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DAYBREAK

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IV. DAYBREAK

I

Out in the middle of the open, fertile country, where the plough was busy turning up the soil round the numerous cheerful little houses, stood a gloomy building that on every side turned bare walls toward the smiling world. No panes of glass caught the ruddy glow of the morning and evening sun and threw back its quivering reflection; three rows of barred apertures drank in all the light of day with insatiable avidity. They were always gaping greedily, and seen against the background of blue spring sky, looked like holes leading into the everlasting darkness. In its heavy gloom the mass of masonry towered above the many smiling homes, but their peaceable inhabitants did not seem to feel oppressed. They ploughed their fields right up to the bare walls, and wherever the building was visible, eyes were turned toward it with an expression that told of the feeling of security that its strong walls gave.

Like a landmark the huge building towered above everything else. It might very well have been a temple raised to God's glory by a grateful humanity, so imposing was it; but if so, it must have been in by-gone ages, for no dwellings—even for the Almighty—are built nowadays in so barbaric a style, as if the one object were to keep out light and air! The massive walls were saturated with the dank darkness within, and the centuries had weathered their surface and made on it luxuriant cultures of fungus and mould, and yet they still seemed as if they could stand for an eternity.

The building was no fortress, however, nor yet a temple whose dim recesses were the abode of the unknown God. If you went up to the great, heavy door, which was always closed you could read above the arch the one word *Prison* in large letters and below it a simple Latin verse that with no little pretentiousness proclaimed:

> "I am the threshold to all virtue and wisdom;
> Justice flourishes solely for my sake."

One day in the middle of spring, the little door in the prison gate opened, and a tall man stepped out and looked about him with eyes blinking at the light which fell upon his ashen-white face. His step faltered and he had to lean for support against the wall; he looked as if he were about to go back again, but he drew a deep breath and went out on to the open ground.

The spring breeze made a playful assault upon him, tried to ruffle his prison-clipped, slightly gray hair, which had been curly and fair when last it had done so, and penetrated gently to his bare body like a soft, cool hand. "Welcome, Pelle!" said the sun, as it peeped into his distended pupils in which the darkness of the prison-cell still lay brooding. Not a muscle of his face moved, however; it was as though hewn out of stone. Only the pupils of his eyes contracted so violently as to be almost painful, but he continued to look earnestly before him. Whenever he saw any one, he stopped and gazed eagerly, perhaps in the hope that it was some one coming to meet him.

As he turned into the King's Road some one called to him. He turned round in sudden, intense joy, but then his head dropped and he went on without answering. It was only a tramp, who was standing half out of a ditch in a field a little way off, beckoning to him. He came running over the ploughed field, crying hoarsely: "Wait a little, can't you? Here have I been waiting for company all day, so you might as well wait a little!"

He was a broad-shouldered, rather puffy-looking fellow, with a flat back and the nape of his neck broad and straight and running right up into his cap without forming any projection for the back of his head, making one involuntarily think of the scaffold. The bone of his nose had sunk into his purple face, giving a bull-dog mixture of brutality and stupid curiosity to its expression.

"How long have you been in?" he asked, as he joined him, breathless. There was a malicious look in his eyes.

"I went in when Pontius Pilate was a little boy, so you can reckon it out for yourself," said Pelle shortly.

"My goodness! That was a good spell! And what were you copped for?"

"Oh, there happened to be an empty place, so they took me and put me in —so that it shouldn't stand empty, you know!"

The tramp scowled at him. "You're laying it on a little too thick! You won't get any one to believe that!" he said uncertainly. Suddenly he put himself in front of Pelle, and pushed his bull-like forehead close to the other's face. "Now, I'll just tell you something, my boy!" he said. "I don't

want to touch any one the first day I'm out, but you'd better take yourself and your confounded uppishness somewhere else; for I've been lying here waiting for company all day."

"I didn't mean to offend any one," said Pelle absently. He looked as if he had not come back to earth, and appeared to have no intention of doing anything.

"Oh, didn't you! That's fortunate for you, or I might have taken a color-print of your doleful face, however unwillingly. By the way, mother said I was to give you her love."

"Are you Ferdinand?" asked Pelle, raising his head.

"Oh, don't pretend!" said Ferdinand. "Being in gaol seems to have made a swell of you!"

"I didn't recognize you," said Pelle earnestly, suddenly recalled to the world around him.

"Oh, all right—if you say so. It must be the fault of my nose. I got it bashed in the evening after I'd buried mother. I was to give you her love, by the way."

"Thank you!" said Pelle heartily. Old memories from the "Ark" filled his mind and sent his blood coursing through his veins once more. "Is it long since your mother died?" he asked sympathetically.

Ferdinand nodded. "It was a good thing, however," he said, "for now there's no one I need go and have a bad conscience about. I'd made up my mind that she deserved to have things comfortable in her old age, and I was awfully careful; but all the same I was caught for a little robbery and got eight months. That was just after you got in—but of course you know that."

"No! How could I know it?"

"Well, I telegraphed it over to you. I was just opposite you, in Wing A, and when I'd reckoned out your cell, I bespoke the whole line one evening, and knocked a message through to you. But there was a sanctimonious parson at the corner of your passage, one of those moral folk—oh, you didn't even know that, then? Well, I'd always suspected him of not passing my message on, though a chap like that's had an awful lot of learning put into him. Then when I came out I said to myself that there must be an end to all this, for mother'd taken it very much to heart, and was failing. I managed to get into one of the streets where honest thieves live, and went about as a colporteur, and it all went very well. It would have been horribly mean if she'd died of hunger. And we had a jolly good time for six months, but then she slipped away all the same, and I can just tell you that I've never been in such low spirits as the day they put her underground in the cemetery. Well, I said to myself, there lies mother smelling the weeds from underneath, so you can just as well give it all up, for there's nothing more to trouble about now. And I went up to the office and asked for a settlement, and they cheated me of fifty subscribers, the rogues!

"Of course I went to the police: I was stupid enough to do that at that time. But they're all a lot of rogues together. They thought it wouldn't do to believe a word that I said, and would have liked to put me in prison at once; but for all they poked about they couldn't find a peg to hang their hat upon. 'He's managing to hide it well this time, the sly fellow!' they said, and let me go. But there soon was something, for I settled the matter myself, and you may take your oath my employers didn't get the best of the arrangement. You see there are two kinds of people—poor people who are only honest when they let themselves be robbed, and all the others. Why the devil should one go about like a shorn sheep and not rob back! Some day of course there'll be a bust-up, and then—'three years, prisoner!' I shall be in again before long."

"That depends upon yourself," said Pelle slowly.

"Oh, well, of course you can do *something*; but the police are always getting sharper, and the man isn't born who won't fall into the trap sooner or later."

"You should try and get some honest employment again. You've shown that you can succeed."

Ferdinand whistled. "In such a paltry way as that! Many thanks for the good advice! You'd like me to look after a bloated aristocrat's geese and then sit on the steps and eat dry bread to the smell of the roast bird, would you? No, thank you! And even if I did—what then? You may be quite sure they'd keep a good watch on a fellow, if he tried an honest job, and it wouldn't be two days before the shadow was there. 'What's this about Ferdinand? I hear things are not all square with him. I'm sorry, for he's really worked well; but he'd better look out for another place.'

That's what the decent ones would do; the others would simply wait until his wages were due and take something off—because he'd been in once. They could never be sure that he hadn't stolen something from them, could they? and it's best to be careful! If you make a fuss, you're called a thief to your face. I've tried it, let me tell you! And now you can try it yourself. You'll be in again as soon as ever the spring comes! The worst of it is that it gets more every time; a fellow like me may get five years for stealing five krones (five shillings). Isn't that a shame? So it's just as well to do something to make it worth while. It wouldn't matter if you could only get a good hit at it all. It's all one to me now that mother's dead. There's a child crying, but it's not for me. There isn't a soul that would shed a tear if I had to lay my head on the block. They'd come and stare, that's what they'd do—and I should get properly into the papers!

"Wicked? Of course I'm wicked! Sometimes I feel like one great sore, and would like to let them hear all about it. There's no such thing as gentle hands. That's only a lie, so I owe nothing to anybody. Several times while I've been in there I've made up my mind to kill the warder, just so as to have a hit at something; for he hadn't done me any harm. But then I thought after all it was stupid. I'd no objection to kick the bucket; it would be a pleasant change anyhow to sitting in prison all one's life. But then you'd want to do something first that would make a stir. That's what I feel!"

They walked on at a good pace, their faces turned in the direction of the smoky mist of the town far ahead, Ferdinand chewing his quid and spitting incessantly. His hardened, bulldog face with its bloodshot eyes was entirely without expression now that he was silent.

A peasant lad came toward them, singing at the top of his voice. He must have been about twelve or fourteen years of age.

"What are you so happy about, boy?" asked Ferdinand, stopping him.

"I took a heifer into the town, and I got two krones (two shillings) for the job," answered the boy, smiling all over his face.

"You must have been up early then," said Pelle.

"Yes, I left home at three last night. But now I've earned a day's wages, and can take it easy the rest of the day!" answered the boy, throwing the two-krone piece into the air and catching it again.

"Take care you don't lose it," said Ferdinand, following the coin with covetous eyes.

The boy laughed merrily.

"Let's see whether it's a good one. They're a fearful lot of thieves on the market in there."

The boy handed him the coin. "Ah, yes, it's one of those that you can break in half and make two of," said Ferdinand, doing a few juggling tricks with it. "I suppose I may keep one?" His expression had become lively and he winked maliciously at Pelle as he stood playing with the coin so that it appeared to be two. "There you are; that's yours," he said, pressing the piece of money firmly into the boy's hand. "Take good care of it, so that you don't get a scolding from your mother."

The boy opened his empty hand in wonderment. "Give me my two-krone!" he said, smiling uncertainly.

"What the devil—I've given it you once!" said Ferdinand, pushing the boy aside roughly and beginning to walk on.

The boy followed him and begged persistently for his money. Then he began to cry.

"Give him his money!" said Pelle crossly. "It's not amusing now."

"Amusing?" exclaimed Ferdinand, stopping abruptly and gazing at him in amazement. "Do you think I play for small sums? What do I care about the boy! He may take himself off; I'm not his father."

Pelle looked at him a moment without comprehending; then he took a paper containing a few silver coins out of his waistcoat pocket, and handed the boy two krones. The boy stood motionless with amazement for a moment, but then, seizing the money, he darted away as quickly as he could go.

Ferdinand went on, growling to himself and blinking his eyes. Suddenly he stopped and exclaimed: "I'll just tell you as a warning that if it wasn't you, and because I don't want to have this day spoiled, I'd have cracked your skull for you; for no one else would have played me that trick. Do you understand?" And he stood still again and pushed his heavy brow close to Pelle's face.

Quick as thought, Pelle seized him by his collar and trousers, and threw him forcibly onto a heap of stones. "That's the second time to-day that you've threatened to crack my skull," he said in fury, pounding

Ferdinand's head against the stones. For a few moments he held him down firmly, but then released him and helped him to rise. Ferdinand was crimson in the face, and stood swaying, ready to throw himself upon Pelle, while his gaze wandered round in search of a weapon. Then he hesitatingly drew the two-krone piece out of his pocket, and handed it to Pelle in sign of subjection.

"You may keep it," said Pelle condescendingly.

Ferdinand quickly pocketed it again, and began to brush the mud off his clothes. "The skilly in there doesn't seem to have weakened you much," he said, shaking himself good-naturedly as they went on. "You've still got a confounded hard hand. But what I can't understand is why you should be so sorry for a hobbledehoy like that. He can take care of himself without us."

"Weren't you once sorry too for a little fellow when some one wanted to take his money away from him?"

"Oh, that little fellow in the 'Ark' who was going to fetch the medicine for his mother? That's such a long time ago!"

"You got into difficulties with the police for his sake! It was the first time you were at odds with the authorities, I think."

"Well, the boy hadn't done anything; I saw that myself. So I hobbled the copper that was going to run him in. His mother was ill—and my old 'un was alive; and so I was a big idiot! You'll see you won't get far with your weak pity. Do we owe any one anything, I should like to know?"

"Yes, *I* do," said Pelle, suddenly raising his face toward the light. "But I can't say you've much to thank any one for."

"What confounded nonsense!" exclaimed Ferdinand, staring at him. "Have they been good to you, did you say? When they shut you up in prison too, perhaps? You're pretending to be good, eh? You stop that! You'll have to go farther into the country with it. So you think you deserved your house-of-correction turn, while another was only suffering the blackest injustice? Nonsense! They know well enough what they're doing when they get hold of me, but they might very well have let you off. You got together fifty thousand men, but what did you all do, I should like to know? You didn't make as much disturbance as a mouse in a pair of lady's unmentionables. Well-to-do people are far more afraid of me than of you and all your fellows together. Injustice! Oh, shut up and don't slobber! You give no quarter, and you don't ask any either: that's all. And by the way, you might do me the favor to take back your two-krone. *I* don't owe any one anything."

"Well, borrow it, then," said Pelle. "You can't go to town quite without money."

"Do take it, won't you?" begged Ferdinand. "It isn't so easy for you to get hold of any as for any one else, and it was a little too mean the way I got it out of you. You've been saving it up in there, a halfpenny a day, and perhaps gone without your quid, and I come and cheat you out of it! No, confound it! And you gave mother a little into the bargain; I'd almost forgotten it! Well, never mind the tin then! I know a place where there's a good stroke of business to be done."

A little above Damhus Lake they turned into a side road that led northward, in order to reach the town from the Nörrebro side. Far down to the right a great cloud of smoke hung in the air. It was the atmosphere of the city. As the east wind tore off fragments of it and carried them out, Ferdinand lifted his bull-dog nose and sniffed the air. "Wouldn't I like to be sitting in the 'Cupping-Glass' before a horse-steak with onions!" he said.

By this time the afternoon was well advanced. They broke sticks out of a hedge and went on steadily, following ditches and dikes as best they could. The plough was being driven over the fields, backward and forward, turning up the black earth, while crows and sea-birds fought in the fresh furrows. The ploughmen put the reins round their waist each time they came to the end of their line, threw the plough over and brought it into position for a new furrow, and while they let their horses take breath, gazed afar at the two strange spring wayfarers. There was such a foreign air about their clothes that they must be two of that kind of people that go on foot from land to land, they thought; and they called after them scraps of foreign sentences to show they knew something about them. Ah, yes! They were men who could look about them! Perhaps by to-morrow those two would be in a foreign country again, while other folk never left the place they were once in!

They passed a white house standing in stately seclusion among old trees, a high hawthorn hedge screening the garden from the road. Ferdinand threw a hasty glance over the gate. The blinds were all down!

He began to be restless, and a little farther on he suddenly slipped in behind a hedge and refused to go any farther. “I don’t care to show myself in town empty-handed,” he said. “And besides evening’s the best time to go in at full speed. Let’s wait here until it’s dark. I can smell silver in that house we passed.”

“Come on now and let those fancies alone,” said Pelle earnestly. “A new life begins from to-day. I’ll manage to help you to get honest work!”

Ferdinand broke into laughter. “Good gracious me! You help others! You haven’t tried yet what it is to come home from prison! You’ll find it hard enough to get anywhere yourself, my good fellow. New life, ha, ha! No; just you stay here and we’ll do a little business together when it gets dark. The house doesn’t look quite squint-eyed. Then this evening we can go to the ‘Cupping-Glass’ and have a jolly good spree, and act the home-coming American. Besides it’s not right to go home without taking something for your family. Just you wait! You should see ‘Laura with the Arm’ dance! She’s my cupboard-love, you know. She can dance blindfold upon a table full of beer-mugs without spilling a drop. There might be a little kiss for you too.—Hang it!—you don’t surely imagine you’ll be made welcome anywhere else, do you? I can tell you there’s no one who’ll stand beckoning you home.—Very well, then go to the devil, you fool, and remember me to your monthly nurse! When you’re tired of family life, you can ask for me at my address, the ‘Cupping-Glass’.” His hoarse, hollow voice cut through the clear spring air as he shouted the last words with his hand to his mouth.

Pelle went on quickly, as though anxious to leave something behind him. He had had an insane hope of being received in some kind way or other when he came out—comrades singing, perhaps, or a woman and two children standing on the white highroad, waiting for him! And there had only been Ferdinand to meet him! Well, it had been a damper, and now he shook off the disappointment and set out at a good pace. The active movement set his pulses beating. The sky had never before been so bright as it was to-day; the sun shone right into his heart. There was a smiling greeting in it all—in the wind that threw itself into his very arms, in the fresh earth and in the running water in the ditches. Welcome back again, Pelle!

How wide and fair the world looks when you’ve spent years within four bare walls! Down in the south the clouds were like the breast of a great bright bird, one of those that come a long way every year with summer in the beat of their strong wings; and on all sides lay the open, white roads, pointing onward with bright assurances.

For the fourth time he was setting out to conquer the world, and this time it was in bitter earnest. There had always before proved to be something more behind, but now he felt that what he should now set out upon would be decisive; if he was victorious now, he would conquer eternity. This time it must be either for weal or woe, and all that he possessed he was now bringing into the field. He had never before been so heavily equipped. Far off he could still make out the dome of the prison, which stood there like a huge mill over the descent to the nether world, and ground misery into crime in the name of humanity. It sucked down every one who was exposed to life’s uncertainty; he had himself hung in the funnel and felt how its whirling drew him down.

But Pelle had been too well equipped. Hitherto he had successfully converted everything into means of rising, and he took this in the same way. His hair was no longer fair, but, on the other hand, his mind was magically filled with a secret knowledge of the inner nature of things, for he had sat at the root of all things, and by listening had drawn it out of the solitude. He had been sitting moping in the dark mountain like Prince Fortune, while Eternity sang to him of the great wonder. The spirits of evil had carried him away into the mountains; that was all. And now they had set him free again, believing that he had become a troll like all his predecessors. But Pelle was not bewitched. He had already consumed many things in his growth, and this was added to the rest. What did a little confinement signify as compared with the slow drip, drip, of centuries? Had he not been born with a caul, upon which neither steel nor poison made any impression?

He sat down on an elevation, pulled off his cap, and let the cool breeze play upon his forehead. It was full of rich promises; in its vernal wandering over the earth it had gathered up all that could improve and strengthen, and loaded him with it. Look around you, Pelle!

On all sides the soil was being prepared, the plough-teams nodded up the gentle inclines and disappeared down the other side. A thin vapor rose from the soil; it was the last of the cold evaporating in the declining spring day. Some way down a few red cottages smilingly faced the

sunset, and still farther on lay the town with its eternal cloud of smoke hanging over it.

What would his future be like down there? And how did matters stand? Had the new made its way to the front, or would he once more have to submit to an extortioner, get only the bare necessaries of life out of his work, and see the rest disappear into some one else's pocket? A number of new factories had grown up, and now formed quite a belt about the city, with their hundreds of giant chimneys stretching up into the sky. But something must be going on, since they were not smoking. Was it a wages conflict?

He was now going to lay plans for his life, build it up again upon the deep foundation that had been laid in his solitude; and yet he knew absolutely nothing of the conditions down in the town! Well, he had friends in thousands; the town was simply lying waiting to receive him with open arms, more fond of him than ever because of all he had suffered. With all his ignorance he had been able to lead them on a little way; the development had chosen him as its blind instrument, and it had been successful; but now he was going to lead them right into the land, for now he felt the burden of life within him.

Hullo! if he wasn't building castles in the air just as in the old days, and forgetting all that the prison cell had taught him so bitterly! The others' good indeed! He had been busily concerned for the homes of others, and had not even succeeded in building his own! What humbug! Down there were three neglected beings who would bring accusations against him, and what was the use of his sheltering himself behind the welfare of the many? What was the good of receiving praise from tens of thousands and being called benefactor by the whole world, if those three whose welfare had been entrusted to him accused him of having failed them? He had often enough tried to stifle their accusing voices, but in there it was not possible to stifle anything into silence.

Pelle still had no doubt that he was chosen to accomplish something for the masses, but it had become of such secondary importance when he recollected that he had neglected his share of that which was the duty of every one. He had mistaken small for great, and believed that when he accomplished something that no one else could do, he might in return pay less attention to ordinary every-day duties; but the fates ordained that the burden of life should be laid just where every one could help. And now he was coming back like a poor beggar, who had conquered everything except the actual, and therefore possessed nothing, and had to beg for mercy. Branded as a criminal, he must now begin at the beginning, and accomplish that which he had not been able to do in the days of his power. It would be difficult to build his home under these circumstances, and who was there to help him? Those three who could have spoken for him he had left to their own devices as punishment for an offence which in reality was his own.

He had never before set out in such a poverty-stricken state. He did not even come like one who had something to forgive: his prison-cell had left him nothing. He had had time enough there to go carefully over the whole matter, and everything about Ellen that he had before been too much occupied to notice or had felt like a silent opposition to his projects, now stood out clearly, and formed itself, against his will, into the picture of a woman who never thought of herself, but only of the care of her little world and how she could sacrifice herself. He could not afford to give up any of his right here, and marshalled all his accusations against her, bringing forward laws and morals; but it all failed completely to shake the image, and only emphasized yet more the strength of her nature. She had sacrificed *everything* for him and the children, her one desire being to see them happy. Each of his attacks only washed away a fresh layer of obstructing mire, and made the sacrifice in her action stand out more clearly. It was because she was so unsensual and chaste that she could act as she had done. Alas! she had had to pay dearly for *his* remissness; it was the mother who, in their extreme want, gave her own body to nourish her offspring.

Pelle would not yield, but fought fiercely against conviction. He had been robbed of freedom and the right to be a human being like others, and now solitude was about to take from him all that remained to sustain him. Even if everything joined together against him, he was not wrong, he *would* not be wrong. It was he who had brought the great conflict to an end at the cost of his own—and he had found Ellen to be a prostitute! His thoughts clung to this word, and shouted it hoarsely, unceasingly—prostitute! prostitute! He did not connect it with anything, but only wanted to drown the clamor of accusations on all sides which were making him still more naked and miserable.

At first letters now and then came to him, probably from old companions- in-arms, perhaps too from Ellen: he did not know, for he refused to take them. He hated Ellen because she was the stronger, hated in impotent defiance everything and everybody. Neither she nor any one else should have the satisfaction of being any comfort to him; since he had been shut up as an unclean person, he had better keep himself quite apart from them. He would make his punishment still more hard, and purposely increased his forlornness, kept out of his thoughts everything that was near and dear to him, and dragged the painful things into the foreground. Ellen had of course forgotten him for some one else, and had perhaps turned the children's thoughts from him; they would certainly be forbidden to mention the word "father." He could distinctly see them all three sitting happily round the lamp; and when some turn in the conversation threatened to lead it to the subject of himself, a coldness and stillness as of death suddenly fell upon them. He mercilessly filled his existence with icy acknowledgment on all points, and believed he revenged himself by breathing in the deadly cold.

After a prolonged period of this he was attacked with frenzy, dashed himself blindly against the walls, and shouted that he wanted to get out. To quiet him he was put into a strait-waistcoat and removed to a pitch-dark cell. On the whole he was one of the so-called defiant prisoners, who meant to kick against the pricks, and he was treated accordingly.

But one night when he lay groaning after a punishment, and saw the angry face of God in the darkness, he suddenly became silent. "Are you a human being?" it said, "and cannot even bear a little suffering?" Pelle was startled. He had never known that there was anything particularly human in suffering. But from that night he behaved quietly, with a listening expression, as if he heard something through the walls. "Now he's become quiet," said the gaoler, who was looking at him through the peep-hole. "It won't be long before he's an idiot!"

But Pelle had only come out on the other side; he was staring bravely into the darkness to see God's face once more, but in a gentler guise. The first thing he saw was Ellen again, sitting there beautiful, exculpated, made more desirable by all his accusations. How great and fateful all petty things became here! What was the good of defending himself? She was his fate, and he would have to surrender unconditionally. He still did not comprehend her, but he had a consciousness of greater laws for life, laws that raised *her* and made him small. She and hers passed undefiled through places where he stuck fast in the surface mire.

She seemed to him to grow in here, and led his thoughts behind the surface, where they had never been before. Her unfailing mother-love was like a beating pulse that rose from the invisible and revealed hidden mystical forces—the perceptible rhythm of a great heart which beat in concealment behind everything. Her care resembled that of God Himself; she was nearer to the springs of life than he.

The springs of life! Through her the expression for the first time acquired a meaning for him. It was on the whole as if she re-created him, and by occupying himself with her ever enigmatical nature, his thoughts were turned further and further inward. He suspected the presence of strong currents which bore the whole thing; and sometimes in the silence of his cell he seemed to hear his existence flowing, flowing like a broad stream, and emptying itself out there where his thoughts had never ventured to roam. What became of the days and the years with all that they had held? The ever present Ellen, who had never herself given a thought to the unseen, brought Pelle face to face with infinity.

While all this was going on within him, they sang one Sunday during the prison service Grundtvig's hymn, "The former days have passed away." The hymn expressed all that he had himself vaguely thought, and touched him deeply; the verses came to him in his narrow pen like waves from a mighty ocean, which rolled ages in to the shore in monotonous power. He suddenly and strongly realized the passage of generations of human beings over the earth, and boldly grasped what he had until now only dimly suspected, namely, his own connection with them all, both those who were living then and all those who had gone before. How small his own idea of union had been when measured by this immense community of souls, and what a responsibility was connected with each one! He understood now how fatal it was to act recklessly, then break off and leave everything. In reality you could never leave anything; the very smallest thing you shirked would be waiting for you as your fate at the next milestone. And who, indeed, was able to overlook an action? You had to be lenient continually, and at last it would turn out that you had been lenient to yourself.

Pelle was taking in wisdom, and his own heart confirmed it. The thought of Ellen filled his mind more and more; he had lost her, and yet he could not get beyond her. Did she still love him? This question pursued him day and night with ever increasing vehemence, until even his life seemed to depend upon it. He felt, as he gazed questioningly into his solitude, that he would be worthless if he did not win her back. New worlds grew up before him; he could dimly discern the great connection between things, and thought he could see how deep down the roots of life stretched, drawing nourishment from the very darkness in which he dwelt. But to this he received no answer.

He never dreamt of writing to her. God had His own way of dealing with the soul, a way with which one did not interfere. It would have to come like all the rest, and he lulled himself with the foolish hope that Ellen would come and visit him, for he was now in the right mood to receive her. On Sundays he listened eagerly to the heavy clang of the gate. It meant visitors to the prisoners; and when the gaoler came along the corridor rattling his keys, Pelle's heart beat suffocatingly. This repeated itself Sunday after Sunday, and then he gave up hope and resigned himself to his fate.

After a long time, however, fortune favored him and brought him a greeting.

Pelle took no personal part in the knocking that every evening after the lights were out sounded through the immense building as if a thousand death-ticks were at work. He had enough of his own to think about, and only knocked those messages on that had to pass through his cell. One day, however, a new prisoner was placed in the cell next to his, and woke him. He was a regular frequenter of the establishment, and immediately set about proclaiming his arrival in all directions. It was Druk-Valde, "Widow" Rasmussen's idler of a sweetheart, who used to stand all the winter through in the gateway in Chapel Road, and spit over the toes of his well-polished shoes.

Yes, Valde knew Pelle's family well; his sweetheart had looked after the children when Ellen, during the great conflict, began to go out to work. Ellen had been very successful, and still held her head high. She sewed uppers and had a couple of apprentices to help her, and she was really doing pretty well. She did not associate with any one, not even with her relatives, for she never left her children.

Druk-Valde had to go to the wall every evening; the most insignificant detail was of the greatest importance. Pelle could see Ellen as if she were standing in the darkness before him, pale, always clad in black, always serious. She had broken with her parents; she had sacrificed everything for his sake! She even talked about him so that the children should not have forgotten him by the time he came back. "The little beggars think you're travelling," said Valde.

So everything was all right! It was like sunshine in his heart to know that she was waiting faithfully for him although he had cast her off. All the ice must melt and disappear; he was a rich man in spite of everything.

Did she bear his name? he asked eagerly. It would be like her—intrepid as she was—defiantly to write "Pelle" in large letters on the door- plate.

Yes, of course! There was no such thing as hiding there! Lasse Frederik and his sister were big now, and little Boy Comfort was a huge fellow for his age—a regular little fatty. To see him sitting in his perambulator, when they wheeled him out on Sundays, was a sight for gods!

Pelle stood in the darkness as though stunned. Boy Comfort, a little fellow sitting in a perambulator! And it was not an adopted child either; Druk-Valde so evidently took it to be his. Ellen! Ellen!

He went no more to the wall. Druk-Valde knocked in vain, and his six months came to an end without Pelle noticing it. This time he made no disturbance, but shrank under a feeling of being accursed. Providence must be hostile to him, since the same blow had been aimed at him twice. In the daytime he sought relief in hard work and reading; at night he lay on his dirty, mouldy-smelling mattress and wept. He no longer tried to overthrow his conception of Ellen, for he knew it was hopeless: she still tragically overshadowed everything. She was his fate and still filled his thoughts, but not brightly; there was indeed nothing bright or great about it now, only imperative necessity.

And then his work! For a man there was always work to fall back upon, when happiness failed him. Pelle set to work in earnest, and the man who was at the head of the prison shoemaking department liked to have him, for he did much more than was required of him. In his leisure hours

he read diligently, and entered with zest into the prison school-work, taking up especially history and languages. The prison chaplain and the teachers took an interest in him, and procured books for him which were generally unobtainable by the prisoners.

When he was thoroughly tired out he allowed his mind to seek rest in thoughts of his home. His weariness cast a conciliatory light over everything, and he would lie upon his pallet and in imagination spend happy hours with his children, including that young cuckoo who always looked at him with such a strangely mocking expression. To Ellen alone he did not get near. She had never been so beautiful as now in her unapproachableness, but she received all his assurances in mysterious silence, only gazing at him with her unfathomable eyes. He had forsaken her and the home; he knew that; but had he not also made reparation? It was *her* child he held on his knee, and he meant to build the home up again. He had had enough of an outlaw's life, and needed a heart upon which to rest his weary head.

All this was dreaming, but now he was on his way down to begin from the beginning. He did not feel very courageous; the uncertainty held so many possibilities. Were the children and Ellen well, and was she still waiting for him? And his comrades? How would his fate shape itself?

Pelle was so little accustomed to being in the fresh air that it affected him powerfully, and, much against his will, he fell asleep as he leaned back upon the bank. The longing to reach the end of his journey made him dream that he was still walking on and making his entry into the city; but he did not recognize it, everything was so changed. People were walking about in their best clothes, either going to the wood or to hear lectures.

"Who is doing the work, then?" he asked of a man whom he met.

"Work!" exclaimed the man in surprise. "Why, the machines, of course! We each have three hours at them in the day, but it'll soon be changed to two, for the machines are getting more and more clever. It's splendid to live and to know that there are no slaves but those inanimate machines; and for that we have to thank a man called Pelle."

"Why, that's me!" exclaimed Pelle, laughing with pleasure.

"You! What absurdity! Why, you're a young man, and all this happened many years ago."

"It is me, all the same! Don't you see that my hair is gray and my forehead lined? I got like that in fighting for you. Don't you recognize me?" But people only laughed at him, and he had to go on.

"I'll go to Ellen!" he thought, disheartened. "She'll speak up for me!" And while the thought was in his mind, he found himself in her parlor.

"Sit down!" she said kindly. "My husband'll be here directly."

"Why, I'm your husband!" he exclaimed, hardly able to keep back his tears; but she looked at him coldly and without recognition, and moved toward the door.

"I'm Pelle!" he said, holding out his hand beseechingly. "Don't you know me?"

Ellen opened her lips to cry out, and at that moment the husband appeared threateningly in the doorway. From behind him Lasse Frederik and Sister peeped out in alarm, and Pelle saw with a certain amount of satisfaction that there were only the two. The terrible thing, however, was that the man was himself, the true Pelle with the good, fair moustache, the lock of hair on his forehead and the go-ahead expression. When he discovered this, it all collapsed and he sank down in despair.

Pelle awoke with a start, bathed in perspiration, and saw with thankfulness the fields and the bright atmosphere: he was at any rate still alive! He rose and walked on with heavy steps while the spring breeze cooled his brow.

His road led him to Nörrebro. The sun was setting behind him; it must be about the time for leaving off work, and yet no hooter sounded from the numerous factories, no stream of begrimed human beings poured out of the side streets. In the little tea-gardens in the Frederikssund Road sat workmen's families with perambulator and provision-basket; they were dressed in their best and were enjoying the spring day. Was there after all something in his dream? If so, it would be splendid to come back! He asked people what was going on, and was told that it was the elections. "We're going to take the city to-day!" they said, laughing triumphantly.

From the square he turned into the churchyard, and went down the somber avenue of poplars to Chapel Road. Opposite the end of the avenue he saw the two little windows in the second floor; and in his passionate longing he seemed to see Ellen standing there and beckoning. He ran now, and took the stairs three or four at a time.

Just as he was about to pull the bell-cord, he heard strange voices within, and paused as though paralyzed. The door looked cold and as if it had nothing to do with him; and there was no door-plate. He went slowly down the stairs and asked in the greengrocer's cellar below whether a woman who sewed uppers did not live on the second floor to the left. She had been forsaken by her husband and had two children— *three*, he corrected himself humbly; what had become of them?

The deputy-landlord was a new man and could give him no information; so he went up into the house again, and asked from door to door but without any result. Poor people do not generally live long in one place.

Pelle wandered about the streets at haphazard. He could think of no way of getting Ellen's address, and gave it up disheartened; in his forlorn condition he had the impression that people avoided him, and it discouraged him. His soul was sick with longing for a kind word and a caress, and there was no one to give them. No eyes brightened at seeing him out again, and he hunted in vain in house after house for some one who would sympathize with him. A sudden feeling of hatred arose in him, an evil desire to hit out at everything and go recklessly on.

Twilight was coming on. Below the churchyard wall some newspaper-boys were playing "touch last" on their bicycles. They managed their machines like circus-riders, and resembled little gauchos, throwing them back and running upon the back wheel only, and bounding over obstacles. They had strapped their bags on their backs, and their blue cap-bands flapped about their ears like pennons.

Pelle seated himself upon a bench, and absently followed their reckless play, while his thoughts went back to his own careless boyhood. A boy of ten or twelve took the lead in breakneck tricks, shouting and commanding; he was the chief of the band, and maintained the leadership with a high hand. His face, with its snub nose, beamed with lively impudence, and his cap rested upon two exceptionally prominent ears.

The boys began to make of the stranger a target for their exuberant spirits. In dashing past him they pretended to lose control of their machine, so that it almost went over his foot; and at last the leader suddenly snatched off his cap. Pelle quietly picked it up, but when the boy came circling back with measured strokes as though pondering some fresh piece of mischief he sprang up and seized him by the collar.

"Now you shall have a thrashing, you scamp!" he said, lifting him off his bicycle. "But it'll be just as well if you get it from your parents. What's your father's name?"

"He hasn't got a father!" cried the other boys, flocking round them threateningly. "Let him go!"

The boy opened his lips to give vent to a torrent of bad language, but stopped suddenly and gazed in terror at Pelle, struggling like a mad thing to get away. Pelle let him go in surprise, and saw him mount his bicycle and disappear howling. His companions dashed after him like a flight of swallows. "Wait a little, Lasse Frederik!" they cried. Pelle stood a little while gazing after them, and then with bent head walked slowly into Nörrebro Street.

It was strange to be walking again in this street, which had played so great a part in his life. The traffic was heavier here than in other places, and the stone paving made it more so. A peculiar adamantine self-dependence was characteristic of this district where every step was weighted with the weight of labor.

The shops were the same, and he also recognized several of the shopkeepers. He tried to feel at home in the crowd, and looked into people's faces, wondering whether any one would recognize him. He both wished and feared it, but they hurried past, only now and then one of them would wonder a little at his strange appearance. He himself knew most of them as well as if it had been yesterday he had had to do with those thousands, for the intermediate years had not thrust new faces in between him and the old ones. Now and again he met one of his men walking on the pavement with his wife on his arm, while others were standing on the electric tramcars as drivers and conductors. Weaklings and steady fellows—they were his army. He could name them by name and was acquainted with their family circumstances. Well, a

good deal of water had run under the bridge since then!

He went into a little inn for travelling artisans, and engaged a room.

"It's easy to see that you've been away from this country for a day or two," said the landlord. "Have you been far?"

Oh, yes, Pelle had seen something of the world. And here at home there had been a good many changes. How did the Movement get on?

"Capitally! Yes, awfully well! Our party has made tremendous progress; to-day we shall take the town!"

"That'll make a difference in things, I suppose?"

"Oh, well, I wouldn't say that for certain. Unemployment increases every year, and it's all the same who represents the town and sits in parliament. But we've got on very well as far as prices go."

"Tell me—there was a man in the Movement a few years ago called Pelle; what's become of him?"

The landlord scratched his parting. "Pelle! Pelle! Yes, of course. What in the world was there about him? Didn't he make false coins, or rob a till? If I remember right, he ended by going to prison. Well, well, there are bad characters in every movement."

A couple of workmen, who were sitting at a table eating fried liver, joined in the conversation. "He came a good deal to the front five or six years ago," said one of them with his mouth full. "But there wasn't much in him; he had too much imagination."

"He had the gift of the gab, anyhow," said the other. "I still distinctly remember him at the great lock-out. He could make you think you were no end of a fine fellow, he could! Well, that's all past and gone! Your health, comrade!"

Pelle rose quietly and went out. He was forgotten; nobody remembered anything about him, in spite of all that he had fought for and suffered. Much must have passed over their heads since then, and him they had simply forgotten.

He did not know what to do with himself, more homeless here in this street, which should have been his own, than in any other place. It was black with people, but he was not carried with the stream; he resembled something that has been washed up to one side and left lying.

They were all in their best clothes. The workmen came in crowds on their way either from or to the polling-booths, and some were collected and accompanied thither by eager comrades. One man would shout to another across the road through his hollowed hand: "Hi, Petersen! I suppose you've voted?" Everywhere there was excitement and good humor: the city was to be taken!

Pelle went with the stream over Queen Louise's Bridge and farther into the city. Here the feeling was different, opinions were divided, people exchanged sharp words. Outside the newspaper-offices stood dense crowds impeding the wheel-traffic as they waited patiently for the results that were shown in the windows. Every time a contested district came in, a wave of movement passed through the crowd, followed by a mighty roar if a victory was recorded. All was comparatively quiet; people stood outside the offices of the papers that bore the color of their party. Only the quarrelsome men gathered about their opponents and had their hats bashed in. Within the offices the members of the staff were passing busily backward and forward, hanging up the results and correcting them.

All the *cafés* and restaurants were full of customers. The telephone rang incessantly, and messengers kept coming with lists from the telegram bureaus; men fought over the results in front of the great blackboard and chances were discussed at the tables and much political nonsense was talked.

Pelle had never seen the city so excited, not even during the great lock-out. Class faced class with clenched fists, the workmen even more eager than the upper class: they had become out-and-out politicians. He could see that the Movement had shifted its center of gravity over this. What was necessary was to gain seats; to-day they expected to get the upper hand in the city and a firm footing out in the country. Several of the old leaders were already in parliament and brought forward their practical experience in the debate; their aim now was nothing less than to usurp the political power. This was bold enough: they must have been successful, after all. He still possessed his old quickness of hearing as regards the general feeling, and perceived a change in the public tone. It had become broader, more democratic. Even the upper classes submitted to the ballot now, and condescended to fight for a majority of votes.

Pelle could see no place for himself, however, in this conflict. “Hi, you there! I suppose you’ve voted?” men shouted to him as they passed. Voted! He had not even the right to vote! In the battle that was now being fought, their old leader was not even allowed to take part as an ordinary soldier.

Out of the road! They marched in small bands on their way to the polling-booths or the Assembly Rooms, taking up the whole pavement, and Pelle readily moved out of their way. This time he did not come like a king’s son for whom the whole world stood waiting.

He was of the scum of the earth, neither more nor less, one who had been thrown aside and forgotten. If he succeeded in recalling himself to their remembrance, it would only be the bringing up of the story of a criminal. There was the house where the Stolpes lived. Perhaps they knew where Ellen was. But what did it matter to him? He had not forgotten Lasse Frederik’s terror-stricken face. And there was the corner house where Morten had managed the business. Ah, it was long since their ways had parted! Morten had in reality always envied him; he had not been able to bear his tremendous success. Now he would be able to crow over him!

Anger and bitterness filled his heart, and his head was confused, and his thoughts, bred of malice, were like clumsy faultfinders. For years the need of associating with human beings had been accumulating within him; and now the whole thing gave way like an avalanche. He could easily pick a quarrel with some one, just to make himself less a matter of indifference to the rest of the world. Why shouldn’t he go to the “Cupping-Glass”? He would be expected there at any rate.

Outside Griffenfeldt Street there was a crowd. A number of people had gathered round a coal-heaver, who was belaboring a lamp-post with the toes of his wooden shoes, at the same time using abusive language. He had run against it and had a bruise on his forehead. People were amusing themselves at his expense.

As the light from the lamp fell upon the coal-blackened face of the drunken man, Pelle recognized him. It was Merry Jacob. He pushed his way angrily through the crowd and took him by the shoulder. “What’s the matter with you, Jacob? Have you become a drunkard?” he said hotly. “How’s that?”

“It’s got no business to get in the way of an organized workman,” Jacob said indistinctly, kicking the air to the great delight of the onlookers, who encouraged him to continue. “I’m a member of my organization, and don’t owe anything; you can see for yourselves!” He pulled out of his breast-pocket a little book in a black leather cover, and turned over its pages. “Just look for yourselves! Member’s subscription paid, isn’t it? Strike subscription paid, isn’t it? Shown on entrance, isn’t it? Just you shut up! Take it and pass it round; we must have our papers in order. You’re supporting the election fund, I suppose? Go up and vote, confound you! The man who won’t give his mite is a poor pal. Who says thief? There’s no one here that steals. I’m an honest, organized—” He suddenly began to weep, and the saliva dropped from the corners of his mouth onto his coat, while he made fearful grimaces.

Pelle managed to get him into a courtyard, and washed his wound at the pump. The cold water made him shiver, and his head lolled weakly. “Such a snotty blackleg!” he murmured. “I’ll get the chairman to give him a doing in the paper.”

Suddenly he recognized Pelle. He started, and consciousness struggled to obtain control over his dulled senses. “Why, is that you, master?” he asked shamefacedly, seizing Pelle’s hand. “So you’ve come back! I suppose you think me a beast, but what can I do?”

“Just come along!” said Pelle sharply, anxious to get away from the crowd of spectators.

They went down Meinung Street, Jacob staggering along in silence, and looking askance at his former leader. He walked a little awkwardly, but it came from his work; the meeting with Pelle had made him almost sober. “I’m sure you think I’m a beast,” he said again at last in a pitiful voice. “But you see there’s no one to keep me straight.”

“It’s the fault of the brandy,” said Pelle shortly.

“Well, you may be right, but a fellow needs a kind word now and then, and you have to take it where you can get it. Your pals look down upon you and chuck you out of their set.”

“What’s the matter, then?” asked Pelle.

“What’s the matter? Six times five’s the matter, because I wouldn’t let my old father starve during the lockout. We had a jolly good time then. I was a good son! Didn’t mind the fat purses of the bigwigs and a little

bread and water—and the devil and his standpipe! But now they're singing another tune: That man! Why, he's been punished for theft! End of him. No one asks why; they've become big men, you see. In olden days I was always called Merry Jacob, and the fellows liked to be in my shift. Do you know what they call me now? Thieving Jacob. Well, they don't say it right out, for if they did, some one 'ud crack their heads for them; but that is my name. Well, I say to myself, perhaps you saw everything topsy-turvy in those days; perhaps, after all, you're nothing but a thief. And then I have to drink to become an honest man again."

"And get in rages with the lamp-posts! Don't you think you'd do better to hit out at those who wrong you?"

Jacob was silent and hung his head; the once strong, bold fellow had become like a dog that any one might kick. If it were so dreadful to bear six times five among one's own people, what could Pelle say? "How is your brother?" he asked, in order to divert Jacob's thoughts to something brighter. "He was a splendid fellow."

