that times had altered. They did not answer, and then he would fly into a passion. “I’ll have you show me respect!” he would cry, stamping on the floor until the dust eddied round him. Master Andres would slowly raise his head. “What’s the matter with you this time, father?” he would ask wearily. Then Jeppe would break out into fulminations against the new times.

If Master Andres and the journeyman were not present, the apprentices amused themselves by making the old man lose his temper; and this was not difficult, as he saw hostility in everything. Then he would snatch up a knee-strap and begin to rain blows upon the sinner. At the same time he would make the most extraordinary grimaces and give vent to a singular gurgling sound. “There, take that, although it grieves me to use harsh measures!” he would mew. “And that, too—and that! You’ve got to go through with it, if you want to enter the craft!” Then he would give the lad something that faintly resembled a kick, and would stand there struggling for breath. “You’re a troublesome youngster—you’ll allow that?” “Yes, my mother used to break a broomstick over my head every other day!” replied Peter, the rogue, snorting. “There, you see you are! But it may all turn out for the best even now. The foundation’s not so bad!” Jeppe doddered to and fro, his hands behind his back. The rest of the day he was inclined to solemnity, and did his best to obliterate all remembrance of the punishment. “It was only for your own good!” he would say, in a propitiatory tone.

Jeppe was first cousin to the crazy Anker, but he preferred not to lay claim to the fact; the man could not help being mad, but he made his living, disgracefully enough, by selling sand in the streets—a specialist in his way. Day by day one saw Anker’s long, thin figure in the streets, with a sackful of sand slung over his sloping shoulders; he wore a suit of blue twill and white woollen stockings, and his face was death-like. He was quite fleshless. “That comes of all his digging,” people said. “Look at his assistant!”

He never appeared in the workshop with his sack of sand; he was afraid of Jeppe, who was now the oldest member of the family. Elsewhere he went in and out everywhere with his clattering wooden shoes; and

people bought of him, as they must have sand for their floors, and his was as good as any other. He needed next to nothing for his livelihood; people maintained that he never ate anything, but lived on his own vitals. With the money he received he bought materials for the “New Time,” and what was left he threw away, in his more exalted moments, from the top of his high stairs. The street-urchins always came running up when the word went round that the madness about the “new time” was attacking him.

He and Bjerregrav had been friends as boys. Formerly they had been inseparable, and neither of them was willing to do his duty and marry, although each was in a position to keep a wife and children. At an age when others were thinking about how to find favor with the womenfolk, these two were running about with their heads full of rubbish which enraged people. At that time a dangerous revolutionist was living with Bjerregrav’s brother; he had spent many years on Christiansö, but then the Government had sent him to spend the rest of his term of captivity on Bornholm. Dampe was his name; Jeppe had known him when an apprentice in Copenhagen; and his ambition was to overthrow God and king. This ambition of his did not profit him greatly; he was cast down like a second Lucifer, and only kept his head on his shoulders by virtue of an act of mercy. The two young people regarded him as then justification, and he turned their heads with his venomous talk, so that they began to ponder over things which common folk do better to leave alone. Bjerregrav came through this phase with a whole skin, but Anker paid the penalty by losing his wits. Although they both had a comfortable competence, they pondered above all things over the question of poverty —as though there was anything particular to be discovered about that!

All this was many years ago; it was about the time when the craze for freedom had broken out in the surrounding nations with fratricide and rebellion. Matters were not so bad on the island, for neither Anker nor Bjerregrav was particularly warlike; yet everybody could see that the town was not behind the rest of the world. Here the vanity of the town was quite in agreement with Master Jeppe, but for the rest he roundly condemned the whole movement. He always looked ready to fall upon Bjerregrav tooth and nail if the conversation turned on Anker’s misfortune.

“Dampe!” said Jeppe scornfully, “he has turned both your heads!”

“That’s a lie!” stammered Bjerregrav. “Anker went wrong later than that—after King Frederick granted us liberty. And it’s only that I’m not very capable; I have my wits, thank God!” Bjerregrav solemnly raised the fingers of his right hand to his lips, a gesture which had all the appearance of a surviving vestige of the sign of the cross.

“You and your wits!” hissed Jeppe contemptuously. “You, who throw your money away over the first tramp you meet! And you defend an abominable agitator, who never goes out by daylight like other people, but goes gallivanting about at night!”

“Yes, because he’s ashamed of humanity; he wants to make the world more beautiful!” Bjerregrav blushed with embarrassment when he had said this.

But Jeppe was beside himself with contempt. “So gaol-birds are ashamed of honest people! So that’s why he takes his walks at night! Well, the world would of course be a more beautiful place if it were filled with people like you and Dampe!”

The pitiful thing about Anker was that he was such a good craftsman. He had inherited the watchmaker’s trade from his father and grandfather, and his Bornholm striking-clocks were known all over the world; orders came to him from Funen as well as from the capital. But when the Constitution was granted he behaved like a child—as though people had not always been free on Bornholm! Now, he said, the new time had begun, and in its honor he intended, in his insane rejoicing, to make an ingenious clock which should show the moon and the date and the month and year. Being an excellent craftsman, he completed it successfully, but then it entered his head that the clock ought to show the weather as well. Like so many whom God had endowed with His gifts, he ventured too far and sought to rival God Himself. But here the brakes were clapped on, and the whole project was nearly derailed. For a long time he took it greatly to heart, but when the work was completed he rejoiced. He was offered a large price for his masterpiece, and Jeppe bade him close with the offer, but he answered crazily—for he was now definitely insane—“This cannot be bought with money. Everything I made formerly had its value in money, but not this. Can any one buy *me*?”

For a long time he was in a dilemma as to what he should do with his

work, but then one day he came to Jeppe, saying: “Now I know; the best ought to have the clock. I shall send it to the King. He has given us the new time, and this clock will tell the new time.” Anker sent the clock away, and after some time he received two hundred thalers, paid him through the Treasury.

This was a large sum of money, but Anker was not satisfied; he had expected a letter of thanks from the King’s own hand. He behaved very oddly about this, and everything went wrong with him; over and over again trouble built its nest with him. The money he gave to the poor, and he lamented that the new time had not yet arrived. So he sank even deeper into his madness, and however hard Jeppe scolded him and lectured him it did no good. Finally he went so far as to fancy that he was appointed to create the new time, and then he became cheerful once more.

Three or four families of the town—very poor people, so demoralized that the sects would have nothing to do with them—gathered around Anker, and heard the voice of God in his message. “*They* lose nothing by sitting under a crazy man,” saw Jeppe scornfully. Anker himself paid no attention to them, but went his own way. Presently he was a king’s son in disguise, and was betrothed to the eldest daughter of the King—and the new time was coming. Or when his mood was quieter, he would sit and work at an infallible clock which would not show the time; it would *be* the time—the new time itself.

He went to and fro in the workshop, in order to let Master Andres see the progress of his invention; he had conceived a blind affection for the young master. Every year, about the first of January, Master Andres had to write a letter for him, a love-letter to the king’s daughter, and had also to take it upon him to despatch it to the proper quarter; and from time to time Anker would run in to ask whether an answer had yet arrived; and at the New Year a fresh love-letter was sent off. Master Andres had them all put away.

One evening—it was nearly time to knock off—there was a thundering knock on the workshop door, and the sound of some one humming a march drifted in from the entry. “Can you not open?” cried a solemn voice: “the Prince is here!”

“Pelle, open the door quick!” said the master. Pelle flung the door wide open, and Anker marched in. He wore a paper hat with a waving plume, and epaulettes made out of paper frills; his face was beaming, and he stood there with his hand to his hat as he allowed the march to die away. The young master rose gaily and shouldered arms with his stick.

“Your Majesty,” he said, “how goes it with the new time?”

“Not at all well!” replied Anker, becoming serious. “The pendulums that should keep the whole in motion are failing me.” He stood still, gazing at the door; his brain was working mysteriously.

“Ought they to be made of gold?” The master’s eyes were twinkling, but he was earnestness personified.

“They ought to be made of eternity,” said Anker unwillingly, “and first it has got to be invented.”

For a long time he stood there, staring in front of him with his gray, empty eyes, without speaking a word. He did not move; only his temples went on working as though some worm was gnawing at them and seeking its way out.

Suddenly it became uncomfortable; his silence was sometimes like a living darkness that surrounded those about him. Pelle sat there with palpitating heart.

Then the lunatic came forward and bent over the young master’s ear. “Has an answer come from the king?” he asked, in a penetrating whisper.

“No, not yet; but I expect it every day. You can be quite easy,” the master whispered back. Anker stood for a few moments in silence; he looked as though he must be meditating, but after his own fashion. Then he turned round and marched out of the workshop.

“Go after him and see he gets home all right,” said the young master. His voice sounded mournful now. Pelle followed the clockmaker up the street.

It was a Saturday evening, and the workers were on their way homeward from the great quarries and the potteries which lay about half a mile beyond the town. They passed in large groups, their dinner-boxes on their back, with a beer-bottle hung in front as a counter-weight. Their sticks struck loudly on the flagstones, and the iron heel-pieces of their wooden shoes struck out sparks as they passed. Pelle knew that weary

homecoming; it was as though weariness in person had invaded the town. And he knew the sound of this taciturn procession; the snarling sound when this man or that made an unexpected and involuntary movement with his stiffened limbs, and was forced to groan with the pain of it. But to-night they gave him a different impression, and something like a smile broke through the encrusted stone-dust on their faces; it was the reflection of the bright new kroner that lay in their pockets after the exhausting labor of the week. Some of them had to visit the post-office to renew their lottery tickets or to ask for a postponement, and here and there one was about to enter a tavern, but at the last moment would be captured by his wife, leading a child by the hand.

Anker stood motionless on the sidewalk, his face turned toward the passing workers. He had bared his head, and the great plume of his hat drooped to the ground behind him; he looked agitated, as though something were fermenting within him, which could not find utterance, save in an odd, unintelligible noise. The workers shook their heads sadly as they trudged onward; one solitary young fellow threw him a playful remark. “Keep your hat on—it’s not a funeral!” he cried. A few foreign seamen came strolling over the hill from the harbor; they came zigzagging down the street, peeping in at all the street doors, and laughing immoderately as they did so. One of them made straight for Anker with outstretched arms, knocked off his hat, and went on with his arm in the air as though nothing had happened. Suddenly he wheeled about. “What, are you giving yourself airs?” he cried, and therewith he attacked the lunatic, who timidly set about resisting him. Then another sailor ran up and struck Anker behind the knees, so that he fell. He lay on the ground shouting and kicking with fright, and the whole party flung itself upon him.

The boys scattered in all directions, in order to gather stones and come to Anker’s assistance. Pelle stood still, his body jerking convulsively, as though the old sickness were about to attack him. Once he sprang forward toward Anker, but something within him told him that sickness had deprived him of his blind courage.

There was one pale, slender youth who was not afraid. He went right among the sailors, in order to drag them off the lunatic, who was becoming quite frantic under their treatment of him.

“He isn’t in his right mind!” cried the boy, but he was hurled back with a bleeding face.

This was Morten, the brother of Jens the apprentice. He was so angry that he was sobbing.

Then a tall man came forward out of the darkness, with a rolling gait; he came forward muttering to himself. “Hurrah!” cried the boys. “Here comes the ‘Great Power.’” But the man did not hear; he came to a standstill by the fighting group and stood there, still muttering. His giant figure swayed to and fro above them. “Help him, father!” cried Morten. The man laughed foolishly, and began slowly to pull his coat off. “Help him, then!” bellowed the boy, quite beside himself, shaking his father’s arm. Jörgensen stretched out his hand to pat the boy’s cheek, when he saw the blood on his face. “Knock them down!” cried the boy, like one possessed. Then a sudden shock ran through the giant’s body—somewhat as when a heavy load is suddenly set in motion; he bowed himself a little, shook himself, and began to throw the sailors aside. One after another they stood still for a moment, feeling the place where he had seized them, and then they set off running as hard as they could toward the harbor.

Jörgensen set the madman on his legs again and escorted him home. Pelle and Morten followed them hand-in-hand. A peculiar feeling of satisfaction thrilled Pelle through; he had seen strength personified in action, and he had made a friend.

After that they were inseparable. Their friendship did not grow to full strength; it overshadowed them suddenly, magically conjured out of their hearts. In Morten’s pale, handsome face there was something indescribable that made Pelle’s heart throb in his breast, and a gentler note came into the voices of all who spoke to him. Pelle did not clearly understand what there could be attractive about himself; but he steeped himself in this friendship, which fell upon his ravaged soul like a beneficent rain. Morten would come up into the workshop as soon as work was over, or wait for Pelle at the corner. They always ran when they were going to meet. If Pelle had to work overtime, Morten did not go out, but sat in the workshop and amused him. He was very fond of reading, and told Pelle about the contents of many books.

Through Morten, Pelle drew nearer to Jens, and found that he had

many good qualities under his warped exterior. Jens had just that broken, despondent manner which makes a child instinctively suspect a miserable home. Pelle had at first supposed that Jens and Morten must have been supported by the poor-box; he could not understand how a boy could bear his father to be a giant of whom the whole town went in terror. Jens seemed hard of hearing when any one spoke to him. “He has had so many beatings,” said Morten. “Father can’t endure him, because he is stupid.” Clever he was not, but he could produce the most wonderful melodies by whistling merely with his lips, so that people would stand still and listen to him.

After his illness Pelle had a more delicate ear for everything. He no longer let the waves pass over him, careless as a child, but sent out tentacles—he was seeking for something. Everything had appeared to him as simpler than it was, and his dream of fortune had been too crudely conceived; it was easily shattered, and there was nothing behind it for him to rest on. Now he felt that he must build a better foundation, now he demanded nourishment from a wider radius, and his soul was on the alert for wider ventures; he dropped his anchors in unfamiliar seas. The goal of his desires receded into the unknown; he now overcame his aversion from the great and mysterious Beyond, where the outlines of the face of God lay hidden. The God of Bible history and the sects had for Pelle been only a man, equipped with a beard, and uprightness, and mercy, and all the rest; he was not to be despised, but the “Great Power” was certainly stronger. Hitherto Pelle had not felt the want of a God; he had only obscurely felt his membership in that all-loving God who will arise from the lowest and foulest and overshadow heaven; in that frenzied dream of the poor, who see, in a thousand bitter privations, the pilgrimage to the beloved land. But now he was seeking for that which no words can express; now the words, “the millennium,” had a peculiar sound in his ears.

Anker, of course, was crazy, because the others said so; when they laughed at him, Pelle laughed with them, but there was still something in him that filled Pelle with remorse for having laughed at him. Pelle himself would have liked to scramble money from the top of his high steps if he had been rich; and if Anker talked strangely, in curious phrases, of a time of happiness for all the poor, why, Father Lasse’s lamentations had dealt with the same subject, as far back as he could remember. The foundation of the boy’s nature felt a touch of the same pious awe which had forbidden Lasse and the others, out in the country, to laugh at the insane, for God’s finger had touched them, so that their souls wandered in places to which no other could attain. Pelle felt the face of the unknown God gazing at him out of the mist.

He had become another being since his illness; his movements were more deliberate, and the features of his round childish face had become more marked and prominent. Those two weeks of illness had dislodged his cares, but they were imprinted on his character, to which they lent a certain gravity. He still roamed about alone, encompassing himself with solitude, and he observed the young master in his own assiduous way. He had an impression that the master was putting him to the proof, and this wounded him. He himself knew that that which lay behind his illness would never be repeated, and he writhed uneasily under suspicion.

One day he could bear it no longer. He took the ten kroner which Lasse had given him so that he might buy a much-needed winter overcoat, and went in to the master, who was in the cutting-out room, and laid them on the table. The master looked at him with a wondering expression, but there was a light in his eyes.

“What the devil is that?” he asked, drawling.

“That’s master’s money,” said Pelle, with averted face.

Master Andres gazed at him with dreamy eyes, and then he seemed to return, as though from another world, and Pelle all at once understood what every one said—that the young master was going to die. Then he burst into tears.

But the master himself could not understand.

“What the deuce. But that means nothing!” he cried, and he tossed the ten kroner in the air. “Lord o’ me! what a lot of money! Well, you aren’t poor!” He stood there, not knowing what to believe, his hand resting on Pelle’s shoulder.

“It’s right,” whispered Pelle. “I’ve reckoned it up exactly. And the master mustn’t suspect me—I’ll never do it again.”

Master Andres made a gesture of refusal with his hand, and wanted to speak, but at that very moment he was attacked by a paroxysm of coughing. “You young devil!” he groaned, and leaned heavily on Pelle;

his face was purple. Then came a fit of sickness, and the sweat beaded his face. He stood there for a little, gasping for breath while his strength returned, and then he slipped the money into Pelle's hand and pushed him out of the room.

Pelle was greatly dejected. His uprightness was unrewarded, and what had become of his vindication? He had been so glad to think that he would shake himself free of all the disgrace. But late in the afternoon the master called him into the cutting-out room. "Here, Pelle," he said confidentially, "I want to renew my lottery ticket; but I've no money. Can you lend me those ten kroner for a week?" So it was all as it should be; his one object was to put the whole disgrace away from him.

Jens and Morten helped him in that. There were three of them now; and Pelle had a feeling that he had a whole army at his back. The world had grown no smaller, no less attractive, by reason of the endless humiliations of the year. And Pelle knew down to the ground exactly where he stood, and that knowledge was bitter enough. Below him lay the misty void, and the bubbles which now and again rose to the surface and broke did not produce in him any feeling of mystical wonder as to the depths. But he did not feel oppressed thereby; what was, was so because it must be. And over him the other half of the round world revolved in the mystery of the blue heavens, and again and again he heard its joyous *Forward! On!*

IX

In his loneliness Pelle had often taken his way to the little house by the cemetery, where Due lived in two little rooms. It was always a sort of consolation to see familiar faces, but in other respects he did not gain much by his visits; Due was pleasant enough, but Anna thought of nothing but herself, and how she could best get on. Due had a situation as coachman at a jobmaster's, and they seemed to have a sufficiency.

"We have no intention of being satisfied with driving other people's horses," Anna would say, "but you must crawl before you can walk." She had no desire to return to the country.

"Out there there's no prospects for small people, who want something more than groats in their belly and a few rags on their back. You are respected about as much as the dirt you walk on, and there's no talk of any future. I shall never regret that we've come away from the country."

Due, on the contrary, was homesick. He was quite used to knowing that there was a quarter of a mile between him and the nearest neighbor, and here he could hear, through the flimsy walls, whether his neighbors were kissing, fighting, or counting their money. "It is so close here, and then I miss the earth; the pavements are so hard."

"He misses the manure—he can't come treading it into the room," said Anna, in a superior way; "for that was the only thing there was plenty of in the country. Here in the town too the children can get on better; in the country poor children can't learn anything that'll help them to amount to something; they've got to work for their daily bread. It's bad to be poor in the country!"

"It's worse here in town," said Pelle bitterly, "for here only those who dress finely amount to anything!"

"But there are all sorts of ways here by which a man can earn money, and if one way doesn't answer, he can try another. Many a man has come into town with his naked rump sticking out of his trousers, and now he's looked up to! If a man's only got the will and the energy —well, I've thought both the children ought to go to the municipal school, when they are older; knowledge is never to be despised."

"Why not Marie as well?" asked Pelle.

"She? What? She's not fitted to learn anything. Besides, she's only a girl."

Anna, like her brother Alfred, had set herself a lofty goal. Her eyes were quite bright when she spoke of it, and it was evidently her intention to follow it regardless of consequences. She was a loud-voiced, capable woman with an authoritative manner; Due simply sat by and smiled and kept his temper. But in his inmost heart, according to report, he knew well enough what he wanted. He never went to the public-house, but came straight home after work; and in the evening he was never happier than when all three children were scrambling over him. He made no distinction between his own two youngsters and the six-year-old Marie, whom Anna had borne before she married him.

Pelle was very fond of little Marie, who had thrived well enough so long as her child-loving grandparents had had her, but now she was thin and had stopped growing, and her eyes were too experienced. She gazed at one like a poor housewife who is always fretted and distressed, and Pelle was sorry for her. If her mother was harsh to her, he always remembered that Christmastide evening when he first visited his Uncle Kalle, and when Anna, weeping and abashed, had crept into the house, soon to be a mother. Little Anna, with the mind of a merry child, whom everybody liked. What had become of her now?

One evening, as Morten was not at liberty, he ran thither. Just as he was on the point of knocking, he heard Anna storming about indoors; suddenly the door flew open and little Marie was thrown out upon the footpath. The child was crying terribly.

"What's the matter, then?" asked Pelle, in his cheerful way.

"What's the matter? The matter is that the brat is saucy and won't eat just because she doesn't get exactly the same as the others. Here one has to slave and reckon and contrive—and for a bad girl like that! Now she's punishing herself and won't eat. Is it anything to her what the others have? Can she compare herself with them? She's a bastard brat and always will be, however you like to dress it up!"

"She can't help that!" said Pelle angrily.

"Can't help it! Perhaps I can help it? Is it my fault that she didn't come into the world a farmer's daughter, but has to put up with being a

bastard? Yes, you may believe me, the neighbors' wives tell me to my face she hasn't her father's eyes, and they look at me as friendly as a lot of cats! Am I to be punished all my life, perhaps, because I looked a bit higher, and let myself be led astray in a way that didn't lead to anything? Ah, the little monster!" And she clenched her fists and shook them in the direction from which the child's crying could still be heard.

"Here one goes and wears oneself out to keep the house tidy and to be respectable, and then no one will treat me as being as good as themselves, just because once I was a bit careless!" She was quite beside herself.

"If you aren't kind to little Marie, I shall tell Uncle Kalle," said Pelle warningly.

She spat contemptuously. "Then you can tell him. Yes, I wish to God you'd do it! Then he'd come and take her away, and delighted I should be!"

But now Due was heard stamping on the flags outside the door, and they could hear him too consoling the child. He came in holding her by the hand, and gave his wife a warning look, but said nothing. "There, there—now all that's forgotten," he repeated, in order to check the child's sobs, and he wiped away the grimy tears from her cheeks with his great thumbs.

Anna brought him his food, sulkily enough, and out in the kitchen she muttered to herself. Due, while he ate his supper of bacon and black bread, stood the child between his knees and stared at her with round eyes. "Rider!" she said, and smiled persuasively. "Rider!" Due laid a cube of bacon on a piece of bread.

> "There came a rider riding
> On his white hoss, hoss, hoss, hoss!"

he sang, and he made the bread ride up to her mouth. "And then?"

"Then, *pop* he rode in at the gate!" said the child, and swallowed horse and rider.

While she ate she kept her eyes fixed upon him unwaveringly, with that painful earnestness which was so sad to see. But sometimes it happened that the rider rode right up to her mouth, and then, with a jerk, turned about, and disappeared, at a frantic gallop, between Due's white teeth. Then she smiled for a moment.

"There's really no sense shoving anything into her," said Anna, who was bringing coffee in honor of the visitor. "She gets as much as she can eat, and she's not hungry."

"She's hungry, all the same!" hummed Due.

"Then she's dainty—our poor food isn't good enough for her. She takes after her father, I can tell you! And what's more, if she isn't naughty now she soon will be when once she sees she's backed up."

Due did not reply. "Are you quite well again now?" he asked, turning to Pelle.

"What have you been doing to-day?" asked Anna, filling her husband's long pipe.

"I had to drive a forest ranger from up yonder right across the whole of the moor. I got a krone and a half for a tip."

"Give it to me, right away!"

Due passed her the money, and she put it into an old coffeepot. "This evening you must take the bucket to the inspector's," she said.

Due stretched himself wearily. "I've been on the go since half-past four this morning," he said.

"But I've promised it faithfully, so there's nothing else to be done. And then I thought you'd see to the digging for them this autumn; you can see when we've got the moonlight, and then there's Sundays. If we don't get it some one else will—and they are good payers."

Due did not reply.

"In a year or two from now, I'm thinking, you'll have your own horses and won't need to go scraping other people's daily bread together," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "Won't you go right away and take the bucket? Then it's done. And I must have some small firewood cut before you go to bed."

Due sat there wearily blinking. After eating, fatigue came over him. He could hardly see out of his eyes, so sleepy was he. Marie handed him his cap, and at last he got on his legs. He and Pelle went out together.

The house in which Due lived lay far up the long street, which ran steeply down to the sea. It was an old watercourse, and even now when

there was a violent shower the water ran down like a rushing torrent between the poor cottages.

Down on the sea-road they met a group of men who were carrying lanterns in their hands; they were armed with heavy sticks, and one of them wore an old leather hat and carried a club studded with spikes. This was the night-watch. They moved off, and behind them all went the new policeman, Pihl, in his resplendent uniform. He kept well behind the others, in order to show off his uniform, and also to ensure that none of the watch took to their heels. They were half drunk, and were taking their time; whenever they met any one they stood still and related with much detail precisely why they had taken the field. The "Great Power" was at his tricks again. He had been refractory all day, and the provost had given the order to keep an eye on him. And quite rightly, for in his cups he had met Ship- owner Monsen, on Church Hill, and had fallen upon him with blows and words of abuse: "So you take the widow's bread out of her mouth, do you? You told her the *Three Sisters* was damaged at sea, and you took over her shares for next to nothing, did you? Out of pure compassion, eh, you scoundrel? And there was nothing the matter with the ship except that she had done only too well and made a big profit, eh? So you did the poor widow a kindness, eh?" A scoundrel, he called him and at every question he struck him a blow, so that he rolled on the ground. "We are all witnesses, and now he must go to prison. A poor stone-cutter oughtn't to go about playing the judge. Come and help us catch him, Due—you are pretty strong!"

"It's nothing to do with me," said Due.

"You do best to keep your fingers out of it," said one of the men derisively; "you might get to know the feel of his fist." And they went on, laughing contemptuously.

"They won't be so pleased with their errand when they've done," said Due, laughing. "That's why they've got a nice drop stowed away— under their belts. To give them courage. The strong man's a swine, but I'd rather not be the one he goes for."

"Suppose they don't get him at all!" said Pelle eagerly.

Due laughed. "They'll time it so that they are where he isn't. But why don't he stick to his work and leave his fool's tricks alone? He could have a good drink and sleep it off at home—he's only a poor devil, he ought to leave it to the great people to drink themselves silly!"

But Pelle took another view of the affair. The poor man of course ought to go quietly along the street and take his hat off to everybody; and if anybody greeted him in return he'd be quite proud, and tell it to his wife as quite an event, as they were going to bed. "The clerk raised his hat to me to-day—yes, that he did!" But Stonecutter Jörgensen looked neither to right nor to left when he was sober, and in his cups he trampled everybody underfoot.

Pelle by no means agreed with the pitiful opinions of the town. In the country, whence he came, strength was regarded as everything, and here was a man who could have taken strong Erik himself and put him in his pocket. He roamed about in secret, furtively measuring his wrists, and lifted objects which were much too heavy for him; he would by no means have objected to be like the "Great Power," who, as a single individual, kept the whole town in a state of breathless excitement, whether he was in one of his raging moods or whether he lay like one dead. The thought that he was the comrade of Jens and Morten made him quite giddy, and he could not understand why they bowed themselves so completely to the judgment of the town, as no one could cast it in their teeth that they were on the parish, but only that their father was a powerful fellow.

Jens shrank from continually hearing his father's name on all lips, and avoided looking people in the eyes, but in Morten's open glance he saw no trace of this nameless grief.

One evening, when matters were quite at their worst, they took Pelle home with them. They lived in the east, by the great clay-pit, where the refuse of the town was cast away. Their mother was busy warming the supper in the oven, and in the chimney-corner sat a shrivelled old grandmother, knitting. It was a poverty-stricken home.

"I really thought that was father," said the woman, shivering. "Has any of you heard of him?"

The boys related what they had heard; some one had seen him here, another there. "People are only too glad to keep us informed," said Jens bitterly.

"Now it's the fourth evening that I've warmed up his supper to no purpose," the mother continued. "Formerly he used to take care to look

in at home, however much they were after him—but he may come yet."

She tried to smile hopefully, but suddenly threw her apron in front of her eyes and burst into tears. Jens went about with hanging head, not knowing what he ought to do; Morten put his arm behind the weary back and spoke soothingly: "Come, come; it isn't worse than it has often been!" And he stroked the projecting shoulder-blades.

"No, but I did feel so glad that it was over. A whole year almost he never broke out, but took his food quietly when he came home from work, and then crawled into bed. All that time he broke nothing; he just slept and slept; at last I believed he had become weak-minded, and I was glad for him, for he had peace from those terrible ideas. I believed he had quieted down after all his disgraces, and would take life as it came; as the rest of his comrades do. And now he's broken out again as audacious as possible, and it's all begun over again!" She wept desolately.

The old woman sat by the stove, her shifting glance wandering from one to another; she was like a crafty bird of prey sitting in a cage. Then her voice began, passionless and uninflected:

"You're a great donkey; now it's the fourth evening you've made pancakes for your vagabond; you're always at him, kissing and petting him! I wouldn't sweeten my husband's sleep if he had behaved so scandalously to his wife and family; he could go to bed and get up again hungry, and dry too, for all I cared; then he'd learn manners at last. But there's no grit in you—that's the trouble; you put up with all his sauciness."

"If I were to lay a stone in his way—why, who would be good to him, if his poor head wanted to lie soft? Grandmother ought to know how much he needs some one who believes in him. And there's nothing else I can do for him."

"Yes, yes; work away and wear yourself out, so that there's always something for the great fellow to smash if he has a mind to! But now you go to bed and lie down; I'll wait up for Peter and give him his food, if he comes; you must be half dead with weariness, you poor worm."

"There's an old proverb says, 'A man's mother is the devil's pother,' but it don't apply to you, grandmother," said the mother of the boys mildly. "You always take my part, although there's no need. But now you go to bed! It's far past your bed-time, and I'll look after Peter. It's so easy to manage him if only he knows that you mean well by him."

The old woman behaved as though she did not hear; she went on knitting. The boys remembered that they had brought something with them; a bag of coffee-beans, some sugar-candy, and a few rolls.

"You waste all your hard-earned shillings on me," said the mother reproachfully, and put the water to boil for the coffee, while her face beamed with gratitude.

"They've no young women to waste it on," said the old woman dryly.

"Grandmother's out of humor this evening," said Morten. He had taken off the old woman's glasses and looked smilingly into her gray eyes.

"Out of humor—yes, that I am! But time passes, I tell you, and here one sits on the edge of the grave, waiting for her own flesh and blood to get on and do something wonderful, but nothing ever happens! Energies are wasted—they run away like brook-water into the sea— and the years are wasted too—or is it lies I'm telling you? All want to be masters; no one wants to carry the sack; and one man seizes hold of another and clambers over him just to reach an inch higher. And there ought to be plenty in the house—but there's poverty and filth in every corner. I should think the dear God will soon have had enough of it all! Not an hour goes by but I curse the day when I let myself be wheedled away from the country; there a poor man's daily bread grows in the field, if he'll take it as it comes. But here he must go with a shilling in his fist, if it's only that he wants a scrap of cabbage for his soup. If you've money you can have it; if you haven't, you can leave it. Yes, that's how it is! But one must live in town in order to have the same luck as Peter! Everything promised splendidly, and I, stupid old woman, have always had a craving to see my own flesh and blood up at the top. And now I sit here like a beggar-princess! Oh, it has been splendid—I'm the mother of the biggest vagabond in town!"

"Grandmother shouldn't talk like that," said the mother of the boys.

"Yes, yes; but I'm sick of it all—and yet I can't think about dying! How can I go and lay me down—who would take a stick to Peter?—the strong man!" she said contemptuously.

"Grandmother had better go quietly and lie down; I can manage Peter

best if I'm alone with him," said the wife, but the old woman did not move.

"Can't you get her to go, Morten?" whispered the mother. "You are the only one she will listen to."

Morten lectured the old woman until he had enticed her away; he had to promise to go with her and arrange the bedclothes over her feet.

"Now, thank goodness, we've got her out of the way!" said the mother, relieved. "I'm always so afraid that father might forget what he's doing when he's like he is now; and she doesn't think of giving in to him, so it's flint against flint. But now I think you ought to go where the rest of the young folks are, instead of sitting here and hanging your heads."

"We'll stay and see whether father comes," declared Morten.

"But what does it matter to you—you can say good-day to father at any time. Go now—listen—father prefers to find me alone when he's like this and comes home merry. Perhaps he takes me in his arms and swings me round—he's so strong—so that I feel as giddy as a young girl. 'Ho, heigh, wench, here's the "Great Power"!' he says, and he laughs as loud as he used to in his rowdy young days. Yes, when he's got just enough in him he gets as strong and jolly as ever he was in his very best days. I'm glad it's soon over. But that's not for you —you had better go." She looked at them appealingly, and shrank back as some one fumbled at the door. Out-of-doors it was terrible weather.

It was only the youngest, who had come home from her day's work. She might have been ten or twelve years old and was small for her age, although she looked older; her voice was harsh and strident, and her little body seemed coarsened and worn with work. There was not a spot about her that shed or reflected a single ray of light; she was like some subterranean creature that has strayed to the surface. She went silently across the room and let herself drop into her grandmother's chair; she leaned over to one side as she sat, and now and again her features contracted.

"She's got that mischief in her back," said the mother, stroking her thin, unlovely hair. "She got it always carrying the doctor's little boy—he's so tall and so heavy. But as long as the doctor says nothing, it can't be anything dangerous. Yes, you did really leave home too early, my child; but, after all, you get good food and you learn to be smart. And capable, that she is; she looks after the doctor's three children all by herself! The eldest is her own age, but she has to dress and undress her. Such grand children, they don't even learn how to do things for themselves!"

Pelle stared at her curiously. He himself had put up with a good deal, but to cripple himself by dragging children about, who were perhaps stronger than himself—no, no one need expect that of him! "Why do you carry the over-fed brat?" he asked.

"They must have some one to look after them," said the mother, "and their mother, who's the nearest to them, she doesn't feel inclined to do it. And they pay her for it."

"If it was me, I'd let the brat fall," said Pelle boldly.

The little girl just glanced at him with her dull eyes, and a feeble interest glimmered in them. But her face retained its frozen indifference, and it was impossible to say what she was thinking, so hard and experienced was her expression.

"You mustn't teach her anything naughty," said the mother; "she has enough to struggle against already; she's got an obstinate nature. And now you must go to bed, Karen"—she caressed her once more— "Father can't bear to see you when he's had too much. He's so fond of her," she added helplessly.

Karen drew away from the caress without the slightest change of expression; silently she went up to the garret where she slept. Pelle had not heard her utter a sound.

"That's how she is," said the mother, shivering. "Never a word to say 'good night'! Nothing makes any impression on her nowadays— neither good nor bad; she's grown up too soon. And I have to manage so that father doesn't see her when he's merry. He goes on like a wild beast against himself and everybody else when it comes across his mind how she's been put upon." She looked nervously at the clock. "But go now—do listen! You'll do me a great favor if you'll go!" She was almost crying.

Morten stood up, hesitating, and the others followed his example. "Pull your collars up and run," said the mother, and buttoned up their coats. The October gale was beating in gusts against the house, and the rain was lashing violently against the window-panes.

As they were saying good night a fresh noise was heard outside. The outer door banged against the wall, and they heard the storm burst in and fill the entry. “Ah, now it’s too late!” lamented the mother reproachfully. “Why didn’t you go sooner?” A monstrous breathing sounded outside, like the breathing of a gigantic beast, sniffing up and down at the crack of the door, and fumbling after the latch with its dripping paws. Jens wanted to run and open the door. “No, you mustn’t do that!” cried his mother despairingly, and she pushed the bolt. She stood there, rigid, her whole body trembling. Pelle too began to shiver; he had a feeling that the storm itself was lying there in the entry like a great unwieldy being, puffing and snorting in a kind of gross content, and licking itself dry while it waited for them.

The woman bent her ear to the door, listening in frantic suspense. “What is he up to now?” she murmured; “he is so fond of teasing!” She was crying again. The boys had for the moment forgotten her.

