

Pelle the Conqueror, Vol 3

Martin Anderson Nexo

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PELLE THE CONQUEROR

PART III.--THE GREAT STRUGGLE.

BY MARTIN ANDERSON NEXO

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH
By Bernard Miall.

III. THE GREAT STRUGGLE

I

A swarm of children was playing on the damp floor of the shaft. They hung from the lower portions of the timber-work, or ran in and out between the upright supports, humming tunes, with bread-and-dripping in their hands; or they sat on the ground and pushed themselves forward across the sticky flagstones. The air hung clammy and raw, as it does in an old well, and already it had made the little voices husky, and had marked their faces with the scars of scrofula. Yet out of the tunnel-like passage which led to the street there blew now and again a warm breath of air and the fragrance of budding trees--from the world that lay behind those surrounding walls.

They had finished playing "Bro-bro-brille," for the last rider had entered the black cauldron; and Hansel and Gretel had crept safely out of the dwarf Vinslev's den, across the sewer-grating, and had reached the pancake-house, which, marvelously enough, had also a grating in front of the door, through which one could thrust a stick or a cabbage-stalk, in order to stab the witch. Sticks of wood and cabbage-stalks were to be found in plenty in the dustbins near the pancake-house, and they knew very well who the witch was! Now and again she would pop up

out of the cellar and scatter the whole crowd with her kitchen tongs! It was almost a little too lifelike; even the smell of pancakes came drifting down from where the well-to-do Olsens lived, so that one could hardly call it a real fairy tale. But then perhaps the dwarf Vinslev would come out of his den, and would once again tell them the story of how he had sailed off with the King's gold and sunk it out yonder, in the King's Deep, when the Germans were in the land. A whole ship's crew took out the King's treasure, but not one save Vinslev knew where it was sunk, and even he did not know now. A terrible secret that, such as well might make a man a bit queer in the head. He would explain the whole chart on his double-breasted waistcoat; he had only to steer from this button to that, and then down yonder, and he was close above the treasure. But now some of the buttons had fallen off, and he could no longer make out the chart. Day by day the children helped him to trace it; this was an exciting bit of work, for the King was getting impatient!

There were other wonderful things to do; for instance, one could lie flat down on the slippery flagstones and play Hanne's game--the "Glory" game. You turned your eyes from the darkness down below, looking up through the gloomy shaft at the sky overhead, which floated there blazing with light, and then you suddenly looked down again, so that everything was quite dark. And in the darkness floated blue and yellow rings of color, where formerly there had been nothing but dustbins and privies. This dizzy flux of colors before the eyes was the journey far out to the land of happiness, in search of all the things that cannot be told. "I can see something myself, and I know quite well what it is, but I'm just not going to tell," they murmured, blinking mysteriously up into the blue.

However, one could have too much of a good thing.... But the round grating under the timbers yonder, where Hanne's father drowned himself, was a thing one never grew weary of. The depths were forever bubbling upward, filling the little children with a secret horror; and the half-grown girls would stand a-straddle over the grating, shuddering at the cold breath that came murmuring up from below. The grating was sure enough the way down to hell, and if you gazed long enough you could see the faintest glimmer of the inky stream that was flowing down below. Every moment it sent its putrid breath up into your face; that was the Devil, who sat panting down there in a corner. If you turned your eyes away from the depths the twilight of the well had turned to brightest day, so you could make the world light or dark just as you wished.

A few children always lay there, on all fours, gazing down with anxious faces; and all summer through, directly over the grating, hung a cloud of midges, swaying in the breath of the depths. They would rise to a certain height, then suddenly fall, and rise again, just like a juggler's balls. Sometimes the breathing from below sucked the whole swarm right down, but it rose up again, veering hither and thither like a dancing wraith in the draught from the tunnel-like entry. The little girls would gaze at it, lift their petticoats, and take a few graceful steps. Olsen's Elvira had learned her first dance-steps here, and now she was dancing respectable citizens into the poor-house. And the furniture broker's daughter was in Petersburg, and was almost a Grand Duchess!

On the walls of the narrow shaft projecting porches hung crazily, so that they left only a small free space, and here the clothes-lines ran to and fro, loaded with dishcloths and children's clothing. The decaying wooden staircases ran zig-zag up the walls, disappearing into the projecting porches and coming out again, until they reached the very garrets.

From the projecting porches and the galleries, doors led into the various tenements, or to long corridors that connected the inner portions of the house. Only in Pipman's side there were neither porches nor galleries, from the second story upward; time had devoured them, so that the stairs alone remained in place. The ends of the joists stuck out of the wall like decaying tooth stumps, and a rope hung from above, on which one could obtain a hold. It was black and smooth from the grip of many hands.

On one of those hot June days when the heavens shone like a blazing fire above the rift overhead, the heavy, mouldering timbers came to life again, as if their forest days had returned. People swarmed in and out on the stairs, shadows came and went, and an incessant chattering filled

the twilight. From porch to porch dropped the sour-smelling suds from the children's washing, until at last it reached the ground, where the children were playing by the sluggish rivulets which ran from the gutters. The timbers groaned continually, like ancient boughs that rub together, and a clammy smell as of earth and moist vegetation saturated the air, while all that one touched wore a coating of slime, as in token of its exuberant fertility.

One's gaze could not travel a couple of steps before it was checked by wooden walls, but one felt conscious of the world that lay behind them. When the doors of the long passages opened and shut, one heard the rumor of the innumerable creatures that lived in the depths of the "Ark"; the crying of little children, the peculiar fidgeting sound of marred, eccentric individuals, for many a whole life's history unfolded itself within there, undisturbed, never daring the light of day. On Pipman's side the waste-pipes stuck straight out of the wall, like wood-goblins grinning from the thicket with wide-open mouths, and long gray beards, which bred rose-pink earthworms, and from time to time fell with a heavy smack into the yard. Green hanging bushes grew out of holes in the wall. The waste water trickled through them and dripped continually as though from the wet locks of the forest. Inside, in the greenish, dripping darkness, sat curiously marked toads, like little water-nymphs, each in her grotto, shining with unwholesome humidity. And up among the timbers of the third story hung Hanne's canary, singing quite preposterously, its beak pointing up toward the spot of fiery light overhead. Across the floor of the courtyard went an endless procession of people, light-shy creatures who emerged from the womb of the "Ark" or disappeared into it. Most of them were women, weirdly clad, unwholesomely pale, but with a layer of grime as though the darkness had worked into their skins, with drowsy steps and fanatical, glittering eyes.

Little old men, who commonly lay in their dark corners waiting for death, came hobbling out on the galleries, lifted their noses toward the blazing speck of sky overhead, and sneezed three times. "That's the sun!" they told one another, delighted. "Artishu! One don't catch cold so easy in winter!"

II

High up, out of Pipman's garret, a young man stepped out onto the platform. He stood there a moment turning his smiling face toward the bright heavens overhead. Then he lowered his head and ran down the break-neck stairs, without holding on by the rope. Under his arm he carried something wrapped in a blue cloth.

"Just look at the clown! Laughing right into the face of the sun as though there was no such thing as blindness!" said the women, thrusting their heads out of window. "But then, of course, he's from the country. And now he's going to deliver his work. Lord, how long is he going to squat up there and earn bread for that sweater? The red'll soon go from his cheeks if he stops there much longer!" And they looked after him anxiously.

The children down in the courtyard raised their heads when they heard his steps above them.

"Have you got some nice leather for us to-day, Pelle?" they cried, clutching at his legs.

He brought out of his pockets some little bits of patent-leather and red imitation morocco.

"That's from the Emperor's new slippers," he said, as he shared the pieces among the children. Then the youngsters laughed until their throats began to wheeze.

Pelle was just the same as of old, except that he was more upright and elastic in his walk, and had grown a little fair moustache. His protruding ears had withdrawn themselves a little, as though they were no longer worked so hard. His blue eyes still accepted everything as good coin, though they now had a faint expression that seemed to say that all that happened was no longer to their liking. His "lucky curls" still shone with a golden light.

The narrow streets lay always brooding in a dense, unbearable atmosphere that never seemed to renew itself. The houses were grimy and crazy; where a patch of sunlight touched a window there were stained bed-clothes hung out to dry. Up one of the side streets was an ambulance wagon, surrounded by women and children who were waiting excitedly for the bearers to appear with their uneasy burden, and Pelle joined them; he always had to take part in everything.

It was not quite the shortest way which he took. The capital was quite a new world to him; nothing was the same as at home; here a hundred different things would happen in the course of the day, and Pelle was willing enough to begin all over again; and he still felt his old longing to take part in it all and to assimilate it all.

In the narrow street leading down to the canal a thirteen-year-old girl placed herself provocatively in his way. "Mother's ill," she said, pointing up a dark flight of steps. "If you've got any money, come along!" He was actually on the point of following her, when he discovered that the old women who lived in the street were flattening their noses against their windowpanes. "One has to be on one's guard here!" he told himself, at least for the hundredth time. The worst of it was that it was so easy to forget the necessity.

He strolled along the canal-side. The old quay-wall, the apple-barges, and the granaries with the high row of hatchways overhead and the creaking pulleys right up in the gables awakened memories of home. Sometimes, too, there were vessels from home lying here, with cargoes of fish or pottery, and then he was able to get news. He wrote but seldom. There was little success to be reported; just now he had to make his way, and he still owed Sort for his passage-money.

But it would soon come.... Pelle hadn't the least doubt as to the future. The city was so monstrously large and incalculable; it seemed to have undertaken the impossible; but there could be no doubt of such an obvious matter of course as that he should make his way. Here wealth was simply lying in great heaps, and the poor man too could win it if only he grasped at it boldly enough. Fortune here was a golden bird, which could be captured by a little adroitness; the endless chances were like a fairy tale. And one day Pelle would catch the bird; when and how he left confidingly to chance.

In one of the side streets which ran out of the Market Street there was a crowd; a swarm of people filled the whole street in front of the iron-foundry, shouting eagerly to the blackened iron-workers, who stood grouped together by the gateway, looking at one another irresolutely.

"What's up here?" asked Pelle.

"This is up--that they can't earn enough to live on," said an old man.

"And the manufacturers won't increase their pay. So they've taken to some new-fangled fool's trick which they say has been brought here from abroad, where they seem to have done well with it. That's to say, they all suddenly chuck up their work and rush bareheaded into the street and make a noise, and then back to work again, just like school children in play-time. They've already been in and out two or three times, and now half of them's outside and the others are at work, and the gate is locked. Nonsense! A lot that's going to help their wages! No; in my time we used to ask for them prettily, and we always got something, too. But, anyhow, we're only working-folks, and where's it going to come from? And now, what's more, they've lost their whole week's wages!"

The workmen were at a loss as to what they should do; they stood there gazing mechanically up at the windows of the counting-house, from which all decisions were commonly issued. Now and again an impatient shudder ran through the crowd, as it made threats toward the windows and demanded what was owing it. "He won't give us the wages that we've honestly earned, the tyrant!" they cried. "A nice thing, truly, when one's got a wife and kids at home, and on a Saturday afternoon, too! What a shark, to take the bread out of their mouths! Won't the gracious gentleman give us an answer--just his greeting, so that we can take it home with us?--just his kind regards, or else they'll have to go hungry to bed!" And they laughed, a low, snarling laugh, spat on the pavement, and once more turned their masterless faces up to the counting-house windows.

Proposals were showered upon them, proposals of every kind; and they were as wise as they were before. "What the devil are we to do if there's no one who can lead us?" they said dejectedly, and they stood staring again. That was the only thing they knew how to do.

"Choose a few of your comrades and send them in to negotiate with the manufacturer," said a gentleman standing by.

"Hear, hear! Forward with Eriksen! He understands the deaf-and-dumb alphabet!" they shouted. The stranger shrugged his shoulders and departed.

A tall, powerful workman approached the group. "Have you got your killer with you, Eriksen?" cried one, and Eriksen turned on the staircase and exhibited his clenched fist.

"Look out!" they shouted at the windows. "Look out we don't set fire to the place!" Then all was suddenly silent, and the heavy house-door was barred.

Pelle listened with open mouth. He did not know what they wanted, and they hardly knew, themselves; none the less, there was a new note in all this! These people didn't beg for what they wanted; they preferred to use their fists in order to get it, and they didn't get drunk first,

like the strong man Eriksen and the rest at home. "This is the capital!" he thought, and again he congratulated himself for having come thither.

A squad of policemen came marching up. "Room there!" they cried, and began to hustle the crowd in order to disperse it. The workmen would not be driven away. "Not before we've got our wages!" they said, and they pressed back to the gates again. "This is where we work, and we're going to have our rights, that we are!" Then the police began to drive the onlookers away; at each onset they fell back a few steps, hesitating, and then stood still, laughing. Pelle received a blow in the back; he turned quickly round, stared for a moment into the red face of a policeman, and went his way, muttering and feeling his back.

"Did he hit you?" asked an old woman. "Devil take him, the filthy lout! He's the son of the mangling-woman what lives in the house here, and now he takes up the cudgels against his own people! Devil take him!"

"Move on!" ordered the policeman, winking, as he pushed her aside with his body. She retired to her cellar, and stood there using her tongue to such purpose that the saliva flew from her toothless mouth.

"Yes, you go about bullying old people who used to carry you in their arms and put dry clouts on you when you didn't know enough to ask.... Are you going to use your truncheon on me, too? Wouldn't you like to, Fredrik? Take your orders from the great folks, and then come yelping at us, because we aren't fine enough for you!" She was shaking with rage; her yellowish gray hair had become loosened and was tumbling about her face; she was a perfect volcano.

The police marched across the Knippel Bridge, escorted by a swarm of street urchins, who yelled and whistled between their fingers. From time to time a policeman would turn round; then the whole swarm took to its heels, but next moment it was there again. The police were nervous: their fingers were opening and closing in their longing to strike out. They looked like a party of criminals being escorted to the court-house by the extreme youth of the town, and the people were laughing.

Pelle kept step on the pavement. He was in a wayward mood. Somewhere within him he felt a violent impulse to give way to that absurd longing to leap into the air and beat his head upon the pavement which was the lingering result of his illness. But now it assumed the guise of insolent strength. He saw quite plainly how big Eriksen ran roaring at the bailiff, and how he was struck to the ground, and thereafter wandered about an idiot. Then the "Great Power" rose up before him, mighty in his strength, and was hurled to his death; they had all been like dogs, ready to fall on him, and to fawn upon everything that smelt of their superiors and the authorities. And he himself, Pelle, had had a whipping at the court-house, and people had pointed the finger at him, just as they pointed at the "Great Power." "See, there he goes loafing, the scum of humanity!" Yes, he had learned what righteousness was, and what mischief it did. But now he had escaped from the old excommunication, and had entered a new world, where respectable men never turned to look after the police, but left such things to the street urchins and old women. There was a great satisfaction in this; and Pelle wanted to take part in this world; he longed to understand it.

It was Saturday, and there was a crowd of journeymen and seamstresses in the warehouse, who had come to deliver their work. The foreman went round as usual, grumbling over the work, and before he paid for it he

would pull at it and crumple it so that it lost its shape, and then he made the most infernal to-do because it was not good enough. Now and again he would make a deduction from the week's wages, averring that the material was ruined; and he was especially hard on the women, who stood there not daring to contradict him. People said he cheated all the seamstresses who would not let him have his way with them.

Pelle stood there boiling with rage. "If he says one word to me, we shall come to blows!" he thought. But the foreman took the work without glancing at it--ah, yes, that was from Pipman!

But while he was paying for it a thick-set man came forward out of a back room; this was the court shoemaker, Meyer himself. He had been a poor young man with barely a seat to his breeches when he came to Copenhagen from Germany as a wandering journeyman. He did not know much about his craft, but he knew how to make others work for him! He did not answer the respectful greetings of the workers, but stationed himself before Pelle, his belly bumping against the counter, wheezing loudly through his nose, and gazing at the young man.

"New man?" he asked, at length. "That's Pipman's assistant," replied the foreman, smiling. "Ah! Pipman--he knows the trick, eh? You do the work and he takes the money and drinks it, eh?" The master shoemaker laughed as at an excellent joke.

Pelle turned red. "I should like to be independent as soon as possible," he said.

"Yes, yes, you can talk it over with the foreman; but no unionists here, mind that! We've no use for those folks."

Pelle pressed his lips together and pushed the cloth wrapper into the breast of his coat in silence. It was all he could do not to make some retort; he couldn't approve of that prohibition. He went out quickly into Kobmager Street and turned out of the Coal Market into Hauser Street, where, as he knew, the president of the struggling Shoemakers' Union was living. He found a little cobbler occupying a dark cellar. This must be the man he sought; so he ran down the steps. He had not understood that the president of the Union would be found in such a miserable dwelling-place.

Under the window sat a hollow-cheeked man bowed over his bench, in the act of sewing a new sole on to a worn-out shoe. The legs of the passers-by were just above his head. At the back of the room a woman stood cooking something on the stove; she had a little child on her arm, while two older children lay on the ground playing with some lasts. It was frightfully hot and oppressive.

"Good day, comrade!" said Pelle. "Can I become a member of the Union?"

The man looked up, astonished. Something like a smile passed over his mournful face.

"Can you indulge yourself so far?" he asked slowly. "It may prove a costly pleasure. Who d'you work for, if I may ask?"

"For Meyer, in Kobmager Street."

"Then you'll be fired as soon as he gets to know of it!"

"I know that sure enough; all the same, I want to join the Union. He's not going to tell me what I can and what I can't do. Besides, we'll soon settle with him."

"That's what I thought, too. But there's too few of us. You'll be starved out of the Union as soon as you've joined."

"We must see about getting a bit more numerous," said Pelle cheerfully, "and then one fine day we'll shut up shop for him!"

A spark of life gleamed in the tired eyes of the president. "Yes, devil take him, if we could only make him shut up shop!" he cried, shaking his clenched fist in the air. "He tramples on all those hereabouts that make money for him; it's a shame that I should sit here now and have come down to cobbling; and he keeps the whole miserable trade in poverty! Ah, what a revenge, comrade!" The blood rushed into his hollow cheeks until they burned, and then he began to cough. "Petersen!" said the woman anxiously, supporting his back. "Petersen!" She sighed and shook her head, while she helped him to struggle through his fit of coughing. "When the talk's about the Court shoemaker Petersen always gets like one possessed," she said, when he had overcome it. "He really don't know what he's doing. No--if everybody would only be as clever as Meyer and just look after his own business, then certain people would be sitting there in good health and earning good money!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Petersen angrily. "You're a woman--you know nothing about the matter." At which the woman went back to her cooking.

Petersen filled out a paper, and Pelle signed his name to it and paid his subscription for a week. "And now you must try to break away from that bloodsucker as soon as possible!" said Petersen earnestly. "A respectable workman can't put up with such things!"