"He hung himself," answered Jacob gloomily. "He couldn't stand it any longer. We broke into a house together, so as to be equal about it; and the grocer owed the old man money—he'd worked for it—and they meant to cheat him out of it. So the two old things were starving, and had no fire either; and we got them what they'd a right to, and it was so splendidly done too. But afterward when there was a row at the works, agitation and election fuss and all that kind of thing, they just went and left him and me out. We weren't the right sort, you see; we hadn't the right to vote. He couldn't get even with the business in any other way than by putting a rope over the lamp-hook in the ceiling. I've looked at the matter myself all round, you see, but I can't make anything of it." He walked on a little without speaking, and then said: "Would you hit out properly now? There's need of a kind word."

Pelle did not answer; it was all too sad. He did not even hear the question.

"It was chiefly what you said that made me believe in a better time coming," Jacob continued persistently, "or perhaps my brother and me would have done differently and things might have gone better with both of us. Well, I suppose you believed it yourself, but what do you think now? Do you still believe in that about the better time? For I should like to be an honest man again."

Of course Pelle still believed in it.

"For there aren't many who'd give a brass farthing for that story now; but if *you* say so—I've got faith in you all the same. Others wouldn't have the brains to think of anything for themselves, and it was like the cork going off, so to speak, for us poor people when you went away; everything went flat. If anything happens, it doesn't do for a poor devil to look on; and every time any one wants to complain, he gets a voting-paper pushed into his hand and they say: Go and vote and things will be altered! But confound it, that can't rouse a fellow who's not learnt anything from the time he was small. They'd taken a lot of trouble about me now—whitewashing me so that I could use my right to vote; but they can't make me so that no one looks down on me. And so I say, Thank you for nothing! But if you still believe in it, so will I, for I've got faith in you. Here's my hand on it!"

Jacob was the same simple, good-hearted fellow that he had been in former days when he lived in the attic in the "Ark." There might very well have been a little more evil in him. But his words warmed Pelle's heart. Here was some one who needed him, and who still believed in him although he had been maimed in the fight. He was the first of the disabled ones, and Pelle was prepared to meet with more and to hear their accusations. Many of them would turn against him now that he was powerless, but he would have to put up with that. He felt as though he had the strength for it now.

Pelle went into the street again, letting his feet carry him where they would, while he thought of the past and the future. They had been so certain that a new age would dawn upon them at once! The new, great truth had been so self-evident that it seemed as if all the old conditions must fall before it as at a magic word; and now the everyday reality had worn the gloss off it. As far as he could see, nothing particular had happened, and what was there to happen? That was not the way to overturn systems. From Merry Jacob's opinion he could draw his own, but he was no longer despondent, he did not mind what happened. He would have had no objection to challenge the opinion of his old comrades at once, and find out how he stood.

He had passed through several side streets when he suddenly found

himself in front of a large, well-lighted building with a broad flight of steps, up which people were flocking. It was one of the working-men's halls, and festivities were being held in it to celebrate the elections. Pelle went, by force of habit, with the stream.

He remained at the back of the hall, and used his eyes as though he had just dropped down from some other planet; strange feelings welled up within him when he found himself once more among the people. For a moment he felt a vehement desire to cry: Here I am! and stretch out his arms to them all; but he quickly controlled it, and his face regained its stony composure.

This then was his army from the conflict. They were decidedly better clothed than on the day when he led them in triumph into the city as its true citizens; they carried their heads higher too, did not get behind one another, but claimed room for themselves. They had more to eat, he could see, for their faces shone more; and their eyes had become indolent in expression, and no longer looked hungrily out into uncertainty but moved quietly and unhesitatingly from place to place. They were prepared for another long march, and perhaps it was as well; great things did not happen in the twinkling of an eye.

He was aroused from his thoughts by discovering that the people nearest to him were turning and gazing at him. The number of faces looking round at him increased, and the words, "Pelle is here!" passed in a murmur through the crowd. Hundreds of eyes were directed toward him questioningly and searchingly, some of them in evident expectation of something unusual happening at once.

The movement became general—a wave that carried him resistlessly to the front of the hall and up onto the platform. A great roar like the breaking of surf arose on all sides of him and stupefied his sensitive brain in which silence sat always putting together a fine new world about which no one else knew. Suddenly everything was still, so still that the solitude was again audible to his ear.

Pelle spoke quietly and with confidence. His words were a greeting to them from a world they as yet did not know, the great solitude through which man must move alone—without loud-voiced companions to encourage him—and listen until he hears his own heart beat within it. He sits in a cell again, like the first original germ of life, alone and forsaken; and over him a spider skilfully spins its web. At first he is angry with the busy insect, and tears down the web; but the insect begins again patiently. And this suddenly becomes a consolatory lesson to him never to give up; he becomes fond of the little vigilant creature that makes its web as skilfully as if it had a great responsibility, and he asks himself whether it is at all conscious of his existence. Is it sorry for him in his forsaken condition, since it does not move to another place, but patiently builds its web up again, finer and finer, as if it had only been torn down because it was not made well enough? He bitterly regrets his conduct, and would give much for a sign that the little insect is not angry with him, for no one can afford to offend another; the smallest creature is of vital importance to you. In the loneliness of the prison cell you learn solidarity. And one day when he is sitting reading, the spider, in its busy efforts to carry its thread past him, drops down and uses his shoulder as a temporary attachment. Never before has such confidence been shown him notwithstanding everything; the little insect knew how a hardened criminal should be taken. It taught him that he had both a heart and a soul to take care of. A greeting to his comrades from the great silence that was waiting to speak to them one by one.

He spoke from the depths of his soul, and saw surprise in their faces. What in the world did he want? Did he want them all to go to prison only because he himself had been there? Was that all that was left of the old Pelle—Lightning, as he was then called? He was certainly rather weak in the legs; there wasn't much of *his* eloquence left! They quickly lost interest and began to talk together in undertones; there came only a little desultory applause here and there from the corners.

Pelle felt the disappointment and indifference, and smiled. He no longer had need of storms of approbation; he listened for it now within himself. This much he had learned by standing up there, namely, that he had not done with the men below; he was, in fact, only just beginning with them. His work had been swept away: well then he would build up a new one that was better. He had sat in his prison-cell and learned long-suffering.

He took a seat below the platform among the leaders of the meeting, and felt that he was really a stranger there. It was out of compassion they had drawn him into the meeting; he read in their eyes that the work that had been done was done without him, and that he came at an

inopportune moment. Would they have to reckon with him, the hare-brained fellow, now again, or did he mean to emigrate? Alas, he did not give much impetus to the Movement! but if they only knew how much wisdom he had gained in his solitude!

He did not talk, but looked on absently, trying to listen through the noise for something lasting. They laughed and drank and made speeches — for him too; but all this was so unnecessary! They had gained confidence, they spoke quite openly, there was a certain emancipation in their general behavior; taken as a whole, they made a good impression. But the miracle? the incomprehensible? He missed a little anxiety behind the prosperity, the deep, silent pondering that would show that they had gazed into a new world. Did they not hear the undertone at all, since they were making such a noise—the unceasing, soft rhythm that was in his own ears continually and contained the whole thing? The stillness of the cell had made his hearing acute; the boisterous laughter, which expressed their pleasure in life, caused him suffering.

Beside a large blackboard on the platform stood one of the leaders, writing up the victories of the day, amid the rejoicing of the crowd. Pelle slipped out unnoticed, and was standing on the steps, breathing in the quiet night air, when a young man came up to him and held out his hand. It was his brother-in-law, Frederik Stolpe. “I just wanted to wish you welcome back,” he said, “and to thank you for what you said in there.”

“How is Ellen?” Pelle asked in a low voice.

“She’s only pretty well. She lives at 20, Victoria Street, and takes in washing. I think she would be glad to see you.” He looked searchingly at Pelle. “If you like, I can easily arrange for you to meet at my place.”

“Thank you!” Pelle answered, “but I’ll go out to her early to-morrow morning.” He no longer needed to go by circuitous routes.

II

Pelle was awakened by a distant sound resembling thunder, that came nearer and nearer out of the night and kept close to the prison. He lay still and listened shudderingly in the hope of hearing the reassuring step of the watchman passing his door, while fancies chased one another in his heavy head like riderless horses. The hollow, threatening sound grew ever louder and clearer, until it suddenly shattered the stillness of the night with a thunderous roar, which seemed to bring everything crashing down. It was as though a great gulf had opened and swallowed everything.

In one panic-stricken bound he was at the window, his heart beating tumultuously; but the next moment he was ashamed of his mistake. It had been the same terrifying Doomsday that he had dreaded in the days of his childhood, when the lightning zig-zagged among the rocks at home; and yet it was nothing but the noise of the first farm-carts as they passed from the highroad onto the stone paving of the town. It was the solitude brooding in his imagination, making it start in fear at every sound. But that would wear off.

He stretched himself and shook off the nightmare. Free! No gaoler was coming like a bad spirit to shatter the night's happy dream of freedom. He *was* free! His pallet had not to be hooked up to the wall at a certain hour; he could lie as long as he wanted to, the whole day, if he liked. But now he had more important things to do; life was waiting. He hastily put on his clothes.

In the street the lamplighter was lighting every other lamp. An endless procession of carts was pouring in from the country to supply the town. Pelle threw open the window and looked out over the wakening city while he dressed himself. He was accustomed to sleep in a silence that was only broken by the soft squeaking of the mice under the heat-grating; and the night-noises of the city—the rumble of the electric trams, the shouts of night-wanderers—all these unwonted sounds that pierced the darkness so startlingly, had filled, his sleep with feverish dreams and caused a series of ugly, deformed visions to pass through his brain.

He now felt quite rested, however, and greeted the city with awakened pleasure. Yes, he had slept more than sufficiently; the noise called him and he must go down and give a helping hand to keep it going. For years he had done nothing but hoard; now he would set to work again with strength and courage. As soon as he was dressed he went out. It was too early to visit Ellen, but he could not bear to stay in any longer. It was early morning. The first tram-car came in, filled with workmen, some even hanging on to the steps both of the motor-wagon and the two cars following it. And there was the first peasant with milk: they were not even up yet in the ice-dairy! Every quarter of an hour trams came in with workmen, and the market-carts continued to drive in from the country laden with vegetables, corn or pigs' carcasses. The street was like a feeding-tube through which nourishment was continually being drawn into the city.

On the top of swaying loads of straw sat Zealand peasants nodding. They had come all the way from the Frederikssund quarter, and had been driving all night. Here and there came a drover with a few animals intended for the cattle-market. The animals did not like the town, and constantly became restive, hitching themselves round lamp-posts or getting across the tram-lines. The newspaper-women trudged from street- door to street-door with their aprons laden with morning papers, and he heard them toiling up the stairs as though their feet were weighted with lead. And beneath all this could be heard the endless tramp-tramp of workmen hastening to their work.

There was a peculiarly familiar sound in those footsteps, which suddenly reminded him that he no longer belonged to their party, but had marked out his own way for good and evil.

Why was he not still a small, impersonal fraction of this great stream which day after day mechanically followed the same round in the mill? Solitude had made his view of mankind a new and wondering one; he now, in every strange face he met, involuntarily sought for a little of that which makes each individual a world in himself. But these men were all alike, he thought; they came hurrying out of the darkness of the side streets, and were not fully awake and steady on their feet until they joined the throng, but then they did walk capitally. He recognized the firm beat again: he had himself taught it to them.

Daylight came stealing in over Vesterbro, gray and heavy with spring

moisture and the city smoke. That part of the town was not quite awake yet; the step sounding in the main street was that of the belated night-wanderer. He turned down Victoria Street, looking about him in surprise; he had never been here before. He read the door-plates: Artists' Bureau, Artisan Heim, Lodging for Artists, Masseur & Chiropodist, Costumes for Hire. Most of the announcements were in foreign languages. There was also a Gymnasium for Equilibrists and a Conservatorium for Singing and Music, Dancing and Deportment. Nor did there seem to be a scarcity of pawnbrokers and dealers in second-hand goods. How had Ellen drifted into this strange atmosphere of perfumes and old clothes and foreign countries? Behind the windows in the low rooms he saw wonderful dresses thrown over chair-backs—burnouses and red fezes; and a little dark figure with a long pigtail and bare feet in yellow slippers, glided noiselessly past him in the old-fashioned, palatial doorway of No. 20.

He mounted the stairs with a beating heart. The steps were worn and groaned ominously when trodden on. The door of the flat stood ajar, and he heard the sound of sweeping in the front room, while farther in a child was talking to itself or its doll. He had to stand a little while on the landing to take breath and to regain his composure.

Ellen was sweeping under the sofa with quick movements. She rose and gazed at him in bewilderment; the broom fell from her hand and she swayed to and fro. Pelle caught her, and she leaned inert and helpless against him, and remained thus for a considerable time, pale and with closed eyes. When at last he turned her inanimate face toward him and kissed it, she burst into tears.

He spoke gently and reassuringly to her as to a child. She kept her eyes closed, as she had always done when anything overwhelmed her. She lay back on his arm, and he felt her body tremble at the sound of his voice. Her tears seemed to soften her, and from the yielding of her body now he could see how stiffly she must have held herself, and was filled with joy. It had all been for his sake, and with a tremendous effort of her will she had defied fate until he came. She now placed it all at his feet and lay prostrate. How tired she must be! But now she and the children should have a good time; he would live for her now!

He had laid her on the sofa and sat bending over her and telling her quietly how he had repented and longed for her. She made no answer, but held his hand in a convulsive grasp, now and then opening her eyes and stealing a glance at him. Suddenly she discovered how worn and lined his face was, and as she passed her hand over it as if to soften the features, she broke into a storm of weeping.

"You have suffered so, Pelle!" she exclaimed vehemently, passing her trembling fingers through his iron-gray hair. "I can feel by your poor head how badly they've treated you. And I wasn't even with you! If I could only do something really nice to make you look happy!"

She drew his head down onto her bosom and stroked it as a mother might her child's, and Pelle's face changed as would a child's when taken to its mother's breast. It was as though the well of life flowed through him, the hardness of his expression disappeared, and life and warmth took its place. "I didn't think you'd come back to us," said Ellen. "Ever since Lasse Frederik met you yesterday I've been expecting you to come."

Pelle suddenly noticed how exhausted she looked. "Haven't you been to bed all night?" he asked.

She smilingly shook her head. "I had to take care that the street-door wasn't locked. Whenever any one came home, I ran down and unlocked it again. You mustn't be angry with the boy for being afraid of you just at first. He was sorry for it afterward, and ran about the town all the evening trying to find you."

A clear child's voice was calling from the bedroom more and more persistently: "Man! Good-morning, man!"

It was Sister, sitting up in Ellen's bed and playing with a feather that she had pulled out of the corner of the down-quilt. She readily allowed herself to be kissed, and sat there with pouting mouth and the funniest little wrinkled nose. "You're man!" she said insinuatingly.

"Yes, that's true enough," answered Pelle, laughing: "but what man?"

"Man!" she repeated, nodding gravely.

Sister shared Ellen's bed now. At the foot of the big bed stood her own little cot, which had also been Lasse Frederik's, and in it lay——. Well, Pelle turned to the other side of the room, where Lasse Frederik lay snoring in a small bed, with one arm beneath his head. He had kicked off the quilt, and lay on his stomach in a deep sleep, with his limbs extended

carelessly. The little fellow was well built, thought Pelle.

"Now, lazy-bones, you'd better be thinking of getting up!" cried Pelle, pulling him by the leg.

The boy turned slowly. When he saw his father, he instantly became wide awake, and raised his arm above his head as though to ward off a blow.

"There's no box on the ears in the air, my boy," said Pelle, laughing. "The game only begins to-day!"

Lasse Frederik continued to hold his arm in the same position, and lay gazing indifferently out into the front room, as if he had no idea to what his father was referring; but his face was scarlet.

"Don't you even say good-morning to your father?" said Ellen, whereupon he sullenly extended his hand and then turned his face to the wall. He was vexed at his behavior of the day before, and perhaps expected a blowing-up. On a nail above his head hung his blouse and cap.

"Is Lasse Frederik a milk-boy?" asked Pelle.

"Yes," said Ellen, "and he's very good at it. The drivers praise him."

"Isn't he going to get up then, and go? I've met several milk-carts."

"No, for we're on strike just now," murmured the boy without turning round.

Pelle became quite interested. "What fellows you are! So you're on strike, are you? What's it for—is it wages?"

The boy had to explain, and gradually turned his face round, but did not look at his father.

Ellen stood in the doorway and listened to them smilingly. She looked frail. "Lasse Frederik's the leader," she said gently.

"And he's lying here instead of being out on the watch for blacklegs?" exclaimed Pelle quite irritably. "You're a nice leader!"

"Do you suppose any boy would be so mean as to be a blackleg?" said Lasse Frederik. "No, indeed! But people fetch their own milk from the carts."

"Then you must get the drivers to join you."

"No, we don't belong to a real union, so they won't support us."

"Well then, make a union! Get up, boy, and don't lie there snoring when there's anything of this sort on! Do you imagine that anything in this world is to be got by sleeping?"

The boy did not move. He did not seem to think there was any reason for taking his father very seriously; but he met a reproachful look from Ellen, and he was out of bed and dressed in a trice. While they sat in the front room, drinking their coffee, Pelle gave him a few hints as to how he should proceed in the matter. He was greatly interested, and went thoroughly into the subject; it seemed to him as though it were only yesterday that he had occupied himself with the people. How many pleasant memories of the fight crowded into his mind! And now every child knew that the meanest thing on earth was to become a blackleg! How he had fought to make even intelligent fellow-workmen understand this! It was quite comical to think that the strike—which filled the workmen with horror the first time he had employed it—was now a thing that children made use of. Time passed with a fleet foot out here in the day; and if you wanted to keep pace you must look sharp!

When the boy had gone, Ellen came to Pelle and stroked his hair. "Welcome home!" she said softly, and kissed his furrowed brow.

He pressed her hand. "Thank you for having a home for me," he answered, looking into her eyes; "for if you hadn't, I think I should have gone to the dogs."

"The boy has had his share in that, you know! He's worked well, or it might have gone badly with me many a time. You mustn't be angry with him, Pelle, even if he is a little sullen to you. You must remember how much he's gone through with the other boys. Sometimes he's come home quite disheartened."

"Because of me?" asked Pelle in a low voice.

"Yes, for he couldn't bear them to say anything about you. At one time he was always fighting, but now I think he's taught them to leave him alone; for he never gave in. But it may have left its marks on him."

She lingered by him; there was something she wanted to say to him, but she had a difficulty in beginning. "What is it?" he asked, in order to help her, his heart beating rapidly. He would have liked to get over this without speech.

She drew him gently into the bedroom and up to the little cot. “You haven’t looked at Boy Comfort,” she said.

He bent in embarrassment over the little boy who lay and gazed at him with large, serious eyes. “You must give me a little time,” he said.

“It’s little Marie’s boy,” said Ellen, with a peculiar intonation.

He stood up quickly, and looked in bewilderment at her. It was a little while before he comprehended.

“Where is Marie?” he asked with difficulty.

“She’s dead, Pelle,” answered Ellen, and came to his aid by holding out her hand to him. “She died when the child was born.”

A gray shadow passed across Pelle’s face.

III

The house in which Pelle and his wife lived—the “Palace,” the inhabitants of the street called it—was an old, tumble-down, three-storied building with a mansard roof. Up the middle of the façade ran the remains of some fluted pilasters through the two upper stories, making a handsome frame to the small windows. The name “Palace” had not been given to the house entirely without reason; the old woman who kept the ironmonger’s shop in the back building could remember that in her childhood it had been a general’s country-house, and stood quite by itself. At that time the shore reached to where Isted Street now runs, and the fruit-gardens went right into Council House Square. Two ancient, worm-eaten apple-trees, relics of that period, were still standing squeezed in among the back buildings.

Since then the town had pushed the fruit-gardens a couple of miles farther back, and in the course of time side streets had been added to the bright neighborhood of Vesterbro—narrow, poor-men’s streets, which sprang up round the scattered country-houses, and shut out the light; and poor people, artistes and street girls ousted the owners and turned the luxuriant summer resort into a motley district where booted poverty and shoeless intelligence met.

The “Palace” was the last relic of a vanished age. The remains of its former grandeur were still to be seen in the smoke-blackened stucco and deep windows of the attics; but the large rooms had been broken up into sets of one or two rooms for people of small means, half the wide landing being boarded off for coal-cellars.

From Pelle’s little two-roomed flat, a door and a couple of steps led down into a large room which occupied the entire upper floor of the side building, and was not unlike the ruins of a former banqueting-hall. The heavy, smoke-blackened ceiling went right up under the span roof and had once been decorated; but most of the plaster had now fallen down, and the beams threatened to follow it.

The huge room had been utilized, in the course of time, both as a brewery and as a warehouse; but it still bore the stamp of its former splendor. The children of the property at any rate thought it was grand, and picked out the last remains of panelling for kindling-wood, and would sit calling to one another for hours from the high ledges above the brick pillars, upon which there had once stood busts of famous men.

Now and again a party of Russian or Polish emigrants hired the room and took possession of it for a few nights. They slept side by side upon the bare floor, each using his bundle for a pillow; and in the morning they would knock at the door of Ellen’s room, and ask by gestures to be allowed to come to the water-tap. At first she was afraid of them and barricaded the door with her wardrobe cupboard; but the thought of Pelle in prison made her sympathetic and helpful. They were poor, needy beings, whom misery and misfortune had driven from their homes. They could not speak the language and knew nothing about the world; but they seemed, like birds of passage, to find their way by instinct. In their blind flight it was at the “Palace” that they happened to alight for rest.

With this exception the great room lay unused. It went up through two stories, and could have been made into several small flats; but the owner of the property—an old peasant from Glostrup—was so miserly that he could not find it in his heart to spend money on it, notwithstanding the great advantage it would be to him. *Ellen* had no objection to this! She dried her customers’ washing there, and escaped all the coal- dust and dirt of the yard.

Chance, which so often takes the place of Providence in the case of poor people, had landed her and her children here when things had gone wrong with them in Chapel Road. Ellen had at last, after hard toil, got her boot-sewing into good working order and had two pupils to help her, when a long strike came and spoiled it all for her. She struggled against it as well as she could, but one day they came and carried her bits of furniture down into the street. It was the old story: Pelle had heard it several times before. There she stood with the children, mounting guard over her belongings until it grew dark. It was pouring with rain, and they did not know what to do. People stopped as they hurried by, asked a few questions and passed on; one or two advised her to apply to the committee for housing the homeless. This, however, both Ellen and Lasse Frederik were too proud to do. They took the little ones down to the mangling-woman in the cellar, and themselves remained on guard over their things, in the dull hope that something would happen, a hope of which experience never quite deprives the poor.

After they had stood there a long time something really did happen. Out of Nörrebro Street came two men dashing along at a tremendous pace with a four-wheeled cart of the kind employed by the poor of Copenhagen when they move—preferably by night—from one place to another. One of the men was at the pole of the cart, while the other pushed behind and, when the pace was at its height, flung himself upon his stomach on the cart, putting on the brake with the toes of his boots upon the road so as to twist the cart into the gutter. Upon the empty cart sat a middle-aged woman, singing, with her feet dangling over the side; she was big and wore an enormous hat with large nodding flowers, of the kind designed to attract the male sex. The party zig-zagged, shouting and singing, from one side of the street to the other, and each time the lady shrieked.

"*There's* a removing cart!" said Lasse Frederik, and as he spoke the vehicle pulled up in the gutter just in front of them.

"What are you doing, Thorvald?" said one of the men; then, staring straight into Ellen's face, "Have you hurt your eye?"

The woman had jumped down from the cart. "Oh, get out of the way, you ass!" she said, pushing him aside. "Can't you see they've been turned out? Is it your husband that's chucked you out?" she asked, bending sympathetically over Ellen.

"No, the landlord's turned us out!" said Lasse Frederik.

"What a funny little figure! And you've got nowhere to sleep to-night? Here, Christian, take and load these things on the cart, and then they can stand under the gateway at home for the night. They'll be quite spoilt by the rain here."

"Yes," answered Christian, "the chair-legs have actually begun to take root!" The two men were in a boisterous humor.

"Now you can just come along with me," said the woman, when the things were piled upon the cart, "and I'll find you a place to sleep in. And then to-morrow Providence'll perhaps be at home himself!"

"She's a street-woman," whispered Lasse Frederik again and again, pulling Ellen's dress; but Ellen did not care now, if only she could avoid having to accept poor relief. She no longer held her head so high.

It was "Queen Theresa" herself they had met, and in a sense this meeting had made their fortune. She helped Ellen to find her little flat, and got her washing to do for the girls of the neighborhood. It was not very much, though the girls of Vesterbro went in for fine clothes as far as they could; but it afforded her at any rate a livelihood.

Pelle did not like Ellen going on with all this dirty work; he wanted to be the one to provide for the family. Ellen moreover had had her turn, and she looked tired and as if she needed to live a more comfortable life. It was as though she fell away now that he was there and able once more to assume the responsibility; but she would not hear of giving up the washing. "It's never worth while to throw away the dirty water until you've got the clean!" she said.

Every morning he set out furnished with a brand-new trades-union book, and went from workshop to workshop. Times were bad for his branch of trade; many of his old fellow-workmen had been forced to take up other occupations—he met them again as conductors, lamplighters, etc.; machinery had made them unnecessary, they said. It was the effect of the great lock-out; it had killed the little independent businesses that had formerly worked with one or two men, and put wind into the sails of large industries. The few who could manage it had procured machines and become manufacturers; the rest were crowded out and sat in out-of-the- way basements doing repairs. To set to work again, on the old conditions was what had been farthest from Pelle's thoughts; and he now went about and offered to become an apprentice again in order to serve his new master, the machinery, and was ready to be utilized to the utmost. But the manufacturers had no use for him; they still remembered him too well. "You've been too long away from the work," said one and another of them meaningly.

Well, that was only tit for tat; but he felt bitterly how even his past rose up against him. He had fought and sacrificed everything to improve the conditions in his branch; and the machines were the discouraging answer that the development gave to him and his fellows.

He was not alone in his vain search in this bright springtime. A number of other branches had had the same fate as his own. Every new day that dawned brought him into a stream of men who seemed to be condemned

to wear out the pavement in their hopeless search for work—people who had been pushed out by the machines and could not get in again. “There must be something wrong with them,” Pelle thought while he stood and listened to always the same story of how they had suddenly been dropped, and saw the rest of the train steaming away. It must have been their own fault that they were not coupled on to a new one; perhaps they were lazy or drunkards. But after a time he saw good, tried men standing in the row, and offering their powers morning after morning without result; and he began to realize with a chill fear that times were changing.

He would certainly have managed to make both ends meet if there had been anything to be got. The prices were all right; their only defect was that they were not eatable. Altogether it seemed as if a change for the worse had overtaken the artisan; and to make it still more serious the large businesses stood in the way of his establishing himself and becoming independent. There was not even a back door left open now! Pelle might just as well put that out of his head first as last; to become a master now required capital and credit. The best thing that the future held was an endless and aimless tramp to and from the factory.

At one stroke he was planted in the middle of the old question again; all the circumstances passed before him, and it was useless to close his eyes. He was willing enough to mind his own affairs and did not seek for anything; but the one thing was a consequence of the other, and whether he wished it or not, it united in a general view of the conditions.

The union had stood the test outwardly. The workmen were well organized and had vindicated their right to negotiate; their corporations could no longer be disregarded. Wages were also to some extent higher, and the feeling for the home had grown in the workmen themselves, many of them having removed from their basements into new two- or three-roomed flats, and bought good furniture. They demanded more from life, but everything had become dearer, and they still lived from hand to mouth. He could see that the social development had not kept pace with the mechanical; the machines wedged themselves quietly but inexorably in between the workmen and the work, and threw more and more men out of employment. The hours of labor were not greatly shortened. Society did not seem to care to protect the workers, but it interested itself more in disabled workmen than before, and provision for the poor was well organized. Pelle could not discover *any* law that had a regulating effect, but found a whole number of laws that plastered up the existing conditions. A great deal of help was given, always just on the borders of starvation; and more and more men had to apply for it. It did not rob them of their rights as citizens, but made them a kind of politically *kept* proletariat.

It was thus that the world of adventure which Pelle had helped to conquer appeared now when he returned and looked at it with new eyes. The world had not been created anew, and the Movement did not seem to have produced anything strong and humanly supporting. It seemed as if the workmen would quietly allow themselves to be left out of the game, if only they received money for doing nothing! What had become of their former pride? They must have acquired the morals of citizens, since they willingly agreed to accept a pension for rights surrendered. They were not deficient in power; they could make the whole world wither and die without shedding a drop of blood, only by holding together. It was a sense of responsibility that they lacked; they had lost the fundamental idea of the Movement.

Pelle looked at the question from all sides while he trudged up and down in his vain search. The prospect obtruded itself upon him, and there were forces at work, both within and without, trying to push him into the Movement and into the front rank among the leaders, but he repelled the idea: he was going to work for his home now.

He managed to obtain some repairs for the neighbors, and also helped Ellen to hang up clothes and turn the mangle. One must pocket one’s pride and be glad *she* had something. She was glad of his help, but did not want any one to see him doing this woman’s work.

“It’s not work for a man,” she said, looking at him with eyes which said how pleased she was to have his company.

They liked being together, enjoyed it in their own quiet way without many words. Much had happened, but neither Pelle nor Ellen were in a hurry. Neither of them had a facility in speaking, but they found their way to an understanding through the pauses, and drew nearer to one another in the silences. Each knew what the other had suffered without requiring to have it told: time had been at work on them both.

There was no storm in their new companionship. The days passed

quietly, made sad by the years that had gone by. In Ellen's mind was neither jubilation nor reproach. She was cautious with regard to him—almost as shy as the first time they met; behind all her goodness and care lay the same touch of maidenly reserve as at that time. She received his caresses silently, she herself giving chiefly by being something for him. He noticed how every little homely action she did for him grew out of her like a motherly caress and took him into her heart. He was grateful for it, but it was not that of which he stood most in need.

When they sat together in the twilight and the children played upon the floor, she was generally silent, stealing glances at him now and then; but as soon as he noticed these, the depth of her expression vanished. Was she again searching for his inner being as she had done in their earliest time together? It was as though she were calling to something within him, but would not reveal herself. It was thus that mother might sit and gaze searchingly into her child's future. Did she not love him then? She had given him all that she possessed, borne him children, and had faithfully waited for him when all the rest of the world had cast him off; and yet he was not sure that she had ever loved him.

Pelle had never met with love in the form of something unmanageable; the Movement had absorbed the surplus of his youth. But now he had been born anew together with the spring, and felt it suddenly as an inward power. He and Ellen would begin now, for now she was everything! Life had taught him seriousness, and it was well. He was horrified at the thoughtless way in which he had taken Ellen and made her a mother without first making her a bride. Her woman's heart must be immeasurably large since she had not gone to pieces in consequence, but still stood as unmoved as ever, waiting for him to win her. She had got through it by being a mother.

Would he ever win her? Was she really waiting still, or was she contented with things as they were?

His love for her was so strong that everything about her was transfigured, and he was happy in the knowledge that she was his fate. Merely a ribbon or a worn check cotton apron—any little thing that belonged to her—acquired a wonderfully warm hue, and filled his mind with sweetness. A glance or a touch made him dizzy with happiness, and his heart went out to her in waves of ardent longing. It awoke no response; she smiled gently and pressed his hand. She was fond of him and refused him nothing, but he nevertheless felt that she kept her innermost self hidden from him. When he tried to see in, he found it closed by a barrier of kindness.

IV

Pelle was like a man returning home after years of exile, and trying to bring himself into personal relations with everything; the act of oblivion was in force only up to the threshold; the real thing he had to see to himself. The land he had tilled was in other hands, he no longer had any right to it; but it was he who had planted, and he must know how it had been tended and how it had thriven.

The great advance had taken on a political character. The Movement had in the meantime let the demand of the poorest of the people for bread drop, and thrown them over as one would throw over ballast in order to rise more quickly. The institutions themselves would be won, and then they would of course come back to the starting-point and begin again quite differently. It might be rather convenient to turn out those who most hindered the advance, but would it lead to victory? It was upon them indeed that everything turned! Pelle had thoroughly learned the lesson, that he who thinks he will outwit others is outwitted himself. He had no faith in those who would climb the fence where it was lowest.

The new tactics dated from the victorious result of the great conflict. He had himself led the crowds in triumph through the capital, and if he had not been taken he would probably now be sitting in parliament as one of the labor members and symbolizing his promotion to citizenship. But now he was out of it all, and had to choose his attitude toward the existing state of things; he had belonged to the world of outcasts and had stood face to face with the irreconcilable. He was not sure that the poor man was to be raised by an extension of the existing social ethics. He himself was still an outlaw, and would probably never be anything else. It was hard to stoop to enter the doorway through which you had once been thrown out, and it was hard to get in. He did not intend to take any steps toward gaining admission to the company of respectable men; he was strong enough to stand alone now.

Perhaps Ellen expected something in that way as reparation for all the wrong she had suffered. She must have patience! Pelle had promised himself that he would make her and the children happy, and he persuaded himself that this would be best attained by following his own impulses.

He was not exactly happy. Pecuniarily things were in a bad way, and notwithstanding all his planning, the future continued to look uncertain. He needed to be the man, the breadwinner, so that Ellen could come to him for safety and shelter, take her food with an untroubled mind from his hand, and yield herself to him unresistingly.

He was not their god; that was where the defect lay. This was noticeable at any rate in Lasse Frederik. There was good stuff in the boy, although it had a tang of the street. He was an energetic fellow, bright and pushing, keenly alert with regard to everything in the way of business. Pelle saw in him the image of himself, and was only proud of him; but the boy did not look upon him with unconditional reliance in return. He was quick and willing, but nothing more; his attitude was one of trial, as if he wanted to see how things would turn out before he recognized the paternal relationship.

Pelle suffered under this impalpable distrust, which classed him with the “new fathers” of certain children; and he had a feeling that was at the same time painful and ridiculous, that he was on trial. In olden days the matter might have been settled by a good thrashing, but now things had to be arranged so that they would be lasting; he could no longer buy cheaply. When helping Lasse Frederik in organizing the milk- boys, he pocketed his pride and introduced features from the great conflict in order to show that he was good for something too. He could see from the boy’s expression that he did not believe much of it, and intended to investigate the matter more closely. It wounded his sensitive mind and drove him into himself.

One day, however, when he was sitting at his work, Lasse Frederik rushed in. “Father, tell me what you did to get the men that were locked into the factory out!” he cried breathlessly.

“You wouldn’t believe it if I did,” said Pelle reproachfully.

“Yes, I would; for they called you the ‘Lightning!’” exclaimed the boy in tones of admiration. “And they had to put you in prison so as to get rid of you. The milk-driver told me all about it!”

From that day they were friends. At one stroke Pelle had become the hero of the boy’s existence. He had shaved off his beard, had blackened his face, and had gone right into the camp of his opponents, and nothing

could have been finer. He positively had to defend himself from being turned into a regular robber-captain with a wide-awake hat and top-boots! Lasse Frederik had a lively imagination!

Pelle had needed this victory. He must have his own people safely at his back first of all, and then have a thorough settlement of the past. But this was not easy, for little Boy Comfort staggered about everywhere, warped himself toward him from one piece of furniture to another with his serious eyes fixed steadily upon him, and crawled the last part of the way. Whenever he was set down, he instantly steered for Pelle; he would come crawling in right from the kitchen, and would not stop until he stood on his feet by Pelle's leg, looking up at him. "See how fond he is of you already!" said Ellen tenderly, as she put him down in the middle of the floor to try him. "Take him up!" Pelle obeyed mechanically; he had no personal feeling for this child; it was indeed no child, but the accusation of a grown-up person that came crawling toward him. And there stood Ellen with as tender an expression as if it were her own baby! Pelle could not understand how it was that she did not despise him; he was ashamed whenever he thought of his struggle to reconcile himself to this "little cuckoo." It was a good thing he had said so little!

His inability to be as naturally kind to the child as she was tormented him; and when, on Saturday evening, she had bathed Boy Comfort and then sat with him on her lap, putting on his clean clothes, Pelle was overwhelmed with self-accusation. He had thoughtlessly trodden little Marie of the "Ark" underfoot, and she whom he had cast off when she most needed him, in return passed her beneficent hand over his wrong-doing. As though she were aware of his gloomy thoughts, she went to him and placed the warm, naked child in his arms, saying with a gentle smile: "Isn't he a darling?" Her heart was so large that he was almost afraid; she really took more interest in this child than in her own.

"I'm his mother, of course!" she said naturally. "You don't suppose he can do without a real mother, do you?"

Marie's fate lay like a shadow over Pelle's mind. He had to talk to Ellen about it in order to try to dispel it, but she did not see the fateful connection; she looked upon it as something that had to be. "You were so hunted and persecuted," she said quietly, "and you had no one to look to. So it had to happen like that. Marie told me all about it. It was no one's fault that she was not strong enough to bear children. The doctor said there was a defect in her frame; she had an internal deformity." Alas! Ellen did not know how much a human being should be able to help, and she herself took much more upon her than she need.

There was, nevertheless, something soothing in these sober facts, although they told him nothing about the real thing. It is impossible to bear for long the burden of the irreparable, and Pelle was glad that Ellen dwelt so constantly and naturally on Marie's fate; it brought it within the range of ordinary things for him too. Marie had come to her when she could no longer hide her condition, and Ellen had taken her in and kept her until she went to the lying-in hospital. Marie knew quite well that she was going to die—she could feel it, as it were—and would sit and talk about it while she helped Ellen with her boot-sewing. She arranged everything as sensibly as an experienced mother.

"How old-fashioned she was, and yet so child-like!" Ellen would exclaim with emotion.

Pelle could not help thinking of his life in the "Ark" when little Marie kept house for him and her two brothers—a careful housekeeper of eleven years! She was deformed and yet had abundant possibilities within her; she resembled poverty itself. Infected by his young strength, she had shot up and unfolded into a fair maiden, at whom the young dandies turned to look when she went along the street to make her purchases. He had been anxious about her, alone and unprotected as she was; and yet it was he himself who had become the plunderer of the poor, defenceless girl. Why had he not carried his cross alone, instead of accepting the love of a being who gave herself to him in gratitude for his gift to her of the joy of life? Why had he been obliged, in a difficult moment, to take his gift back? Boy Comfort she had called her boy in her innocent goodness of heart, in order that Pelle should be really fond of him; but it was a dearly-bought Comfort that cost the life of another! For Pelle the child was almost an accusation.

There was much to settle up and some things that could not be arranged! Pelle sometimes found it burdensome enough to be responsible for himself.

About this time Morten was often in his thoughts. "Morten has disappointed me at any rate," he thought; "he could not bear my prosperity!" This was a point on which Pelle had right upon his side!

Morten must come to him if they were to have anything more to do with one another. Pelle bore no malice, but it was reasonable and just that the one who was on the top should first hold out his hand.

In this way he thought he had obtained rest from that question in any case, but it returned. He had taken the responsibility upon himself now, and was going to begin by sacrificing his only friend on a question of etiquette! He would have to go to him and hold out a hand of reconciliation!

This at last seemed to be a noble thought!

But Pelle was not allowed to feel satisfied with himself in this either. He was a prey to the same tormenting unrest that he had suffered in his cell, when he stole away from his work and sat reading secretly—he felt as if there were always an eye at the peephole, which saw everything that he did. He would have to go into the question once more.

That unselfish Morten envious? It was true he had not celebrated Pelle's victory with a flourish of trumpets, but had preferred to be his conscience! That was really at the bottom of it. He had intoxicated himself in the noise, and wanted to find something with which to drown Morten's quiet warning voice, and the accusation was not far to seek—*envy!* It was he himself, in fact, who had been the one to disappoint.

One day he hunted him up. Morten's dwelling was not difficult to find out; he had acquired a name as an author, and was often mentioned in the papers in connection with the lower classes. He lived on the South Boulevard, up in an attic as usual, with a view over Kalvebod Strand and Amager.

"Why, is that you?" he said, taking Pelle's hands in his and gazing into his stern, furrowed face until the tears filled his eyes. "I say, how you have changed!" he whispered half tearfully, and led him into his room.

"I suppose I have," Pelle answered gloomily. "I've had good reason to, anyhow. And how have you been? Are you married?"

"No, I'm as solitary as ever. The one I want still doesn't care about me, and the others *I* don't want. I thought you'd thrown me over too, but you've come after all."

"I had too much prosperity, and that makes you self-important."

"Oh, well, it does. But in prison—why did you send my letters back? It was almost too hard."

Pelle looked up in astonishment. "It would never have occurred to the prisoner that he could hurt anybody, so you do me an injustice there," he said. "It was myself I wanted to punish!"

"You've been ill then, Pelle!"

"Yes, ill! You should only know what one gets like when they stifle your right to be a human being and shut you in between four bare walls. At one time I hated blindly the whole world; my brain reeled with trying to find out a really crushing revenge, and when I couldn't hit others I helped to carry out the punishment upon myself. There was always a satisfaction in feeling that the more I suffered, the greater devils did it make the others appear. And I really did get a hit at them; they hated with all their hearts having to give me a transfer."

"Wasn't there any one there who could speak a comforting word—the chaplain, the teachers?"

Pelle smiled a bitter smile. "Oh, yes, the lash! The jailer couldn't keep me under discipline; I was what they call a difficult prisoner. It wasn't that I didn't want to, but I had quite lost my balance. You might just as well expect a man to walk steadily when everything is whirling round him. They saw, I suppose, that I couldn't come right by myself, so one day they tied me to a post, pulled my shirt up over my head and gave me a thrashing. It sounds strange, but that did it; the manner of procedure was so brutal that everything in me was struck dumb. When such a thing as *that* could happen, there was nothing more to protest against. They put a wet sheet round me and I was lifted onto my pallet, so that was all right. For a week I had to lie on my face and couldn't move for the pain; the slightest movement made me growl like an animal. The strokes had gone right through me and could be counted on my chest; and there I lay like a lump of lead, struck down to the earth in open- mouthed astonishment. 'This is what they do to human beings!' I groaned inwardly; 'this is what they do to human beings!' I could no longer comprehend anything."

Pelle's face had become ashen gray; all the blood had left it, and the bones stood out sharply as in a dead face. He gulped two or three times to obtain control over his voice.

"I wonder if you understand what it means to get a thrashing!" he said

hoarsely. “Fire’s nothing; I’d rather be burnt alive than have it again. The fellow doesn’t beat; he’s not the least angry; nobody’s angry with you; they’re all so seriously grieved on your account. He places the strokes carefully down over your back as if he were weighing out food, almost as if he were fondling you. But your lungs gasp at each stroke and your heart beats wildly; it’s as if a thousand pincers were tearing all your fibers and nerves apart at once. My very entrails contracted in terror, and seemed ready to escape through my throat every time the lash fell. My lungs still burn when I think of it, and my heart will suddenly contract as if it would send the blood out through my throat. Do you know what the devilish part of corporal punishment is? It’s not the bodily pain that they inflict upon the culprit; it’s his inner man they thrash—his soul. While I lay there brooding over my mutilated spirit, left to lick my wounds like a wounded animal, I realized that I had been in an encounter with the evil conscience of Society, the victim of their hatred of those who suffer.”

“Do you remember what gave occasion to the punishment?” Morten asked, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

“It was some little thing or other—I think I called out. The solitude and the terrible silence got upon my nerves, and I suppose I shouted to make a little life in the horrible emptiness. I don’t remember very clearly, but I think that was my crime.”

“You’d have been the better anyhow for a kind word from a friend.” Morten was still thinking of his despised letters.

“Yes, but the atmosphere of a cell is not suited for friendly relations with the outside world. You get to hate all who are at liberty—those who mean well by you too—and you chop off even the little bit of branch you’re sitting on. Perhaps I should never have got into touch with life again if it hadn’t been for the mice in my cell. I used to put crumbs of bread down the grating for them, and when I lay there half dead and brooding, they ran squeaking over my hand. It was a caress anyhow, even if it wasn’t from fellow-men.”

Morten lived in a small two-roomed flat in the attics. While they sat talking, a sound came now and then from the other room, and each time a nervous look came into Morten’s face, and he glanced in annoyance at the closed door. Gradually he became quite restless and his attention was fixed on these sounds. Pelle wondered at it, but asked no questions.