Then the outer door was beaten in, and the monster got up on all four dripping paws, and began to call them with familiar growls. The woman turned about in her distress; waving her hands helplessly before her, and then clapping them to her face. But now the great beast became impatient; it struck the door sharply, and snarled warningly. The woman shrank back as though she herself were about to drop on all fours and answered him. “No, no!” she cried, and considered a moment. Then the door was burst in with one tremendous blow, and Master Bruin rolled over the threshold and leaped toward them in clumsy jumps, his head thrown somewhat backward as though wondering why his little comrade had not rushed to meet him, with an eager growl. “Peter, Peter, the boy!” she whispered, bending over him; but he pushed her to the floor with a snarl, and laid one heavy paw upon her. She tore herself away from him and escaped to a chair.

“Who am I?” he asked, in a stumbling, ghostly voice, confronting her.

“The great strong man!” She could not help smiling; he was ramping about in such a clumsy, comical way.

“And you?”

“The luckiest woman in all the world!” But now her voice died away in a sob.

“And where is the strong man to rest to-night?” He snatched at her breast.

She sprang up with blazing eyes. “You beast—oh, you beast!” she cried, red with shame, and she struck him in the face.

The “Great Power” wiped his face wonderingly after each blow. “We’re only playing,” he said. Then, in a flash, he caught sight of the boys, who had shrunk into a corner. “There you are!” he said, and he laughed crazily; “yes, mother and I, we’re having a bit of a game! Aren’t we, mother?”

But the woman had run out of doors, and now stood under the eaves, sobbing.

Jörgensen moved restlessly to and fro. “She’s crying,” he muttered. “There’s no grit in her—she ought to have married some farmer’s lad, devil take it, if the truth must be told! It catches me here and presses as though some one were shoving an iron ferrule into my brain. Come on, ‘Great Power’! Come on! so that you can get some peace from it! I say every day. No, let be, I say then—you must keep a hold on yourself, or she just goes about crying! And she’s never been anything but good to you! But deuce take it, if it would only come out! And then one goes to bed and says, Praise God, the day is done—and another day, and another. And they stand there and stare—and wait; but let them wait; nothing happens, for now the ‘Great Power’ has got control of himself! And then all at once it’s there behind! Hit away! Eight in the thick of the heap! Send them all to hell, the scoundrels! ’Cause a man must drink, in order to keep his energies in check.... Well, and there she sits! Can one of you lend me a krone?”

“Not I!” said Jens.

“No, not you—he’d be a pretty duffer who’d expect anything from you! Haven’t I always said ‘he takes after the wrong side’? He’s like his mother. He’s got a heart, but he’s incapable. What can you really do, Jens? Do you get fine clothes from your master, and does he treat you like a son, and will you finish up by taking over the business as his son-in-law? And why not? if I may ask the question. Your father is as much respected as Morten’s.”

“Morten won’t be a son-in-law, either, if his master has no daughter,” Jens muttered.

“No. But he might have had a daughter, hey? But there we’ve got an answer. You don’t reflect. Morten, he’s got something there!” He touched his forehead.

“Then you shouldn’t have hit me on the head,” retorted Jens sulkily.

“On the head—well! But the understanding has its seat in the head. That’s where one ought to hammer it in. For what use would it be, I ask you, supposing you commit some stupidity with your head and I smack you on the behind? You don’t need any understanding there? But it has helped—you’ve grown much smarter. That was no fool’s answer you gave me just now: ‘Then you shouldn’t have hit me on the head!’” He nodded in acknowledgment. “No, but here is a head that can give them some trouble—there are knots of sense in this wood, hey?” And the three boys had to feel the top of his head.

He stood there like a swaying tree, and listened with a changing expression to the less frequent sobs of his wife; she was now sitting by the fire, just facing the door. “She does nothing but cry,” he said compassionately; “that’s a way the women have of amusing themselves nowadays. Life has been hard on us, and she couldn’t stand hardships, poor thing! For example, if I were to say now that I’d like to smash the stove”—and here he seized a heavy chair and waved it about in the air —“then she begins to cry. She cries about everything. But if I get on I shall take another wife —one who can make a bit of a show. Because this is nonsense. Can she receive her guests and make fine conversation? Pah! What the devil is the use of my working and pulling us all out of the mud? But now I’m going out again—God knows, it ain’t amusing here!”

His wife hurried across to him. “Ah, don’t go out, Peter—stay here, do!” she begged.

“Am I to hang about here listening to you maundering on?” he asked sulkily, shrugging his shoulders. He was like a great, good-natured boy who gives himself airs.

“I won’t maunder—I’m ever so jolly—if only you’ll stay!” she cried, and she smiled through her tears. “Look at me—don’t you see how glad I am? Stay with me, do, ‘Great Power!’” She breathed warmly into his ear; she had shaken off her cares and pulled herself together, and was now really pretty with her glowing face.

The “Great Power” looked at her affectionately; he laughed stupidly, as though he was tickled, and allowed himself to be pulled about; he imitated her whisper to the empty air, and was overflowing with good humor. Then he slyly approached his mouth to her ear, and as she listened he trumpeted loudly, so that she started back with a little cry. “Do stay, you great baby!” she said, laughing. “I won’t let you go; I can hold you!” But he shook her off, laughing, and ran out bareheaded.

For a moment it looked as though she would run after him, but then her hands fell, and she drooped her head. “Let him run off,” she said wearily; “now things must go as they will. There’s nothing to be done; I’ve never seen him so drunk. Yes, you look at me, but you must remember that he carries his drink differently to every one else—he is quite by himself in everything!” She said this with a certain air of pride. “And he has punished the shipowner—and even the judge daren’t touch him. The good God Himself can’t be more upright than he is.”

X

Now the dark evenings had come when the lamp had to be lit early for the workers. The journeyman left while it was still twilight; there was little for him to do. In November the eldest apprentice had served his time. He was made to sit all alone in the master's room, and there he stayed for a whole week, working on his journeyman's task—a pair of sea-boots. No one was allowed to go in to him, and the whole affair was extremely exciting. When the boots were ready and had been inspected by some of the master-shoemakers, they were filled to the top with water and suspended in the garret; there they hung for a few days, in order to show that they were water-tight. Then Emil was solemnly appointed a journeyman, and had to treat the whole workshop. He drank brotherhood with little Nikas, and in the evening he went out and treated the other journeymen—and came home drunk as a lord. Everything passed off just as it should.

On the following day Jeppe came into the workshop. "Well, Emil, now you're a journeyman. What do you think of it? Do you mean to travel? It does a freshly baked journeyman good to go out into the world and move about and learn something."

Emil did not reply, but began to bundle his things together. "No, no; it's not a matter of life and death to turn you out. You can come to the workshop here and share the light and the warmth until you've got something better—those are good conditions, it seems to me. Now, when I was learning, things were very different—a kick behind, and out you went! And that's for young men—it's good for them!"

He could sit in the workshop and enumerate all the masters in the whole island who had a journeyman. But that was really only a joke —it never happened that a new journeyman was engaged. On the other hand, he and the others knew well enough how many freshly-baked journeymen had been thrown on to the streets that autumn.

Emil was by no means dejected. Two evenings later they saw him off on the Copenhagen steamer. "There is work enough," he said, beaming with delight. "You must promise me that you'll write to me in a year," said Peter, who had finished his apprenticeship at the same time. "That I will!" said Emil.

But before a month had passed they heard that Emil was home again. He was ashamed to let himself be seen. And then one morning he came, much embarrassed, slinking into the workshop. Yes, he had got work —in several places, but had soon been sent away again. "I have learned nothing," he said dejectedly. He loitered about for a time, to enjoy the light and warmth of the workshop, and would sit there doing some jobs of cobbling which he had got hold of. He kept himself above water until nearly Christmas-time, but then he gave in, and disgraced his handicraft by working at the harbor as an ordinary stevedore.

"I have wasted five years of my life," he used to say when they met him; "Run away while there's time! Or it'll be the same with you as it was with me." He did not come to the workshop any longer out of fear of Jeppe, who was extremely wroth with him for dishonoring his trade.

It was cozy in the workshop when the fire crackled in the stove and the darkness looked in at the black, uncovered window-panes. The table was moved away from the window so that all four could find place about it, the master with his book and the three apprentices each with his repairing job. The lamp hung over the table, and smoked; it managed to lessen the darkness a little. The little light it gave was gathered up by the great glass balls which focussed it and cast it upon the work. The lamp swayed slightly, and the specks of light wriggled hither and thither like tadpoles, so that the work was continually left in darkness. Then the master would curse and stare miserably at the lamp.

The others suffered with their eyes, but the master sickened in the darkness. Every moment he would stand up with a shudder. "Damn and blast it, how dark it is here; it's as dark as though one lay in the grave! Won't it give any light to-night?" Then Pelle would twist the regulator, but it was no better.

When old Jeppe came tripping in, Master Andres looked up without trying to hide his book; he was in a fighting mood.

"Who is there?" he asked, staring into the darkness. "Ah, it's father!"

"Have you got bad eyes?" asked the old man derisively. "Will you have some eye-water?"

"Father's eye-water—no thanks! But this damned light—one can't see one's hand before one's face!"

“Open your mouth, then, and your teeth will shine!” Jeppe spat the words out. This lighting was always a source of strike between them.

“No one else in the whole island works by so wretched a light, you take my word, father.”

“In my time I never heard complaints about the light,” retorted Jeppe. “And better work has been done under the glass ball than any one can do now with all their artificial discoveries. But it’s disappearing now; the young people to-day know no greater pleasure than throwing their money out of the window after such modern trash.”

“Yes, in father’s time—then everything was so splendid!” said Master Andres. “That was when the angels ran about with white sticks in their mouths!”

In the course of the evening now one and another would drop in to hear and tell the news. And if the young master was in a good temper they would stay. He was the fire and soul of the party, as old Bjerregrav said; he could, thanks to his reading, give explanations of so many things.

When Pelle lifted his eyes from his work he was blind. Yonder, in the workshop, where Baker Jörgen and the rest sat and gossiped, he could see nothing but dancing specks of light, and his work swam round in the midst of them; and of his comrades he saw nothing but their aprons. But in the glass ball the light was like a living fire, in whose streams a world was laboring.

“Well, this evening there’s a capital light,” said Jeppe, if one of them looked to the lamp.

“You mean there’s no light at all!” retorted Master Andres, twisting the regulator.

But one day the ironmonger’s man brought something in a big basket —a hanging lamp with a round burner; and when it was dark the ironmonger himself came in order to light it for the first time, and to initiate Pelle into the management of the wonderful contrivance. He went to work very circumstantially and with much caution. “It can explode, I needn’t tell you,” he said, “but you’d have to treat the mechanism very badly first. If you only set to work with care and reason there is no danger whatever.”

Pelle stood close to him, holding the cylinder, but the others turned their heads away from the table, while the young master stood right at the back, and shuffled to and fro. “Devil knows I don’t want to go to heaven in my living body!” he said, with a comical expression; “but deuce take it, where did you get the courage, Pelle? You’re a saucy young spark!” And he looked at him with his wide, wondering gaze, which held in it both jest and earnest.

At last the lamp shone out; and even on the furthest shelf, high up under the ceiling, one could count every single last. “That’s a regular sun!” said the young master, and he put his hand to his face; “why, good Lord, I believe it warms the room!” He was quite flushed, and his eyes were sparkling.

The old master kept well away from the lamp until the ironmonger had gone; then he came rushing over to it. “Well, aren’t you blown sky-high?” he asked, in great astonishment. “It gives an ugly light —oh, a horrible light! Poof, I say! And it doesn’t shine properly; it catches you in the eyes. Well, well, you can spoil your sight as far as I’m concerned!”

But for the others the lamp was a renewal of life. Master Andres sunned himself in its rays. He was like a sun-intoxicated bird; as he sat there, quite at peace, a wave of joy would suddenly come over him. And to the neighbors who gathered round the lamp in order to discover its qualities he held forth in great style, so that the light was doubled. They came often and stayed readily; the master beamed and the lamp shone; they were like insects attracted by the light—the glorious light!

Twenty times a day the master would go out to the front door, but he always came in again and sat by the window to read, his boot with the wooden heel sticking out behind him. He spat so much that Pelle had to put fresh sand every day under his place.

“Is there some sort of beast that sits in your chest and gnaws?” said Uncle Jörgen, when Andres’ cough troubled him badly. “You look so well otherwise. You’ll recover before we know where we are!”

“Yes, thank God!” The master laughed gaily between two attacks.

“If you only go at the beast hard enough, it’ll surely die. Now, where you are, in your thirtieth year, you ought to be able to get at it. Suppose you were to give it cognac?”

Jörgen Kofod, as a rule, came clumping in with great wooden shoes,

and Jeppe used to scold him. “One wouldn’t believe you’ve got a shoemaker for a brother!” he would say crossly; “and yet we all get our black bread from you.”

“But what if I can’t keep my feet warm now in those damned leather shoes? And I’m full through and through of gout—it’s a real misery!” The big baker twisted himself dolefully.

“It must be dreadful with gout like that,” said Bjerregrav. “I myself have never had it.”

“Tailors don’t get gout,” rejoined Baker Jörgen scornfully. “A tailor’s body has no room to harbor it. So much I do know—twelve tailors go to a pound.”

Bjerregrav did not reply.

“The tailors have their own topsy-turvy world,” continued the baker. “I can’t compare myself with them. A crippled tailor—well, even he has got his full strength of body.”

“A tailor is as fine a fellow as a black-bread baker!” stammered Bjerregrav nervously. “To bake black bread—why, every farmer’s wife can do that!”

“Fine! I believe you! Hell and blazes! If the tailor makes a cap he has enough cloth left over to make himself a pair of breeches. That’s why tailors are always dressed so fine!” The baker was talking to the empty air.

“Millers and bakers are always rogues, everybody says.” Old Bjerregrav turned to Master Andres, trembling with excitement. But the young master stood there looking gaily from one to the other, his lame leg dangling in the air.

“For the tailor nothing comes amiss—there’s too much room in me!” said the baker, as though something were choking him. “Or, as another proverb says—it’s of no more consequence than a tailor in hell. They are the fellows! We all know the story of the woman who brought a full-grown tailor into the world without even knowing she was with child.”

Jeppe laughed. “Now, that’s enough, really; God knows neither of you will give in to the other.”

“Well, and I’ve no intention of trampling a tailor to death, if it can anyhow be avoided—but one can’t always see them.” Baker Jörgen carefully lifted his great wooden shoes. “But they are not men. Now is there even one tailor in the town who has been overseas? No, and there were no men about while the tailor was being made. A woman stood in a draught at the front door, and there she brought forth the tailor.” The baker could not stop himself when once he began to quiz anybody; now that Sören was married, he had recovered all his good spirits.

Bjerregrav could not beat this. “You can say what you like about tailors,” he succeeded in saying at last. “But people who bake black bread are not respected as handicraftsmen—no more than the washerwoman! Tailoring and shoemaking, they are proper crafts, with craftman’s tests, and all the rest.”

“Yes, shoemaking of course is another thing,” said Jeppe.

“But as many proverbs and sayings are as true of you as of us,” said Bjerregrav, desperately blinking.

“Well, it’s no longer ago than last year that Master Klausen married a cabinet-maker’s daughter. But whom must a tailor marry? His own serving-maid?”

“Now how can you, father!” sighed Master Andres. “One man’s as good as another.”

“Yes, you turn everything upside down! But I’ll have my handicraft respected. To-day all sorts of agents and wool-merchants and other trash settle in the town and talk big. But in the old days the handicraftsmen were the marrow of the land. Even the king himself had to learn a handicraft. I myself served my apprenticeship in the capital, and in the workshop where I was a prince had learned the trade. But, hang it all, I never heard of a king who learned tailoring!”

They were capable of going on forever in this way, but, as the dispute was at its worst, the door opened, and Wooden-leg Larsen stumped in, filling the workshop with fresh air. He was wearing a storm-cap and a blue pilot-coat. “Good evening, children!” he said gaily, and threw down a heap of leather ferrules and single boots on the window-bench.

His entrance put life into all. “Here’s a playboy for us! Welcome home! Has it been a good summer?”

Jeppe picked up the five boots for the right foot, one after another, turned back the uppers, and held heels and soles in a straight line before

his eyes. “A bungler has had these in hand,” he growled, and then he set to work on the casing for the wooden leg. “Well, did the layer of felt answer?” Larsen suffered from cold in his amputated foot.

“Yes; I’ve not had cold feet any more.”

“Cold feet!” The baker struck himself on the loins and laughed.

“Yes, you can say what you like, but every time my wooden leg gets wet I get a cold in the head!”

“That’s the very deuce!” cried Jörgen, and his great body rolled like a hippopotamus. “A funny thing, that!”

“There are many funny things in the world,” stammered Bjerregrav. “When my brother died, my watch stopped at that very moment—it was he who gave it me.”

Wooden-leg Larsen had been through the whole kingdom with his barrel-organ, and had to tell them all about it; of the railway- trains which travelled so fast that the landscape turned round on its own axis, and of the great shops and places of amusement in the capital.

“It must be as it will,” said Master Andres. “But in the summer I shall go to the capital and work there!”

“In Jutland—that’s where they have so many wrecks!” said the baker. “They say everything is sand there! I’ve heard that the country is shifting under their feet—moving away toward the east. Is it true that they have a post there that a man must scratch himself against before he can sit down?”

“My sister has a son who has married a Jutland woman and settled down there,” said Bjerregrav. “Have you seen anything of them?”

The baker laughed. “Tailors are so big—they’ve got the whole world in their waistcoat pocket. Well, and Funen? Have you been there, too? That’s where the women have such a pleasant disposition. I’ve lain before Svendborg and taken in water, but there was no time to go ashore.” This remark sounded like a sigh.

“Can you stand it, wandering so much?” asked Bjerregrav anxiously.

Wooden-leg Larsen looked contemptuously at Bjerregrav’s congenital club-foot—he had received his own injury at Heligoland, at the hands of an honorable bullet. “If one’s sound of limb,” he said, spitting on the floor by the window.

Then the others had to relate what had happened in town during the course of the summer; of the Finnish barque which had stranded in the north, and how the “Great Power” had broken out again. “Now he’s sitting in the dumps under lock and key.”

Bjerregrav took exception to the name they gave him; he called it blasphemy, on the ground that the Bible said that power and might belonged to God alone.

Wooden-leg Larsen said that the word, as they had used it, had nothing to do with God; it was an earthly thing; across the water people used it to drive machinery, instead of horses.

“I should think woman is the greatest power,” said Baker Jörgen, “for women rule the world, God knows they do! And God protect us if they are once let loose on us! But what do you think, Andres, you who are so book-learned?”

“The sun is the greatest power,” said Master Andres. “It rules over all life, and science has discovered that all strength and force come from the sun. When it falls into the sea and cools, then the whole world will become a lump of ice.”

“Then the sea is the greatest power!” cried Jeppe triumphantly. “Or do you know of anything else that tears everything down and washes it away? And from the sea we get everything back again. Once when I went to Malaga——”

“Yes, that really is true,” said Bjerregrav, “for most people get their living from the sea, and many their death. And the rich people we have get all their money from the sea.”

Jeppe drew himself up proudly and his glasses began to glitter. “The sea can bear what it likes, stone or iron, although it is soft itself! The heaviest loads can travel on its back. And then all at once it swallows everything down. I have seen ships which sailed right into the weather and disappeared when their time came.”

“I should very much like to know whether the different countries float on the water, or whether they stand firm on the bottom of the sea. Don’t you know that, Andres?” asked Bjerregrav.

Master Andres thought they stood on the bottom of the sea, far below the surface; but Uncle Jörgen said: “Nay! Big as the sea is!”

“Yes, it’s big, for I’ve been over the whole island,” said Bjerregrav self-consciously; “but I never got anywhere where I couldn’t see the sea. Every parish in all Bornholm borders on the sea. But it has no power over the farmers and peasants—they belong to the land, don’t they?”

“The sea has power over all of us,” said Larsen. “Some it refuses; they go to sea for years and years, but then in their old age they suffer from sea-sickness, and then they are warned. That is why Skipper Andersen came on shore. And others it attracts, from right away up in the country! I have been to sea with such people—they had spent their whole lives up on the island, and had seen the sea, but had never been down to the shore. And then one day the devil collared them and they left the plough and ran down to the sea and hired themselves out. And they weren’t the worse seamen.”

“Yes,” said Baker Jörgen, “and all of us here have been to sea, and Bornholmers sail on all the seas, as far as a ship can go. And I have met people who had never been on the sea, and yet they were as though it was their home. When I sailed the brig *Clara* for Skipper Andersen, I had such a lad on board as ordinary seaman. He had never bathed in the sea; but one day, as we were lying at anchor, and the others were swimming around, he jumped into the water too—now this is God’s truth—as though he were tumbling into his mother’s arms; he thought that swimming came of its own accord. He went straight to the bottom, and was half dead before we fished him up again.”

“The devil may understand the sea!” cried Master Andres breathlessly. “It is curved like an arch everywhere, and it can get up on its hind legs and stand like a wall, although it’s a fluid! And I have read in a book that there is so much silver in the sea that every man in the whole world might be rich.”

“Thou righteous God!” cried Bjerregrav, “such a thing I have never heard. Now does that come from all the ships that have gone down? Yes, the sea—that, curse it, is the greatest power!”

“It’s ten o’clock,” said Jeppe. “And the lamp is going out—that devil’s contrivance!” They broke up hastily, and Pelle turned the lamp out.

But long after he had laid his head on his pillow everything was going round inside it. He had swallowed everything, and imaginary pictures thronged in his brain like young birds in an over-full nest, pushing and wriggling to find a place wherein to rest. The sea was strong; now in the wintertime the surging of the billows against the cliffs was continually in his ear. Pelle was not sure whether it would stand aside for him! He had an unconscious reluctance to set himself limits, and as for the power about which they had all been disputing, it certainly had its seat in Pelle himself, like a vague consciousness that he was, despite all his defeats, invincible.

At times this feeling manifested itself visibly and helped him through the day. One afternoon they were sitting and working, after having swallowed their food in five minutes, as their custom was; the journeyman was the only one who did not grudge himself a brief mid-day rest, and he sat reading the newspaper. Suddenly he raised his head and looked wonderingly at Pelle. “Now what’s this? Lasse Karlson—isn’t that your father?”

“Yes,” answered Pelle, with a paralyzed tongue, and the blood rushed to his cheeks. Was Father Lasse in the news? Not among the accidents? He must have made himself remarkable in one way or another through his farming! Pelle was nearly choking with excitement, but he did not venture to ask, and Little Nikas simply sat there and looked secretive. He had assumed the expression peculiar to the young master.

But then he read aloud: “Lost! A louse with three tails has escaped, and may be left, in return for a good tip, with the landowner Lasse Karlson, Heath Farm. Broken black bread may also be brought there.”

The others burst into a shout of laughter, but Pelle turned an ashen gray. With a leap he was across the table and had pulled little Nikas to the ground underneath him; there he lay, squeezing the man’s throat with his fingers, trying to throttle him, until he was overpowered. Emil and Peter had to hold him while the knee-strap put in its work.

And yet he was proud of the occurrence; what did a miserable thrashing signify as against the feat of throwing the journeyman to the ground and overcoming the slavish respect he had felt for him! Let them dare to get at him again with their lying allusions, or to make sport of Father Lasse! Pelle was not inclined to adopt circuitous methods.

And the circumstances justified him. After this he received more consideration; no one felt anxious to bring Pelle and his cobbler’s tools on top of him, even although the boy could be thrashed afterward.

XI

The skipper's garden was a desert. Trees and bushes were leafless; from the workshop window one could look right through them, and over other gardens beyond, and as far as the backs of the houses in East Street. There were no more games in the garden; the paths were buried in ice and melting snow, and the blocks of coral, and the great conch-shells which, with their rosy mouths and fish-like teeth, had sung so wonderfully of the great ocean, had been taken in on account of the frost.

Manna he saw often enough. She used to come tumbling into the workshop with her school satchel or her skates; a button had got torn off, or a heel had been wrenched loose by a skate. A fresh breeze hovered about her hair and cheeks, and the cold made her face glow. "There is blood!" the young master would say, looking at her delightedly; he laughed and jested when she came in. But Manna would hold on to Pelle's shoulder and throw her foot into his lap, so that he could button her boots. Sometimes she would pinch him secretly and look angry—she was jealous of Morten. But Pelle did not understand; Morten's gentle, capable mind had entirely subjugated him and assumed the direction of their relations. Pelle was miserable if Morten was not there when he had an hour to spare. Then he would run, with his heart in his mouth, to find him; everything else was indifferent to him.

One Sunday morning, as he was sweeping the snow in the yard, the girls were in their garden; they were making a snowman.

"Hey, Pelle!" they cried, and they clapped their mittens; "come over here! You can help us to build a snow-house. We'll wall up the door and light some Christmas-tree candles: we've got some ends. Oh, do come!"

"Then Morten must come too—he'll be here directly!"

Manna turned up her nose. "No, we don't want Morten here!"

"Why not? He's so jolly!" said Pelle, wounded.

"Yes, but his father is so dreadful—everybody is afraid of him. And then he's been in prison."

"Yes, for beating some one—that's nothing so dreadful! My father was too, when he was a young man. That's no disgrace, for it isn't for stealing."

But Manna looked at him with an expression exactly like Jeppe's when he was criticizing somebody from his standpoint as a respectable citizen.

"But, Pelle, aren't you ashamed of it? That's how only the very poorest people think—those who haven't any feelings of shame!"

Pelle blushed for his vulgar way of looking at things. "It's no fault of Morten's that his father's like that!" he retorted lamely.

"No, we won't have Morten here. And mother won't let us. She says perhaps we can play with you, but not with anybody else. We belong to a very good family," she said, in explanation.

"My father has a great farm—it's worth quite as much as a rotten barge," said Pelle angrily.

"Father's ship isn't rotten!" rejoined Manna, affronted. "It's the best in the harbor here, and it has three masts!"

"All the same, you're nothing but a mean hussy!" Pelle spat over the hedge.

"Yes, and you're a Swede!" Manna blinked her eyes triumphantly, while Dolores and Aina stood behind her and put out their tongues.

Pelle felt strongly inclined to jump over the garden wall and beat them; but just then Jeppe's old woman began scolding from the kitchen, and he went on with his work.

Now, after Christmas, there was nothing at all to do. People were wearing out their old boots, or they went about in wooden shoes. Little Nikas was seldom in the workshop; he came in at meal-times and went away again, and he was always wearing his best clothes. "He earns his daily bread easily," said Jeppe. Over on the mainland they didn't feed their people through the winter; the moment there was no more work, they kicked them out.

In the daytime Pelle was often sent on a round through the harbor in order to visit the shipping. He would find the masters standing about there in their leather aprons, talking about nautical affairs; or they would gather before their doors, to gossip, and each, from sheer habit, would carry some tool or other in his hand.

And the wolf was at the door. The "Saints" held daily meetings, and the

people had time enough to attend them. Winter proved how insecurely the town was established, how feeble were its roots; it was not here as it was up in the country, where a man could enjoy himself in the knowledge that the earth was working for him. Here people made themselves as small and ate as little as possible, in order to win through the slack season.

In the workshops the apprentices sat working at cheap boots and shoes for stock; every spring the shoemakers would charter a ship in common and send a cargo to Iceland. This helped them on a little. “Fire away!” the master would repeat, over and over again; “make haste—we don’t get much for it!”

The slack season gave rise to many serious questions. Many of the workers were near to destitution, and it was said that the organized charities would find it very difficult to give assistance to all who applied for it. They were busy everywhere, to their full capacity. “And I’ve heard it’s nothing here to what it is on the mainland,” said Baker Jörgen. “There the unemployed are numbered in tens of thousands.”

“How can they live, all those thousands of poor people, if the unemployment is so great?” asked Bjerregrav. “The need is bad enough here in town, where every employer provides his people with their daily bread.”

“Here no one starves unless he wants to,” said Jeppe. “We have a well-organized system of relief.”

“You’re certainly becoming a Social Democrat, Jeppe,” said Baker Jörgen; “you want to put everything on to the organized charities!”

Wooden-leg Larsen laughed; that was a new interpretation.

“Well, what do they really want? For they are not freemasons. They say they are raising their heads again over on the mainland.”

“Well, that, of course, is a thing that comes and goes with unemployment,” said Jeppe. “The people must do something. Last winter a son of the sailmaker’s came home—well, he was one of them in secret. But the old folks would never admit it, and he himself was so clever that he got out of it somehow.”

“If he’d been a son of mine he would have got the stick,” said Jörgen.

“Aren’t they the sort of people who are making ready for the millennium? We’ve got a few of their sort here,” said Bjerregrav diffidently.

“D’you mean the poor devils who believe in the watchmaker and his ‘new time’? Yes, that may well be,” said Jeppe contemptuously. “I have heard they are quite wicked enough for that. I’m inclined to think they are the Antichrist the Bible foretells.”

“Ah, but what do they really want?” asked Baker Jörgen. “What is their madness really driving at?”

“What do they want?” Wooden-leg Larsen pulled himself together. “I’ve knocked up against a lot of people, I have, and as far as I can understand it they want to get justice; they want to take the right of coining money away from the Crown and give it to everybody. And they want to overthrow everything, that is quite certain.”

“Well,” said Master Andres, “what they want, I believe, is perfectly right, only they’ll never get it. I know a little about it, on account of Garibaldi.”

“But what *do* they want, then, if they don’t want to overthrow the whole world?”

“What do they want? Well, what do they want? That everybody should have exactly the same?” Master Andres was uncertain.

“Then the ship’s boy would have as much as the captain! No, it would be the devil and all!” Baker Jörgen smacked his thigh and laughed.

“And they want to abolish the king,” said Wooden-leg Larsen eagerly.

“Who the devil would reign over us then? The Germans would soon come hurrying over! That’s a most wicked thing, that Danish people should want to hand over their country to the enemy! All I wonder is that they don’t shoot them down without trial! They’d never be admitted to Bornholm.”

“That we don’t really know!” The young master smiled.

“To the devil with them—we’d all go down to the shore and shoot them: they should never land alive!”

“They are just a miserable rabble, the lot of them,” said Jeppe. “I should very much like to know whether there is a decent citizen among them.”

“Naturally, it’s always the poor who complain of poverty,” said

Bjerregrav. “So the thing never comes to an end.”

Baker Jörgen was the only one of them who had anything to do. Things would have to be bad indeed before the people stopped buying his black bread. He even had more to do than usual; the more people abstained from meat and cheese, the more bread they ate. He often hired Jeppe’s apprentices so that they might help him in the kneading.

But he was not in a happy frame of mind. He was always shouting his abuse of Sören through the open doors, because the latter would not go near his buxom young wife. Old Jörgen had taken him and put him into bed with her with his own hands, but Sören had got out of the business by crying and trembling like a new-born calf.

“D’you think he’s perhaps bewitched?” asked Master Andres.

“She’s young and pretty, and there’s not the least fault to be found with her—and we’ve fed him with eggs right through the winter. She goes about hanging her head, she gets no attention from him. ‘Marie! Sören!’ I cry, just to put a little life into them—he ought to be the sort of devil I was, I can tell you! She laughs and blushes, but Sören, he simply sneaks off. It’s really a shame—so dainty as she is too, in every way. Ah, it ought to have been in my young days, I can tell you!”

“You are still young enough, Uncle Jörgen!” laughed Master Andres.

“Well, a man could almost bring himself to it—when he considers what a dreadful injustice is going on under his own eyes. For, look you, Andres, I’ve been a dirty beast about all that sort of thing, but I’ve been a jolly fellow too; people were always glad to be on board with me. And I’ve had strength for a booze, and a girl; and for hard work in bad weather. The life I’ve led—it hasn’t been bad; I’d live it all over again the same. But Sören—what sort of a strayed weakling is he? He can’t find his own way about! Now, if only you would have a chat with him—you’ve got some influence over him.”

“I’ll willingly try.”

“Thanks; but look here, I owe you money.” Jörgen took ten kroner and laid them on the table as he was going.

“Pelle, you devil’s imp, can you run an errand for me?” The young master limped into the cutting-out room, Pelle following on his heels.

A hundred times a day the master would run to the front door, but he hurried back again directly; he could not stand the cold. His eyes were full of dreams of other countries, whose climates were kinder, and he spoke of his two brothers, of whom one was lost in South America—perhaps murdered. But the other was in Australia, herding sheep. He earned more at that than the town magistrate received as salary, and was the cleverest boxer in the neighborhood. Here the master made his bloodless hands circle one round the other, and let them fall clenched upon Pelle’s back. “That,” he said, in a superior tone, “is what they call boxing. Brother Martin can cripple a man with one blow. He is paid for it, the devil!” The master shuddered. His brother had on several occasions offered to send him his steamer-ticket, but there was that damned leg. “Tell me what I should do over there, eh, Pelle?”

Pelle had to bring books from the lending library every day, and he soon learned which writers were the most exciting. He also attempted to read himself, but he could not get on with it; it was more amusing to stand about by the skating-pond and freeze and watch the others gliding over the ice. But he got Morten to tell him of exciting books, and these he brought home for the master; such was the “Flying Dutchman.” “That’s a work of poetry, Lord alive!” said the master, and he related its contents to Bjerregrav, who took them all for reality.

“You should have played some part in the great world, Andres—I for my part do best to stay at home here. But you could have managed it—I’m sure of it.”

“The great world!” said the master scornfully. No, he didn’t take much stock in the world—it wasn’t big enough. “If I were to travel, I should like to look for the way into the interior of the earth— they say there’s a way into it in Iceland. Or it would be glorious to make a voyage to the moon; but that will always be just a story.”

At the beginning of the new year the crazy Anker came to the young master and dictated a love-letter to the eldest daughter of the king. “This year he will surely answer,” he said thoughtfully. “Time is passing, and fortune disappears, and there are few that have their share of it; we need the new time very badly.”

“Yes, we certainly do,” said Master Andres. “But if such a misfortune should happen that the king should refuse, why, you are man enough to manage the matter yourself, Anker!”

It was a slack season, and, just as it was at its very worst, shoemaker Bohn returned and opened a shop on the marketplace. He had spent a year on the mainland and had learned all sorts of modern humbug. There was only one pair of boots in his window, and those were his own Sunday boots. Every Monday they were put out and exhibited again, so that there should be something to look at.

If he himself was in the shop, talking to the people, his wife would sit in the living-room behind and hammer on a boot, so that it sounded as though there were men in the workshop.

But at Shrovetide Jeppe received some orders. Master Andres came home quite cheerfully one day from Bjerhansen's cellar; there he had made the acquaintance of some of the actors of a troupe which had just arrived. "They are fellows, too!" he said, stroking his cheeks. "They travel continually from one place to another and give performances—they get to see the world!" He could not sit quiet.

The next morning they came rioting into the workshop, filling the place with their deafening gabble. "Soles and heels!" "Heels that won't come off!" "A bit of heel-work and two on the snout!" So they went on, bringing great armfuls of boots from under their cloaks, or fishing them out of bottomless pockets, and throwing them in heaps on the window-bench, each with his droll remarks. Boots and shoes they called "understandings"; they turned and twisted every word, tossing it like a ball from mouth to mouth, until not a trace of sense was left in it.

The apprentices forgot everything, and could scarcely contain themselves for laughing, and the young master overflowed with wit— he was equal to the best of them. Now one saw that he really might have luck with the women: there was no boasting or lying about it. The young actress with the hair like the lightest flax could not keep her eyes off him, although she evidently had all the others at her petticoat-tails; she made signs to her companions that they should admire the master's splendid big mustache. The master had forgotten his lame leg and thrown his stick away; he was on his knees, taking the actress's measure for a pair of high boots with patent tops and concertina-like folds in the legs. She had a hole in the heel of her stocking, but she only laughed over it; one of the actors cried "Poached egg!" and then they laughed uproariously.

Old Jeppe came tumbling into the room, attracted by the merriment. The blonde lady called him "Grandfather," and wanted to dance with him, and Jeppe forgot his dignity and laughed with the rest. "Yes, it's to us they come when they want to have something good," he said proudly. "And I learned my trade in Copenhagen, and I used to carry boots and shoes to more than one play-actor there. We had to work for the whole theater; Jungfer Patges, who became so famous later on, got her first dancing shoes from us."

"Yes, those are the fellows!" said Master Andres, as at last they bustled out; "devil take me, but those are the chaps!" Jeppe could not in the least understand how they had found their way thither, and Master Andres did not explain that he had been to the tavern. "Perhaps Jungfer Patges sent them to me," he said, gazing into the distance. "She must somehow have kept me in mind."