"I was forced into it," said Pelle. "And I learned nothing of this at home. But now that's over and done with."

"Good, comrade! There's my hand on it--and good luck to you! We must work the cause up, and perhaps we shall succeed yet; I tell you, you've given me back my courage! Now you persuade as many as you can, and don't miss the meetings; they'll be announced in _The Working Man_." He shook Pelle's hand eagerly. Pelle took a brisk walk out to the northward. He felt pleased and in the best of spirits.

It was about the time when the workers are returning home; they drifted along singly and in crowds, stooping and loitering, shuffling a little after the fatigue of the day. There was a whole new world out here, quite different from that of the "Ark." The houses were new and orderly, built with level and plumb-line; the men went their appointed ways, and one could see at a glance what each one was.

This quarter was the home of socialism and the new ideas. Pelle often strolled out thither on holidays in order to get a glimpse of these things; what they were he didn't know, and he hadn't dared to thrust himself forward, a stranger, as he still felt himself to be there; but it all attracted him powerfully. However, to-day he forgot that he was a stranger, and he went onward with a long, steady stride that took him over the bridge and into North Bridge Street. Now he himself was a trades unionist; he was like all these others, he could go straight up

to any one if he wished and shake him by the hand. There was a strong and peculiar appeal about the bearing of these people, as though they had been soldiers. Involuntarily he fell into step with them, and felt himself stronger on that account, supported by a feeling of community. He felt solemnly happy, as on his birthday; and he had a feeling as though he must do something. The public houses were open, and the workmen were entering them in little groups. But he had no desire to sit there and pour spirits down his throat. One could do that sort of thing when everything had gone to the dogs.

He stationed himself in front of a pastry cook's window, eagerly occupied in comparing the different kinds of cakes. He wanted to go inside and expend five and twenty ore in celebration of the day. But first of all the whole affair must be properly and methodically planned out, so that he should not be disappointed afterward. He must, of course, have something that he had never eaten before, and that was just the difficult part. Many of the cakes were hollow inside too, and the feast would have to serve as his evening meal.

It was by no means easy, and just as Pelle was on the point of solving the difficulty he was startled out of the whole affair by a slap on the shoulder. Behind him was Morten, smiling at him with that kindly smile of his, as though nothing had gone wrong between them. Pelle was ashamed of himself and could not find a word to say. He had been unfaithful to his only friend; and it was not easy for him to account for his behavior. But Morten didn't want any explanations; he simply shook Pelle by the hand. His pale face was shining with joy. It still betrayed that trace of suffering which was so touching, and Pelle had to surrender at discretion. "Well, to think we should meet here!" he cried, and laughed good-naturedly.

Morten was working at the pastry cook's, and had been out; now he was going in to get some sleep before the night's work. "But come in with me; we can at least sit and talk for half an hour; and you shall have a cake too." He was just the same as in the old days.

They went in through the gate and up the back stairs; Morten went into the shop and returned with five "Napoleons." "You see I know your taste," he said laughing. Morten's room was right up under the roof; it was a kind of turret-room with windows on both sides. One could look out over the endless mass of roofs, which lay in rows, one behind the other, like the hotbeds in a monstrous nursery garden. From the numberless flues and chimneys rose a thin bluish smoke, which lay oppressively over all. Due south lay the Kalvebod Strand, and further to the west the hill of Frederiksberg with its castle rose above the mist. On the opposite side lay the Common, and out beyond the chimneys of the limekilns glittered the Sound with its many sails. "That's something like a view, eh?" said Morten proudly.

Pelle remained staring; he went from one window to another and said nothing. This was the city, the capital, for which he and all other poor men from the farthest corners of the land, had longed so boundlessly; the Fortunate Land, where they were to win free of poverty!

He had wandered through it in all directions, had marvelled at its palaces and its treasures, and had found it to be great beyond all expectation. Everything here was on the grand scale; what men built one day they tore down again on the morrow, in order to build something more sumptuous. So much was going on here, surely the poor man might somehow

make his fortune out of it all!

And yet he had had no true conception of the whole. Now for the first time he saw the City! It lay there, a mighty whole, outspread at his feet, with palaces, churches, and factory chimneys rising above the mass of houses. Down in the street flowed a black, unending stream, a stream of people continually renewed, as though from a mighty ocean that could never be exhausted. They all had some object; one could not see it, but really they were running along like ants, each bearing his little burden to the mighty heap of precious things, which was gathered together from all the ends of the earth.

"There are millions in all this!" said Pelle at last, drawing a deep breath. "Yes," said Morten standing beside him. "And it's all put together by human hands--by the hands of working people!"

Pelle started. That was a wonderful idea. But it was true enough, if one thought about it.

"But now it has fallen into very different hands!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Yes, they've got it away from us by trickery, just as one wheedles a child out of a thing," cried Morten morosely. "But there's no real efficiency in anything that children do--and the poor have never been anything more than children! Only now they are beginning to grow up, look you, and one fine day they'll ask for their own back."

"It would go ill with us if we went and tried to take it for ourselves," said Pelle.

"Not if we were united about it--but we are only the many."

Pelle listened; it had never occurred to him that the question of organization was so stupendous. Men combined, sure enough, but it was to secure better conditions in their trade.

"You are like your father!" he said. "He always had big ideas, and wanted to get his rights. I was thinking about him a little while ago, how he never let himself be trampled on. Then you used to be ashamed of him; but...."

Morten hung his head. "I couldn't bear the contempt of respectable folks," he said half under his breath. "I understood nothing beyond the fact that he was destroying our home and bringing disgrace on us. And I was horribly afraid, too, when he began to lay about him; I wake up sometimes now quite wet and cold with sweat, when I've been dreaming of my childhood. But now I'm proud that I'm the son of the 'Great Power.' I haven't much strength myself; yet perhaps I'll do something to surprise the city folks after all."

"And I too!"

Power! It was really extraordinary that Morten should be the son of the giant stone-cutter, so quiet and delicate was he. He had not yet quite recovered the strength of which Bodil had robbed him in his early boyhood; it was as though that early abuse was still wasting him.

He had retained his girlish love of comfort. The room was nicely kept; and there were actually flowers in a vase beneath the looking-glass. Flowers, good Lord! "How did you get those?" asked Pelle.

"Bought them, of course!"

Pelle had to laugh. Was there another man in the world who would pay money for flowers?

But he did not laugh at the books. There seemed to be a sort of mysterious connection between them and Morten's peculiar, still energy. He had now a whole shelf full. Pelle took a few down and looked into them.

"What sort of stuff is this, now?" he asked doubtfully. "It looks like learning!"

"Those are books about us, and how the new conditions are coming, and how we must make ready for them."

"Ah, you've got the laugh of me," said Pelle. "In a moment of depression you've got your book-learning to help you along. But we other chaps can just sit where we are and kick our heels." Morten turned to him hastily.

"That's the usual complaint!" he cried irritably. "A man spits on his own class and wants to get into another one. But that's not the point at stake, damn it all! We want to stay precisely where we are, shoemakers and bakers, all together! But we must demand proper conditions! Scarcely one out of thousands can come out on top; and then the rest can sit where they are and gape after him! But do you believe he'd get a chance of rising if it wasn't that society needs him--wants to use him to strike at his own people and keep them down? 'Now you can see for yourself what a poor man can do if he likes!' That's what they tell you. There's no need to blame society.

"No, the masses themselves are to blame if they aren't all rich men! Good God! They just don't want to be! So they treat you like a fool, and you put up with it and baa after them! No, let them all together demand that they shall receive enough for their work to live on decently. I say a working man ought to get as much for his work as a doctor or a barrister, and to be educated as well. That's my Lord's Prayer!"

"Now I've set you off finely!" said Pelle good-naturedly. "And it's just the same as what your father was raving about when he lay dying in the shed. He lay there delirious, and he believed the ordinary workman had got pictures on the wall and a piano, just like the fine folks."

"Did he say that?" cried Morten, and he raised his head. Then he fell into thought. For he understood that longing. But Pelle sat there brooding. Was this the "new time" all over again? Then there was really some sense in banding people together--yes, and as many as possible.

"I don't rightly understand it," he said at last. "But to-day I joined the trade union. I shan't stand still and look on when there's anything big to be done."

Morten nodded, faintly smiling. He was tired now, and hardly heard what Pelle was saying. "I must go to bed now so that I can get up at one. But where do you live? I'll come and see you some time. How queer it is that we should have run across one another here!"

"I live out in Kristianshavn--in the 'Ark,' if you know where that is!"

"That's a queer sort of house to have tumbled into! I know the 'Ark' very well, it's been so often described in the papers. There's all sorts of people live there!"

"I don't know anything about that," said Pelle, half offended. "I like the people well enough.... But it's capital that we should have run into one another's arms like this! What bit of luck, eh? And I behaved like a clown and kept out of your way? But that was when I was going to the dogs, and hated everybody! But now nothing's going to come between us again, you may lay to that!"

"That's good, but now be off with you," replied Morten, smiling; he was already half-undressed.

"I'm going, I'm going!" said Pelle, and he picked up his hat, and stood for a moment gazing out over the city. "But it's magnificent, what you were saying about things just now!" he cried suddenly. "If I had the strength of all us poor folks in me, I'd break out right away and conquer the whole of it! If such a mass of wealth were shared out there'd never be any poverty any more!" He stood there with his arms uplifted, as though he held it all in his hands. Then he laughed uproariously. He looked full of energy. Morten lay half asleep, staring at him and saying nothing. And then he went.

Pipman scolded Pelle outrageously when at last he returned. "Curse it all, what are you thinking of? To go strolling about and playing the duke while such as we can sit here working our eyes out of our heads! And we have to go thirsty too! Now don't you dream of being insolent to me, or there'll be an end of the matter. I am excessively annoyed!"

He held out his hand in pathetic expostulation, although Pelle had no intention of answering him. He no longer took Pipman seriously. "Devil fry me, but a man must sit here and drink the clothes off his body while a lout like you goes for a stroll!"

Pelle was standing there counting the week's earnings when he suddenly burst into a loud laugh as his glance fell upon Pipman. His blue naked shanks, miserably shivering under his leather apron, looked so enormously ridiculous when contrasted with the fully-dressed body and the venerable beard.

"Yes, you grin!" said Pipman, laughing too. "But suppose it was you had to take off your trousers in front of the old clothes' man, and wanted to get upstairs respectably! Those damned brats! 'Pipman's got D. T.,' they yell. 'Pipman's got D. T. And God knows I haven't got D. T., but I haven't got any trousers, and that's just the trouble! And these accursed open staircases! Olsen's hired girl took the opportunity, and you may be sure she saw all there was to see! You might lend me your old bags!"

Pelle opened his green chest and took out his work-day trousers.

"You'd better put a few more locks on that spinach-green lumber-chest of yours," said Pipman surlily. "After all, there might be a thief here, near heaven as we are!"

Pelle apparently did not hear the allusion, and locked the chest up again. Then, his short pipe in his hand, he strolled out on to the

platform. Above the roofs the twilight was rising from the Sound. A few doves were flying there, catching the last red rays of the sun on their white pinions, while down in the shaft the darkness lay like a hot lilac mist. The hurdy-gurdy man had come home and was playing his evening tune down there to the dancing children, while the inhabitants of the "Ark" were gossiping and squabbling from gallery to gallery. Now and again a faint vibrating note rose upward, and all fell silent. This was the dwarf Vinslev, who sat playing his flute somewhere in his den deep within the "Ark." He always hid himself right away when he played, for at such times he was like a sick animal, and sat quaking in his lair. The notes of his flute were so sweet, as they came trickling out of his hiding place, that they seemed like a song or a lament from another world. And the restless creatures in the "Ark" must perforce be silent and listen. Now Vinslev was in one of his gentle moods, and one somehow felt better for hearing him. But at times, in his dark moods, the devil seemed to enter into him, and breathed such music into his crazy mind that all his hearers felt a panic terror. Then the decaying timbers of the "Ark" seemed to expand and form a vast monstrous, pitch-black forest, in which all terror lay lurking, and one must strike out blindly in order to avoid being trampled on. The hearse-driver in the fourth story, who at other times was so gentle in his cups, would beat his wife shamefully, and the two lay about in their den drinking and fighting in self-defence. And Vinslev's devilish flute was to blame when Johnsen vainly bewailed his miserable life and ended it under the sewer-grating. But there was nothing to be said about the matter; Vinslev played the flute, and Johnsen's suicide was a death like any other.

Now the devil was going about with a ring in his nose; Vinslev's playing was like a gentle breeze that played on people's hearts, so that they opened like flowers. This was his good time.

Pelle knew all this, although he had not long been here; but it was nothing to him. For he wore the conqueror's shirt of mail, such as Father Lasse had dreamed of for him.

Down in the third story, on the built-out gallery, another sort of magic was at work. A climbing pelargonium and some ivy had wound themselves round the broken beams and met overhead, and there hung a little red paper lantern, which cast a cheerful glow over it all.

It was as though the summer night had found a sanctuary in the heart of this wilderness of stone. Under the lantern sat Madam Johnsen and her daughter sewing; and Hanne's face glowed like a rose in the night, and every now and then she turned it up toward Pelle and smiled, and made an impatient movement of her head. Then Pelle turned away a little, re-crossed his leg, and leant over on the other side, restless as a horse in blinkers.

Close behind him his neighbor, Madam Frandsen, was bustling about her little kitchen. The door stood open on to the platform, and she chattered incessantly, half to herself and half to Pelle, about her gout, her dead husband, and her lout of a son. She needed to rest her body, did this old woman. "My God, yes; and here I have to keep slaving and getting his food ready for Ferdinand from morning to night and from night to morning again. And he doesn't even trouble himself to come home to it. I can't go looking into his wild ways; all I can do is to sit here and worry and keep his meals warm. Now that's a tasty little bit; and he'll soon come when he's hungry, I tell myself. Ah, yes, our young days, they're soon gone. And you stand there and stare like a baa-lamb

and the girl down there is nodding at you fit to crack her neck! Yes, the men are a queer race; they pretend they wouldn't dare--and yet who is it causes all the misfortunes?"

"She doesn't want anything to do with me!" said Pelle grumpily; "she's just playing with me."

"Yes, a girl goes on playing with a white mouse until she gets it! You ought to be ashamed to stand there hanging your head! So young and well-grown as you are too! You cut her tail-feathers off, and you'll get a good wife!" She nudged him in the side with her elbow.

Then at last Pelle made up his mind to go clattering down the stairs to the third story, and along the gallery.

"Why have you been so stand-offish to-day?" said Madam Johnsen, making room for him. "You know you are always very welcome. What are all these preliminaries for?"

"Pelle is short-sighted; he can't see as far as this," said Hanne, tossing her head. She sat there turning her head about; she gazed at him smiling, her head thrown back and her mouth open. The light fell on her white teeth.

"Shall we get fine weather to-morrow?" asked the mother.

Pelle thought they would; he gazed up at the little speck of sky in a weather-wise manner. Hanne laughed.

"Are you a weather-prophet, Pelle? But you haven't any corns!"

"Now stop your teasing, child!" said the mother, pretending to slap her. "If it's fine to-morrow we want to go into the woods. Will you come with us?"

Pelle would be glad to go; but he hesitated slightly before answering.

"Come with us, Pelle," said Hanne, and she laid her hand invitingly on his shoulder. "And then you shall be my young man. It's so tedious going to the woods with the old lady; and then I want to be able to do as I like." She made a challenging movement with her head.

"Then we'll go from the North Gate by omnibus; I don't care a bit about going by train."

"From the North Gate? But it doesn't exist any longer, mummy! But there are still omnibuses running from the Triangle."

"Well then, from the Triangle, you clever one! Can I help it if they go pulling everything down? When I was a girl that North Gate was a splendid place. From there you could get a view over the country where my home was, and the summer nights were never so fine as on the wall. One didn't know what it was to feel the cold then. If one's clothes were thin one's heart was young."

Hanne went into the kitchen to make coffee. The door stood open. She hummed at her task and now and again joined in the conversation. Then she came out, serving Pelle with a cracked tea-tray. "But you look very peculiar tonight!" She touched Pelle's face and gazed at him

searchingly.

"I joined the trade union to-day," answered Pelle; he still had the feeling that of something unusual, and felt as though everybody must notice something about him.

Hanne burst out laughing. "Is that where you got that black sign on your forehead? Just look, mother, just look at him! The trade mark!" She turned her head toward the old woman.

"Ah, the rogue!" said the old woman, laughing. "Now she's smeared soot over your face!" She wetted her apron with her tongue and began to rub the soot away, Hanne standing behind him and holding his head in both hands so that he should not move. "Thank your stars that Pelle's a good-natured fellow," said the old woman, as she rubbed. "Or else he'd take it in bad part!"

Pelle himself laughed shamefacedly.

The hearse-driver came up through the trap in the gallery and turned round to mount to the fourth story. "Good evening!" he said, in his deep bass voice, as he approached them; "and good digestion, too, I ought to say!" He carried a great ham under his arm.

"Lord o' my body!" whispered Madam Johnsen. "There he is again with his ham; that means he's wasted the whole week's wages again. They've always got more than enough ham and bacon up there, poor things, but they've seldom got bread as well."

Now one sound was heard in the "Ark," now another. The crying of children which drifted so mournfully out of the long corridors whenever a door was opened turned to a feeble clucking every time some belated mother came rushing home from work to clasp the little one to her breast. And there was one that went on crying whether the mother was at home or at work. Her milk had failed her.

From somewhere down in the cellars the sleepy tones of a cradle-song rose up through the shaft; it was only "Grete with the child," who was singing her rag-doll asleep. The real mothers did not sing.

"She's always bawling away," said Hanne; "those who've got real children haven't got strength left to sing. But her brat doesn't need any food; and that makes a lot of difference when one is poor."

"To-day she was washing and ironing the child's things to make her fine for to-morrow, when her father comes. He is a lieutenant," said Hanne.

"Is he coming to-morrow, then?" asked Pelle naively.

Hanne laughed loudly. "She expects him every Sunday, but she has never seen him yet!"

"Well, well, that's hardly a thing to laugh about," said the old woman. "She's happy in her delusions, and her pension keeps her from need."

Pelle awoke to find Hanne standing by his bed and pulling his nose, and imitating his comical grimaces. She had come in over the roof. "Why are you stopping here, you?" she said eagerly. "We are waiting for you!"

"I can't get up!" replied Pelle piteously. "Pipman went out overnight with my trousers on and hasn't come back, so I lay down to sleep again!" Hanne broke into a ringing laugh. "What if he never comes back at all? You'll have to lie in bed always, like Mother Jahn!"