Suddenly there came the sound of a chair being overturned. Morten rose quickly and went in, shutting the door carefully behind him. Pelle heard low voices—Morten’s admonishing, and a thin, refractory, girlish voice. “He’s got a girl hidden in there,” thought Pelle. “I’d better be off.”

He rose and looked out of the large attic window. How everything had changed since he first came to the capital and looked out over it from Morten’s old lodging! In those days he had had dreams of conquering it, and had carried out his plan too; and now he could begin from the beginning! An entirely new city lay spread out beneath him. Where he had once run about among wharves and coal-bunkers, there now stood a row of palatial buildings with a fine boulevard. And everything outside was new; a large working-men’s district had sprung up where there had once been timber-yards or water. Below him engines were drawing rows of trucks filled with ballast across the site for the new goods-station yard; and on the opposite side of the harbor a new residential and business quarter had grown up on the Iceland Quay. And behind it all lay the water and the green land of Amager. Morten had had the sense to select a high branch for himself like the nightingales.

He had got together a good number of books again, and on his writing-table stood photographs of well-known men with autograph inscriptions. To all appearances he seemed to make his way in the world of books. Pelle took down some of Morten’s own works, and turned over their leaves with interest. He seemed to hear Morten’s earnest voice behind the printed words. He would begin to read him now!

Morten came in. “You’re not going, are you?” he asked, drawing his hand across his forehead. “Do stay a little while and we’ll have a good talk. You can’t think how I’ve missed you!” He looked tired.

“I’m looking forward tremendously to reading your books,” said Pelle enthusiastically. “What a lot you’ve written! You haven’t given that up.”

“Perhaps solitude’s taught you too to like books,” said Morten, looking at him. “If so, you’ve made some good friends in there, Pelle. All that there isn’t worth much; it’s only preliminary work. It’s a new world ours, you must remember.”

“I don’t think *The Working Man* cares much about you.”

“No, not much,” answered Morten slowly.

“They say you only write in the upper-class papers.”

“If I didn’t I should starve. *They* don’t grudge me my food, at any rate! Our own press still has no use for skirmishers, but only for men who march to order!”

“And it’s very difficult for you to subordinate yourself to any one,” said Pelle, smiling.

“I have a responsibility to those above me,” answered Morten proudly. “If I give the blind man eyes to see into the future, I can’t let myself be led by him. Now and then *The Working Man* gets hold of one of my contributions to the upper-class press: that’s all the connection I have with my own side. My food I have to get from the other side of the boundary, and lay my eggs there: they’re pretty hard conditions. You can’t think how often I’ve worried over not being able to speak to my own people except in roundabout ways. Well, it doesn’t matter! I can afford to wait. There’s no way of avoiding the son of my father, and in the meantime I’m doing work among the upper classes. I bring the misery into the life of the happily-situated, and disturb their quiet enjoyment. The upper classes must be prepared for the revolution too.”

“Can they stand your representations?” asked Pelle, in surprise.

“Yes, the upper classes are just as tolerant as the common people were before they rose: it’s an outcome of culture. Sometimes they’re almost too tolerant; you can’t quite vouch for their words. When there’s something they don’t like, they always get out of it by looking at it from an artistic point of view.”

“How do you mean?”

“As a display, as if you were acting for their entertainment. ‘It’s splendidly done,’ they say, when you’ve laid bare a little of the boundless misery. ‘It’s quite Russian. Of course it’s not real at all, at any rate not here at home.’ But you always make a mark on some one or other, and little by little the food after all becomes bitter to their taste, I think. Perhaps some day I shall be lucky enough to write in such a way about the poor that no one can leave them out. But you yourself—what’s your attitude toward matters? Are you disappointed?”

“Yes, to some extent. In prison, in my great need, I left the fulfilment of the time of prosperity to you others. All the same, a great change has taken place.”

“And you’re pleased with it?”

“Everything has become dearer,” said Pelle slowly, “and unemployment seems on the way to become permanent.”

Morten nodded. “That’s the answer capital gives,” he said. “It multiplies every rise in wages by two, and puts it back on the workmen again. The poor man can’t stand very many victories of that kind.”

“Almost the worst thing about it is the development of snobbery. It seems to me that our good working classes are being split up into two—the higher professions, which will be taken up into the upper classes; and the proletariat, which will be left behind. The whole thing has been planned on too small a scale for it to get very far.”

“You’ve been out and seen something of the world, Pelle,” said Morten significantly. “You must teach others now.”

“I don’t understand myself,” answered Pelle evasively, “and I’ve been in prison. But what about you?”

“I’m no good as a rallier; you’ve seen that yourself. They don’t care about me. I’m too far in advance of the great body of them, and have no actual connection—you know I’m really terribly lonely! Perhaps, though, I’m destined to reach the heights before you others, and if I do I’ll try to light a beacon up there for you.”

Morten sat silent for a little while, and then suddenly lifted his head.

“But you *must*, Pelle!” he said. “You say you’re not the right man, but there’s simply no one but you. Have you forgotten that you fired the Movement, that you were its simple faith? They one and all believed in you blindly like children, and were capable of nothing when you gave up. Why, it’s not you, but the others—the whole Movement— who’ve been imprisoned! How glad I am that you’ve come back full of the strength gained there! You were smaller than you are now, Pelle, and even then something happened; now you may be successful even in great things.”

Pelle sat and listened in the deepening twilight, wondering with a pleased embarrassment. It was Morten who was nominating him—the severe, incorruptible Morten, who had always before been after him like his evil conscience.

“No, I’m going to be careful now,” he said, “and it’s your own fault, Morten. You’ve gone and pricked my soul, and I’m awake now; I shan’t

go at anything blindly again. I have a feeling that what we two are joining in is the greatest thing the world has ever seen. It reaches further into the future than I can see, and so I'm working on myself. I study the books now—I got into the way of that in prison—and I must try to get a view out over the world. Something strange too has happened to me: I understand now what you meant when you said that man was holy! I'm no longer satisfied with being a small part of the whole, but think I must try to become a whole world by myself. It sounds foolish, but I feel as if I were in one of the scales and the rest of the world in the other; and until I can send the other scale up, I can't think of putting myself at the head of the multitude."

Evening had closed in before they were aware of it. The electric light from the railway-station yard threw its gleam upon the ceiling of the attic room and was reflected thence onto the two men who sat leaning forward in the half-darkness, talking quietly. Neither of them noticed that the door to the other room had opened, and a tall, thin girl stood on the threshold gazing at them with dilated pupils. She was in her chemise only, and it had slipped from one thin shoulder; and her feet were bare. The chemise reached only to her knees, leaving exposed a pair of sadly emaciated legs. A wheezing sound accompanied her breathing.

Pelle had raised his head to say something, but was silent at sight of the lean, white figure, which stood looking at him with great eyes that seemed to draw the darkness into them. The meeting with Morten had put him into an expectant frame of mind. He still had the call sounding in his ears, and gazed in amazement at the ghostly apparition. The delicate lines, spoiled by want, the expression of childlike terror of the dark— all this twofold picture of wanness stamped with the stamp of death, and of an unfulfilled promise of beauty—was it not the ghost of poverty, of wrong and oppression, a tortured apparition sent to admonish him? Was his brain failing? Were the horrible visions of the darkness of his cell returning? "Morten!" he whispered, touching his arm.

Morten sprang up. "Why, Johanna! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" he exclaimed reproachfully. He tried to make the girl go back into the other room, and to close the door; but she pushed past him out into the room.

"I *will* see him!" she cried excitedly. "If you don't let me, I shall run away! He's hidden my clothes," she said to Pelle, gazing at him with her sunken eyes. "But I can easily run away in my chemise. I don't care!" Her voice was rough and coarse from the damp air of the back yards.

"Now go back to bed, Johanna!" said Morten more gently. "Remember what the doctor said. You'll catch cold and it'll all be wasted."

"What do I care!" she answered, breaking into a coarse laugh. "You needn't waste anything on me; I've had no children by you." She was trembling with cold, but remained obstinately standing, and answered Morten's remonstrances with a torrent of abusive epithets. At last he gave it up and sat down wearily. The two men sat and looked at her in silence.

The child was evidently uncomfortable at the cessation of resistance, and became confused beneath their silent gaze. She tossed her head and looked defiantly from the one to the other, her eyes glowing with an unnatural brightness. Suddenly she sank upon the floor and began to cry.

"*This* won't do," said Pelle gravely.

"I can't manage her," answered Morten hopelessly, "but you are strong enough."

Pelle stooped and took her up in his arms. She kicked and bit him. "She's got a fit," he said to Morten. "We must take her out to the pump." She instantly became quiet and let him carry her to bed. The fever was raging in her, and he noticed how her body was racked with every breath she drew; it sounded like a leaky pump.

When Morten, with a few kind words, covered her up, she began to weep convulsively, but turned her face to the wall and stuffed the quilt into her mouth in order to hide it. She gradually became quieter and at last fell asleep; and the two men stole out of the room and closed the door after them.

Morten looked tired out, for he was still not strong. "I've let myself in for something that I'm not equal to," he said despondently.

"Who is the poor child?" asked Pelle softly.

"I don't know. She came to me this spring, almost dead drunk and in a fearful state; and the next day she regretted it and went off, but I got hold of her again. She's one of those poor creatures who have no other home than the big timber-yards, and there she's made a living by going

from one to another of the bigger lads. I can get nothing out of her, but I've found out in other ways that she's lived among timber-stacks and in cellars for at least two years. The boys enticed dissolute men out there and sold her, taking most of the money themselves and giving her spirits to encourage her. From what I can make out there are whole organized bands which supply the dissolute men of the city with boys and girls. It makes one sick to think of it! The child must be an orphan, but won't, as I said, tell me anything. Once or twice I've heard her talk in her sleep of her grandmother; but when I've referred to it, she sulks and won't speak."

"Does she drink?" asked Pelle.

Morten nodded. "I've had some bad times with her on that account," he said. "She shows incredible ingenuity when it's a case of getting hold of liquor. At first she couldn't eat hot food at all, she was in such a state. She's altogether fearfully shattered in soul and body, and causes me much trouble."

"Why don't you get her into some home?"

"Our public institutions for the care of children are not calculated to foster life in a down-trodden plant, and you'll not succeed with Johanna by punishment and treatment like any ordinary child. At times she's quite abnormally defiant and unmanageable, and makes me altogether despair; and then when I'm not looking, she lies and cries over herself. There's much good in her in spite of everything, but she can't let it come out. I've tried getting her into a private family, where I knew they would be kind to her; but not many days had passed before they came and said she'd run away. For a couple of weeks she wandered about, and then came back again to me. Late one evening when I came home, I found her sitting wet and shivering in the dark corner outside my door. I was quite touched, but she was angry because I saw her, and bit and kicked as she did just now. I had to carry her in by force. Her unhappy circumstances have thrown her quite off her balance, and I at any rate can't make her out. So that's how matters stand. I sleep on the sofa in here, but of course a bachelor's quarters are not exactly arranged for this. There's a lot of gossip too among the other lodgers."

"Does that trouble you?" asked Pelle in surprise.

"No, but the child, you see—she's terribly alive to that sort of thing. And then she doesn't comprehend the circumstances herself. She's only about eleven or twelve, and yet she's already accustomed to pay for every kindness with her weak body. Can't you imagine how dreadful it is to look into her wondering eyes? The doctor says she's been injured internally and is probably tuberculous too; he thinks she'll never get right. And her soul! What an abyss for a child! For even one child to have such a fate is too much, and how many there are in the hell in which we live!"

They were both silent for a little while, and then Morten rose. "You mustn't mind if I ask you to go," he said, "but I must get to work; there's something I've got to finish this evening. You won't mind, will you? Come and see me again as soon as you can, and thanks for coming this time!" he said as he pressed Pelle's hand.

"I'd like you to keep your eyes open," he said as he followed him to the door. "Perhaps you could help me to find out the history of the poor thing. You know a lot of poor people, and must have come in some way or other into her life, for I can see it in her. Didn't you notice how eager she was to have a look at you? Try to find out about it, will you?"

Pelle promised, but it was more easily said than done. When his thoughts searched the wide world of poverty to which he had drawn so close during the great lock-out, he realized that there were hundreds of children who might have suffered Johanna's fate.

V

Pelle had got out his old tools and started as shoemaker to the dwellers in his street. He no longer went about seeking for employment, and to Ellen it appeared as if he had given up all hope of getting any. But he was only waiting and arming himself: he was as sanguine as ever. The promise of the inconceivable was still unfulfilled in his mind.

There was no room for him up in the small flat with Ellen doing her washing there, so he took a room in the high basement, and hung up a large placard in the window, on which he wrote with shoemaker's ink, "Come to me with your shoes, and we will help one another to stand on our feet." When Lasse Frederik was not at work or at school, he was generally to be found downstairs with his father. He was a clever fellow and could give a hand in many ways. While they worked they talked about all sorts of things, and the boy related his experiences to his father.

He was changing very rapidly and talked sensibly about everything. Pelle was afraid he was getting too little out of his childhood. "Aren't you going up to play with them?" he asked, when the boys of the neighborhood rushed shouting past the basement window; but Lasse Frederik shook his head. He had played at being everything, from a criminal to a king, so there was nothing more to be had in that direction. He wanted something real now, and in the meantime had dreams of going to sea.

Although they all three worked, they could only just make ends meet; there was never anything over for extras. This was a sorrow to Ellen especially; Pelle did not seem to think much about it. If they only put something eatable before him, he was contented and did not mind what it was.

It was Ellen's dream that they should still, by toiling early and late, be able to work themselves up into another stratum; but Pelle was angry when she worked on after the time for leaving off. He would rather they were a little poor, if only they could afford to be human beings. Ellen did not understand it, but she saw that his mind was turned in another direction; he who had hitherto always fallen asleep over books would now become so absorbed in them that he did not hear the children playing round him. She had actually to rouse him when there was anything she wanted; and she began to fear this new power which had come in place of the old. It seemed like a curse that something should always work upon him to take him beyond her. And she dared not oppose it; she had bitter experience from former times.

"What are you looking for in those books?" she asked, sitting down beside him. Pelle looked up absently. His thoughts were in far-off regions where she had never been. What was he looking for? He tried to tell her, but could not explain it. "I'm looking for myself!" he said suddenly, striking boldly through everything. Ellen gazed at him, wondering and disappointed.

But she tried again. This time nothing should come between them and destroy her world. She no longer directly opposed anything; she meant to *go with him* and be where he was. "Tell me what you are doing and let me take part in it," she said.

Pelle had been prepared to some extent to go into this by himself, and was glad to meet with a desire for development in her too. For the present the intellectual world resembled more or less a wilderness, and it was good to have a companion with him in traversing it.

He explained to her the thoughts that occupied him, and discussed them with her; and Ellen observed wonderingly that it was all about things that did not concern their own little well-being. She took great pains to comprehend this flight away from the things that mattered most; it was like children who always wanted what they ought not to have.

In the evening, when Boy Comfort and Sister had been put to bed, Pelle would take a book and read aloud. Ellen was occupied with some mending or other, and Lasse Frederik, his ears standing out from his head, hung over a chair-back with his eyes fixed upon his father. Although he did not understand the half of it, he followed it attentively until Nature asserted herself, and he fell asleep.

Ellen understood this very well, for she had great difficulty herself in keeping her eyes open. They were not stories that Pelle read. Sometimes he would stop to write something down or to discuss some question or other. He would have the most extraordinary ideas, and see a connection

between things that seemed to Ellen to be as far apart as the poles; she could not help thinking that he might very well have studied to be a pastor. It suited him, however; his eyes became quite black when he was explaining some subject that he was thoroughly interested in, and his lips assumed an expression that made her long to kiss them. She had to confess to herself that in any case it was a very harmless evening occupation, and was glad that what was interesting him this time kept him at home at any rate.

One day Pelle became aware that she was not following him. She did not even believe in what he was doing; she had never believed in him blindly. “She’s never really loved me either: that’s why!” he thought despondently. Perhaps that explained why she took Boy Comfort as calmly as if he were her own child: she was not jealous! Pelle would willingly have submitted to a shower of reproaches if afterward she had given him a kiss wetted with hot tears; but Ellen was never thrown off her balance.

Happy though they were, he noticed that she, to a certain extent, reckoned without him, as if he had a weakness of which it was always well to take account. Her earlier experiences had left their mark upon her.

Ellen had been making plans with regard to the old room and the two small ante-rooms at the end of it. She was tired of washing; it paid wretchedly and gave a great deal of work, and she received very little consideration. She now wanted to let lodgings to artistes. She knew of more than one woman in their street who made a nice living by taking in artistes. “If I’d only got a couple of hundred krones (10 or 11 pounds) to start it with, I’m sure I should make it pay,” she said. “And then you’d have more time and quiet for reading your books,” she added coaxingly.

Pelle was against the plan. The better class of artistes took rooms at the artiste hotels, and the people *they* might expect to get had not much to pay with. He had seen a good deal of them from his basement window, and had mended shoes for some of them: they were rather a soleless tribe. She said no more about it, but he could see that she was not convinced. She only dropped the subject because he was against it and it was he who would have to procure the money.

He could not bear to think this; he had become cautious about deciding for others. The money might be obtained, if in no other way, by giving security in his furniture and tools. If the plan did not succeed, it would be certain ruin; but perhaps Ellen thought him a wet blanket.

One day he threw down his leather apron and went out to raise the money. It was late when he came home, and Ellen was standing at the door waiting for him with a face of anxiety.

“Here’s the money, my dear! What’ll you give me for it?” he said gaily, and counted out into her hand a hundred and eighty krones (£10) in notes. Ellen gazed in surprise at the money; she had never held so large a sum in her hands before.

“Wherever did you get all that money from?” she asked at last.

“Well, I’ve trudged all day from place to place,” said Pelle cheerfully, “and at last I was directed to a man in Blaagaard Street. He gave me two hundred krones (£11) on the furniture.”

“But there’s only one hundred and eighty (£10) here!”

“Oh, well, he took off twenty krones (£1 2_s_.). The loan’s to be repaid in instalments of twenty krones (£1 2_s_.) a month for fifteen months. I had to sign a statement that I had borrowed three hundred krones (£16 10_s_.), but then we shan’t have to pay any interest.”

Ellen stared at him in amazement. “Three hundred krones, and we’ve only got a hundred and eighty, Pelle!” But she suddenly threw her arms round his neck and kissed him passionately. “Thank you!” she whispered. He felt quite dazed; it was not like her to be so vehement.

She had plenty to do, after hiring the room, in putting it in order. The loose beams had to be fixed up, and the walls plastered and whitewashed a little. The old peasant was willing enough to let it, but he would not hear of going to any expense. Ellen at last succeeded, however, in getting him to agree to pay half the repairs on condition that she took the room for a year and payed the rent in advance. “We can get my brother Frederik to do some of the repairs on Sunday morning,” she said to Pelle, “and then perhaps we shall get it done for nothing.” She was altogether very energetic.

There was need for it too. The rent swallowed up the hundred krones (£5 10_s_.), and then there were all the things that had to be got. She bought a quantity of cheap print, and hung it up so as to divide one side of the room into a number of small compartments each provided with a second-hand bed and hay mattress, and a washing-stand. “Artistes are not so particular,” she said, “and I’m sure they’ll be glad to have the room to practise in.” Finally there were the two little anterooms, which were to be furnished a little better for more particular artistes. There was not nearly enough money, and some of the things had to be taken on credit.

At last it was all ready to receive the guests. It looked quite smart for the amount spent on it, and Pelle could not but admire her cleverness in making a little go a long way. The only thing now left to do was to catch the birds, but here Ellen’s practical sense ceased to act; she had no idea how to proceed. “We must advertise,” she said, and counted up her remaining pence.

Pelle laughed at her. A lot of good it would be to advertise for people who were goodness knows where on railways and steamers! “What shall we do then?” she said, looking anxiously to him for help. After all, he was the man for it all.

Well, first of all there must be a German placard down on the street-door, and then they must make the rooms known. Pelle had studied both German and English in the prison, and he made up the placard himself. He had cards printed, and left them in the artistes’ tavern at the corner of Vesterbro Street, went there himself two or three times after midnight when the artistes gathered there when their work was finished, and stationed himself at the stage-entrances of the music-halls. He soon came to look upon it as a task to be performed, like everything with which he occupied himself; and this *should* succeed!

Ellen looked on wondering and helpless. She had all at once grown frightened, and followed each of his movements with anxious attention.

Soon, however, things began to move. The girls whose washing Ellen had done took an interest in the undertaking, and sent lodgers to her; and Lasse Frederik, who had the run of the circus stables, often returned with some Russian groom or other who did a turn as a rustic dancer or a Cossack horseman. Sometimes there lived with her people from the other side of the world where they walk with their heads down—fakirs and magicians from India and Japan, snake-charmers from Tetuan, people with shaven heads or a long black pigtail, with oblique, sorrowful eyes, loose hips and skin that resembled the greenish leather that Pelle used for ladies’ boots. Sister was afraid of them, but it was the time of his life to Lasse Frederik. There were fat Tyrolese girls, who came three by three; they jodeled at the music-halls, and looked dreadful all day, much to Ellen’s despair. Now and then a whole company would come, and then trapezes and rings creaked in the great room, Spanish dancers went through their steps, and jugglers practised new feats.

They were all people who should preferably not be seen off the stage. Ellen often went to the circus and music-halls now, but could never quite believe that the performers were the same men and women who went about at home looking like scarecrows. Most of them required nothing except that the lodging should be cheap; they boarded themselves, and goodness knows what they lived on. Some of them simply lighted a fire on a sheet of iron on the floor and made a mixture of rice or something of the sort. They could not eat Danish food, Pelle said. Sometimes they went away without paying, and occasionally took something with them; and they often broke things. There was no fortune to be made out of them, but in the meantime Ellen was satisfied as long as she could keep it going, so that it paid the rent and instalments on the loan and left her a little for her trouble. It was her intention to weed out the more worthless subjects, and raise the whole tone of the business when it had got into good order.

“You really might refuse the worst work now, and save yourself a little,” she said to Pelle when he was sitting over some worn-out factory shoes that had neither sole nor upper. Most boots and shoes had done service somewhere else before they reached this neighborhood; and when they came to Pelle there was not much left of them. “Say no to it!” said Ellen. “It’s far too hardly earned for you! And we shall get on now without having to take everything.” In the kindness of her heart she wanted him to be able to read his books, since he had a weakness for them. Her intention was good, but Pelle had no thought of becoming an aesthetic idler, who let his wife keep him while he posed as a learned man. There were enough of them in the neighborhood, and the inhabitants looked up to them; but they were not interesting. They were

more or less another form of drunkard.

To Pelle books were a new power, grown slowly out of his sojourn in prison. He had sat there alone with his work, thrown on himself for occupation, and he had examined himself in every detail. It was like having companionship when he brought to light anything new and strange in himself; and one day he chanced upon the mistiness of his own being, and discovered that it consisted of experience that others had gone through before him. The Bible, which always lay on the prisoner's table for company, helped him; its words had the sound of a well-known voice that reminded him strongly of Father Lasse's in his childhood. From the Bible he went on further and discovered that the serious books were men who sat in solitude like himself, and spoke out.

Was solitude so dreadful then when you had such company? Pelle was no longer able to comprehend his own fear of it. As a child he had been a creature in the widest sense, and found companionship in everything; he could converse with trees, animals, and stones. Those fibers had withered, and no longer conveyed nourishment; but then he became one with the masses, and thought and felt exactly as they did. That was crumbling away too now; he was being isolated distinctly, bit by bit, and he was interested in discovering a plan in it. He had made Nature subject to him even as a child, and had afterward won the masses! It was solitude now that had to be taken, and he himself was going about in the midst of it, large and wonderful! It was already leaving indelible traces in his mind, although he had seen nothing of it yet. He felt strangely excited, very much as he had felt when, in his childhood, he arrived in Bornholm with his father and could see nothing, but heard the movement of thronging life behind the mist. A new and unknown world, full of wonders and throbbing with anticipation, would meet him in there.

Pelle's action was not due to his own volition. He might as well try to lift himself up by his hair as determine that now he would be a human being by himself. It was an awakening of new powers. He no longer let sunshine and rain pass unnoticed over his head. A strange thing happened to him—he looked wonderingly at everything that he had formerly passed by as commonplace, and saw it all in a new, brilliant light. He had to go all over it from the beginning, look at every detail. How wonderfully everything was connected, sorrow and joy and apparent trifles, to make him, Pelle, who had ruled over hundreds of thousands and yet had to go to prison in order to feel himself rich! Something had been ignited in him that could never be extinguished, a sacred fire to which everything must bear fuel, whether it would or not. He could not be conquered now; he drew strength from infinity itself.

The bare cell—three paces one way and six the other—with its tiny window and the mysterious peephole in the door which was like a watchful eye upon one always, how much it had held! It had always been the lot of the poor man to create worlds out of the void, beautiful mirages which suddenly broke and threw him back even poorer and more desolate. But this lasted. All the threads of life seemed to be joined together in the bare cell. It was like the dark, underground place in large buildings where the machinery is kept that admits and excludes light and heat to the whole block. There he discovered how rich and varied life is.

Pelle went about in a peculiarly elevated frame of mind. He felt that something greater and finer than himself had taken up its abode within him and would grow on to perfection there.

It was a new being that yet was himself; it remained there and drew nourishment from everything that he did. He went about circumspectly and quietly, with an introspective expression as though he were weighing everything: there was so much that was not permissible because it might injure *it*! There were always two of them now—Pelle and this wonderful, invisible ego, which lay securely and weightily within him like a living thing, with its roots in the darkness.

Pelle's relations to books were deeply grounded: he had to find out what the world meant now. He was a little distrustful of works of fiction; you got at their subject-matter too easily, and that could not be right. They were made up, too! He needed real stuff, facts. There were great spaces in his brain that longed to be filled with a tangible knowledge of things. His favorite reading was historical works, especially social history; and at present he read everything that came in his way, raw and unsweetened; it would have to sort itself out. It was a longing that had never been satisfied, and now seemed insatiable.

He minded his work punctiliously, however. He had made it a principle never to touch a book as long as any work lay waiting unfinished on the floor. In prison he had dreamt of a reasonable working-day of—for instance—eight hours, so that he would have time and strength to

occupy himself with intellectual matters; but now he took it off his night's sleep instead. This was at any rate a field out of which they need not try to keep him; he would have his share in the knowledge of the times. He felt it was a weapon. The poor man had long enough retired willingly into the corner for want of enlightenment, and whenever he put out his head he was laughed back again. Why did he not simply wrest the prerogative from the upper classes? It cost only toil, and in that coin he was accustomed to pay! He was scarcely deficient in ability; as far as Pelle could see at present, almost all the pioneers of the new state of things came from the lower classes.

He discovered with pleasure that his inward searching did not carry him away from the world, for far in there he came out again into the light — the light itself! He followed the secret laws for his own inward being, and found himself once more deep in the question of the welfare of the multitude. His practical sense required this confirmation of the conditions. There were also outward results. Even now history could no longer be used to light him and his ideas home; he knew too much. And his vision grew from day to day, and embraced an ever-widening horizon. Some day he would simply take the magic word from the trolls and wake the giant with it!

He worked hard and was as a rule full of confidence. When the last of the artistes came home from their *café*, he was often sitting working by the light of his shoemaker's lamp. They would stop before the open basement window and have a chat with him in their broken Danish. His domestic circumstances were somewhat straitened; the instalments in repayment of the loan, and the debt on the furniture still swallowed all that they were able to scrape together, and Pelle had no prospect of getting better work. But work is the bearer of faith, and he felt sure that a way would open out if only he kept on with it unweariedly.

He took Ellen's unspoken mistrust of his projects quietly. He felt himself to be greater than she in this; she could not reach up to the level of his head!

VI

Pelle was awake as early as four o'clock, although he had gone to bed late. He slept lightly at this time, when the summer night lay lightly upon his eyelids. He stole out into the kitchen and washed himself under the tap, and then went down to his work. The gray spirit of the night was still visible down in the street, but a tinge of red was appearing above the roofs. "The sun's rising now over the country," he thought, recalling the mornings of his childhood, the fields with their sheen of silvery dew, and the sun suddenly coming and changing them into thousands of sparkling diamond drops. Ah, if one could once more run bare-footed, if a little shrinkingly, out into the dewy grass, and shout a greeting to the dawning day: "Get up, Sun! Pelle is here already!" The night-watchman came slowly past the open window on his way home. "Up already?" he exclaimed in a voice hoarse with the night air, as he nodded down to Pelle. "Well, it's the early bird that catches the worm! You'll be rich one of these days, shoemaker!" Pelle laughed; he *was* rich!

He thought of his wife and children while he worked. It was nice to think of them sleeping so securely while he sat here at work; it emphasized the fact that he was their bread-winner. With every blow of his hammer the home grew, so he hammered away cheerfully. They were poor, but that was nothing in comparison with the fact that if he were taken away now, things would go to pieces. He was the children's Providence; it was always "Father's going to," or "Father said so." In their eyes he was infallible. Ellen too began to come to him with her troubles; she no longer kept them to herself, but recognized that he had the broader back.

It was all so undeserved—as if good spirits were working for him. Shameful though it was that the wife should work to help to keep the family, he had not been able to exempt her from it. And what had he done for the children? It was not easy to build everything up at once from a bare foundation, and he was sometimes tempted to leave something alone so as to accomplish the rest the more quickly. As it was now, he was really nothing! Neither the old Pelle nor the new, but something indeterminate, in process of formation, something that was greatly in need of indulgence! A removing van full of furniture on its way to a new dwelling.

He often enough had occasion to feel this from outside; both old enemies and old friends looked upon him as a man who had gone very much down in the world. Their look said: "Is that really all that remains of that stalwart fellow we once knew?" His own people, on the other hand, were lenient in their judgment. "Father hasn't got time," Sister would say in explanation to herself when she was playing about down in his work-room —"but he will have some day!" And then she would picture to herself all the delightful things that would happen then. It affected Pelle strangely; he would try to get through this as quickly as possible.

It was a dark and pathless continent into which he had ventured, but he was now beginning to find his way in it. There were ridges of hills that constantly repeated themselves, and a mountain-top here and there that was reached every time he emerged from the thicket. It was good to travel there. Perhaps it was the land he and the others had looked for. When he had got through, he would show it to them.

Pelle had a good memory, and remembered all that he read. He could quote much of it verbatim, and in the morning, before the street had wakened, he used to go through it all in his mind while he worked. It surprised him to find how little history concerned itself with his people; it was only in quite recent times that they had been included. Well, that did not trouble him! The Movement *was* really something new, and not one of history's everlasting repetitions. He now wanted to see its idea in print, and one day found him sitting with a strange solemnity in the library with Marx and Henry George in front of him. Pelle knew something about this subject too, but this was nevertheless like drawing up a net from the deep; a brilliant world of wonders came up with it. There were incontrovertible logical proofs that he had a right apprehension, though it had been arrived at blindly. The land of fortune was big enough for all; the greater the number that entered it, the larger did it become. He felt a desire to hit out again and strike a fresh blow for happiness!

Suddenly an avalanche seemed to fall from the top to the bottom of the house, a brief, all-pervading storm that brought him back to his home. It was only Lasse Frederik ushering in the day; he took a flight at each

leap, called a greeting down to his father, and dashed off to his work, buttoning the last button of his braces as he ran. A little later Ellen came down with coffee.

"Why didn't you call me when you got up?" she said sulkily. "It's not good to sit working so long without having had something to eat."

Pelle laughed and kissed her good-morning. "Fine ladies don't get up until long after their husbands," he said teasingly.

But Ellen would not be put off with a jest. A proper wife would be up before her husband and have something ready for him. "I *will* have you call me!" she said decidedly, her cheeks very red. It suited her to get roused now and then.

While he drank his coffee, she sat and talked to him about her affairs, and they discussed the plans for the day, after which she went upstairs to help the children to dress.

Later in the morning Pelle laid aside his work, dressed himself and went out to deliver it. While he was out he would go into the Library and look up something in the large dictionaries.

The street lived its own quiet life here close up to the greater thoroughfares—the same life day after day. The fat second-hand dealer from Jutland was standing as usual at his door, smoking his wooden pipe. "Good-morning, shoemaker!" he cried. A yellow, oblique-eyed oriental in slippers and long black caftan was balancing himself carelessly on the steps of the basement milk-shop with a bowl of cream in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other. Above on the pavement two boys were playing hopscotch, just below the large red lamp which all night long advertised its "corn-operator" right up to the main thoroughfare. Two girls in cycling costume came out of a gateway with their machines; they were going to the woods. "Good-day, Pelle! How is Ellen's business getting on?" they asked familiarly. They were girls for whom she had washed.

Pelle was fond of this busy part of the town where new shops with large plate-glass windows stood side by side with low-roofed cottages where retail business was carried on behind ordinary windows with wallflowers and dahlias in them as they might be in any provincial town. A string was stretched above the flower-pots, with a paper of safety-pins or a bundle of shoelaces hanging from it. There were poor people enough here, but life did not run in such hard grooves as out at Nörrebro. People took existence more easily; he thought them less honorable, but also less self-righteous. They seemed to be endowed with a more cheerful temperament, did not go so steadily and methodically to and from their fixed work, but, on the other hand, had several ways of making a living.

There was everywhere a feeling of breaking up, which corresponded well with Pelle's own condition; the uncertainty of life enveloped everything in a peculiarly tense atmosphere. Poverty did not come marching in close columns of workmen; its clothing was plentiful and varied; it might appear in the last woollen material from the big houses of old Copenhagen, or in gold-rimmed spectacles and high hat. Pelle thought he knew all the trades, but here there were hundreds of businesses that could not be organized; every day he discovered new and remarkable trades. He remembered how difficult it had been to organize out here; life was too incalculable.

There was room here for everything; next door to one another lived people whom the Movement had not yet gathered in, and people who had been pushed up out of it in obstinate defiance. There was room here for him too; the shadow he had dreaded did not follow him. The people had seen too much of life to interfere in one another's affairs; respectable citizenship had not been able to take possession of the poor man. There was something of the "Ark" about this part of the town, only not its hopelessness; on the contrary, all possibilities were to be found here. The poor man had conquered this ground from the rich citizens, and it seemed as if the development had got its direction from them. Here it was the proletariat whose varied nature forced its way upward, and leavened—so to speak—the whole. In the long side streets, which were full of second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers, existence had not resolved itself into its various constituents. Girls and gamblers were next-door neighbors to old, peaceable townsfolk, who lived soberly on the interest of their money, and went to church every Sunday with their hymn-books in their hands. The ironmonger had gold watches and antique articles among the lumber in his cellar.

Pelle went along Vesterbro Street. The summer holidays were just over, and the pavement on the Figaro side was crowded with sunburnt people— business-men, students and college girls—who were conspicuous in the throng by their high spirits. They had just returned to

town, and still had the scent of fresh breeze and shore about them: it was almost as good as a walk in the country. And if he wanted to go farther out into the world, he could do that too; there were figures enough in the Vesterbro neighborhood to arrest his fancy and carry him forth. It was like a quay on which people from all parts of the world had agreed to meet—artists, seamen and international agents. Strange women came sailing through the crowd, large, exotic, like hot-house fruits; Pelle recognized them from the picture of the second-hand dealer's daughter in the "Ark," and knew that they belonged to the international nursing corps. They wore striped costumes, and their thick, fair hair emitted a perfume of foreign lands, of many ports and routes, like the interior of steamers; and their strong, placid faces were big with massage. They floated majestically down the current like full-rigged vessels. In their wake followed some energetic little beings who also belonged to the show, and had decked themselves out to look like children, with puffed sleeves, short skirts, and hair tied up with ribbons. Feeble old men, whom the sun had enticed out, stood in silent wonder, following the lovely children with their eyes.

Pelle felt a peculiar pleasure in being carried along with this stream which flowed like life itself, broad and calm. The world was greater than he had thought, and he took no side for or against anything, but merely wondered over its variety.

He came home from the library at two, with a large volume of statistics under his arm. Ellen received him with red eyes.

"Have your lodgers been making things unpleasant for you again?" he asked, looking into her face. She turned her head away.

"Did you get the money for your work?" she asked instead of answering.

"No, the man wasn't in the shop himself. They're coming here to pay."

"Then we haven't got a farthing, and I've got no dinner for you!" She tried to smile as she spoke, but her heavy eyelids quivered.

"Is that all?" said Pelle, putting his arm round her. "Why didn't you make me some porridge? I should have liked a good plateful of that."

"I have made it, but you'll get hardly anything else, and that's no food for a man."

He took her round the waist with both hands, lifted her up and put her carefully down upon the kitchen table. "That's porridge, my dear!" he said merrily. "I can hardly walk, I'm so strong!"

But there was no smile to be coaxed out of Ellen; something had happened that she did not want to tell him. At last he got out of her that the two musical clowns had gone off without paying. They had spoiled her good bed-clothes by lying in them with their clothes on, and had made them so filthy that nothing could be done with them. She was unwilling to tell Pelle, because he had once advised her against it; but all at once she gave in completely. "You mustn't laugh at me!" she sobbed, hiding her face on his shoulder.

Pelle attempted to comfort her, but it was not so easily done. It was not the one misfortune but the whole fiasco that had upset her so; she had promised herself so much from her great plan. "It isn't all lost yet," he said to comfort her. "We'll just keep on and you'll see it'll be all right."

Ellen was not to be hoodwinked, however. "You know you don't mean it," she said angrily. "You only say it because of me! And the second-hand dealer sent up word this morning that if he didn't soon get the rest of his money, he'd take all the furniture back again."

"Then let him take it, and that'll be an end of the matter."

"But then we shall lose all that we've paid!" she exclaimed quickly, drying her eyes.

Pelle shrugged his shoulders. "That can't be helped."

"Wouldn't it be better to get the things sold little by little? We only owe a third on them."

"We can't do that; it's punishable. We've got a contract for the hire of the furniture, and as long as we owe a farthing on it, it's his. But we're well and strong all of us; what does it matter?"

"That's true enough," answered Ellen, trying to smile, "but the stronger we are, the more food we need."

A girl came running up with a pair of boots that were to be soled as quickly as possible. They were "Queen Theresa's," and she was going to

wear them in the evening. “That’ll bring us in a few pence!” said Ellen, brightening. “I’ll help you to get them done quickly.”

They seated themselves one on each side of the counter, and set to work. It reminded them of the early days of their married life. Now and then they stopped to laugh, when Ellen had forgotten some knack. In an hour and a half the boots were ready, and Pelle went himself with them to make sure of the money.

“You’ll most likely find her in the tavern,” said Ellen. “The artistes generally have their dinner at this hour, and she’s probably there.”

It was a busy time in the artistes’ restaurant. At the small tables sat bony, close-cropped men of a peculiar rubicund type, having dinner with some girl or other from the neighborhood. They were acrobats, clowns, and wrestlers, people of a homogeneous type, dressed in loud checks, with enormous cuffs and boots with almost armor-plated toes. They chewed well and looked up stupidly at the call of the girls; they wore a hard, brutal mask for a face, and big diamond rings on their fingers. Some of them had such a powerful lower jaw that they looked as if they had developed it for the purpose of taking blows in a boxing-match. In the adjoining room some elegant young men were playing billiards while they secretly kept an eye on what was going on at the tables. They had curls on their forehead, and patent leather shoes.

“Queen Theresa” was not there, so Pelle went to Dannebrog Street, where she lived, but found she was not at home. He had to hand in the boots to a neighbor, and go back empty-handed.

Well, it was no more than might have been expected. When you needed a thing most, chance played with you as a cat played with a mouse. Pelle was not nearly so cheerful as he appeared to be when he faced Ellen. The reality was beginning to affect him. He went out to Morten, but without any faith in the result; Morten had many uses for what he earned.

“You’ve just come at the right moment!” said Morten, waving two notes in the air. “I’ve just had twenty krones (a guinea) sent me from *The Working Man*, and we can divide them. It’s the first money I’ve got from that quarter, so of course I’ve spat upon it three times.”

“Then they’ve found their way to you, after all!” exclaimed Pelle joyfully.

Morten laughed. “I got tired of seeing my work repeated in their paper,” he said, “when they’ll have nothing to do with me up there; and I went up to them and drew their attention to the paragraph about piracy. You should have seen their expression! Goodness knows it’s not pleasant to have to earn your bread on wretchedness, so to speak, but it’s still more painful when afterward you have to beg for your hard-earned pence. You mustn’t think I should do it either under other circumstances; I’d sooner starve; but at any rate I won’t be sweated, by my own side! It’s a long time since you were here.”

“I’ve been so busy. How’s Johanna?” The last words were spoken in a whisper.

“Not well just now; she’s keeping her bed. She’s always asking after you.”

“I’ve been very busy lately, and unfortunately I can’t find out anything about her. Is she just as cross?”

“When she’s in a bad temper she lets me understand that she could easily help to put us on the right track if she wanted to. I think it amuses her to see us fooled.”

“A child can’t be so knowing!”

“Don’t be so sure of that! Remember she’s not a child; her experiences have been too terrible. I have an idea that she hates me and only meditates on the mischief she can do me. You can’t imagine how spiteful she can be; it’s as though the exhalations from down there had turned to poison in her. If any one comes here that she notices I like, she reviles them as soon as they’re gone, says some poisonous thing about them in order to wound me. You’re the only one she spares, so I think there must be some secret link between you. Try to press her on the subject once more.”

They went in to her. As the door opened she slipped hastily down beneath the clothes—she had been listening at the door—and pretended to be asleep. Morten went back to his work and closed the door after him.

“Well, Johanna,” said Pelle, seating himself on the edge of the bed. “I’ve got a message for you. Can you guess who it’s from?”

“From grandmother!” she exclaimed, sitting up eagerly; but the next

moment she was ashamed at having been outwitted, and crept down under the clothes, where she lay with compressed lips, and stole distrustful glances at Pelle. There was something in the glance and the carriage of her head that awakened dormant memories in him, but he could not fix them.

"No, not grandmother," he said. "By-the-bye, where is she now? I should like to speak to her. Couldn't you go out to her with me when you get well?"

She looked at him with sparkling eyes and a mocking expression. "Don't you wish you may get it!" she answered.

"Tell me where she lives, Johanna," Pelle went on, taking her thin hand in his, "there's a good girl!"

"Oh, yes, at night!"

Pelle frowned. "You must be very heartless, when you can leave your old grandmother and not even like others to help her. I'm certain she's in want somewhere or other."

Johanna looked at him angrily. "I whipped her too," she exclaimed malignantly, and then burst into a laugh at Pelle's expression. "No, I didn't really," she said reassuringly. "I only took away her stick and hid her spectacles so that she couldn't go out and fetch the cream. So she was obliged to send me, and I drank up all the cream and put water in the can. She couldn't see it, so she scolded the milk people because they cheated."

"You're making all this up, I think," said Pelle uncertainly.

"I picked the crumb out of the loaf too, and let her eat the crust," Johanna continued with a nod.

"Now stop that," said Pelle, stroking her damp forehead. "I know quite well that I've offended you."

She pushed away his hand angrily. "Do you know what I wish?" she said suddenly. "I wish you were my father."

"Would you like me to be?"

"Yes, for when you became quite poor and ill, I'd treat you just as well as I've treated grandmother." She laughed a harsh laugh.

"I'm certain you've only been kind to grandmother," said Pelle gravely.

She looked hard at him to see whether he meant this too, and then turned her face to the wall. He could see from the curve of her body that she was struggling to keep back her tears, and he tried to turn her round to him; but she stiffened herself.

"I won't live with grandmother!" she whispered emphatically, "I won't!"

"And yet you're fond of her!"

"No, I'm not! I can't bear her! She told the woman next door that I was only in the way! It was that confounded child's fault that she couldn't get into the Home, she said; I heard her myself! And yet I went about and begged all the food for her. But then I left her!" She jerked the sentences out in a voice that was quite hoarse, and crumpled the sheet up in her hands.

"But do tell me where she is!" said Pelle earnestly. "I promise you you shan't go to her if you don't want to."

The child kept a stubborn silence. She did not believe in promises.

"Well, then, I must go to the police to find her, but I don't want to do that."

"No, because you've been in prison!" she exclaimed, with a short laugh.