Free tickets poured in on them; the young master was in the theater every evening. Pelle received a gallery ticket every time he went round with a pair of boots. He was to say nothing—but the price was plainly marked on the sole with chalk.

"Did you get the money?" the master would ask eagerly; he used to stand on the stairs all the time, waiting. No, Pelle was to present their very best wishes, and to say they would come round and settle up themselves.

"Well, well, people of that sort are safe enough," said the master.

One day Lasse came stamping into the workshop and into the midst of them all, looking the picture of a big farmer, with his fur collar drawn round his ears. He had a sack of potatoes outside; it was a present to Pelle's employers, because Pelle was learning his trade so well. Pelle was given leave and went out with his father; and he kept looking furtively at the fur collar. At last he could contain himself no longer, but turned it up inquiringly. Disillusioned, he let it fall again.

"Ah, yes—er—well—that's just tacked on to my driving-cloak. It looks well, and it keeps my ears nice and warm. You thought I'd blossomed out into a proper fur coat? No, it won't run to that just yet—but it will soon. And I could name you more than one big farmer who has nothing better than this."

Yes, Pelle was just a trifle disappointed. But he must admit that there

was no difference to be perceived between this cloak and the real bear-skin. “Are things going on all right?” he asked.

“Oh, yes; at present I am breaking stone. I’ve got to break twenty cords if I’m to pay everybody what’s owing to him by the Devil’s birthday.[2] So long as we keep our health and strength, Karna and I.”

[2] The 11th December—the general pay-day and hiring-day.—TR.

They drove to the merchant’s and put up the horses. Pelle noticed that the people at the merchant’s did not rush forward to Lasse quite so eagerly as they did to the real farmers; but Lasse himself behaved in quite an important manner. He stumped right into the merchant’s counting-house, just like the rest, filled his pipe at the barrel, and helped himself to a drink of brandy. A cold breath of air hung about him as he went backward and forward from the cart with buttoned-up cloak, and he stamped as loudly on the sharp cobble-stones as though his boot-soles too were made of stone.

Then they went on to Due’s cottage; Lasse was anxious to see how matters were prospering there. “It isn’t always easy when one of the parties brings a love-child into the business.”

Pelle explained to him how matters stood. “Tell them at Uncle Kalle’s that they must take little Maria back again. Anna ill-treats her. They are getting on well in other ways; now they want to buy a wagon and horses and set up as carriers.”

“Do they? Well, it’s easy for those to get on who haven’t any heart.” Lasse sighed.

“Look, father,” said Pelle suddenly, “there’s a theater here now, and I know all the players. I take them their boots, and they give me a ticket every evening. I’ve seen the whole thing.”

“But, of course, that’s all lies, eh?” Lasse had to pull up, in order to scrutinize Pelle’s face. “So you’ve been in a proper theater, eh? Well, those who live in the town have got the devil to thank for it if they are cleverer than a peasant. One can have everything here!”

“Will you go with me to-night? I can get the tickets.”

Lasse was uneasy. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to go; but the whole thing was so unaccustomed. However, it was arranged that he should sleep the night at Due’s, and in the evening they both went to the theater.

“Is it here?” asked Lasse, astounded. They had come to a great building like a barn, before which a number of people were standing. But it was fine inside. They sat right up at the top, at the back, where the seats were arranged like the side of a hill, and they had a view over the whole theater. Down below, right in front, sat some ladies who, so far as Lasse could see, were naked. “I suppose those are the performers?” he inquired.

Pelle laughed. “No, those are the grandest ladies in the town—the doctor’s wife, the burgomaster’s lady, and the inspector’s wife, and such like.”

“What, they are so grand that they haven’t enough clothes to wear!” cried Lasse. “With us we call that poverty! But where are the players, then?”

“They are the other side of the curtain.”

“Then have they begun already?”

“No, you can see they haven’t—the curtain has to go up first.”

There was a hole in the curtain, and a finger came through it, and began to turn from side to side, pointing at the spectators. Lasse laughed. “That’s devilish funny!” he cried, slapping his thighs, as the finger continued to point.

“It hasn’t begun yet,” said Pelle.

“Is that so?” This damped Lasse’s spirits a little.

But then the big crown-light began suddenly to run up through a hole in the ceiling; up in the loft some boys were kneeling round the hole, and as the light came up they blew out the lamps. Then the curtain went up, and there was a great brightly-lit hall, in which a number of pretty young girls were moving about, dressed in the most wonderful costumes—and they were speaking! Lasse was quite astonished to find that he could understand what they said; the whole thing seemed so strange and foreign to him; it was like a peep into dreamland. But there was one maiden who sat there all alone at her spinning wheel, and she was the fairest of them all.

“That’s surely a fine lady?” asked Lasse.

But Pelle whispered that she was only a poor forest maiden, whom the lord of the castle had robbed, and now he wanted to force her to be his sweetheart. All the others were making a tremendous lot of her, combing her golden hair and kneeling before her; but she only looked unhappier than before. And sometimes her sadness was more than she could bear; then she opened her beautiful mouth and her wounded heart bled in song, which affected Lasse so that he had to fetch a long sighing breath.

Then a tall man with a huge red beard came stamping into the hall. Lasse saw that he was dressed like a man who has been keeping Carnival.

"That's the one we made the fine boots for," whispered Pelle: "the lord of the castle, who wants to seduce her."

"An ugly devil he looks too!" said Lasse, and spat. "The master at Stone Farm is a child of God compared with him!" Pelle signed to him to be quiet.

The lord of the castle drove all the other women away, and then began to tramp stormily to and fro, eyeing the forest maiden and showing the whites of his eyes. "Well, have you at last decided?" he roared, and snorted like a mad bull. And suddenly he sprang at her as if to take her by force.

"Ha! Touch me not!" she cried, "or by the living God, I will plunge this dagger into my heart! You believe you can buy my innocence because I am poor, but the honor of the poor is not to be bought with gold!"

"That's a true word!" said Lasse loudly.

But the lord of the castle gave a malicious laugh, and tugged at his red beard. He rolled his r's dreadfully.

"Is my offer not enough for you? Come, stay this night with me and you shall receive a farm with ten head of cattle, so that to-morrow you can stand at the altar with your huntsman!"

"Hold your tongue, you whoremonger!" said Lasse angrily.

Those round about him tried to calm him; one or another nudged him in the ribs. "Well, can't a man speak any longer?" Lasse turned crossly to Pelle. "I'm no clergyman, but if the girl doesn't want to, let him leave her alone; at any rate he shan't slake his lust publicly in the presence of hundreds of people with impunity! A swine like that!" Lasse was speaking loudly, and it seemed as though his words had had their effect on the lord of the castle. He stood there awhile staring in front of him, and then called a man, and bade him lead the maiden back to the forest.

Lasse breathed easily again as the curtain fell and the boys overhead by the hole in the ceiling relit the lamps and let them down again. "So far she's got out of it all right," he told Pelle, "but I don't trust the lord—he's a scoundrel!" He was perspiring freely, and did not look entirely satisfied.

The next scene which was conjured up on the stage was a forest. It was wonderfully fine, with pelargoniums blooming on the ground, and a spring which was flowing out of something green. "That is a covered beer-barrel!" said Pelle, and now Lasse too could see the tap, but it was wonderfully natural. Right in the background one could see the lord's castle on a cliff, and in the foreground lay a fallen tree-trunk; two green-clad huntsmen sat astride of it, concocting their evil schemes. Lasse nodded—he knew something of the wickedness of the world.

Now they heard a sound, and crouched down behind the tree-trunk, each with a knife in his hand. For a moment all was silent; then came the forest maiden and her huntsman, wandering all unawares down the forest path. By the spring they took a clinging and affectionate farewell; then the man came forward, hurrying to his certain death.

This was too much. Lasse stood up. "Look out!" he cried in a choking voice: "look out!" Those behind him pulled his coat and scolded him. "No, devil take you all, I won't hold my tongue!" he cried, and laid about him. And then he leaned forward again: "Look where you're going, d'you hear! Your life is at stake! They're hiding behind the fallen tree!"

The huntsman stood where he was and stared up, and the two assassins had risen to their feet and were staring, and the actors and actresses came through from the wings and gazed upward over the auditorium. Lasse saw that the man was saved, but now he had to suffer for his services; the manager wanted to throw him out. "I can perfectly well go by myself," he said. "An honorable man is one too many in this company!" In the street below he talked aloud to himself; he was in a blazing temper.

"It was only a play," said Pelle dejectedly. In his heart he was ashamed of his father.

“You needn’t try to teach me about that! I know very well that it all happened long ago and that I can do nothing to alter it, not if I was to stand on my head. But that such low doings should be brought to life again! If the others had felt as I did we should have taken the lord and thrashed him to death, even if it did come a hundred years too late!”

“Why—but that was Actor West, who comes to our workshop every day.”

“Is that so? Actor West, eh? Then you are Actor Codfish, to let yourself be imposed on like that! I have met people before now who had the gift of falling asleep and conjuring up long dead people in their place—but not so real as here, you understand. If you had been behind the curtain you would have seen West lying there like dead, while he, the other one —the Devil—was carrying on and ordering everybody about. It’s a gift I’d rather not have; a dangerous game! If the others forget the word of command that brings him back into the body it would be all up with him, and the other would take his place.”

“But that is all superstition! When I know it’s West in a play—why, I recognized him at once!”

“Oh, of course! You are always the cleverer! You’d like a dispute with the devil himself every day! So it was only a show? When he was rolling the whites of his eyes in his frantic lust! You believe me—if she hadn’t had that knife he would have fallen on her and satisfied his desire in front of everybody! Because if you conjure up long bygone times the action has to have its way, however many there are to see. But that they should do it for money—for money —ugh! And now I’m going home!” Lasse would say nothing more, but had the horses harnessed.

“You had best not go there again,” he said at parting. “But if it has got hold of you already, at least put a knife in your pocket. Yes, and we’ll send you your washing by Butcher Jensen, one Saturday, soon.”

Pelle went to the theater as before; he had a shrewd idea that it was only a play, but there *was* something mysterious about it; people must have a supernatural gift who evening after evening could so entirely alter their appearance and so completely enter into the people they represented. Pelle thought he would like to become an actor if he could only climb high enough.

The players created a considerable excitement when they strolled through the streets with their napping clothes and queer head-gear; people ran to their windows to see them, the old folk peeping over their shoulders. The town was as though transformed as long as they were in it.

Every mind had taken a perverse direction. The girls cried out in their sleep and dreamed of abductions; they even left their windows a little open; and every young fellow was ready to run away with the players. Those who were not theater-mad attended religious meetings in order to combat the evil.

And one day the players disappeared—as they had come—and left a cloud of debts behind them. “Devil’s trash!” said the master with his despondent expression. “They’ve tricked us! But, all the same, they were fine fellows in their way, and they had seen the world!”

But after these happenings he could by no means get warm again. He crawled into bed and spent the best part of the month lying there.

XII

It can be very cozy on those winter evenings when everybody sits at home in the workshop and passes the time by doing nothing, because it is so dark and cold out of doors, and one has nowhere to go to. To stand about by the skating-ponds and to look on, frozen, while others go swinging past—well, Pelle has had enough of it; and as for strolling up the street toward the north, and then turning about and returning toward the south, and turning yet again, up and down the selfsame street—well, there is nothing in it unless one has good warm clothes and a girl whose waist one can hold. And Morten too is no fresh-air disciple; he is freezing, and wants to sit in the warmth.

So they slink into the workshop as soon as it begins to grow dark, and they take out the key and hang it on the nail in the entry, in order to deceive Jeppe, and then they secretly make a fire in the stove, placing a screen in front of it, so that Jeppe shall not see the light from it when he makes his rounds past the workshop windows. They crouch together on the ledge at the bottom of the stove, each with an arm round the other's shoulder, and Morten tells Pelle about the books he has read.

"Why do you do nothing but read those stupid books?" asks Pelle, when he has listened for a time.

"Because I want to know something about life and about the world," answers Morten, out of the darkness.

"Of the world?" says Pelle, in a contemptuous tone. "I want to go out into the world and see things—what's in the books is only lies. But go on."

And Morten goes on, good-natured as always. And in the midst of his narrative something suddenly occurs to him, and he pulls a paper packet from his breast-pocket: "That's chocolate from Bodil," he says, and breaks the stick in two.

"Where had she put it?" asks Pelle.

"Under the sheet—I felt something hard under my back when I lay down."

The boys laugh, while they nibble at the chocolate. Suddenly Pelle says: "Bodil, she's a child-seducer! She enticed Hans Peter away from Stone Farm—and he was only fifteen!"

Morten does not reply; but after a time his head sinks on Pelle's shoulder—his body is twitching.

"Well, you are seventeen," says Pelle, consoling. "But it's silly all the same; she might well be your mother—apart from her age." And they both laugh.

It can be still cozier on work-day evenings. Then the fire is burning openly in the stove, even after eight o'clock, and the lamp is shining, and Morten is there again. People come from all directions and look in for a moment's visit, and the cold, an impediment to everything else, awakens all sorts of notable reminiscences. It is as though the world itself comes creeping into the workshop. Jeppe conjures up his apprentice years in the capital, and tells of the great bankruptcy; he goes right back to the beginning of the century, to a wonderful old capital where the old people wore wigs, and the rope's-end was always at hand and the apprentices just kept body and soul together, begging on Sundays before the doors of the townsfolk. Ah, those were times! And he comes home and wants to settle down as master, but the guild won't accept him; he is too young. So he goes to sea as cook, and comes to places down south where the sun burns so fiercely that the pitch melts in the seams and the deck scorches one's feet. They are a merry band, and Jeppe, little as he is, by no means lags behind the rest. In Malaga they storm a tavern, throw all the Spaniards out of the window, and sport with the girls—until the whole town falls upon them and they have to fly to their boat. Jeppe cannot keep up with them, and the boat shoves off, so that he has to jump into the water and swim for it. Knives fall splashing about him in the water, and one sticks shivering in his shoulder-blades. When Jeppe comes to this he always begins to strip his back to show the scar, and Master Andres holds him back. Pelle and Morten have heard the story many a time, but they are willing always to hear it again.

And Baker Jörgen, who for the greater part of his life has been a seaman on the big vessels sailing the northern and southern oceans, talks about capstans and icebergs and beautiful black women from the West Indies. He sets the capstan turning, so that the great three-master makes sail out of the Havana roadstead, and all his hearers feel their hearts grow light.

“Heave ho, the capstan,
Waltz her well along!
Leave the girl a-weeping,
Strike up the song!”

So they walk round and round, twelve men with their breasts pressed against the heavy capstan-bars; the anchor is weighed, and the sail fills with the wind—and behind and through his words gleam the features of a sweetheart in every port. Bjerregrav cannot help crossing himself—he who has never accomplished anything, except to feel for the poor; but in the young master’s eyes everybody travels—round and round the world, round and round the world. And Wooden-leg Larsen, who in winter is quite the well-to-do pensioner, in blue pilot-coat and fur cap, leaves his pretty, solidly-built cottage when the Spring comes, and sallies forth into the world as a poor organ-grinder—he tells them of the Zoological Gardens on the hill, and the adventurous Holm-Street, and of extraordinary beings who live upon the dustbins in the back-yards of the capital.

But Pelle’s body creaks whenever he moves; his bones are growing and seeking to stretch themselves; he feels growth and restlessness in every part and corner of his being. He is the first to whom the Spring comes; one day it announces itself in him in the form of a curiosity as to what his appearance is like. Pelle has never asked himself this question before; and the scrap of looking-glass which he begged from the glazier from whom he fetches the glass scrapers tells him nothing truly. He has at bottom a feeling that he is an impossible person.

He begins to give heed to the opinions of others respecting his outward appearance; now and again a girl looks after him, and his cheeks are no longer so fat that people can chaff him about them. His fair hair is wavy; the lucky curl on his forehead is still visible as an obstinate little streak; but his ears are still terribly big, and it is of no use to pull his cap over them, in order to press them close to his head. But he is tall and well-grown for his age, and the air of the workshop has been powerless to spoil his ruddy complexion; and he is afraid of nothing in the world— particularly when he is angry. He thinks out a hundred different kinds of exercise in order to satisfy the demands of his body, but it is of no use. If he only bends over his hammer-work he feels it in every joint of his body.

And then one day the ice breaks and goes out to sea. Ships are fitted out again, and provisioned, and follow the ice, and the people of the town awake to the idea of a new life, and begin to think of green woods and summer clothing.

And one day the fishing-boats arrive! They come gliding across from Hellavik and Nogesund on the Swedish coast. They cut swiftly through the water, heeling far over under their queer lateen sails, like hungry sea-birds that sweep the waves with one wing-tip in their search for booty. A mile to seaward the fishermen of the town receive them with gunshots; they have no permission to anchor in the fishing port, but have to rent moorings for themselves in the old ship’s harbor, and to spread out the gear to dry toward the north. The craftsmen of the town come flocking down to the harbor, discussing the foreign thieves who have come from a poorer country in order to take the bread out of the mouths of the townsfolk; for they are inured to all weathers, and full of courage, and are successful in their fishing. They say the same things every Spring, but when they want to buy herrings they deal with the Swedes, who sell more cheaply than the Bornholmers. “Perhaps our fishermen wear leather boots?” inquires Jeppe. “No, they wear wooden shoes week-days and Sunday alike. Let the wooden-shoe makers deal with them—I buy where the fish is cheapest!”

It is as though the Spring in person has arrived with these thin, sinewy figures, who go singing through the streets, challenging the petty envy of the town. There are women, too, on every boat, to mend and clean the gear, and they pass the workshop in crowds, searching for their old lodgings in the poor part of the town near the “Great Power’s” home. Pelle’s heart leaps at the sight of these young women, with pretty slippers on their feet, black shawls round their oval faces, and many fine colors in their dress. His mind is full of shadowy memories of his childhood, which have lain as quiet as though they were indeed extinguished; vague traditions of a time that he has experienced but can no longer remember; it is like a warm breath of air from another and unknown existence.

If it happens that one or another of these girls has a little child on her arm, then the town has something to talk about. Is it Merchant Lund again, as it was last year? Lund, who since then had been known only as

“the Herring Merchant”? Or is it some sixteen- year-old apprentice, a scandal to his pastor and schoolmaster, whose hands he has only just left?

Then Jens goes forth with his concertina, and Pelle makes haste with his tidying up, and he and Morten hurry up to Gallows Hill, hand-in-hand, for Morten finds it difficult to run so quickly. All that the town possesses of reckless youth is there; but the Swedish girls take the lead. They dance and whirl until their slippers fly off, and little battles are fought over them. But on Saturdays the boats do not go to sea; then the men turn up, with smouldering brows, and claim their women, and then there is great slaughter.

Pelle enters into it all eagerly; here he finds an opportunity of that exercise of which his handicraft deprives his body. He hungers for heroic deeds, and presses so close to the fighters that now and again he gets a blow himself. He dances with Morten, and plucks up courage to ask one of the girls to dance with him; he is shy, and dances like a leaping kid in order to banish his shyness; and in the midst of the dance he takes to his heels and leaves the girl standing there. “Damned silly!” say the onlookers, and he hears them laughing behind him. He has a peculiar manner of entering into all this recklessness which lets the body claim its due without thought for the following day and the following year. If some man-hunting young woman tries to capture his youth he lashes out behind, and with a few wanton leaps he is off and away. But he loves to join in the singing when the men and women go homeward with closely-twined arms, and he and Morten follow them, they too with their arms about each other. Then the moon builds her bridge of light across the sea, and in the pinewood, where a white mist lies over the tree-tops, a song rises from every path, heard as a lulling music in the haunts of the wandering couples; insistently melancholy in its meaning, but issuing from the lightest hearts. It is just the kind of song to express their happiness.

> “Put up, put up thy golden hair;
> A son thou’lt have before a year—
> No help in thy clamor and crying!
> In forty weeks may’st look for me.
> I come to ask how it fares with thee.
> The forty weeks were left behind.
> And sad she was and sick of mind,
> And fell to her clamor and crying—”

And the song continues as they go through the town, couple after couple, wandering as they list. The quiet winding closes ring with songs of love and death, so that the old townsfolk lift their heads from their pillows, and, their nightcaps pushed to one side, wag gravely at all this frivolity. But youth knows nothing of this; it plunges reveling onward, with its surging blood. And one day the old people have the best of it; the blood surges no longer, but there they are, and there are the consequences, and the consequences demand paternity and maintenance. “Didn’t we say so?” cry the old folk; but the young ones hang their heads, and foresee a long, crippled existence, with a hasty marriage or continual payments to a strange woman, while all through their lives a shadow of degradation and ridicule clings to them; both their wives and their company must be taken from beneath them. They talk no longer of going out into the world and making their way; they used to strut arrogantly before the old folk and demand free play for their youth, but now they go meekly in harness with hanging heads, and blink shamefacedly at the mention of their one heroic deed. And those who cannot endure their fate must leave the country secretly and by night, or swear themselves free.

The young master has his own way of enjoying himself. He takes no part in the chase after the girls; but when the sunlight is really warm, he sits before the workshop window and lets it warm his back. “Ah, that’s glorious!” he says, shaking himself. Pelle has to feel his fur jacket to see how powerful the sun is. “Thank God, now we have the spring here!”

Inside the workshop they whistle and sing to the hammer-strokes; there are times when the dark room sounds like a bird-shop. “Thank God, now we have the spring!” says Master Andres over and over again, “but the messenger of spring doesn’t seem to be coming this year.”

“Perhaps he is dead,” says little Nikas.

“Garibaldi dead? Good Lord! he won’t die just yet. All the years I can remember he has looked just as he does now and has drunk just as hard. Lord of my body! but how he has boozed in his time, the rascal! But you won’t find his equal as a shoemaker all the world over.”

One morning, soon after the arrival of the steamer, a thin, tall, sharp-shouldered man comes ducking through the workshop door. His hands and face are blue with the cold of the morning and his cheeks are rather baggy, but in his eyes burns an undying fire. “Morning, comrades!” he says, with a genial wave of the hand. “Well, how’s life treating us? Master well?” He dances into the workshop, his hat pressed flat under his left arm. His coat and trousers flap against his body, revealing the fact that he is wearing nothing beneath them; his feet are thrust bare into his shoes, and he wears a thick kerchief round his neck. But such a manner and a carriage in a craftsman Pelle has never seen in all his days; and Garibaldi’s voice alone is like a bell.

“Now, my son,” he says, and strikes Pelle lightly on the shoulder, “can you fetch me something to drink? Just a little, now at once, for I’m murderously thirsty. The master has credit! Pst! We’ll have the bottleful —then you needn’t go twice.”

Pelle runs. In half a minute he is back again. Garibaldi knows how to do things quickly; he has already tied his apron, and is on the point of passing his opinion on the work in the workshop. He takes the bottle from Pelle, throws it over his shoulder, catches it with the other hand, sets his thumb against the middle of the bottle, and drinks. Then he shows the bottle to the others. “Just to the thumbnail, eh?”

“I call that smart drinking!” says little Nikas.

“It can be done though the night is black as a crow;” Garibaldi waves his hand in a superior manner. “And old Jeppe is alive still? A smart fellow!”

Master Andres strikes on the wall. “He has come in—he is there!” he says, with his wide-opened eyes. After a time he slips into his clothes and comes out into the workshop; he hangs about gossiping, but Garibaldi is sparing of his words; he is still rusty after the night voyage.

A certain feverishness has affected them all; an anxiety lest anything should escape them. No one regards his daily work with aversion to-day; everybody exerts his capacities to the utmost. Garibaldi comes from the great world, and the spirit of adventure and the wandering life exhales from his flimsy clothes.

“If he’ll only begin to tell us about it,” whispers Pelle to Jens; he cannot sit still. They hang upon his lips, gazing at him; if he is silent it is the will of Providence. Even the master does not bother him, but endures his taciturnity and little Nikas submits to being treated like an apprentice.

Garibaldi raises his head. “Well, one didn’t come here to sit about and idle!” he cries gaily. “Plenty to do, master?”

“There’s not much doing here, but we’ve always work for you,” replies Master Andres. “Besides, we’ve had an order for a pair of wedding-shoes, white satin with yellow stitching; but we haven’t properly tackled it.” He gives little Nikas a meaning glance.

“No yellow stitching with white satin, master; white silk, of course, and white edges.”

“Is that the Paris fashion?” asks Master Andres eagerly. Garibaldi shrugs his shoulders. “Don’t let us speak of Paris, Master Andres; here we have neither the leather nor the tools to make Parisian shoes; and we haven’t the legs to put into them, either.”

“The deuce! Are they so fashionable?”

“Fashionable! I should say so! I can hold the foot of a well-grown Parisian woman in the hollow of my hand. And when they walk they don’t touch the pavement! You could make shoes for a Parisian girl out of whipped cream, and they’d hold together! If you were to fit her with a pair of ordinary woman’s beetle-crushers she’d jump straight into the sewer!”

“Well, I’m damned!” The master is hastily cutting some leather to shape. “The devil she would!”

Never did any one make himself at home more easily; Garibaldi draws a seat up to the table and is at once in full swing. No rummaging about after tools; his hand finds his way to the exact spot where the thing required lies, as though an invisible track lay between them. These hands do everything of themselves, quietly, with gentle movements, while the eyes are elsewhere; gazing out into the garden, or examining the young master, or the work of the apprentices. To Pelle and the others, who always have to look at everything from every side in turn, this is absolutely marvelous. And before they have had time to look round Garibaldi has put everything in order, and is sitting there working and looking across the room at the master, who is himself sewing to-day.

And then Jeppe comes tumbling in, annoyed that no one has told him of

Garibaldi's arrival. "'Day, master—'day, craft-master!" says Garibaldi, who stands up and bows.

"Yes," says Jeppe self-consciously, "if there were craft-masters still, I should be one. But manual work is in a wretched case to-day; there's no respect for it, and where shall a man look for respect if he doesn't respect himself?"

"That's meant for the young master, eh?" says Garibaldi laughing. "But times have altered, Master Jeppe; knee-straps and respect have given out; yes, those days are over! Begin at seven, and at six off and away! So it is in the big cities!"

"Is that this sosherlism?" says Jeppe disdainfully.

"It's all the same to me what it is—Garibaldi begins and leaves off when it pleases him! And if he wants more for his work he asks for it! And if that doesn't please them—then adieu, master, adieu! There are slaves enough, said the boy, when he got no bread."

The others did not get very much done; they have enough to do to watch Garibaldi's manner of working. He has emptied the bottle, and now his tongue is oiled; the young master questions him, and Garibaldi talks and talks, with continual gestures. Not for a moment do his hands persist at their work; and yet the work progresses so quickly it is a revelation to watch it; it is as though it were proceeding of itself. His attention is directed upon their work, and he always interferes at the right moment; he criticizes their way of holding their tools, and works out the various fashions of cut which lend beauty to the heel and sole. It is as though he feels it when they do anything wrongly; his spirit pervades the whole workshop. "That's how one does it in Paris," he says, or "this is Nuremberg fashion." He speaks of Vienna and Greece in as matter-of-fact a way as though they lay yonder under Skipper Elleby's trees. In Athens he went to the castle to shake the king by the hand, for countrymen should always stand by one another in foreign parts.

"He was very nice, by the by; but he had had his breakfast already. And otherwise it's a damned bad country for traveling; there are no shoemakers there. No, there I recommend you Italy—there are shoemakers there, but no work; however, you can safely risk it and beg your way from place to place. They aren't like those industrious Germans; every time you ask them for a little present they come and say, 'Come in, please, there is some work you can do!' And it is so warm there a man can sleep on the bare ground. Wine flows in every gutter there, but otherwise it's no joke." Garibaldi raises the empty bottle high in the air and peeps wonderingly up at the shelves; the young master winks at Pelle, and the latter fetches another supply of drink at the gallop.

The hot blood is seething in Pelle's ears. He must go away, far away from here, and live the wandering life, like Garibaldi, who hid himself in the vineyards from the gendarmes, and stole the bacon from the chimneys while the people were in the fields. A spirit is working in him and the others; the spirit of their craft. They touch their tools and their material caressingly with their fingers; everything one handles has an inward color of its own; which tells one something. All the dustiness and familiarity of the workshop is swept away; the objects standing on the shelves glow with interest; the most tedious things contain a radiant life of their own.

The world rises before them like a cloudy wonder, traversed by endless highways deep in white dust, and Garibaldi treads them all. He has sold his journeyman's pass to a comrade for a slice of bread and butter, and is left without papers; German policemen give chase to him, and he creeps through the vineyards for fourteen days, on hands and knees, getting nothing for his pains but grapes and a shocking attack of summer cholera. Finally his clothes are so very much alive that he no longer needs to move of himself; he simply lies quiet, and lets himself be carried along until he comes to a little town. "An inn?" asks Garibaldi. Yes, there is an inn. There he tells a story to the effect that he has been robbed; and the good people put him to bed, and warm and dry his clothes. Garibaldi snores, and pushes the chair nearer the stove; snores, and pushes it a little further; and as his clothes burst into a blaze he starts up roaring and scolding and weeping, and is inconsolable. So then he is given fine new clothes and new papers, and is out on the road again, and the begging begins afresh; mountains rise and pass him by, and great cities too, cities with wide rivers. There are towns in which the wandering journeyman can get no money, but is forced to work; damnable places, and there are German hostels where one is treated like a prisoner; all clothes must be taken off in a long corridor, even to one's shirt; a handful of men examine them, and then everything is put safely away. Thirty or forty naked men are admitted, one after another, to the

great bare dormitory.

Paris—the name is like a bubble bursting in one's ear! There Garibaldi has worked for two years, and he has been there a score of times on passing visits. Paris is the glory of the whole world massed together, and all the convenient contrivances of the world brought to a state of perfection. Here in the town no respectable shoemaker will mend the dirty shoes of the "Top-galeass"; she goes about in down-trodden top-boots, or, if the snipping season has been poor, she wears wooden shoes. In Paris there are women who wear shoes at twenty guineas a pair, who carry themselves like queens, earn forty thousand pounds a year, and are yet nothing but prostitutes. Forty thousand! If another than Garibaldi had said it he would have had all the lasts thrown at his head!

Pelle does not hear what the master says to him, and Jens is in a great hurry for the cobbler's wax; he has cut the upper of the shoe he is soling. They are quite irresponsible; as though bewitched by this wonderful being, who goes on pouring brandy down his throat, and turning the accursed drink into a many-colored panorama of the whole world, and work that is like a miracle.

The news has soon spread, and people come hurrying in to see Garibaldi, and perhaps to venture to shake him by the hand; Klausen wants to borrow some pegs, and Marker, quite unabashed, looks in to borrow the biggest last. The old cobbler Drejer stands modestly in a corner and says "Yes, yes!" to the other's remarks. Garibaldi has reached him his hand, and now he can go home to his gloomy shop and his dirty stock and his old man's solitude. The genius of the craft has touched him, and for the rest of his days has shed a light upon his wretched work of patching and repairing; he has exchanged a handshake with the man who made the cork-soled boots for the Emperor of Germany himself when he went out to fight the French. And the crazy Anker is there too; but does not come in, as he is shy of strangers. He walks up and down the yard before the workshop window, and keeps on peeping in. Garibaldi points his finger to his forehead and nods, and Anker does the same; he is shaking with suppressed laughter, as over some excellent joke, and runs off like a child who must hide himself in a corner in order to savor his delight. Baker Jörgen is there, bending down with his hands on his thighs, and his mouth wide open. "Lor' Jiminy!" he cries from time to time; "did ever one hear the like!" He watches the white silk run through the sole and form itself into glistening pearls along the edge. Pearl after pearl appears; Garibaldi's arms fly about him, and presently he touches the baker on the hip. "Am I in the way?" asks old Jörgen. "No, God forbid—stay where you are!" And his arms fly out again, and the butt of the bodkin touches the baker with a little click. "I'm certainly in the way," says Jörgen, and moves a few inches. "Not in the least!" replies Garibaldi, stitching away. Then out fly his arms again, but this time the point of the bodkin is turned toward the baker. "Now, good Lord, I can see I'm in the way!" says Jörgen, rubbing himself behind. "Not at all!" replies Garibaldi courteously, with an inviting flourish of his hand. "Pray come nearer." "No, thank you! No, thank you!" Old Jörgen gives a forced laugh, and hobbles away.

Otherwise Garibaldi lets them come and stare and go as they like. It does not trouble him that he is an eminent and remarkable person; quite unperturbed, he puts the brandy-bottle to his lips and drinks just as long as he is thirsty. He sits there, playing thoughtlessly with knife and leather and silk, as though he had sat on the stool all his life, instead of having just fallen from the moon. And about the middle of the afternoon the incomparable result is completed; a pair of wonderful satin shoes, slender as a neat's tongue, dazzling in their white brilliance, as though they had just walked out of the fairy-tale and were waiting for the feet of the Princess.

"Look at them, damn it all!" says the master, and passes them to little Nikas, who passes them round the circle. Garibaldi throws back his close-cropped gray head.

"You need not say who has made them—everybody can see that. Suppose now the shoes go to Jutland and are worn there and are thrown on the rubbish-heap. One day, years hence, some porridge-eater goes ploughing; a scrap of the instep comes to the surface; and a wandering journeyman, who is sitting in the ditch nibbling at his supper, rakes it toward him with his stick. That bit of instep, he says, that, or the Devil may fry me else, was part of a shoe made by Garibaldi—deuce take me, he says, but that's what it was. And in that case the journeyman must be from Paris, or Nuremberg, or Hamburg—one or the other, that's certain. Or am I talking nonsense, master?"

No; Master Andres can asseverate this is no nonsense—he who from

childhood lived with Garibaldi on the highways and in great cities, who followed him so impetuously with that lame leg of his that he remembers Garibaldi's heroic feats better than Garibaldi himself. "But now you will stay here," he says persuasively. "Now we'll work up the business—we'll get all the fine work of the whole island." Garibaldi has nothing against this; he has had enough of toiling through the world.

Klausen will gladly make one of the company; in the eyes of all those present this proposal is a dream which will once more raise the craft to its proper level; will perhaps improve it until the little town can compete with Copenhagen. "How many medals have you really received?" says Jeppe, as he stands there with a great framed diploma in his hand. Garibaldi shrugs his shoulders. "I don't know, old master; one gets old, and one's hand gets unsteady. But what is this? Has Master Jeppe got the silver medal?"

Jeppe laughs. "For this I have to thank a tramp by the name of Garibaldi. He was here four years ago and won the silver medal for me!" Well—that is a thing Garibaldi has long forgotten! But medals are scattered about wherever he has been.

"Yes, there are a hundred masters knocking about who boast of their distinctions: first-class workshop—you can see it for yourself— 'a silver medal.' But who did the work? Who got his day's wages and an extra drop of drink and then—good-bye, Garibaldi! What has one to show for it, master? There are plenty of trees a man can change his clothes behind—but the shirt?" For a moment he seems dejected. "Lorrain in Paris gave me two hundred francs for the golden medal I won for him; but otherwise it was always—Look in my waistcoat pocket! or—I've an old pair of trousers for you, Garibaldi! But now there's an end to that, I tell you; Garibaldi has done with bringing water to the mill for the rich townsfolk; for now he's a sosherlist!" He strikes the table so that the glass scrapers jingle. "That last was Franz in Cologne—gent's boots with cork socks. He was a stingy fellow; he annoyed Garibaldi. I'm afraid this isn't enough for the medal, master, I said; there's too much unrest in the air. Then he bid me more and yet more—but it won't run to the medal—that's all I will say. At last he sends Madame to me with coffee and Vienna bread—and she was in other respects a lady, who drove with a lackey on the box. But we were furious by that time! Well, it was a glorious distinction—to please Madame."

"Had he many journeymen?" asks Jeppe.

"Oh, quite thirty or forty."

"Then he must have been somebody." Jeppe speaks in a reproving tone.

"Somebody—yes—he was a rascal! What did it matter to me that he had a lot of journeymen? I didn't cheat them out of their wages!"

Now Garibaldi is annoyed; he takes off his apron, puts his hat on sideways, and he goes into the town.

"Now he's going to look for a sweetheart!" says the young master; "he has a sweetheart in every town."