At this Pelle laughed too.

"I really don't know what I shall do! You must just go without me."

"No, that we shan't!" said Hanne very decidedly. "No, we'll fetch the picnic-basket and spread the things on your counterpane! After all, it's green! But wait now, I know what!" And she slipped through the back door and out on to the roof. Half an hour later she came again and threw a pair of striped trousers on the bed. "He's obliging, is Herr Klodsmajor! Now just hurry yourself a bit. I ran round to see the hearse-driver's Marie, where she works, and she gave me a pair of her master's week-day breeches. But she must have them again early to-morrow morning, so that his lordship doesn't notice it."

Directly she had gone Pelle jumped into the trousers. Just as he was ready he heard a terrific creaking of timbers. The Pipman was coming up the stairs. He held the rope in one hand, and at every turn of the staircase he bowed a few times outward over the rope. The women were shrieking in the surrounding galleries and landings. That amused him. His big, venerable head beamed with an expression of sublime joy.

"Ah, hold your tongue!" he said good-naturedly, as soon as he set eyes on Pelle. "You hold your tongue!" He propped himself up in the doorway and stood there staring.

Pelle seized him by the collar. "Where are my Sunday trousers?" he asked angrily. The Pipman had the old ones on, but where were the new?

The Pipman stared at him uncomprehending, his drowsy features working in the effort to disinter some memory or other. Suddenly he whistled. "Trousers, did you say, young man? What, what? Did you really say trousers? And you ask me where your trousers have got to? Then you might have said so at once! Because, d'you see, your bags ... I've ... yes ... why, I've pawned them!"

"You've pawned my best trousers?" cried Pelle, so startled that he loosed his hold.

"Yes, by God, that's what I did! You can look for yourself--there's no need to get so hot about it! You can't eat me, you know. That goes without saying. Yes, that's about it. One just mustn't get excited!"

"You're a scoundrelly thief!" cried Pelle. "That's what you are!"

"Now, now, comrade, always keep cool! Don't shout yourself hoarse. Nothing's been taken by me. Pipman's a respectable man, I tell you. Here, you can see for yourself! What'll you give me for that, eh?" He had taken the pawnticket from his pocket and held it out to Pelle,

deeply offended.

Pelle fingered his collar nervously; he was quite beside himself with rage. But what was the use? And now Hanne and her mother had come out over yonder. Hanne was wearing a yellow straw hat with broad ribbons. She looked bewitching; the old lady had the lunch-basket on her arm. She locked the door carefully and put the key under the doorstep. Then they set out.

There was no reasoning with this sot of a Pipman! He edged round Pelle with an uncertain smile, gazed inquisitively into his face, and kept carefully just out of his reach. "You're angry, aren't you?" he said confidently, as though he had been speaking to a little child. "Dreadfully angry? But what the devil do you want with two pairs of trousers, comrade? Yes, what do you want with two pairs of trousers?" His voice sounded quite bewildered and reproachful.

Pelle pulled out a pair of easy-looking women's shoes from under his bed, and slipped out through the inner door. He squeezed his way between the steep roof and the back wall of the room, ducked under a beam or two, and tumbled into the long gangway which ran between the roof-buildings and had rooms on either side of it. A loud buzzing sound struck suddenly on his ears. The doors of all the little rooms stood open on to the long gangway, which served as a common livingroom. Wrangling and chattering and the crying of children surged together in a deafening uproar; here was the life of a bee-hive. Here it's really lively, thought Pelle. To-morrow I shall move over here! He had thought over this for a long time, and now there should be an end of his lodging with Pipman.

In front of one of the doors stood a little eleven-years-old maiden, who was polishing a pair of plump-looking boy's boots; she wore an apron of sacking which fell down below her ankles, so that she kept treading on it. Within the room two children of nine and twelve were moving backward and forward with mighty strides, their hands in their pockets. Then enjoyed Sundays. In their clean shirt-sleeves, they looked like a couple of little grown-up men. This was the "Family"; they were Pelle's rescuers.

"Here are your shoes, Marie," said Pelle. "I couldn't do them any better."

She took them eagerly and examined the soles. Pelle had repaired them with old leather, and had therefore polished the insteps with cobbler's wax. "They're splendid now!" she whispered, and she looked at him gratefully. The boys came and shook hands with Pelle. "What will the shoes cost?" asked the elder, feeling for his purse with a solemn countenance.

"We'd better let that stand over, Peter; I'm in a hurry to-day," said Pelle, laughing. "We'll put it on the account until the New Year."

"I'm going out, too, to-day with the boys," said Marie, beaming with delight. "And you are going to the woods with Hanne and her mother, we know all about it!" Hopping and skipping, she accompanied him to the steps, and stood laughing down at him. To-day she was really like a child; the shrewd, old, careful woman was as though cast to the winds. "You can go down the main staircase," she cried.

A narrow garret-stairs led down to the main staircase, which lay inside the building and was supposed to be used only by those who lived on the side facing the street. This was the fashionable portion of the "Ark"; here lived old sea-dogs, shipbuilders, and other folks with regular incomes. The tradesmen who rented the cellars--the coal merchant, the old iron merchant, and the old clothes dealer, also had their dwellings here.

These dwellings were composed of two splendid rooms; they had no kitchen or entry, but in a corner of the landing on the main staircase, by the door, each family had a sink with a little board cover. When the cover was on one could use the sink as a seat; this was very convenient.

The others had almost reached the Knippels Bridge when he overtook them. "What a long time you've been!" said Hanne, as she took his arm. "And how's the 'Family'? Was Marie pleased with the shoes? Poor little thing, she hasn't been out for two Sundays because she had no soles to her shoes."

"She had only to come to me; I'm ever so much in her debt!"

"No, don't you believe she'd do that. The 'Family' is proud. I had to go over and steal the shoes somehow!"

"Poor little things!" said Madam Johnsen, "it's really touching to see how they hold together! And they know how to get along. But why are you taking Pelle's arm, Hanne? You don't mean anything by it."

"Must one always mean something by it, little mother? Pelle is my young man to-day, and has to protect me."

"Good Lord, what is he to protect you from? From yourself, mostly, and that's not easy!"

"Against a horde of robbers, who will fall upon me in the forest and carry me away. And you'll have to pay a tremendous ransom!"

"Good Lord, I'd much rather pay money to get rid of you! If I had any money at all! But have you noticed how blue the sky is? It's splendid with all this sun on your back--it warms you right through the cockles of your heart."

At the Triangle they took an omnibus and bowled along the sea-front. The vehicle was full of cheerful folk; they sat there laughing at a couple of good-natured citizens who were perspiring and hurling silly witticisms at one another. Behind them the dust rolled threateningly, and hung in a lazy cloud round the great black waterbutts which stood on their high trestles along the edge of the road. Out in the Sound the boats lay with sails outspread, but did not move; everything was keeping the Sabbath.

In the Zoological Gardens it was fresh and cool. The beech-leaves still retained their youthful brightness, and looked wonderfully light and festive against the century-old trunks. "Heigh, how beautiful the forest is!" cried Pelle. "It is like an old giant who has taken a young bride!"

He had never been in a real beech-wood before. One could wander about here as in a church. There were lots of other people here as well; all Copenhagen was on its legs in this fine weather. The people were as

though intoxicated by the sunshine; they were quite boisterous, and the sound of their voices lingered about the tree-tops and only challenged them to give vent to their feelings. People went strolling between the tree-trunks and amusing themselves in their own way, laying about them with great boughs and shouting with no other object than to hear their own voices. On the borders of the wood, a few men were standing and singing in chorus; they wore white caps, and over the grassy meadows merry groups were strolling or playing touch or rolling in the grass like young kittens.

Madam Johnsen walked confidently a few steps in advance; she was the most at home out here and led the way. Pelle and Hanne walked close together, in order to converse. Hanne was silent and absent; Pelle took her hand in order to make her run up a hillock, but she did not at first notice that he was touching her, and the hand was limp and clammy. She walked on as in a sleep, her whole bearing lifeless and taciturn. "She's dreaming!" said Pelle, and released her hand, offended. It fell lifelessly to her side.

The old woman turned round and looked about her with beaming eyes.

"The forest hasn't been so splendid for many years," she said. "Not since I was a young girl."

They climbed up past the Hermitage and thence out over the grass and into the forest again, until they came to the little ranger's house where they drank coffee and ate some of the bread-and-butter they had brought with them. Then they trudged on again. Madam Johnsen was paying a rare visit to the forest and wanted to see everything. The young people raised objections, but she was not to be dissuaded. She had girlhood memories of the forest, and she wanted to renew them; let them say what they would. If they were tired of running after her they could go their own way. But they followed her faithfully, looking about them wearily and moving along dully onward, moving along rather more stupidly than was justifiable.

On the path leading to Raavad there were not so many people.

"It's just as forest-like here as in my young days!" said the old woman. "And beautiful it is here. The leaves are so close, it's just the place for a loving couple of lovers. Now I'm going to sit down and take my boots off for a bit, my feet are beginning to hurt me. You look about you for a bit."

But the young people looked at one another strangely and threw themselves down at her feet. She had taken off her boots, and was cooling her feet in the fresh grass as she sat there chatting. "It's so warm to-day the stones feel quite burning--but you two certainly won't catch fire. Why do you stare in that funny way? Give each other a kiss in the grass, now! There's no harm in it, and it's so pretty to see!"

Pelle did not move. But Hanne moved over to him on her knees, put her hands gently round his head, and kissed him. When she had done so she looked into his eyes, lovingly, as a child might look at her doll. Her hat had slipped on to her shoulders. On her white forehead and her upper lip were little clear drops of sweat. Then, with a merry laugh, she suddenly released him. Pelle and the old woman had gathered flowers and boughs of foliage; these they now began to arrange. Hanne lay on her back and gazed up at the sky.

"You leave that old staring of yours alone," said the mother. "It does you no good."

"I'm only playing at 'Glory'; it's such a height here," said Hanne. "But at home in the 'Ark' you see more. Here it's too light."

"Yes, God knows, one does see more--a sewer and two privies. A good thing it's so dark there. No, one ought to have enough money to be able to go into the forests every Sunday all the summer. When one has grown up in the open air it's hard to be penned in between dirty walls all one's life. But now I think we ought to be going on. We waste so much time."

"Oh Lord, and I'm so comfortable lying here!" said Hanne lazily. "Pelle, just push my shawl under my head!"

Out of the boughs high above them broke a great bird. "There, there, what a chap!" cried Pelle, pointing at it. It sailed slowly downward, on its mighty outspread wings, now and again compressing the air beneath it with a few powerful strokes, and then flew onward, close above the tree-tops, with a scrutinizing glance.

"Jiminy, I believe that was a stork!" said Madam Johnsen. She reached for her boots, alarmed. "I won't stay here any longer now. One never knows what may happen." She hastily laced up her boots, with a prudish expression on her face. Pelle laughed until the tears stood in his eyes.

Hanne raised her head. "That was surely a crane, don't you think so? Stupid bird, always to fly along like that, staring down at everything as though he were short-sighted. If I were he I should fly straight up in the air and then shut my eyes and come swooping down. Then, wherever one got to, something or other would happen."

"Sure enough, this would happen, that you'd fall into the sea and be drowned. Hanne has always had the feeling that something has got to happen; and for that reason she can never hold on to what she's got in her hands."

"No, for I haven't anything in them!" cried Hanne, showing her hands and laughing. "Can you hold what you haven't got, Pelle?"

About four o'clock they came to the Schleswig Stone, where the Social-Democrats were holding a meeting. Pelle had never yet attended any big meeting at which he could hear agitators speaking, but had obtained his ideas of the new movements at second hand. They were in tune with the blind instinct within him. But he had never experienced anything really electrifying--only that confused, monotonous surging such as he had heard in his childhood when he listened with his ear to the hollow of the wooden shoe.

"Well, it looks as if the whole society was here!" said Madam Johnsen half contemptuously. "Now you can see all the Social-Democrats of Copenhagen. They never have been more numerous, although they pretend the whole of society belongs to them. But things don't always go so smoothly as they do on paper."

Pelle frowned, but was silent. He himself knew too little of the matter to be able to convert another.

The crowd affected him powerfully; here were several thousands of people gathered together for a common object, and it became exceedingly clear to him that he himself belonged to this crowd. "I belong to them too!" Over and over again the words repeated themselves rejoicingly in his mind. He felt the need to verify it all himself, and to prove himself grateful for the quickly-passing day. If the Court shoemaker hadn't spoken the words that drove him to join the Union he would still have been standing apart from it all, like a heathen. The act of subscribing the day before was like a baptism. He felt quite different in the society of these men--he felt as he did not feel with others. And as the thousands of voices broke into song, a song of jubilation of the new times that were to come, a cold shudder went through him. He had a feeling as though a door within him had opened, and as though something that had lain closely penned within him had found its way to the light.

Up on the platform stood a darkish man talking earnestly in a mighty voice. Shoulder to shoulder the crowd stood breathless, listening open-mouthed, with every face turned fixedly upon the speaker. A few were so completely under his spell that they reproduced the play of his features. When he made some particular sally from his citadel a murmur of admiration ran through the crowd. There was no shouting. He spoke of want and poverty, of the wearisome, endless wandering that won no further forward. As the Israelites in their faith bore the Ark of the Covenant through the wilderness, so the poor bore their hope through the unfruitful years. If one division was overthrown another was ready with the carrying-staves, and at last the day was breaking. Now they stood at the entrance to the Promised Land, with the proof in their hands that they were the rightful dwellers therein. All that was quite a matter of course; if there was anything that Pelle had experienced it was that wearisome wandering of God's people through the wilderness. That was the great symbol of poverty. The words came to him like something long familiar. But the greatness of the man's voice affected Pelle; there was something in the speech of this man which did not reach him through the understanding, but seemed somehow to burn its way in through the skin, there to meet something that lay expanding within him. The mere ring of anger in his voice affected Pelle; his words beat upon one's old wounds, so that they broke open like poisonous ulcers, and one heaved a deep breath of relief. Pelle had heard such a voice, ringing over all, when he lived in the fields and tended cows. He felt as though he too must let himself go in a great shout and subdue the whole crowd by his voice --he too! To be able to speak like that, now thundering and now mild, like the ancient prophets!

A peculiar sense of energy was exhaled by this dense crowd of men, this thinking and feeling crowd. It produced a singular feeling of strength. Pelle was no longer the poor journeyman shoemaker, who found it difficult enough to make his way. He became one, as he stood there, with that vast being; he felt its strength swelling within him; the little finger shares in the strength of the whole body. A blind certainty of irresistibility went out from this mighty gathering, a spur to ride the storm with. His limbs swelled; he became a vast, monstrous being that only needed to go trampling onward in order to conquer everything. His brain was whirling with energy, with illimitable, unconquerable strength!

Pelle had before this gone soaring on high and had come safely to earth again. And this time also he came to ground, with a long sigh of relief, as though he had cast off a heavy burden. Hanne's arm lay in his; he

pressed it slightly. But she did notice him; she too now was far away. He looked at her pretty neck, and bent forward to see her face. The great yellow hat threw a golden glimmer over it. Her active intelligence played restlessly behind her strained, frozen features; her eyes looked fixedly before her. It has taken hold of her too, he thought, full of happiness; she is far away from here. It was something wonderful to know that they were coupled together in the same interests--were like man and wife!

At that very moment he accidentally noticed the direction of her fixed gaze, and a sharp pain ran through his heart. Standing on the level ground, quite apart from the crowd, stood a tall, handsome man, astonishingly like the owner of Stone Farm in his best days; the sunlight was coming and going over his brown skin and his soft beard. Now that he turned his face toward Pelle his big, open features reminded him of the sea.

Hanne started, as though awakening from a deep sleep, and noticed Pelle.

"He is a sailor!" she said, in a curious, remote voice, although Pelle had not questioned her. God knows, thought Pelle, vexedly, how is it she knows him; and he drew his arm from hers. But she took it again at once and pressed it against her soft bosom. It was as though she suddenly wanted to give him a feeling of security.

She hung heavily on his arm and stood with her eyes fixed unwaveringly on the speakers' platform. Her hands busied themselves nervously about her hair. "You are so restless, child," said the mother, who had seated herself at their feet. "You might let me lean back against your knee; I was sitting so comfortably before."

"Yes," said Hanne, and she put herself in the desired position. Her voice sounded quite excited.

"Pelle," she whispered suddenly, "if he comes over to us I shan't answer him. I shan't."

"Do you know him, then?"

"No, but it does happen sometimes that men come and speak to one. But then you'll say I belong to you, won't you?"

Pelle was going to refuse, but a shudder ran through her. She's feverish, he thought compassionately; one gets fever so easily in the "Ark." It comes up with the smell out of the sewer. She must have lied to me nicely, he thought after a while. Women are cunning, but he was too proud to question her. And then the crowd shouted "Hurrah!" so that the air rang. Pelle shouted with them; and when they had finished the man had disappeared.

They went over to the Hill, the old woman keeping her few steps in advance. Hanne hummed as she went; now and then she looked questioningly at Pelle--and then went on humming.

"It's nothing to do with me," said Pelle morosely. "But it's not right of you to have lied to me."

"I lie to you? But Pelle!" She gazed wonderingly into his eyes.

"Yes, that you do! There's something between you and him."

Hanne laughed, a clear, innocent laugh, but suddenly broken off. "No, Pelle, no, what should I have to do with him? I have never even seen him before. I have never even once kissed a man--yes, you, but you are my brother."

"I don't particularly care about being your brother--not a straw, and you know that!"

"Have I done anything to offend you? I'm sorry if I have." She seized his hand.

"I want you for my wife!" cried Pelle passionately.

Hanne laughed. "Did you hear, mother? Pelle wants me for his wife!" she cried, beaming.

"Yes, I see and hear more than you think," said Madam Johnsen shortly.

Hanne looked from one to the other and became serious. "You are so good, Pelle," she said softly, "but you can't come to me bringing me something from foreign parts--I know everything about you, but I've never dreamed of you at night. Are you a fortunate person?"

"I'll soon show you if I am," said Pelle, raising his head. "Only give me a little time."

"Lord, now she's blethering about fortune again," cried the mother, turning round. "You really needn't have spoiled this lovely day for us with your nonsense. I was enjoying it all so."

Hanne laughed helplessly. "Mother will have it that I'm not quite right in my mind, because father hit me on the head once when I was a little girl," she told Pelle.

"Yes, it's since then she's had these ideas. She'll do nothing but go rambling on at random with her ideas and her wishes. She'll sit whole days at the window and stare, and she used to make the children down in the yard even crazier than herself with her nonsense. And she was always bothering me to leave everything standing--poor as we were after my man died--just to go round and round the room with her and the dolls and sing those songs all about earls. Yes, Pelle, you may believe I've wept tears of blood over her."