A pained expression passed over Pelle's face. "Do you think that's so funny?" he said, winking his eyes fast. "I'm sure grandmother didn't laugh at it."

Johanna turned half round. "No, she cried!" she said. "There was no one to give us food then, and so she cried."

It began to dawn upon him who she was. "What became of you two that day on the common? We were going to have dinner together," he said.

"When you were taken up? Oh, we couldn't find you, so we just went home." Her face was now quite uncovered, and she lay looking at him with her large gray eyes. It was Hanne's look; behind it was the same wondering over life, but here was added to it a terrible knowledge. Suddenly her face changed; she discovered that she had been outwitted, and glared at him.

"Is it true that you and mother were once sweethearts?" she suddenly

asked mischievously.

Pelle's face flushed. The question had taken him by surprise. "I'll tell you everything about your mother if you'll tell me what you know," he said, looking straight at her.

"What is it you want to know?" she asked in a cross-questioning tone. "Are you going to write about me in the papers?"

"My dear child, we must find your grandmother! She may be starving."

"I think she's at the 'Generality,'" said the child quietly. "I went there on Thursday when the old things had leave to go out and beg for a little coffee; and one day I saw her."

"Didn't you go up to her then?"

"No; I was tired of listening to her lamentations!"

Johanna was no longer stiff and defiant. She lay with her face turned away and answered—a little sullenly—Pelle's questions, while she played nervously with his fingers. Her brief answers made up for him one connected, sad story.

Widow Johnsen was not worth much when once the "Ark" was burnt down. She felt old and helpless everywhere else, and when Pelle went to prison, she collapsed entirely. She and the little girl suffered want, and when Johanna felt herself in the way, she ran away to a place where she could be comfortable. Her grandmother had also been in her way. She had her mother's whimsical, dreamy nature, and now she gave up everything and ran away to meet the wonderful. An older playfellow seduced her and took her out to the boys of the timber-yard. There she was left to take care of herself, often slept out in the open, and stole now and then, but soon learned to earn money for herself. When it became cold she went as scullery-maid to the inns or maid-of-all-work to the women in Dannebrog Street. Strange to say, she always eluded the police. At first there were two or three times when she started to return to her grandmother, but went no farther than the stairs; she was afraid of being punished, and could not endure the thought of having to listen to the old lady's complaints. Later on she became accustomed to her new way of living, and no longer felt any desire to leave it, probably because she had begun to take strong drink. Now and again, however, she stole in to the Home and caught a glimpse of her grandmother. She could not explain why she did it, and firmly maintained that she could not endure her. The old woman's unreasonable complaint that she was an encumbrance to her had eaten deeply into the child's mind. During the last year she had been a waitress for some time at a sailors' tavern down in Nyhavn with an innkeeper Elleby, the confidence-man who had fleeced Pelle on his first arrival in the city. It was Elleby's custom to adopt young girls so as to evade the law and have women-servants for his sailors; and they generally died in the course of a year or two: he always wore a crape band round his sleeve. Johanna was also to have been adopted, but ran away in time.

She slowly confessed it all to Pelle, coarse and horrible as it was, with the instinctive confidence that the inhabitants of the "Ark" had placed in him, and which had been inherited by her from her mother and grandmother. What an abyss of horrors! And he had been thinking that there was no hurry, that life was richer than that! But the children, the children! Were they to wait too, while he surveyed the varied forms of existence—wait and go to ruin? Was there on the whole any need of knowledge and comprehensiveness of survey in order to fight for juster conditions? Was anything necessary beyond the state of being good? While he sat and read books, children were perhaps being trodden down by thousands. Did this also belong to life and require caution? For the first time he doubted himself.

"Now you must lie down and go to sleep," he said gently, and stroked her forehead. It was burning hot and throbbed, and alarmed he felt her pulse. Her hand dropped into his, thin and worn, and her pulse was irregular. Alas, Hanne's fever was raging within her!

She held his hand tight when he rose to go. "Were you and mother sweethearts, then?" she asked in a whisper, with a look of expectation in the bright eyes that she fixed upon him. And suddenly he understood the reiterated question and all her strange compliance with his wishes.

For a moment he looked waveringly into her expectant eyes. Then he nodded slowly. "Yes, Johanna; you're my little daughter!" he said, bending down over her. Her pale face was lighted with a faint smile, and she shyly touched his stubbly chin and then turned over to go to sleep.

In a few words Pelle told Morten the child's previous history—Madam Johnsen and her husband's vain fight to get on, his horrible death in the sewer, how Hanne had grown up as the beautiful princess of the "Ark"—

Hanne who meant to have happiness, and had instead this poor child!

"You've never told me anything about Hanne," said Morten, looking at him.

"No," said Pelle slowly. "She was always so strangely unreal to me, like an all too beautiful dream. Do you know she danced herself to death! But you must pretend to the child that I'm her father."

Morten nodded. "You might go out to the Home for me, and hear about the old lady. It's a pity she should have to spend her old age there!" He looked round the room.

"You can't have her here, however," said Pelle.

"It might perhaps be arranged. She and the child belong to one another."

Pelle first went home to Ellen with the money and then out to the Home.

Madam Johnsen was in the infirmary, and could not live many days. It was a little while before she recognized Pelle, and she seemed to have forgotten the past. It made no impression whatever on her when he told her that her grandchild had been found. She lay most of the time, talking unintelligibly; she thought she still had to get money for the rent and for food for herself and the child. The troubles of old age had made an indelible impression upon her. "She gets no pleasure out of lying here and being comfortable," said an old woman who lay in the next bed to hers. "She's always trying and trying to get things, and when she's free of that, she goes to Jutland."

At the sound of the last word, Madam Johnsen fixed her eyes upon Pelle. "I should so like to see Jutland again before I die," she said. "Ever since I came over here in my young days, I've always meant to use the first money I had over on an excursion home; but I never managed it. Hanne's child had to live too, and they eat a lot at her age." And so she was back in her troubles again.

The nurse came and told Pelle that he must go now, and he rose and bent over the old woman to say farewell, strangely moved at the thought that she had done so much for him, and now scarcely knew him. She felt for his hand and held it in both hers like a blind person trying to recognize, and she looked at him with her expressionless eyes that were already dimmed by approaching death. "You still have a good hand," she said slowly, with the far-sounding voice of old age. "Hanne should have taken you, and then things would have been very different.'"

VII

People wondered, at the library, over the grave, silent working-man who took hold of books as if they were bricks. They liked him and helped him to find what he wanted.

Among the staff there was an old librarian who often came and asked Pelle if there were anything he could help him with. He was a little wizened man with gold spectacles and thin white hair and beard that gave a smiling expression to his pale face. He had spent his time among the stacks of books during the greater part of his life; the dust of the books had attacked his chest, and every minute his dry cough sounded through the room.

Librarian Brun was a bachelor and was said to be very rich. He was not particularly neat or careful in his dress, but there was something unspoiled about his person that made one think he could never have been subjected to the world's rough handling. In his writings he was a fanatical worshipper of the ego, and held up the law of conscience as the only one to which men should be subject. Personally he was reserved and shy, but something drew him to Pelle, who, he knew, had once been the soul in the raising of the masses; and he followed with wonder and curiosity the development of the new working-man. Now and then he brought one of his essays to Pelle and asked him to read it. It often treated of the nature of personality, took as its starting-point the ego of some philosopher or other, or of such and such a religion, and attempted to get at the questions of the day. They conversed in whispers on the subject. The old, easily-approached philosopher, who was read by very few, cherished an unrequited affection for the general public, and listened eagerly to what a working-man might be able to make out of his ideas. Quiet and almost timid though his manner was, his views were strong, and he did not flinch from the thought of employing violent measures; but his attitude toward the raising of the lower classes was sceptical. "They don't know how to read," he said. "The common people never touch a real book." He had lived so long among books that he thought the truths of life were hidden away in them.

They gradually became well acquainted with one another. Brun was the last descendant of an old, decayed family, which had been rich for many generations. He despised money, and did not consider it to be one of the valuable things of life. Never having known want, he had few pretensions, and often denied himself to help others. It was said that he lived in a very Spartan fashion, and used a large proportion of his income for the relief of the poor. On many points he agreed with the lower classes, not only theoretically but purely organically; and Pelle saw, to his amazement, that the dissolution of existing conditions could also take place from the upper grades of society. Perhaps the future was preparing itself at both extremities!

One day Brun carefully led the conversation on to Pelle's private affairs: he seemed to know something about them. "Isn't there anything you want to start?" he asked. "I should be so glad if you would allow me to help you."

Pelle was not yet clear as to what was to be done about the future. "At present," he said, "the whole thing is just a chaos to me."

"But you must live! Will you do me the favor of taking a loan from me at any rate, while you're looking about you? Money is necessary to make one capable and free," he continued, when Pelle refused it. "It's a pity, but so it is. You don't *take* what you want anyhow, so you must either get the money in the way that offers, or do without."

"Then I'll do without," said Pelle.

"It seems to me that's what you and yours have always done, and have you ever succeeded in heaping coals of fire on the head of society by it? You set too high a value upon money; the common people have too great respect for the property of others. And upon my word it's true! The good old poor man could scarcely find it in his heart to put anything into his own miserable mouth; his wife was to have all the good pieces. So he is mourned as lost to our side; he was so easy to get wealth by. His progeny still go about with a good deal of it."

"Money makes you dependent," Pelle objected.

"Not always," answered Brun, laughing. "In my world people borrow and take on credit without a thought: the greater the debt, the better it is; they never treat a man worse than when they owe him money. On that point we are very much more emancipated than you are, indeed that's where the dividing line goes between the upper classes and the common

people. This fear of becoming indebted to any one, and carefulness to do two services in return for one, is all very nice and profitable in your own world; but it's what you'll be run down by in your relations to us. We don't know it at all; how otherwise would those people get on who have to let themselves be helped from their cradle to their grave, and live exclusively upon services received?"

Pelle looked at him in bewilderment. "Poor people have nothing but their sense of honor, and so they watch over it," he said.

"And you've really never halted at this sense of honor that works so splendidly in our favor?" asked Brun in surprise. "Just examine the existing morals, and you'll discover that they must have been invented by us—for your use. Yes, you're surprised to hear me say that, but then I'm a degenerate upper-class man, one of those who fall outside the established order of things. I saw your amazement at my not having patted you on the shoulder and said: 'Poor but proud! Go on being so, young man!' But you mustn't draw too far-reaching conclusions from that; as I told you, I'm not that sort. Now mayn't I give you a helping hand?"

No, Pelle was quite determined he should not. Something had been shattered within him, and the knowledge made him restive.

"You're an obstinate plebeian," said Brun, half vexed.

On his way home Pelle thought it all over. Of course he had always been quite aware that the whole thing resembled a gentleman's carriage, in which he and others like him had to be the horses; the laws and general arrangement were the reins and harness, which made them draw the carriage well. The only thing was that it was always denied from the other side; he was toiling at history and statistics in order to furnish incontrovertible proof of this. But here was some one who sat in the carriage himself, and gave evidence to the effect that it was right enough; and this was not a book, but a living man with whom he stood face to face. It gave an immense support to his belief.

There was need enough for it too, for at home things were going badly. The letting of rooms was at a standstill, and Ellen was selling the furniture as fast as she could. "It's all the same to me what the law is!" was her reply to Pelle's warnings. "There surely can be no sense in our having to make the furniture-dealer a present of all we've paid upon it, just because he has a scrap of paper against us. When the furniture's sold, he shall have the rest of what we owe him."

He did not get the whole, however, for in the first place they had to live. The remainder of the debt hung like a threat over them; if he discovered that the furniture was sold, it might end badly for them. "Remember I've been in prison before," said Pelle.

"They surely can't punish you for what I've done?" said Ellen, looking at him in terror. "Pelle, Pelle, what have I done! Why didn't I do what you told me!" For a time she collapsed, but then suddenly rose energetically, saying: "Then we must get it paid at once. It's surely possible to find twenty krones (a guinea)!" And hastening up to their flat, she quickly returned in her hat and jacket.

"What are you going to do?" asked Pelle in amazement.

"What am I going to do? I'm going to 'Queen Theresa.' She *can* get it! Don't be afraid!" she said, bending down and kissing him. She soon returned with the money. "I may pay it back by *washing*," she said cheerfully.

So that matter was settled, and they would have been glad if the loan had been the same. It scarcely moved, however; the instalments ate themselves up in some wonderful way. Two or three times they had had to ask for a postponement, and each time the usurer added the amount of the instalment to the sum still owing; he called it punishment interest.

Pelle read seldom; he felt no wish to do so. He was out early and late looking for a job. He fetched and took back furniture in the town for the second-hand dealer, and did anything else that came to hand.

One evening Ellen came up with a newspaper cutting that "Queen Theresa" had sent her, an advertisement of a good, well-paid situation for a trustworthy man, who had been trained as a shoemaker. "It's this morning's," said Ellen anxiously, "so I only hope it isn't too late. You must go out there at once." She took out Pelle's Sunday clothes quickly, and helped him to make himself tidy. It was for a boot-factory in Borger Street. Pelle took the tram in order to get there quickly, but he had no great hopes of getting the place. The manufacturer was one of his most bitter opponents among the employers at the time when he was organizing the trade—a young master-shoemaker who had had the good sense to follow the development and take the leap over to manufacturer.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” he said. “Well, well, old differences shan’t stand between us if we can come to an agreement in other ways. What I want is a man who’ll look a little after everything, a kind of right- hand man who can take something off my shoulders in a general way, and superintend the whole thing when I’m travelling. I think you’ll do capitally for that, for you’ve got influence with the men; and I’d like things to go nicely and smoothly with them, without giving in to them too much, you understand. One may just as well do things pleasantly; it doesn’t cost an atom more, according to my experience, and now one belongs to the party one’s self.”

“Do you?” said Pelle, hardly able to believe his ears.

“Yes! Why shouldn’t an employer be a fellow-partisan? There’s nothing to be afraid of when once you’ve peeped in behind the scenes; and it has its advantages, of course. In ten years’ time every sensible man will be a social democrat.”

“That’s not at all unlikely,” said Pelle, laughing.

“No, is it! So one evening I said to my wife: ‘I say, you know it won’t do soon to own that you don’t belong to the party; in other countries millionaires and counts and barons already belong to it.’ She didn’t quite like it, but now she’s quite satisfied. They’re quite nice people, as she said herself. There are even persons of rank among them. Well, it wasn’t conviction that drove me at first, but now I agree because what they say’s very sensible. And upon my word it’s the only party that can thrash the anarchists properly, don’t you think so? In my opinion all should unite in fighting against them, and that’ll be the end of it, I suppose. I’ve reflected a good deal upon politics and have come to the conclusion that we employers behaved like asses from the beginning. We oughtn’t to have struggled against the Movement; it only drove it to extremes. Just see how well-behaved it’s become since we began to take off our hats to it! You *become* what you’re *treated* as, let me tell you. You wouldn’t have acted so harshly if we others had been a little kinder to you. Don’t you allow that? You’re exactly like every one else: you want to have good food and nice clothes—be considered respectable people. So it was wise to cut off the lower end; you can’t rise when you’ve too much lumber as ballast. Fellows who pull up paving- stones and knock you down are no company for me. You must have patience and wait until the turn comes to your party to come in for a share: those are my politics. Well, what do you think about the job?”

“I don’t understand the machines,” said Pelle.

“You’ll soon get into that! But it’s not that that matters, if only you know how to treat the workmen, and that of course you do. I’ll pay you thirty-five krones (£2) a week—that’s a good weekly wage—and in return you’ll have an eye to my advantage of course. One doesn’t join the party to be bled—you understand what I mean? Then you get a free house—in the front building of course—so as to be a kind of vice-landlord for the back building here; there are three stairs with one-roomed flats. I can’t be bothered having anything to do with that; there’s so much nonsense about the mob. They do damage and don’t pay if they can help it, and when you’re a little firm with them they fly to the papers and write spiteful letters. Of course I don’t run much risk of that, but all the same I like things to go smoothly, partly because I aspire to become a member of the management. So you get eighteen hundred krones (£100) a year and a flat at four hundred (£22), which makes two thousand two hundred krones (£l22)—a good wage, though perhaps I oughtn’t to say so myself; but good pay makes good work. Well, is it a bargain?”

Pelle wanted to have till the next day to think it over.

“What do you want to think over? One ought never to think over things too much; our age requires action. As I said before, an expert knowledge is not the main thing; it’s your authority that I chiefly want. In other words, you’ll be my confidential man. Well, well, then you’ll give me your answer to-morrow.”

Pelle went slowly homeward. He did not know why he had asked time to think it over; the matter was settled. If you wanted to make a home, you must take the consequences of it and not sneak away the first time a prospect offered of making it a little comfortable for your wife and children. So now he was the dog set to watch his companions.

He went down the King’s New Market and into the fashionable quarter. It was bright and gay here, with the arc-lamps hanging like a row of light- birds above the asphalt, now and then beating their wings to keep themselves poised. They seemed to sweep down the darkness of night, and great shadows flickered through the street and disappeared. In the narrow side streets darkness lay, and insistent sounds forced their

way out of it—a girl's laugh, the crying of a lonely child, the ceaseless bickering of a cowed woman. But people strolled, quietly conversing, along the pavement in couples and heard nothing. They had got out their winter coats, and were luxuriating in the first cold weather.

Music sounded from the large *cafés*, which were filled to overflowing. People were sitting close together in small select companies, and looked gay and happy. On the tables round which they sat, stood the wine-cooler with the champagne bottle pointing obliquely upward as though it were going to shoot down heaven itself to them. How secure they appeared to feel! Had they no suspicion that they were sitting upon a thin crust, with the hell of poverty right beneath them? Or was that perhaps why they were enjoying themselves—to-day your turn, to-morrow mine? Perhaps they had become reconciled to the idea, and took what they could get without listening too carefully to the hoarse protests of the back streets!

Under one of the electric lamp-posts on the Town Hall Square a man was standing selling papers. He held one out to Pelle, saying: "A halfpenny if you can afford it, if not you can have it for nothing!" He was pale, with dark shadows under his eyes, and he had a dark beard. He looked as if he were suffering from some internal complaint which was slowly consuming him. Pelle looked at him, and saw to his surprise that it was Peter Dreyer, his comrade of long ago!

"Do you go about selling newspapers?" he exclaimed in astonishment, holding out his hand.

Peter Dreyer quietly returned his greeting. He had the same heavy, introspective look that he had had when Pelle met him in the garret in Jager Street, but looked even more perplexed.

"Yes, I've become a newspaper man," he said, "but only after working hours. It's a little paper that I write and print myself. It may perhaps do you good to read it."

"What's it about?"

"About you and me."

"It's anarchistic, I suppose?" said Pelle, looking at the title of the paper. "You were so strange last time I met you."

"Well, you can read it. A halfpenny if you can afford it, if not gratis!" he cried, holding out a copy to the passers-by. A policeman was standing a little way off observing him. He gradually drew nearer.

"I see you're under observation!" said Pelle, drawing his attention to the policeman.

"I'm used to that. Once or twice they've seized my inoffensive little paper."

"Then it can't have been altogether inoffensive?" said Pelle, smiling.

"I only advise people to think for themselves."

"That advice may be dangerous enough too, if it's followed."

"Oh, yes. The mean thing is that the police pursue me financially. As soon as I've got work with any master, a policeman appears and advises him to discharge me. It's their usual tactics! They aim at the stomach, for that's where they themselves have their heart."

"Then it must be very hard for you to get on," said Pelle sympathetically.

"Oh, I get along somehow. Now and then they put me in prison for no lawful reason, and when a certain time has passed they let me out again—the one with just as little reason as the other. They've lost their heads. It doesn't say much for machinery that's exclusively kept going to look after us. I've a feeling that they'd like to put me out of the way, if it could be done; but the country's not large enough to let any one disappear in. But I'm not going to play the hunted animal any longer. Although I despise our laws, which are only a mask for brute force, I'm very careful to be on the right side; and if they use violence against me again, I'll not submit to it."

"The conditions are so unequal," said Pelle, looking seriously at him.

"No one need put up with more than he himself likes. But there's something wanting in us here at home—our own extreme consequence, self- respect; and so they treat us as ignominiously as they please."

They went on together. On the pavement outside one of the large *cafés* stood an anaemic woman with a child upon her arm, offering for sale some miserable stalks which were supposed to represent flowers. Peter Dreyer pointed silently from her to the people in the *café*. His face was distorted.

"I've no objection to people enjoying life," said Pelle; "on the contrary,

I'm glad to see that there are some who are happy. I hate the system, but not the people, you see, unless it were those who grudge us all anything, and are only really happy in the thought that others are in want."

"And do you believe there's any one in there who seriously doesn't grudge others anything? Do you believe any of them would say: 'I'm fortunate enough to earn twenty-five thousand krones (£1,400) a year and am not allowed to use more than five thousand (£300), so the rest belongs to the poor'? No, they're sitting there abusing the poor man while they drink up the surplus of his existence. The men abuse the workmen, and their wives the servant girls. Just go in among the tables and listen! The poor are bestial, unreliable, ungrateful in spite of everything that is done for them; they are themselves to blame for their misery. It gives a spice to the feast to some of them, others dull their uneasy conscience with it. And yet all they eat and drink has been made by the poor man; even the choicest dainties have passed through his dirty hands and have a piquant flavor of sweat and hunger. They look upon it as a matter of course that it should be so; they are not even surprised that nothing is ever done in gratitude for kind treatment—something to disagree with them, a little poison, for instance. Just think! There are millions of poor people daily occupied in making dainties for the rich man, and it never occurs to any of them to revenge themselves, they are so good-natured. Capital literally sleeps with its head in our lap, and abuses us in its sleep; and yet we don't cut its throat!"

At Victoria Street they stopped. The policeman had followed them and stopped on the other side of the street when they stopped. Pelle drew the other's attention to the fact.

Peter looked across carelessly. "He's like an English bloodhound," he said quietly—"a ferocious mouth and no brain! What vexes me most is that we ourselves produce the dogs that are to hunt us; but we shall soon begin to agitate among the military." He said good-night and turned toward Enghave Road, where he lived.

Ellen met Pelle at the top of the street. "How did you get on?" she asked eagerly. "Did you get the place?"

He quietly explained matters to her. She had put her arm round him. "You great big man," she said, looking up at him with a happy face. "If you only knew how proud I am of you! Why, we're rich now, Pelle—thirty-five krones (2 Pounds) a week! Aren't you glad yourself?"

"Yes, I'm glad that you and the children will be a little comfortable for once."

"Yes, but you yourself—you don't seem to be very delighted, and yet it's a good place you're getting."

"It won't be an easy place for me, but I must make the best of it," he answered.

"I don't see why not. You're to be on the side of the manufacturer, but that's always the way with that kind of position; and he's got a right too to have his interests looked after."

When they got in Ellen brought him his supper, which had been standing on the stove to keep warm. Now and then she looked at him in wonder; there was something about him to-day that she did not understand. He had on the whole become a little peculiar in his views about things in the prison, and it was not to be wondered at. She went to him and stroked his hair.

"You'll be satisfied on your own account too, soon," she said. "It's fortunate for us that he can't be bothered to look after things himself."

"He's taken up with politics," answered Pelle absently. "At present he's thinking of getting into the Town Council by the help of the working-men's votes."

"Then it's very wise of him to take you," Ellen exclaimed vivaciously. "You understand these matters and can help him. If we save, we may perhaps have so much over that we could buy the business from him some day."

She looked happy, and treated him to a little petting, now in one way and now in another. Her joy increased her beauty, and when he looked at her it was impossible for him to regret anything. She had sacrificed everything for him, and he could do nothing without considering her. He must see her perfectly happy once more, let it cost what it might, for he owed her everything. How beautiful she was in her unaffectedness! She still had a fondness for dressing in black, and with her dark hair about her pale face, she resembled one of those Sisters who have suffered much and do everything out of compassion.

It struck him that he had never heard her really laugh; she only smiled.

He had not awakened the strongest feeling in her yet, he had not succeeded in making her happy; and therefore, though she had shared his bed and board, she had kept the most beautiful part to herself, like an unapproachable virgin. But now her cheeks glowed with happy expectation, and her eyes rested upon him eagerly; he no longer represented for her the everyday dullness, he was the fairy-story that might take her by surprise when the need was greatest. He felt he could hardly pay too dearly for this change. Women were not made for adversity and solitude; they were flowers that only opened fully when happiness kissed them. Ellen might shift the responsibility over onto his shoulders.

The next day he dressed himself carefully to go out and make the final agreement with the manufacturer. Ellen helped him to button his collar, and brushed his coat, talking, as she did so, with the lightheartedness of a bird, of the future. “What are we going to do now? We must try and get rid of this flat and move out to that end of the town,” she said, “or else you’ll have too far to walk.”

“I forgot to tell you that we shall live out there,” said Pelle. “He has three stairs with one-roomed apartments, and we’re to be the vice-landlord of them. He can’t manage the tenants himself.” Pelle had not forgotten it, but had not been able to bring himself to tell her that he was to be watch-dog.

Ellen looked at him in petrified astonishment. “Does that go with the post?” she gasped.

Pelle nodded.

“You mustn’t do it!” she cried, suddenly seizing him by the arms. “Do you hear, Pelle? You mustn’t do it!” She was greatly disturbed and gazed beseechingly at him. “I don’t understand you at all.”

He looked at her in bewilderment and murmured something in self-defence.

“Don’t you see that he only wants to make use of you?” she continued excitedly. “It’s a Judas post he’s offered you, but we won’t earn our bread by turning poor people into the street. I’ve seen my own bits of furniture lying in the gutter. Oh, if you’d gone there!” She gazed shudderingly straight before her.

“I can’t understand what you can have been thinking about—you who are generally so sensible,” she said when she had once more calmed down, looking reproachfully at him; but the next instant she understood it all, and sank down weeping.

“Oh, Pelle, Pelle!” she exclaimed, and hid her face.

VIII

Pelle read no more and no longer went to the library. He had enough to do to keep things going. There was no question now of trying to get a place; winter was at the door, and the army of the unemployed grew larger every day. He stayed at home, worked when there was anything to do, and for the rest minded the children for Ellen while she washed. He talked to Lasse Frederik as he would to a comrade, but it was nice to have to look after the little ones too. They were grateful for it, and he discovered that it gave him much pleasure. Boy Comfort he was very fond of now, his only sorrow being that the boy could not talk yet. His dumbness was always a silent accusation.

"Why don't you bring books home?" Ellen would say when she came up from the wash-house to look after them, with her arms bare and tiny drops in her hair from the steam down there. "You've plenty of time now."

No, what did he want with books? They did perhaps widen his horizon a little, but what lay behind it became so very much greater again; and he himself only grew smaller by reading. It was impossible in any case to obtain any reassuring view of the whole. The world followed its own crooked course in defiance of all wisdom. There was little pleasure in absorbing knowledge about things that one could not remedy; poor people had better be dull.

He and Morten had just been to Madam Johnsen's funeral. She had not succeeded in seeing Jutland. Out of a whole life of toil there had never been ten krones (10s.) over for a ticket home; and the trains ran day after day with hundreds of empty places. With chilling punctuality they whirled away from station to station. Heaven knows how many thousand empty seats the trains had run with to Jutland during the years in which the old woman longed to see her home! And if she had trudged to the railway-station and got into the train, remorseless hands would have removed her at the first station. What had she to do with Jutland? She longed to go there, it was true, but she had no money!

Was it malice or heartless indifference? A more fiendish sport can at any rate hardly be imagined than this running with empty places. It was they that made the journey so terribly vivid—as though the devil himself were harnessed to the train and, panting with wantonness, dragging it along through the country to places that people were longing to see. It must be dreadful to be the guard and call the names of the stations in to those seats for the people left behind!

And Sister walked about the floor so pale and thin! There was no strength in her fair hair, and when she was excited, her breath whistled in her windpipe with that painful sound that was practically inseparable from the children of the poor neighborhoods. It was always the vitiated air of the back-yards that had something to say now—depressing, like almost everything his understanding mastered. All she wanted was sunshine, and all the summer it had been poured down in open-handed generosity, only it went over the heads of poor people like everything else. It had been a splendid year for strawberries, but the large gardeners had decided to let half of them rot on their stalks in order to keep up the prices and save the money spent on picking them. And here were the children hungering for fruit, and ailing for want of it! Why? No, there was no possible answer to be given to that question.

And again—everywhere the same! Whenever he thought of some social institution or other, the same melancholy spectacle presented itself—an enormous rolling stock, only meant for a few, and to a great extent running empty; and from the empty places accusing eyes gazed out, sick and sad with hunger and want and disappointed hope. If one had once seen them, it was impossible to close one's eyes to them again.

Sometimes his imagination took another direction, and he found himself planning, for instance, kingdoms in which trains were used according to the need for them, and not according to the purse, where the food was eaten by those who were hungry, and the only poor people were those who grudged others things.

But he pulled himself up there; it was too idiotic! A voice from the unseen had called him and his out into the day, and then nothing had happened! It had only been to fool them.

Brun often came down to see him. The old librarian missed his young friend.

"Why do you never come in to us now?" he asked.

"What should I do there?" answered Pelle shortly. "The poor man has

no use for knowledge; he's everlastingly damned."

He had broken with all that and did not care either about the librarian's visits. It was best for every one to look after himself; the great were no company for such as he. He made no attempt to conceal his ill humor, but Brun took no notice. The latter had moved out into Frederiksberg Avenue in October, and dropped in almost every afternoon on his way home from the library. The children took care to be down there at that time, for he always brought something for them.

Neither Pelle nor Ellen demanded much of life now. They had settled down in resignation side by side like a pair of carthorses that were accustomed to share manger and toil. It would have been a great thing now to have done with that confounded loan, so that they need not go about with their lives in their hands continually; but even that was requiring too much! All that could be scraped together went every month to the money-lender, and they were no nearer the end. On the one hundred and eighty krones (£10) that Pelle had received they had now in all paid off one hundred and twenty (£7), and yet they still owed two hundred and forty (more than £13). It was the "punishment interest" that made it mount up whenever they came only a day or two too late with the instalments or whatever it might be. In any case it was an endless screw that would go on all their life pumping out whatever they could scrape together into the money-lender's pocket.

But now Pelle meant to put an end to this. He had not paid the last instalment and meant to pay no more, but let things go as they liked. "You ought to borrow of Herr Brun and pay off that money-lender," said Ellen, "or else he'll only come down on us and take our furniture." But Pelle was obstinate and would not listen to reason. The consciousness that a parasite had fastened upon him and sucked him dry in spite of all his resistance, made him angry. He would like to see them touching his things!

When the money-lender came to fetch his instalment, Pelle shut the door in his face. For the rest he took everything with the calmness of resignation; but when the subject cropped up, he fired up and did not know what he said. Ellen had to keep silence and let his mood work itself out.

One afternoon he sat working at the basement window. The librarian was sitting on the chair by the door, with a child on each knee, feeding them with dates. Pelle was taking no notice, but bent over his work with the expression of a madman who is afraid of being spoken to. His work did not interest him as it had formerly done, and progressed slowly; a disturbing element had entered, and whenever he could not instantly find a tool, he grew angry and threw the things about.

Brun sat watching him anxiously, though apparently taken up with the children. A pitying expression would have made Pelle furious. Brun guessed that there was some money trouble, but dared not offer his assistance; every time he tried to begin a conversation Pelle repelled him with a cunning look which said: "You're seeking for an opportunity to come with your money, but you won't get it!" Something or other had gone wrong with him, but it would all come right in the end.

A cab stopped outside the door, and three men stepped out and went into the house. A little while after Ellen burst into the workshop. "Pelle!" she cried, without noticing Brun, "they've come to take away our things!" She broke into a fit of weeping, and seeing their mother crying, the children began to cry too.

Pelle rose and seized a hammer. "I'll soon get *them* out!" he said between his teeth in a low tone as he moved toward the door. He did not hurry, but went with lowered head, not looking at any one.

Brun seized him by the arm and stopped him.

"You forget that there's something called Prison!" he said with peculiar emphasis.

Pelle gazed at him in astonishment, and for a moment it looked as if he were going to strike the old man; then the hammer dropped from his hand and he broke down.

IX

Now and then a comrade from the good old days would come up and want Pelle to go with him to a meeting. Old fighting memories wakened within him. Perhaps it was there the whole point lay. He threw off his leather apron and went. Ellen's eyes followed him to the door, wondering that he could still wish to have anything to do with that after what *he* had got out of it.

But it was not there after all! He remembered the tremendous ferment in men's minds during the Movement, and it seemed to him that the excitement had died down. People only came forward before the elections, otherwise they went about their own business as if there had never been any rallying idea. They were all organized, but there was nothing new and strong in that fact; they were born—so to speak—in organization, and connected nothing great and elevating with it. His old associates had cooled down remarkably; they must have discovered that success was neither so romantic nor so easy as they had thought. They had no longer simply to open the gate into the land of success and stream through it; there was a long and difficult road before that. So they each arranged his own matters, and disposed of the doubtful future for small present advantages which were immediately swallowed up by the existing conditions.

The Movement had not reached to the bottom. There was an accusation against himself in this fact; it had not been designed with sufficient breadth. Even at that time it had passed over the heads of the inhabitants of the "Ark," and now a large proletariat was left with their own expectations of the future. The good old class of the common people had split up into a class of petty tradesmen—who seemed to be occupied solely in establishing themselves—and this proletariat.

But there was nothing new in this. One stratum moved up and revealed a new one below; it had always been thus in history. Was it then everlastingly determined that at the bottom of existence there should always be the same innumerable crowd of those who were thrust down, who bore the burden of the whole, the great hunger reserve? Was it only possible to be happy when one knew how to push the difficulties down, just as one might push the folds of a material until at last they were heaped up in one place? It was the old question over again. Formerly he had had his clear faith with which to beat down doubt, but now he could not be content with a blind hope; he required to be shown an expedient. If the Movement had failed through having been begun crookedly, the causes with which one had to do were practical causes, and it was possible to do the whole thing over again.

There were also others engaged in taking the whole thing up from the bottom, and through Peter Dreyer he came into contact with young men of an entirely new type. They had emerged from the Movement, shot up surprisingly out of its sediment, and now made new ambitious claims upon life. By unknown paths they had reached the same point as he himself had done, and demanded first and foremost to be human beings. The sacredness of the ego filled them, and made them rebel at all yokes; they began from within by shaking them off, did not smoke or drink, would be slaves to nothing. They kept out of the Movement and had their own places of meeting out about the South Boulevard, where they read and discussed new social forms. They were intelligent, well-paid working-men, who persistently shared the conditions of the proletariat; fanatics who gave away their week's wages if they met a man who was poorer than themselves; hot-headed enthusiasts who awaited revolution. Several of them had been in prison for agitating against the social order. There were also country people among them—sons of the men who stood in the ditches and peat-pits out there. "The little man's children," Morten called them.

These were the offspring of those who had made the Movement; that was how it should go on. By being contented they kept themselves free from the ensnaring expedients of capitalism, they despised the petty tradesman's inclination for comfort, and were always ready for action. In them the departure was at any rate a fact!

They wanted to get hold of Pelle. "Come over to us!" Peter Dreyer often said.

Pelle, however, was not easily enticed out; he had his home where he hid himself like a snail in its shell. He had the responsibility for this little world of five people, and he had not even succeeded in securing it. His strength and industry were not enough even to keep one little home above water; a benefactor was needed for that! It was not the time to

tend jealously one's own honor when wife and children would be the sufferers; and now that it was all arranged he felt deeply grateful to the old librarian. It was nevertheless a disgraceful fact which did not encourage him to have anything to do with the affairs of others.

The violent language used by the young men frightened him too. He had rebelled against the old conditions just as they had done, but he met with different experiences. From the time he could crawl he had struggled to accommodate himself to the great connection of things; even the life of the prison had not placed him outside it, but had only united him the more closely with the whole. He had no inclination to cut the knot, but demanded that it should be untied.

"You're no good," said Morten and the others when they tried to rouse him, "for you can't hate." No, the cold in his mind was like the night-frost; it melted at the first sunbeam. When he looked back there were redeeming ties that held the whole together in spite of all the evil; and now the old librarian had brought him close up to the good in the other side of the cleft too. He had settled down to his shoemaking again and refused to be roused by the others' impatience; but he looked as if he had an eternity in which to unravel his affairs.

Sister was often down with him and filled the workshop with her chatter. At about eight, when it began to grow light, he heard her staggering step on the stair, and she remained with him until Ellen took her up in the evening by main force to put her to bed. She dragged all the tools together and piled them up in front of Pelle on the bench so that he could hardly move, and called it helping. Then she rested, standing with her hands upon the edge of the bench and talking to him. "Sister's clever!" she said appreciatively, pointing with satisfaction to her work. "Big girl!" And if he did not answer she repeated it and did not leave off until he had praised her.

"Yes, you're very clever!" he said, "but can you put the things back in their places?"

The child shook her head. "Sister's tired," she declared with decision, and immediately after brought another tool and pushed it slowly up onto the heap while she kept her eyes upon his face to see whether she might do it. "Sister's helping!" she repeated in explanation; but Pelle pretended not to hear.

For a time she was quiet, but then came to him with her pinafore full of old boots and shoes that she had pulled out from behind the stove. He tried to look stern, but had to bend down over his work. It made the little girl feel uncertain. She emptied her pinafore onto the platform, and sitting on her heels with her hands on her little knees, she tried to see what his expression was. It was not satisfactory, so she got up and, putting her hands on his knee, said, with an ingratiating look into his face: "You're so clever, father! You can do everything! You're the cleverest in the whole world!" And after a little pause—"We're both clever, aren't we, father?"

"Oh, that's it, is it!" exclaimed Pelle. "One of us is very conceited at any rate!"

"It's not me!" answered the child confidently, shaking her head.

"You seem to be very happy together," said Ellen when she came down with Boy Comfort on her arm to fetch Anna. The child did not want to go up with her, and pushed round into the corner behind Pelle's chair; and Boy Comfort struggled to be put down onto the floor to play with the lasts. "Well, then," said Ellen, sitting down, "we'll all stay here together."

She looked quiet and resigned; her defeat had told upon her. She no longer spoke of the future, but was glad that they had escaped from the clutches of the money-lender; the thought of it filled her with a quiet but not altogether unspoiled happiness. She no longer dreamed of anything better, but was grateful for what she possessed; and it seemed to Pelle that something had died within her together with the dissatisfaction. It was as though she had at last given everything she had; her resignation to the gray everyday life made her dull and ordinary. "She needs sunshine," he thought.

And again his thoughts wandered in their search for a way out into the future—his one idea—in the same track that they had followed a hundred times before. He did not even enter it fully, but merely recognized that the problem was being worn threadbare. In his trade there was no compromise; there was only room for extortioners and extortionized, and he was not suited for either part. When he took up other possibilities, however, his thoughts returned of themselves to his work, like a roving dog that always comes back and snuffs at the same scent. There was something in him that with fatalistic obstinacy made him one with his

trade, in spite of its hopelessness; he had staked everything there, and there the question should be solved. Behind the fatalism of the common people lies the recognition that there is plan and perspective in their life too; such and such a thing is so because it must be so. And this recognition Pelle had no reason to do away with.

He grew confused with the continual dwelling of his thoughts on the same subject, but it seemed to possess him, was with him while he slept, and seized him as soon as he awoke. There was an old dream that persistently haunted him at this time—a forgotten youthful idea from his earliest participation in the rising, the plan for a common workshop that would make the court shoemaker superfluous. The plan had been laid aside at the time as impossible, but now he took it up again and went over it step by step. He could easily find some capable, reliable fellow-workmen who would stand by him through thick and thin with regard to work and profits; and there would be no difficulty about discipline, for during the past years the workmen had learned to subordinate themselves to their own people. Here was a way for the small man to assert himself within his trade and join the development; what one was not able to do could be done by several joining together, namely, turn the modern technics to account and divide the work into sections. He arranged it all most carefully, and went over it again and again to make sure that every detail was correct. When he slept he dreamed of his system of profit-sharing, and then it was a fact. He stood working in a bright room among comrades; there was no master and no servant, the machinery whirred, and the workmen sang and whistled while they minded it. Their hours of labor were short, and they all had happy homes waiting for them.

It was hard to wake up and know the reality. Alas! all the cleverest and most industrious hands in the world had no influence in their several trades—could not so much as sew a single stitch—until capital started them. If that refused its support, they could do nothing at all, but were cut off, as it were, at once.

Machinery cost money. Pelle could get the latter from Brun, the old man having often enough offered him capital to start something or other; but he already owed him money, and capital might run his undertaking down. It was at its post, and allowed no activity of that kind beside it. He was seized with uncertainty; he dared not venture the stakes.

The old philosopher came almost daily. Pelle had become a part of his life, and he watched his young friend’s condition with anxiety. Was it the prison life—or was it perhaps the books—that had transformed this young man, who had once gone ahead with tempestuous recklessness, into a hesitating doubter who could not come to a decision? Personality was of doubtful value when it grew at the expense of energy. It had been the old man’s hope that it would have developed greater energy through being replanted in fresh, untouched soil, and he tried to rouse Pelle out of his lethargy.

Pelle gave an impatient jerk. They were poking him up on all sides, wanting him to come to a decision, and he could not see his way to it. Of course he was half asleep; he knew it himself. He felt that he wanted rest; his entity was working for him out there in the uncertainty.

“I don’t know anything,” he said, half irritated, “so what can be the use? I thought books would lead me to a place from which I could bring everything together; but now I’m all abroad. I know too much to dash on blindly, and too little to find the pivot on which the whole thing turns. It doesn’t matter what I touch, it resolves itself into something *for* and something *against*.” He laughed in desperation.

One day Brun brought him a book. “This book,” he said with a peculiar smile, “has satisfied many who were seeking for the truth. Let’s see whether it can satisfy you too!” It was Darwin’s “Origin of Species.”

Pelle read as in a mist. The point lay here—the whole thing powerfully put into one sentence! His brain was in a ferment, he could not lay the book down, but went on reading all night, bewitched and horrified at this merciless view. When Ellen in surprise came down with his morning coffee, he had finished the book. He made no reply to her gentle reproaches, but drank the coffee in silence, put on his hat and went out into the deserted streets to cool his burning brow.

It was very early and the working-men had not yet turned out; at the morning coffee-rooms the shutters were just being taken down; warmly-clad tram-men were tramping through the streets in their wooden-soled boots; slipshod, tired women ran stumbling along to their early jobs, shivering with cold and weary of life, weary before they had begun their day. Here and there a belated woman toiled along the street carrying a clothes-basket, a mother taking her baby to the crêche before she went

to her work.

Suddenly the feeling of rebellion came over Pelle, hot, almost suffocating him. This cruelly cold doctrine of the right of the strong, which gave him the choice between becoming brutal or going to the dogs — this was the key to an understanding of life? It pronounced a sentence of death upon him and his fellows, upon the entire world of the poor. From this point of view, the existing conditions were the only ones possible—they were simply ideal; the sweater and the money-lender, whom he hated, were in the most harmonious agreement with the fundamental laws of life! And the terrible thing was that from this standpoint the social fabric was clearly illuminated: he could not deny it. He who best learned to accommodate himself to the existing state of things, conquered; no matter how vile the existing state of things might be.

The book threw at once a dazzling light upon society, but where was his own class in this doctrine—all the poor? They were not taken into account! Society was thus in reality only those in possession, and here he had their religion, the moral support for the uncompromising utilization. It had always been difficult to understand how men could misuse others; but here it was a sacred duty to give stones for bread. The greatest oppressor was in reality nearest to life’s holy, maternal heart; for he was appointed to carry on the development.

The poor had no share in this doctrine. When a bad workman was in difficulties, the others did not press him until he had to go down, not even when he himself was to blame for his lack of means. The poor did not let the weak fall, but took him under their wing. They placed themselves outside the pale of the law and gave themselves no chance; the race could not be won with a wounded comrade on one’s back. But in this fact there lay the admission that they did not belong to the existing order of things, but had the right to demand their own time of happiness. A new age must come, in which all that was needed in order that they might share in it—kindness of heart, solidarity—was predominant. Thus even the great union he had helped to effect pointed in the right direction. It had been the opposite of one against all—it had built upon the law of reciprocity.