At eight he comes sailing into the workshop again. "What, still sitting here?" he says to the apprentices. "In other parts of the world they have knocked off work two hours ago. What sort of slaves are you to sit crouching here for fourteen hours? Strike, damn it all!"

They look at one another stupidly. "Strike—what is that?"

Then comes the young master. "Now it would do one good to warm one's eyes a bit," says Garibaldi.

"There's a bed made up for you in the cutting-out room," says the master. But Garibaldi rolls his coat under his head and lies down on the window-bench. "If I snore, just pull my nose," he says to Pelle, and goes to sleep. Next day he makes two pairs of kid boots with yellow stitching—for little Nikas this would be a three days' job. Master Andres has all his plans ready—Garibaldi is to be a partner. "We'll knock out a bit of wall and put in a big shop-window!" Garibaldi agrees—he really does for once feel a desire to settle down. "But we mustn't begin too big," he says: "this isn't Paris." He drinks a little more and does not talk much; his eyes stray to the wandering clouds outside.

On the third day Garibaldi begins to show his capacities. He does not do much more work, but he breaks a heavy stick in two with one blow as it flies through the air, and jumps over a stick which he holds in both hands. "One must have exercise," he says restlessly. He balances an awl on the face of a hammer and strikes it into a hole in the sole of a boot.

And suddenly he throws down his work. "Lend me ten kroner, master," he says; "I must go and buy myself a proper suit. Now I'm settled and a

partner in a business I can't go about looking like a pig."

"It will be better for you to get that finished," says the master quietly, pushing Garibaldi's work across to little Nikas. "We shan't see him again!"

This is really the case. He will go into the town with the honorable intentions, to buy something, and then he will be caught and whirled out into the great world, far away, quite at hazard. "He's on the way to Germany with some skipper already," says the master.

"But he hasn't even said good-bye!" The master shrugs his shoulders.

He was like a falling star! But for Pelle and the others he signified more than that; they learned more in three days than in the whole course of their apprenticeship. And they saw brilliant prospects for the craft; it was no hole-and-corner business after all; with Garibaldi, they traveled the whole wonderful world. Pelle's blood burned with the desire to wander; he knew now what he wanted. To be capable as Garibaldi—that genius personified; and to enter the great cities with stick and knapsack as though to a flourish of trumpets.

They all retained traces of his fleeting visit. Something inside them had broken with a snap; they gripped their tools more freely, more courageously; and they had seen their handicraft pass before their eyes like a species of technical pageant. For a long time the wind of the passage of the great bird hung about the little workshop with its atmosphere of respectable citizenship.

And this fresh wind in one's ears was the spirit of handicraft itself which hovered above their heads—borne upon its two mighty pinions—genius and debauchery.

But one thing remained in Pelle's mind as a meaningless fragment—the word "strike." What did it mean?

XIII

One could not be quite as cheerful and secure here as one could at home in the country; there was always a gnawing something in the background, which kept one from wholly surrendering oneself. Most people had wandered hither in search of fortune—poverty had destroyed their faculty of surrendering to fate; they were weary of waiting and had resolved to take matters into their own hands. And now here they were, sunk in wretchedness. They could not stir from the spot; they only labored and sunk deeper into the mire. But they continued to strive, with the strength of their bodies, until that gave way, and it was all over with them.

Pelle had often enough wondered to see how many poor people there were in the town. Why did not they go ahead with might and main until they were well off? They had all of them had intentions of that kind, but nothing came of them. Why? They themselves did not understand why, but bowed their heads as though under a curse. And if they raised them again it was only to seek that consolation of the poor—alcohol, or to attend the meetings of the home missions.

Pelle could not understand it either. He had an obscure sense of that joyous madness which arises from poverty itself, like a dim but wonderful dream of reaching the light. And he could not understand why it failed; and yet he must always follow that impetus upward which resided in him, and scramble up once more. Yet otherwise his knowledge was wide; a patched-up window-pane, or a scurfy child's head, marked an entrance to that underworld which he had known so well from birth, so that he could have found his way about it with bandaged eyes. He attached no particular importance to it, but in this direction his knowledge was continually extended; he "thee'd and thou'd" poor people from the first moment, and knew the mournful history of every cottage. And all he saw and heard was like a weary refrain—it spoke of the same eternally unalterable longing and the same defeats. He reflected no further about the matter, but it entered into his blood like an oppression, purged his mind of presumption, and vitiated his tense alertness. When he lay his head on his pillow and went to sleep the endless pulsing of his blood in his ears became the tramping of weary hordes who were for ever passing in their blind groping after the road which should lead to light and happiness. His consciousness did not grasp it, but it brooded oppressively over his days.

The middle-class society of the town was still, as far as he was concerned, a foreign world. Most of the townsfolk were as poor as church mice, but they concealed the fact skilfully, and seemed to have no other desire than to preserve appearances. "Money!" said Master Andres; "here there's only one ten-kroner note among all the employers in the town, and that goes from hand to hand. If it were to stop too long with one of them all the rest of us would stop payment!" The want of loose capital weighed on them oppressively, but they boasted of Shipowner Monsen's money—there were still rich people in the town! For the rest, each kept himself going by means of his own earnings; one had sent footwear to the West Indies, and another had made the bride-bed for the burgomaster's daughter; they maintained themselves as a caste and looked down with contempt upon the people.

Pelle himself had honestly and honorably intended to follow the same path; to keep smiles for those above him and harsh judgments for those below him; in short, like Alfred, to wriggle his way upward. But in the depths of his being his energies were working in another direction, and they continually thrust him back where he belonged. His conflict with the street-urchins stopped of itself, it was so aimless; Pelle went in and out of their houses, and the boys, so soon as they were confirmed, became his comrades.

The street boys sustained an implacable conflict with those who attended the town school and the grammar-school. They called them pigs, after the trough-like satchels which they carried on their backs. Pelle found himself between a double fire, although he accepted the disdain and the insult of those above him, as Lasse had taught him, as something that was inherent in the nature of things. "Some are born to command and some to obey," as Lasse said.

But one day he came to blows with one of them. And having thrashed the postmaster's son until not a clean spot was left on him, he discovered that he now had a crow to pluck with the sons of all the fine folks, or else they would hold him up to ridicule. It was as though something was redeemed at his hands when he managed to plant them in the face of one

of these lads, and there seemed to be a particular charm connected with the act of rolling their fine clothes in the mire. When he had thrashed a “pig” he was always in the rosiest of tempers, and he laughed to think how Father Lasse would have crossed himself!

One day he met three grammar-school students, who fell upon him then and there, beating him with their books; there was repayment in every blow. Pelle got his back against the wall, and defended himself with his belt, but could not manage the three of them; so he gave the biggest of them a terrific kick in the lower part of the body and took to his heels. The boy rolled on the ground and lay there shrieking; Pelle could see, from the other end of the street, how the other two were toiling to set him on his legs again. He himself had got off with a black eye.

“Have you been fighting again, you devil’s imp?” said the young master.

No! Pelle had fallen and bruised himself.

In the evening he went round the harbor to see the steamer go out and to say good-bye to Peter. He was in a bad temper; he was oppressed by a foreboding of evil.

The steamer was swarming with people. Over the rail hung a swarm of freshly-made journeymen of that year’s batch—the most courageous of them; the others had already gone into other trades, had become postmen or farm servants. “There is no employment for us in the shoe trade,” they said dejectedly as they sank. As soon as their journeyman’s test-work was done they took to their heels, and new apprentices were taken all along the line. But these fellows here were crossing to the capital; they wanted to go on working at their own trade. The hundreds of apprentices of the little town were there, shouting “Hurrah!” every other moment, for those departing were the heroes who were going forth to conquer the land of promise for them all. “We are coming after you!” they cried. “Find me a place, you! Find me a place!”

Emil stood by the harbor shed, with some waterside workers, looking on. His time was long ago over. The eldest apprentice had not had the pluck to leave the island; he was now a postman in Sudland and cobbled shoes at night in order to live. Now Peter stood on the deck above, while Jens and Pelle stood below and looked up at him admiringly. “Good-bye, Pelle!” he cried. “Give Jeppe my best respects and tell him he can kiss my bootsoles!”

Some of the masters were strolling to and fro on the quay, in order to note that none of their apprentices were absconding from the town.

Jens foresaw the time when he himself would stand there penniless. “Send me your address,” he said, “and find me something over there.”

“And me too,” said Pelle.

Peter spat. “There’s a bit of sour cabbage soup—take it home and give it to Jeppe with my love and I wish him good appetite! But give my very best respects to Master Andres. And when I write, then come over—there’s nothing to be done in this hole.”

“Don’t let the Social Democrats eat you up!” cried some one from among the spectators. The words “Social Democrat” were at this time in every mouth, although no one knew what they meant; they were used as terms of abuse.

“If they come to me with their damned rot they’ll get one on the mouth!” said Peter, disdainfully. And then the steamer began to move; the last cheers were given from the outer breakwater. Pelle could have thrown himself into the sea; he was burning with desire to turn his back on it all. And then he let himself drift with the crowd from the harbor to the circus-ground. On the way he heard a few words of a conversation which made his ears burn. Two townsmen were walking ahead of him and were talking.

“They say he got such a kick that he brought up blood,” said the one.

“Yes, it’s terrible, the way that scum behaves! I hope they’ll arrest the ruffian.”

Pelle crept along behind the tent until he came to the opening. There he stood every evening, drinking everything in by his sense of smell. He had no money to pay his way in; but he could catch a glimpse of a whole host of magnificent things when the curtain was drawn up in order to admit a late-comer. Albinus came and went at will—as always, when jugglers were in the town. He was acquainted with them almost before he had seen them. When he had seen some clever feat of strength or skill he would come crawling out from under the canvas in order to show his companions that he could do the same thing. Then he was absolutely in

his element; he would walk on his hands along the harbor railings and let his body hang over the water.

Pelle wanted to go home and sleep on the day's doings, but a happy pair came up to him—a woman who was dancing as she walked, and a timid young workman, whom she held firmly by the arm. "Here, Hans!" she said, "this is Pelle, whose doing it is that we two belong to each other!"

Then she laughed aloud for sheer delight, and Hans, smiling, held out his hand to Pelle. "I ought to thank you for it," he said.

"Yes, it was that dance," she said. "If my dancing-shoes hadn't been mended Hans would have run off with somebody else!" She seized Pelle's arm. And then they went on, very much pleased with one another, and Pelle's old merriment returned for a time. He too could perform all sorts of feats of strength.

On the following day Pelle was hired by Baker Jörgensen to knead some dough; the baker had received, at short notice, a large order for ship's biscuit for the *Three Sisters*.

"Keep moving properly!" he would cry every moment to the two boys, who had pulled off their stockings and were now standing up in the great kneading-trough, stamping away, with their hands gripping the battens which were firmly nailed to the rafters. The wooden ceiling between the rafters was black and greasy; a slimy paste of dust and dough and condensed vapor was running down the walls. When the boys hung too heavily on the battens the baker would cry: "Use your whole weight! Down into the dough with you—then you'll get a foot like a fine young lady!"

Sören was pottering about alone, with hanging head as always; now and again he sighed. Then old Jörgen would nudge Marie in the side, and they would both laugh. They stood close together, and as they were rolling out the dough their hands kept on meeting; they laughed and jested together. But the young man saw nothing of this.

"Don't you see?" whispered his mother, striking him sharply in the ribs; her angry eyes were constantly fixed on the pair.

"Oh, leave me alone!" the son would say, moving a little away from her. But she moved after him. "Go and put your arm round her waist—that's what she wants! Let her feel your hands on her hips! Why do you suppose she sticks out her bosom like that? Let her feel your hands on her hips! Push the old man aside!"

"Oh, leave me alone!" replied Sören, and he moved further away from her again.

"You are tempting your father to sin—you know what he is! And she can't properly control herself any longer, now that she claims to have a word in the matter. Are you going to put up with that? Go and take her round the waist—strike her if you can't put up with her, but make her feel that you're a man!"

"Well, are you working up there?" old Jörgen cried to the boys, turning his laughing countenance from Marie. "Tread away! The dough will draw all the rottenness out of your bodies! And you, Sören—get a move on you!"

"Yes, get a move on—don't stand there like an idiot!" continued his mother.

"Oh, leave me alone! I've done nothing to anybody; leave me in peace!"

"Pah!" The old woman spat at him. "Are you a man? Letting another handle your wife! There she is, obliged to take up with a gouty old man like that! Pah, I say! But perhaps you are a woman after all? I did once bring a girl into the world, only I always thought she was dead. But perhaps you are she? Yes, make long ears at me!" she cried to the two boys, "you've never seen anything like what's going on here! There's a son for you, who leaves his father to do all the work by himself!"

"Now then, what's the matter with you?" cried old Jörgen jollily. "Is mother turning the boys' heads?" Marie broke into a loud laugh.

Jeppe came to fetch Pelle. "Now you'll go to the Town Hall and get a thrashing," he said, as they entered the workshop. Pelle turned an ashen gray.

"What have you been doing now?" asked Master Andres, looking sadly at him.

"Yes, and to one of our customers, too!" said Jeppe. "You've deserved that, haven't you?"

"Can't father get him let off the beating?" said Master Andres.

"I have proposed that Pelle should have a good flogging here in the

workshop, in the presence of the deputy and his son. But the deputy says no. He wants justice to run its course."

Pelle collapsed. He knew what it meant when a poor boy went to the town hall and was branded for life. His brain sought desperately for some way of escape. There was only one—death! He could secretly hide the knee-strap under his blouse and go into the little house and hang himself. He was conscious of a monotonous din; that was Jeppe, admonishing him; but the words escaped him; his soul had already began its journey toward death. As the noise ceased he rose silently.

"Well? What are you going out for?" asked Jeppe.

"I'm going to the yard." He spoke like a sleepwalker.

"Perhaps you want to take the knee-strap out with you?"

Jeppe and the master exchanged a look of understanding. Then Master Andres came over to him. "You wouldn't be so silly?" he said, and looked deep into Pelle's eyes. Then he made himself tidy and went into the town.

"Pelle, you devil's imp," he said, as he came home, "I've been running from Herod to Pilate, and I've arranged matters so that you can get off if you will ask for pardon. You must go to the grammar- school about one o'clock. But think it over first, as to what you are going to say, because the whole class will hear it."

"I won't ask for pardon." It sounded like a cry.

The master looked at Pelle hesitatingly. "But that is no disgrace— if one has done wrong."

"I have not done wrong. They began it, and they have been making game of me for a long time."

"But you thrashed him, Pelle, and one mustn't thrash fine folks like that; they have got a doctor's certificate that might be your ruin. Is your father a friend of the magistrate's? They can dishonor you for the rest of your life. I think you ought to choose the lesser evil."

No, Pelle could not do that. "So let them flog me instead!" he said morosely.

"Then it will be about three o'clock at the town hall," said the master, shortly, and he turned red about the eyes.

Suddenly Pelle felt how obstinacy must pain the young master, who, lame and sick as he was, had of his own accord gone running about the town for him. "Yes, I'll do it!" he said; "I'll do it!"

"Yes, yes!" replied Master Andres quietly; "for your own sake as well. And I believe you ought to be getting ready now."

Pelle slunk away; it was not his intention to apologize, and he had plenty of time. He walked as though asleep; everything was dead within him. His thoughts were busy with all sorts of indifferent matters, as though he sought to delay something by chattering; Crazy Anker went by with his bag of sand on his back, his thin legs wobbling under him. "I will help him to carry it," thought Pelle dejectedly, as he went onward; "I will help him to carry it."

Alfred came strolling down the street; he was carrying his best walking-stick and was wearing gloves, although it was in the midst of working hours. "If he sees me now he'll turn down the corner by the coal-merchant's," thought Pelle bitterly. "Oughtn't I to ask him to say a good word for me? He is such an important person! And he still owes me money for soling a pair of boots."

But Alfred made straight for him. "Have you seen anything of Albinus? He has disappeared!" he said; and his pretty face seemed somehow unusually moved. He stood there chewing at his moustache, just as fine folk do when they are musing over something.

"I've got to go to the town hall," said Pelle.

"Yes, I know—you've got to be flogged. But don't you know anything of Albinus?" Alfred had drawn him into the coal-merchant's doorway, in order not to be seen in his company.

"Yes, Albinus, Albinus—" Something was dawning in Pelle's mind. "Wait a minute—he—he—I'm sure he has run away with the circus. At least, I believe he has!" Whereat Alfred turned about and ran— ran in his best clothes!

Of course Albinus had run away with the circus. Pelle could understand the whole affair perfectly well. The evening before he had slipped on board Ole Hansen's yacht, which during the night was to have taken the trick-rider across to Sweden, and now he would live a glorious life and do what he liked. To run away—that was the only clear opening in life. Before Pelle knew it, he was down by the harbor, staring at a ship

which was on the point of sailing. He followed up his inspiration, and went about inquiring after a vacancy on board some vessel, but there was none.

He sat down by the waterside, and played with a chip of wood. It represented a three-master, and Pelle gave it a cargo; but every time it should have gone to sea it canted over, and he had to begin the loading all over again. All round him carpenters and stone- cutters were working on the preparations for the new harbor; and behind them, a little apart, stood the “Great Power,” at work, while, as usual, a handful of people were loitering near him; they stood there staring, in uneasy expectation that something would happen. Pelle himself had a feeling of something ominous as he sat there and plashed in the water to drive his ship out to sea; he would have accepted it as a manifestation of the most sacred principle of life had Jörgensen begun to rage before his eyes.

But the stone-cutter only laid down his hammer, in order to take his brandy-bottle from under the stone and swallow a mouthful; with that exception, he stood there bowed over the granite as peacefully as though there were no other powers in the world save it and him. He did not see the onlookers who watched him in gaping expectation, their feet full of agility, ready to take to flight at his slightest movement.

He struck so that the air moaned, and when he raised himself again his glance swept over them. Gradually Pelle had concentrated all his expectations upon this one man, who endured the hatred of the town without moving an eyelash, and was a haunting presence in every mind. In the boy’s imagination he was like a loaded mine; one stood there not knowing whether or not it was ignited, and in a moment the whole might leap into the air. He was a volcano, and the town existed from day to day by his mercy. And from time to time Pelle allowed him to shake himself a little—just enough to make the town rock.

But now, moreover, there was a secret between them; the “Great Power” had been punished too for beating the rich folks. Pelle was not slow in deducing the consequences—was there not already a townsman standing and watching him at play? He too was the terror of the people. Perhaps he would join himself to the “Great Power”; there would be little left of the town then! In the daytime they would lie hidden among the cliffs, but at night they came down and plundered the town.

They fell upon all who had earned their living as bloodsuckers; people hid themselves in their cellars and garrets when they heard that Pelle and the “Great Power” were on the march. They hanged the rich shipowner Monsen to the church steeple, and he dangled there a terror and a warning to all. But the poor folk came to them as trustingly as lambs and ate out of their hands. They received all they desired; so poverty was banished from the world, and Pelle could proceed upon his radiant, onward way without a feeling of betrayal.

His glance fell upon the clock on the harbor guard-house; it was nearly three. He sprang up and looked irresolutely about him; he gazed out over the sea and down into the deep water of the harbor, looking for help. Manna and her sisters—they would disdainfully turn their backs upon the dishonored Pelle; they would no longer look at him. And the people would point their fingers at him, or merely look at him, and think: “Ha, there goes the boy who was flogged at the town hall!” Wherever he went in the world it would follow him like a shadow, that he had been flogged as a child; such a thing clings visibly to a man. He knew men and maids and old white-headed men who had come to Stone Farm from places where no one else had ever been. They might come as absolute strangers, but there was something in their past which in spite of all rose up behind them and went whispering from mouth to mouth.

He roamed about, desperately in his helplessness, and in the course of his wanderings came to stone-cutter Jörgensen.

“Well,” said the “Great Power,” as he laid down his hammer, “you’ve quarrelled nicely with the big townsfolk! Do you think you can keep a stiff upper-lip?” Then he reached for his hammer again. But Pelle took his bearings and ran despondently to the town-hall.

XIV

The punishment itself was nothing. It was almost laughable, those few strokes, laid on through his trousers, by the stick of the old gaoler; Pelle had known worse thrashings. But he was branded, an outcast from the society even of the very poorest; he read as much into the compassion of the people to whom he carried boots and shoes. “Good Lord, this miserable booby! Has it gone as far as that with him!” This was what he read in their eyes. Everybody would always stare at him now, and when he went down the street he saw faces in the “spy” mirrors fixed outside the windows. “There goes that shoemaker boy!”

The young master was the only one who treated him precisely as before; and Pelle repaid him for that with the most limitless devotion. He bought on credit for him and saved him from blows where only he could. If the young master in his easy-going way had promised to have something completed and had then forgotten it, Pelle would sit in his place and work overtime on it. “What’s it matter to us?” Jens used to say. But Pelle would not have the customers coming to scold Master Andres, nor would he allow him to suffer the want of anything that would keep him on his feet.

He became more intimate than ever with Jens and Morten; they all suffered from the same disgrace; and he often accompanied them home, although no pleasure awaited them in their miserable cottage. They were among the very poorest, although the whole household worked. It was all of no avail.

“Nothing’s any use,” the “Great Power” himself would say when he was disposed to talk; “poverty is like a sieve: everything goes straight through it, and if we stop one hole, it’s running through ten others at the same time. They say I’m a swine, and why shouldn’t I be? I can do the work of three men—yes, but do I get the wages of three? I get my day’s wages and the rest goes into the pockets of those who employ me. Even if I wanted to keep myself decent, what should we gain by it? Can a family get decent lodging and decent food and decent clothing for nine kroner a week? Will the means of a laborer allow him to live anywhere but by the refuse-heaps, where only the pigs used to be kept? Why should I be housed like a pig and live like a pig and yet be no pig—is there any sense in that? My wife and children have to work as well as me, and how can things be decent with us when wife and children have to go out and make things decent for other people? No, look here! A peg of brandy, that makes everything seem decent, and if that doesn’t do it, why, then, a bottle!” So he would sit talking, when he had been drinking a little, but otherwise he was usually silent.

Pelle knew the story of the “Great Power” now, from the daily gossip of the townsfolk, and his career seemed to him sadder than all the rest; it was as though a fairy-tale of fortune had come to a sudden end.

Among the evil reports which were continually in circulation respecting Stone-cutter Jörgensen—it seemed that there was never an end of them—it was said that in his youth he had strolled into town from across the cliffs, clad in canvas trousers, with cracked wooden shoes on his feet, but with his head in the clouds as though the whole town belonged to him. Brandy he did not touch. He had a better use for his energies, he said: he was full of great ideas of himself and would not content himself with ordinary things. And he was thoroughly capable—he was quite absurdly talented for a poor man. And at once he wanted to begin turning everything topsy-turvy. Just because he was begotten among the cliffs and crags by an old toil- worn stone-cutter, he behaved like a deity of the rocks; he brushed long-established experience aside, and introduced novel methods of work which he evolved out of his own mind. The stone was as though bewitched in his hands. If one only put a sketch before him, he would make devils’ heads and subterranean monsters and sea-serpents —the sort of thing that before his time had to be ordered from the sculptors in Copenhagen. Old deserving stone-masons saw themselves suddenly set aside and had then and there to take to breaking stones; and this young fellow who had strayed into the town straightway ignored and discounted the experience of their many years. They tried, by the most ancient of all methods, to teach the young man modesty. But they gave it up. Peter Jörgensen had the strength of three men and the courage of ten. It was not good to meddle with one who had stolen his capacities from God himself, or perhaps was in league with Satan. So they resigned themselves, and avenged themselves by calling him the “Great Power”—and they put their trust in misfortune. To follow in his footsteps meant to risk a broken neck. And whenever the

brave townsfolk made the journey, something of its dizzy quality remained with them.

In the night he would sit sketching and calculating, so that no one could understand when he slept; and on Sundays, when decent people went to church, he would stop at home and cut the queerest things out of stone—although he never got a penny for it.

It was at this time that the famous sculptor came from the capital of Germany to hew a great lion out of granite, in honor of Liberty. But he could not get forward with his toolbox full of butter-knives; the stone was too hard for one who was accustomed to stand scratching at marble. And when for once he really did succeed in knocking off a bit of granite, it was always in the wrong place.

Then the “Great Power” asserted himself, and undertook to hew the lion out of granite, according to a scale model of some sort which the sculptor slapped together for him! All were persuaded that he would break down in this undertaking, but he negotiated it so cleverly that he completed the work to the utmost satisfaction of those concerned. He received a good sum of money for this, but it was not enough for him; he wanted half the honor, and to be spoken of in the newspapers like the sculptor himself; and as nothing came of it he threw down his tools and refused to work any more for other people. “Why should I do the work and others have the honor of it?” he asked, and sent in a tender for a stone-cutting contract. In his unbounded arrogance he sought to push to one side those who were born to ride on the top of things. But pride comes before a fall; his doom was already hanging over him.

He had sent in the lowest tender for the work on the South Bridge. They could not disregard it; so they sought to lay every obstacle in his path; they enticed his workmen away from him and made it difficult for him to obtain materials. The district judge, who was in the conspiracy, demanded that the contract should be observed; so the “Great Power” had to work day and night with the few men left to him in order to complete the work in time. A finer bridge no one had ever seen. But he had to sell the shirt off his body in order to meet his engagements.

He lived at that time in a pretty little house that was his own property. It lay out on the eastern highway, and had a turret on the mansard—Jens and Morten had spent their early childhood there. A little garden, with tidy paths, and a grotto which was like a heap of rocks, lay in front of it. Jörgenson had planned it all himself. It was taken from him, and he had to remove to a poor quarter of the town, to live among the people to whom he rightly belonged, and to rent a house there. But he was not yet broken. He was cheerful in spite of his downfall, and more high-and-mighty than ever in his manners. It was not easy to hit him! But then he sent in a tender for the new crane-platform. They could have refused him the contract on the pretext that he had no capital at his disposal. But now he *should* be struck down! He got credit from the savings-bank, in order to get well under way, and workers and material were his to dispose of. And then, as he was in the midst of the work, the same story was repeated—only this time he was to break his neck! Rich and poor, the whole town was at one in this matter. All demanded the restoration of the old certainty, high and low, appointed by God Himself. The “Great Power” was of the humblest descent; now he could quietly go back to the class he was born in!

He failed! The legal proprietor took over a good piece of work and got it for nothing, and Stonemason Jörgensen stood up in a pair of cracked wooden shoes, with a load of debts which he would never be able to shake off. Every one rejoiced to see him return to the existence of a day-laborer. But he did not submit quietly. He took to drink. From time to time he broke out and raged like the devil himself. They could not get rid of him; he weighed upon the minds of all, like an angry rumbling; even when he was quietly going about his work they could not quite forget him. Under these conditions he squandered his last possessions, and he moved into the cottage by the refuse-heaps, where formerly no one had dwelt.

He had become another man since the grant for the great harbor project had been approved. He no longer touched any brandy; when Pelle went out to see his friends, the “Great Power” would be sitting at the window, busying himself with sketches and figures. His wife was moving about and weeping quietly to herself; the old woman was scolding. But Jörgensen turned his broad back upon them and pored silently over his own affairs. He was not to be shaken out of his self-sufficiency.

The mother received them out in the kitchen, when she heard their noisy approach. “You must move quietly—Father is calculating and

calculating, poor fellow! He can get no peace in his head since the harbor plans have been seriously adopted. His ideas are always working in him. That must be so, he says, and that so! If he would only take life quietly among his equals and leave the great people to worry over their own affairs!”

He sat in the window, right in the sunlight, adding up some troublesome accounts; he whispered half to himself, and his mutilated forefinger, whose outer joint had been blown off, ran up and down the columns. Then he struck the table. “Oh, if only a man had learned something!” he groaned. The sunlight played on his dark beard; his weary labors had been powerless to stiffen his limbs or to pull him down. Drink had failed to hurt him—he sat there like strength personified; his great forehead and his throat were deeply bronzed by the sun.

“Look here, Morten!” he cried, turning to the boys. “Just look at these figures!”

Morten looked. “What is it, father?”

“What is it? Our earnings during the last week! You can see they are big figures!”

“No, father; what are they?” Morten twined his slender hand in his father’s beard.

The “Great Power’s” eyes grew mild under this caress.

“It’s a proposed alteration—they want to keep the channel in the old place, and that is wrong; when the wind blows in from the sea, one can’t get into the harbor. The channel must run out there, and the outer breakwater must curve like this”—and he pointed to his sketches. “Every fisherman and sailor will confirm what I say—but the big engineer gentlemen are so clever!”

“But are you going—again—to send in a tender?” Morten looked at his father, horrified. The man nodded.

“But you aren’t good enough for them—you know you aren’t! They just laugh at you!”

“This time I shall be the one to laugh,” retorted Jörgensen, his brow clouding at the thought of all the contempt he had had to endure.

“Of course they laugh at him,” said the old woman from the chimney-corner, turning her hawk-like head toward them; “but one must play at something. Peter must always play the great man!”

Her son did not reply.

“They say you know something about sketching, Pelle?” he said quietly. “Can’t you bring this into order a bit? This here is the breakwater—supposing the water isn’t there—and this is the basin —cut through the middle, you understand? But I can’t get it to look right—yet the dimensions are quite correct. Here above the water-line there will be big coping-stones, and underneath it’s broken stone.”

Pelle set to work, but he was too finicking.

“Not so exact!” said Jörgensen. “Only roughly!”

He was always sitting over his work when they came. From his wife they learned that he did not put in a tender, after all, but took his plans to those who had undertaken the contract and offered them his cooperation. She had now lost all faith in his schemes, and was in a state of continual anxiety. “He’s so queer—he’s always taken up with only this one thing,” she said, shuddering. “He never drinks —and he doesn’t go raging against all the world as he used to do.”

“But that’s a good thing,” said Morten consolingly.

“Yes, you may talk, but what do you know about it? If he looks after his daily bread, well, one knows what that means. But now, like this…. I’m so afraid of the reaction if he gets a set-back. Don’t you believe he’s changed—it’s only sleeping in him. He’s the same as ever about Karen; he can’t endure seeing her crooked figure; she reminds him always too much of everything that isn’t as it should be. She mustn’t go to work, he says, but how can we do without her help? We must live! I daren’t let him catch sight of her. He gets so bitter against himself, but the child has to suffer for it. And he’s the only one she cares anything about.”

Karen had not grown during the last few years; she had become even more deformed; her voice was dry and shrill, as though she had passed through a frozen desert on her way to earth. She was glad when Pelle was there and she could hear him talk; if she thought he would come in the evening, she would hurry home from her situation. But she never joined in the conversation and never took part in anything. No one could guess what was going on in her mind. Her mother would suddenly break down and burst into tears if her glance by chance fell upon her.

“She really ought to leave her place at once,” said her mother over and again. “But the doctor’s wife has one child after another, and then they ask so pleadingly if she can’t stay yet another half-year. They think great things of her; she is so reliable with children.”

“Yes, if it was Pelle, he’d certainly let them fall.” Karen laughed —it was a creaking laugh. She said nothing more; she never asked to be allowed to go out, and she never complained. But her silence was like a silent accusation, destroying all comfort and intimacy.

But one day she came home and threw some money on the table. “Now I needn’t go to Doctor’s any more.”

“What’s the matter? Have you done something wrong?” asked the mother, horrified.

“The doctor gave me a box on the ear because I couldn’t carry Anna over the gutter—she’s so heavy.”

“But you can’t be sent away because he has struck you! You’ve certainly had a quarrel—you are so stubborn!”

“No; but I accidentally upset the perambulator with little Erik in it—so that he fell out. His head is like a mottled apple.” Her expression was unchanged.

The mother burst into tears. “But how could you do such a thing?” Karen stood there and looked at the other defiantly. Suddenly her mother seized hold of her. “You didn’t do it on purpose? Did you do it on purpose?”

Karen turned away with a shrug of the shoulders and went up to the garret without saying good night. Her mother wanted to follow her.

“Let her go!” said the old woman, as though from a great distance. “You have no power over her! She was begotten in wrath.”

XV

All the winter Jens had smeared his upper lip with fowl's dung in order to grow a moustache; now it was sprouting, and he found himself a young woman; she was nurse-maid at the Consul's. "It's tremendous fun," he said; "you ought to get one yourself. When she kisses me she sticks out her tongue like a little kid." But Pelle wanted no young woman —in the first place, no young woman would have him, branded as he was; and then he was greatly worried.

When he raised his head from his work and looked out sideways over the manure-sheds and pigsties, he saw the green half-twilight of the heart of the apple-tree, and he could dream himself into it. It was an enchanted world of green shadows and silent movement; countless yellow caterpillars hung there, dangling to and fro, each on its slender thread; chaffinches and yellow-hammers swung themselves impetuously from bough to bough, and at every swoop snapped up a caterpillar; but these never became any fewer. Without a pause they rolled themselves down from the twigs, and hung there, so enticingly yellow, swinging to and fro in the gentle breath of the summer day, and waited to be gobbled up.

And deeper still in the green light—as though on the floor of a green sea—three brightly-clad maidens moved and played. Now and again the two younger would suddenly look over at Pelle, but they turned their eyes away again the moment he looked at them; and Manna was as grown-up and self-controlled as though he had never existed. Manna had been confirmed a long time now; her skirts were halfway to the ground, and she walked soberly along the street, arm-in-arm with her girl friends. She no longer played; she had long been conscious of a rapidly-increasing certainty that it wouldn't do to play any longer. In a few days she went over from Pelle's side to the camp of the grown-ups. She no longer turned to him in the workshop, and if he met her in the street she looked in another direction. No longer did she leap like a wild cat into the shop, tearing Pelle from his stool if she wanted something done; she went demurely up to the young master, who wrapped up her shoes in paper. But in secret she still recognized her playmate; if no one was by she would pinch his arm quite hard, and gnash her teeth together as she passed him.

But Pelle was too clumsy to understand the transition, and too much of a child to be shy of the light himself. He hung hack, lonely, and pondered, uncomprehending, over the new condition of affairs.

But now she did not know him in secret even—he simply did not exist for her any longer. And Dolores and Aina too had withdrawn their favor; when he looked out, they averted their heads and shrugged their shoulders. They were ashamed that they had ever had anything to do with such a person, and he knew very well why that was.

It had been a peculiar and voluptuous delight to be handled by those delicate and generous hands. It had been really splendid to sit there with open mouth and let all three stuff him with delicacies, so that he was in danger of choking! He wasn't allowed to swallow them down—they wanted to see how much his mouth would hold; and then they would laugh and dance round him, and their plump girlish hands would take hold of his head, one on each side, and press his jaws together. Now Pelle had gradually added quite an ell to his stature as a worldly wise citizen; he knew very well that he was of coarser clay than his companions, and that there must have been an end of it all, even without the town hall.

But it hurt him; he felt as though he had been betrayed; properly he oughtn't to touch his food. For was not Manna his betrothed? He had never thought of that! These were the pains of love! So this was what they were like! Did those who took their lives on account of unhappy love feel any different? His grief, to be sure, was not very stupendous; when the young master made a joke or cursed in his funny way he could laugh quite heartily still. That, with his disgrace, was the worst of all.

"You ought to get yourself a young woman," said Jens. "She's as soft as a young bird, and she warms you through your clothes and everything!"

But Pelle had something else on hand. He wanted to learn to swim. He wanted to know how to do everything that the town boys did, and to win back his place among them. He no longer dreamed of leading them. So he went about with the "gang"; he drew back a little if they teased him too brutally, and then crept back again; finally they grew accustomed to him.

Every evening he ran down to the harbor. To the south of the big

basin, which was now being pumped dry, there was always, in the twilight, a crowd of apprentices; they leaped naked among the rocks and swam in chattering shoals toward the west, where the sky still glowed after the sunset. A long way out a reef lay under the water, and on this they could just touch bottom; there they would rest before they swam back, their dark heads brooding on the water like chattering sea-birds.

Pelle swam out with them in order to accustom himself to deep water, although they always tried to pull him under by his legs. When the sea blushed it was as though one was swimming amid roses; and the light, slippery, shining fronds which the deep-lying weed-beds had thrown up gleamed in the evening light and slid gently across his shoulders, and far out in the west lay the land of Fortune, beyond the vast radiant portals of the sunset; or it showed its golden plains stretching out into infinity. There it lay, shining with a strange enticing radiance, so that Pelle forgot the limits of his strength, and swam out farther than his powers justified. And when he turned round, parting the floating weed with vigorous strokes, the water stared at him blackly, and the terror of the depths seized upon him.