Hanne wandered on, laughing at her mother's rebuke, and humming--it was the tune of the "Earl's Song."

"There, you hear her yourself," said the old woman, nudging Pelle. "She's got no shame in her--there's nothing to be done with her!"

Up on the hill there was a deafening confusion of people in playful mood; wandering to and fro in groups, blowing into children's trumpets and "dying pigs," and behaving like frolicsome wild beasts. At every moment some one tooted in your ear, to make you jump, or you suddenly discovered that some rogue was fixing something on the back of your coat. Hanne was nervous; she kept between Pelle and her mother, and could not stand still. "No, let's go away somewhere--anywhere!" she said, laughing in bewilderment.

Pelle wanted to treat them to coffee, so they went on till they found a tent where there was room for them. Hallo! There was the hurdy-gurdy man from home, on a roundabout, nodding to him as he went whirling round. He held his hand in front of his mouth like a speaking-trumpet in order to shout above the noise. "Mother's coming up behind you with the Olsens," he roared.

"I can't hear what he says at all," said Madam Johnsen. She didn't care about meeting people out of the "Ark" to-day.

When the coffee was finished they wandered up and down between the booths and amused themselves by watching the crowd. Hanne consented to have her fortune told; it cost five and twenty ore, but she was rewarded by an unexpected suitor who was coming across the sea with lots of money. Her eyes shone.

"I could have done it much better than that!" said Madam Johnsen.

"No, mother, for you never foretell me anything but misfortune," replied Hanne, laughing.

Madam Johnsen met an acquaintance who was selling "dying pigs." She sat down beside her. "You go over there now and have a bit of a dance while I rest my tired legs," she said.

The young people went across to the dancing marquee and stood among the onlookers. From time to time they had five ore worth of dancing. When other men came up and asked Hanne to dance, she shook her head; she did not care to dance with any one but Pelle.

The rejected applicants stood a little way off, their hats on the backs of their heads, and reviled her. Pelle had to reprove her. "You have offended them," he said, "and perhaps they're screwed and will begin to quarrel."

"Why should I be forced to dance with anybody, with somebody I don't know at all?" replied Hanne. "I'm only going to dance with you!" She made angry eyes, and looked bewitching in her unapproachableness. Pelle had nothing against being her only partner. He would gladly have fought for her, had it been needful.

When they were about to go he discovered the foreigner right at the back of the dancing-tent. He urged Hanne to make haste, but she stood there, staring absent-mindedly in the midst of the dancers as though she did not know what was happening around her. The stranger came over to them. Pelle was certain that Hanne had not seen him.

Suddenly she came to herself and gripped Pelle's arm. "Shan't we go, then?" she said impatiently, and she quickly dragged him away.

At the doorway the stranger came to meet them and bowed before Hanne. She did not look at him, but her left arm twitched as though she wanted to lay it across his shoulders.

"My sweetheart isn't dancing any more; she is tired," said Pelle shortly, and he led her away.

"A good thing we've come out from there," she cried, with a feeling of

deliverance, as they went back to her mother. "There were no amusing dancers."

Pelle was taken aback; then she had not seen the stranger, but merely believed that it had been one of the others who had asked her to dance! It was inconceivable that she should have seen him; and yet a peculiar knowledge had enveloped her, as though she had seen obliquely through her down-dropped eyelids; and then it was well known women could see round corners! And that twitch of the arm! He did not know what to think. "Well, it's all one to me," he thought, "for I'm not going to be led by the nose!"

He had them both on his arm as they returned under the trees to the station. The old woman was lively; Hanne walked on in silence and let them both talk. But suddenly she begged Pelle to be quiet a moment; he looked at her in surprise.

"It's singing so beautifully in my ears; but when you talk then it stops!"

"Nonsense! Your blood is too unruly," said the mother, "and mouths were meant to be used."

During the journey Pelle was reserved. Now and again he pressed Hanne's hand, which lay, warm and slightly perspiring, in his upon the seat.

But the old woman's delight was by no means exhausted, the light shining from the city and the dark peaceful Sound had their message for her secluded life, and she began to sing, in a thin, quavering falsetto:

"Gently the Night upon her silent wings
Comes, and the stars are bright in east and west;
And lo, the bell of evening rings;
And men draw homewards, and the birds all rest."

But from the Triangle onward it was difficult for her to keep step; she had run herself off her legs.

"Many thanks for to-day," she said to Pelle, down in the courtyard. "Tomorrow one must start work again and clean old uniform trousers. But it's been a beautiful outing." She waddled forward and up the steps, groaning a little at the numbers of them, talking to herself.

Hanne stood hesitating. "Why did you say 'my sweetheart'?" she asked suddenly. "I'm not."

"You told me to," answered Pelle, who would willingly have said more.

"Oh, well!" said Hanne, and she ran up the stairs. "Goodnight, Pelle!" she called down to him.

IV

Pelle was bound to the "Family" by peculiar ties. The three orphans were the first to reach him a friendly helping hand when he stood in the open

street three days after his landing, robbed of his last penny.

He had come over feeling important enough. He had not slept all night on his bench between decks among the cattle. Excitement had kept him awake; and he lay there making far-reaching plans concerning himself and his twenty-five kroner. He was up on deck by the first light of morning, gazing at the shore, where the great capital with its towers and factory-chimneys showed out of the mist. Above the city floated its misty light, which reddened in the morning sun, and gave a splendor to the prospect. And the passage between the forts and the naval harbor was sufficiently magnificent to impress him. The crowd on the landing-stage before the steamer laid alongside and the cabmen and porters began shouting and calling, was enough to stupefy him, but he had made up his mind beforehand that nothing should disconcert him. It would have been difficult enough in any case to disentangle himself from all this confusion.

And then Fortune herself was on his side. Down on the quay stood a thick-set, jovial man, who looked familiarly at Pelle; he did not shout and bawl, but merely said quietly, "Good-day, countryman," and offered Pelle board and lodging for two kroner a day. It was good to find a countryman in all this bustle, and Pelle confidently put himself in his hands. He was remarkably helpful; Pelle was by no means allowed to carry the green chest. "I'll soon have that brought along!" said the man, and he answered everything with a jolly "I'll soon arrange that; you just leave that to me!"

When three days had gone by, he presented Pelle with a circumstantial account, which amounted exactly to five and twenty kroner. It was a curious chance that Pelle had just that amount of money. He was not willing to be done out of it, but the boarding-house keeper, Elleby, called in a policeman from the street, and Pelle had to pay.

He was standing in the street with his green box, helpless and bewildered, not knowing what to be about. Then a little boy came whistling up to him and asked if he could not help him. "I can easily carry the box alone, to wherever you want it, but it will cost twenty-five ore and ten ore for the barrow. But if I just take one handle it will be only ten ore," he said, and he looked Pelle over in a business-like manner. He did not seem to be more than nine or ten years old.

"But I don't know where I shall go," said Pelle, almost crying. "I've been turned out on the street and have nowhere where I can turn. I am quite a stranger here in the city and all my money has been taken from me."

The youngster made a gesture in the air as though butting something with his head. "Yes, that's a cursed business. You've fallen into the hands of the farmer-catchers, my lad. So you must come home with us--you can very well stay with us, if you don't mind lying on the floor."

"But what will your parents say if you go dragging me home?"

"I haven't any parents, and Marie and Peter, they'll say nothing. Just come with me, and, after all, you can get work with old Pipman. Where do you come from?"

"From Bornholm."

"So did we! That's to say, a long time ago, when we were quite children. Come along with me, countryman!" The boy laughed delightedly and seized one handle of the chest.

It was also, to be sure, a fellow-countryman who had robbed him; but none the less he went with the boy; it was not in Pelle's nature to be distrustful.

So he had entered the "Ark," under the protection of a child. The sister, a little older than the other two, found little Karl's action entirely reasonable, and the three waifs, who had formerly been shy and retiring, quickly attached themselves to Pelle. They found him in the street and treated him like an elder comrade, who was a stranger, and needed protection. They afforded him his first glimpse of the great city, and they helped him to get work from Pipman.

On the day after the outing in the forest, Pelle moved over to the row of attics, into a room near the "Family," which was standing empty just then. Marie helped him to get tidy and to bring his things along, and with an easier mind he shook himself free of his burdensome relations with Pipman. There was an end of his profit-sharing, and all the recriminations which were involved in it. Now he could enter into direct relations with the employers and look his comrades straight in the eyes. For various reasons it had been a humiliating time; but he had no feeling of resentment toward Pipman; he had learned more with him in a few months than during his whole apprenticeship at home.

He obtained a few necessary tools from an ironmonger, and bought a bench and a bed for ready money. From the master-shoemaker he obtained as a beginning some material for children's shoes, which he made at odd times. His principal living he got from Master Beck in Market Street.

Beck was a man of the old school; his clientele consisted principally of night watchmen, pilots, and old seamen, who lived out in Kristianshavn. Although he was born and had grown up in Copenhagen, he was like a country shoemaker to look at, going about in canvas slippers which his daughter made for him, and in the mornings he smoked his long pipe at the house-door. He had old-fashioned views concerning handwork, and was delighted with Pelle, who could strain any piece of greased leather and was not afraid to strap a pair of old dubbin'd boots with it. Beck's work could not well be given out to do at home, and Pelle willingly established himself in the workshop and was afraid of no work that came his way. But he would not accept bed and board from his master in the old-fashioned way.

From the very first day this change was an improvement. He worked heart and soul and began to put by something with which to pay off his debt to Sort. Now he saw the day in the distance when he should be able to send for Father Lasse.

In the morning, when the dwellers on the roof, drunken with sleep, tumbled out into the long gangway, in order to go to their work, before the quarter-to-six whistle sounded, Pelle already sat in his room hammering on his cobbler's last. About seven o'clock he went to Beck's workshop, if there was anything for him to do there. And he received orders too from the dwellers in the "Ark."

In connection with this work he acquired an item of practical experience, an idea which was like a fruitful seed which lay germinating

where it fell and continually produced fresh fruit. It was equivalent to an improvement in his circumstances to discover that he had shaken off one parasite; if only he could send the other after him and keep all his profits for himself!

That sounded quite fantastic, but Pelle had no desire to climb up to the heights only to fall flat on the earth again. He had obtained certain tangible experience, and he wanted to know how far it would take him. While he sat there working he pursued the question in and out among his thoughts, so that he could properly consider it.

Pipman was superfluous as a middleman; one could get a little work without the necessity of going to him and pouring a flask of brandy down his thirsty gullet. But was it any more reasonable that the shoes Pelle made should go to the customer by way of the Court shoemaker and yield him carriages and high living? Could not Pelle himself establish relations with his customers? And shake off Meyer as he had shaken off Pipman? Why, of course! It was said that the Court shoemaker paid taxes on a yearly income of thirty thousand kroner. "That ought to be evenly divided among all those who work for him!" thought Pelle, as he hammered away at his pegs. "Then Father Lasse wouldn't need to stay at home a day longer, or drag himself through life so miserably."

Here was something which he could take in hand with the feeling that he was setting himself a practical problem in economics--and one that apparently had nothing to do with his easy belief in luck. This idea was always lurking somewhere in secrecy, and held him upright through everything--although it did not afford him any definite assistance. A hardly earned instinct told him that it was only among poor people that this idea could be developed. This belief was his family inheritance, and he would retain it faithfully through all vicissitudes; as millions had done before him, always ready to cope with the unknown, until they reached the grave and resigned the inherited dream. There lay hope for himself in this, but if he miscarried, the hope itself would remain in spite of him. With Fortune there was no definite promise of tangible success for the individual, but only a general promise, which was maintained through hundreds of years of servitude with something of the long patience of eternity.

Pelle bore the whole endless wandering within himself: it lay deep in his heart, like a great and incomprehensible patience. In his world, capacity was often great enough, but resignation was always greater. It was thoroughly accustomed to see everything go to ruin and yet to go on hoping.

Often enough during the long march, hope had assumed tones like those of "David's City with streets of gold," or "Paradise," or "The splendor of the Lord returns." He himself had questioningly given ear; but never until now had the voice of hope sounded in a song that had to do with food and clothing, house and farm; so how was he to find his way?

He could only sit and meditate the problem as to how he should obtain, quickly and easily, a share in the good things of this world; presumptuously, and with an impatience for which he himself could not have accounted.

And round about him things were happening in the same way. An awakening shudder was passing through the masses. They no longer wandered on and on with blind and patient surrender, but turned this way and that in

bewildered consultation. The miracle was no longer to be accomplished of itself when the time was fulfilled. For an evil power had seized upon their great hope, and pressed her knees together so that she could not bring forth; they themselves must help to bring happiness into the world!

The unshakable fatalism which hitherto had kept them on their difficult path was shattered; the masses would no longer allow themselves to be held down in stupid resignation. Men who all their lives had plodded their accustomed way to and from their work now stood still and asked unreasonable questions as to the aim of it all. Even the simple ventured to cast doubts upon the established order of things. Things were no longer thus because they must be; there was a painful cause of poverty. That was the beginning of the matter; and now they conceived a desire to master life; their fingers itched to be tearing down something that obstructed them--but what it was they did not know.

All this was rather like a whirlpool; all boundaries disappeared. Unfamiliar powers arose, and the most good-natured became suspicious or were frankly bewildered. People who had hitherto crawled like dogs in order to win their food were now filled with self-will, and preferred to be struck down rather than bow down of their own accord. Prudent folks who had worked all their lives in one place could no longer put up with the conditions, and went at a word. Their hard-won endurance was banished from their minds, and those who had quietly borne the whole burden on their shoulders were now becoming restive; they were as unwilling and unruly as a pregnant woman. It was as though they were acting under the inward compulsion of an invisible power, and were striving to break open the hard shell which lay over something new within them. One could perceive that painful striving in their bewildered gaze and in their sudden crazy grasp at the empty air.

There was something menacing in the very uncertainty which possessed the masses. It was as though they were listening for a word to sound out of the darkness. Swiftly they resolved to banish old custom and convention from their minds, in order to make room there. On every side men continually spoke of new things, and sought blindly to find their way to them; it was a matter of course that the time had come and the promised land was about to be opened to them. They went about in readiness to accomplish something--what, they did not know; they formed themselves into little groups; they conducted unfortunate strikes, quite at random. Others organized debating societies, and began in weighty speech to squabble about the new ideas--which none of them knew anything about. These were more particularly the young men. Many of them had come to the city in search of fortune, as had Pelle himself, and these were full of burning restlessness. There was something violent and feverish about them.

Such was the situation when Pelle entered the capital. It was chaotic; there was no definite plan by which they could reach their goal. The masses no longer supported one another, but were in a state of solution, bewildered and drifting about in the search for something that would weld them together. In the upper ranks of society people noted nothing but the insecurity of the position of the workers; people complained of their restlessness, a senseless restlessness which jeopardized revenue and aggravated foreign competition. A few thoughtful individuals saw the people as one great listening ear; new preachers were arising who wanted to lead the crowd by new ways to God. Pelle now and again allowed the stream to carry him into such quarters, but he did allow himself to be

caught; it was only the old story over again; there was nothing in it. Nobody now was satisfied with directions how to reach heaven--the new prophets disappeared as quickly as they had arisen.

But in the midst of all this confusion there was one permanent center, one community, which had steadily increased during the years, and had fanatically endured the scorn and the persecution of those above and below, until it at last possessed several thousand of members. It stood fast in the maelstrom and obstinately affirmed that its doctrines were those of the future. And now the wind seemed to be filling its sails; it replied after its own fashion to the impatient demands for a heaven to be enjoyed here on earth and an attainable happiness.

Pelle had been captured by the new doctrines out by the Schleswig Stone, and had thrown himself, glowing and energetic, into the heart of the movement. He attended meetings and discussions, his ears on the alert to absorb anything really essential; for his practical nature called for something palpable whereupon his mind could get to work. Deep within his being was a mighty flux, like that of a river beneath its ice; and at times traces of it rose to the surface, and alarmed him. Yet he had no power to sound the retreat; and when he heard the complaint, in respect of the prevailing unrest, that it endangered the welfare of the nation, he was not able to grasp the connection.

"It's preposterous that they should knock off work without any reason," he once told Morten, when the baker's driver had thrown up his place. "Like your driver, for example--he had no ground for complaint."

"Perhaps he suddenly got a pain between the legs because his ancestor great-grandfather was once made to ride on a wooden horse--he came from the country," said Morten solemnly.

Pelle looked at him quickly. He did not like Morten's ambiguous manner of expressing himself. It made him feel insecure.

"Can't you talk reasonably?" he said. "I can't understand you."

"No? And yet that's quite reason enough--there have been lots of reasons since his great-grandfather's days. What the devil--why should they want a reason referring to yesterday precisely? Don't you realize that the worker, who has so long been working the treadmill in the belief that the movement was caused by somebody else, has suddenly discovered that it's he that keeps the whole thing in motion? For that's what is going on. The poor man is not merely a slave who treads the wheel, and had a handful of meal shoved down his gullet now and again to keep him from starving to death. He is on the point of discovering that he performs a higher service, look you! And now the movement is altering--it is continuing of itself! But that you probably can't see," he added, as he noted Pelle's incredulous expression.

"No, for I'm not one of the big-bellies," said Pelle, laughing, "and you're no prophet, to prophesy such great things. And I have enough understanding to realize that if you want to make a row you must absolutely have something definite to make a fuss about, otherwise it won't work. But that about the wooden horse isn't good enough!"

"That's just the point about lots of fusses," Morten replied. "There's no need to give a pretext for anything that everybody's interested in."

Pelle pondered further over all this while at work. But these deliberations did not proceed as in general; as a rule, such matters as were considered in his world of thought were fixed by the generations and referred principally to life and death. He had to set to work in a practical manner, and to return to his own significant experience.

Old Pipman was superfluous; that Pelle himself had proved. And there was really no reason why he should not shake off the Court shoemaker as well; the journeymen saw to the measuring and the cutting-out; indeed, they did the whole work. He was also really a parasite, who had placed himself at the head of them all, and was sucking up their profits. But then Morten was right with his unabashed assertion that the working-man carried on the whole business! Pelle hesitated a little over this conclusion; he cautiously verified the fact that it was in any case valid in his craft. There was some sense in winning back his own—but how?

His sound common-sense demanded something that would take the place of Meyer and the other big parasites. It wouldn't do for every journeyman to sit down and botch away on his own account, like a little employer; he had seen that plainly enough in the little town at home; it was mere bungling.

So he set himself to work out a plan for a cooperative business. A number of craftsmen should band together, each should contribute his little capital, and a place of business would be selected. The work would be distributed according to the various capacities of the men, and they would choose one from their midst who would superintend the whole. In this way the problem could be solved—every man would receive the full profit of his work.