And the poor man was not a miserable wretch, condemned by the development to be ruined, a visionary, who, as a consequence of an empty stomach, dreamed of a Utopia. Pelle had passed his childhood in the country and gone about with the rest of creation in all kinds of weather. He had seen the small singing-birds throw themselves in whole clouds at the hawk when it had seized one of their number, and pursue it until it dropped its prey in confusion. When he caught an ant in a split straw, the other ants flocked to the straw and gnawed their comrade out: they could not be frightened away. If he touched them, they squirted their poison against his hand and went on working. Their courage amused him, the sprinklings of poison were so tiny that he could not see them; but if he quickly raised his hand to his nose, he detected a sharp acid smell. Why did they not leave their comrade in his dilemma, when there were so many of them and they were so busy? They did not even stop to have a meal until they had liberated him.

The poor man must stick to the union idea; he had got hold of the right thing this time! And now all at once Pelle knew which way they ought to go. If they were outside the existing conditions and their laws, why not arrange their own world upon the laws that were theirs? Through the organizations they had been educated in self-government; it was about time that they took charge of their own existence.

The young revolutionaries kept clear of the power of money by going without things, but that was not the way. Capital always preached contentment to the poor; he would go the other way, and conquer production by a great flanking movement.

He was not afraid now of using the librarian’s money. All doubt had been chased away. He was perfectly clear and saw in broad outlines a world- wide, peaceful revolution which was to subvert all existing values. Pelle knew that poverty is not confined to any country. He had once before brought forward an invincible idea. His system of profit-sharing must be the starting-point for a world-fight between Labor and Capital!

X

Two days later Pelle and the librarian went to Frederiksberg Street to look at a business that was to be disposed of. It was a small matter of half a score of workmen, with an electrical workshop in the basement and a shop above. The whole could be had by taking over the stock and machinery at a valuation. The rent was rather high, but with that exception the conditions were favorable.

“I think we’ll arrange that the purchase and working capital shall bear interest and be sunk like a four per cent. credit-association loan,” said Brun.

“It’s cheap money,” answered Pelle. “A good result won’t say much about the circumstances when we haven’t got the same conditions as other businesses.”

“Not so very cheap. At that price you can get as many as you want on good security; and I suppose the workman ought to be regarded as the best security in an undertaking that’s built upon labor,” said the old man, smiling. “There’ll be a big fall in discount when you come into power, Pelle! But the bare capital costs no more now either, when there are no parasites at it; and it’s just parasites that we’re going to fight.”

Pelle had no objection to the cheap money; there were still plenty of difficulties to overcome. If they got on, it would not be long before private speculation declared war on him.

They agreed that they would have nothing to do with agents and branches; the business was to rest entirely upon itself and communicate directly with the consumers. What was made in the workshop should merely cover the expenses of the shop above, the rest of the surplus being divided among the workmen.

“According to what rules?” asked Brun, with a searching glance at Pelle.

“Equal!” he answered without hesitation. “We won’t have anything to do with agreements. We made a great mistake, when we began the Movement, in giving in to the agreement system instead of doing away with it altogether. It has increased the inequality. Every one that works has a right to live.”

“Do you think the capable workman will submit to sharing equally with those that are less capable?” asked Brun doubtfully.

“He must learn to!” said Pelle firmly. “How could he otherwise maintain that all work is of equal value?”

“Is that your own opinion?”

“Most decidedly. I see no reason, for instance, for making any difference between a doctor and a sewer-cleaner. It’s impossible to say which of them is of the greater use in matters of health; the point is that each shall do what he can.”

“Capital!” exclaimed Brun. “Capital!” The old philosopher was in the best of spirits. Pelle had considered him awkward and unpractical, and was astonished to find that his views on many points were so practical.

“It’s because this is something new,” said the old man, rubbing his hands. “I’d done with the old before I came into the world; there was nothing that stimulated me; I was said to be degenerated. Yes, indeed! All the same, the old bookworm’s going to show his ancestors that there’s vigorous blood flowing in his veins too. We two have found the place from which the world can be rocked, my dear Pelle; I think we’ve found it! And now we’ll set to work.”

There was enough to do indeed, but they were realities now, and Pelle had a pleasant feeling of once more having his feet upon the ground. This was something different from riding alone through space upon his own thought, always in danger of falling down; here he opened up his road, so to speak, with his hands.

It had been arranged that the present owner of the business should carry it on a little longer, while Pelle made himself at home in it all, learned to understand the machinery, and took lessons in book-keeping. He was always busy, used his day and at night slept like a log. His brain was no longer in a perpetual ferment like a caldron, for sleep put out the fire beneath it.

The essential thing was that they should be a party that could entirely rely upon one another, and Pelle unhesitatingly discharged those of his comrades who were not suited for work under new forms, and admitted others.

The first man he applied to was Peter Dreyer. Ellen advised him not to

do so. “You know he’s on bad terms with the police,” she said. “You may have difficulties enough without that.” But Pelle needed some one beside him who was able to look at things from a new point of view, and quite understood what was essential; egoists were of no good, and this must be the very thing for a man who had grown restive at the old state of things.

Pelle had come home from his book-keeping course to have his dinner. Ellen was out with Boy Comfort, but she had left the meal ready for him. It was more convenient to eat it in the kitchen, so he sat upon the kitchen table, reading a book on the keeping of accounts while he ate.

In the front room sat Lasse Frederik, learning his lessons with fingers in both ears in order to shut out the world completely. This was not so easy, however, for Sister had a loose tooth, and his fingers were itching to get at it. Every other minute he broke off his reading to offer her something or other for leave to pull it out; but the little girl always made the same answer: “No, father’s going to.”

He then gave up setting about it honorably, and tried to take her unawares; and at last he persuaded her to let him tie a piece of cotton round the tooth and fasten it to the doorhandle. “There! Now we’ve only got to burn through the cotton,” he said, lighting a piece of candle, “or else father’ll never be able to get the tooth out. It loosens it tremendously!” He talked on about all kinds of things to divert her attention, like a conjuror, and then suddenly brought the candle close to her nose, so that she quickly drew back. “Look, here’s the tooth!” he cried triumphantly, showing it to Sister, who, however, screamed at the top of her voice.

Pelle heard it all, but quietly went on eating. They would have to make it up by themselves. It was not long before Lasse Frederik was applying a plaster to his exploit; he talked to her and gave her her toys to put her into good humor again. When Pelle went in, they were both lying on the floor with their heads under the bed. They had thrown the tooth right into the wall, and were shouting together:

> “Mouse, mouse!
> Give me a gold tooth
> Instead of a bone tooth!”

“Are you going to do anything now, father?” asked Sister, running up to him.

Yes, he had several things to do.

“You’re always so busy,” she said sulkily. “Are you going to keep on all your life?”

Pelle’s conscience smote him. “No, I’m not very busy,” he said quickly. “I can stay with you for a little. What shall we do?”

Little Anna brought her large rag doll, and began to drag chairs into position.

“No, that’s so stupid!” said Lasse Frederik. “Tell us about the time you minded the cows, father! About the big mad bull!” And Pelle told them stories of his childhood—about the bull and Father Lasse, the farmer of Stone Farm and Uncle Kalle with his thirteen children and his happy disposition. The big farm, the country life, the stone-quarry and the sea—they all made up a fairy-story for the two children of the pavement; the boy Pelle’s battle with the great oxen for the supremacy, his wonderful capture of the twenty-five-öre piece—each incident was more exciting than the one before it. Most exciting of all was the story of the giant Eric, who became an idiot from a blow. “That was in those days,” said Pelle, nodding; “it wouldn’t happen like that now.”

“What a lot you have seen!” said Ellen, who had come home while they were talking, and was sitting knitting. “I can hardly understand how you managed—a little fellow like that! How I should like to have seen you!”

“Father’s big!” exclaimed Sister appreciatively. Lasse Frederik was a little more reserved. It was so tiresome always to be outdone, and he would like to have found room for a parenthesis about his own exploits. “I say, there’s a big load of corn in the cabman’s gateway,” he said, to show that he too understood country life.

“That’s not corn,” said Pelle; “it’s hay—clover hay. Don’t you even know what corn’s like?”

“We call it corn,” answered the boy confidently, “and it is corn too, for it has those tassels at the ends.”

“The ears, you mean! But those are on coarse grass too, and, besides, corn is descended from grass. Haven’t you ever really been into the country?”

“We were once going, and meant to stay a whole week, but it went wrong with mother’s work. I’ve been right out to the Zoological Gardens, though.”

Pelle suddenly realized how much the children must lose by living their life in the city. “I wonder if we shouldn’t think about moving out of town,” he said that evening when he and Ellen were alone.

“If you think so,” Ellen answered. She herself had no desire to move into the country, indeed she had an instinctive horror of it as a place to live in. She did not understand it from the point of view of the children either; there were so many children who got on capitally in town, and he surely did not want them to become stupid peasants! If he thought so, however, she supposed it was right; he was generally right.

Then it was certainly time they gave notice; there was not much more than a month to April removing-day.

On Sundays they packed the perambulator and made excursions into the surrounding country, just as in the old days when Lasse Frederik was the only child and sat in his carriage like a little crown-prince. Now he wheeled the carriage in which Boy Comfort sat in state; and when Sister grew tired she was placed upon the apron with her legs hanging down. They went in a different direction each time, and came to places that even Lasse Frederik did not know. Close in to the back of the town lay nice old orchards, and in the midst of them a low straw-thatched building, which had evidently once been the dwelling-house on a farm. They came upon it quite by chance from a side-road, and discovered that the town was busy building barracks beyond this little idyll too, and shutting it in. When the sun shone they sat down on a bank and ate their dinner; Pelle and Lasse Frederik vied with one another in performing feats of strength on the withered grass; and Ellen hunted for winter boughs to decorate the house with.

On one of their excursions they crossed a boggy piece of ground on which grew willow copse; behind it rose cultivated land. They followed the field roads with no definite aim, and chanced upon an uninhabited, somewhat dilapidated house, which stood in the middle of the rising ground with a view over Copenhagen, and surrounded by a large, overgrown garden. On an old, rotten board stood the words “To let,” but nothing was said as to where application was to be made.

“That’s just the sort of house you’d like,” said Ellen, for Pelle had stopped.

“It would be nice to see the inside,” he said. “I expect the key’s to be got at the farm up there.”

Lasse Frederik ran up to the old farmhouse that lay a little farther in at the top of the hill, to ask. A little while after he came back accompanied by the farmer himself, a pale, languid, youngish man, who wore a stand-up collar and was smoking a cigar.

The house belonged to the hill farm, and had been built for the parents of the present owner. The old people had had the odd idea of calling it “Daybreak,” and the name was painted in large letters on the east gable. The house had stood empty since they died some years ago, and looked strangely lifeless; the window-panes were broken and looked like dead eyes, and the floors were covered with filth.

“No, I don’t like it!” said Ellen.

Pelle showed her, however, that the house was good enough, the doors and windows fitted well, and the whole needed only to be overhauled. There were four rooms and a kitchen on the ground floor, and some rooms above, one of these being a large attic facing south. The garden was more than an acre in extent, and in the yard was an out-house fitted up for fowls and rabbits, the rent was four hundred krones (£22).

Pelle and Lasse Frederik went all over it again and again, and made the most wonderful discoveries; but when Pelle heard, the price, he grew serious. “Then we may as well give it up,” he said.

Ellen did not answer, but on the way home she reckoned it out to herself; she could see how disappointed he was. “It’ll be fifteen krones (17 s.) more a month than we now pay,” she suddenly exclaimed. “But supposing we could get something out of the garden, and kept fowls! Perhaps, too, we might let the upper floor furnished.”

Pelle looked gratefully at her. “I’ll undertake to get several hundred krones’ worth out of the garden,” he said.

They were tired out when they got home, for after all it was a long way

out. “It’s far away from everything,” said Ellen. “You’d have to try to buy a second-hand bicycle.” Pelle suddenly understood from the tone of her voice that she herself would be lonely out there.

“We’d better put it out of our thoughts,” he said, “and look for a three-roomed flat in town. The other is unpractical after all.”

When he returned from his work the following evening, Ellen had a surprise for him. “I’ve been out and taken the house,” she said. “It’s not so far from the tram after all, and we get it for three hundred krones (£16 10s.) the first year. The man promised to put it all into good order by removing-day. Aren’t you glad?”

“Yes, if only you’ll be happy there,” said Pelle, putting his arms round her.

The children were delighted. They were to live out there in the bright world into which they had peeped, as a rule, only on very festive occasions—to wander about there every day, and always eat the food they brought with them in the open air.

A week later they moved out. Pelle did not think they could afford to hire men to do the removing. He borrowed a four-wheeled hand-cart—the same that had carried Ellen’s furniture from Chapel Road—and in the course of Saturday evening and Sunday morning he and Lasse Frederik took out the things. “Queen Theresa” gave Ellen a helping hand with the packing. The last load was done very quickly, as they had to be out of the town before church-time. They half ran with it, Boy Comfort having been placed in a tub on the top of the load. Behind came Ellen with little Anna, and last of all fat “Queen Theresa” with some pot plants that had to be taken with special care. It was quite a procession.

They were in a tremendous bustle all day. The cleaning had been very badly done and Ellen and “Queen Theresa” had to do it all over again. Well, it was only what they might have expected! When you moved you always had to clean two flats, the one you left and the one you went into. There had not been much done in the way of repairs either, but that too was what one was accustomed to. Landlords were the same all the world over. There was little use in making a fuss; they were there, and the agreement was signed. Pelle would have to see to it by degrees.

By evening the house was so far in order that it could be slept in. “Now we’ll stop for to-day,” said Ellen. “We mustn’t forget that it’s Sunday.” They carried chairs out into the garden and had their supper there, Pelle having laid an old door upon a barrel for a table. Every time “Queen Theresa” leaned forward with her elbows on the table, the whole thing threatened to upset, and then she screamed. She was a pastor’s daughter, and her surroundings now made her melancholy. “I haven’t sat like this and had supper out of doors since I ran away from home as a fifteen-year-old girl,” she said, wiping her eyes.

“Poor soul!” said Ellen, when they had gone with her along the road to the tram. “She’s certainly gone through a good deal. She’s got no one to care about her except us.”

“Is she really a pastor’s daughter?” asked Pelle. “Women of that kind always pretend to be somebody of a better class who has been unfortunate.”

“Oh, yes, it’s true enough. She ran away from home because she couldn’t stand it. She wasn’t allowed to laugh, but had to be always praying and thinking about God. Her parents have cursed her.”

They went for a little walk behind the farm to see the evening sky. Ellen was very talkative, and already had a thousand plans in her head. She was going to plant a great many fruit-bushes and make a kitchen-garden; and they would keep a number of fowls and rabbits. Next summer she would have early vegetables that could be sold in town.

Pelle was only half attending as he walked beside her and gazed at the glowing evening sky, which, with its long fiery lines, resembled a distant prairie-fire. There was quiet happiness within him and around him. He was in a solemn mood, and felt as though, after an absence of many years, he had once more entered the land of his childhood. There was a familiar feeling in the soft pressure of the earth beneath his feet; it was like a caress that made him strong and gave him new life. Here, with his feet on the soil, he felt himself invincible.

“You’re so silent!” said Ellen, taking his arm so as to walk beside him upon the dike.

“I feel as if you had just become my bride,” he said, taking her into his arms.

XI

Brun came in every morning before he went to the library to see how the work was progressing; he was greatly interested in it, and began to look younger. He was always urging Pelle on, and suggesting plans for extensions. “If money’s wanted, just let me know,” he said. He longed to see the effect of this new system, and was always asking Pelle whether he noticed anything. When he heard that the boot and shoe manufacturers had held a meeting to decide what should be their attitude to the undertaking, he laughed and wanted to turn on more steam, quite indifferent to what it might cost. The old philosopher had become as impatient as a child; an interest had come into his old-man’s existence, and he was afraid of not getting the whole of it. “It’s all very well for you to take your time,” he said, “but remember that I’m old and sickly into the bargain.”

He treated Pelle as a son, and generally said “thou” to him.

Pelle held back. So much depended upon the success of this venture, and he watched it anxiously; it was as though he had been chosen to question the future. Within the Movement his undertaking was followed with attention; the working-men’s papers wrote about it, but awaited results. There were opinions for and against.

He wanted to give a good answer, and decided on his measures with much care; he immediately dismissed such workmen as were not suited to the plan. It made bad blood, but there was no help for that. He was busy everywhere, and where he could not go himself, Lasse Frederik went, for the boy had given up his other occupations and helped in the shop and ran errands. Ellen wanted to help too. “We can keep a servant, and then I’ll learn book-keeping and keep the accounts and mind the shop.”

Pelle would not agree to this, however. He was not going to have her working for their maintenance any more. A woman’s place was with her children!

“Nowadays the women take part in all kinds of work,” Ellen urged.

It did not matter; he had his own opinion on the subject. It was enough that the men should do the producing. Would she have them stand on the pavement and watch the women doing the work? It was very possible it did not sound liberal-minded, but he did not care. Women were like beautiful flowers, whatever people said about their being man’s equal. They wore their happiness off when they had to work for their living; he had seen enough to know that.

She did not like standing and looking on while the two men were so busy, so she attacked the garden, and sowed herbs and planted cabbage in the beds that lay like thick down quilts upon the earth; and when it happened that things came up, she was happy. She had bought a gardening book, and puzzled her head about the various kinds and their treatment. Pelle came to her assistance after working hours, and everything that he handled flourished. This made Ellen a little angry. She did exactly what he did, but it was just as if the plants made a difference between them. “I’ve got the countryman’s hand,” he said, laughing.

All Sunday they were busy. The whole family was in the garden, Lasse Frederik digging, Pelle pruning the espalier round the garden door, and Ellen tying it up. The children were trying to help everybody and were mostly a hindrance. One or other of them was always doing something wrong, treading on the beds or pulling up the plants. How extraordinarily stupid they were! Regular town children! They could not even understand when they were told! Pelle could not comprehend it, and sometimes nearly lost patience.

One day when little Anna came to him unsuspectingly to show him a flowering branch of an apple-tree which she had broken off, he was angry and took her roughly by the arm; but when he saw the frightened expression in her face, he remembered the man with the strange eyes, who had taught him in his childhood to manage the cattle without using anything but his hands, and he was ashamed of himself. He took the little ones by the hand, went round the garden with them and told them about the trees and bushes, which were alive just like themselves, and only wanted to do all they could for the two children. The branches were their arms and legs, so they could imagine how dreadful it was to pull them off. Sister turned pale and said nothing, but Boy Comfort, who at last had decided, to open his mouth and had become quite a chatterbox, jabbered away and stuck out his little stomach like a drummer. He was a sturdy little fellow, and Ellen’s eyes followed him proudly as he went round the garden.

The knowledge that everything was alive had a remarkable effect upon the two children. They always went about hand in hand, and kept carefully to the paths. All round them the earth was breaking and curious things coming up out of it. The beans had a bucket turned over them to protect them, and the lettuces put up folded hands as if they were praying for fine weather. Every morning when the children made their round of the garden, new things had come up. "'Oook, 'ook!" exclaimed Boy Comfort, pointing to the beds. They stood at a safe distance and talked to one another about the new wonders, bending over with their hands upon their backs as if afraid that the new thing would snatch at their fingers. Sometimes Boy Comfort's chubby hand would come out involuntarily and want to take hold of things; but he withdrew it in alarm as if he had burnt himself, saying "Ow!" and then the two children would run as fast as they could up to the house.

For them the garden was a wonder-world full of delights—and full of terrors. They soon became familiar with the plants in their own way, and entered into a kind of mystic companionship with them, met them in a friendly way and exchanged opinions—like beings from different worlds, meeting on the threshold. There was always something mysterious about their new friends, which kept them at a distance; they did not give much information about themselves. When they were asked: "Who called you?" they answered quickly: "Mother Ellen!" But if they were asked what it looked like down in the earth, they made no answer whatever. The garden continued to be an inexhaustible world to the children, no matter how much they trotted about in it. Every day they went on new journeys of discovery in under elder and thorn bushes; there were even places which they had not yet got at, and others into which they did not venture at all. They went near to them many times in the course of the day, and peeped over the gooseberry bushes into the horrible darkness that sat in there like an evil being and had no name. Out in the brilliant sunshine on the path they stood and challenged it, Sister spitting until her chin and pinafore were wet, and Boy Comfort laboriously picking up stones and throwing them in. He was so fat that he could not bend down, but had to squat on his heels whenever he wanted to pick up anything. And then suddenly they would rush away to the house in a panic of fear.

It was not necessary to be a child to follow the life in the garden. A wonderful power of growing filled everything, and in the night it crackled and rustled out in the moonlight, branches stretched themselves in fresh growths, the sap broke through the old bark in the form of flowers and new "eyes." It was as though Pelle and Ellen's happy zeal had been infectious; the half-stifled fruit-trees that had not borne for many years revived and answered the gay voices by blossoming luxuriantly. It was a race between human beings and plants as to who should accomplish the most, and between the plants themselves as to which could make the best show. "The spring is lavishing its flowers and green things upon us," said Pelle. He had never seen a nest that was so beautiful as his; he had at last made a home.

It was pleasant here. Virginia creeper and purple clematis covered the whole front of the house and hung down before the garden door, where Ellen liked to sit with her work, keeping an eye on the little ones playing on the grass, where she liked best to sit with Pelle on Sundays, when the Copenhagen families came wandering past on their little country excursions. They often stopped outside the hedge and exclaimed: "Oh, what a lovely home!"

The work in Pelle's workshop began, as in all other places, at six in the morning; but it stopped at four, so that those who cared about it could easily make something of the day. Pelle had reduced the working hours to nine, and dared not venture any further for the present.

Some of the hands liked this arrangement, and employed the afternoon in going out with their wives and children; but others would rather have had an hour longer in bed in the morning. One day the latter came and declared that now they were in the majority and would have it changed.

"I can't agree to that," answered Pelle. "Being early up is the workman's privilege, and I'm not going to give it up."

"But we've taken the votes on it," they said. "This is a democratic institution, isn't it?"

"I've taken no oath to the vote," Pelle answered quietly, "and in the meantime I should advise those who are dissatisfied with the conditions here to try somewhere else."

There was always something like this going on, but he did not take it for more than it was worth. They had acquired consciousness of their power, but most of them had not yet discovered its aim. They used it blindly, in childish pleasure at seeing it unfold, like boys in unfurling their banner, tyrannized a little by way of a change, and took their revenge for the subjection of old times by systematically demanding the opposite to what they had. They reeled a little; the miracle of the voting-paper had gone to their heads. It was an intelligible transition; the feeling of responsibility would get hold of them in time.

Another day two of the most skilful workmen came and asked to have piece-work introduced again. “We won’t stand toiling to make money for our comrades,” they said.

“Are they idle?” asked Pelle.

“No, but we work quicker.”

“Then they’re more thorough on the whole. The one generally balances the other.”

“That’s all very well, but it doesn’t benefit us.”

“It benefits the consumers, and under the new conditions that’s the same thing. We must maintain the principle that all who do their duty are equally good; it’s in our own interests.”

They were satisfied for the time. They were two clever fellows, and it was only that they had not got hold of the new feature in the arrangement.

In this way there was considerable trouble. The workmen were short-sighted, and saw only from their hands to their own mouths. Impatience had also something to do with it. They had shorter hours and higher wages, but had not as much to do as in other places. It was new of course, and had to answer to their dreams; but there would be no fortunes to be made out of it as Pelle was working it. He was a little more precise than was necessary when you were pressed on all sides by vulgar competition.

There were, for instance, still a number of people who kept to the good old handsewn boots and shoes, and willingly paid half as much again for them. A good many small shoemakers availed themselves of this by advertising handsewn foot-wear, and then passed the measures on to a factory. It was a good business for both factory and shoemaker, but Pelle would have nothing to do with such transactions. He put his trade- mark on the sole of everything that went out of his workshop.

Pelle took all this with dignified calmness. What right had he to demand perspicuity of these people? It was *his* business to educate them to it. If only they were willing, he was satisfied. Some day he supposed he would take them so far that they would be able to take over the business jointly, or make it self-supporting; but until then they would have to fall in with his plans.

Part of a great, far-off dream was nevertheless being realized in his undertaking, modest though it was at present; and if it were successful, the way to a new age for the petty tradesmen was open. And what was of still more importance, his own home was growing through this work. He had found the point where the happiness of the many lay in the lengthening of his own; he had got the right way now! Sometimes in the evening after a troublesome day he felt a little tired of the difficulties; but when he bicycled down toward the town in the early morning, while the mists of night drifted across the fields and the lark sang above his head, he was always in good spirits. Then he could follow the consequences of his labor, and see the good principles victorious and the work growing. Kindred enterprises sprang up in other parts of the town, in other towns, still farther out. In the far distance he could see that all production was in the hands of the working-men themselves.

Peter Dreyer supported him like a good comrade, and took a good deal of the worry off his shoulders. He unselfishly put all his strength into it, but he did not share Pelle’s belief in the enormous results that would come from it. “But, dear me, this is capitalistic too!” he said— “socialist capitalism! Just look up to the pavement! there goes a man with no soles to his shoes, and his feet are wet, but all the same he doesn’t come down here and get new shoes, for we want money for them just like all the others, and those who need our work most simply have none. That thing”—he went on, giving a kick to one of the machines— “turns ten men into the street! There you have the whole thing!”

Pelle defended his machines, but Peter would not give in. “The whole thing should have been altered first,” he said angrily. “As it is, they are inventions of the devil! The machines have come a day or two too early, and point their mouths at us, like captured cannons!”

“The machines make shoes for ten times as many people as we could make for with our hands,” said Pelle, “and that can hardly be called a misfortune. It’s only the distribution that’s all wrong.”

Peter Dreyer shrugged his shoulders; he would not discuss the question of distribution any more. If they meant to do anything to alter it he was willing to help. There had been enough nonsense talked about it. Those who had money could buy up all that they made, while the barefooted would be no better off than before. It was a deadlock. Did he think it would revolutionize the world if every man received the entire proceeds of his work? That only meant justice in the existing conditions, so long as diamonds continued to be more valuable than bread. “I don’t see that those who happen to have work should have a better right to live than those who can’t get any,” he said wrathfully. “Or perhaps you don’t know the curse of unemployment! Look at them wandering about in thousands, summer and winter, a whole army of shadows! The community provides for them so that they can just hang together. Good heavens, that isn’t helping the poor, with all respect to the honorable workman! Let him keep his vote, since it amuses him! It’s an innocent pleasure. Just think if he demanded proper food instead of it!”

Yes, Pelle was well enough acquainted with the great hunger reserve; he had very nearly been transferred into it himself. But here he nevertheless caught a glimpse of the bottom. There was a peaceable strength in what he was doing that might carry them on a long way. Peter Dreyer acknowledged it himself by working so faithfully with him. It was only that he would not admit it.

At first they had to stand a good deal, but by degrees Pelle learned to turn things off. Peter, who was generally so good and amenable, spoke in an angry, vexed tone when the conversation touched upon social conditions; it was as though he was at the end of his patience. Though he earned a very good amount, he was badly dressed and looked as if he did not get sufficient food; his breakfast, which he ate together with the others in the workshop, generally consisted of bread and margarine, and he quenched his thirst at the water-tap. At first the others made fun of his prison fare, but he soon taught them to mind their own business: it was not safe to offend him. Part of his earnings he used for agitation, and his comrades said that he lived with a humpbacked woman and her mother. He himself admitted no one into his confidence, but grew more and more reticent. Pelle knew that he lived in one of the Vesterbro back streets, but did not know his address. When he stood silent at his work, his expression was always gloomy, sometimes terribly sad. He seemed to be always in pain.

The police were always after him. Pelle had once or twice received a hint not to employ him, but firmly refused to submit to any interference in his affairs. It was then arbitrarily decided that Peter Dreyer should report himself to the authorities every week.

“I won’t do it!” he said. “It’s quite illegal. I’ve only been punished for political offences, and I’ve been so careful that they shouldn’t be able to get at me for any formal mistake, and here they’re having this triumph! I won’t!” He spoke quietly and without excitement, but his hands shook.

Pelle tried an appeal to his unselfishness. “Do it for my sake then,” he said. “If you don’t they’ll shut you up, and you know I can’t do without you.”

“Would you go and report yourself then if you were told to?” Peter asked.

“Yes. No one need be ashamed of submitting to superior brute force.”

So he went. But it cost him an enormous effort, and on that day in the week it was better to leave him alone.

XII

Marie's fate lay no longer like a heavy burden upon Pelle; time had taken the bitterness out of it. He could recall without self-reproach his life with her and her two brothers in the "Ark," and often wondered what had become of the latter. No one could give him any information about them.

One day, during the midday rest, he went on his bicycle out to Morten with a message from Ellen. In Morten's sitting-room, a hunched-up figure was sitting with its back to the window, staring down at the floor. His clothes hung loosely upon him, and his thin hair was colorless. He slowly raised a wasted face as he looked toward the door. Pelle had already recognized him from his maimed right hand, which had only the thumb and one joint of the forefinger. He no longer hid it away, but let it lie upon his thin knee.

"Why, good-day, Peter!" exclaimed Pelle in surprise, holding out his hand to take the other's left hand. Peter drew the hand out of his pocket and held it out. It was a dead, maimed lump with some small protuberances like rudiments of knuckles, that Pelle found in his hand. Peter looked into his face without moving a muscle of his own, and there was only a little gleam in his eyes when Pelle started.

"What in the world are you starting for?" he said dryly. "I should think any one might have known that a fellow couldn't mind a shearing-machine with one hand. I knew it just as well as everybody else in the factory, and expected it every day; and at last I had to shut my eyes. Confound it, I often thought, won't there soon be an end to it? And then one day there it was!"

Pelle shivered. "Didn't you get any accident insurance?" he asked in order to say something.

"Of course I did! The whole council gathered on account of my humble self, and I was awarded three thousand krones (£170) as entirely invalided. Well, the master possessed nothing and had never insured me, so it never got beyond the paper. But anyhow it's a great advance upon the last time, isn't it? Our party has accomplished something!" He looked mockingly at Pelle. "You ought to give a cheer for paper reforms!"

Peter was a messenger and a kind of secretary in a revolutionary association for young men. He had taught himself to read and sat with other young men studying anarchistic literature. The others took care of him like brothers; but it was a marvel that he had not gone to the dogs. He was nothing but skin and bone, and resembled a fanatic that is almost consumed by his own fire. His intelligence had never been much to boast of, but there were not many difficulties in the problem that life had set him. He hated with a logic that was quite convincing. The strong community had passed a sham law, which was not even liable for the obligations that it admitted that it had with regard to him. He had done with it now and belonged to the destructionists.

He had come up to Morten to ask him to give a reading at the Club. "It's not because we appreciate authors—you mustn't imagine that," he said with a gloomy look. "They live upon us and enjoy a meaningless respect for it. It's only manual labor that deserves to be honored; everything else sponges on us. I'm only telling you so that you shan't come imagining something different."

"Thank you," said Morten, smiling. "It's always nice to know what you're valued at. And still you think you can make use of me?"

"Yes, you're one of the comparatively better ones among those who work to maintain the capitalists; but we're agreed at the Club that you're not a real proletariat writer, you're far too much elaborated. There have never been proletariat writers; and it's of no consequence either, for entertainment shouldn't be made out of misery. It's very likely you'll hear all about that up there."

"That's all right. I'll be sure to come," answered Morten.

"And if you'll write us a cantata for our anniversary festival—it's the day of the great Russian massacre—I'll see that it's accepted. But it mustn't be the usual hallelujah!"

"I'm glad I met you," he said to Pelle with his unchanging expression of gloom. "Have you seen anything of Karl?"

"No, where is he?" asked Pelle eagerly.

"He's a swell now. He's got a business in Adel Street; but he won't enjoy it long."

"Why not? Is there anything wrong with his affairs?"

“Nothing more than that some day we’ll pull the whole thing down upon all your heads. There’ll soon be quite a number of us. I say, you might speak one evening in our association, and tell us something about your prison life. I think it would interest them. We don’t generally have outsiders, for we speak for ourselves; but I don’t think there’d be any difficulty in getting you introduced.”

Pelle promised.

“He’s a devil-may-care fellow, isn’t he?” exclaimed Morten when he had shut the door on Peter, “but he’s no fool. Did you notice that he never asked for anything? They never do. When they’re hungry they go up to the first person they meet and say: ‘Let me have something to eat!’ It’s all the same to them what’s put into their mouths so long as it’s satisfying, and they never thank gratefully. Nothing affects them. They’re men who put the thief above the beggar. I don’t dislike it really; there’s a new tone in it. Perhaps our well-behaved ruminant’s busy doing away with one stomach and making up the spare material into teeth and claws.”

“If only they’d come forward and do work!” said Pelle. “Strong words don’t accomplish much.”

“How’s it going with your peaceable revolution?” asked Morten with a twinkle in his eye. “Do you see any progress in the work?”

“Oh, yes, it’s slow but sure. Rome wasn’t built in a day. I didn’t think though that you were interested in it.”

“I think you’re on the right tack, Pelle,” answered Morten seriously. “But let the young ones light the fire underneath, and it’ll go all the quicker. That new eventualities crop up in this country is no disadvantage; the governing body may very well be made aware that there’s gunpowder under their seats. It’ll immensely strengthen their sense of responsibility! Would you like to see Johanna? She’s been wanting very much to see you. She’s ill again unfortunately.”

“Ellen sent me out to propose that she should come to stay with us in the country. She thinks the child must be a great trouble to you and cannot be properly looked after here either.”

“It’s very kind of your wife to think of it, but hasn’t she enough to do already?”

“Oh, Ellen can manage a great deal,” said Pelle heartily. “You would be giving her a pleasure.”

“Then I’ll say ‘Thank you’ for the offer,” exclaimed Morten. “It’ll be a great relief to me, if only she can stand the moving. It isn’t that she gives me any trouble now, for we get on capitally together. Johanna is good and manageable, really a splendid character in spite of her spoiling. You won’t have any difficulty with her. And I think it’ll be good for her to be away from me here, and be somewhere where there’s a woman to see to her—and children. She doesn’t get much attention here.”

They went in to her and found her asleep, her pale face covered with large drops of moisture. “It’s exhaustion,” whispered Morten. “She’s not got much strength yet.” Their presence made her sleep disturbed, and she tossed from side to side and then, suddenly opening her eyes, gazed about her with an expression of wild terror. In a moment she recognized them and smiled; and raising herself a little she held out both her hands to Pelle with a charming expression of childish coquetry.

“Tell me about the house out there and Boy Comfort,” she said, making room for him on the edge of the bed. “It’s so tiresome here, and Mr. Morten’s so serious.” And she threw a glance of defiance at him.

“Is he?” said Pelle. “That must be because he writes books.”

“No, but I must keep up a little dignity,” said Morten, assuming a funny, schoolmasterish expression. “This young lady’s beginning to be saucy!”

Johanna lay and laughed to herself, her eyes travelling from one to the other of them. “He ought to have a pair of spectacles, and then he’d be like a real one,” she said. She spoke hardly above a whisper, it was all she had strength for; but her voice was mischievous.

“You must come to us if he’s so bad,” said Pelle, “and then you can play with the children and lie in the sunshine out in the garden. You don’t know how lovely it is there now? Yes, I’m really in earnest,” he continued, as she still smiled. “Ellen asked me to come and say so.”

She suddenly became grave and looked from the one to the other; then looking down, and with her face turned away, she asked: “Will Morten be there too?”

“No, Johanna, I must stay here, of course; but I’ll come out to see you.”

“Every day?” Her face was turned to the wall, and she scratched the

paper with her nails.

“I shall come and see my little sweetheart just as often as I can,” said Morten, stroking her hair.

The red blood suffused her neck in a sudden wave, and was imperceptibly absorbed in the paleness of her skin, like a dying ember. Hanne’s blood came and went in the same way for the merest trifle. Johanna had inherited her mother’s bashfulness and unspeakable charm, and also her capricious temper.

She lay with her back turned toward them and made no reply to their persuasions. It was not easy to say whether she even heard them, until suddenly she turned to Morten with an expression of hatred on her face. “You don’t need to trouble,” she said, with glowing eyes; “you can easily get rid of me!”

Morten only looked at her sorrowfully, but Pelle was angry. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself for taking it like that,” he said. “Is that all the thanks Morten gets for what he’s done? I must say you’re a grateful child!”

Johanna took the scolding without moving a muscle of her face, but when he ceased she quietly took his hand and laid it over her delicate, thin face, which it quite covered. There she lay peeping out at him and Morten between the large fingers, with a strangely resigned expression that was meant to be roguish. “I know it was horrid of me,” she said dully, moving Pelle’s middle finger backward and forward in front of her eyes so that she squinted; “but I’ll do what you tell me. Elle-Pelle, Morten-Porten—I can talk the P-language!” And she laughed an embarrassed laugh.

“You don’t know how much better and happier you’ll be when you get out to Pelle’s,” said Morten.

“I could easily get up and do the work of the house, so that you didn’t need to have a woman,” she whispered, gazing at him passionately with her big eyes. “I’m well enough now.”

“My dear child, that’s not what I mean at all! It’s for your sake. Don’t you understand that?” said Morten earnestly, bending over her.

Johanna’s gaze wandered round hopelessly, as if she had given up all thought of being understood any more.

“I don’t think we’ll move her against her will,” said Morten, as he went down with Pelle. “She is so capricious in her moods. I think, too, I should miss her, for she’s a good little soul. When she’s up she goes creeping about and is often quite touching in her desire to make me comfortable. And suddenly recollections of her former life awaken in her and darken her mind; she’s still very mistrustful and afraid of being burdensome. But she needs the companionship of women, some one to whom she can talk confidentially. She has too much on her mind for a child.”

“Couldn’t you both move out to us? You can have the two upstairs rooms.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” exclaimed Morten. “May I have two or three days to think it over? And my love to Ellen and the children!”

XIII

When the workshop closed, Pelle often went on working for an hour or two in the shop, getting the accounts straight and arranging the work for the following day in the intervals of attending to customers. A little before six he closed the shop, mounted his bicycle and hastened home with longing for the nest in his heart.

Every one else seemed to feel as he did. There was a peculiar homeward current in the traffic of the streets. Cyclists overtook him in whole flocks, and raced in shoals in front of the trams, which looked as if they squirted them away from the lines as they worked their way along with incessant, deafening ringing, bounding up and down under the weight of the overfilled platforms.

Crowds of men and women were on their way out, and met other crowds whose homes were in the opposite quarter. On the outskirts of the town the factory whistles were crowing like a choir of giant cocks, a single one beginning, the others all joining in. Sooty workmen poured out of the gates, with beer-bottles sticking out of coat-pockets and dinner handkerchiefs dangling from a finger. Women who had been at work or out making purchases, stood with their baskets on their arms, waiting for their husbands at the corner of the street. Little children tripping along hand in hand suddenly caught sight of a man far off in the crowd, and set off at a run to throw themselves at his legs.

Sister often ran right across the fields to meet her father, and Ellen stood at the gate of “Daybreak” and waited. “Good-day, Mr. Manufacturer!” she cried as he approached. She was making up for so much now, and was glowing with health and happiness. It was no use for Pelle to protest, and declare that in his world there were only workmen; she would not give up the title. He was the one who directed the whole thing, and she did not mind about the fellowship. She was proud of him, and he might call himself an errand-boy if he liked; men must always have some crochet or other in their work, or else it would not satisfy them. The arrangement about the equal division she did not understand, but she was sure that her big, clever husband deserved to have twice as much as any of the others. She did not trouble her head about that, however; she lived her own life and was contented and happy.

Pelle had feared that she would tire of the country, and apparently she did not take to it. She weeded and worked in the garden with her customary energy, and by degrees acquired a fair knowledge of the work; but it did not seem to afford her any peculiar enjoyment. It was no pleasure to her to dig her fingers into the mould. Pelle and the children throve here, and that determined her relations to the place; but she did not strike root on her own account. She could thrive anywhere in the world if only they were there; and their welfare was hers. She grew out from them, and had her own wonderful growth inward.

Within her there were strange hidden forces that had nothing to do with theories or systems, but produced the warmth that bore up the whole. Pelle no longer desired to force his way in there. What did he care about logical understanding between man and woman? It was her heart with which he needed to be irradiated. He required to be understood by his friends. His great satisfaction in being with, for instance, Morten, was that in perfect unanimity they talked until they came to a stopping-place, and if they were then silent their thoughts ran on parallel lines and were side by side when they emerged once more. But even if he and Ellen started from the same point, the shortest pause would take their thoughts in different directions; he never knew where she would appear again. No matter how well he thought he knew her, she always came up just as surprisingly and unexpectedly behind him. And was it not just that he loved? Why then contend with it on the basis of the claims of a poor logic?

She continued to be just as unfathomable, no matter how much of her he thought he had mastered. She became greater and greater with it, and she brought him a new, strange world—the mysterious unknown with which he had always had to strive, allowed itself to be tenderly embraced. He no longer demanded the whole of her; in his inmost soul probably every human being was lonely. He guessed that she was going through her own development in concealment, and wondered where she would appear again.

It had formerly been a grief to him that she did not join the Movement; she was not interested in political questions and the suffrage. He now dimly realized that that was just her strength, and in any case he did not wish her otherwise. She seldom interfered definitely with what he did,

and why should she? She exerted a silent influence upon everything he did, stamped each of his thoughts from the moment they began to shoot up. For the very reason that she did not know how to discuss, she could not be refuted; what to him was downright logic had no effect whatever upon her. He did not get his own thoughts again stale from her lips, and did not wish to either; her wonderful power over him lay in the fact that she rested so securely on her own, and answered the most crushing arguments with a smile. Pelle was beginning to doubt as to the value of superiority of intellect; it seemed to have undisputed rule over the age, but did not accomplish chiefly good. As compared with Ellen's nature, it seemed to him poor. The warmth in a kiss convinced her better than a thousand sensible reasons, and yet she seldom made a mistake.

And she herself gave out warmth. They went to her, both he and the children, when there was anything wrong. She did not say much, but she warmed. She still always seemed to him like a pulse that beat, living and palpable, out from the invisible, with a strangely tranquil speech. When his head was hot and tired with adverse happenings, there was nothing more delightful than to rest it upon her bosom and listen, only half awake, to the dull, soothing murmur within like that of the earth's springs when, in his childhood, he laid his ear to the grass.

The spring was beautiful, and they were much out in it; when no one could see them they walked hand-in-hand along the dikes like two young lovers. Then Pelle talked and showed her things. Look! there it grew in that way, and here in quite a different way. Was it not strange? He lived over again all his childhood's excitement in spring. Ellen listened to him, smiling; she was not astonished at anything so natural as that things grew; she was merely *transformed!* The earth simply sent up its juices into her too.

The fresh air and the work in the garden tanned her bare arms, and gave strength and beauty to her figure, while her easy circumstances freed her from care. One day a new being showed in her eyes, and looked at Pelle with the inquisitiveness of a kid. "Shall we play?" it said. Was it he or the spring that set fire to her? No matter! The pleasure was his! The sunshine entered the innermost corners of his soul, the musty corners left by the darkness of his prison-cell, and cured him completely; her freedom from care infected him, and he was entirely happy. It was Ellen who had done it all; at last she had taken upon herself to be the messenger between joy and him!

She became gentler and more vigorous in disposition every day. The sun and the wind across the open country called forth something in her that had never been there before, an innocent pleasure in her own body and a physical appetite that made her teeth white and gleaming. She was radiant with delight when Pelle brought her little things to adorn herself with; she did not use them for the children now! "Look!" she said once, holding up a piece of dark velvet to her face which in the evening gave out again the warmth of the sun, as hay its scent. "You must give me a dress like this when we become rich." And her eyes sparkled as she looked at him, full of promises of abundant returns. He thought he belonged to the soil, and yet it was through her that he first really came into contact with it! There was worship of nature in the appetite with which she crunched the first radishes of the year and delighted in their juicy freshness; and when in the evening he sprang from his bicycle and took her in his arms, she herself exhaled the fresh perfume of all that had passed through the spring day—the wind and the products of the soil. He could smell in her breath the perfume of wild honey, mixed with the pollen and nectar of wild flowers; and she would close her eyes as though she herself were intoxicated with it.