One evening the boys had been hostile in their attitude, and one of them maintained that the marks of the whip could still be seen on Pelle's back. "Pelle has never been beaten with a whip!" cried Morten, in a rage. Pelle himself made no reply, but followed the "squadron"; his whole nature felt somehow embittered.

There was a slight swell, and this perhaps washed the swimmers out of their proper course; they could not find the reef on which they were used to rest. For a time they splashed about, trying to find it, and wasting their strength; then they turned back to the shore. Pelle looked after them with wondering eyes.

"Lie on your back and rest!" they cried, as they passed him, and then they made for the beach; a touch of panic had fallen on them. Pelle tried to rest, but he had had no practice in floating; the waves broke over his face; so he labored after the others. On the shore there was great excitement; he wondered what it meant. Morten, who had never bathed with the others, was standing on a rock and was shouting.

Some of the foremost swimmers were already in safety. "You can touch bottom here!" they shouted, standing with outstretched arms, the water up to their chins. Pelle labored on indefatigably, but he was quite convinced that it was useless. He was making hardly any progress, and he was sinking deeper and deeper. Every moment a wave washed over him and filled him with water. The stronger swimmers came out again; they swam round him and tried to help him, but they only made matters worse. He saw Morten run shouting into the water with all his clothes on, and that gave him a little strength. But then suddenly his arms became paralyzed; he went round and round in the same spot, and only his eyes were above water. Pelle had often flown in his dreams, and something had always clutched his legs and hampered his flight. But now this had become reality; he was floating in the blue sky and poised on his outspread pinions; and out of the darkness below he heard voices. "Pelle!" they cried, "little Pelle!" "Yes, Father Lasse!" he answered, and with a sense of relief he folded his weary wings; he sank in whirling haste, and a surging sounded in his ears.

Then of a sudden he felt a violent pain in his shins. His hands clutched at growing plants. He stood up with a leap, and light and air flowed over him as from a new existence. The boys were running about, frightened, one leg in their trousers, and he was standing on the submarine reef, up to the breast in the sea, vomiting salt water. Round about him swimmers were splashing, diving in every direction to fetch him up from the bottom of the sea. It was all really rather funny, and Pelle raised his arms high above his head as a greeting to life, and took the water with a long dive. Some distance farther in he appeared again, and swam to shore, parting the waves like a frolicsome porpoise. But on the beach he fell down as God had made him, in a profound sleep; he had just pulled one stocking over his big toe.

Since that day the boys recognized him again. He had certainly performed no heroic deed, but Destiny had for a moment rested upon his head—that was enough! Pelle always took the steel sharpener with him after that; and laid it on the beach with the point toward the land; he wanted after all to live a little longer. He did not allow himself to be intimidated, but plunged headlong into the water.

If the sea was so rough that they could not swim, they would lie on the brink of the water and let the waves roll them over and over. Then the waves would come in sweeping flight from the west, as though to spring upon them; the herds of white horses drove onward, their grayish manes

streaming obliquely behind them. Rearing they came, sweeping the sea with their white tails, striking out wildly with their hooves and plunging under the surface. But others sprang up and leaped over them in serried ranks. They lay flat on the water and rushed toward the land. The storm whipped the white foam out of their mouths and drove it along the beach, where it hung gleaming on the bushes, and then vanished into nothingness. Right up to the shore they dashed, and then fell dead. But fresh hordes stormed shoreward from the offing, as though the land must be over-run by them; they reared, foaming, and struck at one another; they sprang, snorting and quivering, high in the air; they broke asunder in panic; there was never an end to it all. And far out in the distance the sun went down in a flame-red mist. A streak of cloud lay across it, stretching far out into infinity. A conflagration like a glowing prairie fire surrounded the horizon, and drove the hordes before it in panic-stricken flight, and on the beach shouted the naked swarm of boys. Now and again they sprang up with outspread arms, and, shouting, chased the wild horses back into the sea.

XVI

Things were not going well in the brothers' home. Jörgensen had done nothing with his plans. He was the only person who had not known that such would be the case. The people knew, too, on very good authority, that the engineer had offered him a hundred kroner for them, and as he would not take them, but demanded a share in the undertaking and the honor of executing it, he was shown to the door.

He had never before taken anything so quietly. He did not burst out roaring with violent words; he simply betook himself to his usual day-laborer's work in the harbor, like any other worker. He did not mention his defeat, and allowed no one else to do so. He treated his wife as though she did not exist. But she had to watch him wrap himself up in silence, without knowing what was going on in his mind. She had a foreboding of something terrible, and spoke of her trouble to the boys. He made no scenes, although now and again he got drunk; he ate in silence and went to bed. When he was not working, he slept.

But as he himself had so far revealed his plans that they were known to all, it was all up with his work. The engineer had taken from Jörgensen's plans as much as he could use—every one could see that—and now the "Great Power" stood with his mouth empty, simply because he had put more in his spoon than his mouth would hold. Most people were far from envying his position, and they took plenty of time to talk about it; the town was quite accustomed to neglect its own affairs in order to throw its whole weight on his obstinate back. But now he was down in the dust all had been to the harbor to watch the "Great Power" working there—to see him, as a common laborer, carting the earth for his own wonderful scheme. They marvelled only that he took it all so quietly; it was to some extent a disappointment that he did not flinch under the weight of his burden and break out into impotent raving.

He contented himself with drinking; but that he did thoroughly. He went about it as it were in the midst of a cloud of alcoholic vapor, and worked only just enough to enable him to go on drinking. "He has never yet been like this," said his wife, weeping. "He doesn't storm and rage, but he is angry all the time so that one can't bear him at home any longer. He breaks everything in his anger, and he scolds poor Karen so that it's wretched. He has no regard for anybody, only for his old mother, and God knows how long that will last. He doesn't work, he only drinks. He steals my hard-earned money out of my dress-pocket and buys brandy with it. He has no shame left in him, although he always used to be so honorable in his way of life. And he can't stand his boozing as he used to; he's always falling about and staggering. Lately he came home all bloody—he'd knocked a hole in his head. What have we ever done to the dear God that he should punish us like this?"

The old woman said nothing, but let her glance sweep from one to the other, and thought her own thoughts.

So it went on, week after week. The boys became weary of listening to their mother's complaints, and kept away from home.

One day, when Karen had been sent on an errand for her mother, she did not return. Neither had she returned on the following day. Pelle heard of it down at the boat-harbor, where she had last been seen. They were dragging the water with nets in the hope of finding her, but no one dared tell Jörgensen. On the following afternoon they brought her to the workshop; Pelle knew what it was when he heard the many heavy footsteps out in the street. She lay on a stretcher, and two men carried her; before her the autumn wind whirled the first falling leaves, and her thin arms were hanging down to the pavement, as though she sought to find a hold there. Her disordered hair was hanging, too, and the water was dripping from her. Behind the stretcher came the "Great Power." He was drunk. He held one hand before his eyes, and murmured as though in thought, and at every moment he raised his forefinger in the air. "She has found peace," he said thickly, trying to look intelligent.

"Peace—the higher it is——" He could not find the word he wanted.

Jens and Pelle replaced the men at the stretcher, and bore it home. They were afraid of what was before them. But the mother stood at the door and received them silently, as though she had expected them; she was merely pale. "She couldn't bear it!" she whispered to them, and she kneeled down beside the child.

She laid her head on the little crippled body, and whispered indistinctly; now and again she pressed the child's fingers into her mouth, in order to stifle her sobs. "And you were to have run an errand for mother," she said, and she shook her head, smilingly. "You are a nice

sort of girl to me—not to be able to buy me two skeins of thread; and the money I gave you for it—have you thrown it away?" Her words came between smiles and sobs, and they sounded like a slow lament. "Did you throw the money away? It doesn't matter —it wasn't your fault. Dear child, dear little one!" Then her strength gave way. Her firmly closed mouth broke open, and closed again, and so she went on, her head rocking to and fro, while her hands felt eagerly in the child's pocket. "Didn't you run that errand for mother?" she moaned. She felt, in the midst of her grief, the need of some sort of corroboration, even if it referred to something quite indifferent. And she felt in the child's purse. There lay a few öre and a scrap of paper.

Then she suddenly stood up. Her face was terribly hard as she turned to her husband, who stood against the wall, swaying to and fro. "Peter!" she cried in agony, "Peter! Don't you know what you have done? 'Forgive me, mother,' it says here, and she has taken four öre of the thirteen to buy sugar-candy. Look here, her hand is still quite sticky." She opened the clenched hand, which was closed upon a scrap of sticky paper. "Ah, the poor persecuted child! She wanted to sweeten her existence with four öre worth of sugar-candy, and then into the water! A child has so much pleasure at home here! 'Forgive me, mother!' she says, as though she had done something wrong. And everything she did was wrong; so she had to go away. Karen! Karen! I'm not angry with you—you were very welcome—what do they signify, those few öre! I didn't mean it like that when I reproached you for hanging about at home! But I didn't know what to do—we had nothing to eat. And he spent the little money there was!" She turned her face from the body to the father and pointed to him. It was the first time that the wife of the "Great Power" had ever turned upon him accusingly. But he did not understand her. "She has found peace," he murmured, and attempted to pull himself up a little; "the peace of—" But here the old woman rose in the chimney-corner—until this moment she had not moved. "Be silent!" she said harshly, setting her stick at his breast, "or your old mother will curse the day when she brought you into the world." Wondering, he stared at her; and a light seemed to shine through the mist as he gazed. For a time he still stood there, unable to tear his eyes from the body. He looked as though he wished to throw himself down beside his wife, who once more lay bowed above the bier, whispering. Then, with hanging head, he went upstairs and lay down.

XVII

It was after working hours when Pelle went homeward; but he did not feel inclined to run down to the harbor or to bathe. The image of the drowned child continued to follow him, and for the first time Death had met him with its mysterious “Why?” He found no answer, and gradually he forgot it for other things. But the mystery itself continued to brood within him, and made him afraid without any sort of reason, so that he encountered the twilight even with a foreboding of evil. The secret powers which exhale from heaven and earth when light and darkness meet clutched at him with their enigmatical unrest, and he turned unquietly from one thing to another, although he must be everywhere in order to cope with this inconceivable Something that stood, threatening, behind everything. For the first time he felt, rid of all disguise, the unmercifulness which was imminent in this or that transgression of his. Never before had Life itself pressed upon him with its heavy burden.

It seemed to Pelle that something called him, but he could not clearly discover whence the call came. He crept from his window on to the roof and thence to the gable-end; perhaps it was the world that called. The hundreds of tile-covered roofs of the town lay before him, absorbing the crimson of the evening sky, and a blue smoke was rising. And voices rose out of the warm darkness that lay between the houses. He heard, too, the crazy Anker’s cry; and this eternal prophecy of things irrational sounded like the complaint of a wild beast. The sea down yonder and the heavy pine-woods that lay to the north and the south—these had long been familiar to him.

But there was a singing in his ears, and out of the far distance, and something or some one stood behind him, whose warm breath struck upon his neck. He turned slowly about. He was no longer afraid in the darkness, and he knew beforehand that nothing was there. But his lucid mind had been invaded by the twilight, with its mysterious train of beings which none of the senses can confirm.

He went down into the courtyard and strolled about. Everywhere prevailed the same profound repose. Peers, the cat, was sitting on the rain-water butt, mewing peevishly at a sparrow which had perched upon the clothes-line. The young master was in his room, coughing; he had already gone to bed. Pelle bent over the edge of the well and gazed vacantly over the gardens. He was hot and dizzy, but a cool draught rose from the well and soothingly caressed his head. The bats were gliding through the air like spirits, passing so close to his face that he felt the wind of their flight, and turning about with a tiny clapping sound. He felt a most painful desire to cry.

Among the tall currant-bushes yonder something moved, and Sjermanna’s head made its appearance. She was moving cautiously and peering before her. When she saw Pelle she came quickly forward.

“Good evening!” she whispered.

“Good evening!” he answered aloud, delighted to return to human society.

“Hush! You mustn’t shout!” she said peremptorily.

“Why not?” Pelle himself was whispering now. He was feeling quite concerned. “Because you mustn’t! Donkey! Come, I’ll show you something. No, nearer still!”

Pelle pushed his head forward through the tall elder-bush, and suddenly she put her two hands about his head and kissed him violently and pushed him back. He tried gropingly to take hold of her, but she stood there laughing at him. Her face glowed in the darkness. “You haven’t heard anything about it!” she whispered. “Come, I’ll tell you!”

Now he was smiling all over his face. He pushed his way eagerly into the elder-bush. But at the same moment he felt her clenched fist strike his face. She laughed crazily, but he stood fixed in the same position, as though stunned, his mouth held forward as if still awaiting a kiss. “Why do you hit me?” he asked, gazing at her brokenly.

“Because I can’t endure you! You’re a perfect oaf, and so ugly and so common!”

“I have never done anything to you!”

“No? Anyhow, you richly deserved it! What did you want to kiss me for?”

Pelle stood there helplessly stammering. The whole world of his experience collapsed under him. “But I didn’t!” he at last brought out; he looked extraordinarily foolish. Manna aped his expression. “Ugh! Bugh!

Take care, or you'll freeze to the ground and turn into a lamp-post! There's nothing on the hedge here that will throw light on your understanding!"

With a leap Pelle was over the hedge. Manna took him hastily by the hand and drew him through the bushes. "Aina and Dolores will be here directly. Then we'll play," she declared.

"I thought they couldn't come out in the evenings any more," said Pelle, obediently allowing her to lead him. She made no reply, but looked about her as though she wanted to treat him to something as in the old days. In her need she stripped a handful of leaves off the currant-boughs, and stuffed them into his mouth. "There, take that and hold your mouth!" She was quite the old Manna once more, and Pelle laughed.

They had come to the summer-house. Manna cooled his swollen cheeks with wet earth while they waited.

"Did it hurt you much?" she asked sympathetically, putting her arm about his shoulder.

"It's nothing. What's a box on the ear?" he said manfully.

"I didn't mean it—you know that. Did *that* hurt you very much?"

Pelle gazed at her sadly. She looked at him inquisitively. "Was it here?" she said, letting her hand slide down his back. He rose silently, in order to go, but she seized him by the wrist. "Forgive me," she whispered.

"Aren't the others coming soon?" asked Pelle harshly. He proposed to be angry with her, as in the old days.

"No! They aren't coming at all! I've deceived you. I wanted to talk to you!" Manna was gasping for breath.

"I thought you didn't want to have anything more to do with me?"

"Well, I don't! I only want—" She could not find words, and stamped angrily on the ground. Then she said slowly and solemnly, with the earnestness of a child: "Do you know what I believe? I believe—I love you!"

"Then we can get married when we are old enough!" said Pelle joyfully.

She looked at him for a moment with a measuring glance. The town-hall and the flogging! thought Pelle. He was quite resolved that he would do the beating now; but here she laughed at him. "What a glorious booby you are!" she said, and as though deep in thought, she let a handful of wet earth run down his neck.

Pelle thought for a moment of revenge; then, as though in sport, he thrust his hand into her bosom. She fell back weakly, groping submissively with her hands; a new knowledge arose in him, and impelled him to embrace her violently.

She looked at him in amazement, and tried gently to push his hand away. But it was too late. The boy had broken down her defences.

As Pelle went back into the house he was overwhelmed, but not happy. His heart hammered wildly, and a chaos reigned in his brain. Quite instinctively he trod very softly. For a long time he lay tossing to and fro without being able to sleep. His mind had resolved the enigma, and now he discovered the living blood in himself. It sang its sufferings in his ear; it welled into his cheeks and his heart; it murmured everywhere in numberless pulses, so that his whole body thrilled. Mighty and full of mystery, it surged through him like an inundation, filling him with a warm, deep astonishment. Never before had he known all this!

In the time that followed his blood was his secret confidant in everything; he felt it like a caress when it filled his limbs, causing a feeling of distension in wrists and throat. He had his secret now, and his face never betrayed the fact that he had ever known Sjermanna. His radiant days had all at once changed into radiant nights. He was still enough of a child to long for the old days, with their games in the broad light of day; but something impelled him to look forward, listening, and his questing soul bowed itself before the mysteries of life. The night had made him accomplice in her mysteries. With Manna he never spoke again. She never came into the garden, and if he met her she turned into another street. A rosy flame lay continually over her face, as though it had burned its way in. Soon afterward she went to a farm in Ostland, where an uncle of hers lived.

But Pelle felt nothing and was in no way dejected. He went about as though in a half-slumber; everything was blurred and veiled before his spiritual vision. He was quite bewildered by all that was going on within him. Something was hammering and laboring in every part and corner of him. Ideas which were too fragile were broken down and built up more strongly, so that they should bear the weight of the man in him. His

limbs grew harder; his muscles became like steel, and he was conscious of a general feeling of breadth across his back, and of unapplied strength. At times he awakened out of his half-slumber into a brief amazement, when he felt himself, in one particular or another, to have become a man; as when one day he heard his own voice. It had gained a deep resonance, which was quite foreign to his ear, and forced him to listen as though it had been another that spoke.

XVIII

Pelle fought against the decline of the business. A new apprentice had been taken into the workshop, but Pelle, as before, had to do all the delicate jobs. He borrowed articles when necessary, and bought things on credit; and he had to interview impatient customers, and endeavor to pacify them. He got plenty of exercise, but he learned nothing properly. “Just run down to the harbor,” the master used to say: “Perhaps there will be some work to bring back!” But the master was much more interested in the news which he brought thence.

Pelle would also go thither without having received any orders. Everybody in the town must needs make for the harbor whenever he went from home; it was the heart through which everything came and went, money and dreams and desires and that which gratified them. Every man had been to sea, and his best memories and his hardest battles belonged to the sea. Dreams took the outward way; yonder lay the sea, and all men’s thoughts were drawn to it; the thoughts of the young, who longed to go forth and seek adventure, and of the old, who lived on their memories. It was the song in all men’s hearts, and the God in the inmost soul of all; the roving-ground of life’s surplus, the home of all that was inexplicable and mystical. The sea had drunk the blood of thousands, but its color knew no change; the riddle of life brooded in its restless waters.

Destiny rose from the floor of the deep and with short shrift set her mark upon a man; he might escape to the land, like Baker Jörgensen, who went no more to sea when once the warning had come to him, or, like Boatman Jensen, he might rise in his sleep and walk straight over the vessel’s side. Down below, where the drowned dwelt, the ships sank to bring them what they needed; and from time to time the bloodless children of the sea rose to the shore, to play with the children that were born on a Sunday, and to bring them death or happiness.

Over the sea, three times a week, came the steamer with news from Copenhagen; and vessels all wrapped in ice, and others that had sprung a heavy leak, or bore dead bodies on board; and great ships which came from warm countries and had real negroes among their crews.

Down by the harbor stood the old men who had forsaken the sea, and now all the long day through they stared out over the playground of their manhood, until Death came for them. The sea had blown gout into their limbs, had buffeted them until they were bent and bowed, and in the winter nights one could hear them roar with the pain like wild beasts. Down to the harbor drifted all the flotsam and jetsam of the land, invalids and idle men and dying men, and busy folk raced round about and up and down with fluttering coat-tails, in order to scent out possible profits.

The young sported here continually; it was as though they encountered the future when they played here by the open sea. Many never went further, but many let themselves be caught and whirled away out into the unknown. Of these was Nilen. When the ships were being fitted out he could wait no longer. He sacrificed two years’ apprenticeship, and ran away on board a vessel which was starting on a long voyage. Now he was far away in the Trades, on the southern passage round America, homeward bound with a cargo of redwood. And a few left with every steamer. The girls were the most courageous when it came to cutting themselves loose; they steamed away swiftly, and the young men followed them in amorous blindness. And men fought their way outward in order to seek something more profitable than could be found at home.

Pelle had experienced all this already: he had felt this same longing, and had known the attractive force of the unknown. Up in the country districts it was the dream of all poor people to fight their way to town, and the boldest one day ventured thither, with burning cheeks, while the old people spoke warningly of the immorality of cities. And in the town here it was the dream of all to go to the capital, to Copenhagen; there fortune and happiness were to be found! He who had the courage hung one day over the ship’s rail, and waved farewell, with an absent expression in his eyes, as though he had been playing a game with high stakes; over there on the mainland he would have to be a match with the best of them. But the old people shook their heads and spoke at length of the temptations and immorality of the capital.

Now and again one came back and justified their wisdom. Then they would run delightedly from door to door. “Didn’t we tell you so?” But many came home at holiday seasons and were such swells that it was really the limit! And this or that girl was so extremely stylish that people

had to ask the opinion of Wooden-leg Larsen about her.

The girls who got married over there—well, they were well provided for! After an interval of many years they came back to their parents' homes, travelling on deck among the cattle, and giving the stewardess a few pence to have them put in the newspaper as cabin-passengers. They were fine enough as to their clothes, but their thin haggard faces told another story. "There is certainly not enough to eat for all over there!" said the old women.

But Pelle took no interest in those that came home again. All his thoughts were with those who went away; his heart tugged painfully in his breast, so powerful was his longing to be off. The sea, whether it lay idle or seethed with anger, continually filled his head with the humming of the world "over yonder," with a vague, mysterious song of happiness.

One day, as he was on his way to the harbor, he met old thatcher Holm from Stone Farm. Holm was going about looking at the houses from top to bottom; he was raising his feet quite high in the air from sheer astonishment, and was chattering to himself. On his arm he carried a basket loaded with bread and butter, brandy, and beer.

"Well, here's some one at last!" he said, and offered his hand. "I'm going round and wondering to myself where they all live, those that come here day after day and year after year, and whether they've done any good. Mother and I have often talked about it, that it would be splendid to know how things have turned out for this one or that. And this morning she said it would be best if I were to make a short job of it before I quite forget how to find my way about the streets here, I haven't been here for ten years. Well, according to what I've seen so far, mother and I needn't regret we've stayed at home. Nothing grows here except lamp-posts, and mother wouldn't understand anything about rearing them. Thatched roofs I've not seen here. Here in the town they'd grudge a thatcher his bread. But I'll see the harbor before I go home."

"Then we'll go together," said Pelle. He was glad to meet some one from his home. The country round about Stone Farm was always for him the home of his childhood. He gossiped with the old man and pointed out various objects of interest.

"Yes, I've been once, twice, three times before this to the harbor," said Holm, "but I've never managed to see the steamer. They tell me wonderful things of it; they say all our crops are taken to Copenhagen in the steamer nowadays."

"It's lying here to-day," said Pelle eagerly. "This evening it goes out."

Holm's eyes beamed. "Then I shall be able to see the beggar! I've often seen the smoke from the hill at home—drifting over the sea— and that always gave me a lot to think about. They say it eats coals and is made of iron." He looked at Pelle uncertainly.

The great empty harbor basin, in which some hundreds of men were at work, interested him greatly. Pelle pointed out the "Great Power," who was toiling like a madman and allowing himself to be saddled with the heaviest work.

"So that is he!" cried Holm. "I knew his father; he was a man who wanted to do things above the ordinary, but he never brought them off. And how goes it with your father? Not any too well, as I've heard?"

Pelle had been home a little while before; nothing was going well there, but as to that he was silent. "Karna isn't very well," he said. "She tried to do too much; she's strained herself lifting things."

"They say he'll have a difficult job to pull through. They have taken too much on themselves," Holm continued.

Pelle made no reply; and then the steamer absorbed their whole attention. Talkative as he was, Holm quite forgot to wag his tongue.

The steamer was on the point of taking in cargo; the steam derricks were busy at both hatches, squealing each time they swung round in another direction. Holm became so light on his legs one might have thought he was treading on needles; when the derrick swung round over the quay and the chain came rattling down, he ran right back to the granary. Pelle wanted to take him on board, but he would not hear of it. "It looks a bad-tempered monster," he said: "look how it sneezes and fusses!"

On the quay, by the forward hold, the goods of a poverty-stricken household lay all mixed together. A man stood there holding a mahogany looking-glass, the only article of value, in his arms. His expression was gloomy. By the manner in which he blew his nose—with his knuckles instead of with his fingers—one could see that he had something unaccustomed on hand. His eyes were fixed immovably on his miserable

household possessions, and they anxiously followed every breakable article as it went its airy way into the vessel's maw. His wife and children were sitting on the quay-wall, eating out of a basket of provisions. They had been sitting there for hours. The children were tired and tearful; the mother was trying to console them, and to induce them to sleep on the stone.

"Shan't we start soon?" they asked continually, in complaining tones.

"Yes, the ship starts directly, but you must be very good or I shan't take you with me. And then you'll come to the capital city, where they eat white bread and always wear leather boots. The King himself lives there, and they've got everything in the shops there." She arranged her shawl under their heads.

"But that's Per Anker's son from Blaaholt!" cried Holm, when he had been standing a while on the quay and had caught sight of the man. "What, are you leaving the country?"

"Yes, I've decided to do so," said the man, in an undertone, passing his hand over his face.

"And I thought you were doing so well! Didn't you go to Ostland, and didn't you take over a hotel there?"

"Yes, they enticed me out there, and now I've lost everything there."

"You ought to have considered—considering costs nothing but a little trouble."

"But they showed me false books, which showed a greater surplus than there really was. Shipowner Monsen was behind the whole affair, together with the brewer from the mainland, who had taken the hotel over in payment of outstanding debts."

"But how did big folks like that manage to smell you out?" Holm scratched his head; he didn't understand the whole affair.

"Oh, they'd heard of the ten thousand, of course, which I'd inherited from my father. They throw their nets out for sums like that, and one day they sent an agent to see me. Ten thousand was just enough for the first instalment, and now they have taken the hotel over again. Out of compassion, they let me keep this trash here." He suddenly turned his face away and wept; and then his wife came swiftly up to him.

Holm drew Pelle away. "They'd rather be rid of us," he said quietly; and he continued to discuss the man's dismal misfortune, while they strolled out along the mole. But Pelle was not listening to him. He had caught sight of a little schooner which was cruising outside, and was every moment growing more restless.

"I believe that's the Iceland schooner!" he said at last. "So I must go back."

"Yes, run off," said Holm, "and many thanks for your guidance, and give my respects to Lasse and Karna."

On the harbor hill Pelle met Master Jeppe, and farther on Drejer, Klaussen, and Blom. The Iceland boat had kept them waiting for several months; the news that she was in the roads quickly spread, and all the shoemakers of the whole town were hurrying down to the harbor, in order to hear whether good business had been done before the gangway was run out.

"The Iceland boat is there now!" said the merchants and leather-dealers, when they saw the shoemakers running by. "We must make haste and make out our bills, for now the shoemakers will be having money."

But the skipper had most of the boots and shoes still in his hold; he returned with the terrifying news that no more boots and shoes could be disposed of in Iceland. The winter industry had been of great importance to the shoemakers.

"What does this mean?" asked Jeppe angrily. "You have been long enough about it! Have you been trying to open another agency over there? In others years you have managed to sell the whole lot."

"I have done what I could," replied the captain gloomily. "I offered them to the dealers in big parcels, and then I lay there and carried on a retail trade from the ship. Then I ran down the whole west coast; but there is nothing to be done."

"Well, well," said Jeppe, "but do the Icelanders mean to go without boots?"

"There's the factories," replied the captain.

"The factories, the factories!" Jeppe laughed disdainfully, but with a touch of uncertainty. "You'll tell me next that they can make shoes by machinery—cut out and peg and sew and fix the treads and all? No,

damn it, that can only be done by human hands directed by human intelligence. Shoemaking is work for men only. Perhaps I myself might be replaced by a machine—by a few cog-wheels that go round and round! Bah! A machine is dead, I know that, and it can't think or adapt itself to circumstances; you may have to shape the boot in a particular way for a special foot, on account of tender toes, or—here I give the sole a certain cut in the instep, so that it looks smart, or—well, one has to be careful, or one cuts into the upper!"

"There are machines which make boots, and they make them cheaper than you, too," said the skipper brusquely.

"I should like to see them! Can you show me a boot that hasn't been made by human hands?" Jeppe laughed contemptuously. "No; there's something behind all this, by God! Some one is trying to play us a trick!" The skipper went his way, offended.

Jeppe stuck to it that there was something uncanny about it—the idea of a machine making boots was enough to haunt him. He kept on returning to it.

"They'll be making human beings by machinery too, soon!" he exclaimed angrily.

"No," said Baker Jörgen; "there, I believe, the old method will survive!"

One day the skipper came in at the workshop door, banged a pair of shoes down on the window-bench, and went out again. They had been bought in England, and belonged to the helmsman of a bark which had just come into the harbor. The young master looked at them, turned them over in his hands, and looked at them again. Then he called Jeppe. They were sewn throughout—shoes for a grown man, yet sewn throughout! Moreover, the factory stamp was under the sole.

In Jeppe's opinion they were not worth a couple of shillings. But he could not get over the fact that they were machine-made.

"Then we are superfluous," he said, in a quavering voice. All his old importance seemed to have fallen from him. "For if they can make the one kind on a machine, they can make another. The handicraft is condemned to death, and we shall all be without bread one fine day! Well, I, thank God, have not many years before me." It was the first time that Jeppe had admitted that he owed his life to God.

Every time he came into the workshop he began to expatiate on the same subject. He would stand there turning the hated shoes over between his hands. Then he would criticize them. "We must take more pains next winter."

"Father forgets it's all up with us now," said the young master wearily.

Then the old man would be silent and hobble out. But after a time he would be back again, fingering the boots and shoes, in order to discover defects in them. His thoughts were constantly directed upon this new subject; no song of praise, no eulogy of his handicraft, passed his lips nowadays. If the young master came to him and asked his help in some difficult situation, he would refuse it; he felt no further desire to triumph over youth with his ancient dexterity, but shuffled about and shrank into himself. "And all that we have thought so highly of—what's to become of it?" he would ask. "For machines don't make masterpieces and medal work, so where will real good work come in?"

The young master did not look so far ahead; he thought principally of the money that was needed. "Devil take it, Pelle, how are we going to pay every one, Pelle?" he would ask dejectedly. Little Nikas had to look out for something else; their means would not allow them to keep a journeyman. So Nikas decided to marry, and to set up as a master shoemaker in the north. The shoemaker of the Baptist community had just died, and he could get plenty of customers by joining the sect; he was already attending their services. "But go to work carefully!" said Jeppe. "Or matters will go awry!"

It was a bad shock to all of them. Klaussen went bankrupt and had to find work on the new harbor. Blom ran away, deserting his wife and children, and they had to go home to the house of her parents. In the workshop matters had been getting worse for a long time. And now this had happened, throwing a dazzling light upon the whole question. But the young master refused to believe the worst. "I shall soon be well again now," he said. "And then you will just see how I'll work up the business!" He lay in bed more often now, and was susceptible to every change in the weather. Pelle had to see to everything.

"Run and borrow something!" the master would say. And if Pelle returned with a refusal, he would look at the boy with his wide, wondering eyes. "They've got the souls of grocers!" he would cry. "Then we must peg those soles!"

“That won’t answer with ladies’ patent-leather shoes!” replied Pelle very positively.

“Damn and blast it all, it will answer! We’ll black the bottom with cobbler’s wax.”

But when the black was trodden off, Jungfer Lund and the others called, and were wroth. They were not accustomed to walk in pegged shoes. “It’s a misunderstanding!” said the young master, the perspiration standing in clear beads on his forehead. Or he would hide and leave it to Pelle. When it was over, he would reach up to the shelf, panting with exhaustion. “Can’t you do anything for me, Pelle?” he whispered.

One day Pelle plucked up courage and said it certainly wasn’t healthy to take so much spirit; the master needed so much now.

“Healthy?” said the master; “no, good God, it isn’t healthy! But the beasts demand it! In the beginning I couldn’t get the stuff down, especially beer; but now I’ve accustomed myself to it. If I didn’t feed them, they’d soon rush all over me and eat me up.”

“Do they swallow it, then?”

“I should think they do! As much as ever you like to give them. Or have you ever seen me tipsy? I can’t get drunk; the tubercles take it all. And for them it’s sheer poison. On the day when I am able to get drunk again I shall thank God, for then the beasts will be dead and the spirit will be able to attack me again. Then it’ll only be a question of stopping it, otherwise it’ll play the deuce with my mind!”

Since the journeyman had left, the meals had become more meager than ever. The masters had not had enough money in the spring to buy a pig. So there was no one to consume the scraps. Now they had to eat them all themselves. Master Andres was never at the table; he took scarcely any nourishment nowadays; a piece of bread-and-butter now and again, that was all. Breakfast, at half-past seven, they ate alone. It consisted of salt herrings, bread and hog’s lard, and soup. The soup was made out of all sorts of odds and ends of bread and porridge, with an addition of thin beer. It was fermented and unpalatable. What was left over from breakfast was put into a great crock which stood in one corner of the kitchen, on the floor, and this was warmed up again the next morning, with the addition of a little fresh beer. So it went on all the year round. The contents were renewed only when some one kicked the crock so that it broke. The boys confined themselves to the herrings and the lard; the soup they did not use except to fish about in it. They made a jest of it, throwing all sorts of objects into it, and finding them again after half a year.

Jeppe was still lying in the alcove, asleep; his nightcap was hoved awry over one eye. Even in his sleep he still had a comical expression of self-importance. The room was thick with vapor; the old man had his own way of getting air, breathing it in with a long snort and letting it run rumbling through him. If it got too bad, the boys would make a noise; then he would wake and scold them.

They were longing for food by dinner-time; the moment Jeppe called his “Dinner!” at the door they threw everything down, ranged themselves according to age, and tumbled in behind him. They held one another tightly by the coat-tails, and made stupid grimaces. Jeppe was enthroned at the head of the table, a little cap on his head, trying to preserve seemly table-manners. No one might begin before him or continue after he had finished. They snatched at their spoons, laid them down again with a terrified glance at the old man, and nearly exploded with suppressed laughter. “Yes, I’m very hungry to-day, but there’s no need for you to remark it!” he would say warningly, once they were in full swing. Pelle would wink at the others, and they would go on eating, emptying one dish after another. “There’s no respect nowadays!” roared Jeppe, striking on the table. But when he did this discipline suddenly entered into them, and they all struck the table after him in turn. Sometimes, when matters got too bad, Master Andres had to find some reason for coming into the room.

The long working-hours, the bad food, and the foul air of the workshop left their mark on Pelle. His attachment to Master Andres was limitless; he could sit there till midnight and work without payment if a promise had been made to finish some particular job. But otherwise he was imperceptibly slipping into the general slackness, sharing the others’ opinion of the day as something utterly abominable, which one must somehow endeavor to get through. To work at half pressure was a physical necessity; his rare movements wearied him, and he felt less inclined to work than to brood. The semi-darkness of the sunless workshop bleached his skin and filled him with unhealthy imaginations.

He did little work now on his own account; but he had learned to manage with very little. Whenever he contrived to get hold of a ten-öre piece, he bought a savings-stamp, so that in this way he was able to collect a few shillings, until they had grown to quite a little sum. Now and again, too, he got a little help from Lasse, but Lasse found it more and more difficult to spare anything. Moreover, he had learned to compose his mind by his work.

XIX

The crazy Anker was knocking on the workshop door. “Bjerregrav is dead!” he said solemnly. “Now there is only one who can mourn over poverty!” Then he went away and announced the news to Baker Jörgen. They heard him going from house to house, all along the street.

Bjerregrav dead! Only yesterday evening he was sitting yonder, on the chair by the window-bench, and his crutch was standing in the corner by the door; and he had offered them all his hand in his odd, ingenuous way —that unpleasantly flabby hand, at whose touch they all felt a certain aversion, so importunate was it, and almost skinless in its warmth, so that one felt as if one had involuntarily touched some one on a naked part. Pelle was always reminded of Father Lasse; he too had never learned to put on armor, but had always remained the same loyal, simple soul, unaffected by his hard experience.

The big baker had fallen foul of him as usual. Contact with this childlike, thin-skinned creature, who let his very heart burn itself out in a clasp of his hand, always made him brutal. “Now, Bjerregrav, have you tried it—you know what—since we last saw you?”

Bjerregrav turned crimson. “I am content with the experience which the dear God has chosen for me,” he answered, with blinking eyes.

“Would you believe it, he is over seventy and doesn’t know yet how a woman is made!”