When he had thoroughly thought out his plan, he went to Morten.

"They've already put that into practice!" cried Morten, and he pulled out a book. "But it didn't work particularly well. Where did you get the idea from?"

"I thought it out myself," answered Pelle self-consciously.

Morten looked a trifle incredulous; then he consulted the book, and showed Pelle that his idea was described there—almost word for word—as a phase of the progressive movement. The book was a work on Socialism.

But Pelle did not lose heart on that account! He was proud to have hit on something that others had worked out before him—and learned people, too! He began to have confidence in his own ideas, and eagerly attended lectures and meetings. He had energy and courage, that he knew. He would try to make himself efficient, and then he would seek out those at the head of things, who were preparing the way, and would offer them his services.

Hitherto Fortune had always hovered before his eyes, obscurely, like a fairy-tale, as something that suddenly swooped down upon a man and lifted him to higher regions, while all those who were left behind gazed longingly after him—that was the worst of it! But now he perceived new paths, which for all those that were in need led on to fortune, just as the "Great Power" had fancied in the hour of his death. He did not quite understand where everything was to come from, but that was just the thing he must discover.

All this kept his mind in a state of new and unaccustomed activity. He was not used to thinking things out for himself, but had until now always adhered to the ideas which had been handed down from generation to generation as established--and he often found it difficult and wearisome. Then he would try to shelve the whole subject, in order to escape from it; but it always returned to him.

When he was tired, Hanne regained her influence over him, and then he went over to see her in the evenings. He knew very well that this would lead to nothing good. To picture for himself a future beside Hanne seemed impossible; for her only the moment existed. Her peculiar nature had a certain power over him--that was all. He often vowed to himself that he would not allow her to make a fool of him--but he always went over to see her again. He must try to conquer her--and then take the consequences.

One day, when work was over, he strolled across to see her. There was no one on the gallery, so he went into the little kitchen.

"Is that you, Pelle?" Hanne's voice sounded from the living-room. "Come in, then!"

She had apparently been washing her body, and was now sitting in a white petticoat and chemise, and combing her beautiful hair. There was something of the princess about her; she took such care of her body, and knew how it should be done. The mirror stood before her, on the window-sill; from the little back room one could see, between the roofs and the mottled party-wall, the prison and the bridge and the canal that ran beneath it. Out beyond the Exchange the air was gray and streaked with the tackle of ships.

Pelle sat down heavily by the stove, his elbows on his knees, and gazed on the floor. He was greatly moved. If only the old woman would come! "I believe I'll go out," he thought, "and behave as though I were looking out for her." But he remained sitting there. Against the wall was the double bed with its red-flowered counterpane, while the table stood by the opposite wall, with the chairs pushed under it. "She shouldn't drive me too far," he thought, "or perhaps it'll end in my seizing her, and then she'll have her fingers burnt!"

"Why don't you talk to me, Pelle?" said Hanne.

He raised his head and looked at her in the mirror. She was holding the end of her plait in her mouth, and looked like a kitten biting its tail.

"Oh, what should I talk about?" he replied morosely.

"You are angry with me, but it isn't fair of you--really, it isn't fair! Is it my fault that I'm so terrified of poverty? Oh, how it does frighten me! It has always been like that ever since I was born, and you are poor too, Pelle, as poor as I am! What would become of us both? We know the whole story!"

"What will become of us?" said Pelle.

"That I don't know, and it's all the same to me--only it must be something I don't know all about. Everything is so familiar if one is poor--one knows every stitch of one's clothes by heart; one can watch

them wearing out. If you'd only been a sailor, Pelle!"

"Have you seen _him_ again?" asked Pelle.

Hanne laughingly shook her head. "No; but I believe something will happen--something splendid. Out there lies a great ship--I can see it from the window. It's full of wonderful things, Pelle."

"You are crazy!" said Pelle scornfully. "That's a bark--bound for the coal quay. She comes from England with coals."

"That may well be," replied Hanne indifferently. "I don't mind that. There's something in me singing, 'There lies the ship, and it has brought something for me from foreign parts.' And you needn't grudge me my happiness."

But now her mother came in, and began to mimic her.

"Yes, out there lies the ship that has brought me something--out there lies the ship that has brought me something! Good God! Haven't you had enough of listening to your own crazy nonsense? All through your childhood you've sat there and made up stories and looked out for the ship! We shall soon have had enough of it! And you let Pelle sit there and watch you uncovering your youth--aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Pelle's so good, mother--and he's my brother, too. He thinks nothing of it."

"Thinks nothing of it? Yes, he does; he thinks how soft and white your bosom is! And he's fit to cry inside of him because he mustn't lay his head there. I, too, have known what it is to give joy, in my young days."

Hanne blushed from her bosom upward. She threw a kerchief over her bosom and ran into the kitchen.

The mother looked after her.

"She's got a skin as tender as that of a king's daughter. Wouldn't one think she was a cuckoo's child? Her father couldn't stand her. 'You've betrayed me with some fine gentleman'--he used so often to say that. 'We poor folks couldn't bring a piece like that into the world!' 'As God lives, Johnsen,' I used to say, 'you and no other are the girl's father.' But he used to beat us--he wouldn't believe me. He used to fly into a rage when he looked at the child, and he hated us both because she was so fine. So its no wonder that she had gone a bit queer in the head. You can believe she's cost me tears of blood, Pelle. But you let her be, Pelle. I could wish you could get her, but it wouldn't be best for you, and it isn't good for you to have her playing with you. And if you got her after all, it would be even worse. A woman's whims are poor capital for setting up house with."

Pelle agreed with her in cold blood; he had allowed himself to be fooled, and was wasting his youth upon a path that led nowhere. But now there should be an end of it.

Hanne came back and looked at him, radiant, full of visions. "Will you take me for a walk, Pelle?" she asked him.

"Yes!" answered Pelle joyfully, and he threw all his good resolutions overboard.

V

Pelle and his little neighbor used to compete as to which of them should be up first in the morning. When she was lucky and had to wake him her face was radiant with pride. It sometimes happened that he would lie in bed a little longer, so that he should not deprive her of a pleasure, and when she knocked on the wall he would answer in a voice quite stupid with drowsiness. But sometimes her childish years demanded the sleep that was their right, when Pelle would move about as quietly as possible, and then, at half-past six, it would be his turn to knock on the wall. On these occasions she would feel ashamed of herself all the morning. Her brothers were supposed to get their early coffee and go to work by six o'clock. Peter, who was the elder, worked in a tin-plate works, while Earl sold the morning papers, and undertook every possible kind of occasional work as well; this he had to hunt for, and you could read as much in his whole little person. There was something restless and nomadic about him, as though his thoughts were always seeking some outlet.

It was quite a lively neighborhood at this time of day; across the floor of the well, and out through the tunnel-like entry there was an endless clattering of footsteps, as the hundreds of the "Ark" tumbled out into the daylight, half tipsy with sleep, dishevelled, with evidence of hasty rising in their eyes and their garments, smacking their lips as though they relished the contrast between the night and day, audibly yawning as they scuttled away. Up in Pelle's long gangway factory girls, artisans, and newspaper women came tumbling out, half naked; they were always late, and stood there scolding until their turn came to wash themselves. There was only one lavatory at either end of the gangway, and there was only just time to sluice their eyes and wake themselves up. The doors of all the rooms stood open; the odors of night were heavy on the air.

On the days when Pelle worked at home little Marie was in high spirits. She sang and hummed continually, with her curiously small voice, and every few minutes she would run in and offer Pelle her services. At such times she would station herself behind him and stand there in silence, watching the progress of his work, while her breathing was audibly perceptible, as a faint, whistling sound. There was a curious, still, brooding look about her little under-grown figure that reminded Pelle of Morten's unhappy sister; something hard and undeveloped, as in the fruit of a too-young tree. But the same shadow did not lie upon her; childish toil had not steeped her as with a bitter sap; only her outer shell was branded by it. There was about her, on the contrary, a gleam of careful happiness, as though things had turned out much better than she had expected. Perhaps this was because she could see the result of her hard childish labors; no one could scatter that to the winds.

She was a capable little housewife, and her brothers respected her, and

faithfully brought home what they earned. Then she took what she needed, laid something by toward the rent, in a box which was put away in the chest of drawers, and gave them something wherewith to amuse themselves.

"They must have something!" she told people; "besides, men always need money in their pockets. But they deserve it, for they have never yet spent a farthing in drink. On Saturday nights they always come straight home with their earnings. But now I must get on with my work; it's dreadful how the time runs through one's hands."

She talked just like a young married woman, and Pelle inwardly chuckled over her.

After a while she would peep in again; it was time for Pelle to have a bite of something; or else she would bring her mending with her and sit down on the edge of a chair.

She was always in a fidget lest a saucepan should boil over, or something else go amiss.

At such times they had long, sensible talks. Little Marie did not care about gossip; but there were plenty of serious things which had to be talked over; the difficult times, Marie's parents, and then the wonderful fact that they had met one another once before, a long time ago; that was an event which provided her with an inexhaustible mine of discussion, although she herself could not remember the occasion.

But Pelle remembered it all quite well, and over and over again he had to tell her how one day at home he had gone down to the harbor, in order to show old Thatcher Holm the steamers; and she always laughed when she heard how Holm had run away in his alarm every time the steam-crane blew off steam. And then? Yes, the steamer was just on the point of taking on board a heap of furniture, old beds, tables, and the like.

"That was all ours!" cried Marie, clapping her hands. "We still had a few things then. We took them to the pawn-shop when father lay ill after his fall." And then she would meet his gaze, asking for more.

And in the midst of all the furniture stood a man with a fine old mirror in his arms. Thatcher Holm knew him, and had a talk with him.

"He was crying, wasn't he?" asked Marie compassionately. "Father was so unhappy, because things were going so badly with us."

And then she herself would talk about the hotel, down among the cliffs of the east coast, and of the fine guests who came there in summer. Three years they had kept the hotel, and Pelle had to name the sum out of which her father had been cheated. She was proud that they had once possessed so much. Ten thousand kroner!

Over here her father had found work as a stonemason's laborer, but one day he trod on a loose beam and fell. For a few months he lay sick, and all their household goods found their way to the pawn-shop; then he died, and then they came to the "Ark." Their mother did washing out of doors, but at last she became queer in the head. She could not bear unhappiness, and neglected her housework, to run about seeking consolation from all sorts of religious sects. At last she was quite demented, and one day she disappeared. It was believed that she had drowned herself in the canal. "But things are going well with us now," Marie always concluded; "now there's nothing to worry about."

"But don't you get tired of having all this to look after?" Pelle would ask, wondering.

She would look at him in astonishment. "Why should I be tired? There's not more than one can manage--if one only knows how to manage. And the children never make things difficult for me; they are pleased with everything I do."

The three orphans struggled on as well as they could, and were quite proud of their little household. When things went badly with them, they went hungry, and took serious counsel together; but they accepted help from no one. They lived in the continual fear that the police would get to know of their position, and haul them off to school. Then they would be forcibly separated and brought up at the expense of the poor rates. They were shy, and "kept themselves to themselves." In the "Ark" everybody liked them, and helped them to keep their secret. The other inmates managed their family affairs as best they could; there was always a scandal somewhere. It was a sort of satisfaction to have these three children living so decently in the midst of all this hotch-potch. People thought a great deal of their little model household, and protected it as though it had been a sanctuary.

To Pelle they attached themselves blindly. They had picked him up out of the streets, and they certainly regarded him to some extent as a foundling who was still under their protection. When Marie had given the boys their morning coffee, she carried some in to Pelle--it was no use protesting. And in the mornings, when she was busy indoors by herself, she would go round to him with broom and bucket. Her precocious, intelligent face was beaming with circumspection and the desire to help. She did not ask permission, but set to work where need was. If Pelle was away at Beck's workshop, he always found his room clean and tidy in the evening.

If he had work at home, she would bring coffee for the two of them during the morning. He did not dare to drive her away, for she would take that to heart, and would go about offended all the rest of the day; so he would run below to fetch a roll of white bread. Marie always found some pretext for putting aside her share for the boys; it gave her no real pleasure to enjoy anything by herself.

Pelle felt that he was making headway; and he was conscious of his own youth. He was continually in the rosiest of humors, and even Hanne could not throw any real shadow over his existence. In his relations with her there was something of a beautiful unreality; they left no permanent scar upon his heart.

He felt quite simply ashamed in the presence of this much tried child, whenever something cropped up to put him out of temper. He felt it was his duty to brighten her poverty-stricken life with his high spirits. He chatted merrily to her, chaffed her, teased her, to charm her from her unnatural solemnity. And she would smile, in her quiet, motherly fashion, as one smiles at a much-loved child who seeks to drive away our cares--and would then offer to do something for him.

"Shall I wash out your blouse or do up your shirt?" she would ask. Her gratitude always found its expression in some kind of work.

"No, thanks, Marie; Hanne and her mother look after that."

"But that's not work for the Princess--I can do it much better."

"The Princess?" said Pelle, raising his head. "Is that what they call her?"

"Only us children--we don't mean it unkindly. But we always played at there being a princess when she was with us--and she was always the princess. But do you know what? Some one will come and take her away--some one very distinguished. She has been promised from the cradle to a fine gentleman."

"What nonsense!" said Pelle crossly.

"But that's really true! When it rained we used to sit under the gallery--in the corner by the dustbin--and she used to tell us--and it's really true! And, besides, don't you think she's fascinating? She's really just like a princess--like that!" Marie made a gesture in the air with her fingers outspread. "And she knows everything that is going to happen. She used to run down to us, in the courtyard, in her long dress, and her mother used to stand up above and call her; then she'd sit on the grating as if it was a throne and she was the queen and we were her ladies. She used to braid our hair, and then dress it beautifully with colored ribbons, and when I came up here again mother used to tear it all down and make my hair rough again. It was a sin against God to deck one's self out like that, she said. And when mother disappeared I hadn't time to play down there any more."

"Poor little girl!" said Pelle, stroking her hair.

"Why do you say that?" she asked him, looking at him in astonishment.

He enjoyed her absolute confidence, and was told things that the boys were not allowed to know. She began to dress more carefully, and her fine fair hair was always brushed smoothly back from her forehead. She was delighted when they both had some errand in the city. Then she put on her best and went through the streets at his side, her whole face smiling. "Now perhaps people will think we are a couple of lovers--but what does it matter? Let them think it!" Pelle laughed; with her thirteen years she was no bigger than a child of nine, so backward in growth was she.

She often found it difficult to make both ends meet; she would say little or nothing about it, but a kind of fear would betray itself in her expression. Then Pelle would speak cheerfully of the good times that would soon be coming for all poor people. It cost him a great deal of exertion to put this in words so as to make it sound as it ought to sound. His thoughts were still so new--even to himself. But the children thought nothing of his unwieldy speech; to them it was easier to believe in the new age than it was to him.

VI

Pelle was going through a peculiar change at this time. He had seen enough need and poverty in his life; and the capital was simply a battlefield on which army upon army had rushed forward and had miserably been defeated. Round about him lay the fallen. The town was built over them as over a cemetery; one had to tread upon them in order to win

forward and harden one's heart. Such was life in these days; one shut one's eyes--like the sheep when they see their comrades about to be slaughtered--and waited until one's own turn came. There was nothing else to do.

But now he was awake and suffering; it hurt him with a stabbing pain whenever he saw others suffer; and he railed against misfortune, unreasonable though it might be.

There came a day when he sat working at home. At the other end of the gangway a factory girl with her child had moved in a short while before. Every morning she locked the door and went to work--and she did not return until the evening. When Pelle came home he could hear the sound of crying within the room.

He sat at his work, wrestling with his confused ideas. And all the time a curious stifled sound was in his ears--a grievous sound, as though something were incessantly complaining. Perhaps it was only the dirge of poverty itself, some strophe of which was always vibrating upon the air.

Little Marie came hurrying in. "Oh, Pelle, it's crying again!" she said, and she wrung her hands anxiously upon her hollow chest. "It has cried all day, ever since she came here--it is horrible!"

"We'll go and see what's wrong," said Pelle, and he threw down his hammer.

The door was locked; they tried to look through the keyhole, but could see nothing. The child within stopped its crying for a moment, as though it heard them, but it began again at once; the sound was low and monotonous, as though the child was prepared to hold out indefinitely. They looked at one another; it was unendurable.

"The keys on this gangway do for all the doors," said Marie, under her breath. With one leap Pelle had rushed indoors, obtained his key, and opened the door.

Close by the door sat a little four-year-old boy; he stared up at them, holding a rusty tin vessel in his hand. He was tied fast to the stove; near him, on an old wooden stool, was a tin plate containing a few half-nibbled crusts of bread. The child was dressed in filthy rags and presented a shocking appearance. He sat in his own filth; his little hands were covered with it. His tearful, swollen face was smeared all over with it. He held up his hands to them beseechingly.

Pelle burst into tears at the horrible sight and wanted to pick the child up. "Let me do that!" cried Marie, horrified. "You'll make yourself filthy!"

"What then?" said Pelle stupidly. He helped to untie the child; his hands were trembling.

To some extent they got the child to rights and gave him food. Then they let him loose in the long gangway. For a time he stood stupidly gaping by the doorpost; then he discovered that he was not tied up, and began to rush up and down. He still held in his hand the old tea-strainer which he had been grasping when they rescued him; he had held on to it convulsively all the time. Marie had to dip his hand in the water in order to clean the strainer.

From time to time he stood in front of Pelle's open door, and peeped inside. Pelle nodded to him, when he went storming up and down again--he was like a wild thing. But suddenly he came right in, laid the tea-strainer in Pelle's lap and looked at him. "Am I to have that?" asked Pelle. "Look, Marie, he is giving me the only thing he's got!"

"Oh, poor little thing!" cried Marie pityingly. "He wants to thank you!"

In the evening the factory girl came rushing in; she was in a rage, and began to abuse them for breaking into her room. Pelle wondered at himself, that he was able to answer her so quietly instead of railing back at her. But he understood very well that she was ashamed of her poverty and did not want any one else to see it. "It is unkind to the child," was all he said. "And yet you are fond of it!"

Then she began to cry. "I have to tie him up, or he climbs out over the window-sill and runs into the street--he got to the corner once before. And I've no clothes, to take him to the creche!"

"Then leave the door open on the gangway! We will look after him, Marie and I."

After this the child tumbled about the gangway and ran to and fro. Marie looked after him, and was like a mother to him. Pelle bought some old clothes, and they altered them to fit him. The child looked very droll in them; he was a little goblin who took everything in good part. In his loneliness he had not learned to speak, but now speech came quickly to him.