Their dawning affection became passionate first love out here. Ellen was always standing at the gate waiting for him. As soon as Pelle had had his supper, the children dragged him round the garden to show him what had taken place during the day. They held his hands and Ellen had to walk by herself. Pelle and she had an intense desire to be close together, but the little ones would not submit to be set aside. "He's our father!" they said; and Pelle and Ellen were like two young people that are kept cruelly apart by a remorseless fate, and they looked at one another with eyes that were heavy with expression.

When the little ones had gone to bed they stole away from it all, leaving Lasse Frederik in charge of the house. He had seen an artist sitting outside the hedge and painting the smoky city in the spring light, and had procured himself a paintbox. He sat out there every evening now, daubing away busily. He did not mean to be a sailor now!

They went up past the farm and on toward the evening sun, walked hand- in-hand in the dewy grass, gazing silently in front of them. The

ruddy evening light colored their faces and made their eyes glow. There was a little grove of trees not far off, to which they often went so as to be quite away from the world. With their arms round one another they passed into the deep twilight, whispering together. Now and then she bent her head back for him to kiss her, when an invisible ray would strike her eye and be refracted into a rainbow-colored star, in the darkness.

A high dike of turfs ran along the edge of the wood, and low over it hung hazel and young beech trees. In under the branches there were little bowers where they hid themselves; the dead leaves had drifted together in under the dike and made a soft couch. The birds above their heads gave little sleepy chirps, turned on the branch and twittered softly as though they dreamed the day's melodies over again. Sometimes the moon peeped in at them with a broad smile. The heavy night- exhalations of the leaves lulled them to sleep, and sometimes they were only wakened by the tremor that passes through everything when the sun rises. Pelle would be cold then, but Ellen's body was always warm although she had removed some of her clothing to make a pillow for their heads.

She still continued to be motherly; her devotion only called forth new sides of her desire for self-sacrifice. How rich she was in her motherliness! She demanded nothing but the hard ground, and could not make herself soft enough: everything was for him. And she could make herself so incomprehensibly soft! Providence had thrown all His riches and warmth into her lap; it was no wonder that both life and happiness had made their nesting-place there.

Their love increased with the sunshine, and made everything bright and good; there was no room for any darkness. Pelle met all troubles with a smile. He went about in a state of semi-stupor, and even his most serious business affairs could not efface Ellen's picture from his mind. Her breath warmed the air around him throughout the day, and made him hasten home. At table at home they had secret signs that referred to their secret world. They were living in the first love of youth with all its sweet secrecy, and smiled at one another in youthful, stealthy comprehension, as though the whole world were watching them and must learn nothing. If their feet touched under the table, their eyes met and Ellen would blush like a young girl. Her affection was so great that she could not bear it to be known, even to themselves. A red flame passed over her face, and her eyes were veiled as though she hid in them the unspeakable sweetness of her tryst from time to time. She rarely spoke and generally answered with a smile; she sang softly to herself, filled with the happiness of youth.

One afternoon when he came cycling home Ellen did not meet him as usual. He became anxious, and hurried in. The sofa was made into a bed, and Ellen was standing by it, bending over Johanna, who lay shivering with fever. Ellen raised her head and said, "Hush!" The children were sitting in a corner gazing fearfully at the sick girl, who lay with closed eyes, moaning slightly.

"She came running out here this afternoon," whispered Ellen, looking strangely at him; "I can't think why. She's terribly ill! I've sent Lasse Frederik in to Morten, so that he may know she's with us."

"Have you sent for the doctor?" asked Pelle, bending down over Johanna.

"Yes. Lasse Frederik will tell Morten to bring his doctor with him. He must know her best. I should think they'll soon be here."

A shivering fit came over Johanna. She lay working her tongue against the dry roof of her mouth, now and then uttering a number of disconnected words, and tossing to and fro upon the bed. Suddenly she raised herself in terror, her wide-open eyes fixed upon Pelle, but with no recognition in them. "Go away! I won't!" she screamed, pushing him away. His deep voice calmed her, however, and she allowed herself to be laid down once more, and then lay still with closed eyes.

"Some one has been after her," said Ellen, weeping. "What can it be?"

"It's the old story," Pelle whispered with emotion. "Morten says that it constantly reappears in her.—Take the children out into the garden, Ellen. I'll stay here with her."

Ellen went out with the little ones, who could hardly be persuaded to come out of their corner; but it was not long before their chattering voices could be heard out on the grass.

Pelle sat with his hand on Johanna's forehead, staring straight before him. He had been rudely awakened to the horror of life once more. Convulsive tremors passed through her tortured brow. It was as if he held in his hand a fluttering soul that had been trodden in the mire beneath heavy heels—a poor crushed fledgeling that could neither fly nor die.

He was roused by the sound of a carriage driving quickly up to the garden gate, and went out to meet the men.

The doctor was very doubtful about Johanna's condition. "I'm afraid that the fits will increase rather than decrease," he said in a whisper. "It would be better if she were sent to the hospital as soon as she's able to be moved."

"Would it be better for her?" asked Ellen.

"No, not exactly for her, but—she'll be a difficult patient, you know!"

"Then she shall remain here," said Ellen; "she shall be well looked after."

Lasse Frederik had to take his bicycle and ride to the chemist's, and immediately after the doctor drove away.

They sat outside the garden door, so that they could hear any sound from the sick girl, and talked together in low tones. It was sad to see Morten; Johanna's flight from him had wounded him deeply.

"I wonder why she did it?" said Pelle.

"She's been strange ever since you came up and proposed that she should come out to you," said Morten sadly. "She got it into her head that she was a burden to me and that I would like to get rid of her. Two or three days ago she got up while I was out, and began working in the house—I suppose as a return for my keeping her. She's morbidly sensitive. When I distinctly forbade her she declared that she wouldn't owe me anything and meant to go away. I knew that she might very likely do it in spite of her being ill, so I stayed at home. At midday to-day I just went down to fetch milk, and when I came up she was gone. It was a good thing she came out here; I think she'd do anything when once the idea's taken her that she's a burden."

"She must be very fond of you," said Ellen, looking at him.

"I don't think so," answered Morten, with a sad smile. "At any rate, she's hidden it well. My impression is that she's hated me ever since the day we spoke of her coming out here.—May I stay here for the night?"

"If you can put up with what we have," answered Ellen. "It won't be a luxurious bed, but it'll be something to lie down on."

Morten did not want a bed, however. "I'll sit up and watch over Johanna," he said.

XIV

The house was thus transformed into a nursing home. It was a hard hit at their careless happiness, but they took it as it came. Neither of them demanded more of life than it was capable of.

Ellen was with the sick girl day and night until the worst was over; she neglected both Pelle and the children to give all her care to Johanna.

“You’ve got far too much to do,” said Pelle anxiously. “It’ll end in your being ill too. Do let us have help!” And as Ellen would not hear of it, he took the matter into his own hands, and got “Queen Theresa” to be out there during the day.

In the course of a few days Morten arranged his affairs, got rid of his flat, and moved out to them. “You won’t be able to run away from me, after all,” he said to Johanna, who was sitting up in bed listening to the carrying upstairs of his things. “When you’re well enough you shall be moved up into the big attic; and then we two shall live upstairs and be jolly again, won’t we?”

She made no answer, but flushed with pleasure.

Ellen now received from Morten the amount he usually spent in a month on food and house-rent. She was quite disconcerted. What was she to do with all that money? It was far too much! Well, they need no longer be anxious about their rent.

Johanna was soon so far recovered as to be able to get up for a little. The country air had a beneficial effect upon her nerves, and Ellen knew how to keep her in good spirits. Old Brun made her a present of a beautiful red and yellow reclining chair of basket work; and when the sun shone she was carried out onto the grass, where she lay and watched the children’s play, sometimes joining in the game from her chair, and ordering them hither and thither. Boy Comfort submitted to it good- naturedly, but Sister was a little more reserved. She did not like this stranger to call Pelle “father”; and when she was in a teasing mood she would stand a little way off and repeat again and again: “He’s not your father, for he’s mine!” until Ellen took her away.

Johanna mostly lay, however, gazing into space with an expression of the utmost weariness. For a moment her attention would be attracted by anything new, but then her eyes wandered away again. She was never well enough to walk about; even when she felt well, her legs would not support her. Brun came out to “Daybreak” every afternoon to see her. The old man was deeply affected by her sad fate, and had given up his usual holiday trip in order to keep himself acquainted with her condition. “We must do something for her,” he said to the doctor, who paid a daily visit at his request. “Is there nothing that can be done?”

The doctor shook his head. “She couldn’t be better off anywhere than she is here,” he said.

They were all fond of her, and did what they could to please her. Brun always brought something with him, expensive things, such as beautiful silk blankets that she could have over her when she lay out in the garden, and a splendid coral necklace. He got her everything that he could imagine she would like. Her eyes sparkled whenever she received anything new, and she put everything on. “Now I’m a princess in all her finery,” she whispered, smiling at him; but a moment after she had forgotten all about it. She was very fond of the old man, made him sit beside her, and called him “grandfather” with a mournful attempt at roguishness. She did not listen to what he told her, however, and when the little ones crept up and wanted him to come with them to play in the field, he could quite well go, for she did not notice it.

Alas! nothing could reconcile her child’s soul to her poor, maltreated body, neither love nor trinkets. It was as though it were weary of its covering and had soared as far out as possible, held captive by a thin thread that would easily wear through. She grew more transparent every day; it could be clearly seen now that she had the other children beside her. They ate and throve for her as well as themselves! When Ellen was not on the watch, Boy Comfort would come and eat up Johanna’s invalid food, though goodness knew he wasn’t starved! Johanna herself looked on calmly; it was all a matter of such indifference to her.

It was an unusually fine summer, dry and sunny, and they could nearly always be in the garden. They generally gathered there toward evening; Ellen and “Queen Theresa” had finished their house work, and sat by Johanna with their sewing, Brun kept them company with his cheerful talk, and Johanna lay and dozed with her face toward the garden gate. They laughed and joked with her to keep her in good spirits. Brun had

promised her a trip to the South if she would make haste to use her legs, and told her about the sun down there and the delicious grapes and oranges that she would be allowed to pick herself. She answered everything with her sad smile, as though she knew all too well what awaited her. Her thick, dark hair overshadowed more and more her pale face; it was as if night were closing over her. She seemed to be dozing slowly out of existence, with her large eyes turned toward the garden gate.

Morten was often away on lecturing tours, sometimes for several days at a time. When at last he entered the gate, life flashed into her face. He was the only one who could recall her spirit to its surroundings; it was as though it only lingered on for him. She was no longer capricious with him. When she had the strength for it, she sat up and threw her arms round his neck; her tears flowed silently, and her longing found free vent. Ellen understood the child's feelings, and signed to the others to leave the two together. Morten would then sit for hours beside her, telling her all that he had been doing; she never seemed to grow weary, but lay and listened to him with shining eyes, her transparent hand resting upon his arm. Every step he took interested her; sometimes a peculiar expression came into her eyes, and she fell suspiciously upon some detail or other. Her senses were morbidly keen; the very scent of strange people about him made her sullen and suspicious.

"The poor, poor child! She loves him!" said Ellen one day to Pelle, and suddenly burst into tears. "And there she lies dying!" Her own happiness made her so fully conscious of the child's condition.

"But dearest Ellen!" exclaimed Pelle in protest. "Don't you think I can see? That's of course why she's always been so strange to him. How sad it is!"

The child's sad fate cast a shadow over the others, but the sun rose high in the heavens and became still stronger.

"Pelle," said Ellen, stroking his hair, "the light nights will soon be over!"

Morten continued obstinately to believe that little Johanna would recover, but every one else could see distinctly what the end was to be. Her life oozed away with the departing summer. She became gentler and more manageable every day. The hatred in her was extinguished; she accepted all their kindness with a tired smile. Through her spoiled being there radiated a strange charm, bearing the stamp of death, which seemed to unfold itself the more as she drew nearer to the grave.

Later in the autumn her nature changed. Suddenly, when Pelle or Morten approached, her eyes would fill with horror and she would open her mouth to cry out; but when she recognized them, she nestled down in their arms, crying pitifully. She could no longer go into the garden, but always kept her bed. She could not bear the noise of the children; it tortured her and carried her thoughts back to the narrow streets: they had to keep out of doors all day. Delirious attacks became more frequent, and her thin, languid voice became once more rough and hoarse. She lay fighting with boys and roughs and high hats, defended herself with nicknames and abusive epithets, and snarled at every one, until she at last gave in and asked for brandy, and lay crying softly to herself. Old Brun never dared show himself at her bedside; she took him for an old chamberlain that the street-boys had set onto her, and received him with coarse demands.

This insight into the child's terrible existence among the timber-stacks affected them all. It seemed as if the malignity of life would not relax its hold on this innocent victim, but would persecute her as long as life remained, and made all their love useless. Morten stayed with her during the days in which she fought her battle with death; he sat watching her from a corner, only venturing nearer when she dozed. Ellen was the only one who had the strength to meet it. She was with Johanna night and day, and tried to make death easier for her by her unwearying care; and when the fits came over the child, she held her in her arms and sought to calm her with a mother's love.

She had never been in a death-chamber before, but did not quail; and the child died upon her breast.

Johanna's death had completely paralyzed Morten. As long as he possibly could he had clung to the belief that her life might be saved; if not, it would be so unreasonably unjust; and when her hopeless condition became apparent to him, he collapsed. He did nothing, but wandered

about dully, spoke to no one and ate very little. It was as though he had received a blow on the head from a heavy hand.

After the funeral he and Pelle walked home together while the others drove. Pelle talked of indifferent matters in order to draw Morten's thoughts away from the child, but Morten did not listen to him.

"My dear fellow, you can't go on like this," said Pelle suddenly, putting his arm through Morten's. "You've accompanied the poor child along the road as far as you could, and the living have some claim on you too."

Morten raised his head. "What does it matter whether I write a few pages more or less?" he said wearily.

"Your pen was given you to defend the defenceless with; you mustn't give up," said Pelle.

Morten laughed bitterly. "And haven't I pleaded the cause of the children as well as I could, and been innocent enough to believe that there, at any rate, it was only necessary to open people's eyes in order to touch their hearts? And what has been gained? The addition, at the most, of one more volume to the so-called good literature. Men are practical beings; you can with the greatest ease get them to shed theater tears; they're quite fond of sitting in the stalls and weeping with the unfortunate man; but woe to him if they meet him again in the street! The warmest words that have ever been spoken to me about my descriptions of children were from an old gentleman whom I afterward found to be trying to get hold of little children."

"But what are you going to do?" said Pelle, looking at him with concern.

"Yes, what am I going to do—tell me that! You're right in saying I'm indifferent, but can one go on taking part in a battle that doesn't even spare the children? Do you remember my little sister Karen, who had to drown herself? How many thousand children are there not standing behind her and Johanna! They call this the children's century, and the children's blood is crying out from the earth! They're happy when they can steal away. Fancy if Johanna had lived on with her burden! The shadows of childhood stretch over the whole of life."

"Yes, and so does the sunshine of childhood!" exclaimed Pelle. "That's why we mustn't fail the poor little ones. We shall need a race with warm hearts."

"That's just what I've thought," said Morten sadly. "Do you know, Pelle, I *loved* that child who came to me from the very lowest depth. She was everything to me; misery has never come so cruelly near to me before. It was a beautiful dream of mine—a foolish dream—that she would live. I was going to coax life and happiness into her again, and then I would have written a book about all that triumphs. I don't know whether you understand me—about misery that becomes health and happiness beneath the sunshine of kindness. She was that; life could hardly be brought lower! But did you notice how much beauty and delicacy there was after all buried beneath the sewer-mud in her? I had looked forward to bringing it out, freed from all want and ugliness, and showing the world how beautiful we are down here when the mud is scraped off us. Perhaps it might have induced them to act justly. That's what I dreamed, but it's a bitter lot to have the unfortunates appointed to be one's beloved. My only love is irretrievably dead, and now I cannot write about anything that triumphs. What have I to do with that?"

"I think it's Victor Hugo who says that the heart is the only bird that carries its cage," said Pelle, "but your heart refuses to take it when there is most use for it."

"Oh, no!" said Morten with a little more energy. "I shan't desert you; but this has been a hard blow for me. If only I had a little more of your clear faith! Well, I must be glad that I have you yourself," he added, holding out his hand to Pelle with a bright smile.

The librarian came across the fields to meet them. "It's taken you two Dioseuri a long time," he said, looking at them attentively. "Ellen's waiting with the dinner."

The three men walked together up the bare stubblefield toward the house. "The best of the summer's over now," said Brun, looking about with a sigh. "The wheel has turned on one more cog!"

"Death isn't the worst thing that can happen to one," answered Morten, who was still in a morbid mood.

"That's the sort of thing one says while one's young and prosperous—and doesn't mean seriously. To-morrow life will have taken you and your sorrow into its service again. But I have never been young until now that I've learned to know you two, so I count every fleeting hour like a miser

—and envy you who can walk so quickly,” he added with a smile.

They walked up more slowly, and as they followed the hedge up toward the house they heard a faint whimpering in the garden. In a hole in an empty bed, which the two children had dug with their spades, sat Boy Comfort, and Sister was busy covering him with earth; it was already up to his neck. He was making no resistance, but only whimpered a little when the mould began to get near his mouth.

Pelle gave the alarm and leaped the hedge, and Ellen at the same moment came running out. “You might have suffocated little brother!” she said with consternation, taking the boy in her arms.

“I was only planting him,” said Anna, offended at having her work destroyed. “He wanted to be, and of course he’d come up again in the spring!” The two children wanted a little brother, and had agreed that Boy Comfort should sacrifice himself.

“You mustn’t do such things,” said Ellen quietly. “You’ll get a little brother in the spring anyhow.” And she looked at Pelle with a loving glance.

XV

Work went on steadily in the cooperative works. It made no great stir; in the Movement they had almost forgotten that it existed at all. It was a long and difficult road that Pelle had set out on, but he did not for a moment doubt that it led to the end he had in view, and he set about it seriously. Never had his respiration been so slow.

At present he was gaining experience. He and Peter Dreyer had trained a staff of good workmen, who knew what was at stake, and did not allow themselves to be upset even if a foreign element entered. The business increased steadily and required new men; but Pelle had no difficulty with the new forces; the undertaking was so strong that it swallowed them and remodelled them.

The manufacturers at any rate remembered his existence, and tried to injure him at every opportunity. This pleased him, for it established the fact that he was a danger to them. Through their connections they closed credit, and when this did not lead to anything, because he had Brun's fortune to back him up, they boycotted him with regard to materials by forcing the leather-merchants not to sell to him. He then had to import his materials from abroad. It gave him a little extra trouble, and now it was necessary to have everything in order, so that they should not come to a standstill for want of anything.

One day an article was lacking in a new consignment, and the whole thing was about to come to a standstill. He managed to obtain it by stratagem, but he was angry. "I should like to hit those leather-merchants back," he said to Brun. "If we happen to be in want of anything, we're obliged to get it by cunning. Don't you think we might take the shop next door, and set up a leather business? It would be a blow to the others, and then we should always have what we want to use. We shouldn't get rich on it, so I think the small masters in out-of-the-way corners would be glad to have us."

Brun had no objection to making a little more war to the knife. There was too little happening for his taste!

The new business opened in October. Pelle would have had Peter Dreyer to be at the head of it, but he refused. "I'm sure I'm not suited for buying and selling," he said gloomily, so Pelle took one of the young workmen from the workshop into the business, and kept an eye upon it himself.

It at once put a little more life into things; there was always plenty of material. They now produced much more than they were able to sell in the shop, and Pelle's leather shop made the small masters independent of private capital. Many of them sold a little factory foot-wear in addition to doing repairs, and these now took their goods from him. Out in the provinces his boots and shoes had already gained a footing in many places; it had come about naturally, in the ordinary sequence of things. The manufacturers followed them up there too, wherever they could; but the consequence was that the workmen patronized them and forced them in again to the shops of which they themselves were the customers. A battle began to rage over Pelle's boots and shoes.

He knew, however, that it was only the beginning. It would soon come to a great conflict, and were his foundations sufficiently strong for that? The manufacturers were establishing a shop opposite his, where the goods were to be sold cheap in order to ruin his sales, and one day they put the prices very much down on everything, so as to extinguish him altogether.

"Let them!" said Brun. "People will be able to get shoes cheap!" Pelle was troubled, however, at this fresh attack. Even if they held out, it might well exhaust their economic strength.

The misfortune was that they were too isolated; they were as yet like men washed up onto an open shore; they had nothing to fall back upon. The employers had long since discovered that they were just as international as the workmen, and had adopted Pelle's old organization idea. It was not always easy, either, to get materials from abroad; he noticed the connection. Until he had got the tanners to start a cooperative business, he ran the risk of having his feet knocked away from under him at any moment. And in the first place he must have the great army of workmen on his side; that was whither everything pointed.

One day he found himself once more after many years on the lecturer's platform, giving his first lecture on cooperation. It was very strange to stand once more before his own people and feel their faces turned toward him. At present they looked upon him as one who had come from

abroad with new ideas, or perhaps only a new invention; but he meant to win them! Their very slowness promised well when once it was overcome. He knew them again; they were difficult to get started, but once started could hardly be stopped again. If his idea got proper hold of these men with their huge organizations and firm discipline, it would be insuperable. He entered with heart and soul into the agitation, and gave a lecture every week in a political or trade association.

"Pelle, how busy you are!" said Ellen, when he came home. Her condition filled him with happiness; it was like a seal upon their new union. She had withdrawn a little more into herself, and over her face and figure there was thrown a touch of dreamy gentleness. She met him at the gate now a little helpless and remote—a young mother, to be touched with careful hands. He saw her thriving from day to day, and had a happy feeling that things were growing for him on all sides.

They did not see much of Morten. He was passing through a crisis, and preferred to be by himself. He was always complaining that he could not get on with his work. Everything he began, no matter how small, stuck fast.

"That's because you don't believe in it any longer," said Pelle. "He who doubts in his work cuts through the branch upon which he is himself sitting."

Morten listened to him with an expression of weariness. "It's much more than that," he said, "for it's the men themselves I doubt, Pelle. I feel cold and haven't been able to find out why; but now I know. It's because men have no heart. Everything growing is dependent upon warmth, but the whole of our culture is built upon coldness, and that's why it's so cold here."

"The poor people have a heart though," said Pelle. "It's that and not common sense that keeps them up. If they hadn't they'd have gone to ruin long ago—simply become animals. Why haven't they, with all their misery? Why does the very sewer give birth to bright beings?"

"Yes, the poor people warm one another, but they're blue with cold all the same! And shouldn't one rather wish that they had no heart to be burdened with in a community that's frozen to the very bottom? I envy those who can look at misery from a historical point of view and comfort themselves with the future. I think myself that the good will some day conquer, but it's nevertheless fearfully unreasonable that millions shall first go joyless to the grave in the battle to overcome a folly. I'm an irreconcilable, that's what it is! My mind has arranged itself for other conditions, and therefore I suffer under those that exist. Even so ordinary a thing as to receive money causes me suffering. It's mine, but I can't help following it back in my thoughts. What want has been caused by its passing into my hands? How much distress and weeping may be associated with it? And when I pay it out again I'm always troubled to think that those who've helped me get too little—my washerwoman and the others. They can scarcely live, and the fault is mine among others! Then my thoughts set about finding out the others' wants and I get no peace; every time I put a bit of bread into my mouth, or see the stores in the shops, I can't help thinking of those who are starving. I suffer terribly through not being able to alter conditions of which the folly is so apparent. It's of no use for me to put it down to morbidness, for it's not that; it's a forestalling in myself. We must all go that way some day, if the oppressed do not rise before then and turn the point upward. You see I'm condemned to live in all the others' miseries, and my own life has not been exactly rich in sunshine. Think of my childhood, how joyless it was! I haven't your fund to draw from, Pelle, remember that!"

No, there had not been much sunshine on Morten's path, and now he cowered and shivered with cold.

One evening, however, he rushed into the sitting-room, waving a sheet of paper. "I've received a legacy," he cried. "Tomorrow morning I shall start for the South."

"But you'll have to arrange your affairs first," said Pelle.

"Arrange?" Morten laughed. "Oh, no! You're always ready to start on a journey. All my life I've been ready for a tour round the world at an hour's notice!" He walked to and fro, rubbing his hands. "Ah, now I shall drink the sunshine—let myself be baked through and through! I think it'll be good for my chest to hop over a winter."

"How far are you going?" asked Ellen, with shining eyes.

"To Southern Italy and Spain. I want to go to a place where the cold doesn't pull off the coats of thousands while it helps you on with your furs. And then I want to see people who haven't had a share in the blessings of mechanical culture, but upon whom the sun has shone to

make up for it—sunshine-beings like little Johanna and her mother and grandmother, but who've been allowed to live. Oh, how nice it'll be to see for once poor people who aren't cold!"

"Just let him get off as quickly as possible," said Ellen, when Morten had gone up to pack; "for if he once gets the poor into his mind, it'll all come to nothing. I expect I shall put a few of your socks and a little underclothing into his trunk; he's got no change. If only he'll see that his things go to the wash, and that they don't ruin them with chlorine!"

"Don't you think you'd better look after him a little while he's packing?" asked Pelle. "Or else I'm afraid he'll not take what he'll really want. Morten would sometimes forget his own head."

Ellen went upstairs with the things she had looked out. It was fortunate that she did so, for Morten had packed his trunk quite full of books, and laid the necessary things aside. When she took everything out and began all over again, he fidgeted about and was quite unhappy; it had been arranged so nicely, the fiction all together in one place, the proletariat writings in another; he could have put his hand in and taken out anything he wanted. But Ellen had no mercy. Everything had to be emptied onto the floor, and he had to bring every stitch of clothing he possessed and lay them on chairs, whence she selected the necessary garments. At each one that was placed in the trunk, Morten protested meekly: it really could not be worth while to take socks with him, nor yet several changes of linen; you simply bought them as you required them. Indeed? Could it not? But it was worth while lugging about a big trunk full of useless books like any colporteur, was it?

Ellen was on her knees before the trunk, and was getting on with her task. Pelle came up and stood leaning against the door-jamb, looking at them. "That's right! Just give him a coating of paint that will last till he gets home again!" he said, laughing. "He may need it badly."

Morten sat upon a chair looking crestfallen. "Thank goodness, I'm not married!" he said. "I really begin to be sorry for you, Pelle." It was evident that he was enjoying being looked after.

"Yes, now you can see what a domestic affliction I have to bear," Pelle answered gravely.

Ellen let them talk. The trunk was now cram full, and she had the satisfaction of knowing that he would not be going about like a tramp. There were only his toilet articles left now; even those he had forgotten. She drew a huge volume out of the pocket for these articles inside the lid of the trunk to make room for his washing things; but at that Morten sprang forward. "I *must* have that with me, whatever else is left out," he said with determination. It was Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables," Morten's Bible.

Ellen opened it at the title-page to see if it really was so necessary to travel about with such a monster; it was as big as a loaf.

"There's no room for it," she declared, and quietly laid it on one side, "that's to say if you want things to wash yourself with; and you're sure to meet plenty of unhappy people wherever you go, for there's always enough of them everywhere."

"Then perhaps Madam will not permit me to take my writing things with me?" questioned Morten, in a tone of supplication.

"Oh, yes!" answered Ellen, laughing, "and you may use them too, to do something beautiful—that's to say if it's us poor people you're writing for. There's sorrow and misery enough!"

"When the sun's shone properly upon me, I'll come home and write you a book about it," said Morten seriously.

The following day was Sunday. Morten was up early and went out to the churchyard. He was gone a long time, and they waited breakfast for him. "He's coming now!" cried Lasse Frederik, who had been up to the hill farm for milk. "I saw him down in the field."

"Then we can put the eggs on," said Ellen to Sister, who helped her a little in the kitchen.

Morten was in a solemn mood. "The roses on Johanna's grave have been picked again," he said. "I can't imagine how any one can have the heart to rob the dead; they are really the poorest of us all."

"I'm glad to hear you say that!" exclaimed Pelle. "A month ago you thought the dead were the only ones who were well off."

"You're a rock!" said Morten, smiling and putting his hands on the other's shoulders. "If everything else were to change, we should always know where you were to be found."

"Come to table!" cried Ellen, "but at once, or the surprise will be cold." She stood waiting with a covered dish in her hand.

“Why, I believe you’ve got new-laid eggs there!” exclaimed Pelle, in astonishment.

“Yes, the hens have begun to lay again the last few days. It must be in Morten’s honor.”

“No, it’s in honor of the fine weather, and because they’re allowed to run about anywhere now,” said Lasse Frederik.

Morten laughed. “Lasse Frederik’s an incorrigible realist,” he said. “Life needs no adornment for him.”

Ellen looked well after Morten. “Now you must make a good breakfast,” she said. “You can’t be sure you’ll get proper food out there in foreign countries.” She was thinking with horror of the messes her lodgers in the “Palace” had put together.

The carriage was at the door, the trunk was put up beside the driver, and Morten and Pelle got into the carriage, not before it was time either. They started at a good pace, Lasse Frederik and Sister each standing on a step all the way down to the main road. Up at the gable window Ellen stood and waved, holding Boy Comfort by the hand.

“It must be strange to go away from everything,” said Pelle.

“Yes, it might be strange for you,” answered Morten, taking a last look at Pelle’s home. “But I’m not going away from anything; on the contrary, I’m going to meet things.”

“It’ll be strange at any rate not having you walking about overhead any more, especially for Ellen and the children. But I suppose we shall hear from you?”

“Oh, yes! and you’ll let me hear how your business gets on, won’t you?”

The train started. Pelle felt his heart contract as he stood and gazed after it, feeling as though it were taking part of him with it. It had always been a dream of his to go out and see a little of the world; ever since “Garibaldi” had appeared in the little workshop at home in the provincial town he had looked forward to it. Now Morten was going, but he himself would never get away; he must be content with the “journey abroad” he had had. For a moment Pelle stood looking along the lines where the train had disappeared, with his thoughts far away in melancholy dreams; then he woke up and discovered that without intending it he had been feeling his home a clog upon his feet. And there were Ellen and the children at home watching for his coming, while he stood here and dreamed himself away from them! They would do nothing until he came, for Sunday was his day, the only day they really had him. He hurried out and jumped onto a tram.

As he leaped over the ditch into the field at the tramway terminus, he caught sight of Brun a little farther along the path. The old librarian was toiling up the hill, his asthma making him pause every now and then. “He’s on his way to us!” said Pelle to himself, touched at the thought; it had not struck him before how toilsome this walk over ploughed fields and along bad roads must be for the old man; and yet he did it several times in the week to come out and see them.

“Well, here I am again!” said Brun. “I only hope you’re not getting tired of me.”

“There’s no danger of that!” answered Pelle, taking his arm to help him up the hill. “The children are quite silly about you!”

“Yes, the children—I’m safe enough with them, and with you too, Pelle; but your wife makes me a little uncertain.”

“Ellen’s rather reserved, but it’s only her manner; she’s very fond of you,” said Pelle warmly. “Any one who takes the children on his knee wins Ellen’s heart.”

“Do you really think so? I’ve always despised woman because she lacks personality—until I got to know your wife. She’s an exceptional wife you’ve got, Pelle; hers is a strong nature, so strong that she makes me uncertain. Couldn’t you get her to leave off calling me Mr. Brun?”

“I’ll tell her,” said Pelle, laughing; “but I’m not sure it’ll be of any use.”

“This *Mr. Brun* is beginning to be an intolerable person, let me tell you; and in your house I should like to get away from him. Just imagine what it means to be burdened all your life with a gentleman like that, who doesn’t stand in close relationship to anybody at all. Others are called ‘Father,’ ‘Grandfather’—something or other human; but all conditions of life dispose of me with a ‘Mr. Brun’! ‘Thank you, Mr. Brun!’ ‘Many thanks, Mr. Brun!’” The old man had worked himself up, and made the name a caricature.

“These are bad roads out here,” he said suddenly, stopping to take breath. “It’s incomprehensible that these fields should be allowed to lie

here just outside the town—that speculation hasn't got hold of them."

"I suppose it's because of the boggy ground down there," said Pelle. "They've begun to fill it in, however, at the north end, I see."

Brun peered in that direction with some interest, but gave it up, shaking his head.

"No, I can't see so far without glasses; that's another of the blessings bestowed by books. Yes, it is! Old people in the country only make use of spectacles when they want to look at a book, but I have to resort to them when I want to find my way about the world: that makes a great difference. It's the fault of the streets and those stupid books that I'm shortsighted; you don't get any outlook if you don't live in the country. The town shuts up all your senses, and the books take you away from life; so I'm thinking of moving out too."

"Is that wise now just before the winter? It wouldn't do for you to go in and out in all kinds of weather."

"Then I'll give up the library," answered Brun. "I shan't miss it much; I've spent enough of my life there. Fancy, Pelle! it occurred to me last night that I'd helped to catalogue most of the literature of the world, but haven't even seen a baby dressed! What right have people like me to have an opinion?"

"I can't understand that," said Pelle. "Books have given me so much help."

"Yes, because you had the real thing. If I were young, I would go out and set to work with my hands. I've missed more through never having worked with my body till I was hot and tired, than you have through not knowing the great classic writers. I'm discovering my own poverty, Pelle; and I would willingly exchange everything for a place as grandfather by a cozy fireside."

The children came running across the field. "Have you got anything for us to-day?" they cried from a long distance.

"Yes, but not until we get into the warmth. I daren't unbutton my coat out here because of my cough."

"Well, but you walk so slowly," said Boy Comfort. "Is it because you're so old?"

"Yes, that's it," answered the old man, laughing. "You must exercise a little patience."

Patience, however, was a thing of which the children possessed little, and they seized hold of his coat and pulled him along. He was quite out of breath when they reached the house.

Ellen looked severely at the children, but said nothing. She helped Brun off with his coat and neckerchief, and after seeing him comfortably seated in the sitting-room, went out into the kitchen. Pelle guessed there was something she wanted to say to him, and followed her.

"Pelle," she said gravely, "the children are much too free with Mr. Brun. I can't think how you can let them do it."

"Well, but he likes it, Ellen, or of course I should stop them. It's just what he likes. And do you know what I think he would like still better? If you would ask him to live with us."

"That I'll never do!" declared Ellen decidedly. "It would look so extraordinary of me."

"But if he wants a home, and likes us? He's got no friends but us."

No—no, Ellen could not understand that all the same, with the little they had to offer. And Brun, who could afford to pay for all the comforts that could be had for money! "If he came, I should have to have new table-linen at any rate, and good carpets on the floors, and lots of other things."

"You can have them too," said Pelle. "Of course we'll have everything as nice as we can, though Brun's quite as easily pleased as we are."

That might be so, but Ellen was the mistress of the house, and there were things she could not let go. "If Mr. Brun would like to live with us, he shall be made comfortable," she said; "but it's funny he doesn't propose it himself, for he can do it much better than we can."

"No, it must come from us—from *you,* Ellen. He's a little afraid of you."

"Of me?" exclaimed Ellen, in dismay. "And I who would—why, there's no one I'd sooner be kind to! Then I'll say it, Pelle, but not just now." She put up her hands to her face, which was glowing with pleasure and confusion at the thought that her little home was worth so much.

Pelle went back to the sitting-room. Brun was sitting on the sofa with Boy Comfort on his knee. "He's a regular little urchin!" he said. "But he's not at all like his mother. He's got your features all through."

“Ellen isn’t his mother,” said Pelle, in a low voice.

“Oh, isn’t she! It’s funny that he should have those three wrinkles in his forehead like you; they’re like the wave-lines in the countenance of Denmark. You both look as if you were always angry.”

“So we were at that time,” said Pelle.

“Talking of anger”—Brun went on—“I applied to the police authorities yesterday, and got them to promise to give up their persecution of Peter Dreyer, on condition that he ceases his agitation among the soldiers.”

“We shall never get him to agree to that; it would be the same thing as requiring him to swear away his rights as a man. He has taught himself, by a great effort, to use parliamentary expressions, and nobody’ll ever get him to do more. In the matter of the Cause itself he’ll never yield, and there I agree with him. If you mayn’t even fight the existing conditions with spiritual weapons, there’ll be an end of everything.”

“Yes, that’s true,” said Brun, “only I’m sorry for him. The police keep him in a perpetual state of inflammation. He can’t have any pleasure in life.”

XVI

Pelle was always hoping that Peter Dreyer would acquire a calmer view of life. It was his intention to start a cooperative business in the course of the spring at Aarhus too, and Peter was appointed to start it. But his spirit seemed incurable; every time he calmed down a little, conditions roused him to antagonism again. This time it was the increase of unemployment that touched him.

The senseless persecution, moreover, kept him in a state of perpetual irritation. Even when he was left alone, as now, he had the feeling that they were wondering how they could get him to blunder—apparently closed their eyes in order to come down upon him with all the more force. He never knew whether he was bought or sold.

The business was now so large that they had to move the actual factory into the back building, and take the whole of the basement for the repairing workshop. Peter Dreyer managed this workshop, and there was no fault to find with his management; he was energetic and vigilant. He was not capable, however, of managing work on a large scale, for his mind was in constant oscillation. In spite of his abilities he was burning to no purpose.

"He might drop his agitation and take up something more useful," said Brun, one evening when he and Pelle sat discussing the matter. "Nothing's accomplished by violence anyhow! And he's only running his head against a brick wall himself!"

"You didn't think so some time ago," said Pelle. It was Brun's pamphlets on the rights of the individual that had first roused Peter Dreyer's attention.

"No, I know that. I once thought that the whole thing must be smashed to pieces in order that a new world might arise out of chaos. I didn't know you, and I didn't think my own class too good to be tossed aside; they were only hindering the development. But you've converted me. I was a little too quick to condemn your slowness; you have more connectedness in you than I. Our little business in there has proved to me that the common people are wise to admit their heritage from and debt to the upper class. I'm sorry to see Peter running off the track; he's one of your more talented men. Couldn't we get him out here? He could have one of my rooms. I think he needs a few more comforts."

"You'd better propose it to him yourself," said Pelle.

The next day Brun went into town with Pelle and proposed it, but Peter Dreyer declined with thanks. "I've no right to your comforts as long as there are twenty thousand men that have neither food nor firing," he said, dismissing the subject. "But you're an anarchist, of course," he added scornfully, "and a millionaire, from what I hear; so the unemployed have nothing to fear!" He had been disappointed on becoming personally acquainted with the old philosopher, and never disguised his ill-will.

"I think you know that I *have* already placed my fortune at the disposal of the poor," said Brun, in an offended tone, "and my manner of doing so will, I hope, some day justify itself. If I were to divide what I possess to-day among the unemployed, it would have evaporated like dew by to-morrow, so tremendous, unfortunately, is the want now."

Peter Dreyer shrugged his shoulders. The more reason was there, he thought, to help.

"Would you have us sacrifice our great plan of making all want unnecessary, for one meal of food to the needy?" asked Pelle.

Yes, Peter saw only the want of to-day; it was such a terrible reality to him that the future must take care of itself.

A change had taken place in him, and he seemed quite to have given up the development.

"He sees too much," said Pelle to Brun, "and now his heart has dominated his reason. We'd better leave him alone; we shan't in any case get him to admit anything, and we only irritate him. It's impossible to live with all that he always has before his eyes, and yet keep your head clear; you must either shut your eyes and harden yourself, or let yourself be broken to pieces."

Peter Dreyer's heart was the obstruction. He often had to stop in the middle of his work and gasp for breath. "I'm suffocated!" he would say.

There were many like him. The ever-increasing unemployment began to spread panic in men's minds. It was no longer only the young, hot-headed men who lost patience. Out of the great compact mass of

organization, in which it had hitherto been impossible to distinguish the individual beings, simple-minded men suddenly emerged and made themselves ridiculous by bearing the truth of the age upon their lips. Poor people, who understood nothing of the laws of life, nevertheless awakened, disappointed, out of the drowsiness into which the rhythm had lulled them, and stirred impatiently. Nothing happened except that one picked trade after another left them to become middle-class.

The Movement had hitherto been the fixed point of departure; from it came everything that was of any importance, and the light fell from it over the day. But now suddenly a germ was developed in the simplest of them, and they put a note of interrogation after the party-cry. To everything the answer was: When the Movement is victorious, things will be otherwise. But how could they be otherwise when no change had taken place even now when they had the power? A little improvement, perhaps, but no change. It had become the regular refrain, whenever a woman gave birth to a child in secret, or a man stole, or beat his wife:—It is a consequence of the system! Up and vote, comrades! But now it was beginning to sound idiotic in their ears. They were voting, confound it, with all their might, but all the same everything was becoming dearer! Goodness knows they were law-abiding enough. They were positively perspiring with parliamentarianism, and would soon be doing nothing but getting mandates. And what then? Did any one doubt that the poor man was in the majority—an overwhelming majority? What was all this nonsense then that the majority were to gain? No, those who had the power would take good care to keep it; so they might win whatever stupid mandates they liked!

Men had too much respect for the existing conditions, and so they were always being fooled by them. It was all very well with all this lawfulness, but you didn't only go gradually from the one to the other! How else was it that nothing of the new happened? The fact was that every single step toward the new was instantly swallowed up by the existing condition of things, and turned to fat on its ribs. Capital grew fat, confound it, no matter what you did with it; it was like a cat, which always falls upon its feet. Each time the workmen obtained by force a small rise in their wages, the employers multiplied it by two and put it onto the goods; that was why they were beginning to be so accommodating with regard to certain wage-demands. Those who were rather well off, capital enticed over to its side, leaving the others behind as a shabby proletariat. It might be that the Movement had done a good piece of work, but you wanted confounded good eyes to see it.

Thus voices were raised. At first it was only whiners about whom nobody needed to trouble—frequenters of public-houses, who sat and grumbled in their cups; but gradually it became talk that passed from mouth to mouth; the specter of unemployment haunted every home and made men think over matters once more on their own account; no one could know when his turn would come to sweep the pavement.

Pelle had no difficulty in catching the tone of all this; it was his own settlement with the advance on coming out of prison that was now about to become every one's. But now he was another man! He was no longer sure that the Movement had been so useless. It had not done anything that marked a boundary, but it had kept the apparatus going and strengthened it. It had carried the masses over a dead period, even if only by letting them go in a circle. And now the idea was ready to take them again. Perhaps it was a good thing that there had not been too great progress, or they would probably never have wakened again. They might very well starve a little longer, until they could establish themselves in their own world; fat slaves soon lost sight of liberty.

Behind the discontented fussing Pelle could hear the new. It expressed itself in remarkable ways. A party of workmen—more than two hundred — who were employed on a large excavation work, were thrown out of work by the bankruptcy of the contractor. A new contractor took over the work, but the men made it a condition for beginning work again that he should pay them the wages that were due to them, and also for the time they were unemployed. "We have no share in the cake," they said, "so you must take the risk too!" They made the one employer responsible for the other! And capriciously refused good work at a time when thousands were unemployed! Public opinion almost lost its head, and even their own press held aloof from them; but they obstinately kept to their determination, and joined the crowd of unemployed until their unreasonable demand was submitted to.

Pelle heard a new tone here. For the first time the lower class made capital responsible for its sins, without any petty distinction between Tom, Dick, and Harry. There was beginning to be perspective in the

feeling of solidarity.

The great weariness occasioned by wandering in a spiritual desert came once more to the surface. He had experienced the same thing once before, when the Movement was raised; but oddly enough the breaking out came that time from the bottom of everything. It began with blind attacks on parliamentarianism, the suffrage, and the paroles; there was in it an unconscious rebellion against restraint and treatment in the mass. By an incomprehensible process of renewal, the mass began to resolve itself into individuals, who, in the midst of the bad times, set about an inquiry after the ego and the laws for its satisfaction. They came from the very bottom, and demanded that their shabby, ragged person should be respected.

Where did they come from? It was a complete mystery! Did it not sound foolish that the poor man, after a century's life in rags and discomfort, which ended in his entire effacement in collectivism, should now make his appearance with the strongest claim of all, and demand his soul back?

Pelle recognized the impatience of the young men in this commotion. It was not for nothing that Peter Dreyer was the moving spirit at the meetings of the unemployed. Peter wanted him to come and speak, and he went with him two or three times, as he wanted to find out the relation of these people to his idea; but he remained in the background and could not be persuaded to mount the platform. He had nothing to do with these confused crowds, who turned all his ideas upside down. In any case he could not give them food to-day, and he had grown out of the use of strong language.