“Because, after all I find it suits me best to live alone, and then there’s my club foot.”

“So he goes about asking questions about everything, things such as every child knows about,” said Jeppe, in a superior tone. “Bjerregrav has never rubbed off his childish innocence.”

Yet as he was going home, and Pelle was helping him over the gutter, he was still in his mood of everlasting wonder.

“What star is that?” he said; “it has quite a different light to the others. It looks so red to me—if only we don’t have a severe winter, with the soil frozen and dear fuel for all the poor people.” Bjerregrav sighed.

“You mustn’t look at the moon so much. Skipper Andersen came by his accident simply because he slept on deck and the moon shone right in his face; now he has gone crazy!”

Yesterday evening just the same as always—and now dead! And no one had known or guessed, so that they might have been a little kinder to him just at the last! He died in his bed, with his mind full of their last disdainful words, and now they could never go to him and say: “Don’t take any notice of it, Bjerregrav; we didn’t mean to be unkind.” Perhaps their behavior had embittered his last hours. At all events, there stood Jeppe and Brother Jörgen, and they could not look one another in the face; an immovable burden weighed upon them.

And it meant a void—as when the clock in a room stops ticking. The faithful sound of his crutch no longer approached the workshop about six o’clock. The young master grew restless about that time; he could not get used to the idea of Bjerregrav’s absence.

“Death is a hateful thing,” he would say, when the truth came over him; “it is horribly repugnant. Why must one go away from here without leaving the least part of one behind? Now I listen for Bjerregrav’s crutch, and there’s a void in my ears, and after a time there won’t be even that. Then he will be forgotten, and perhaps more besides, who will have followed him, and so it goes on forever. Is there anything reasonable about it all, Pelle? They talk about Heaven, but what should I care about sitting on a damp cloud and singing ‘Hallelujah’? I’d much rather go about down here and get myself a drink—especially if I had a sound leg!”

The apprentices accompanied him to the grave. Jeppe wished them to do so, as a sort of atonement. Jeppe himself and Baker Jörgen, in tall hats, walked just behind the coffin. Otherwise only a few poor women and children followed, who had joined the procession out of curiosity. Coachman Due drove the hearse. He had now bought a pair of horses, and this was his first good job.

Otherwise life flowed onward, sluggish and monotonous. Winter had come again, with its commercial stagnation, and the Iceland trade was ruined. The shoemakers did no more work by artificial light; there was so little to do that it would not repay the cost of the petroleum; so the hanging lamp was put on one side and the old tin lamp was brought out again. That was good enough to sit round and to gossip by. The neighbors would come into the twilight of the workshop; if Master

Andres was not there, they would slip out again, or they would sit idly there until Jeppe said it was bed-time. Pelle had begun to occupy himself with carving once more; he got as close to the lamp as possible, listening to the conversation while he worked upon a button which was to be carved like a twenty-five-öre piece. Morten was to have it for a tie-pin.

The conversation turned upon the weather, and how fortunate it was that the frost had not yet come to stop the great harbor works. Then it touched upon the "Great Power," and from him it glanced at the crazy Anker, and poverty, and discontent. The Social Democrats "over yonder" had for a long time been occupying the public mind. All the summer through disquieting rumors had crossed the water; it was quite plain that they were increasing their power and their numbers —but what were they actually aiming at? In any case, it was nothing good. "They must be the very poorest who are revolting," said Wooden-leg Larsen. "So their numbers must be very great!" It was as though one heard the roaring of something or other out on the horizon, but did not know what was going on there. The echo of the upheaval of the lower classes was quite distorted by the time it reached the island; people understood just so much, that the lowest classes wanted to turn God's appointed order upside down and to get to the top themselves, and involuntarily their glance fell covertly on the poor in the town. But these were going about in their customary half-slumber, working when there was work to be had and contenting themselves with that. "That would be the last straw," said Jeppe, "here, where we have such a well-organized poor-relief!"

Baker Jörgen was the most eager—every day he came with news of some kind to discuss. Now they had threatened the life of the King himself! And now the troops were called out.

"The troops!" The young master made a disdainful gesture. "That'll help a lot! If they merely throw a handful of dynamite among the soldiers there won't be a trouser-button left whole! No, they'll conquer the capital now!" His cheeks glowed: he saw the event already in his mind's eye. "Yes, and then? Then they'll plunder the royal Mint!"

"Yes—no. Then they'll come over here—the whole party!"

"Come over here? No, by God! We'd call out all the militia and shoot them down from the shore. I've put my gun in order already!"

One day Marker came running in. "The pastrycook's got a new journeyman from over yonder—and he's a Social Democrat!" he cried breathlessly. "He came yesterday evening by the steamer." Baker Jörgen had also heard the news.

"Yes, now they're on you!" said Jeppe, as one announcing disaster. "You've all been trifling with the new spirit of the times. This would have been something for Bjerregrav to see—him with his compassion for the poor!"

"Let the tailor rest in peace in his grave," said Wooden-leg Larsen, in a conciliatory tone. "You mustn't blame him for the angry masses that exist to-day. He wanted nothing but people's good—and perhaps these people want to do good, too!"

"Good!" Jeppe was loud with scorn. "They want to overturn law and order, and sell the fatherland to the Germans! They say the sum is settled already, and all!"

"They say they'll be let into the capital during the night, when our own people are asleep," said Marker.

"Yes," said Master Andres solemnly. "They've let out that the key's hidden under the mat—the devils!" Here Baker Jörgen burst into a shout of laughter; his laughter filled the whole workshop when he once began.

They guessed what sort of a fellow the new journeyman might be. No one had seen him yet. "He certainly has red hair and a red beard," said Baker Jörgen. "That's the good God's way of marking those who have signed themselves to the Evil One."

"God knows what the pastrycook wants with him," said Jeppe. "People of that sort can't do anything—they only ask. I've heard the whole lot of them are free-thinkers."

"What a lark!" The young master shook himself contentedly. "He won't grow old here in the town!"

"Old?" The baker drew up his heavy body. "To-morrow I shall go to the pastrycook and demand that he be sent away. I am commander of the militia, and I know all the townsfolk think as I do."

Drejer thought it might be well to pray from the pulpit—as in time of plague, and in the bad year when the field-mice infested the country.

Next morning Jörgen Kofod looked in on his way to the pastrycook's. He was wearing his old militia coat, and at his belt hung the leather

wallet in which flints for the old flint-locks had been carried many years before. He filled his uniform well; but he came back without success. The pastrycook praised his new journeyman beyond all measure, and wouldn't hear a word of sending him away. He was quite besotted. "But we shall buy there no more—we must all stick to that—and no respectable family can deal with the traitor in future."

"Did you see the journeyman, Uncle Jörgen?" asked Master Andres eagerly.

"Yes, I saw him—that is, from a distance! He had a pair of terrible, piercing eyes; but he shan't bewitch me with his serpent's glance!"

In the evening Pelle and the others were strolling about the market in order to catch a glimpse of the new journeyman—there were a number of people there, and they were all strolling to and fro with the same object in view. But he evidently kept the house.

And then one day, toward evening, the master came tumbling into the workshop. "Hurry up, damn it all!" he cried, quite out of breath; "he's passing now!" They threw down their work and stumbled along the passage into the best room, which at ordinary times they were not allowed to enter. He was a tall, powerful man, with full cheeks and a big, dashing moustache, quite as big as the master's. His nostrils were distended, and he held his chest well forward. His jacket and wasitcoat were open, as though he wanted more air. Behind him slunk a few street urchins, in the hope of seeing something; they had quite lost their accustomed insolence, and followed him in silence.

"He walks as though the whole town belonged to him!" said Jeppe scornfully. "But we'll soon finish with him here!"

XX

Out in the street some one went by, and then another, and then another; there was quite a trampling of feet. The young master knocked on the wall. “What in the world is it, Pelle?” He did not mean to get up that day.

Pelle ran out to seek information. “Jen’s father has got delirium— he’s cleared the whole harbor and is threatening to kill them all!”

The master raised his head a little. “By God, I believe I shall get up!” His eyes were glistening; presently he had got into his clothes, and limped out of doors; they heard him coughing terribly in the cold.

Old Jeppe put his official cap in his pocket before he ran out; perhaps the authorities would be needed. For a time the apprentices sat staring at the door like sick birds; then they, too, ran out of the house.

Outside everything was in confusion. The wildest rumors were flying about as to what Stonemason Jörgensen had done. The excitement could not have been greater had a hostile squadron come to anchor and commenced to bombard the town. Everybody dropped what he was holding and rushed down to the harbor. The smaller side-streets were one unbroken procession of children and old women and small employers in their aprons. Old gouty seamen awoke from their decrepit slumber and hobbled away, their hands dropped to the back of their loins and their faces twisted with pain.

> “Toot aroot aroot aroot,
> All the pitchy snouts!”

A few street-urchins allowed themselves this little diversion, as Pelle came running by with the other apprentices; otherwise all attention was concentrated on the one fact that the “Great Power” had broken out again! A certain festivity might have been noted on the faces of the hurrying crowd; a vivid expectation. The stonemason had been quiet for a long time now; he had labored like a giant beast of burden, to all appearance extinguished, but toiling like an elephant, and quietly taking home a couple of kroner in the evening. It was almost painful to watch him, and a disappointed silence gathered about him. And now came a sudden explosion, thrilling everybody through!

All had something to say of the “strong man” while they hastened down to the harbor. Everybody had foreseen that it must come; he had for a long time looked so strange, and had done nothing wrong, so that it was only a wonder that it hadn’t come sooner! Such people ought not really to be at large; they ought to be shut up for life! They went over the events of his life for the hundredth time—from the day when he came trudging into town, young and fearless in his rags, to find a market for his energies, until the time when he drove his child into the sea and settled down as a lunatic.

Down by the harbor the people were swarming; everybody who could creep or crawl was stationed there. The crowd was good-humored, in spite of the cold and the hard times; the people stamped their feet and cracked jokes. The town had in a moment shaken off its winter sleep; the people clambered up on the blocks of stone, or hung close-packed over the rough timber frames that were to be sunk in building the breakwater. They craned their necks and started nervously, as though some one might come up suddenly and hit them over the head. Jens and Morten were there, too; they stood quite apart and were speaking to one another. They looked on mournfully, with shy, harrassed glances, and where the great slip ran obliquely down to the floor of the basin the workmen stood in crowds; they hitched up their trousers, for the sake of something to do, exchanged embarrassed glances, and swore.

But down on the floor of the great basin the “Great Power” ruled supreme. He was moving about alone, and he seemed to be as unconscious of his surroundings as a child absorbed in play; he had some purpose of his own to attend to. But what that was it was not easy to tell. In one hand he held a bundle of dynamite cartridges; with the other he was leaning on a heavy iron bar. His movements were slow and regular, not unlike those of a clumsy bear. When he stood up, his comrades shouted to him excitedly; they would come and tear him into little pieces; they would slit his belly so that he could see his own bowels; they would slash him with their knives and rub his wounds with vitriol if he didn’t at once lay down his weapons and let them come down to their work.

But the “Great Power” did not deign to answer. Perhaps he never heard them. When he raised his head his glance swept the distance,

laden with a mysterious burden which was not human. That face, with its deadly weariness, seemed in its sadness to be turned upon some distant place whither none could follow him. “He is mad!” they whispered; “God has taken away his wits!” Then he bent himself to his task again; he seemed to be placing the cartridges under the great breakwater which he himself had proposed. He was pulling cartridges out of every pocket; that was why they had stuck out from his body curiously.

“What the devil is he going to do now? Blow up the breakwater?” they asked, and tried to creep along behind the causeway, so as to come upon him from behind. But he had eyes all round him; at the slightest movement on their part he was there with his iron bar.

The whole works were at a standstill! Two hundred men stood idle hour after hour, growling and swearing and threatening death and the devil, but no one ventured forward. The overseer ran about irresolutely, and even the engineer had lost his head; everything was in a state of dissolution. The district judge was walking up and down in full uniform, with an impenetrable expression of face; his mere presence had a calming effect, but he did nothing.

Each proposal made was wilder than the last. Some wanted to make a gigantic screen which might be pushed toward him; others suggested capturing him with a huge pair of tongs made of long balks of timber; but no one attempted to carry out these suggestions; they were only too thankful that he allowed them to stand where they were. The “Great Power” could throw a dynamite cartridge with such force that it would explode where it struck and sweep away everything around it.

“The tip-wagons!” cried some one. Here at last was an idea! The wagons were quickly filled with armed workmen. The catch was released, but the wagons did not move. The “Great Power” with his devilish cunning, had been before them; he had spiked the endless chain so that it could not move. And now he struck away the under-pinning of a few of the supports, so that the wagons could not be launched upon him by hand.

This was no delirium; no one had ever yet seen delirium manifest itself in such a way! And he had touched no spirit since the day they had carried his daughter home. No; it was the quietest resolution imaginable; when they got up after the breakfast-hour and were strolling down to the slip, he stood there with his iron bar and quietly commanded them to keep away—the harbor belonged to him! They had received more than one sharp blow before they understood that he was in earnest; but there was no malice in him—one could see quite plainly how it hurt him to strike them. It was certainly the devil riding him—against his own will.

But where was it going to end? They had had enough of it now! For now the great harbor bell was striking midday, and there was something derisive in the sound, as though it was jeering at respectable people who only wanted to resume their work. They didn’t want to waste the whole day; neither did they want to risk life and limb against the fool’s tricks of a lunatic. Even the mighty Bergendal had left his contempt of death at home to-day, and was content to grumble like the rest.

“We must knock a hole in the dam,” he said, “then the brute may perish in the waves!”

They immediately picked up their tools, in order to set to work. The engineer threatened them with the law and the authorities; it would cost thousands of kroner to empty the harbor again. They would not listen to him; what use was he if he couldn’t contrive for them to do their work in peace?

They strolled toward the dam, with picks and iron crowbars, in order to make the breach; the engineer and the police were thrust aside. Now it was no longer a matter of work; it was a matter of showing that two hundred men were not going to allow one crazy devil to make fools of them. Beelzebub had got to be smoked out. Either the “Great Power” would come up from the floor of the basin, or he would drown.

“You shall have a full day’s wages!” cried the engineer, to hold them back. They did not listen; but when they reached the place of the intended breach, the “Great Power” was standing at the foot of the dam, swinging his pick so that the walls of the basin resounded. He beamed with helpfulness at every blow; he had posted himself at the spot where the water trickled in, and they saw with horror what an effect his blows had. It was sheer madness to do what he was doing there.

“He’ll fill the harbor with water, the devil!” they cried, and they hurled stones at his head. “And such a work as it was to empty it!”

The “Great Power” took cover behind a pile and worked away.

Then there was nothing for it but to shoot him down before he had

attained his object. A charge of shot in the legs, if nothing more, and he would at least be rendered harmless. The district judge was at his wits' end; but Wooden-leg Larsen was already on the way home to fetch his gun. Soon he came stumping back, surrounded by a swarm of boys.

"I've loaded it with coarse salt!" he cried, so that the judge might hear.

"Now you'll be shot dead!" they called down to him. In reply, the "Great Power" struck his pick into the foot of the dam, so that the trampled clay sighed and the moisture rose underfoot. A long crackling sound told them that the first plank was shattered.

The final resolve had been formed quite of itself; everybody was speaking of shooting him down as though the man had been long ago sentenced, and now everybody was longing for the execution. They hated the man below there with a secret hatred which needed no explanation; his defiance and unruliness affected them like a slap in the face; they would gladly have trampled him underfoot if they could.

They shouted down insults; they reminded him how in his presumption he had ruined his family, and driven his daughter to suicide; and they cast in his face his brutal attack on the rich shipowner Monsen, the benefactor of the town. For a time they roused themselves from their apathy in order to take a hand in striking him down. And now it must be done thoroughly; they must have peace from this fellow, who couldn't wear his chains quietly, but must make them grate like the voice of hatred that lay behind poverty and oppression.

The judge leaned out over the quay, in order to read his sentence over the "Great Power"—three times must it be read, so the man might have opportunity to repent. He was deathly pale, and at the second announcement he started convulsively; but the "Great Power" threw no dynamite cartridges at him; he merely lifted his hand to his head, as though in greeting, and made a few thrusting motions in the air with two of his fingers, which stood out from his forehead like a pair of horns. From where the apothecary stood in a circle of fine ladies a stifled laugh was heard. All faces were turned to where the burgomaster's wife stood tall and stately on a block of stone. But she gazed down unflinchingly at the "Great Power" as though she had never seen him before.

On the burgomaster the gesture had an effect like that of an explosion. "Shoot him down!" he roared, with purple face, stumbling excitedly along the breakwater. "Shoot him down, Larsen!"

But no one heeded his command. All were streaming toward the wagon-slip, where an old, faded little woman was in the act of groping her way along the track toward the floor of the basin. "It's the 'Great Power's' mother!" The word passed from mouth to mouth. "No! How little and old she is! One can hardly believe she could have brought such a giant into the world!"

Excitedly they followed her, while she tottered over the broken stone of the floor of the basin, which was littered with the *debris* of explosions until it resembled an ice-floe under pressure. She made her way but slowly, and it looked continually as though she must break her legs. But the old lady persevered, bent and withered though she was, with her shortsighted eyes fixed on the rocks before her feet.

Then she perceived her son, who stood with his iron bar poised in his hand. "Throw the stick away, Peter!" she cried sharply, and mechanically he let the iron rod fall. He gave way before her, slowly, until she had pinned him in a corner and attempted to seize him; then he pushed her carefully aside, as though she was something that inconvenienced him.

A sigh went through the crowd, and crept round the harbor like a wandering shudder. "He strikes his own mother—he must be mad!" they repeated, shuddering.

But the old woman was on her legs again. "Do you strike your own mother, Peter?" she cried, with sheer amazement in her voice, and reached up after his ear; she could not reach so far; but the "Great Power" bent down as though something heavy pressed upon him, and allowed her to seize his ear. Then she drew him away, over stock and stone, in a slanting path to the slipway, where the people stood like a wall. And he went, bowed, across the floor of the basin, like a great beast in the little woman's hands.

Up on the quay the police stood ready to fall upon the "Great Power" with ropes; but the old woman was like pepper and salt when she saw their intention. "Get out of the way, or I'll let him loose on you!" she hissed. "Don't you see he has lost his intellect? Would you attack a man whom God has smitten?"

"Yes, he is mad!" said the people, in a conciliatory tone; "let his mother punish him—she is the nearest to him!"

XXI

Now Pelle and the youngest apprentice had to see to everything, for in November Jens had finished his term and had left at once. He had not the courage to go to Copenhagen to seek his fortune. So he rented a room in the poor quarter of the town and settled there with his young woman. They could not get married; he was only nineteen years of age. When Pelle had business in the northern portion of the town he used to look in on them. The table stood between the bed and the window, and there sat Jens, working on repairs for the poor folk of the neighborhood. When he had managed to get a job the girl would stand bending over him, waiting intently until he had finished, so that she could get something to eat. Then she would come back and cook something right away at the stove, and Jens would sit there and watch her with burning eyes until he had more work in hand. He had grown thin, and sported a sparse pointed beard; a lack of nourishment was written in both their faces. But they loved one another, and they helped one another in everything, as awkwardly as two children who are playing at “father and mother.” They had chosen the most dismal locality; the lane fell steeply to the sea, and was full of refuse; mangy cats and dogs ran about, dragging fish-offal up the steps of the houses and leaving it lying there. Dirty children were grubbing about before every door.

One Sunday morning, when Pelle had run out there to see them, he heard a shriek from one of the cottages, and the sound of chairs overturned. Startled, he stood still. “That’s only one-eyed Johann beating his wife,” said an eight-year-old girl; “he does that almost every day.”

Before the door, on a chair, sat an old man, staring imperturbably at a little boy who continually circled round him.

Suddenly the child ran inward, laid his hands on the old man’s knee, and said delightedly: “Father runs round the table—mother runs round the table—father beats mother—mother runs round the table and—cries.” He imitated the crying, laughed all over his little idiot’s face, and dribbled. “Yes, yes,” was all the old man said. The child had no eyebrows, and the forehead was hollow over the eyes. Gleefully he ran round and round, stamping and imitating the uproar within. “Yes, yes,” said the old man imperturbably, “yes, yes!”

At the window of one of the cottages sat a woman, gazing out thoughtfully, her forehead leaning against the sash-bar. Pelle recognized her; he greeted her cheerfully. She motioned him to the door. Her bosom was still plump, but there was a shadow over her face. “Hans!” she cried uncertainly, “here is Pelle, whose doing it was that we found one another!”

The young workman replied from within the room: “Then he can clear out, and I don’t care if he looks sharp about it!” He spoke threateningly.

In spite of the mild winter, Master Andres was almost always in bed now. Pelle had to receive all instructions, and replace the master as well as he could. There was no making of new boots now—only repairs. Every moment the master would knock on the wall, in order to gossip a little.

“To-morrow I shall get up,” he would say, and his eyes would shine; “yes, that I shall, Pelle! Give me sunlight tomorrow, you devil’s imp! This is the turning-point—now nature is turning round in me. When that’s finished I shall be quite well! I can feel how it’s raging in my blood—it’s war to the knife now—but the good sap is conquering! You should see me when the business is well forward— this is nothing to what it will be! And you won’t forget to borrow the list of the lottery-drawings?”

He would not admit it to himself, but he was sinking. He no longer cursed the clergy, and one day Jeppe silently went for the pastor. When he had gone, Master Jeppe knocked on the wall.

“It’s really devilish queer,” he said, “for suppose there should be anything in it? And then the pastor is so old, he ought rather to be thinking of himself.” The master lay there and looked thoughtful; he was staring up at the ceiling. He would lie all day like that; he did not care about reading now. “Jens was really a good boy,” he would say suddenly. “I could never endure him, but he really had a good disposition. And do you believe that I shall ever be a man again?”

“Yes, when once the warm weather comes,” said Pelle.

From time to time the crazy Anker would come to ask after Master Andres. Then the master would knock on the wall. “Let him come in, then,” he said to Pelle. “I find myself so terribly wearisome.” Anker had quite given up the marriage with the king’s eldest daughter, and had now taken matters into his own hands. He was now working at a clock

which would *be* the “new time” itself, and which would go in time with the happiness of the people. He brought the wheels and spring and the whole works with him, and explained them, while his gray eyes, fixed out-of-doors, wandered from one object to another. They were never on the thing he was exhibiting. He, like all the others, had a blind confidence in the young master, and explained his invention in detail. The clock would be so devised that it would show the time only when every one in the land had what he wanted. “Then one can always see and know if anybody is suffering need—there’ll be no excuse then! For the time goes and goes, and they get nothing to eat; and one day their hour comes, and they go hungry into the grave.” In his temples that everlasting thing was beating which seemed to Pelle like the knocking of a restless soul imprisoned there; and his eyes skipped from one object to another with their vague, indescribable expression.

The master allowed himself to be quite carried away by Anker’s talk as long as it lasted; but as soon as the watchmaker was on the other side of the door he shook it all off. “It’s only the twaddle of a madman,” he said, astonished at himself.

Then Anker repeated his visit, and had something else to show. It was a cuckoo; every ten-thousandth year it would appear to the hour and cry “Cuckoo!” The time would not be shown any longer—only the long, long course of time—which never comes to an end—eternity. The master looked at Anker bewildered. “Send him away, Pelle!” he whispered, wiping the sweat from his forehead: “he makes me quite giddy; he’ll turn me crazy with his nonsense!”

Pelle ought really to have spent Christmas at home, but the master would not let him leave him. “Who will chat with me all that time and look after everything?” he said. And Pelle himself was not so set on going; it was no particular pleasure nowadays to go home. Karna was ill, and Father Lasse had enough to do to keep her in good spirits. He himself was valiant enough, but it did not escape Pelle that as time went on he was sinking deeper into difficulties. He had not paid the latest instalment due, and he had not done well with the winter stone-breaking, which from year to year had helped him over the worst. He had not sufficient strength for all that fell to his lot. But he was plucky. “What does it matter if I’m a few hundred kroner in arrears when I have improved the property to the tune of several thousand?” he would say.

Pelle was obliged to admit the truth of that. “Raise a loan,” he advised.

Lasse did try to do so. Every time he was in the town he went to the lawyers and the savings-banks. But he could not raise a loan on the land, as on paper it belonged to the commune, until, in a given number of years, the whole of the sum to which Lasse had pledged himself should be paid up. On Shrove Tuesday he was again in town, and then he had lost his cheerful humor. “Now we know it, we had better give up at once,” he said despondently, “for now Ole Jensen is haunting the place—you know, he had the farm before me and hanged himself because he couldn’t fulfill his engagements. Karna saw him last night.”

“Nonsense!” said Pelle. “Don’t believe such a thing!” But he could not help believing in it just a little himself.

“You think so? But you see yourself that things are always getting more difficult for us—and just now, too, when we have improved the whole property so far, and ought to be enjoying the fruit of our labor. And Karna can’t get well again,” he added despondently.

“Well, who knows?—perhaps it’s only superstition!” he cried at last. He had courage for another attempt.

Master Andres was keeping his bed. But he was jolly enough there; the more quickly he sank, the more boldly he talked. It was quite wonderful to listen to his big words, and to see him lying there so wasted, ready to take his departure when the time should come.

At the end of February the winter was so mild that people were already beginning to look for the first heralds of spring; but then in one night came the winter from the north, blustering southward on a mighty ice-floe. Seen from the shore it looked as though all the vessels in the world had hoisted new white sails, and were on the way to Bornholm, to pay the island a visit, before they once again set out, after the winter’s rest, on their distant voyages. But rejoicings over the breaking-up of the ice were brief; in four-and- twenty hours the island was hemmed in on every side by the ice-pack, so that there was not a speck of open water to be seen.

And then the snow began. “We really thought it was time to begin work on the land,” said the people; but they could put up with the cold—there was still time enough. They proceeded to snowball one another, and set

their sledges in order; all through the winter there had been no toboggan-slide. Soon the snow was up to one's ankles, and the slide was made. Now it might as well stop snowing. It might lie a week or two, so that people might enjoy a few proper sleighing-parties. But the snow continued to flutter down, until it reached to the knee, and then to the waist; and by the time people were going to bed it was no longer possible to struggle through it. And those who did not need to rise before daylight were very near not getting out of bed at all, for in the night a snowstorm set in, and by the morning the snow reached to the roofs and covered all the windows. One could hear the storm raging about the chimneys, but down below it was warm enough. The apprentices had to go through the living-room to reach the workshop. The snow was deep there and had closed all outlets.

"What the devil is it?" said Master Andres, looking at Pelle in alarm. "Is the world coming to an end?"

Was the world coming to an end? Well, it might have come to an end already; they could not hear the smallest sound from without, to tell them whether their fellow-men were living still, or were already dead. They had to burn lamps all day long; but the coal was out in the snow, so they must contrive to get to the shed. They all pushed against the upper half-door of the kitchen, and succeeded in forcing it so far open that Pelle could just creep through. But once out there it was impossible to move. He disappeared in the mass of snow. They must dig a path to the well and the coal-shed; as for food, they would have to manage as best they could. At noon the sun came out, and so far the snow melted on the south side of the house that the upper edge of the window admitted a little daylight. A faint milky shimmer shone through the snow. But there was no sign of life outside.

"I believe we shall starve, like the people who go to the North Pole," said the master, his eyes and mouth quite round with excitement. His eyes were blazing like lamps; he was deep in the world's fairy-tale.

During the evening they dug and bored halfway to Baker Jörgen's. They must at least secure their connection with the baker. Jeppe went in with a light. "Look out that it doesn't fall on you," he said warningly. The light glistened in the snow, and the boys proceeded to amuse themselves. The young master lay in bed, and called out at every sound that came to him from outside—so loudly that his cough was terrible. He could not contain himself for curiosity. "I'll go and see the robbers' path, too, by God!" he said, over and over again. Jeppe scolded him, but he took no notice. He had his way, got into his trousers and fur jacket, and had a counterpane thrown about him. But he could not stand up, and with a despairing cry he fell back on the bed.

Pelle watched him until his heart burned within him. He took the master on his arm, and supported him carefully until they entered the tunnel. "You are strong; good Lord, you are strong!" The master held Pelle convulsively, one arm about his neck, while he waved the other in the air, as defiantly as the strong man in the circus. "Hip, hip!" He was infected by Pelle's strength. Cautiously he turned round in the glittering vault; his eyes shone like crystals of ice. But the fever was raging in his emaciated body. Pelle felt it like a devouring fire through all his clothes.

Next day the tunnel was driven farther—as far as Baker Jörgen's steps, and their connection with the outer world was secure. At Jörgen's great things had happened in the course of the last four- and-twenty hours. Marie had been so excited by the idea that the end of the world was perhaps at hand that she had hastily brought the little Jörgen into it. Old Jörgen was in the seventh heaven; he had to come over at once and tell them about it. "He's a regular devil, and he's the very image of me!"

"That I can well believe!" cried Master Andres, and laughed. "And is Uncle pleased?"

But Jeppe took the announcement very coolly; the condition of his brother's household did not please him. "Is Sören delighted with the youngster?" he asked cautiously.

"Sören?" The baker gave vent to a shout of laughter. "He can think of nothing but the last judgment—he's praying to the dear God!"

Later in the day the noise of shovels was heard. The workmen were outside; they cleared one of the pavements so that one could just get by; but the surface of the street was still on a level with the roofs.

Now one could get down to the harbor once more; it felt almost as though one were breathing again after a choking-fit. As far as the eyes could reach the ice extended, packed in high ridges and long ramparts where the waves had battled. A storm was brewing. "God be thanked!" said the old seamen, "now the ice will go!" But it did not move. And then

they understood that the whole sea was frozen; there could not be one open spot as big as a soup-plate on which the storm could begin its work. But it was a wonderful sight, to see the sea lying dead and motionless as a rocky desert in the midst of this devastating storm.

And one day the first farmer came to town, with news of the country. The farms inland were snowed up; men had to dig pathways into the open fields, and lead the horses in one by one; but of accidents he knew nothing.

All activities came to a standstill. No one could do any work, and everything had to be used sparingly—especially coals and oil, both of which threatened to give out. The merchants had issued warnings as early as the beginning of the second week. Then the people began to take to all sorts of aimless doings; they built wonderful things with the snow, or wandered over the ice from town to town. And one day a dozen men made ready to go with the ice-boat to Sweden, to fetch the post; people could no longer do without news from the outside world. On Christiansö they had hoisted the flag of distress; provisions were collected in small quantities, here, there, and everywhere, and preparations were made for sending an expedition thither.

And then came the famine; it grew out of the frozen earth, and became the only subject of conversation. But only those who were well provided for spoke of it; those who suffered from want were silent. People appealed to organized charity; there was Bjerregrav's five thousand kroner in the bank. But no, they were not there. Ship-owner Monsen declared that Bjerregrav had recalled the money during his lifetime. There was no statement in his will to the contrary. The people knew nothing positively; but the matter gave plenty of occasion for discussion. However things might be, Monsen was the great man, now as always—and he gave a thousand kroner out of his own pocket for the help of the needy.

Many eyes gazed out over the sea, but the men with the ice-boat did not come back; the mysterious "over yonder" had swallowed them. It was as though the world had sunk into the sea; as if, behind the rugged ice-field which reached to the horizon, there now lay nothing but the abyss.

The "Saints" were the only people who were busy; they held overcrowded meetings, and spoke about the end of the world. All else lay as though dead. Under these conditions, who would worry himself about the future? In the workshop they sat in caps and overcoats and froze; the little coal that still remained had to be saved for the master. Pelle was in his room every moment. The master did not speak much now; he lay there and tossed to and fro, his eyes gazing up at the ceiling; but as soon as Pelle had left him he knocked for him again. "How are things going now?" he would ask wearily. "Run down to the harbor and see whether the ice isn't near breaking—it is so very cold; at this rate the whole earth will become a lump of ice. This evening they will certainly hold another meeting about the last judgment. Run and hear what they think about it."

Pelle went, and returned with the desired information, but when he had done so the master had usually forgotten all about the matter. From time to time Pelle would announce that there seemed to be a bluish shimmer on the sea, far beyond the ice. Then the master's eyes would light up. But he was always cast down again by the next announcement. "The sea will eat up the ice yet—you'll see," said Master Andres, as though from a great distance. "But perhaps it cannot digest so much. Then the cold will get the upper hand, and we shall all be done for!"

But one morning the ice-field drove out seaward, and a hundred men got ready to clear the channel of ice by means of dynamite. Three weeks had gone by since any post had been received from the outer world, and the steamer went out in order to fetch news from Sweden. It was caught by the ice out in the offing, and driven toward the south; from the harbor they could see it for days, drifting about in the ice-pack, now to the north and now to the south.

At last the heavy bonds were broken. But it was difficult alike for the earth and for mankind to resume the normal activities of life. Everybody's health had suffered. The young master could not stand the change from the bitter frost to the thaw; when his cough did not torment him he lay quite still. "Oh, I suffer so dreadfully, Pelle!" he complained, whispering. "I have no pain—but I suffer, Pelle."

But then one morning he was in a good humor. "Now I am past the turning-point," he said, in a weak but cheerful voice; "now you'll just see how quickly I shall get well. What day is it really to-day? Thursday? Death and the devil! then I must renew my lottery ticket! I am so light I

was flying through the air all night long, and if I only shut my eyes I am flying again. That is the force in the new blood—by summer I shall be quite well. Then I shall go out and see the world! But one never—deuce take it!—gets to see the best—the stars and space and all that! So man must learn to fly. But I was there last night."

Then the cough overpowered him again. Pelle had to lift him up; at every spasm there was a wet, slapping sound in his chest. He put one hand on Pelle's shoulder and leaned his forehead against the boy's body. Suddenly the cough ceased; and the white, bony hand convulsively clutched Pelle's shoulder. "Pelle, Pelle!" moaned the master, and he gazed at him, a horrible anxiety in his dying eyes.

"What does he see now?" thought Pelle, shuddering; and he laid him back on his pillow.

XXII

Often enough did Pelle regret that he had wasted five years as apprentice. During his apprenticeship he had seen a hundred, nay, two hundred youths pass into the ranks of the journeymen; and then they were forthwith turned into the streets, while new apprentices from the country filled up the ranks again. There they were, and they had to stand on their own legs. In most cases they had learned nothing properly; they had only sat earning their master's daily bread, and now they suddenly had to vindicate their calling. Emil had gone to the dogs; Peter was a postman and earned a krone a day, and had to go five miles to do that. When he got home he had to sit over the knee-strap and waxed-end, and earn the rest of his livelihood at night. Many forsook their calling altogether. They had spent the best years of their youth in useless labor.

Jens had done no better than the majority. He sat all day over repairs, and had become a small employer, but they were positively starving. The girl had recently had a miscarriage, and they had nothing to eat. When Pelle went to see them they were usually sitting still and staring at one another with red eyes; and over their heads hung the threat of the police, for they were not yet married. "If I only understood farm work!" said Jens. "Then I'd go into the country and serve with a farmer."

Despite all his recklessness, Pelle could not help seeing his own fate in theirs; only his attachment to Master Andres had hindered him from taking to his heels and beginning something else.

Now everything suddenly came to an end; old Jeppe sold the business, with apprentices and all. Pelle did not wish to be sold. Now was his opportunity; now, by a sudden resolve, he might bring this whole chapter to an end.

"You don't go!" said Jeppe threateningly; "you have still a year of your apprenticeship before you! I shall give information to the police about you—and you've learned what that means." But Pelle went. Afterward they could run to the police as often as they liked.

With a light and cheerful mind he rented an attic on the hill above the harbor, and removed his possessions thither. He felt as though he was stretching himself after his years of slavery; he no longer had any one over him, and he had no responsibilities, and no burdens. Year by year he had fought against a continual descent. It had by no means fortified his youthful courage vainly to pit his energies, day after day, against the decline of the workshop; he was only able to hold back the tide a little, and as for the rest, he must perforce sink with the business.

A good share of resignation and a little too much patience with regard to his eighteen years—this was for the moment his net profit from the process of going downhill.