In Pelle this incident awakened something quite novel. Poverty he had known before, but now he saw the injustice that lay beneath it, and cried to heaven. His hands would suddenly clench with anger as he sat so quietly in his room. Here was something one must hasten forward, without intermission, day and night, as long as one drew breath--Morten was right about that! This child's father was a factory hand, and the girl dared not summon him before the magistrates in order to make him pay for its support for fear of being dismissed from her place. The whole business seemed so hopeless--society seemed so unassailable--yet he felt that he must strike a blow. His own hands alone signified so little; but if they could only strike the blow all together--then perhaps it would have some effect.

In the evenings he and Morten went to meetings where the situation was passionately discussed. Those who attended these meetings were mostly young people like himself. They met in some inn by the North Bridge. But Pelle longed to see some result, and applied himself eagerly to the organization of his own craft.

He inspired the weary president with his own zeal, and they prepared together a list of all the members of their trade--as the basis of a more vigorous agitation. When the "comrades" were invited to a meeting through the press, they turned lazy and failed to appear. More effectual means were needed; and Pelle started a house-to-house agitation. This helped immediately; they were in a dilemma when one got them face to face, and the Union was considerably increased, in spite of the persecution of the big masters.

Morten began to treat him with respect; and wanted him to read about the

movement. But Pelle had no time for that. Together with Peter and Karl, who were extremely zealous, he took in _The Working Man_, and that was enough for him. "I know more about poverty than they write there," he said.

There was no lack of fuel to keep this fire burning. He had participated in the march of poverty, from the country to the town and thence to the capital, and there they stood and could go no farther for all their longing, but perished on a desert shore. The many lives of the "Ark" lay always before his eyes as a great common possession, where no one need conceal himself, and where the need of the one was another's grief.

His nature was at this time undergoing a great change. There was an end of his old careless acceptance of things. He laughed less and performed apparently trivial actions with an earnestness which had its comical side. And he began to display an appearance of self-respect which seemed ill-justified by his position and his poverty.

One evening, when work was over, as he came homeward from Beck's workshop, he heard the children singing Hanne's song down in the courtyard. He stood still in the tunnel-like entry; Hanne herself stood in the midst of a circle, and the children were dancing round her and singing:

"I looked from the lofty mountain
Down over vale and lea,
And I saw a ship come sailing,
Sailing, sailing,
I saw a ship come sailing,
And on it were lordlings three."

On Hanne's countenance lay a blind, fixed smile; her eyes were tightly closed. She turned slowly about as the children sang, and she sang softly with them:

"The youngest of all the lordlings
Who on the ship did stand..."

But suddenly she saw Pelle and broke out of the circle. She went up the stairs with him. The children, disappointed, stood calling after her.

"Aren't you coming to us this evening?" she asked. "It is so long since we have seen you."

"I've no time. I've got an appointment," replied Pelle briefly.

"But you must come! I beg you to, Pelle." She looked at him pleadingly, her eyes burning.

Pelle's heart began to thump as he met her gaze. "What do you want with me?" he asked sharply.

Hanne stood still, gazing irresolutely into the distance.

"You must help me, Pelle," she said, in a toneless voice, without meeting his eye.

"Yesterday I met.... Yesterday evening, as I was coming out of the factory ... he stood down below here ... he knows where I live. I went

across to the other side and behaved as though I did not see him; but he came up to me and said I was to go to the New Market this evening!"

"And what did you say to that?" answered Pelle sulkily.

"I didn't say anything--I ran as hard as I could!"

"Is that all you want me for?" cried Pelle harshly. "You can keep away from him, if you don't want him!"

A cold shudder ran through her. "But if he comes here to look for me?... And you are so.... I don't care for anybody in the world but you and mother!" She spoke passionately.

"Well, well, I'll come over to you," answered Pelle cheerfully.

He dressed himself quickly and went across. The old woman was delighted to see him. Hanne was quite frolicsome; she rallied him continually, and it was not long before he had abandoned his firm attitude and allowed himself to be drawn into the most delightful romancing. They sat out on the gallery under the green foliage, Hanne's face glowing to rival the climbing pelargonium; she kept on swinging her foot, and continually touched Pelle's leg with the tip of her shoe.

She was nervously full of life, and kept on asking the time. When her mother went into the kitchen to make coffee, she took Pelle's hand and smilingly stroked it.

"Come with me," she said. "I should so like to see if he is really so silly as to think I'd come. We can stand in a corner somewhere and look out."

Pelle did not answer.

"Mother," said Hanne, when Madam Johnsen returned with the coffee, "I'm going out to buy some stuff for my bodice. Pelle's coming with me."

The excuse was easy to see through. But the old woman betrayed no emotion. She had already seen that Hanne was well disposed toward Pelle to-day; something was going on in the girl's mind, and if Pelle only wanted to, he could now bridle her properly. She had no objection to make if both the young people kicked over the traces a little. Perhaps then they would find peace together.

"You ought to take your shawl with you," she told Hanne. "The evening air may turn cold."

Hanne walked so quickly that Pelle could hardly follow her. "It'll be a lark to see his disappointment when we don't turn up," she said, laughing. Pelle laughed also. She stationed herself behind one of the pillars of the Town Hall, where she could peep out across the market. She was quite out of breath, she had hurried so.

Gradually, as the time went by and the stranger did not appear, her animation vanished; she was silent, and her expression was one of disappointment.

"No one's going to come!" she said suddenly, and she laughed shortly.

"I only made up the whole thing to tell you, to see what you'd say."

"Then let's go!" said Pelle quietly, and he took her hand.

As they went down the steps, Hanne started; and her hand fell limply from his. The stranger came quickly up to her. He held out his hand to Hanne, quietly and as a matter of course, as though he had known her for years. Pelle, apparently, he did not see.

"Will you come somewhere with me--where we can hear music, for example?" he asked, and he continued to hold her hand. She looked irresolutely at Pelle.

For a moment Pelle felt an inordinate longing to throw himself upon this man and strike him to the ground, but then he met Hanne's eyes, which wore an expression as though she was longing for some means of shaking him off. "Well, it looks as if one was in the way here!" he thought. "And what does it all matter to me?" He turned away from her and sauntered off down a side street.

Pelle strolled along to the quays by the gasworks, and he stood there, sunk in thought, gazing at the ships and the oily water. He did not suffer; it was only so terribly stupid that a strange hand should appear out of the unknown, and that the bird which he with all his striving could not entice, should have hopped right away on to that hand.

Below the quay-wall the water plashed with a drowsy sound; fragments of wood and other rubbish floated on it; it was all so home-like! Out by the coal-quay lay a three-master. It was after working hours; the crew were making an uproar below decks, or standing about on deck and washing themselves in a bucket. One well-grown young seaman in blue clothes and a white neckerchief came out of the cabin and stared up at the rigging as though out of habit, and yawned. Then he strolled ashore. His cap was on the back of his head, and between his teeth was a new pipe. His face was full of freakish merriment, and he walked with a swing of the hips. As he came up to Pelle he swayed to and fro a few times and then bumped into him. "Oh, excuse me!" he said, touching his cap. "I thought it was a scratching-post, the gentleman stood so stiff. Well, you mustn't take it amiss!" And he began to go round and round Pelle, bending far forward as though he were looking for something on him, and finally he pawed his own ears, like a friendly bear, and shook with laughter. He was overflowing with high spirits and good humor.

Pelle had not shaken off his feeling of resentment; he did not know whether to be angry or to laugh at the whole thing.

He turned about cautiously, so as to keep his eye on the sailor, lest the latter should pull his feet from under him. He knew the grip, and also how it should be parried; and he held his hands in readiness. Suddenly something in the stooping position struck him as familiar. This was Per Kofod--Howling Peter, from the village school at home, in his own person! He who used to roar and blubber at the slightest word! Yes, this was he!

"Good evening, Per!" he cried, delighted, and he gave him a thump in the back.

The seaman stood up, astonished. "What the devil! Good evening! Well, that I should meet you here, Pelle; that's the most comical thing I've

ever known! You must excuse my puppy-tricks! Really!" He shook Pelle heartily by the hand.

They loafed about the harbor, chatting of old times. There was so much to recall from their schooldays. Old Fris with his cane, and the games on the beach! Per Kofod spoke as though he had taken part in all of them; he had quite forgotten that he used always to stand still gripping on to something and bellowing, if the others came bawling round him. "And Nilen, too, I met him lately in New Orleans. He is second mate on a big American full-rigged ship, and is earning big money. A smart fellow he is. But hang it all, he's a tough case! Always with his revolver in his hand. But that's how it has to be over there--among the niggers. Still, one fine day they'll slit his belly up, by God they will! Now then, what's the matter there?"

From some stacks of timber near by came a bellowing as of some one in torment, and the sound of blows. Pelle wanted, to turn aside, but Per Kofod seized his arm and dragged him forward.

In among the timber-stacks three "coalies" were engaged in beating a fourth. He did not cry out, but gave vent to a muffled roar every time he received a blow. The blood was flowing down his face.

"Come on!" shouted Per Kofod, hitching up his trousers. And then, with a roar, he hurled himself into their midst, and began to lay about him in all directions. It was like an explosion with its following hail of rocks. Howling Peter had learned to use his strength; only a sailor could lay about him in that fashion. It was impossible to say where his blows were going to fall; but they all went home. Pelle stood by for a moment, mouth and eyes open in the fury of the fray; then he, too, tumbled into the midst of it, and the three dock-laborers were soon biting the dust.

"Damn it all, why did you interfere!" said Pelle crossly, when it was over, as he stood pulling his collar straight.

"I don't know," said Howling Peter. "But it does one no harm to bestir one's self a bit for once!"

After the heat of the battle they had all but forgotten the man originally attacked; he lay huddled up at the foot of a timber-stack and made no sound. They got him on his legs again, but had to hold him upright; he stood as limp as though asleep, and his eyes were staring stupidly. He was making a heavy snoring sound, and at every breath the blood made two red bubbles at his nostrils. From time to time he ground his teeth, and then his eyes turned upward and the whites gleamed strangely in his coal-blackened face.

The sailor scolded him, and that helped him so far that he was able to stand on his feet. They drew a red rag from his bulging jacket-pocket, and wiped the worst of the blood away. "What sort of a fellow are you, damn it all, that you can't stand a drubbing?" said Per Kofod.

"I didn't call for help," said the man thickly. His lips were swollen to a snout.

"But you didn't hit back again! Yet you look as if you'd strength enough. Either a fellow manages to look after himself or he sings out so that others can come to help him. D'ye see, mate?"

"I didn't want to bring the police into it; and I'd earned a thrashing. Only they hit so damned hard, and when I fell they used their clogs."

He lived in the Saksogade, and they took each an arm. "If only I don't get ill now!" he groaned from time to time. "I'm all a jelly inside." And they had to stop while he vomited.

There was a certain firm for which he and his mates had decided no longer to unload, as they had cut down the wages offered. There were only four of them who stuck to their refusal; and what use was it when others immediately took their place? The four of them could only hang about and play the gentleman at large; nothing more came of it. But of course he had given his word--that was why he had not hit back. The other three had found work elsewhere, so he went back to the firm and ate humble pie. Why should he hang about idle and killing time when there was nothing to eat at home? He was damned if he understood these new ways; all the same, he had betrayed the others, for he had given his word. But they had struck him so cursedly hard, and had kicked him in the belly with their clogs.

He continued rambling thus, like a man in delirium, as they led him along. In the Saksogade they were stopped by a policeman, but Per Kofod quickly told him a story to the effect that the man had been struck on the head by a falling crane. He lived right up in the attics. When they opened the door a woman who lay there in child-bed raised herself up on the iron bedstead and gazed at them in alarm. She was thin and anemic. When she perceived the condition of her husband she burst into a heartrending fit of crying.

"He's sober," said Pelle, in order to console her; "he has only got a bit damaged."

They took him into the kitchen and bathed his head over the sink with cold water. But Per Kofod's assistance was not of much use; every time the woman's crying reached his ears he stopped helplessly and turned his head toward the door; and suddenly he gave up and tumbled head-foremost down the back stairs.

"What was really the matter with you?" asked Pelle crossly, when he, too, could get away. Per was waiting at the door for him.

"Perhaps you didn't hear her hymn-singing, you blockhead! But, anyhow, you saw her sitting up in bed and looking like wax? It's beastly, I tell you; it's infamous! He'd no need to go making her cry like that! I had the greatest longing to thrash him again, weak as a baby though he was. The devil--what did he want to break his word for?"

"Because they were starving, Per!" said Pelle earnestly. "That does happen at times in this accursed city."

Kofod stared at him and whistled. "Oh, Satan! Wife and child, and the whole lot without food--what? And she in childbed. They were married, right enough, you can see that. Oh, the devil! What a honeymoon! What misery!"

He stood there plunging deep into his trouser pockets; he fetched out a handful of things: chewing-tobacco, bits of flock, broken matches, and in the midst of all a crumpled ten-kroner note. "So I thought!" he said,

fishing out the note. "I was afraid the girls had quite cleaned me out last night! Now Pelle, you go up and spin them some sort of a yarn; I can't do it properly myself; for, look you, if I know that woman she won't stop crying day and night for another twenty-four hours! That's the last of my pay. But--oh, well, blast it ... we go to sea to-morrow!"

"She stopped crying when I took her the money," said Pelle, when he came down again.

"That's good. We sailors are dirty beasts; you know; we do our business into china and eat our butter out of the tarbucket; all the same, we--I tell you, I should have left the thing alone and used the money to have made a jolly night of it to-night...." He was suddenly silent; he chewed at his quid as though inwardly considering his difficult philosophy. "Damn it all, to-morrow we put to sea!" he cried suddenly.

They went out to Alleenberg and sat in the gardens. Pelle ordered beer. "I can very well stand a few pints when I meet a good pal," he said, "but at other times I save like the devil. I've got to see about getting my old father over here; he's living on charity at home."

"So your father's still living? I can see him still so plainly--he had a love-affair with Madam Olsen for some time, but then bo'sun Olsen came home unexpectedly; they thought he'd remain abroad."

Pelle laughed. Much water had run into the sea since those days. Now he was no longer ashamed of Father Lasse's foolish prank.

Light was gleaming from the booths in the garden. Young couples wandered about and had their fortunes told; they ventured themselves on the Wheel of Happiness, or had their portraits cut out by the silhouette artist. By the roundabout was a mingled whirl of cries and music and brightly colored petticoats. Now and again a tremendous outcry arose, curiously dreadful, over all other sounds, and from the concert-pavilion one heard the cracked, straining voices of one-time "stars." Wretched little worldlings came breathlessly hurrying thither, pushing through the crowd, and disappeared into the pavilion, nodding familiarly to the man in the ticket-office window.

"It's really quite jolly here," said Per Kofod. "You have a damn good time of it on land!"

On the wide pathway under the trees apprentices, workmen, soldiers, and now and again a student, loitered up and down, to and fro, looking sideways at the servant-girls, who had stationed themselves on either side of the walk, standing there arm-in-arm, or forming little groups. Their eyes sent many a message before ever one of them stopped and ventured to speak. Perhaps the maiden turned away; if so, that was an end of the matter, and the youngster began the business all over again. Or perhaps she ran off with him to one of the closed arbors, where they drank coffee, or else to the roundabouts. Several of the young people were from Pelle's home; and every time he heard the confident voices of the Bornholm girls Pelle's heart stirred like a bird about to fly away.

Suddenly his troubles returned to his mind. "I really felt inclined, this evening, to have done with the whole thing.... Just look at those two, Per!" Two girls were standing arm-in-arm under a tree, quite close to their table. They were rocking to and fro together, and now and again they glanced at the two young men.

"Nothing there for me--that's only for you land-lubbers," said Per Kofod. "For look you now, they're like so many little lambs whose ears you've got to tickle. And then it all comes back to you in the nights when you take the dog-watch alone; you've told her lies, or you promised to come back again when she undid her bodice.... And in the end there she is, planted, and goin' to have a kid! It don't do. A sailor ought to keep to the naughty girls."

"But married women can be frisky sometimes," said Pelle.

"That so, really? Once I wouldn't have believed that any one could have kicked a good woman; but after all they strangle little children.... And they come and eat out of your hand if you give 'em a kind word--that's the mischief of it.... D'you remember Howling Peter?"

"Yes, as you ask me, I remember him very well."

"Well, his father was a sailor, too, and that's just what he did.... And she was just such a girl, one who couldn't say no, and believed everything a man told her. He was going to come back again--of course. 'When you hear the trap-door of the loft rattle, that'll be me,' he told her. But the trap-door rattled several times, and he didn't come. Then she hanged herself from the trap-door with a rope. Howling Peter came on to the parish. And you know how they all scorned him. Even the wenches thought they had the right to spit at him. He could do nothing but bellow. His mother had cried such a lot before he was born, d'ye see? Yes, and then he hanged himself too--twice he tried to do it. He'd inherited that! After that he had a worse time than ever; everybody thought it honorable to ill-use him and ask after the marks on his throat. No, not you; you were the only one who didn't raise a hand to him. That's why I've so often thought about you. 'What has become of him?' I used to ask myself. 'God only knows where he's got to!'" And he gazed at Pelle with a pair of eyes full of trust.

"No, that was due to Father Lasse," said Pelle, and his tone was quite childlike. "He always said I must be good to you because you were in God's keeping."

"In God's keeping, did he say?" repeated Per Kofod thoughtfully. "That was a curious thing to say. That's a feeling I've never had. There was nothing in the whole world at that time that could have helped me to stand up for myself. I can scarcely understand how it is that I'm sitting here talking to you--I mean, that they didn't torment the life out of my body."

"Yes, you've altered very much. How does it really come about that you're such a smart fellow now?"

"Why, such as I am now, that's really my real nature. It has just waked up, that's what I think. But I don't understand really what was the matter with me then. I knew well enough I could knock you down if I had only wanted to. But I didn't dare strike out, just out of sheer wretchedness. I saw so much that you others couldn't see. Damn it all, I can't make head nor tail of it! It must have been my mother's dreadful misery that was still in my bones. A horror used to come over me--quite causeless--so that I had to bellow aloud; and then the farmers used to beat me. And every time I tried to get out of it all by hanging myself, they beat me worse than ever. The parish council decided I was to be

beaten. Well, that's why I don't do it, Pelle--a sailor ought to keep to women that get paid for it, if they have anything to do with him--that is, if he can't get married. There, you have my opinion."

"You've had a very bad time," said Pelle, and he took his hand. "But it's a tremendous change that's come over you!"