"Go up and say something nice to them! Don't you see how starved they are?" said Peter Dreyer, one evening. "They still have confidence in you from old days. But don't preach coöperation; you don't feed hungry men with music of the future."

"Do you give them food then?" asked Pelle.

"No, I can't do that, but I give them a vent for their grievances, and get them to rise and protest. It's something at any rate, that they no longer keep silence and submit."

"And if to-morrow they get something to eat, the whole turmoil's forgotten; but they're no further on than they were. Isn't it a matter of indifference whether they suffer want today, as compared with the question whether they will do so eternally?"

"If you can put the responsibility upon those poor creatures, you must be a hard-hearted brute!" said Peter angrily.

Well, it was necessary now to harden one's heart, for nothing would be accomplished with sympathy only! The man with eyes that watered would not do for a driver through the darkness.

It was a dull time, and men were glad when they could keep their situations. There was no question of new undertakings before the spring. But Pelle worked hard to gain adherents to his idea. He had started a discussion in the labor party press, and gave lectures. He chose the quiet trade unions, disdained all agitation eloquence, and put forward his idea with the clearness of an expert, building it up from his own experience until, without any fuss, by the mere power of the facts, it embraced the world. It was the slow ones he wanted to get hold of, those who had been the firm nucleus of the Movement through all these years, and steadfastly continued to walk in the old foot-prints, although they led nowhere. It was the picked troops from the great conflict that must first of all be called upon! He knew that if he got them to go into fire for his idea with their unyielding discipline, much would be gained.

It was high time for a new idea to come and take them on; they had grown weary of this perpetual goose-step; the Movement was running away from them. But now he had come with an idea of which they would never grow weary, and which would carry them right through. No one would be able to say that he could not understand it, for it was the simple idea of the home carried out so as to include everything. Ellen had taught it to him, and if they did not know it themselves, they must go home to their wives and learn it. *They* did not brood over the question as to which of the family paid least or ate most, but gave to each one according to his needs, and took the will for the deed. The world would be like a good, loving home, where no one oppressed the other—nothing more complicated than that.

Pelle was at work early and late. Scarcely a day passed on which he did not give a lecture or write about his coöperation idea. He was frequently summoned into the provinces to speak. People wanted to see and hear the remarkable manufacturer who earned no more than his

work- people.

In these journeys he came to know the country, and saw that much of his idea had been anticipated out there. The peasant, who stiffened with horror at the word “socialist,” put the ideas of the Movement into practice on a large scale. He had arranged matters on the coöperative system, and had knitted the country into supply associations.

“We must join on there when we get our business into better order,” said Pelle to Brun.

“Yes, if the farmers will work with us,” said Brun doubtfully. “They’re conservative, you know.”

This was now almost revolutionary. As far as Pelle could see, there would soon be no place as big as his thumb-nail for capital to feed upon out there. The farmers went about things so quickly! Pelle came of peasant stock himself, and did not doubt that he would be able to get in touch with the country when the time came.

The development was preparing on several sides; they would not break with that if they wanted to attain anything.

It was like a fixed law relating to growth in existence, an inviolable divine idea running through it all. It was now leading him and his fellows into the fire, and when they advanced, no one must stay behind. No class of the community had yet advanced with so bright and great a call; they were going to put an end forever to the infamy of human genius sitting and weighing the spheres in space, but forgetting to weigh the bread justly.

He was not tired of the awakening discontent with the old condition of things; it opened up the overgrown minds, and created possibility for the new. At present he had no great number of adherents; various new currents were fighting over the minds, which, in their faltering search, were drawn now to one side, now to the other. But he had a buoyant feeling of serving a world-idea, and did not lose courage.

Unemployment and the awakening ego-feeling brought many to join Peter Dreyer. They rebelled against the conditions, and now saw no alternative but to break with everything. They sprang naked out of nothing, and demanded that their personality should be respected, but were unable as yet to bear its burdens; and their hopeless view of their misery threatened to stifle them. Then they made obstruction, their own broken- down condition making them want to break down the whole. They were Pelle’s most troublesome opponents.

Up to the present they had unfortunately been right, but now he could not comprehend their desperate impatience. He had given them an idea now, with which they could conquer the world just by preserving their coherence, and if they did not accept this, there must be something wrong with them. Taking this view of the matter, he looked upon their disintegrating agitation with composure; the healthy mind would be victorious!

Peter Dreyer was at present agitating for a mass-meeting of the unemployed. He wanted the twenty thousand men, with wives and children, to take up their position on the Council House Square or Amalienborg Palace Square, and refuse to move away until the community took charge of them.

“Then the authorities can choose between listening to their demands, and driving up horses and cannon,” he said. Perhaps that would open up the question.

“Take care then that the police don’t arrest you,” said Pelle, in a warning voice; “or your people will be left without a head, and you will have enticed them into a ridiculous situation which can only end in defeat.”

“Let them take care, the curs!” answered Peter threateningly. “I shall strike at the first hand that attempts to seize me!”

“And what then? What do you gain by striking the policemen? They are only the tool, and there are plenty of them!”

Peter laughed bitterly. “No,” he said, “it’s not the policemen, nor the assistant, nor the chief of police! It’s no one! That’s so convenient, no one can help it! They’ve always stolen a march upon us in that way; the evil always dives and disappears when you want to catch it. ‘It wasn’t me!’ Now the workman’s demanding his right, the employer finds it to his advantage to disappear, and the impersonal joint stock company appears. Oh, this confounded sneaking out of a thing! Where is one to apply? There’s no one to take the blame! But something *shall* be done now! If I hit the hand, I hit what stands behind it too; you must hit what you can see. I’ve got a revolver to use against the police; to carry arms

against one’s own people shall not be made a harmless means of livelihood unchallenged.”

XVII

One Saturday evening Pelle came home by train from a provincial town where he had been helping to start a coöperative undertaking.

It was late, but many shops were still open and sent their brilliant light out into the drizzling rain, through which the black stream of the streets flowed as fast as ever. It was the time when the working women came from the center of the city—pale typists, cashiers with the excitement of the cheap novel still in their eyes, seamstresses from the large businesses. Some hurried along looking straight before them without taking any notice of the solitary street-wanderers; they had something waiting for them—a little child perhaps. Others had nothing to hurry for, and looked weariedly about them as they walked, until perhaps they suddenly brightened up at sight of a young man in the throng.

Charwomen were on their way home with their basket on their arm. They had had a long day, and dragged their heavy feet along. The street was full of women workers—a changed world! The bad times had called the women out and left the men at home. On their way home they made their purchases for Sunday. In the butchers' and provision-dealers' they stood waiting like tired horses for their turn. Shivering children stood on tiptoe with their money clasped convulsively in one hand, and their chin supported on the edge of the counter, staring greedily at the eatables, while the light was reflected from their ravenous eyes.

Pelle walked quickly to reach the open country. He did not like these desolate streets on the outskirts of the city, where poverty rose like a sea-birds' nesting-place on both sides of the narrow cleft, and the darkness sighed beneath so much. When he entered an endless brick channel such as these, where one- and two-roomed flats, in seven stories extended as far as he could see, he felt his courage forsaking him. It was like passing through a huge churchyard of disappointed hopes. All these thousands of families were like so many unhappy fates; they had set out brightly and hopefully, and now they stood here, fighting with the emptiness.

Pelle walked quickly out along the field road. It was pitch-dark and raining, but he knew every ditch and path by heart. Far up on the hill there shone a light which resembled a star that hung low in the sky. It must be the lamp in Brun's bedroom. He wondered at the old man being up still, for he was soon tired now that he had given up the occupation of a long lifetime, and generally went to bed early. Perhaps he had forgotten to put out the lamp.

Pelle had turned his coat-collar up about his ears, and was in a comfortable frame of mind. He liked walking alone in the dark. Formerly its yawning emptiness had filled him with a panic of fear, but the prison had made his mind familiar with it. He used to look forward to these lonely night walks home across the fields. The noises of the city died away behind him, and he breathed the pure air that seemed to come straight to him out of space. All that a man cannot impart to others arose in him in these walks. In the daily struggle he often had a depressing feeling that the result depended upon pure chance. It was not easy to obtain a hearing through the thousand-voiced noise. A sensation was needed in order to attract attention, and he had presented himself with only quite an ordinary idea, and declared that without stopping a wheel it could remodel the world. No one took the trouble to oppose him, and even the manufacturers in his trade took his enterprise calmly and seemed to have given up the war against him. He had expected great opposition, and had looked forward to overcoming it, and this indifference sometimes made him doubt himself. His invincible idea would simply disappear in the motley confusion of life!

But out here in the country, where night lay upon the earth like great rest, his strength returned to him. All the indifference fell away, and he saw that like the piers of a bridge, his reality lay beneath the surface. Insignificant though he appeared, he rested upon an immense foundation. The solitude around him revealed it to him and made him feel his own power. While they overlooked his enterprise he would make it so strong that they would run their head against it when they awoke.

Pelle was glad he lived in the country, and it was a dream of his to move the workmen out there again some day. He disliked the town more and more, and never became quite familiar with it. It was always just as strange to go about in this humming hive, where each seemed to buzz on his own account, and yet all were subject to one great will—that of hunger. The town exerted a dull power over men's minds, it drew the poor to it with lies about happiness, and when it once had them, held

them fiendishly fast. The poisonous air was like opium; the most miserable beings dream they are happy in it; and when they have once got a taste for it, they had not the strength of mind to go back to the uneventful everyday life again. There was always something dreadful behind the town's physiognomy, as though it were lying in wait to drag men into its net and fleece them. In the daytime it might be concealed by the multitudinous noises, but the darkness brought it out.

Every evening before Pelle went to bed he went out to the end of the house and gazed out into the night. It was an old peasant-custom that he had inherited from Father Lasse and his father before him. His inquiring gaze sought the town where his thoughts already were. On sunny days there was only smoke and mist to be seen, but on a dark night like this there was a cheerful glow above it. The town had a peculiar power of shedding darkness round about it, and lighting white artificial light in it. It lay low, like a bog with the land sloping down to it on all sides, and all water running into it. Its luminous mist seemed to reach to the uttermost borders of the land; everything came this way. Large dragon-flies hovered over the bog in metallic splendor; gnats danced above it like careless shadows. A ceaseless hum rose from it, and below lay the depth that had fostered them, seething so that he could hear it where he stood.

Sometimes the light of the town flickered up over the sky like the reflection from a gigantic forge-fire. It was like an enormous heart throbbing in panic in the darkness down there; his own caught the infection and contracted in vague terror. Cries would suddenly rise from down there, and one almost wished for them; a loud exclamation was a relief from the everlasting latent excitement. Down there beneath the walls of the city the darkness was always alive; it glided along like a heavy life-stream, flowing slowly among taverns and low music-halls and barracks, with their fateful contents of want and imprecations. Its secret doings inspired him with horror; he hated the town for its darkness which hid so much.

He had stopped in front of his house, and stood gazing downward. Suddenly he heard a sound from within that made him start, and he quickly let himself in. Ellen came out into the passage looking disturbed.

"Thank goodness you've come!" she exclaimed, quite forgetting to greet him. "Anna's so ill!"

"Is it anything serious?" asked Pelle, hurriedly removing his coat.

"It's the old story. I got a carriage from the farm to drive in for the doctor. It was dear, but Brun said I must. She's to have hot milk with Ems salts and soda water. You must warm yourself at the stove before you go up to her, but make haste! She keeps on asking for you."

The sick-room was in semi-darkness, Ellen having put a red shade over the lamp, so that the light should not annoy the child. Brun was sitting on a chair by her bed, watching her intently as she lay muttering in a feverish doze. He made a sign to Pelle to walk quietly. "She's asleep!" he whispered. The old man looked unhappy.

Pelle bent silently over her. She lay with closed eyes, but was not asleep. Her hot breath came in short gasps. As he was about to raise himself again, she opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"What's the matter with Sister? Is she going to be ill again?" he said softly. "I thought the sun had sent that naughty bronchitis away."

The child shook her head resignedly. "Listen to the cellar-man!" she whispered. He was whistling as hard as he could down in her windpipe, and she listened to him with a serious expression. Then her hand stole up and she stroked her father's face as though to comfort him.

Brun, however, put her hand down again immediately and covered her up close. "We very nearly lost that doll!" he said seriously. He had promised her a large doll if she would keep covered up.

"Shall I still get it?" she asked in gasps, gazing at him in dismay.

"Yes, of course you'll get it, and if you make haste and get well, you shall have a carriage too with india rubber tires."

Here Ellen came in. "Mr. Brun," she said, "I've made your room all ready for you." She laid a quieting hand upon the child's anxious face.

The librarian rose unwillingly. "That's to say Mr. Brun is to go to bed," he said half in displeasure. "Well, well, goodnight then! I rely upon your waking me if things become worse."

"How good he is!" said Ellen softly. "He's been sitting here all the time to see that she kept covered up. He's made us afraid to move because she's to be kept quiet; but he can't help chattering to her himself whenever she opens her eyes."

Ellen had moved Lasse Frederik's bed down into their bedroom and

put up her own here so as to watch over the child. “Now you should go to bed,” she said softly to Pelle. “You must be tired to death after your journey, and you can’t have slept last night in the train either.”

He looked tired, but she could not persuade him; he meant to stay up there. “I can’t sleep anyhow as things are,” he whispered, “and to-morrow’s Sunday.”

“Then lie down on my bed! It’ll rest you a little.”

He lay down to please her, and stared up at the ceiling while he listened to the child’s short, rattling respiration. He could hear that she was not asleep. She lay and played with the rattling sound, making the cellar-man speak sometimes with a deep voice, sometimes with a high one. She seemed quite familiar with this dangerous chatter, which had already cost her many hours of illness and sounded so painful to Pelle’s ear. She bore her illness with the wonderful resignation that belonged to the dwellers in the back streets. She did not become unreasonable or exacting, but generally lay and entertained herself. It was as though she felt grateful for her bed; she was always in the best spirits when she was in it. The sun out here had made her very brown, but there must be something in her that it had not prevailed against. It was not so easy to move away from the bad air of the back streets.

Whenever she had a fit of coughing, Pelle raised her into a sitting posture and helped her to get rid of the phlegm. She was purple in the face with coughing, and looked at him with eyes that were almost starting out of her head with the violent exertion. Then Ellen brought her the hot milk and Ems salts, and she drank it with a resigned expression and lay down again.

“It’s never been so bad before,” whispered Ellen, “so what can be the use? Perhaps the country air isn’t good for her.”

“It ought to be though,” said Pelle, “or else she’s a poor little poisoned thing.”

Ellen’s voice rang with the possibility of their moving back again to the town for the sake of the child. To her the town air was not bad, but simply milder than out here. Through several generations she had become accustomed to it and had overcome its injurious effects; to her it seemed good as only the air of home can be. She could live anywhere, but nothing must be said against her childhood’s home. Then she became eager.

The child had wakened with their whispering, and lay and looked at them. “I shan’t die, shall I?” she asked.

They bent over her. “Now you must cover yourself up and not think about such things,” said Ellen anxiously.

But the child continued obstinately. “If I die, will you be as sorry about me as you were about Johanna?” she asked anxiously, with her eyes fixed upon them.

Pelle nodded. It was impossible for him to speak.

“Will you paint the ceiling black to show you’re sorry about me? Will you, father?” she continued inexorably, looking at him.

“Yes, yes!” said Ellen desperately, kissing her lips to make her stop talking. The child turned over contentedly, and in another moment she was asleep.

“She’s not hot now,” whispered Pelle. “I think the fever’s gone.” His face was very grave. Death had passed its cold hand over it; he knew it was only in jest, but he could not shake off the impression it had made.

They sat silent, listening to the child’s breathing, which was now quiet. Ellen had put her hand into Pelle’s, and every now and then she shuddered. They did not move, but simply sat and listened, while the time ran singing on. Then the cock crew below, and roused Pelle. It was three o’clock, and the child had slept for two hours. The lamp had almost burned dry, and he could scarcely see Ellen’s profile in the semi-darkness. She looked tired.

He rose noiselessly and kissed her forehead. “Go downstairs and go to bed,” he whispered, leading her toward the door.

Stealthy footsteps were heard outside. It was Brun who had been down to listen at the door. He had not been to bed at all. The lamp was burning in his sitting-room, and the table was covered with papers. He had been writing.

He became very cheerful when he heard that the attack was over. “I think you ought rather to treat us to a cup of coffee,” he answered, when Ellen scolded him because he was not asleep.

Ellen went down and made the coffee, and they drank it in Brun’s room. The doors were left ajar so that they could hear the child.

“It’s been a long night,” said Pelle, passing his hand across his forehead.

“Yes, if there are going to be more like it, we shall certainly have to move back into town,” said Ellen obstinately.

“It would be a better plan to begin giving her a cold bath in the morning as soon as she’s well again, and try to get her hardened,” said Pelle.

“Do you know,” said Ellen, turning to Brun, “Pelle thinks it’s the bad air and the good air fighting for the child, and that’s the only reason why she’s worse here than in town.”

“So it is,” said Brun gravely; “and a sick child like that gives one something to think about.”

XVIII

The next day they were up late. Ellen did not wake until about ten, and was quite horrified; but when she got up she found the fire on and everything in order, for Lasse Frederik had seen to it all. She could start on breakfast at once.

Sister was quite bright again, and Ellen moved her into the sitting-room and made up a bed on the sofa, where she sat packed in with pillows, and had her breakfast with the others.

"Are you sorry Sister's getting well, old man?" asked Boy Comfort.

"My name isn't 'old man.' It's 'grandfather' or else 'Mr. Brun,'" said the librarian, laughing and looking at Ellen, who blushed.

"Are you sorry Sister's getting well, grandfather?" repeated the boy with a funny, pedantic literalness.

"And why should I be sorry for that, you little stupid?"

"Because you've got to give money!"

"The doll, yes! That's true! You'll have to wait till tomorrow, Sister, because to-day's Sunday."

Anna had eaten her egg and turned the shell upside down in the egg-cup so that it looked like an egg that had not been touched. She pushed it slowly toward Brun.

"What's the matter now?" he exclaimed, pushing his spectacles up onto his forehead. "You haven't eaten your egg!"

"I can't," she said, hanging her head.

"Why, there must be something wrong with her!" said the old man, in amazement. "Such a big, fat egg too! Very well, then *I* must eat it." And he began to crack the egg, Anna and Boy Comfort following his movements with dancing eyes and their hands over their mouths, until his spoon went through the shell and he sprang up to throw it at their heads, when their merriment burst forth. It was a joke that never suffered by repetition.

While breakfast was in progress, the farmer from the hill farm came in to tell them that they must be prepared to move out, as he meant to sell the house. He was one of those farmers of common-land, whom the city had thrown off their balance. He had lived up there and had seen one farm after another grow larger and make their owners into millionaires, and was always expecting that his turn would come. He neglected the land, and even the most abundant harvest was ridiculously small in comparison with his golden dreams; so the fields were allowed to lie and produce weeds.

Ellen was just as dismayed as Pelle at the thought of having to leave "Daybreak." It was their home, their nest too; all their happiness and welfare were really connected with this spot.

"You can buy the house of course," said the farmer. "I've had an offer of fifteen thousand (L850) for it, and I'll let it go for that."

After he had gone they sat and discussed the matter. "It's very cheap," said Brun. "In a year or two you'll have the town spreading in this direction, and then it'll be worth at least twice as much."

"Yes, that may be," said Pelle; "but you've both to get the amount and make it yield interest."

"There's eight thousand (L450) in the first mortgage, and the loan institution will lend half that. That'll make twelve thousand (L675). That leaves three thousand (L175), and I'm not afraid of putting that in as a third mortgage," said Brun.

Pelle did not like that. "There'll be need for your money in the business," he said.

"Yes, yes! But when you put the house into repair and have it re-valued, I'm certain you can get the whole fifteen thousand in the Loan Societies," said Brun. "I think it'll be to your advantage to do it."

Ellen had taken pencil and paper, and was making calculations. "What percentage do you reckon for interest and paying off by instalments?" she asked.

"Five," said the old man. "You do all the work of keeping it up yourselves."

"Then I would venture," she said, looking dauntlessly at them. "It would be nice to own the house ourselves, don't you think so, Pelle?"

"No, I think it's quite mad," Pelle answered. "We shall be saddled with a house-rent of seven hundred and fifty kroner (over £40)."

Ellen was not afraid of the house-rent; the house and garden would bear that. “And in a few years we can sell the ground for building and make a lot of money.” She was red with excitement.

Pelle laughed. “Yes, speculation! Isn’t that what the hill farmer has gone to pieces over?” Pelle had quite enough on his hands and had no desire to have property to struggle with.

But Ellen became only more and more bent upon it. “Then buy it yourself!” said Pelle, laughing. “I’ve no desire to become a millionaire.”

Ellen was quite ready to do it. “But then the house’ll be *mine*,” she declared. “And if I make money on it, I must be allowed to spend it just as I like. It’s not to go into your bottomless common cash-box!” The men laughed.

“Brun and I are going for a walk,” said Pelle, “so we’ll go in and write a contract note for you at once.”

They went down the garden and followed the edge of the hill to the south. The weather was clear; it had changed to slight frost, and white rime covered the fields. Where the low sun’s rays fell upon them, the rime had melted and the withered green grass appeared. “It’s really pretty here,” said Brun. “See how nice the town looks with its towers—only one shouldn’t live there. I was thinking of that last night when the child was lying there with her cough. The work-people really get no share of the sun, nor do those who in other respects are decently well off. And then I thought I’d like to build houses for our people on the ridge of the hill on both sides of ‘Daybreak.’ The people of the new age ought to live in higher and brighter situations than others. I’ll tell you how I thought of doing it. I should in the meantime advance money for the plots, and the business should gradually redeem them with its surplus. That is quite as practical as dividing the surplus among the workmen, and we thereby create values for the enterprise. Talking of surplus—you’ve worked well, Pelle! I made an estimate of it last night and found it’s already about ten thousand (£555) this year. But to return to what we were talking about—mortgage loans are generally able to cover the building expenses, and with amortization the whole thing is unencumbered after some years have passed.”

“Who’s to own it?” asked Pelle. He was chewing a piece of grass and putting his feet down deliberately like a farmer walking on ploughed land.

“The cooperative company. It’s to be so arranged that the houses can’t be made over to others, nor encumbered with fresh loan. Our cooperative enterprises must avoid all form of speculation, thereby limiting the field for capital. The whole thing should be self-supporting and be able to do away with private property within its boundaries. You see it’s your own idea of a community within the community that I’m building upon. At present it’s not easy to find a juridical form under which the whole thing can work itself, but in the meantime you and I will manage it, and Morten if he will join us. I expect he’ll come home with renewed strength.”

“And when is this plan to be realized? Will it be in the near future?”

“This very winter, I had thought; and in this way we should also be able to do a little for the great unemployment. Thirty houses! It would be a beginning anyhow. And behind it lies the whole world, Pelle!”

“Shall you make the occupation of the houses obligatory for our workmen?”

“Yes, cooperation makes it an obligation. You can’t be half outside and half inside! Well, what do you think of it?”

“It’s a strong plan,” said Pelle. “We shall build our own town here on the hill.”

The old man’s face shone with delight. “There’s something in me after all, eh? There’s old business-blood in my veins too. My forefathers built a world for themselves, and why should I do less than they? I ought to have been younger, Pelle!”

They walked round the hill and came to the farm from the other side. “The whole piece wouldn’t really be too large if we’re to have room to extend ourselves,” said Pelle, who was not afraid of a large outlay when it was a question of a great plan.

“I was thinking the same thing,” answered Bran. “How much is there here? A couple of hundred acres? There’ll be room for a thousand families if each of them is to have a fair-sized piece of land.”

They then went in and took the whole for a quarter of a million (£14,000).

“But Ellen!” exclaimed Pelle, when they were on their way home again.

“How are we going to come to terms with her?”

“Bless my soul! Why, it was her business we went upon! And now we’ve done business for ourselves! Well, I suppose she’ll give in when she hears what’s been done.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Pelle, laughing. “Perhaps when you tackle her.”

“Well, did you get the house?” asked Ellen, from the house door, where she was standing to receive them.

“Yes, we got much more,” said Brun airily. “We bought the whole concern.”

“Is that a fact, Pelle?”

Pelle nodded.

“What about my house then?” she asked slowly.

“Well, we bought that together with all the rest,” said Brun. “But as far as that goes it can easily be separated from the rest, only it’s rather soon to break up the cooperation before it’s started.” He waited a little, expecting that Ellen would say something, and when she continued silent he went on, rather shortly: “Well, then there’s nothing more to be said about that? Fair play’s a jewel, and to-morrow I’ll make arrangements for the conveyance of the house to you for the fifteen thousand (£850). And then we must give up the whole concern, Pelle. It won’t do for the man at the head of it to live on his private property; so that plan’s come to nothing!”

“Unless Ellen and I live in separate houses,” said Pelle slyly. “I might build just the other side of the boundary, and then we could nod to one another at any rate.”

Ellen looked at him gravely. “I only think it’s rather strange that you settle my affairs without asking me first,” she said at length.

“Yes, it was inconsiderate of us,” answered Brun, “and we hope you’ll forget all about it. You’ll give up the house then?”

“I’m pretty well obliged to when Pelle threatens to move out,” Ellen answered with a smile. “But I’m sorry about it. I’m certain that in a short time there’d have been money to make over it.”

“It’ll be nice, won’t it, if the women are going to move into our forsaken snail-shells?” said Brun half seriously.

“Ellen’s always been an incorrigible capitalist,” Pelle put in.

“It’s only that I’ve never had so much money that I shouldn’t know what it was worth,” answered Ellen, with ready wit.

Old Brun laughed. “That was one for Mr. Brun!” he said. “But since you’ve such a desire for land-speculation, Mistress Ellen, I’ve got a suggestion to make. On the ground we’ve bought there’s a piece of meadow that lies halfway in to town, by the bog. We’ll give you that. It’s not worth anything at present, and will have to be filled in to be of any value; but it won’t be very long before the town is out there wanting more room.”

Ellen had no objection to that. “But then,” she said, “I must be allowed to do what I like with what comes out of it.”

XIX

The sun held out well that year. Remnants of summer continued to hang in the air right into December. Every time they had bad weather Ellen said, “Now it’ll be winter, I’m sure!” But the sun put it aside once more; it went far down in the south and looked straight into the whole sitting- room, as if it were going to count the pictures.

The large yellow Gloire de Dijon went on flowering, and every day Ellen brought in a large, heavy bunch of roses and red leaves. She was heavy herself, and the fresh cold nipped her nose—which was growing sharper— and reddened her cheeks. One day she brought a large bunch to Pelle, and asked him: “How much money am I going to get to keep Christmas with?”

It was true! The year was almost ended!

After the new year winter began in earnest. It began with much snow and frost, and made it a difficult matter to keep in communication with the outside world, while indoors people drew all the closer to one another. Anna should really have been going to school now, but she suffered a good deal from the cold and was altogether not very strong, so Pelle and Ellen dared not expose her to the long wading through the snow, and taught her themselves.

Ellen had become a little lazy about walking, and seldom went into town; the two men made the purchases for her in the evening on their way home. It was a dull time, and no work was done by artificial light, so they were home early. Ellen had changed the dinner-hour to five, so that they could all have it together. After dinner Brun generally went upstairs to work for another couple of hours. He was busy working out projects for the building on the Hill Farm land, and gave himself no rest. Pelle’s wealth of ideas and energy infected him, and his plans grew and assumed ever-increasing dimensions. He gave no consideration to his weak frame, but rose early and worked all day at the affairs of the coöperative works. He seemed to be vying with Pelle’s youth, and to be in constant fear that something would come up behind him and interrupt his work.

The other members of the family gathered round the lamp, each with some occupation. Boy Comfort had his toy-table put up and was hammering indefatigably with his little wooden mallet upon a piece of stuff that Ellen had put between to prevent his marking the table. He was a sturdy little fellow, and the fat lay in creases round his wrists. The wrinkles on his forehead gave him a funny look when one did not recall the fact that he had cost his mother her life. He looked as if he knew it himself, he was so serious. He had leave to sit up for a little while with the others, but he went to bed at six.

Lasse Frederik generally drew when he was finished with his lessons. He had a turn for it, and Pelle, wondering, saw his own gift, out of which nothing had ever come but the prison, repeated in the boy in an improved form. He showed him the way to proceed, and held the pencil once more in his own hand. His chief occupation, however, was teaching little Anna, and telling her anything that might occur to him. She was especially fond of hearing about animals, and Pelle had plenty of reminiscences of his herding-time from which to draw.

“Have animals really intelligence?” asked Ellen, in surprise. “You really believe that they think about things just as we do?”

It was nothing new to Sister; she talked every day to the fowls and rabbits, and knew how wise they were.

“I wonder if flowers can think too,” said Lasse Frederik. He was busy drawing a flower from memory, and it *would* look like a face: hence the remark.

Pelle thought they could.

“No, no, Pelle!” said Ellen. “You’re going too far now! It’s only us people who can think.”

“They can feel at any rate, and that’s thinking in a way, I suppose, only with the heart. They notice at once if you’re fond of them; if you aren’t they don’t thrive.”

“Yes, I do believe that, for if you’re fond of them you take good care of them,” said the incorrigible Ellen.

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Pelle, looking at her teasingly. “You’re very fond of your balsam, but a gardener would be sure to tell you that you treat it like a cabbage. And look how industriously it flowers all the same. They answer kind thoughts with gratitude, and that’s a nice way of

thinking. Intelligence isn't perhaps worth as much as we human beings imagine it to be. You yourself think with your heart, little mother." It was his pet name for her just now.

After a little interlude such as this, they went on with their work. Pelle had to tell Sister all about the animals in her alphabet-book— about the useful cow and the hare that licked the dew off the clover and leaped up under the very nose of the cowherd. In the winter it went into the garden, gnawed the bark off the young trees and ate the farmer's wife's cabbage. "Yes, I must acknowledge that," Ellen interposed, and then they all laughed, for puss had just eaten her kail.

Then the child suddenly left the subject, and wanted to know whether there had always, always been a Copenhagen. Pelle came to a standstill for a moment, but by a happy inspiration dug Bishop Absalom out of his memory. He took the opportunity of telling them that the capital had a population of half a million.

"Have you counted them, father?" exclaimed Sister, in perplexity, taking hold of his sleeve.

"Why, of course father hasn't, you little donkey!" said Lasse Frederik. "One might be born while he was counting!"

Then they were at the cock again, which both began and ended the book. He stood and crowed so proudly and never slept. He was a regular prig, but when Sister was diligent he put a one-öre piece among the leaves. But the hens laid eggs, and it was evident that they were the same as the flowers; for when you were kind to them and treated them as if they belonged to the family, they were industrious in laying, but if you built a model house for them and treated them according to all established rules, they did not even earn as much as would pay for their food. At Uncle Kalle's there was a hen that came into the room among all the children and laid its egg under the bed every single day all through the winter, when no other hens were laying. Then the farmer of Stone Farm bought it to make something by it. He gave twenty kroner (a guinea) for it and thought he had got a gold mine; but no sooner did it come to Stone Farm than it left off laying winter eggs, for there it was not one of the family, but was only a hen that they wanted to make money out of.

"Mother's balsam flowers all the winter," said Sister, looking fondly at the plant.

"Yes, that's because it sees how industrious we all are," said Lasse Frederik mischievously.

"Will you be quiet!" said Pelle, hitting out at him.

Ellen sat knitting some tiny socks. Her glance moved lingeringly from one to another of them, and she smiled indulgently at their chatter. They were just a lot of children!

"Mother, may I have those for my doll?" asked Anna, taking up the finished sock.

"No, little sister's to have them when she comes."

"If it *is* a girl," put in Lasse Frederik.

"When's little sister coming?"

"In the spring when the stork comes back to the farm; he'll bring her with him."

"Pooh! The stork!" said Lasse Frederik contemptuously. "What a pack of nonsense!"

Sister too was wiser than that. When the weather was fine she fetched milk from the farm, and had learned a few things there.

"Now you must go to bed, my child," said Ellen, rising. "I can see you're tired." When she had helped the child into bed she came back and sat down again with her knitting.

"Now I think you should leave off work for to-day," said Pelle.

"Then I shouldn't be ready in time," answered Ellen, moving her knitting-needles more swiftly.

"Send it to a machine-knitter. You don't even earn your bread anyhow with that handicraft; and there must be a time for work and a time for rest, or else you'd not be a human being."

"Mother can make three öre (nearly a halfpenny) an hour by knitting," said Lasse Frederik, who had made a careful calculation.

What did it matter? Ellen did not think she neglected anything else in doing it.

"It is stupid though!" exclaimed Lasse Frederik suddenly. "Why doesn't wool grow on one's legs? Then you'd have none of the bother of shearing the wool off sheep, carding it, spinning it, and knitting stockings."

“Oh, what nonsense you’re talking!” said Ellen, laughing.

“Well, men were hairy once,” Lasse Frederik continued. “It was a great pity that they didn’t go on being it!”

Pelle did not think it such a pity, for it meant that they had taken over the care of themselves. Animals were born fully equipped. Even water-haters like cats and hens were born with the power of swimming; but men had to acquire whatever they had a use for. Nature did not equip them, because they had become responsible for themselves; they were the lords of creation.

“But then the poor ought to be hairy all over their bodies,” Ellen objected. “Why doesn’t Nature take as much care of the poor as of the animals? They can’t do it themselves.”

“Yes, but that’s just what they *can* do!” said Pelle, “for it’s they who produce most things. Perhaps you think it’s money that cultivates the land, or weaves materials, or drags coal out of the earth? It had to leave that alone; all the capital in the world can’t so much as pick up a pin from the ground if there are no hands that it can pay to do it. If the poor were born hairy, it would simply stamp him as an inferior being. Isn’t it a wonder that Nature obstinately lets the poor men’s children be born just as naked as the king’s, in spite of all that we’ve gone through of want and hardship? If you exchange the prince’s and the beggar’s new-born babies, no one can say which is which. It’s as if Providence was never tired of holding our stamp of nobility up before us.”

“Do you really think then that the world can be transformed?” said Ellen, looking affectionately at him. It seemed so wonderful that this Pelle, whom she could take in her arms, occupied himself with such great matters. And Pelle looked back at her affectionately and wonderingly. She was the same to-day as on the day he first got to know her, perhaps as the day the world was created! She put nothing out on usury, but had been born with all she had. The world could indeed be transformed, but she would always remain as she was.

The post brought a letter from Morten. He was staying at present in Sicily, and thought of travelling along the north coast of Africa to the south of Spain. “And I may make an excursion in to the borders of the Desert, and try what riding on a camel is like,” he wrote. He was well and in good spirits. It was strange to think that he was writing with open doors, while here they were struggling with the cold. He drank wine at every meal just as you drank pale ale here at home; and he wrote that the olive and orange harvests were just over.

“It must be lovely to be in such a place just for once!” said Ellen, with a sigh.

“When the new conditions gain a footing, it’ll no longer be among unattainable things for the working-man,” Pelle answered.

Brun now came down, having at last finished his work. “Ah, it’s good to be at home!” he said, shaking himself; “it’s a stormy night.”

“Here’s a letter from Morten,” said Pelle, handing it to him.

The old man put on his spectacles.

XX

As soon as it was possible to get at the ground, the work of excavating for the foundations of the new workmen's houses was begun with full vigor. Brun took a great interest in the work, and watched it out in the cold from morning till evening. He wore an extra great-coat, and woollen gloves outside his fur-lined ones. Ellen had knitted him a large scarf, which he was to wrap round his mouth. She kept an eye on him from the windows, and had to fetch him in every now and then to thaw him. It was quite impossible, however, to keep him in; he was far too eager for the work to progress. When the frost stopped it, he still wandered about out there, fidgety and in low spirits.

On weekdays Pelle was never at home in daylight, but on Sunday he had to go out with him and see what had been done, as soon as day dawned. The old man came and knocked at Pelle's door. "Well, Pelle!" he said. "Will you soon be out of bed?"

"He must really be allowed to lie there while he has his coffee!" cried Ellen from the kitchen.

Brun ran once round the house to pass the time. He was not happy until he had shown it all to Pelle and got him to approve of the alterations. This was where he had thought the road should go. And there, where the roads crossed, a little park with statuary would look nice. New ideas were always springing up. The librarian's imagination conjured up a whole town from the bare fields, with free schools and theaters and comfortable dwellings for the aged. "We must have a supply association and a school at once," he said; "and by degrees, as our numbers increase, we shall get all the rest. A poor-house and a prison are the only things I don't think we shall have any use for."

They would spend the whole morning out there, walking about and laying plans. Ellen had to fetch them in when dinner-time came. She generally found them standing over some hole in earnest conversation—just an ordinary, square hole in the earth, with mud or ice at the bottom. Such holes were always dug for houses; but these two talked about them as if they were the beginning of an entirely new earth!

Brun missed Pelle during the day, and watched for him quite as eagerly as Ellen when the time came for him to return from work. "I shall soon be quite jealous of him," said Ellen, as she drew Pelle into the kitchen to give him her evening greeting in private. "If he could he'd take you quite away from me."

When Pelle had been giving a lecture, he generally came home after Brun had gone to rest, and in the morning when he left home the old man was not up. Brun never went to town. He laid the blame on the weather, but in reality he did not know what he would do with himself in there. But if a couple of days passed without his seeing Pelle, he became restless, lost interest in the excavating, and wandered about feebly without doing anything. Then he would suddenly put on his boots, excuse himself with some pressing errand, and set off over the fields toward the tram, while Ellen stood at the window watching him with a tender smile. She knew what was drawing him!

One would have thought there were ties of blood between these two, so dependent were they on one another. "How's the old man?" was Pelle's first question on entering; and Brun could not have followed Pelle's movements with tenderer admiration in his old days if he had been his father. While Pelle was away the old man went about as if he were always looking for something.

Ellen did not like his being out among the navvies in all kinds of weather. In the evening the warmth of the room affected his lungs and made him cough badly.

"It'll end in a regular cold," she said. She wanted him to stay in bed for a few days and try to get rid of the cold before it took a firm hold.

It was a constant subject of argument between them, but Ellen did not give in until she got her way. When once he had made this concession to the cold, it came on in earnest. The warmth of bed thawed the cold out of his body and made both eyes and nose run.

"It's a good thing we got you to bed in time," said Ellen. "And now you won't be allowed up until the worst cold weather is over, even if I have to hide your clothes." She tended him like a child and made "camel tea" for him from flowers that she had gathered and dried in the summer.

When once he had gone to bed he quite liked it and took delight in being waited on, discovering a need of all kinds of things, so as to receive them from Ellen's hands.

“Now you’re making yourself out worse than you are!” she said, laughing at him.

Brun laughed too. “You see, I’ve never been petted before,” he said. “From the time I was born, my parents hired people to look after me; that’s why I’m so shrivelled up. I’ve had to buy everything. Well, there’s a certain amount of justice in the fact that money kills affection, or else you’d both eat your cake and have it.”

“Yes, it’s a good thing the best can’t be had for money,” said Ellen, tucking the clothes about his feet. He was propped up with pillows, so that he could lie there and work. He had a map of the Hill Farm land beside him, and was making plans for a systematic laying out of the ground for building. He wrote down his ideas about it in a book that was to be appended to the plans. He worked from sunrise until the middle of the day, and during that time it was all that Ellen could do to keep the children away from him; Boy Comfort was on his way up to the old man every few minutes.

In the afternoon, when she had finished in the kitchen, she took the children up for an hour. They were given a picture-book and were placed at Brun’s large writing-table, while Ellen seated herself by the window with her knitting and talked to the old man. From her seat she could follow the work out on the field, and had to give him a full description of how far they had got with each plot.

There were always several hundred men out there standing watching the work—a shivering crowd that never diminished. They were unemployed who had heard that something was going on out here, and long before the dawn of day they were standing there in the hope of coming in for something. All day they streamed in and out, an endless chain of sad men. They resembled prisoners condemned hopelessly to tread a huge wheel; there was a broad track across the fields where they went.

Brun was troubled by the thought of these thousands of men who came all this way to look for a day’s work and had to go back with a refusal. “We can’t take more men on than there are already,” he said to Pelle, “or they’ll only get in one another’s way. But perhaps we could begin to carry out some of our plans for the future. Can’t we begin to make roads and such like, so that these men can get something to do?”

No, Pelle dared not agree to that.

“In the spring we shall want capital to start the tanners with a cooperative tannery,” he said. “It’ll be agreed on in their Union at an early date, on the presupposition that we contribute money; and I consider it very important to get it started. Our opponents find fault with us for getting our materials from abroad. It’s untenable in the long run, and must come to an end now. As it is, the factory’s hanging in the air; they can cut us off from the supply of materials, and then we’re done. But if we only have our own tannery, the one business can be carried out thoroughly and can’t be smashed up, and then we’re ready to meet a lock-out in the trade.”

“The hides!” interpolated Brun.

“There we come to agriculture. That’s already arranged coöperatively, and will certainly not be used against us. We must anyhow join in there as soon as ever we get started—buy cattle and kill, ourselves, so that besides the hides we provide ourselves with good, cheap meat.”

“Yes, yes, but the tannery won’t swallow everything! We can afford to do some road-making.”

“No, we can’t!” Pelle declared decisively. “Remember we’ve also got to think of the supply associations, or else all our work is useless; the one thing leads to the other. There’s too much depending on what we’re doing, and we mustn’t hamper our undertaking with dead values that will drag it down. First the men and then the roads! The unemployed to-day must take care of themselves without our help.”

“You’re a little hard, I think,” said Brun, somewhat hurt at Pelle’s firmness, and drumming on the quilt with his fingers.

“It’s not the first time that I’ve been blamed for it in this connection,” answered Pelle gravely; “but I must put up with it.”

The old man held out his hand. “I beg your pardon! It wasn’t my intention to find fault with you because you don’t act thoughtlessly. Of course we mustn’t give up the victory out of sympathy with those who fight. It was only a momentary weakness, but a weakness that might spoil everything—that I must admit! But it’s not so easy to be a passive spectator of these topsy-turvy conditions. It’s affirmed that the workmen prefer to receive a starvation allowance to doing any work; and judging by what they’ve hitherto got out of their work it’s easy to understand

that it's true. But during the month that the excavations here have been going on, at least a thousand unemployed have come every day ready to turn to; and we pay them for refraining from doing anything! They can at a pinch receive support, but at no price obtain work. It's as insane as it's possible to be! You feel you'd like to give the machinery a little push and set it going again."

"It wants a good big push," said Pelle. "They're not trifles that are in the way."

"They look absurdly small, at any rate. The workmen are not in want because they're out of work, as our social economists want us to believe; but they're out of work because they're in want. What a putting of the cart before the horse! The procession of the unemployed is a disgrace to the community; what a waste—also from a purely mercantile point of view—while the country and the nation are neglected! If a private business were conducted on such principles, it would be doomed from the very first."

"If the pitiable condition arose only from a wrong grasp of things, it would be easily corrected," said Pelle; "but the people who settle the whole thing can't at any rate be charged with a lack of mercantile perception. It would be a good thing if they had the rest in as good order! Believe me, not a sparrow falls to the ground unless it is to the advantage of the money-power; if it paid, in a mercantile sense, to have country and people in perfect order, it would take good care that they were so. But it simply can't be done; the welfare of the many and the accumulation of property by the few are irreconcilable contradictions. I think there is a wonderful balance in humanity, so that at any time it can produce exactly enough to satisfy all its requirements; and when one claims too much, others let go. It's on that understanding indeed that we want to remove the others and take over the management."

"Yes, yes! I didn't mean that I wanted to protect the existing state of affairs. Let those who make the venture take the responsibility. But I've been wondering whether *we* couldn't find a way to gather up all this waste so that it should benefit the cooperative works?"

"How could we? We *can't* afford to give occupation to the unemployed."

"Not for wages! But both the Movement and the community have begun to support them, and what would be more natural than that one required work of them in return? Only, remember, letting it benefit them!"

"You mean that, for instance, unemployed bricklayers and carpenters should build houses for the workmen?" asked Pelle, with animation.

"Yes, as an instance. But the houses should be ensured against private speculation, in the same way as those we're building, and always belong to the workmen. As *we* can't be suspected of trying to make profits, we should be suitable people for its management, and it would help on the cooperative company. In that way the refuse of former times would fertilize the new seed."