Now it all lay at the foot of the hill, and he could stand aside and draw himself up a little. His conscience was clear, and he felt a somewhat mitigated delight in his freedom; that was all he had won. He had no money for traveling, and his clothes were in a sad case; but that did not trouble him at first. He breathed deeply, and considered the times. The death of the master had left a great void within him; he missed that intelligent glance, which had given him the feeling that he was serving an idea; and the world was a terribly desolate and God-forsaken place now that this glance no longer rested on him, half lucid and half unfathomable, and now that the voice was silent which had always gone to his heart—when it was angry just as much as when it was infinitely mild or frolicsome. And where he was used to hear that voice his ear encountered only solitude.

He did nothing to arouse himself; he was for the present idle. This or that employer was after him, truly, for they all knew that he was a quick and reliable worker, and would willingly have taken him as apprentice, for a krone a week and his food. But Pelle would have none of them; he felt that his future did not lie in that direction. Beyond that he knew nothing, but only waited, with a curious apathy, for something to happen —something, anything. He had been hurried out of his settled way of life, yet he had no desire to set to work. From his window he could look out over the harbor, where the extensive alterations that had been interrupted by the winter were again in full swing. And the murmur of the work rose up to him; they were hewing, boring and blasting; the tip-wagons wandered in long rows up the slipway, threw their contents out on the shore, and returned. His limbs longed for strenuous work with pick and shovel, but his thoughts took another direction.

If he walked along the street the industrious townsfolk would turn to look after him, exchanging remarks which were loud enough to reach his

ear. “There goes Master Jeppe’s apprentice, loafing along,” they would tell one another; “young and strong he is, but he doesn’t like work. He’ll turn into a loafer if you give him time— that you can see. Yes, wasn’t it he who got a beating at the town hall, for his brutal behavior? What else can you expect of him?”

So then Pelle kept the house. Now and again he got a little work from comrades, and poor people of his acquaintance; he did his best without proper implements, or if he could not manage otherwise he would go to Jens. Jens had lasts and an anvil. At other times he sat at the window, freezing, and gazed out over the harbor and the sea. He saw the ships being rigged and fitted, and with every ship that went gliding out of the harbor, to disappear below the horizon, it seemed to him that a last possibility had escaped him; but although he had such a feeling it did not stir him. He shrank from Morten, and did not mix with other people. He was ashamed to be so idle when every one else was working.

As for food, he managed fairly well; he lived on milk and bread, and needed only a few öre a day. He was able to avoid extreme hunger. As for firing, it was not to be thought of. Sitting idly in his room, he enjoyed his repose, apart from a certain feeling of shame; otherwise he was sunk in apathy.

On sunny mornings he got up early and slipped out of the town. All day long he would stroll in the great pine-woods or lie on the dunes by the shore, with the murmur of the sea sounding through his half- slumber. He ate like a dog whatever he could get that was eatable, without particularly thinking of what it consisted. The glitter of the sun on the water, and the poignant scent of the pine-trees, and the first rising of the sluggish sap which came with spring, made him dizzy, and filled his brain with half-wild imaginations. The wild animals were not afraid of him, but only stood for a moment inhaling his scent; then they would resume their daily life before his eyes. They had no power to disturb his half-slumber; but if human beings approached, he would hide himself, with a feeling of hostility, almost of hatred. He experienced a kind of well-being out in the country. The thought often occurred to him that he would give up his dwelling in the town, and creep at night under the nearest tree.

Only when the darkness hid him did he return to his room. He would throw himself, fully dressed, on his bed, and lie there until he fell asleep. As though from a remote distance he could hear his next-door neighbor, Ström the diver, moving about his room with tottering steps, and clattering with his cooking utensils close at hand. The smell of food, mingled with tobacco smoke and the odor of bedding, which crept through the thin board partition, and hovered, heavy and suffocating, above his head, became even more overpowering. His mouth watered. He shut his eyes and forced himself to think of other things, in order to deaden his hunger. Then a light, well-known step sounded on the stairs and some one knocked on the door—it was Morten. “Are you there, Pelle?” he asked. But Pelle did not move.

Pelle could hear Ström attacking his bread with great bites, and chewing it with a smacking sound; and suddenly in the intervals of mastication, another sound was audible; a curious bellowing, which was interrupted every time the man took a bite; it sounded like a child eating and crying simultaneously. That another person should cry melted something in Pelle, and filled him with a feeble sense of something living; he raised himself on his elbows and listened to Ström struggling with terror, while cold shudders chased one another down his back.

People said that Ström lived here because in his youth he had done something at home. Pelle forgot his own need and listened, rigid with terror, to this conflict with the powers of evil. Patiently, through his clenched teeth, in a voice broken by weeping, Ström attacked the throng of tiny devils with words from the Bible. “I’ll do something to you at last that’ll make you tuck your tails between your legs!” he cried, when he had read a little. There was a peculiar heaviness about his speech, which seemed charged with a craving for peace. “Ah!” he cried presently, “you want some more, you damned rascals, do you? Then what have you got to say to this —‘I, the Lord thy God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob’”—Ström hurled the words at them, anger crept into his voice, and suddenly he lost patience. He took the Bible and flung it on the floor. “Satan take you, then!” he shouted, laying about him with the furniture.

Pelle lay bathed in sweat, listening to this demoniac struggle; and it was with a feeling of relief that he heard Ström open the window and drive the devils out over the roofs. The diver fought the last part of the battle with a certain humor. He addressed the corner of the room in a

wheedling, flattering tone. “Come, you sweet, pretty little devil! What a white skin you have—Ström would so like to stroke you a little! No, you didn’t expect that! Are we getting too clever for you? What? You’d still bite, would you, you devil’s brat? There, don’t scowl like that!”—Ström shut the window with an inward chuckle.

For a while he strolled about amusing himself. “Ström is still man enough to clear up Hell itself!” he said, delighted.

Pelle heard him go to bed, and he himself fell asleep. But in the night he awoke; Ström was beating time with his head against the board partition, while he lay tearfully singing “By the waters of Babylon!” But halfway through the psalm the diver stopped and stood up. Pelle heard him groping to and fro across the floor and out on the landing. Seized with alarm, he sprang out of bed and struck a light. Outside stood Ström, in the act of throwing a noose over the rafters. “What do you want here?” he said fiercely. “Can I never get any peace from you?”

“Why do you want to lay hands on yourself?” asked Pelle quietly.

“There’s a woman and a little child sitting there, and she’s forever and forever crying in my ear. I can’t stand it any longer!” answered Ström, knotting his rope.

“Think of the little child, then!” said Pelle firmly, and he tore down the rope. Ström submitted to be led back into his room, and he crawled into bed. But Pelle must stay with him; he dared not put out the light and lie alone in the darkness.

“Is it the devils?” asked Pelle.

“What devils?” Ström knew nothing of any devils. “No, it’s remorse,” he replied. “The child and its mother are continually complaining of my faithlessness.”

But next moment he would spring out of bed and stand there whistling as though he was coaxing a dog. With a sudden grip he seized something by the throat, opened the window, and threw it out. “So, that was it!” he said, relieved; “now there’s none of the devil’s brood left!” He reached after the bottle of brandy.

“Leave it alone!” said Pelle, and he took the bottle away from him. His will increased in strength at the sight of the other’s misery.

Ström crept into bed again. He lay there tossing to and fro, and his teeth chattered. “If I could only have a mouthful!” he said pleadingly; “what harm can that do me? It’s the only thing that helps me! Why should a man always torment himself and play the respectable when he can buy peace for his soul so cheaply? Give me a mouthful!” Pelle passed him the bottle. “You should take one yourself—it sets a man up! Do you think I can’t see that you’ve suffered shipwreck, too? The poor man goes aground so easily, he has so little water under the keel. And who d’you think will help him to get off again if he’s betrayed his own best friend? Take a swallow, then—it wakes the devil in us and gives us courage to live.”

No, Pelle wanted to go to bed.

“Why do you want to go now? Stay here, it is so comfortable. If you could, tell me about something, something that’ll drive that damned noise out of my ears for a bit! There’s a young woman and a little child, and they’re always crying in my ears.”

Pelle stayed, and tried to distract the diver. He looked into his own empty soul, and he could find nothing there; so he told the man of Father Lasse and of their life at Stone Farm, with everything mixed up just as it occurred to him. But his memories rose up within him as he spoke of them, and they gazed at him so mournfully that they awakened his crippled soul to life. Suddenly he felt utterly wretched about himself, and he broke down helplessly.

“Now, now!” said Ström, raising his head. “Is it your turn now? Have you, too, something wicked to repent of, or what is it?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? That’s almost like the women—crying is one of their pleasures. But Ström doesn’t hang his head; he would like to be at peace with himself, if it weren’t for a pair of child’s eyes that look at him so reproachfully, day in and day out, and the crying of a girl! They’re both at home there in Sweden, wringing their hands for their daily bread. And the one that should provide for them is away from them here and throws away his earnings in the beer-houses. But perhaps they’re dead now because I’ve forsaken them. Look you, that is a real grief; there’s no child’s talk about that! But you must take a drink for it.”

But Pelle did not hear; he sat there gazing blindly in front of him. All at once the chair began to sail through air with him; he was almost fainting

with hunger. “Give me just one drink—I’ve had not a mouthful of food to-day!” He smiled a shamefaced smile at the confession.

With one leap, Ström was out of bed. “No, then you shall have something to eat,” he said eagerly, and he fetched some food. “Did one ever see the like—such a desperate devil! To take brandy on an empty stomach! Eat now, and then you can drink yourself full elsewhere! Ström has enough on his conscience without that.... He can drink his brandy himself! Well, well, then, so you cried from hunger! It sounded like a child crying to me!”

Pelle often experienced such nights. They enlarged his world in the direction of the darkness. When he came home late and groped his way across the landing he always experienced a secret terror lest he should rub against Ström’s lifeless body; and he only breathed freely when he heard him snoring or ramping round his room. He liked to look in on him before he went to bed.

Ström was always delighted to see him, and gave him food; but brandy he would not give him. “It’s not for fellows as young as you! You’ll get the taste for it early enough, perhaps.”

“You drink, yourself,” said Pelle obstinately.

“Yes, I drink to deaden remorse. But that’s not necessary in your case.”

“I’m so empty inside,” said Pelle. “Really brandy might set me up a little. I feel as if I weren’t human at all, but a dead thing, a table, for instance.”

“You must do something—anything—or you’ll become a good-for-nothing. I’ve seen so many of our sort go to the dogs; we haven’t enough power of resistance!”

“It’s all the same to me what becomes of me!” replied Pelle drowsily. “I’m sick of the whole thing!”

XXIII

It was Sunday, and Pelle felt a longing for something unaccustomed. At first he went out to see Jens, but the young couple had had a dispute and had come to blows. The girl had let the frying-pan containing the dinner fall into the fire, and Jens had given her a box on the ears. She was still white and poorly after her miscarriage. Now they were sitting each in a corner, sulking like children. They were both penitent, but neither would say the first word. Pelle succeeded in reconciling them, and they wanted him to stay for dinner. “We’ve still got potatoes and salt, and I can borrow a drop of brandy from a neighbor!” But Pelle went; he could not watch them hanging on one another’s necks, half weeping, and kissing and babbling, and eternally asking pardon of one another.

So he went out to Due’s. They had removed to an old merchant’s house where there was room for Due’s horses. They seemed to be getting on well. It was said that the old consul took an interest in them and helped them on. Pelle never went into the house, but looked up Due in the stable, and if he was not at home Pelle would go away again. Anna did not treat him as though he was welcome. Due himself greeted him cordially. If he had no rounds to make he used to hang about the stable and potter round the horses; he did not care about being in the house. Pelle gave him a hand, cutting chaff for him, or helping in anything that came to hand, and then they would go into the house together. Due was at once another man if he had Pelle behind him; he was more decided in his behavior. Anna was gradually and increasingly getting the upper hand over him.

She was just as decided as ever, and kept the house in good order. She no longer had little Marie with her. She dressed her own two children well, and sent them to a school for young children, and she paid for their attendance. She was delightful to look at, and understood how to dress herself, but she would hear nothing good of any one else. Pelle was not smart enough for her; she turned up her nose at his every-day clothes, and in order to make him feel uncomfortable she was always talking about Alfred’s engagement to Merchant Lau’s daughter. This was a fine match for him. “*He* doesn’t loaf about and sleep his time away, and sniff at other people’s doors in order to get their plate of food,” she said. Pelle only laughed; nothing made any particular impression on him nowadays. The children ran about, wearying themselves in their fine clothes —they must not play with the poor children out-of-doors, and must not make themselves dirty. “Oh, play with us for a bit, Uncle Pelle!” they would say, hanging on to him. “Aren’t you our uncle too? Mother says you aren’t our uncle. She’s always wanting us to call the consul uncle, but we just run away. His nose is so horribly red.”

“Does the consul come to see you, then?” asked Pelle.

“Yes, he often comes—he’s here now!”

Pelle peeped into the yard. The pretty wagon had been taken out. “Father’s gone out,” said the children. Then he slipped home again. He stole a scrap of bread and a drop of brandy from Ström, who was not at home, and threw himself on his bed. As the darkness came on he strolled out and lounged, freezing, about the street corners. He had a vague desire to do something. Well-dressed people were promenading up and down the street, and many of his acquaintances were there, taking their girls for a walk; he avoided having to greet them, and to listen to whispered remarks and laughter at his expense. Lethargic as he was, he still had the acute sense of hearing that dated from the time of his disgrace at the town hall. People enjoyed finding something to say when he passed them; their laughter still had the effect of making his knees begin to jerk with a nervous movement, like the quickly-suppressed commencement of a flight.

He slipped into a side-street; he had buttoned his thin jacket tightly about him, and turned up his collar. In the half-darkness of the doorways stood young men and girls, in familiar, whispered conversation. Warmth radiated from the girls, and their bibbed aprons shone in the darkness. Pelle crept along in the cold, and knew less than ever what to do with himself; he ranged about to find a sweetheart for himself.

In the market he met Alfred, arm-in-arm with Lau’s daughter. He carried a smart walking-stick, and wore brown gloves and a tall hat. “The scamp—he still owes me two and a half kroner, and I shall never get it out of him!” thought Pelle, and for a moment he felt a real desire to spring upon him and to roll all his finery in the mud. Alfred turned his head the other way. “He only knows me when he wants to do something and has no money!” said Pelle bitterly.

He ran down the street at a jog-trot, in order to keep himself warm, turning his eyes toward the windows. The bookbinder and his wife were sitting at home, singing pious songs. The man drank when at home; that one could see plainly on the blind. At the wool-merchant's they were having supper.

Farther on, at the Sow's, there was life, as always. A mist of tobacco smoke and a great deal of noise were escaping through the open window. The Sow kept a house for idle seamen, and made a great deal of money. Pelle had often been invited to visit her, but had always considered himself too good; moreover, he could not bear Rud. But this evening he seized greedily upon the memory of this invitation, and went in. Perhaps a mouthful of food would come his way.

At a round table sat a few tipsy seamen, shouting at one another, and making a deafening row. The Sow sat on a young fellow's knee; she lay half over the table and dabbled her fingers in a puddle of spilt beer; from time to time she shouted right in the face of those who were making the most noise. The last few years had not reduced her circumference.

"Now look at that! Is that you, Pelle?" she said, and she stood up to give him her hand. She was not quite sober, and had some difficulty in taking his. "That's nice of you to come, now—I really thought we weren't good enough for you! Now, sit down and have a drop; it won't cost you anything." She motioned to him to take a seat.

The sailors were out of humor; they sat staring sleepily at Pelle. Their heavy heads wagged helplessly. "That's surely a new customer?" asked one, and the others laughed.

The Sow laughed too, but all at once became serious. "Then you can leave him out of your games, for he's far too good to be dragged into anything; one knows what you are!" She sank into a chair next to Pelle, and sat looking at him, while she rubbed her own greasy countenance. "How tall and fine you've grown—but you aren't well-off for clothes! And you don't look to be overfed.... Ah, I've known you from the time when you and your father came into the country; a little fellow you were then, and Lasse brought me my mother's hymn-book!" She was suddenly silent, and her eyes filled with tears.

One of the sailors whispered to the rest, and they began to laugh.

"Stop laughing, you swine!" she cried angrily, and she crossed over to them. "You aren't going to play any of your nonsense with him—he comes like a memory of the times when I was respectable, too. His father is the only creature living who can prove that I was once a pretty, innocent little maid, who got into bad company. He's had me on his lap and sung lullabies to me." She looked about her defiantly, and her red face quivered.

"Didn't you weigh as much then as you do now?" asked one of the men, and embraced her.

"Don't play the fool with the little thing!" cried another. "Don't you see she's crying? Take her on your lap and sing her a lullaby— then she'll believe you are Lasse-Basse!"

Raging, she snatched up a bottle. "Will you hold your tongue with your jeering? Or you'll get this on the head!" Her greasy features seemed to run together in her excitement.

They let her be, and she sat there sobbing, her hands before her face. "Is your father still alive?" she asked. "Then give him my respects—just say the Sow sends her respects—you can safely call me the Sow!—and tell him he's the only person in the world I have to thank for anything. He thought well of me, and he brought me the news of mother's death."

Pelle sat there listening with constraint to her tearful speech, with an empty smile. He had knives in his bowels, he was so empty, and the beer was going to his head. He remembered all the details of Stone Farm, where he had first seen and heard the Sow, just as Father Lasse had recalled her home and her childhood to her. But he did not connect any further ideas with that meeting; it was a long time ago, and—"isn't she going to give me anything to eat?" he thought, and listened unsympathetically to her heavy breathing.

The sailors sat looking at her constrainedly; a solemn silence lay on their mist-wreathed faces; they were like drunken men standing about a grave. "Give over washing the decks now—and get us something to drink!" an old fellow said suddenly. "Each of us knows what it is to have times of childish innocence come back to him, and I say it's a jolly fine thing when they will peep through the door at old devils like us! But let the water stop overboard now, I say! The more one scours an old barge the more damage comes to light! So, give us something to drink now, and then the cards, ma'am!"

She stood up and gave them what they asked for; she had mastered her emotion, but her legs were still heavy.

“That’s right—and then we’ve got a sort of idea that to-day is Sunday! Show us your skill, ma’am, quick!”

“But that costs a krone, you know!” she said, laughing.

They collected the money and she went behind the bar and undressed. She reappeared in her chemise, with a burning candle in her hand….

Pelle slipped out. He was quite dizzy with hunger and a dull feeling of shame. He strolled on at random, not knowing what he did. He had only one feeling—that everything in the world was indifferent to him, whatever happened—whether he went on living in laborious honesty, or defiled himself with drinking, or perished—it was all one to him! What was the good of it all? No one cared what happened to him—not even he himself. Not a human soul would miss him if he went to the dogs—but yes, there was Lasse, Father Lasse! But as for going home now and allowing them to see him in all his wretchedness —when they had expected such unreasonable things of him—no, he could not do it! The last remnants of shame protested against it. And to work—what at? His dream was dead. He stood there with a vague feeling that he had come to the very edge of the abyss, which is so ominous to those in the depths.

Year in, year out, he had kept himself by his never-flagging exertions, and with the demented idea that he was mounting upward. And now he stood very near the lowest depth of life—the very bottom. And he was so tired. Why not let himself sink yet a little further; why not let destiny run its course? There would be a seductive repose in the acts, after his crazy struggle against the superior powers.

The sound of a hymn aroused him slightly. He had come down a side-street, and right in front of him stood a wide, lofty building, with the gable facing the street and a cross on the point of the gable. Hundreds of voices had sought, in the course of the years, to entice him hither; but in his arrogance he had had no use for spiritual things. What was there here for a smart youngster? And now he was stranded outside! And now he felt a longing for a little care, and he had a feeling that a hand had led him hither.

The hall was quite filled with poor families. They were packed amazingly close together on the benches, each family by itself; the men, as a rule, were asleep, and the women had all they could do to quiet their children, and to make them sit politely with their legs sticking out in front of them. These were people who had come to enjoy a little light and warmth, free of cost, in the midst of their desolate lives; on Sundays, at least, they thought, they could ask for a little of these things. They were the very poorest of the poor, and they sought refuge here, where they would not be persecuted, and where they were promised their part in the millennium. Pelle knew them all, both those whom he had seen before and those others, who wore the same expression, as of people drowned in the ocean of life. He soon found himself cozily settled among all these dishevelled nestlings, whom the pitiless wind had driven oversea, and who were now washed ashore by the waves.

A tall man with a full beard and a pair of good child-like eyes stood up among the benches, beating the time of a hymn—he was Dam, the smith. He led the singing, and as he stood there he bent his knees in time, and they all sang with him, with tremulous voices, each in his own key, of that which had passed over them. The notes forced their way through the parched, worn throats, cowering, as though afraid, now that they had flown into the light. Hesitatingly they unfurled their fragile, gauzy wings, and floated out into the room, up from the quivering lips. And under the roof they met with their hundreds of sisters, and their defilement fell from them. They became a jubilation, loud and splendid, over some unknown treasure, over the kingdom of happiness, that was close at hand. To Pelle it seemed that the air must be full of butterflies winged with sunshine:

> “O blessed, blessed shall we be
> When we, from care and mis’ry free,
> The splendor of Thy kingdom see,
> And with our Saviour come to Thee!”

“Mother, I’m hungry!” said a child’s voice, as the hymn was followed by silence. The mother, herself emaciated, silenced the child with a shocked expression, and looked wonderingly about her. What a stupid idea of the child’s! “You’ve just had your food!” she said loudly, as though she had been comfortably off. But the child went on crying: “Mother, I’m so hungry!”

Then Baker Jörgen’s Sören came by, and gave the child a roll. He had a

whole basket full of bread. “Are there any more children who are hungry?” he asked aloud. He looked easily in people’s faces, and was quite another creature to what he was at home; here no one laughed at him, and no one whispered that he was the brother of his own son.

An old white-bearded man mounted the pulpit at the back of the hall. “That’s him,” was whispered in every direction, and they all hastened to clear their throats by coughing, and to induce the children to empty their mouths of food. He took the cry of the little one as his text: “Mother, I am so hungry!” That was the voice of the world—that great, terrible cry—put into the mouth of a child. He saw no one there who had not writhed at the sound of that cry on the lips of his own flesh and blood—no one who, lest he should hear it again, had not sought to secure bread during his lifetime—no one who had not been beaten back. But they did not see God’s hand when that hand, in its loving-kindness, changed that mere hunger for bread into a hunger for happiness. They were the poor, and the poor are God’s chosen people. For that reason they must wander in the desert, and must blindly ask: “Where is the Promised Land?” But the gleam of which the faithful followed was not earthly happiness! God himself led them to and fro until their hunger was purged and became the true hunger—the hunger of the soul for eternal happiness!

They did not understand much of what he said; but his words set free something within them, so that they engaged in lively conversation over everyday things. But suddenly the buzz of conversation was silenced; a little hunchbacked man had clambered up on a bench and was looking them over with glittering eyes. This was Sort, the traveling shoemaker from the outer suburb.

“We want to be glad and merry,” he said, assuming a droll expression; “God’s children are always glad, however much evil they have to fight against, and they can meet with no misfortune—God is Joy!” He began to laugh, as boisterously as a child, and they all laughed with him; one infected the next. They could not control themselves; it was as though an immense merriment had overwhelmed them all. The little children looked at the grown-ups and laughed, till their little throats began to cough with laughing. “He’s a proper clown!” said the men to their wives, their own faces broad with laughter, “but he’s got a good heart!”

On the bench next to Pelle sat a silent family, a man and wife and three children, who breathed politely through their raw little noses. The parents were little people, and there was a kind of inward deftness about them, as though they were continually striving to make themselves yet smaller. Pelle knew them a little, and entered into conversation with them. The man was a clay-worker, and they lived in one of the miserable huts near the “Great Power’s” home.

“Yes, that is true—that about happiness,” said the wife. “Once we too used to dream of getting on in the world a little, so that we might be sure of our livelihood; and we scraped a little money together, that some good people lent us, and we set up in a little shop, and I kept it while father went to work. But it wouldn’t answer; no one supported us, and we got poorer goods because we were poor, and who cares about dealing with very poor people? We had to give it up, and we were deeply in debt, and we’re still having to pay it off—fifty öre every week, and there we shall be as long as we live, for the interest is always mounting up. But we are honorable people, thank God!” she concluded. The man took no part in the conversation.

Her last remark was perhaps evoked by a man who had quietly entered the hall, and was now crouching on a bench in the background; for he was not an honorable man. He had lived on a convict’s bread and water; he was “Thieving Jacob,” who about ten years earlier had smashed in the window of Master Jeppe’s best room and had stolen a pair of patent-leather shoes for his wife. He had heard of a rich man who had given his betrothed such a pair of shoes, and he wanted to see what it was like, just for once, to give a really fine present—a present worth as much as one would earn in two weeks. This he had explained before the court. “Numbskull!” said Jeppe always, when the conversation touched upon Jacob; “for such a miserable louse suddenly to get a swollen head, to want to make big presents! And if it had been for his young woman even—but for his wife! No, he paid the penalty to the very last day—in spite of Andres.”

Yes, he certainly had to pay the penalty! Even here no one would sit next to him! Pelle looked at him and wondered that his own offence should be so little regarded. The remembrance of it now only lay in people’s eyes when they spoke to him. But at this moment Smith Dam went and sat next to Thieving Jacob, and they sat hand-in-hand and whispered.

And over yonder sat some one who nodded to Pelle—in such a friendly manner; it was the woman of the dancing-shoes; her young man had left her, and now she was stranded here—her dancing days were over. Yet she was grateful to Pelle; the sight of him had recalled delightful memories; one could see that by the expression of her eyes and mouth.

Pelle's own temper was softened as he sat there. Something melted within him; a quiet and humble feeling of happiness came over him. There was still one human being who believed herself in Pelle's debt, although everything had gone wrong for her.

As the meeting was breaking up, at half-past nine, she was standing in the street, in conversation with another woman. She came up to Pelle, giving him her hand. "Shall we walk a little way together?" she asked him. She evidently knew of his circumstances; he read compassion in her glance. "Come with me," she said, as their ways parted. "I have a scrap of sausage that's got to be eaten. And we are both of us lonely."

Hesitatingly he went with her, a little hostile, for the occasion was new and unfamiliar. But once he was seated in her little room he felt thoroughly at ease. Her white, dainty bed stood against the wall. She went to and fro about the room, cooking the sausage at the stove, while she opened her heart to him, unabashed.

It isn't everybody would take things so easily! thought Pelle, and he watched her moving figure quite happily.

They had a cheerful meal, and Pelle wanted to embrace her in his gratitude, but she pushed his hands away. "You can keep that for another time!" she said, laughing. "I'm a poor old widow, and you are nothing but a child. If you want to give me pleasure, why, just settle down and come to yourself again. It isn't right that you should be just loafing about and idling, and you so young and such a nice boy. And now go home, for I must get up early to-morrow and go to my work."

Pelle visited her almost every evening. She had a disagreeable habit of shaking him out of his slumber, but her simple and unchanging manner of accepting and enduring everything was invigorating. Now and again she found a little work for him, and was always delighted when she could share her poor meal with him. "Any one like myself feels a need of seeing a man-body at the table-end once in a while," she said. "But hands off—you don't owe me anything!"

She criticized his clothes. "They'll all fall off your body soon— why don't you put on something else and let me see to them?"

"I have nothing but these," said Pelle, ashamed.

On Saturday evening he had to take off his rags, and creep, mother-naked, into her bed. She would take no refusal, and she took shirt and all, and put them into a bucket of water. It took her half the night to clean everything. Pelle lay in bed watching her, the coverlet up to his chin. He felt very strange. As for her, she hung the whole wash to dry over the stove, and made herself a bed on a couple of chairs. When he woke up in the middle of the morning she was sitting by the window mending his clothes.

"But what sort of a night did you have?" asked Pelle, a trifle concerned.

"Excellent! Do you know what I've thought of this morning? You ought to give up your room and stay here until you are on your feet again — you've had a good rest—for once," she smiled teasingly. "That room is an unnecessary expense. As you see, there's room here for two."

But Pelle would not agree. He would not hear of being supported by a woman. "Then people will believe that there's something wrong between us—and make a scandal of it," he said.

"Let them then!" she answered, with her gay laugh. "If I've a good conscience it's indifferent to me what others think." While she was talking she was working diligently at his linen, and she threw one article after another at his head. Then she ironed his suit. "Now you're quite a swell again!" she said, when he stood up dressed once more, and she looked at him affectionately. "It's as though you had become a new creature. If I were only ten or fifteen years younger I'd be glad to go down the street on your arm. But you shall give me a kiss—I've put you to rights again, as if you were my own child." She kissed him heartily and turned about to the stove.

"And now I've got no better advice than that we have some cold dinner together and then go our ways," she said, with her back still turned. "All my firing has been used overnight to dry your things, and you can't stay here in the cold. I think I can pay a visit somewhere or other, and so the day will pass; and you can find some corner to put yourself in.'

“It’s all the same to me where I am,” said Pelle indifferently.

She looked at him with a peculiar smile. “Are you really always going to be a loafer?” she said. “You men are extraordinary creatures! If anything at all goes wrong with you, you must start drinking right away, or plunge yourself into unhappiness in some other way—you are no better than babies! We must work quietly on, however things go with us!” She stood there hesitating in her hat and cloak. “Here’s five-and-twenty öre,” she said; “that’s just for a cup of coffee to warm you!”

Pelle would not accept it. “What do I want with your money?” he said. “Keep it yourself!”

“Take it, do! I know it’s only a little, but I have no more, and there’s no need for us to be ashamed of being helped by one another.” She put the coin in his jacket pocket and hurried off.

Pelle strolled out to the woods. He did not feel inclined to go home, to resume the aimless battle with Ström. He wandered along the deserted paths, and experienced a feeble sense of well-being when he noticed that the spring was really coming. The snow was still lying beneath the old moss-gray pinetrees, but the toadstools were already thrusting their heads up through the pine-needles, and one had a feeling, when walking over the ground, as though one trod upon rising dough.

He found himself pondering over his own affairs, and all of a sudden he awoke out of his half-slumber. Something had just occurred to him, something cozy and intimate—why, yes, it was the thought that he might go to Marie and set up for himself, like Jens and his girl. He could get hold of a few lasts and sit at home and work … he could scrape along for a bit, until better times came. She earned something too, and she was generous.

But when he thought over the matter seriously it assumed a less pleasant aspect. He had already sufficiently abused her poverty and her goodness of heart. He had taken her last scrap of firing, so that she was now forced to go out in order to get a little warmth and some supper. The idea oppressed him. Now that his eyes were opened he could not escape this feeling of shame. It went home and to bed with him, and behind all her goodness he felt her contempt for him, because he did not overcome his misery by means of work, like a respectable fellow.

On the following morning he was up early, and applied for work down at the harbor. He did not see the necessity of work in the abstract, but he would not be indebted to a woman. On Sunday evening he would repay her outlay over him and his clothes.

XXIV

Pelle stood on the floor of the basin, loading broken stone into the tip-wagons. When a wagon was full he and his comrade pushed it up to the head of the track, and came gliding back hanging to the empty wagons. Now and again the others let fall their tools, and looked across to where he stood; he was really working well for a cobbler! And he had a fine grip when it came to lifting the stone. When he had to load a great mass of rock into the wagon, he would lift it first to his knee, then he would let out an oath and put his whole body into it; he would wipe the sweat from his forehead and take a dram of brandy or a drop of beer. He was as good as any of the other men!

He did not bother himself with ideas; two and two might make five for all he cared; work and fatigue were enough for him. Hard work had made his body supple and filled him with a sense of sheer animal well-being. “Will my beer last out the afternoon to-day?” he would wonder; beyond that nothing mattered. The future did not exist, nor yet the painful feeling that it did not exist; there was no remorse in him for what he had lost, or what he had neglected; hard work swallowed up everything else. There was only this stone that had to be removed—and then the next! This wagon which had to be filled— and then the next! If the stone would not move at the first heave he clenched his teeth; he was as though possessed by his work. “He’s still fresh to harness,” said the others; “he’ll soon knock his horns off!” But Pelle wanted to show his strength; that was his only ambition. His mate let him work away in peace and did not fatigue himself. From time to time he praised Pelle, in order to keep his steam up.

This work down at the harbor was the hardest and lowest kind of labor; any one could get taken on for it without previous qualifications. Most of Pelle’s comrades were men who had done with the world, who now let themselves go as the stream carried them, and he felt at ease among them. He stood on the solid ground, and no words had power to call the dead past to life; it had power to haunt only an empty brain. An iron curtain hung before the future; happiness lay here to his hand; the day’s fatigue could straightway be banished by joyous drinking.

His free time he spent with his companions. They led an unsettled, roving life; the rumor that extensive works were to be carried out had enticed them hither. Most were unmarried; a few had wives and children somewhere, but held their tongues about them, or no longer remembered their existence, unless reminded by something outside themselves. They had no proper lodgings, but slept in Carrier Köller’s forsaken barn, which was close to the harbor. They never undressed, but slept in the straw, and washed in a bucket of water that was seldom changed; their usual diet consisted of stale bread, and eggs, which they grilled over a fire made between two stones.

The life pleased Pelle, and he liked the society. On Sundays they ate and drank alternately, all day long, and lay in the smoke-filled barn; burrowing deep into the straw, they told stories, tragic stories of youngest sons who seized an axe and killed their father and mother, and all their brothers and sisters, because they thought they were being cheated of their share of their inheritance! Of children who attended confirmation class, and gave way to love, and had children themselves, and were beheaded for what they did! And of wives who did not wish to bring into the world the children it was their duty to bear, and whose wombs were closed as punishment!

Since Pelle had begun to work here he had never been out to see Marie Nielsen. “She’s making a fool of you,” said the others, to whom he had spoken of Marie; “she’s playing the respectable so that you shall bite. Women have always got second thoughts—it’s safest to be on the lookout. They and these young widows would rather take two than one—they’re the worst of all. A man must be a sturdy devil to be able to stand up against them.”

But Pelle was a man, and would allow no woman to lead him by the nose. Either you were good friends and no fuss about it, or nothing. He’d tell her that on Saturday, and throw ten kroner on the table— then they would sure enough be quits! And if she made difficulties she’d get one over the mouth! He could not forgive her for using all her firing, and having to pass Sunday in the street; the remembrance would not leave him, and it burned like an angry spark. She wanted to make herself out a martyr.

One day, about noon, Pelle was standing among the miners on the floor of the basin; Emil and he had just come from the shed, where they had

swallowed a few mouthfuls of dinner. They had given up their midday sleep in order to witness the firing of a big blast during the midday pause when the harbor would be empty. The whole space was cleared, and the people in the adjacent houses had opened their windows so that they should not be shattered by the force of the explosion.

The fuse was lit, and the men took shelter behind the caissons, and stood there chatting while they waited for the explosion. The “Great Power” was there too. He was always in the neighborhood; he would stand and stare at the workers with his apathetic expression, without taking part in anything. They took no notice of him, but let him move about as he pleased. “Take better cover, Pelle,” said Emil; “it’s going off directly!”

“Where are Olsen and Ström?” said some one suddenly. The men looked at one another bewildered.

“They’ll be taking their midday sleep,” said Emil. “They’ve been drinking something chronic this morning.”

“Where are they sleeping?” roared the foreman, and he sprang from his cover. They all had a foreboding, but no one wanted to say. It flashed across them that they must do something. But no one stirred. “Lord Jesus!” said Bergendal, and he struck his fist against the stone wall. “Lord Jesus!”

The “Great Power” sprang from his shelter and ran along the side of the basin, taking long leaps from one mass of rock to the next, his mighty wooden shoes clattering as he went. “He’s going to tear the fuse away!” cried Bergendal. “He’ll never reach it—it must be burnt in!” There was a sound as of a cry of distress, far above the heads of those who heard it. They breathlessly followed the movements of the “Great Power”; they had come completely out of shelter. In Pelle an irrational impulse sprang into being. He made a leap forward, but was seized by the scruff of the neck. “One is enough,” said Bergendal, and he threw him back.

Now the “Great Power” had reached the goal. His hand was stretched out to seize the fuse. Suddenly he was hurled away from the fuse, as though by an invisible hand, and was swept upward and backward through the air, gently, like a human balloon, and fell on his back. Then the roar of the explosion drowned everything.