"Change! You may well say so! One moment Howling Peter--and the next, the strongest man on board! There you have the whole story! For look here now, at sea, of course, it was just the same; even the ship's boy felt obliged to give me a kick on the shins in passing. Everybody who got a blow on a rowing passed it on to me. And when I went to sea in an American bark, there was a nigger on board, and all of them used to hound him down; he crawled before them, but you may take your oath he hated them out of the whites of his devil's eyes. But me, who treated him with humanity, he played all manner of tricks on--it was nothing to him that I was white. Yet even with him I didn't dare to fetch him one--there was always like a flabby lump in my midriff. But once the thing went too far--or else the still-born something inside me was exhausted. I just aimed at him a bit with one arm, so that he fell down. That really was a rummy business. It was, let's say, like a fairy tale where the toad suddenly turns into a man. I set to then and there and thrashed him till he was half dead. And while I was about it, and in the vein, it seemed best to get the whole thing over, so I went right ahead and thrashed the whole crew from beginning to end. It was a tremendous moment, there was such a heap of rage inside me that had got to come out!"

Pelle laughed. "A lucky thing that I knew you a little while ago, or you would have made mincemeat of me, after all!"

"Not me, mate, that was only a little joke. A fellow is in such high spirits when he comes ashore again. But out at sea it's--thrash the others, or they'll thrash you! Well, that's all right, but one ought to be good to the women. That's what I've told the old man on board; he's a fellow-countryman, but a swine in his dealings with women. There isn't a single port where he hasn't a love-affair. In the South, and on the American coast. It's madman's work often, and I have to go along with him and look out that he doesn't get a knife between his ribs. 'Per,' he says, 'this evening we'll go on the bust together.' 'All right, cap'n,' I say. 'But it's a pity about all the women.' 'Shut your mouth, Per,' he says; 'they're most of them married safe enough.' He's one of us from home, too--from a little cottage up on the heath."

"What's his name, then?" said Pelle, interested.

"Albert Karlsen."

"Why, then he's Uncle Kalle's eldest, and in a way my cousin--Kalle, that is to say, isn't really his father. His wife had him before she was married--he's the son of the owner of Stone Farm."

"So he's a Kongstrup, then!" cried Per Kofod, and he laughed loudly. "Well, that's as it should be!"

Pelle paid, and they got up to go. The two girls were still standing by the tree. Per Kofod went up to one of them as though she had been a bird that might escape him. Suddenly he seized her round the waist; she withdrew herself slowly from his grip and laughed in his big fair face.

He embraced her once again, and now she stood still; it was still in her mind to escape, for she laughingly half-turned away. He looked deep into her eyes, then released her and followed Pelle.

"What's the use, Pelle--why, I can hear her complaining already! A fellow ought to be well warned," he said, with a despairing accent. "But, damn it all, why should a man have so much compassion when he himself has been so cruelly treated? And the others; they've no compassion. Did you see how gentle her eyes were? If I'd money I'd marry her right away."

"Perhaps she wouldn't have you," replied Pelle. "It doesn't do to take the girls for granted."

In the avenue a few men were going to and fro and calling; they were looking for their young women, who had given them the slip. One of them came up to Per and Pelle--he was wearing a student's cap. "Have the gentlemen seen anything of our ladies?" he asked. "We've been sitting with them and treating them all the evening, and then they said they'd just got to go to a certain place, and they've gone off."

They went down to the harbor. "Can't you come on board with me and say how d'ye-do to the old man?" said Per. "But of course, he's ashore to-night. I saw him go over the side about the time we knocked off--rigged out for chasing the girls."

"I don't know him at all," said Pelle; "he was at sea already when I was still a youngster. Anyhow, I've got to go home to bed now--I get to work early in the mornings."

They stood on the quay, taking leave of one another. Per Kofod promised to look Pelle up next time he was in port. While they were talking the door of the after-cabin rattled. Howling Peter drew Pelle behind a stack of coal. A powerful, bearded man came out, leading a young girl by the hand. She went slowly, and appeared to resist. He set her ceremoniously ashore, turned back to the cabin, and locked the door behind him. The girl stood still for a moment. A low 'plaint escaped her lips. She stretched her arms pleadingly toward the cabin. Then she turned and went mournfully along the quay.

"That was the old man," whispered Per Kofod. "That's how he treats them all--and yet they don't want to give him up."

Pelle could not utter a word; he stood there cowering, oppressed as by some terrible burden. Suddenly he pulled himself together, pressed his comrade's hand, and set off quickly between the coal-stacks.

After a time he turned aside and followed the young girl at a little distance. Like a sleep-walker, she staggered along the quay and went over the long bridge. He feared she would throw herself in the water, so strangely did she behave.

On the bridge she stood gazing across at the ship, with a frozen look on her face. Pelle stood still; turned to ice by the thought that she might see him. He could not have borne to speak to her just then--much less look into her eyes.

But then she moved on. Her bearing was broken; from behind she looked like one of those elderly, shipwrecked females from the "Ark," who

shuffled along by the house-walls in trodden-down men's shoes, and always boasted a dubious past. "Good God!" thought Pelle, "is her dream over already? Good God!"

He followed her at a short distance down the narrow street, and as soon as he knew that she must have reached her dwelling he entered the tunnel.

VII

In the depths of Pelle's soul lay a confident feeling that he was destined for something particular; it was his old dream of fortune, which would not be wholly satisfied by the good conditions for all men which he wanted to help to bring about. His fate was no longer in his eyes a grievous and crushing predestination to poverty, which could only be lifted from him by a miracle; he was lord of his own future, and already he was restlessly building it up!

But in addition to this there was something else that belonged only to him and to life, something that no one else in the world could undertake. What it was he had not yet figured to himself; but it was something that raised him above all others, secretly, so that only he was conscious of it. It was the same obscure feeling of being a pioneer that had always urged him forward; and when it did take the form of a definite question he answered it with the confident nod of his childhood. Yes, he would see it through all right! As though that which was to befall him was so great and so wonderful that it could not be put into words, nor even thought of. He saw the straight path in front of him, and he sauntered on, strong and courageous. There were no other enemies than those a prudent man might perceive; those lurking forces of evil which in his childhood had hovered threateningly above his head were the shadows of the poor man's wretchedness. There was nothing else evil, and that was sinister enough. He knew now that the shadows were long. Morten was right. Although he himself when a child had sported in the light, yet his mind was saddened by the misery of all those who were dead or fighting in distant parts of the earth; and it was on this fact that the feeling of solidarity must be based. The miraculous simply had no existence, and that was a good thing for those who had to fight with the weapon of their own physical strength. No invisible deity sat overhead making his own plans for them or obstructing others. What one willed, that could one accomplish, if only he had strength enough to carry it through. Strength--it was on that and that alone that everything depended. And there was strength in plenty. But the strength of all must be united, must act as the strength of one. People always wondered why Pelle, who was so industrious and respectable, should live in the "Ark" instead of in the northern quarter, in the midst of the Movement. He wondered at himself when he ever thought about it at all; but he could not as yet tear himself away from the "Ark." Here, at the bottom of the ladder, he had found peace in his time of need. He was too loyal to turn his back on those among whom he had been happy.

He knew they would feel it as a betrayal; the adoration with which the inmates of the "Ark" regarded the three orphan children was also bestowed upon him; he was the foundling, the fourth member of the "Family," and now they were proud of him too!

It was not the way of the inmates of the "Ark" to make plans for the future. Sufficient to the day was the evil thereof; to-morrow's cares were left for the morrow. The future did not exist for them. They were like careless birds, who had once suffered shipwreck and had forgotten it. Many of them made their living where they could; but however down in the world they were, let the slightest ray of sunlight flicker down to them, and all was forgotten. Of the labor movement and other new things they gossiped as frivolously as so many chattering starlings, who had snapped up the news on the wind.

But Pelle went so confidently out into the world, and set his shoulders against it, and then came back home to them. He had no fear; he could look Life straight in the face, he grappled boldly with the future, before which they shudderingly closed their eyes. And thereby his name came to be spoken with a particular accent; Pelle was a prince; what a pity it was that he wouldn't, it seemed, have the princess!

He was tall and well-grown, and to them he seemed even taller. They went to him in their misery, and loaded it all on his strong young shoulders, so that he could bear it for them. And Pelle accepted it all with an increasing sense that perhaps it was not quite aimlessly that he lingered here--so near the foundations of society!

At this time Widow Frandsen and her son Ferdinand came upon the scene. Misfortune must house itself somewhere!

Ferdinand was a sturdy young fellow of eighteen years, with a powerfully modelled head, which looked as though it had originally been intended to absorb all the knowledge there is in all the world. But he used it only for dispensing blows; he had no other use for it whatever.

Yet he was by no means stupid; one might even call him a gifted young man. But his gifts were of a peculiar quality, and had gradually become even more peculiar.

As a little child he had been forced to fight a besotted father, in order to protect his mother, who had no other protector. This unequal battle had to be fought; and it necessarily blunted his capacity for feeling pain, and particularly his sense of danger. He knew what was in store for him, but he rushed blindly into the fray the moment his mother was attacked; just as a dog will attack a great beast of prey, so he hung upon the big man's fists, and would not be shaken off. He hated his father, and he longed in his heart to be a policeman when he was grown up. With his blind and obtuse courage he was particularly adapted to such a calling; but he actually became a homeless vagabond.

Gradually as he grew in height and strength and the battle was no longer so unequal, his father began to fear him and to think of revenge; and once, when Ferdinand had thoroughly thrashed him, he reported him, and the boy was flogged. The boy felt this to be a damnable piece of injustice; the flogging left scars behind it, and another of its results was that his mother was no longer left in peace.

From that time onward he hated the police, and indulged his hatred at every opportunity. His mother was the only being for whom he still cared. It was like a flash of sunshine when his father died. But it came too late to effect any transformation; Ferdinand had long ago begun to look after his mother in his own peculiar way--which was partly due to

the conditions of his life.

He had grown up in the streets, and even when quite a child was one of those who are secretly branded. The police knew him well, and were only awaiting their opportunity to ask him inside. Ferdinand could see it in their eyes--they reckoned quite confidently on that visit, and had got a bed already for him in their hotel on the New Market.

But Ferdinand would not allow himself to be caught. When he had anything doubtful in hand, he always managed to clear himself. He was an unusually strong and supple young fellow, and was by no means afraid to work; he obtained all kinds of occasional work, and he always did it well. But whenever he got into anything that offered him a future, any sort of regular work which must be learned and attacked with patience, he could never go on with it.

"You speak to him, Pelle!" said his mother. "You are so sensible, and he does respect you!" Pelle did speak to him, and helped him to find some calling for which he was suited; and Ferdinand set to work with a will, but when he got to a certain point he always threw it up.

His mother never lacked actual necessities; although sometimes he only procured them at the last moment. When not otherwise engaged, he would stand in some doorway on the market-place, loafing about, his hands in his pockets, his supple shoulders leaning against the wall. He was always in clogs and mittens; at stated intervals he spat upon the pavement, his sea-blue eyes following the passers-by with an unfathomable expression. The policeman, who was aggressively pacing up and down his beat, glanced at him in secret every time he passed him, as much as to say, "Shan't we ever manage to catch the rogue? Why doesn't he make a slip?"

And one day the thing happened--quite of itself, and not on account of any clumsiness on his part--in the "Ark" they laid particular stress upon that. It was simply his goodness of heart that was responsible. Had Ferdinand not been the lad he was, matters had not gone awry, for he was a gifted young man.

He was in the grocer's shop on the corner of the Market buying a few coppers' worth of chewing-tobacco. An eight-year-old boy from the "Ark" was standing by the counter, asking for a little flour on credit for his mother. The grocer was making a tremendous fuss about the affair. "Put it down--I dare say! One keeps shop on the corner here just to feed all the poor folks in the neighborhood! I shall have the money to-morrow? Peculiar it is, that in this miserable, poverty-stricken quarter folks are always going to have money the very next day! Only the next day never comes!"

"Herre Petersen can depend on it," said the child, in a low voice.

The grocer continued to scoff, but began to weigh the meal. Before the scales there was a pile of yard brooms and other articles, but Ferdinand could see that the grocer was pressing the scale with his fingers. He's giving false weight because it's for a poor person, thought Ferdinand, and he felt an angry pricking in his head, just where his thoughts were.

The boy stood by, fingering something concealed in his hand. Suddenly a coin fell on the floor and went rolling round their feet. Quick as lightning the grocer cast a glance at the till, as he sprang over the

counter and seized the boy by the scruff of the neck. "Ay, ay," he said sharply, "a clever little rogue!"

"I haven't stolen anything!" cried the boy, trying to wrench himself loose and to pick up his krone-piece. "That's mother's money!"

"You leave the kid alone!" said Ferdinand threateningly. "He hasn't done anything!"

The grocer struggled with the boy, who was twisting and turning in order to recover his money. "Hasn't done anything!" he growled, panting, "then why did he cry out about stealing before ever I had mentioned the word? And where does the money come from? He wanted credit, because they hadn't got any! No, thanks--I'm not to be caught like that."

"The money belongs to mother!" shrieked the youngster, twisting desperately in the grocer's grip. "Mother is ill--I'm to get medicine with it!" And he began to blubber.

"It's quite right--his mother is ill!" said Ferdinand, with a growl. "And the chemist certainly won't give credit. You'd best let him go, Petersen." He took a step forward.

"You've thought it out nicely!" laughed the grocer scornfully, and he wrenched the shop-door open. "Here, policeman, here!"

The policeman, who was keeping watch at the street corner, came quickly over to the shop. "Here's a lad who plays tricks with other folks' money," said the grocer excitedly. "Take care of him for a bit, Iversen!"

The boy was still hitting out in all directions; the policeman had to hold him off at arm's length. He was a ragged, hungry little fellow. The policeman saw at a glance what he had in his fingers, and proceeded to drag him away; and there was no need to have made any more ado about the matter.

Ferdinand went after him and laid his hand on the policeman's arm. "Mister Policeman, the boy hasn't done anything," he said. "I was standing there myself, and I saw that he did nothing, and I know his mother!"

The policeman stood still for a moment, measuring Ferdinand with a threatening eye; then he dragged the boy forward again, the latter still struggling to get free, and bellowing: "My mother is ill; she's waiting for me and the medicine!" Ferdinand kept step with them, in his thin canvas shoes.

"If you drag him off to the town hall, I shall come with you, at all events, and give evidence for him," he continued; "the boy hasn't done anything, and his mother is lying sick and waiting for the medicine at home."

The policeman turned about, exasperated. "Yes, you're a nice witness. One crow don't pick another's eyes out. You mind your own business--and just you be off!"

Ferdinand stood his ground. "Who are you talking to, you Laban?" he muttered, angrily looking the other up and down. Suddenly he took a run

and caught the policeman a blow in the neck so that he fell with his face upon the pavement while his helmet rolled far along the street. Ferdinand and the boy dashed off, each in a different direction, and disappeared.

And now they had been hunting him for three weeks already. He did not dare go home. The "Ark" was watched night and day, in the hope of catching him--he was so fond of his mother. God only knew where he might be in that rainy, cold autumn. Madam Frandsen moved about her attic, lonely and forsaken. It was a miserable life. Every morning she came over to beg Pelle to look in _The Working Man_, to see whether her son had been caught. He was in the city--Pelle and Madam Frandsen knew that. The police knew it also; and they believed him responsible for a series of nocturnal burglaries. He might well be sleeping in the outhouses and the kennels of the suburban villas.

The inmates of the "Ark" followed his fate with painful interest. He had grown up beneath their eyes. He had never done anything wrong there; he had always respected the "Ark" and its inhabitants; that at least could be said of him, and he loved his mother dearly. And he had been entirely in the right when he took the part of the boy; a brave little fellow he was! His mother was very ill; she lived at the end of one of the long gangways, and the boy was her only support. But it was a mad undertaking to lay hands on the police; that was the greatest crime on earth! A man had far better murder his own parents--as far as the punishment went. As soon as they got hold of him, he would go to jail, for the policeman had hit his handsome face against the flagstones; according to the newspaper, anybody but a policeman would have had concussion of the brain.

* * * * *

Old Madam Frandsen loved to cross the gangway to visit Pelle, in order to talk about her son.

"We must be cautious," she said. At times she would purse up her mouth, tripping restlessly to and fro; then he knew there was something particular in the wind.

"Shall I tell you something?" she would ask, looking at him importantly.

"No; better keep it to yourself," Pelle would reply. "What one doesn't know one can't give evidence about."

"You'd better let me chatter, Pelle--else I shall go running in and gossiping with strangers. Old chatterbox that I am, I go fidgeting round here, and I've no one I can trust; and I daren't even talk to myself! Then that Pipman hears it all through the wooden partition; it's almost more than I can bear, and I tremble lest my toothless old mouth should get him into trouble!"

"Well, then, tell it me!" said Pelle, laughing. "But you mustn't speak loud."

"He's been here again!" she whispered, beaming. "This morning, when I got up, there was money for me in the kitchen. Do you know where he had put it? In the sink! He's such a sensible lad! He must have come creeping over the roofs--otherwise I can't think how he does it, they are looking for him so. But you must admit that--he's a good lad!"

"If only you can keep quiet about it!" said Pelle anxiously. She was so proud of her son!

"M--m!" she said, tapping her shrunken lips. "No need to tell me that--and do you know what I've hit on, so that the bloodhounds shan't wonder what I live on? I'm sewing canvas slippers."

Then came little Marie with mop and bucket, and the old woman hobbled away.

It was a slack time now in Master Beck's workshop, so Pelle was working mostly at home. He could order his hours himself now, and was able to use the day, when people were indoors, in looking up his fellow-craftsmen and winning them for the organization. This often cost him a lengthy argument, and he was proud of every man he was able to inscribe. He very quickly learned to classify all kinds of men, and he suited his procedure to the character of the man he was dealing with; one could threaten the waverers, while others had to be enticed or got into a good humor by chatting over the latest theories with them. This was good practice, and he accustomed himself to think rapidly, and to have his subject at his fingers' ends. The feeling of mastery over his means continually increased in strength, and lent assurance to his bearing.

He had to make up for neglecting his work, and at such times he was doubly busy, rising early and sitting late at his bench.

He kept away from his neighbors on the third story; but when he heard Hanne's light step on the planking over there, he used to peep furtively across the well. She went her way like a nun--straight to her work and straight home again, her eyes fixed on the ground. She never looked up at his window, or indeed anywhere. It was as though her nature had completed its airy flutterings, as though it now lay quietly growing.

It surprised him that he should now regard her with such strange and indifferent eyes, as though she had never been anything to him. And he gazed curiously into his own heart--no, there was nothing wrong with him. His appetite was good, and there was nothing whatever the matter with his heart. It must all have been a pleasant illusion, a mirage such as the traveller sees upon his way. Certainly she was beautiful; but he could not possibly see anything fairy-like about her. God only knew how he had allowed himself to be so entangled! It was a piece of luck that he hadn't been caught--there was no future for Hanne.