Pelle sat lost in thought, and the old man lay and looked at him in suspense. "Well, are you asleep?" he asked at last impatiently.

"It's a fine idea," said Pelle, raising his head. "I think we should get the organizations on our side; they're already beginning to be interested in cooperation. When the committee sits, I'll lay your plan before them. I'm not so sure of the community, however, Brun! They have occasional use for the great hunger-reserve, so they'll go on just keeping life in it; if they hadn't, it would soon be allowed to die of hunger. I don't think they'll agree to have it employed, so to speak, against themselves."

"You're an incorrigible pessimist!" said Brun a little irritably.

"Yes, as regards the old state of things," answered Pelle, with a smile.

Thus they would discuss the possibilities for the fixture in connection with the events of the day when Pelle sat beside the old man in the evening, both of them engrossed in the subject. Sometimes the old man felt that he ran off the lines. "It's the blood," he said despondently. "I'm not, after all, quite one of you. It's so long since one of my family worked with his hands that I've forgotten it."

During this time he often touched upon his past, and every evening had something to tell about himself. It was as though he were determined to find a law that would place him by Pelle's side.

Brun belonged to an old family that could be traced back several hundred years to the captain of a ship, who traded with the Tranquebar coast. The founder of the family, who was also a whaler and a pirate, lived in a house on one of the Kristianshavn canals. When his ship was at

home, she lay to at the wharf just outside his street-door. The Bruns' house descended from father to son, and was gradually enlarged until it became quite a mansion. In the course of four generations it had become one of the largest trading-houses of the capital. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the members of the family had gone over into the world of stockbrokers and bankers, and thence the changes went still further. Brun's father, the well-known Kornelius Brun, stuck to the old business, his brothers making over their share to him and entering the diplomatic service, one of them receiving a high Court appointment.

Kornelius Brun felt it his duty to carry on the old business, and in order to keep on a level with his brothers as regarded rank, he married a lady of noble birth from Funen, of a very old family heavily burdened with debt. She bore him three children, all of whom—as he himself said — were failures. The first child was a deaf mute with very small intellectual powers. It fortunately died before it attained to man's estate. Number two was very intelligent and endowed with every talent, but even as a boy exhibited perverse tendencies. He was very handsome, had soft, dark hair, and a delicate, womanish complexion. His mother dressed him in velvet, and idolized him. He never did anything useful, but went about in fine company and spent large sums of money. In his fortieth year he died suddenly, a physical and moral wreck. The announcement of the death gave a stroke as the cause; but the truth was that rumors had begun to circulate of a scandal in which he was implicated together with some persons of high standing. It was at the end of the seventies, at the time when the lower class movement began to gather way. An energetic investigation was demanded from below, and it was considered inadvisable to hush the story up altogether, for fear of giving support to the assertion of the rottenness and onesidedness of the existing conditions. When an investigation became imminent, and it was evident that Brun would be offered up upon the altar of the multitude in order to shield those who stood higher, Kornelius Brun put a pistol into his son's hand—or shot him; the librarian was unable to say which.

"Those were two of the fruits upon the decaying family tree," said Brun bitterly, "and it can't be denied that they were rather worm-eaten. The third was myself. I came fifteen years after my youngest brother. By that time my parents had had enough of their progeny; at any rate, I was considered from the beginning to be a hopeless failure, even before I had had an opportunity of showing anything at all. Perhaps they felt instinctively that I should take a wrong direction too. In me too the disintegrating forces predominated; I was greatly deficient, for instance, in family feeling. I remember when still quite little hearing my mother complain of my plebeian tendencies; I always kept with the servants, and took their part against my parents. My family looked more askance at me for upholding the rights of our inferiors than they had done at the idiot who tore everything to pieces, or the spendthrift who made scandals and got into debt. And I dare say with good reason! Mother gave me plenty of money to amuse myself with, probably to counteract my plebeian tendencies; but I had soon done with the pleasures and devoted myself to study. Things of the day did not interest me, but even as a boy I had a remarkable desire to look back; I devoted myself especially to history and its philosophy. Father was right when he derided me and called it going into a monastery; at an age when other young men are lovers, I could not find any woman that interested me, while almost any book tempted me to a closer acquaintance. For a long time he hoped that I would think better of it and take over the business, and when I definitely chose study, it came to a quarrel between us. 'When the business comes to an end, there's an end of the family!' he said, and sold the whole concern. He had been a widower then for several years, and had only me; but during the five years that he lived after selling the business we didn't see one another. He hated me because I didn't take it over, but what could I have done with it? I possessed none of the qualities necessary for the carrying on of business in our day, and should only have ruined the whole thing. From the time I was thirty, my time has been passed among bookshelves, and I've registered the lives and doings of others. It's only now that I've come out into the daylight and am beginning to live my own life; and now it'll soon be ended!"

"It's only now that life's beginning to be worth living," said Pelle, "so you've come out just at the right time."

"Ah, no!" said Brun despondently. "I'm not in the ascendant! I meet young men and my mind inclines to them; but it's like evening and morning meeting in the same glow during the light nights. I've only got my share in the new because the old must bend to it, so that the ring may be completed. You go in where I go out."

“It must have been a melancholy existence to be always among books, books, without a creature that cared for you,” put in Ellen. “Why didn’t you marry? Surely we women aren’t so terrible that there mightn’t have been *one* that you liked?”

“No, you’d think not, but it’s true nevertheless,” answered Brun, with a smile. “The antipathy was mutual too; it’s always like that. I suppose it wasn’t intended that an old fellow like me should put children into the world! It’s not nice, though, to be the end of something.”

Ellen laughed. “Yes, but you haven’t always been old!”

“Yes, I have really; I was born old. I’m only now beginning to feel young. And who knows?” he exclaimed with grim humor. “I may play Providence a trick and make my appearance some day with a little wife on my arm.”

“Brun’s indulging in fancies,” said Pelle, as they went down to bed. “But I suppose they’ll go when he’s about again.”

“He’s not had much of a time, poor old soul!” said Ellen, going closer to Pelle. “It’s a shame that there are people who get no share in all the love there is—just as great a shame as what you’re working against, I think!”

“Yes, but we can’t put that straight!” exclaimed Pelle, laughing.

XXI

In the garden at “Daybreak” the snow was disappearing from day to day. First it went away nearest the house, and gave place to a little forest of snowdrops and crocuses. The hyacinths in the grass began to break through the earth, coming up like a row of knuckles that first knocked at the door.

The children were always out watching the progress made. They could not understand how the delicate crocus could push straight up out of the frozen ground without freezing to death, but died when it came into the warm room. Every day they wrapped some snowdrops in paper and laid them on Brun’s table—they were “snowdrop-letters”—and then hovered about in ungovernable excitement until he came in from the fields, when they met him with an air of mystery, and did all they could to entice him upstairs.

Out in the fields they were nearly finished with the excavations, and were only waiting for the winter water to sink in order to cart up gravel and stone and begin the foundations; the ground was too soft as yet.

Old Brun was not so active now after his confinement to bed; although there was not much the matter with him, it had weakened him. He allowed Pelle a free hand with the works, and said Yea and Amen to everything he proposed. “I can’t keep it all in my head,” he would say when Pelle came to suggest some alteration; “but just do as you like, my son, and it’s sure to be right.” There were not enough palpable happenings down there to keep his mind aglow, and he was too old to hear it grow and draw strength from that. His faith, however, merely shifted from the Cause over to Pelle; he saw him alive before him, and could lean upon his youthful vigor.

He had given up his work on the plans. He could not keep at it, and contented himself with going the round of the fields two or three times a day and watching the men. The sudden flame of energy that Pelle’s youth had called to life within him had died down, leaving a pathetic old man, who had been out in the cold all his life, and was now luxuriating in a few late rays of evening sun. He no longer measured himself by Pelle, and was not jealous of his taking the lead in anything, but simply admired him and kept carefully within the circle of those for whom Pelle acted providence. Ellen treated him like a big child who needed a great deal of care, and the children of course looked upon him as their equal.

When he went his round of the fields, he generally had Boy Comfort by the hand; the two could both keep pace with one another and converse together. There was one thing that interested them both and kept them in great excitement. The stork was expected every day back at the Hill Farm, and when it came it would bring a baby to Mother Ellen. The expectation was not an unmixed pleasure. The stork always bit the mother in the leg when he came with a baby for her. Boy Comfort’s own mother died of the bite; he was wise enough to know that now. The little fellow looked upon Ellen as his mother, and went about in a serious, almost depressed, mood. He did not talk to the other children of his anxiety, for fear they would make fun of him; but when he and the old man walked together in the fields they discussed the matter, and Brun, as the older and wiser, came to the conclusion that there was no danger. All the same, they always kept near the house so as to be at hand.

One day Pelle stayed at home from work, and Ellen did not get up as usual. “I’m going to lie here and wait for the stork,” she said to Boy Comfort. “Go out and watch for it.” The little boy took a stick, and he and Brun tramped round the house; and when they heard Ellen cry out, they squeezed one another’s hands. It was such a disturbed day, it was impossible to keep anything going straight; now a carriage drove up to the door with a fat woman in it, now it was Lasse Frederik who leaped upon his bicycle and raced down the field-path, standing on the pedals. Before Boy Comfort had any idea of it, the stork had been there, and Ellen was lying with a baby boy on her arm. He and Brun went in together to congratulate her, and they were both equally astonished. The old man had to be allowed to touch the baby’s cheek.

“He’s still so ugly,” said Ellen, with a shy smile, as she lifted the corner of the shawl from the baby’s head. Then she had to be left quiet, and Brun took Boy Comfort upstairs with him.

Pelle sat on the edge of the bed, holding Ellen’s hand, which in a few hours had become white and thin. “Now we must send for ‘Queen Theresa,’” she said.

“Shan’t we send for your mother too?” asked Pelle, who had often proposed that they should take the matter into their own hands, and go

and see the old people. He did not like keeping up old quarrels.

Ellen shook her head. “They must come of their own accord,” she said decidedly. She did not mind for herself, but they had looked down upon Pelle, so it was not more than fair that they should come and make it up.

“But I *have* sent for them,” said Pelle. “That was what Lasse Frederik went about. You mustn’t have a baby without help from your mother.”

In less than a couple of hours Madam Stolpe had arrived. She was much moved, and to hide it she began turning the house inside out for clean cloths and binders, scolding all the time. A nice time, indeed, to send for anybody, when it was all over!

Father Stolpe was harder. He was not one to come directly he was whistled for! But two or three evenings after the baby had arrived, Pelle ran up against him hanging about a little below the house. Well, he was waiting for mother, to take her home, and it didn’t concern anybody else, he supposed. He pretended to be very determined, but it was comparatively easy to persuade him to come in; and once in, it was not long before Ellen had thawed him. She had, as usual, her own manner of procedure.

“Let me tell you, father, that it’s not me that sent for you, but Pelle; and if you don’t give him your hand and say you’ve done him an injustice, we shall never be good friends again!”

“Upon my word, she’s the same confounded way of taking the bull by the horns that she always had!” said Stolpe, without looking at her. “Well, I suppose I may as well give in at once, and own that I’ve played the fool. Shall we agree to let bygones be bygones, son-in-law?” extending his hand to Pelle.

When once the reconciliation was effected, Stolpe became quite cheerful. “I never dreamt I should see you so soon, least of all with a baby!” he said contentedly, stroking Ellen’s face with his rough hand.

“No, she’s always been his darling, and father’s often been tired of it,” said Madam Stolpe. “But men make themselves so hard!”

“Rubbish, mother!” growled Stolpe. “Women will always talk nonsense!”

Time had left its mark upon them both. There had been a certain amount of unemployment in his trade, and Stolpe was getting on in years and had a difficulty in keeping up with the young men on the scaffolding. Their clothes showed that they were not so prosperous as formerly; but Stolpe was still chairman of his trade union and a highly respected man within the Movement.

“And now, my boy,” he said suddenly, placing his hands on Pelle’s shoulders, “you must explain to me what it is you’re doing this time. I hear you’ve begun to stir up men’s feelings again.”

Pelle told him about his great plan for coöperative works. The old man knew indeed a good deal about it; it appeared that he had followed Pelle’s movements from a distance.

“That’s perhaps not so out of the way,” he said. “We might squeeze capital out of existence just as quietly, if we all bestirred ourselves. But you must get the Movement to join you; and it must be made clear that every one who doesn’t support his own set is a black-leg.”

“*I have* got a connection, but it goes rather slowly,” said Pelle.

“Then we must stir them up a little. I say, that queer fellow—Brun, I think you call him—doesn’t he live with you?”

“He isn’t a queer fellow,” said Pelle, laughing. “We can go up and see him.”

Brun and Stolpe very soon found something to talk about. They were of the same age, and had witnessed the first days of the Movement, each from his own side. Madam Stolpe came several times and pulled her husband by the coat: they ought to be going home.

“Well, it’s not worth while to quarrel with your own wife,” said Stolpe at last; “but I shall come again. I hear you’re building out here, and I should like to see what our own houses’ll be like.”

“We’ve not begun yet,” answered Pelle. “But come out on Sunday, and Brun and I will show it all to you.”

“I suppose it’s masters who’ll get it?” asked Stolpe.

“No, we thought of letting the unemployed have the work if they could undertake it, and have a man to put at the head,” said Brun. “Perhaps you could undertake it?”

“Why, of course I can!” answered Stolpe, with a feeling of his own importance. “I’m the man to build houses for workmen! I was member of the party when it numbered only one man.”

“Yes, Stolpe’s the veteran of the Movement,” said Pelle.

“Upon my word, it’d be awfully nice if it was me!” exclaimed Stolpe when Pelle accompanied the old couple down to the tram. “I’ll get together a set of workmen that have never been equalled. And what houses we shall put up! There won’t be much papier-mâché there!”

XXII

It still sometimes happened that Pelle awoke in the night not knowing where he was. He was oppressed with a stifling anxiety, dreaming that he was in prison, and fancying he could still smell the rank, mouldy odor of the cell. He gradually came to his senses and knew where he was; the sounds of breathing around him, and the warm influence of the darkness itself, brought him back to his home. He sat up joyfully, and struck a match to get a glimpse of Ellen and the little ones. He dared not go to sleep again, for sleep would instantly take him back to the prison; so he dressed quietly and stole out to see the day awaken.

It was strange with these dreams, for they turned everything upside down. In the prison he always dreamed he was free and living happily; nothing less would do there. There the day was bad and the night good, and here it was the reverse. It was as though something within one would always have everything. “That must be the soul!” he thought as he wandered eastward to meet the first gleam of day. In the country at home, the old people in his childhood believed that dreams were the soul wandering about by itself; some had seen it as a white mouse creeping out of the sleeper’s mouth to gather fresh experiences for him. It was true, too, that through dreams the poor man had hitherto had everything; they carried him out of his prison. Perhaps the *roles* were exchanged during the darkness of night. Perhaps the rich man’s soul came during the night and slipped into the poor man’s body to gather suffering for his master.

There was spring in the air. As yet it was only perceptible to Pelle in a feeling of elation, a desire to expand and burst all boundaries. He walked with his face toward the opening day, and had a feeling of unconquerable power. Whence this feeling came he knew not, but it was there. He felt himself as something immense that was shut into a small space and would blow up the world if it were let loose. He walked on quickly. Above his head rose the first lark. Slowly the earth drew from its face the wonderful veil of rest and mystery that was night.

Perhaps the feeling of strength came from his having taken possession of his spirit and commanding a view of the world. The world had no limits, but neither had his powers; the force that could throw him out of his course did not exist. In his own footfall he heard the whole future; the Movement would soon be concluded when it had taken in the fact that the whole thing must be included. There was still a little difficulty; from that side they still made it a condition for their cooperation that Pelle should demand a public recognition of his good character. Pelle laughed and raised his face to the morning breeze which came like a cold shiver before the sunrise. Outsider! Yes, there was some truth in it. He did not belong to the existing state of things; he desired no civil rights there. That he was outside was his stamp of nobility; his relations to the future were contained in that fact. He had begun the fight as one of the lowest of the people, and as such he would triumph. When he rose there should no longer be a pariah caste.

As he walked along with the night behind him and his face to the light, he seemed to have just entered into youth with everything before him—everything to look forward to! And yet he seemed to have existed since the morning of time, so thoroughly did he know the world of darkness that he left. Was not man a wonderful being, both in his power to shrink up and become nothing, and in his power to expand and fill everything? He now understood Uncle Kalle’s smile on all occasions; he had armed himself with it in order that life should not draw too deep furrows in his gentle nature. The poor man had been obliged to dull himself; he would simply bleed to death if he gave himself up to stern reality. The dullness had been like a hard shell that protected the poor; and now they came with their heart quite safe in spite of everything. They could very well lead when times were good.

Pelle had always a vague feeling of being chosen. Even as a child it made him look with courage in the face of a hard world, and filled his bare limbs with elasticity. Poor and naked he came into the world, apparently without a gift of any kind; and yet he came as a bright promise to the elderly, work-bowed Father Lasse. Light radiated from him, insignificant and ordinary though he was; God had given him the spark, the old man always said, and he always looked upon the boy as a little miracle of heaven. The boy Pelle wondered a little at it, but was happy in his father’s pleasure. He himself knew some very different miracles at that time, for instance the calf of the fair with two heads, and the lamb with eight legs. He had his own demands to make of life’s

wonderful riches, and was not struck with surprise at a very ordinary, big-eared urchin such as one might see any day.

And now he was just showing that Father Lasse had been right. The greatest miracles were in himself—Pelle, who resembled hundreds of millions of other workmen, and had never yet had more than just enough for his food. Man was really the most wonderful of all. Was he not himself, in all his commonplace naturalness, like a luminous spark, sprung from the huge anvil of divine thought? He could send out his inquiring thought to the uttermost borders of space, and back to the dawn of time. And this all-embracing power seemed to have proceeded from nothing, like God Himself! The mere fact that he, who made so much noise, had to go to prison in order to comprehend the great object of things, was a marvel! There must have been far-reaching plans deposited in him, since he shut himself in.

When he looked out over the rising, he felt himself to be facing a world-thought with extraordinarily long sight. The common people, without knowing it, had been for centuries preparing themselves for an entry into a new world; the migration of the masses would not be stopped until they had reached their goal. A law which they did not even know themselves, and could not enter into, led them the right way; and Pelle was not afraid. At the back of his unwearied labor with the great problem of the age was the recognition that he was one of those on whom the nation laid the responsibility for the future; but he was never in doubt as to the aim, nor the means. During the great lock-out the foreseeing had feared the impossibility of leading all these crowds into the fire. And then the whole thing had opened out of itself quite naturally, from an apparently tiny cause to a steadily ordered battle all along the line. The world had never before heard a call so great as that which he and his followers brought forward! It meant nothing less than the triumph of goodness! He was not fond of using great words, but at the bottom of his heart he was convinced that everything bad originated in want and misery. Distrust and selfishness came from misusage; they were man’s defence against extortion. And the extortion came from insecure conditions, from reminders of want or unconscious fear of it. Most crimes could easily be traced back to the distressing conditions, and even where the connection was not perceptible he was sure that it nevertheless existed. It was his experience that every one in reality was good: the evil in them could nearly always be traced back to something definite, while the goodness often existed in spite of everything. It would triumph altogether when the conditions became secure for everybody. He was sure that even the crimes that were due to abnormity would cease of themselves when there were no longer hidden reminders of misery in the community.

It was his firm belief that he and his followers should renew the world; the common people should turn it into a paradise for the multitude, just as it had already made it a paradise for the few. It would require a great and courageous mind for this, but his army had been well tested. Those who, from time immemorial, had patiently borne the pressure of existence for others, must be well fitted to take upon themselves the leadership into the new age.

Pelle at last found himself in Strand Road, and it was too late to return home. He was ravenously hungry and bought a couple of rolls at a baker’s, and ate them on his way to work.

At midday Brun came into the works to sign some papers and go through accounts with Pelle. They were sitting up in the office behind the shop. Pelle read out the items and made remarks on them, while the old man gave his half attention and merely nodded. He was longing to get back to “Daybreak.”

“You won’t mind making it as short as possible?” he said, “for I don’t feel quite well.” The harsh spring winds were bad for him and made his breathing difficult. The doctor had advised a couple of months in the Riviera—until the spring was over; but the old man could not make up his mind. He had not the courage to set out alone.

The shop-bell rang, and Pelle went in to serve. A young sunburnt man stood on the other side of the counter and laughed.

“Don’t you know me?” he asked, holding out his hand to Pelle. It was Karl, the youngest of the three orphans in the “Ark.”

“Why, of course I know you!” answered Pelle, delighted. “I’ve been to Adel Street to look for you; I was told you had your business there.”

That had been a long time ago! Now Karl Anker was manager of a large supply association over on Funen. He had come over to order some boots and shoes from Pelle for the association. “It’s only a trial,” he said. “If it succeeds I’ll get you a connection with the cooperative association, and that’s a customer that takes something, I can tell you!”

Pelle had to make haste to take down the order, as Karl had to catch a train.

“It’s a pity you haven’t got time to see our works,” said Pelle. “Do you remember little Paul from the ‘Ark’? The factory-girl’s child that she tied to the stove when she went to work? He’s become a splendid fellow. He’s my head man in the factory. He’d like to see you!”

When Karl was gone and Pelle was about to go in to Brun in the office, he caught sight of a small, somewhat deformed woman with a child, walking to and fro above the workshop windows, and taking stolen glances down. They timidly made way for people passing, and looked very frightened. Pelle called them into the shop.

“Do you want to speak to Peter Dreyer?” he asked.

The woman nodded. She had a refined face with large, sorrowful eyes. “If it won’t disturb him,” she said.

Pelle called Peter Dreyer and then went into the office, where he found Brun had fallen asleep.

He heard them whispering in the shop. Peter was angry, and the woman and the child cried; he could hear it in the tones of their whisper. It did not last more than a minute, and then Peter let them out. Pelle went quickly into the shop.

“If it was money,” he said hurriedly, “you know you’ve only got to tell me.”

“No, it was the big meeting of unemployed this afternoon. They were begging me to stop at home, silly creatures! Goodness knows what’s come to them!” Peter was quite offended. “By the by—I suppose you haven’t any objection to my going now? It begins in an hour’s time.”

“I thought it had been postponed,” said Pelle.

“Yes, but that was only a ruse to prevent its being prohibited. We’re holding it in a field out by Nörrebro. You ought to come too; it’ll be a meeting that’ll be remembered. We shall settle great matters to-day.” Peter was nervous, and fidgeted with his clothes while he spoke.

Pelle placed his hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. “You’d better do what those two want,” he said earnestly. “I don’t know them, of course; but if their welfare’s dependent on you, then they too have a claim upon you. Give up what you were going to do, and go out for a walk with those two! Everything’s budding now; take them to the woods! It’s better to make two people happy than a thousand unhappy.”

Peter looked away. “We’re not going to do anything special, so what is there to make such a fuss about?” he murmured.

“You *are* going to do something to-day; I can see it in you. And if you can’t carry it through, who’ll have to take the consequences? Why, the women and children! You *can’t* carry it through! Our strength doesn’t lie in that direction.”

“You go your way and let me go mine,” said Peter, gently freeing himself.

Two policemen were standing on the opposite pavement, talking together, while they secretly kept an eye on the shop. Pelle pointed to them.

“The police don’t know where the meeting’s to be held, so they’re keeping watch on me,” said Peter, shrugging his shoulders. “I can easily put those two on the wrong track.”

The policemen crossed the street and separated outside the shop. One of them stood looking at the articles exhibited in the window for a little while, and then quickly entered the shop. “Is Peter Dreyer here?” he asked haughtily.

“I’m he,” answered Peter, withdrawing behind the counter. “But I advise you not to touch me! I can’t bear the touch of a policeman’s hands.”

“You’re arrested!” said the policeman shortly, following him.

Pelle laid his hand upon his arm. “You should go to work with a little gentleness,” he said. But the man pushed him roughly away. “I’ll have no interference from you!” he cried, blowing his whistle. Peter started, and for a moment his thoughts were at a standstill; then he leaped like a cat over the iron railing, of the workshop steps. But the other policeman was there to receive him, and he sprang once more into the shop, close up to

his pursuer. He had his revolver in his hand. “I’ve had enough of this, confound you!” he hissed.

Two shots sounded, one immediately after the other. The policeman just managed to turn round, but fell forward with his head under the counter, and Peter dropped upon the top of him. It looked as if he had tripped over the policeman’s leg; but when Pelle went to help him up he saw that the blood was trickling from a hole in his temple. The policeman was dead.

Peter opened his eyes with difficulty when Pelle raised his head. “Take me away!” he whispered, turning his head toward the dead man with an expression of loathing. He still kept a convulsive hold upon his revolver.

Pelle took it from him, and carried him in to the sofa in the office. “Get me a little water!” said Pelle to the old librarian, who was standing trembling at the door, but the old man did not hear him.

Peter made a sign that he needed nothing now. “But those two,” he whispered. Pelle nodded. “And then—Pelle—comrade—” He tried to fix his dying gaze upon Pelle, but suddenly started convulsively, his knees being drawn right up to his chin. “Bloodhounds!” he groaned, his eyes converging so strongly that the pupils disappeared altogether; but then his features fell once more into their ordinary folds as his head sank back, and he was dead.

The policeman came in. “Well, is he dead?” he asked maliciously. “He’s made fools of us long enough!”

Pelle took him by the arm and led him to the door. “He’s no longer in your district,” he said, as he closed the door behind him and followed the man into the shop, where the dead policeman lay upon the counter. His fellow-policeman had laid him there, locked the outer door, and pulled down the blinds.

“Will you stop the work and tell the men what has happened?” said Pelle quietly to Brun. “There’s something else I must see to. There’ll be no more work done here to-day.”

“Are you going?” asked the old man anxiously.

“Yes, I’m going to take Peter’s meeting for him, now that he can’t do it himself,” answered Pelle in a low voice.

They had gone down through the workshop, where the men were standing about, looking at one another. They had heard the shots, but had no idea what they meant. “Peter is dead!” said Pelle. His emotion prevented him from saying anything more. Everything seemed suddenly to rush over him, and he hastened out and jumped onto a tram-car.

Out on one of the large fields behind Nörrebro a couple of thousand unemployed were gathered. The wind had risen and blew gustily from the west over the field. The men tramped backward and forward, or stood shivering in their thin clothes. The temper of the crowd was threatening. Men continued to pour out from the side streets, most of them sorry figures, with faces made older by want of work. Many of them could no longer show themselves in the town for want of clothes, and took this opportunity of joining the others.

There was grumbling among them because the meeting had not begun. Men asked one another what the reason was, and no one could tell. Suppose Peter Dreyer had cheated them too, and had gone over to the corporation!

Suddenly a figure appeared upon the cart that was to be used as a platform, and the men pressed forward on all sides. Who in the world was it? It was not Peter Dreyer! Pelle? What smith? Oh, him from The Great Struggle—“the Lightning”! Was he still to the fore? Yes, indeed he was! Why, he’d become a big manufacturer and a regular pillar of society. What in the world did he want here? He had plenty of cheek!

Suddenly a storm of shouts and hisses broke out, mingled with a little applause.

Pelle stood looking out over the crowd with an expression of terrible earnestness. Their demonstration against him did not move him; he was standing here in the stead of a dead man. He still felt Peter’s heavy head on his arm.

When comparative quiet was restored he raised his head. “Peter Dreyer is dead!” he said in a voice that was heard by every one. Whispers passed through the crowd, and they looked questioningly at one another as though they had not heard correctly. He saw from their expression how much would go to pieces in their lives when they believed it.

“It’s a lie!” suddenly cried a voice, relieving the tension. “You’re hired by the police to entice us round the corner, you sly fellow!”

Pelle turned pale. “Peter Dreyer is lying in the factory with a bullet through his head,” he repealed inexorably. “The police were going to arrest him, and he shot both the policeman and himself!”

For a moment all the life in the crowd seemed to be petrified by the pitiless truth, and he saw how they had loved Peter Dreyer. Then they began to make an uproar, shouting that they would go and speak to the police, and some even turned to go.

“Silence, people!” cried Pelle in a loud voice. “Are you grown men and yet will get up a row beside the dead body of a comrade?”

“What do you know about it?” answered one. “You don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“I do know at any rate that at a place out by Vesterbro there sits a woman with a child, waiting for Peter, and he will not come. Would you have more like them? What are you thinking of, wanting to jump into the sea and drown yourselves because you’re wet through? Will those you leave behind be well off? For if you think so, it’s your duty to sacrifice yourselves. But don’t you think rather that the community will throw you into a great common pit, and leave your widows and fatherless children to weep over you?”

“It’s all very well for you to talk!” some one shouted. “Yours are safe enough!”

“I’m busy making yours safe for you, and you want to spoil it by stupidity! It’s all very well for me to talk, you say! But if there’s any one of you who dares turn his face to heaven and say he has gone through more than I have, let him come up here and take my place.”

He was silent and looked out over the crowd. Their wasted faces told him that they were in need of food, but still more of fresh hope. Their eyes gazed into uncertainty. A responsibility must be laid upon them—a great responsibility for such prejudiced beings—if possible, great enough to carry them on to the goal.

“What is the matter with you?” he went on. “You suffer want, but you’ve always done that without getting anything for it; and now when there’s some purpose in it, you won’t go any further. We aren’t just from yesterday, remember! Wasn’t it us who fought the great battle to its end together? Now you scorn it and the whole Movement and say they’ve brought nothing; but it was then we broke through into life and won our right as men.

“Before that time we have for centuries borne our blind hope safely through oppression and want. Is there any other class of society that has a marching route like ours? Forced by circumstances, we prepared for centuries of wandering in the desert and never forgot the country; the good God had given us some of His own infinite long-suffering to carry us through the toilsome time. And now, when we are at the border, you’ve forgotten what we were marching for, and sacrifice the whole thing if only *you* can be changed from thin slaves to fat slaves!”

“There are no slaves here!” was the threatening cry on all sides.

“You’re working horses, in harness and with blinkers on! Now you demand good feeding. When will the scales fall from your eyes, so that you take the responsibility upon yourselves? You think you’re no end of fine fellows when you dare to bare your chest to the bayonets, but are we a match for brutality? If we were, the future would not be ours.”

“Are you scoffing at Peter Dreyer?” asked a sullen voice.

“No, I am not. Peter Dreyer was one of those who go on in advance, and smear the stones on the road with their hearts’ blood, so that the rest of us may find our way. But you’ve no right to compare yourselves with him. He sank under the weight of a tremendous responsibility; and what are you doing? If you want to honor Peter’s memory as it deserves, go quietly home, and join the Movement again. There you have work to do that will transform the world when you all set about it. What will it matter if your strength ebbs and you suffer hunger for a little longer while you’re building your own house? You were hungry too when you were building for others.

“You referred to Peter Dreyer, but we are none of us great martyrs; we are everyday, ordinary men, and there’s where our work lies. Haven’t the thousands who have suffered and died in silence a still greater claim to be followed? They have gone down peacefully for the sake of the development, and have the strongest right to demand our belief in a peaceable development. It is just we that come from the lowest stratum who must preserve the historic development; never has any movement had so long and sad a previous history as ours! Suffering and want have taught us to accept the leadership, when the good has justice done to it; and you want to throw the whole thing overboard by an act of violence.”

They listened to him in silence now. He had caught their minds, but it was not knowledge they absorbed. At present they looked most like weary people who are told that they still have a long way to go. But he *would* get them through!

"Comrades!" he cried earnestly, "perhaps we who are here shall not live to see the new, but it's through us that it'll some day become reality. Providence has stopped at us, and has appointed us to fight for it. Is that not an honor? Look! we come right from the bottom of everything—entirely naked; the old doesn't hang about our clothes, for we haven't any; we can clothe ourselves in the new. The old God, with His thousands of priests as a defence against injustice, we do not know; the moral of war we have never understood—we who have always been its victims. We believe in the Good, because we know that without the victory of goodness there will be no future. Our mind is light and can receive the light; we will lift up our little country and show that it has a mission on the earth. We who are little ourselves will show how the little ones keep up and assert themselves by the principle of goodness. We wish no harm to any one, therefore the good is on our side. Nothing can in the long run keep us down! And now go home! Your wives and children are perhaps anxious on your account."

They stood for a moment as though still listening, and then dispersed in silence.

When Pelle sprang down from the cart, Morten came up and held out his hand. "You are strong, Pelle!" he said quietly.

"Where have you come from?" exclaimed Pelle in glad surprise.

"I came by the steamer this afternoon, and went straight up to the works. Brun told me what had happened and that you were here. It must have been a threatening meeting! There was a detachment of police over there in one of the side streets. What was going on?"

"They'd planned some demonstration or other, and would in that case have met with harsh treatment, I suppose," said Pelle gravely.

"It was well you got them to change their minds. I've seen these demonstrations in the South, where the police and the soldiers ride over the miserable unemployed. It's a sad sight."

They walked up across the fields toward "Daybreak." "To think that you're home again!" said Pelle, with childlike delight. "You never wrote a word about coming."

"Well, I'd meant to stay away another couple of months. But one day I saw the birds of passage flying northward across the Mediterranean, and I began to be so homesick. It was just as well I came too, for now I can see Brun before he goes."

"Oh, is he going away, after all? That's been settled very quickly. This morning he couldn't make up his mind."

"It's this about Peter. The old man's fallen off very much in the last six months. But let's walk quicker! I'm longing to see Ellen and the children. How's the baby?"

"He's a little fatty!" said Pelle proudly. "Nine pounds without his clothes! Isn't that splendid? He's a regular sunshine baby."

XXIII

It is spring once more in Denmark.

It has been coming for a long time. The lark came before the frost was out of the ground, and then the starling appeared. And one day the air seemed suddenly to have become high and light so that the eye could once more see far out; there was a peculiar broad airiness in the wind—the breath of spring. It rushed along with messages of young, manly strength, and people threw back their shoulders and took deep breaths. “Ah! the south wind!” they said, and opened their minds in anticipation.

There he comes riding across the sea from the south, in the middle of his youthful train. Never before has his coming been so glorious! Is he not like the sun himself? The sea glitters under golden hoofs, and the air is quivering with sunbeam-darts caught and thrown in the wild gallop over the waves. Heigh-ho! Who’ll be the first to reach the Danish shore?

Like a broad wind the spring advances over islands and belts, embracing the whole in arrogant strength. He sings in the children’s open mouths as in a shell, and is lavish of his airy freshness. Women’s teeth grow whiter with his kiss, and vie with their eyes in brightness; their cheeks glow beneath his touch, though they remain cool—like sun-ripe fruit under the morning dew. Men’s brains whirl once more, and expand into an airy vault, as large as heaven itself, giddy with expectancy. From high up comes the sound of the passage birds in flight; the air is dizzy with its own infinitude.

Bareheaded and with a sunny smile the spring advances like a young giant intoxicated with his own strength, stretches out his arms and wakens everything with his song. Nothing can resist him. He touches lightly the heart of the sleeping earth, calling merrily into her dull ears to awake. And deep down the roots of life begin to stir and wake, and send the sap circulating once more. Hedgehogs and field-mice emerge sleepily and begin to busy themselves in the hedges. From the darkness below old decayed matter ferments and bubbles up, and the stagnant water in the ditches begins to run toward the sea.

Men stand and gaze in amazement after the open-handed giant, until they feel the growth in themselves and can afford something. All that was impossible before has suddenly become possible, and more besides. The farmer has long since had his plough in the earth, and the sower straps his basket on: the land is to be clothed again.

The days lengthen and become warmer; it is delightful to watch them and know that they are going upward. One day Ellen opens wide the double doors out to the garden; it is like a release. But what a quantity of dirt the light reveals!

“We shall have to be busy now, Petra Dreyer!” says Ellen. The little deformed sewing-woman smiles with her sad eyes, and the two women begin to sweep floors and wash windows. Now and then a little girl comes in from the garden complaining that she is not allowed to play with Anna’s big doll. Boy Comfort is in the fields from morning to night, helping Grandfather Stolpe to build the new workmen’s houses. A fine help his is! When Ellen fetches him in to meals, he is so dirty that she nearly loses all patience.

“I wonder how Old Brun is!” says Ellen suddenly, in the middle of her work. “We haven’t heard from him now for three days. It’s quite sad to think he’s so far away. I only hope they’ll look after him properly.”

Pelle is tremendously busy, and they do not see much of him. The Movement has taken up his idea now in earnest, and he is to have the management of it all, so that he has his hands full. “Have I got a husband or not?” says Ellen, when she gets hold of him now and again.

“It’ll soon be better,” he answers. “When once we’ve got the machinery properly started, it’ll go by itself.”

Morten is the only one who has not set seriously to work on anything, and in the midst of all the bustle has an incongruous effect. “He’s thinking!” says Ellen, stopping in the middle of beating a carpet. “Thank goodness we’re not all authors!”

Pelle would like to draw him into the business. “There’s so much to write and lecture about,” he says, “and you could do all that so much better than I.”

“Oh, no, I couldn’t,” says Morten. “Your work’s growing in me too. I’m always thinking about it and have thought of giving a hand too, but I can’t. If I ever contribute anything to your great work, it’ll be in some other way.”

“You’re doing nothing with your book about the sun either,” says Pelle anxiously.

“No, because whenever I set to work on it, it mixes up so strangely with your work, and I can’t keep the ideas apart. At present I feel like a mole, digging blindly in the black earth under the mighty tree of life. I dig and search, and am continually coming across the thick roots of the huge thing above the surface. I can’t see them, but I can hear sounds from above there, and it hurts me not to be able to follow them into their strong connection up in the light.”

One Sunday morning at the end of May they were sitting out in the garden. The cradle had been moved out into the sun, and Pelle and Ellen were sitting one on either side, talking over domestic matters. Ellen had so much to tell him when she had him to herself. The child lay staring up into the sky with its dark eyes that were the image of Ellen’s. He was brown and chubby; any one could see that he had been conceived in sunshine and love.

Lasse Frederik was sitting by the hedge painting a picture that Pelle was not to see until it was finished. He went to the drawing-school now, and was clever. He had a good eye for figures, and poor people especially he hit off in any position. He had a light hand, and in two or three lines could give what his father had had to work at carefully. “You cheat!” Pelle often said, half resentfully. “It won’t bear looking closely at.” He had to admit, however, that it was a good likeness.

“Well, can’t I see the picture soon?” he called across. He was very curious.

“Yes, it’s finished now,” said Lasse Frederik, coming up with it.

The picture represented a street in which stood a solitary milk-cart, and behind the cart lay a boy with bleeding head. “He fell asleep because he had to get up so early,” Lasse Frederik explained; “and then when the cart started he tumbled backward.” The morning emptiness of the street was well done, but the blood was too brilliantly red.

“It’s very unpleasant,” said Ellen, with a shudder. “But it’s true.”

Morten came home from town with a big letter which he handed to Pelle, saying: “Here’s news for you from Brun.” Pelle went into the house to read it undisturbed, and a little while after came out again.

“Yes, important news this time,” he said with some emotion. “Would you like to hear it?” he asked, sitting down.

“DEAR PELLE:

“I am sitting up in bed to write to you. I am poorly, and have been for some days; but I hope it is nothing serious. We all have to die some day, but I should like to start on the great voyage round the world from your home. I long to see ‘Daybreak’ and all of you, and I feel very lonely. If the business could do without you for a few days, I should be so glad if you would come down here. Then we could go home together, for I should not like to venture on the journey by myself.

“The sun is just going down, and sends its last rays in to me. It has been gray and gloomy all day, but now the sun has broken through the clouds, and kisses the earth and me, poor old man, too, in farewell. It makes me want to say something to you, Pelle, for my day was like this before I knew you—endlessly long and gray! When you are the last member of a dying family, you have to bear the gray existence of the others too.

“I have often thought how wonderful the hidden force of life is. Intercourse with you has been like a lever to me, although I knew well that I should not accomplish anything more, and had no one to come after me. I feel, nevertheless, through you, in alliance with the future. You are in the ascendant and must look upon me as something that is vanishing. But look how life makes us all live by using us each in his own way. Be strong in your faith in the future; with you lies the development. I wish with all my heart that I were an awakening proletary and stood in the dawn of day; but I am nevertheless glad because my eyes will be closed by the new in you.

“I have imagined that life was tiresome and dull and far too well known. I had it arranged in my catalogues. And look how it renews itself! In my old age I have experienced its eternal youth. Formerly I had never cared about the country; in my mind it was a place where you waded either in dust or mud. The black earth appeared to me horrible rather

than anything else; it was only associated in my mind with the churchyard. That shows how far I was from nature. The country was something that farmers moved about in—those big, voracious creatures, who almost seemed like a kind of animal trying to imitate man. Rational beings could not possibly live out there. That was the view in my circle, and I had myself a touch of the same complaint, although my university training of course paraphrased and veiled it all to some extent. All this about our relations to nature seemed to me very interesting aesthetically, but with more or less of a contradictory, not to say hostile, character. I could not understand how any one could see anything beautiful in a ploughed field or a dike. It was only when I got to know you that something moved within me and called me out; there was something about you like the air from out there.

"Now I also understand my forefathers! Formerly they seemed to me only like thick-skinned boors, who scraped together all the money that two generations of us have lived upon without doing a pennyworth of good. They enabled us, however, to live life, I have always thought, and I considered it the only excuse for their being in the family, coarse and robust as they were. Now I see that it was they who lived, while we after them, with all our wealth, have only had a bed in life's inn.

"For all this I thank you. I am glad to have become acquainted through you with men of the new age, and to be able to give my fortune back. It was made by all those who work, and gathered together by a few; my giving it back is merely a natural consequence. Others will come to do as I am doing, either of their own free will or by compulsion, until everything belongs to everybody. Then only can the conflict about human interests begin. Capitalism has created wonderful machines, but what wonderful men await us in the new age! Happy the man who could have lived to see it!

"I have left all my money to you and Morten. As yet there is no institution that I could give it to, so you must administer it in the name of cooperation. You two are the best guardians of the poor, and I know you will employ it in the best manner. I place it with confidence in your hands. The will is at my lawyer's; I arranged it all before I left home.

"My greetings to all at 'Daybreak'—Ellen, the children, and Morten. If the baby is christened before I get home, remember that he is to be called after me. But I am hoping that you will come."

Ellen drew a deep breath when Pelle had finished the letter. "I only hope he's not worse than he makes out," she said. "I suppose you'll go?"

"Yes, I'll arrange what's necessary at the works to-morrow early, and take the morning express."

"Then I must see to your things," exclaimed Ellen, and went in.

Pelle and Morten went for a stroll along the edge of the hill, past the half-finished houses, whose red bricks shone in the sun.

"Everything seems to turn out well for you, Pelle," said Morten suddenly.

"Yes," said Pelle; "nothing has succeeded in injuring me, so I suppose what Father Lasse and the others said is right, that I was born with a caul. The ill-usage I suffered as a child taught me to be good to others, and in prison I gained liberty; what might have made me a criminal made a man of me instead. Nothing has succeeded in injuring me! So I suppose I may say that everything has turned out well."

"Yes, you may, and now I've found a subject, Pelle! I'm not going to hunt about blindly in the dark; I'm going to write a great work now."

"I congratulate you! What will it be about? Is it to be the work on the sun?"

"Yes, both about the sun and about him who conquers. It's to be a book about you, Pelle!"

"About me?" exclaimed Pelle.

"Yes, about the naked Pelle with the caul! It's about time to call out the naked man into the light and look at him well, now that he's going to take over the future. You like to read about counts and barons, but now I'm going to write a story about a prince who finds the treasure and wins the princess. He's looked for her all over the world and she wasn't there, and now there's only himself left, and there he finds her, for he's taken her heart. Won't that be a good story?"

"I think it's a lot of rubbish," said Pelle, laughing. "And you'll have to lay the lies on thick if you're going to make me into a prince. I don't think you'll get the workpeople to take it for a real book; it'll all be so well known and ordinary."

“They’ll snatch at it, and weep with delight and pride at finding themselves in it. Perhaps they’ll name their children after it out of pure gratitude!”

“What are you going to call it then?” asked Pelle.

“I’m going to call it ‘PELLE THE CONQUEROR.’”

THE END

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