When the last fragments had fallen the men ran forward. The “Great Power” lay stretched upon his back, looking quietly up at the sky. The corners of his mouth were a little bloody and the blood trickled from a hole behind the ear. The two drunken men were scathless. They rose to their feet, bewildered, a few paces beyond the site of the explosion. The “Great Power” was borne into the shed, and while the doctor was sent for Emil tore a strip from his blouse, and soaked it in brandy, and laid it behind the ear.

The “Great Power” opened his eyes and looked about him. His glance was so intelligent that every one knew that he had not long to live.

“It smells of brandy here,” he said. “Who will stand me a drop?” Emil reached him the bottle, and he emptied it. “It tastes good,” he said easily. “Now I haven’t touched brandy for I don’t know how long, but what was the good? The poor man must drink brandy, or he’s good for nothing; it is no joke being a poor man! There is no other salvation for him; that you have seen by Ström and Olsen—drunken men never come to any harm. Have they come to any harm?” He tried to raise his head. Ström stepped forward. “Here we are,” he said, his voice stifled with emotion. “But I’d give a good deal to have had us both blown to hell instead of this happening. None of us has wished you any good!” He held out his hand.

But the “Great Power” could not raise his; he lay there, staring up through the holes in the thatched roof. “It has been hard enough, certainly, to belong to the poor,” he said, “and it’s a good thing it’s all over. But you owe me no thanks. Why should I leave you in the lurch and take everything for myself—would that be like the ‘Great Power’? Of course, the plan was mine! But could I have carried it out alone? No, money does everything. You’ve fairly deserved it! The ‘Great Power’ doesn’t want to have more than any one else—where we have all done an equal amount of work.” He raised his hand, painfully, and made a magnanimous gesture.

“There—he believes he’s the engineer of the harbor works!” said Ström. “He’s wandering. Wouldn’t a cold application do him good?” Emil took the bucket in order to fetch fresh water. The “Great Power” lay with closed eyes and a faint smile on his face; he was like a blind man who is listening. “Do you understand,” he said, without opening his eyes, “how we have labored and labored, and yet have been barely able to earn our

daily bread? The big people sat there and ate up everything that we could produce; when we laid down our tools and wanted to still our hunger there was nothing. They stole our thoughts, and if we had a pretty sweetheart or a young daughter they could do with her too—they didn't disdain our cripple even. But now that's done with, and we will rejoice that we have lived to see it; it might have gone on for a long time. Mother wouldn't believe what I told her at all—that the bad days would soon be over. But now just see! Don't I get just as much for my work as the doctor for his? Can't I keep my wife and daughter neat and have books and get myself a piano, just as he can? Isn't it a great thing to perform manual labor too? Karen has piano lessons now, just as I've always wished, for she's weakly and can't stand any hard work. You should just come home with me and hear her play—she does it so easily too! Poor people's children have talent too, it's just that no one notices it."

"God, how he talks!" said Ström, crying. "It's almost as if he had the delirium."

Pelle bent down over the "Great Power." "Now you must be good and be quiet," he said, and laid something wet on his forehead. The blood was trickling rapidly from behind his ear.

"Let him talk," said Olsen. "He hasn't spoken a word for months now; he must feel the need to clear his mind this once. It'll be long before he speaks again, too!"

Now the "Great Power" was only weakly moving his lips. His life was slowly bleeding away. "Have you got wet, little Karen?" he murmured. "Ah, well, it'll dry again! And now it's all well with you, now you can't complain. Is it fine to be a young lady? Only tell me everything you want. Why be modest? We've been that long enough! Gloves for the work-worn fingers, yes, yes. But you must play something for me too. Play that lovely song: 'On the joyful journey through the lands of earth….' That about the Eternal Kingdom!"

Gently he began to hum it; he could no longer keep time by moving his head, but he blinked his eyes in time; and now his humming broke out into words.

Something irresistibly impelled the others to sing in concert with him; perhaps the fact that it was a religious song. Pelle led them with his clear young voice; and it was he who best knew the words by heart.

> "Fair, fair is earth,
> And glorious Heaven;
> Fair is the spirit's journey long;
> Through all the lovely earthly kingdoms,
> Go we to Paradise with song."

The "Great Power" sang with increasing strength, as though he would outsing Pelle. One of his feet was moving now, beating the time of the song. He lay with closed eyes, blindly rocking his head in time with the voices, like one who, at a drunken orgy, must put in his last word before he slips under the table. The saliva was running from the corners of his mouth.

> "The years they come,
> The years they go,
> And down the road to death we throng,
> But ever sound the strains from heaven—
> The spirit's joyful pilgrim song!"

The "Great Power" ceased; his head drooped to one side, and at the same moment the others ceased to sing.

They sat in the straw and gazed at him—his last words still rang in their ears, like a crazy dream, which mingled oddly with the victorious notes of the hymn.

They were all sensible of the silent accusation of the dead, and in the solemnity of the moment they judged and condemned themselves.

"Yes, who knows what we might come to!" said one ragged fellow, thoughtfully chewing a length of straw.

"I shall never do any good," said Emil dejectedly. "With me it's always been from bad to worse. I was apprenticed, and when I became a journeyman they gave me the sack; I had wasted five years of my life and couldn't do a thing. Pelle—he'll get on all right."

Astonished, Pelle raised his head and gazed at Emil uncomprehendingly.

"What use is it if a poor devil tries to make his way up? He'll always be pushed down again!" said Olsen. "Just look at the 'Great Power'; could

any one have had a better claim than he? No, the big folks don't allow us others to make our way up!"

"And have we allowed it ourselves?" muttered Ström. "We are always uneasy if one of our own people wants to fly over our heads!"

"I don't understand why all the poor folk don't make a stand together against the others," said Bergendal. "We suffer the same wrongs. If we all acted together, and had nothing to do with them that mean us harm, for instance, then it would soon be seen that collective poverty is what makes the wealth of the others. And I've heard that that's what they're doing elsewhere."

"But we shall never in this life be unanimous about anything whatever," said an old stonemason sadly. "If one of the gentlemen only scratches our neck a bit, then we all grovel at his feet, and let ourselves be set on to one of our own chaps. If we were all like the 'Great Power,' then things might have turned out different."

They were silent again; they sat there and gazed at the dead man; there was something apologetic in the bearing of each and all.

"Yes, that comes late!" said Ström, with a sigh. Then he felt in the straw and pulled out a bottle.

Some of the men still sat there, trying to put into words something that ought perhaps to be said; but then came the doctor, and they drew in their horns. They picked up their beer-cans and went out to their work.

Silently Pelle gathered his possessions together and went to the foreman. He asked for his wages.

"That's sudden," said the foreman. "You were getting on so well just now. What do you want to do now?"

"I just want my wages," rejoined Pelle. What more he wanted, he himself did not know. And then he went home and put his room in order. It was like a pigsty; he could not understand how he could have endured such untidiness. In the meantime he thought listlessly of some way of escape. It had been very convenient to belong to the dregs of society, and to know that he could not sink any deeper; but perhaps there were still other possibilities. Emil had said a stupid thing—what did he mean by it? "Pelle, he'll get on all right!" Well, what did Emil know of the misery of others? He had enough of his own.

He went down into the street in order to buy a little milk; then he would go back and sleep. He felt a longing to deaden all the thoughts that once more began to seethe in his head.

Down in the street he ran into the arms of Sort, the wandering shoemaker. "Now we've got you!" cried Sort. "I was just coming here and wondering how best I could get to speak with you. I wanted to tell you that I begin my travelling to-morrow. Will you come with me? It is a splendid life, to be making the round of the farms now in the spring-time; and you'll go to the dogs if you stay here. Now you know all about it and you can decide. I start at six o'clock! I can't put it off any later!"

Sort had observed Pelle that evening at the prayer-meeting, and on several occasions had spoken to him in the hope of arousing him. "He can put off his travels for a fortnight as far as I'm concerned!" thought Pelle, with a touch of self-esteem. He wouldn't go! To go begging for work from farm to farm! Pelle had learned his craft in the workshop, and looked down with contempt upon the travelling cobbler, who lives from hand to mouth and goes from place to place like a beggar, working with leather and waxed-ends provided on the spot, and eating out of the same bowl as the farm servants. So much pride of craft was still left in Pelle. Since his apprentice days, he had been accustomed to regard Sort as a pitiful survival from the past, a species properly belonging to the days of serfdom.

"You'll go to the dogs!" Sort had said. And all Marie Melsen's covert allusions had meant the same thing. But what then? Perhaps he had already gone to the dogs! Suppose there was no other escape than this! But now he would sleep, and think no more of all these things.

He drank his bottle of milk and ate some bread with it, and went to bed. He heard the church clock striking—it was midnight, and glorious weather. But Pelle wanted to sleep—only to sleep! His heart was like lead.

He awoke early next morning and was out of bed with one leap. The sun filled his room, and he himself was filled with a sense of health and well-being. Quickly he slipped into his clothes—there was still so much that he wanted to do! He threw up the window, and drank in the spring morning in a breath that filled his body with a sense of profound joy. Out at sea the boats were approaching the harbor; the morning sun fell on

the slack sails, and made them glow; every boat was laboring heavily forward with the aid of its tiller. He had slept like a stone, from the moment of lying down until now. Sleep lay like a gulf between yesterday and to-day. Whistling a tune to himself, he packed his belongings and set out upon his way, a little bundle under his arm. He took the direction of the church, in order to see the time. It was still not much past five. Then he made for the outermost suburb with vigorous steps, as joyful as though he were treading the road to happiness.

XXV

Two men appeared from the wood and crossed the highroad. One was little and hump-backed; he had a shoemaker's bench strapped tightly on his back; the edge rested on his hump, and a little pillow was thrust between, so that the bench should not chafe him. The other was young and strongly built; a little thin, but healthy and fresh- colored. He carried a great bundle of lasts on his back, which were held in equilibrium by another box, which he carried on his chest, and which, to judge by the sounds that proceeded from it, contained tools. At the edge of the ditch he threw down his burden and unstrapped the bench from the hunchback. They threw themselves down in the grass and gazed up into the blue sky. It was a glorious morning; the birds twittered and flew busily to and fro, and the cattle were feeding in the dewy clover, leaving long streaks behind them as they moved.

"And in spite of that, you are always happy?" said Pelle. Sort had been telling him the sad story of his childhood.

"Yes, look you, it often vexes me that I take everything so easily— but what if I can't find anything to be sad about? If I once go into the matter thoroughly, I always hit on something or other that makes me still happier—as, for instance, your society. You are young, and health beams out of your eyes. The girls become so friendly wherever we go, and it's as though I myself were the cause of their pleasure!"

"Where do you really get your knowledge of everything?" asked Pelle.

"Do you find that I know so much?" Sort laughed gaily. "I go about so much, and I see so many different households, some where man and wife are as one, and others where they live like cat and dog. I come into contact with people of every kind. And I get to know a lot, too, because I'm not like other men—more than one maiden has confided her miseries to me. And then in winter, when I sit alone, I think over everything—and the Bible is a good book, a book a man can draw wisdom from. There a man learns to look behind things; and if you once realize that everything has its other side, then you learn to use your understanding. You can go behind everything if you want to, and they all lead in the same direction —to God. And they all came from Him. He is the connection, do you see; and once a man grasps that, then he is always happy. It would be splendid to follow things up further—right up to where they divide, and then to show, in spite of all, that they finally run together in God again! But that I'm not able to do."

"We ought to see about getting on." Pelle yawned, and he began to bestir himself.

"Why? We're so comfortable here—and we've already done what we undertook to do. What if there should be a pair of boots yonder which Sort and Pelle won't get to sole before they're done with? Some one else will get the job!"

Pelle threw himself on his back and again pulled his cap over his eyes —he was in no hurry. He had now been travelling nearly a month with Sort, and had spent almost as much time on the road as sitting at his work. Sort could never rest when he had been a few days in one place; he must go on again! He loved the edge of the wood and the edge of the meadow, and could spend half the day there. And Pelle had many points of contact with this leisurely life in the open air; he had his whole childhood to draw upon. He could lie for hours, chewing a grass-stem, patient as a convalescent, while sun and air did their work upon him.

"Why do you never preach to me?" he said suddenly, and he peeped mischievously from tinder his cap.

"Why should I preach to you? Because I am religious? Well, so are you; every one who rejoices and is content is religious."

"But I'm not at all content!" retorted Pelle, and he rolled on his back with all four limbs in the air. "But you—I don't understand why you don't get a congregation; you've got such a power over language."

"Yes, if I were built as you are—fast enough. But I'm humpbacked!"

"What does that matter? You don't want to run after the women!"

"No, but one can't get on without them; they bring the men and the children after them. And it's really queer that they should—for women don't bother themselves about God! They haven't the faculty of going behind things. They choose only according to the outside—they want to hang everything on their bodies as finery—and the men too, yes, and the dear God best of all—they've got a use for the lot!"

Pelle lay still for a time, revolving his scattered experiences. "But

Marie Nielsen wasn't like that," he said thoughtfully. "She'd willingly give the shirt off her body and ask nothing for herself. I've behaved badly to her—I didn't even say goodbye before I came away!"

"Then you must look her up when we come to town and confess your fault. There was no lovemaking between you?"

"She treated me like a child; I've told you."

Sort was silent a while.

"If you would help me, we'd soon get a congregation! I can see it in your eyes, that you've got influence over them, if you only cared about it; for instance, the girl at Willow Farm. Thousands would come to us."

Pelle did not answer. His thoughts were roaming back wonderingly to Willow Farm, where Sort and he had last been working; he was once more in that cold, damp room with the over-large bed, on which the pale girl's face was almost invisible. She lay there encircling her thick braids with her transparent hand, and gazed at him; and the door was gently closed behind him. "That was really a queer fancy," he said, and he breathed deeply; "some one she'd never laid eyes on before; I could cry now when I think of it."

"The old folks had told her we were there, and asked if she wouldn't like me to read something from God's word with her. But she'd rather see you. The father was angry and didn't want to allow it. 'She has never thought about young men before,' he said, 'and she shall stand before the throne of God and the Lamb quite pure.' But I said, 'Do you know so precisely that the good God cares anything for what you call purity, Ole Jensen? Let the two of them come together, if they can take any joy in it.' Then we shut the door behind you—and how was it then?" Sort turned toward Pelle.

"You know," replied Pelle crossly. "She just lay there and looked at me as though she was thinking: 'That's what he looks like—and he's come a long way here.' I could see by her eyes that you had spoken of me and that she knew about all my swinishness."

Sort nodded.

"Then she held out her hand to me. How like she is to one of God's angels already—I thought—but it's a pity in one who's so young. And then I went close to her and took her hand."

"And what then?" Sort drew nearer to Pelle. His eyes hung expectantly on Pelle's lips.

"Then she stretched out her mouth to me a little—and at that very moment I forgot what sort of a hog I'd been—and I kissed her!"

"Didn't she say anything to you—not a word?"

"She only looked at me with those eyes that you can't understand. Then I didn't know what I—what I ought to do next, so I came away."

"Weren't you afraid that she might transfer death to you?"

"No; why should I be? I didn't think about it. But she could never think of a thing like that—so child-like as she was!"

They both lay for a time without speaking. "You have something in you that conquers them all!" said Sort at length. "If only you would help me—I'd see to the preaching!"

Pelle stretched himself indolently—he felt no desire to create a new religion. "No, I want to go away and see the world now," he said. "There must be places in that world where they've already begun to go for the rich folks—that's where I want to go!"

"One can't achieve good by the aid of evil—you had better stay here! Here you know where you are—and if we went together—"

"No, there's nothing here for any one to do who is poor—if I go on here any longer, I shall end in the mud again. I want to have my share—even if I have to strike a bloodsucker dead to get it—and that couldn't be any very great sin! But shan't we see about getting on now? We've been a whole month now tramping round these Sudland farms. You've always promised me that we should make our way toward the heath. For months now I've heard nothing of Father Lasse and Karna. When things began to go wrong with me, it was as though I had quite forgotten them."

Sort rose quickly. "Good! So you've still thoughts for other things than killing bloodsuckers! How far is it, then, to Heath Farm?"

"A good six miles."

"We'll go straight there. I've no wish to begin anything to-day."

They packed their possessions on their backs and trudged onward in cheerful gossip. Sort pictured their arrival to Pelle. "I shall go in first and ask whether they've any old boots or harness that we can mend; and then you'll come in, while we're in the middle of a conversation."

Pelle laughed. “Shan’t I carry the bench for you? I can very well strap it on the other things.”

“You shan’t sweat for me as well as yourself!” rejoined Sort, laughing. “You’d want to take off even your trousers then.”

They had chattered enough, and tramped on in silence. Pelle stepped forward carelessly, drinking in the fresh air. He was conscious of a superfluity of strength and well-being; otherwise he thought of nothing, but merely rejoiced unconsciously over his visit to his home. At every moment he had to moderate his steps, so that Sort should not be left behind.

“What are you really thinking about now?” he asked suddenly. He would always have it that Sort was thinking of something the moment he fell silent. One could never know beforehand in what region he would crop up next.

“That’s just what the children ask!” replied Sort, laughing. “They always want to know what’s inside.”

“Tell me, then—you might as well tell me!”

“I was thinking about life. Here you walk at my side, strong and certain of victory as the young David. And yet a month ago you were part of the dregs of society!”

“Yes, that is really queer,” said Pelle, and he became thoughtful.

“But how did you get into such a mess? You could quite well have kept your head above water if you had only wanted to!”

“That I really don’t know. I tell you, it’s as if some one had hit you over the head; and then you run about and don’t know what you’re doing; and it isn’t so bad if you’ve once got there. You work and drink and bang each other over the head with your beer-cans or bottles—”

“You say that so contentedly—you don’t look behind things—that’s the point! I’ve seen so many people shipwrecked; for the poor man it’s only one little step aside, and he goes to the dogs; and he himself believes he’s a devilish fine fellow. But it was a piece of luck that you got out of it all! Yes, it’s a wonder remorse didn’t make your life bitter.”

“If we felt remorse we had brandy,” said Pelle, with an experienced air. “That soon drives out everything else.”

“Then it certainly has its good points—it helps a man over the time of waiting!”

“Do you really believe that an eternal kingdom is coming—the ‘thousand-year kingdom’—the millennium? With good times for all, for the poor and the miserable?”

Sort nodded. “God has promised it, and we must believe His Word. Something is being prepared over on the mainland, but whether it’s the real millennium, I don’t know.”

They tramped along. The road was stony and deserted. On either side the rocky cliffs, with their scrubby growth, were beginning to rise from the fields, and before them ranged the bluish rocky landscape of the heath or moorland. “As soon as we’ve been home, I shall travel; I must cross the sea and find out what they do really intend there,” said Pelle.

“I have no right to hold you back,” answered Sort quietly, “but it will be lonely travelling for me. I shall feel as if I’d lost a son. But of course you’ve got other things to think of than to remember a poor hunchback! The world is open to you. Once you’ve feathered your nest, you’ll think no more of little Sort!”

“I shall think of you, right enough,” replied Pelle. “And as soon as I’m doing well I shall come back and look out for you—not before. Father will be sure to object to my idea of travelling—he would so like me to take over Heath Farm from him; but there you must back me up. I’ve no desire to be a farmer.”

“I’ll do that.”

“Now just look at it! Nothing but stone upon stone with heather and scrubby bushes in between! That’s what Heath Farm was four years ago —and now it’s quite a fine property. That the two of them have done — without any outside help.”

“You must be built of good timber,” said Sort. “But what poor fellow is that up on the hill? He’s got a great sack on his back and he’s walking as if he’d fall down at every step.”

“That—that is Father Lasse! Hallo!” Pelle waved his cap.

Lasse came stumbling up to them; he dropped his sack and gave them his hand without looking at them.

“Are you coming this way?” cried Pelle joyfully; “we were just going on to look for you!”

“You can save yourself the trouble! You’ve become stingy about using your legs. Spare them altogether!” said Lasse lifelessly.

Pelle stared at him. “What’s the matter? Are you leaving?”

“Yes, we’re leaving!” Lasse laughed—a hollow laugh. “Leaving—yes! We’ve left—indeed, we’ve each of us gone our own way. Karna has gone where there’s no more care and trouble—and here’s Lasse, with all that’s his!” He struck his foot against the sack, and stood there with face averted from them, his eyes fixed upon the ground.

All signs of life had vanished from Pelle’s face. Horrified, he stared at his father, and his lips moved, but he could form no words.

“Here I must meet my own son by accident in the middle of the empty fields! So often as I’ve looked for you and asked after you! No one knew anything about you. Your own flesh and blood has turned from you, I thought—but I had to tell Karna you were ill. She fully expected to see you before she went away. Then you must give him my love, she said, and God grant all may go well with him. She thought more about you than many a mother would have done! Badly you’ve repaid it. It’s a long time ago since you set foot in our house.”

Still Pelle did not speak; he stood there swaying from side to side; every word was like the blow of a club.

“You mustn’t be too hard on him!” said Sort. “He’s not to blame—ill as he’s been!”

“Ah, so you too have been through bad times and have got to fight your way, eh? Then, as your father, I must truly be the last to blame you.” Lasse stroked his son’s sleeve, and the caress gave Pelle pleasure. “Cry, too, my son—it eases the mind. In me the tears are dried up long ago. I must see how I can bear my grief; these have become hard times for me, you may well believe. Many a night have I sat by Karna and been at my wits’ end—I could not leave her and go for help, and everything went wrong with us all at the same time. It almost came to my wishing you were ill. You were the one who ought to have had a kindly thought for us, and you could always have sent us news. But there’s an end of it all!”

“Are you going to leave Heath Farm, father?” asked Pelle quietly.

“They have taken it away from me,” replied Lasse wretchedly. “With all these troubles, I couldn’t pay the last instalment, and now their patience is at an end. Out of sheer compassion they let me stay till Karna had fought out her fight and was happily buried in the earth—every one could see it wasn’t a matter of many days more.”

“If it is only the interest,” said Sort, “I have a few hundred kroner which I’ve saved up for my old days.”

“Now it’s too late; the farm is already taken over by another man. And even if that were not the case—what should I do there without Karna? I’m no longer any use!”

“We’ll go away together, father!” said Pelle, raising his head.

“No; I go nowhere now except to the churchyard. They have taken my farm away from me, and Karna has worked herself to death, and I myself have left what strength I had behind me. And then they took it away from me!”

“I will work for us both—you shall be comfortable and enjoy your old days!” Pelle saw light in the distance.

Lasse shook his head. “I can no longer put things away from me—I can no longer leave them behind and go on again!”

“I propose that we go into the town,” said Sort. “Up by the church we are sure to find some one who will drive us in.”

They collected their things and set off. Lasse walked behind the others, talking to himself; from time to time he broke out into lamentation. Then Pelle turned back to him in silence and took his hand.

“There is no one to help us and give us good advice. On the contrary, they’d gladly see us lose life and fortune if they could only earn a few shillings on that account. Even the authorities won’t help the poor man. He’s only there so that they can all have a cut at him and then each run off with his booty. What do they care that they bring need and misery and ruin upon us? So long as they get their taxes and their interest! I could stick them all in the throat, in cold blood!”

So he continued a while, increasing in bitterness, until he broke down like a little child.

XXVI

They lived with Sort, who had his own little house in the outermost suburb. The little travelling cobbler did not know what to do for them: Lasse was so dejected and so aimless. He could not rest; he did not recover; from time to time he broke out into lamentation. He had grown very frail, and could no longer lift his spoon to his mouth without spilling the contents. If they tried to distract him, he became obstinate.

"Now we must see about fetching your things," they would both say repeatedly. "There is no sense in giving your furniture to the parish."

But Lasse would not have them sent for. "They've taken everything else from me; they can take that, too," he said. "And I won't go out there again—and let myself be pitied by every one."

"But you'll beggar yourself," said Sort.

"They've done that already. Let them have their way. But they'll have to answer for it in the end!"

Then Pelle procured a cart, and drove over himself to fetch them. There was quite a load to bring back. Mother Bengta's green chest he found upstairs in the attic; it was full of balls of thread. It was so strange to see it again—for many years he had not thought of his mother. "I'll have that for a travelling trunk," he thought, and he took it with him.

Lasse was standing before the door when he returned.

"See, I've brought everything here for you, father!" he cried, lustily cracking his whip. But Lasse went in without saying a word. When they had unloaded the cart and went to look for him, he had crawled into bed. There he lay with his face to the wall, and would not speak.

Pelle told him all sorts of news of Heath Farm, in order to put a little life into him. "Now the parish has sold Heath Farm to the Hill Farm man for five thousand kroner, and they say he's got a good bargain. He wants to live there himself and to leave Hill Farm in his son's hands."

Lasse half turned his head. "Yes, something grows there now. Now they are making thousands—and the farmer will do better still," he said bitterly. "But it's well-manured soil. Karna overstrained herself and died and left me.... And we went so well in harness together. Her thousand kroner went into it, too ... and now I'm a poor wreck. All that was put into the barren, rocky soil, so that it became good and generous soil. And then the farmer buys it, and now he wants to live there—we poor lice have prepared the way for him! What else were we there for? Fools we are to excite ourselves so over such a thing! But, how I loved the place!" Lasse suddenly burst into tears.

"Now you must be reasonable and see about becoming cheerful again," said Sort. "The bad times for the poor man will soon be over. There is a time coming when no one will need to work himself to death for others, and when every one will reap what he himself has sown. What injury have you suffered? For you are on the right side and have thousands of kroner on which you can draw a bill. It would be still worse if you owed money to others!"

"I haven't much more time," said Lasse, raising himself on his elbows.

"Perhaps not, you and I, for those who start on the pilgrimage must die in the desert! But for that reason we are God's chosen people, we poor folk. And Pelle, he will surely behold the Promised Land!"

"Now you ought to come in, father, and see how we have arranged it," said Pelle.

Lasse stood up wearily and went with them. They had furnished one of Sort's empty rooms with Lasse's things. It looked quite cozy.

"We thought that you would live here until Pelle is getting on well 'over there,'" said Sort. "No, you don't need to thank me! I'm delighted to think I shall have society, as you may well understand."

"The good God will repay it to you," said Lasse, with a quavering voice. "We poor folk have no one but Him to rely on."

Pelle could not rest, nor control his thoughts any longer; he must be off! "If you'll give me what the fare comes to, as I've helped you," he told Sort, "then I'll start this evening...."

Sort gave him thirty kroner.

"That's the half of what we took. There's not so much owing to me," said Pelle. "You are the master and had the tools and everything."

"I won't live by the work of other hands—only by that of my own," said Sort, and he pushed the money across to Pelle. "Are you going to travel just as you stand?"

“No, I have plenty of money,” said Pelle gaily. “I’ve never before possessed so much money all at once! One can get quite a lot of clothes for that.”

“But you mustn’t touch the money! Five kroner you’ll need for the passage and the like; the rest you must save, so that you can face the future with confidence!”

“I shall soon earn plenty of money in Copenhagen!”

“He has always been a thoughtless lad,” said Lasse anxiously. “Once, when he came into town here to be apprenticed he had five kroner; and as for what he spent them on, he could never give any proper account!”

Sort laughed.

“Then I shall travel as I stand!” said Pelle resolutely. But that wouldn’t do, either!

He could not by any means please both—they were like two anxious clucking hens.

He had no lack of linen, for Lasse had just thought of his own supply. Karna had looked after him well. “But it will be very short for your long body. It’s not the same now as it was when you left Stone Farm—then we had to put a tuck in my shirt for you.”

In the matter of shoes he was not well off. It would never do for a journeyman shoemaker to look for work wearing such shoes as his. Sort and Pelle must make a pair of respectable boots. “We must leave ourselves time,” said Sort. “Think! They must be able to stand the judgment of the capital!” Pelle was impatient, and wanted to get the work quickly out of hand.

Now there was only the question of a new suit. “Then buy it ready made on credit,” said Sort. “Lasse and I will be good enough securities for a suit.”

In the evening, before he started, he and Lasse went out to look up Due. They chose the time when they were certain of meeting Due himself. They neither of them cared much for Anna. As they approached the house they saw an old richly-dressed gentleman go in at the front door.

“That is the consul,” said Pelle, “who has helped them to get on. Then Due is out with the horses, and we are certainly not welcome.”

“Is it like that with them?” said Lasse, standing still. “Then I am sorry for Due when he first finds out how his affairs really stand! He will certainly find that he has bought his independence too dearly! Yes, yes; for those who want to get on the price is hard to pay. I hope it will go well with you over there, my boy.”

They had reached the church. There stood a cart full of green plants; two men were carrying them into a dwelling-house.

“What festivity’s going on here?” asked Pelle.

“There’s to be a wedding to-morrow,” answered one of the men. “Merchant Lau’s daughter is marrying that swaggering fellow, who’s always giving himself airs—Karlsen, he’s called, and he’s a poor chap like ourselves. But do you suppose he’ll notice us? When dirt comes to honor, there’s no bearing with it! Now he’s become a partner in the business!”

“Then I’ll go to the wedding,” said Lasse eagerly, while they strolled on. “It is very interesting to see when one of a family comes to something.” Pelle felt that this was to some extent meant as a reproach, but he said nothing.

“Shall we have one look at the new harbor?” he said.

“No, now the sun’s going down, and I’ll go home and get to bed. I’m old—but you go. I shall soon find my way back.” Pelle strolled onward, but then turned aside toward the north—he would go and bid Marie Nielsen good-bye. He owed her a friendly word for all her goodness. Also, as an exception, she should for once see him in respectable clothes. She had just come home from her work, and was on the point of preparing her supper.

“No, Pelle, is that you?” she cried delightedly, “and so grand, too—you look like a prince!” Pelle had to remain to supper.

“I have really only come to thank you for all your friendliness and to say good-bye. To-morrow I go to Copenhagen.”

She looked at him earnestly. “And you are glad!”

Pelle had to tell her what he had been doing since he had last seen her. He sat there looking gratefully about the poor, clean room, with the bed set so innocently against the wall, covered with a snow-white counterpane. He had never forgotten that fragrance of soap and

cleanliness and her fresh, simple nature. She had taken him in the midst of all his misery and had not thought her own white bed too good for him while she scrubbed the mire from him. When he reached the capital he would have himself photographed and send her his portrait.

"And how are you doing now?" he asked gently.

"Just as when you last saw me—only a little more lonely," she answered earnestly.

And then he must go. "Good-bye, and may everything go well with you!" he said, and he shook her hand. "And many thanks for all your goodness!"

She stood before him silently, looking at him with an uncertain smile. "Ah, no! I'm only a human being too!" she cried suddenly, and she flung her arms about him in a passionate embrace.

And then the great day broke! Pelle awaked with the sun and had the green chest already packed before the others were up, and then he roamed about, not knowing what he should set his hand to, he was so restless and so excited. He answered at random, and his eyes were full of radiant dreams. In the morning he and Lasse carried the chest to the steamer, in order to have the evening free. Then they went to the church, in order to attend Alfred's wedding. Pelle would gladly have stayed away; he had enough to do with his own affairs, and he had no sympathy for Alfred's doings.

But Lasse pushed him along.

The sun stood high in heaven and blazed in the winding side-streets so that the tarred timberwork sweated and the gutters stank; from the harbor came the sound of the crier, with his drum, crying herrings, and announcing an auction. The people streamed to church in breathless conversation concerning this child of fortune, Alfred, who had climbed so far.

The church was full of people. It was gaily decorated, and up by the organ stood eight young women who were to sing "It is so lovely together to be!" Lasse had never seen or heard of such a wedding. "I feel quite proud!" he said.

"He's a bladder full of wind!" said Pelle. "He's taking her simply on account of the honor."

And then the bridal pair stepped up to the altar. "It's tremendous the way Alfred has greased his head!" whispered Lasse. "It looks like a newly-licked calf's head! But she is pretty. I'm only puzzled that she's not put on her myrtle-wreath—I suppose nothing has happened?"

"Yes, she's got a child," whispered Pelle. "Otherwise, he would never in this world have got her!"

"Oh, I see! Yes, but that's smart of him, to catch such a fine lady!"

Now the young women sang, and it sounded just as if they were angels from heaven who had come to seal the bond.

"We must take our places so that we can congratulate them," said Lasse, and he wanted to push right through the crowd, but Pelle held him back.

"I'm afraid he won't know us to-day; but look now, there's Uncle Kalle."

Kalle stood squeezed among the hindmost chairs, and there he had to stay until everybody had passed out. "Yes, I was very anxious to take part in this great day," he said, "and I wanted to bring mother with me, but she thought her clothes weren't respectable enough." Kalle wore a new gray linsey-woolsey suit; he had grown smaller and more bent with the years.

"Why do you stand right away in the corner here, where you can see nothing? As the bridegroom's father, you must have been given your place in the first row," said Lasse.

"I have been sitting there, too—didn't you see me sitting next to Merchant Lau? We sang out of the same hymn-book. I only got pushed here in the crowd. Now I ought to go to the wedding-feast. I was properly invited, but I don't quite know…." He looked down at himself. Suddenly he made a movement, and laughed in his own reckless way. "Ugh—what am I doing standing here and telling lies to people who don't believe me! No, pigs don't belong in the counting-house! I might spread a bad smell, you know! People like us haven't learned to sweat scent!"

"Bah! He's too grand to know his own father! Devil take it! Then come with us so that you needn't go away hungry!" said Lasse.

"No—I've been so overfed with roast meats and wine and cakes that I can't get any more down for the present. Now I must go home and tell

mother about all the splendid things. I've eighteen miles to go."

"And you came here on foot—thirty-six miles! That's too much for your years!"

"I had really reckoned that I'd stay the night here. I didn't think … Well, an owl's been sitting there! Children can't very well climb higher than that—not to recognize their own fathers! Anna is now taking the best way to become a fine lady, too…. I shall be wondering how long I shall know myself! Devil take it, Kalle Karlsen, I'm of good family, too, look you! Well, then, ajoo!"

Wearily he set about tramping home. He looked quite pitiful in his disappointment. "He's never looked so miserable in his life!" said Lasse, gazing after him, "and it takes something, too, to make Brother Kalle chuck his gun into the ditch!"

Toward evening they went through the town to the steamer. Pelle took long strides, and a strange feeling of solemnity kept him silent. Lasse trotted along at his side; he stooped as he went. He was in a doleful mood. "Now you won't forget your old father?" he said, again and again.

"There's no danger of that," rejoined Sort. Pelle heard nothing of this; his thoughts were all set on his journey. The blue smoke of kitchen fires was drifting down among the narrow lanes. The old people were sitting out of doors on their front steps, and were gossiping over the news of the day. The evening sun fell upon round spectacles, so that great fiery eyes seemed to be staring out of their wrinkled faces. The profound peace of evening lay over the streets. But in the narrow lanes there was the breathing of that eternal, dull unrest, as of a great beast that tosses and turns and cannot sleep. Now and again it blazed up into a shout, or the crying of a child, and then began anew—like heavy, labored breathing. Pelle knew it well, that ghostly breathing, which rises always from the lair of the poor man. The cares of poverty had shepherded the evil dreams home for the night. But he was leaving this world of poverty, where life was bleeding away unnoted in the silence; in his thoughts it was fading away like a mournful song; and he gazed out over the sea, which lay glowing redly at the end of the street. Now he was going out into the world!

The crazy Anker was standing at the top of his high steps. "Good-bye!" cried Pelle, but Anker did not understand. He turned his face up to the sky and sent forth his demented cry.

Pelle threw a last glance at the workshop. "There have I spent many a good hour!" he thought; and he thought, too, of the young master. Old Jörgen was standing before his window, playing with the little Jörgen, who sat inside on the windowseat. "Peep, peep, little one!" he cried, in his shrill voice, and he hid, and bobbed up into sight again. The young wife was holding the child; she was rosy with maternal delight.

"You'll be sure to let us hear from you," said Lasse yet again, as Pelle stood leaning over the steamer's rail. "Don't forget your old father!" He was quite helpless in his anxiety.

"I will write to you as soon as I'm getting on," said Pelle, for the twentieth time at least. "Only don't worry!" Sure of victory, he laughed down at the old man. For the rest they stood silent and gazed at one another.

At last the steamer moved. "Good luck—take care of yourself!" he cried for the last time, as they turned the pier-head; and as long as he could see he waved his cap. Then he went right forward and sat on a coil of rope.

He had forgotten all that lay behind him. He gazed ahead as though at any moment the great world itself might rise in front of the vessel's bow. He pictured nothing to himself of what was to come and how he would meet it—he was only longing—longing!

THE END

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