Madam Johnsen continued to lean on him affectionately, and she often came over for a little conversation; she could not forget the good times they had had together. She always wound up by lamenting the change in Hanne; the old woman felt that the girl had forsaken her.

"Can you understand what's the matter with her, Pelle? She goes about as if she were asleep, and to everything I say she answers nothing but 'Yes, mother; yes, mother!' I could cry, it sounds so strange and empty, like a voice from the grave. And she never says anything about good fortune now--and she never decks herself out to be ready for it! If she'd only begin with her fool's tricks again--if she only cared to look out and watch for the stranger--then I should have my child again. But she just goes about all sunk into herself, and she stares about her as if she was half asleep, as though she were in the middle of empty space; and she's never in any spirits now. She goes about so unmeaning--like

with her own dreary thoughts, it's like a wandering corpse. Can you understand what's wrong with her?"

"No, I don't know," answered Pelle.

"You say that so curiously, as if you did know something and wouldn't come out with it--and I, poor woman, I don't know where to turn." The good-natured woman began to cry. "And why don't you come over to see us any more?"

"Oh, I don't know--I've so much on hand, Madam Johnsen," answered Pelle evasively.

"If only she's not bewitched. She doesn't enter into anything I tell her; you might really come over just for once; perhaps that would cheer her up a little. You oughtn't to take your revenge on us. She was very fond of you in her way--and to me you've been like a son. Won't you come over this evening?"

"I really haven't the time. But I'll see, some time," he said, in a low voice.

And then she went, drooping and melancholy. She was showing her fifty years. Pelle was sorry for her, but he could not make up his mind to visit her.

"You are quite detestable!" said Marie, stamping angrily on the floor. "It's wretched of you!"

Pelle wrinkled his forehead. "You don't understand, Marie."

"Oh, so you think I don't know all about it? But do you know what the women say about you? They say you're no man, or you would have managed to clip Hanne's feathers."

Pelle gazed at her, wondering; he said nothing, but looked at her and shook his head.

"What are you staring at me for?" she said, placing herself aggressively in front of him. "Perhaps you think I'm afraid to say what I like to you? Don't you stare at me with that face, or you'll get one in the mouth!" She was burning red with shame. "Shall I say something still worse? with you staring at me with that face? Eh? No one need think I'm ashamed to say what I like!" Her voice was hard and hoarse; she was quite beside herself with rage.

Pelle was perfectly conscious that it was shame that was working in her. She must be allowed to run down. He was silent, but did not avert his reproachful gaze. Suddenly she spat in his face and ran into her own room with a malicious laugh.

There she was very busy for a time.

There for a time she worked with extreme vigor, but presently grew quieter. Through the stillness Pelle could hear her gently sobbing. He did not go in to her. Such scenes had occurred between them before, and he knew that for the rest of the day she would be ashamed of herself, and it would be misery for her to look him in the face. He did not wish to lessen that feeling.

He dressed himself and went out.

VIII

The "Ark" now showed as a clumsy gray mass. It was always dark; the autumn daylight was unable to penetrate it. In the interior of the mass the pitch-black night brooded continually; those who lived there had to grope their way like moles. In the darkness sounds rose to the surface which failed to make themselves noticeable in the radiance of summer. Innumerable sounds of creatures that lived in the half-darkness were heard. When sleep had laid silence upon it all, the stillness of night unveiled yet another world: then the death-watches audibly bored their way beneath the old wall-papers, while rats and mice and the larvae of wood-beetles vied with one another in their efforts. The darkness was full of the aromatic fragrance of the falling worm-dust. All through this old box of a building dissolution was at work, with thousands of tiny creatures to aid it. At times the sound of it all rose to a tremendous crash which awoke Pelle from sleep, when some old worm-eaten timber was undermined and sagged in a fresh place. Then he would turn over on the other side.

When he went out of an evening he liked to make his way through the cheerful, crowded streets, in order to share in the brightness of it all; the rich luxury of the shops awakened something within him which noted the startling contrast between this quarter of the town and his own. When he passed from the brightly lit city into his own quarter, the streets were like ugly gutters to drain the darkness, and the "Ark" rose mysteriously into the sky of night like a ponderous mountain. Dark cellar-openings led down into the roots of the mountain, and there, in its dark entrails, moved wan, grimy creatures with smoky lamps; there were all those who lived upon the poverty of the "Ark"--the old iron merchant, the old clothes merchant, and the money-lender who lent money upon tangible pledges. They moved fearfully, burrowing into strange-looking heaps. The darkness was ingrained in them; Pelle was always reminded of the "underground people" at home. So the base of the cliffs had opened before his eyes in childhood, and he had shudderingly watched the dwarfs pottering about their accursed treasure. Here they moved about like greedy goblins, tearing away the foundations from under the careless beings in the "Ark," so that one day these might well fall into the cellars--and in the meantime they devoured them hair and hide. At all events, the bad side of the fairy tale was no lie!

One day Pelle threw down his work in the twilight and went off to carry out his mission. Pipman had some days earlier fallen drunk from the rickety steps, and down in the well the children of the quarter surrounded the place where he had dropped dead, and illuminated it with matches. They could quite plainly see the dark impress of a shape that looked like a man, and were all full of the spectacle.

Outside the mouth of the tunnel-like entry he stopped by the window of the old clothes dealer's cellar. Old Pipman's tools lay spread out there in the window. So she had got her claws into them too! She was rummaging about down there, scurfy and repulsive to look at, chewing an unappetizing slice of bread-and-butter, and starting at every sound that

came from above, so anxious was she about her filthy money! Pelle needed a new heel-iron, so he went in and purchased that of Pipman. He had to haggle with her over the price.

"Well, have you thought over my proposal?" she asked, when the deal was concluded.

"What proposal?" said Pelle, in all ignorance.

"That you should leave your cobbling alone and be my assistant in the business."

So that was what she meant? No, Pelle hadn't thought over it sufficiently.

"I should think there isn't much to think over. I have offered you more than you could earn otherwise, and there's not much to do. And I keep a man who fetches and carries things. It's mostly that I have a fancy to have a male assistant. I am an old woman, going about alone here, and you are so reliable, I know that."

She needed some one to protect all the thousands of kroner which she had concealed in these underground chambers. Pelle knew that well enough--she had approached him before on the subject.

"I should scarcely be the one for that--to make my living out of the poverty of others," said Pelle, smiling. "Perhaps I might knock you over the head and distribute all your pennies to the poor!"

The old woman stared at him for a moment in alarm. "Ugh, what a horrible thing to say!" she cried, shuddering. "You libel your good heart, joking about such things. Now I shan't like to stay here in the cellar any longer when you've gone. How can you jest so brutally about life and death? Day and night I go about here trembling for my life, and yet I've nothing at all, the living God knows I've nothing. That is just gossip! Everybody looks at me as much as to say, 'I'd gladly strike you dead to get your money!' And that's why I'd like to have a trustworthy man in the business; for what good is it to me that I've got nothing when they all believe I have? And there are so many worthless fellows who might fall upon one at any moment."

"If you have nothing, you can be easy," said Pelle teasingly. "No need for an empty stomach to have the nightmare!"

"Have nothing! Of course one always has something! And Pelle"--she leaned confidentially over him with a smirk on her face--"now Mary will soon come home, perhaps no later than this summer. She has earned so much over there that she can live on it, and she'll still be in the prime of her youth. What do you think of that? In her last letter she asked me to look out for a husband for her. He need only be handsome, for she has money enough for two. Then she'd rent a big house in the fine part of the city, and keep her own carriage, and live only for her handsome husband. What do you say to that, Pelle?"

"Well, that is certainly worth thinking over!" answered Pelle; he was in overflowing high spirits.

"Thinking over? Is that a thing to think over? Many a poor lord would accept such an offer and kiss my hand for it, if only he were here."

"But I'm not a lord, and now I must be going."

"Won't you just see her pictures?" The old woman began to rummage in a drawer.

"No." Pelle only wanted to be gone. He had seen these pictures often enough, grimed with the air of the cellar and the old woman's filthy hands; pictures which represented Mary now as a slim figure, striped like a tiger-cat, as she sang in the fashionable variety theaters of St. Petersburg, now naked, with a mantle of white furs, alone in the midst of a crowd of Russian officers--princes, the old woman said. There was also a picture from the aquarium, in which she was swimming about in a great glass tank amid some curious-looking plants, with nothing on her body but golden scales and diamond ornaments. She had a magnificent body--that he could plainly see; but that she could turn the heads of fabulously wealthy princes and get thousands out of their pockets merely by undressing herself--that he could not understand. And he was to take her to wife, was he?--and to get all that she had hoarded up! That was tremendously funny! That beat everything!

He went along the High Street with a rapid step. It was raining a little; the light from the street lamps and shop-windows was reflected in the wet flagstones; the street wore a cheerful look. He went onward with a feeling that his mind was lifted above the things of everyday; the grimy old woman who lived as a parasite on the poverty of the "Ark" and who had a wonderful daughter who was absorbing riches like a leech. And on top of it all the little Pelle with the "lucky curl," like the curly-haired apprentice in the story! Here at last was the much-longed-for fairy tale!

He threw back his head and laughed. Pelle, who formerly used to feel insults so bitterly, had achieved a sense of the divinity of life.

That evening his round included the Rabarber ward. Pelle had made himself a list, according to which he went forth to search each ward of the city separately, in order to save himself unnecessary running about. First of all, he took a journeyman cobbler in Smith Street; he was one of Meyer's regular workers, and Pelle was prepared for a hard fight. The man was not at home. "But you can certainly put him down," said his wife. "We've been talking it over lately, and we've come to see it's really the best thing." That was a wife after Pelle's heart. Many would deny that their husbands were at home when they learned what Pelle wanted; or would slam the door in his face; they were tired of his running to and fro.

He visited various houses in Gardener Street, Castle Street, Norway Street, making his way through backyards and up dark, narrow stairs, up to the garrets or down to the cellars.

Over all was the same poverty; without exception the cobblers were lodged in the most miserable holes. He had not a single success to record. Some had gone away or were at fresh addresses; others wanted time to consider or gave him a direct refusal. He promised himself that he would presently give the wobblers another call; he would soon bring them round; the others he ticked off, keeping them for better times--their day too would come before long! It did not discourage him to meet with refusals; he rejoiced over the single sheep. This was a work of patience, and patience was the one thing in which he had always been

rich.

He turned into Hunter Street and entered a barrack-like building, climbing until he was right under the roof, when he knocked on a door. It was opened by a tall thin man with a thin beard. This was Peter, his fellow-'prentice at home. They were speedily talking of the days of their apprenticeship, and the workshop at home with all the curious company there. There was not much that was good to be said of Master Jeppe. But the memory of the young master filled them with warmth. "I often think of him in the course of the year," said Peter. "He was no ordinary man. That was why he died."

There was something abstracted about Peter; and his den gave one an impression of loneliness. Nothing was left to remind one of the mischievous fellow who must always be running; but something hostile and obstinate glowed within his close-set eyes. Pelle sat there wondering what could really be the matter with him. He had a curious bleached look as though he had shed his skin; but he wasn't one of the holy sort, to judge by his conversation.

"Peter, what's the truth of it--are you one of us?" said Pelle suddenly.

A disagreeable smile spread over Peter's features. "Am I one of you? That sounds just like when they ask you--have you found Jesus? Have you become a missionary?"

"You are welcome to call it that," replied Pelle frankly, "if you'll only join our organization. We want you."

"You won't miss me--nobody is missed, I believe, if he only does his work. I've tried the whole lot of them--churches and sects and all--and none of them has any use for a man. They want one more listener, one more to add to their list; it's the same everywhere." He sat lost in thought, looking into vacancy. Suddenly he made a gesture with his hands as though to wave something away. "I don't believe in anything any longer, Pelle--there's nothing worth believing in."

"Don't you believe in improving the lot of the poor, then? You haven't tried joining the movement?" asked Pelle.

"What should I do there? They only want to get more to eat--and the little food I need I can easily get. But if they could manage to make me feel that I'm a man, and not merely a machine that wants a bit more greasing, I'd as soon be a thin dog as a fat one."

"They'd soon do that!" said Pelle convincingly. "If we only hold together, they'll have to respect the individual as well, and listen to his demands. The poor man must have his say with the rest."

Peter made an impatient movement. "What good can it do me to club folks on the head till they look at me? It don't matter a damn to me! But perhaps they'd look at me of their own accord--and say, of their own accord--'Look, there goes a man made in God's image, who thinks and feels in his heart just as I do!' That's what I want!"

"I honestly don't understand what you mean with your 'man,'" said Pelle irritably. "What's the good of running your head against a wall when there are reasonable things in store for us? We want to organize ourselves and see if we can't escape from slavery. Afterward every man

can amuse himself as he likes."

"Well, well, if it's so easy to escape from slavery! Why not? Put down my name for one!" said Peter, with a slightly ironical expression.

"Thanks, comrade!" cried Pelle, joyfully shaking his hand. "But you'll do something for the cause?"

Peter looked about him forlornly. "Horrible weather for you to be out in," he said, and he lighted Pelle down the stairs.

Pelle went northward along Chapel Street. He wanted to look up Morten. The wind was chasing the leaves along by the cemetery, driving the rain in his face. He kept close against the cemetery wall in order to get shelter, and charged against the wind, head down. He was in the best of humors. That was two new members he had won over; he was getting on by degrees! What an odd fish Peter had become; the word, "man, man," sounded meaningless to Pelle's ears. Well, anyhow, he had got him on the list.

Suddenly he heard light, running steps behind him. The figure of a man reached his side, and pushed a little packet under Pelle's arm without stopping for a moment. At a short distance he disappeared. It seemed to Pelle as though he disappeared over the cemetery wall.

Under one of the street lamps he stopped and wonderingly examined the parcel; it was bound tightly with tape. "For mother" was written upon it in an awkward hand. Pelle was not long in doubt--in that word "mother" he seemed plainly to hear Ferdinand's hoarse voice. "Now Madam Frandsen will be delighted," he thought, and he put it in his pocket. During the past week she had had no news of Ferdinand. He dared no longer venture through Kristianshavn. Pelle could not understand how Ferdinand had lit upon him. Was he living out here in the Rabarber ward?

Morten was sitting down, writing in a thick copybook. He closed it hastily as Pelle entered.

"What is that?" asked Pelle, who wanted to open the book; "are you still writing in your copybook?"

Morten, confused, laid his hand on the book. "No. Besides--oh, as far as that goes," he said, "you may as well know. I have written a poem. But you mustn't speak of it."

"Oh, do read it out to me!" Pelle begged.

"Yes; but you must promise me to be silent about it, or the others will just think I've gone crazy."

He was quite embarrassed, and he stammered as he read. It was a poem about poor people, who bore the whole world on their upraised hands, and with resignation watched the enjoyment of those above them. It was called, "Let them die!" and the words were repeated as the refrain of every verse. And now that Morten was in the vein, he read also an unpretentious story of the struggle of the poor to win their bread.

"That's damned fine!" cried Pelle enthusiastically. "Monstrously good, Morten! I don't understand how you put it together, especially the verse. But you're a real poet. But I've always thought that--that you

had something particular in you. You've got your own way of looking at things, and they won't clip your wings in a hurry. But why don't you write about something big and thrilling that would repay reading--there's nothing interesting about us!"

"But I find there is!"

"No, I don't understand that. What can happen to poor fellows like us?"

"Then don't you believe in greatness?"

To be sure Pelle did. "But why shouldn't we have splendid things right away?"

"You want to read about counts and barons!" said Morten. "You are all like that. You regard yourself as one of the rabble, if it comes to that! Yes, you do! Only you don't know it! That's the slave-nature in you; the higher classes of society regard you as such and you involuntarily do the same. Yes, you may pull faces, but it's true, all the same! You don't like to hear about your own kind, for you don't believe they can amount to anything! No, you must have fine folks--always rich folks! One would like to spit on one's past and one's parents and climb up among the fine folks, and because one can't manage it one asks for it in books." Morten was irritated.

"No, no," said Pelle soothingly, "it isn't as bad as all that!"

"Yes, it is as bad as all that!" cried Morten passionately. "And do you know why? Because you don't yet understand that humanity is holy, and that it's all one where a man is found!"

"Humanity is holy?" said Pelle, laughing. "But I'm not holy, and I didn't really think you were!"

"For your sake, I hope you are," said Morten earnestly, "for otherwise you are no more than a horse or a machine that can do so much work." And then he was silent, with a look that seemed to say that the matter had been sufficiently discussed.

Morten's reserved expression made Pelle serious. He might jestingly pretend that this was nonsense, but Morten was one of those who looked into things--perhaps there was something here that he didn't understand.

"I know well enough that I'm a clown compared with you," he said good-naturedly, "but you needn't be so angry on that account. By the way, do you still remember Peter, who was at Jeppe's with your brother Jens and me? He's here, too--I--I came across him a little while ago. He's always looking into things too, but he can't find any foundation to anything, as you can. He believes in nothing in the whole world. Things are in a bad way with him. It would do him good if he could talk with you."

"But I'm no prophet--you are that rather than I," said Morten ironically.

"But you might perhaps say something of use to him. No, I'm only a trades unionist, and that's no good."

On his way home Pelle pondered honestly over Morten's words, but he had

to admit that he couldn't take them in. No, he had no occasion to surround his person with any sort of holiness or halo; he was only a healthy body, and he just wanted to do things.

IX

Pelle came rushing home from Master Beck's workshop, threw off his coat and waistcoat, and thrust his head into a bucket of water. While he was scrubbing himself dry, he ran over to the "Family." "Would you care to come out with me? I have some tickets for an evening entertainment--only you must hurry up."

The three children were sitting round the table, doing tricks with cards. The fire was crackling in the stove, and there was a delicious smell of coffee. They were tired after the day's work and they didn't feel inclined to dress themselves to go out. One could see how they enjoyed feeling that they were at home. "You should give Hanne and her mother the tickets," said Marie, "they never go out."

Pelle thought the matter over while he was dressing. Well, why not? After all, it was stupid to rake up an old story.

Hanne did not want to go with him. She sat with downcast eyes, like a lady in her boudoir, and did not look at him. But Madam Johnsen was quite ready to go--the poor old woman quickly got into her best clothes.

"It's a long time since we two have been out together, Pelle," she said gaily, as they walked through the city. "You've been so frightfully busy lately. They say you go about to meetings. That is all right for a young man. Do you gain anything by it?"

"Yes, one could certainly gain something by it--if only one used one's strength!"

"What can you gain by it, then? Are you going to eat up the Germans again, as in my young days, or what is it you are after?"

"We want to make life just a little happier," said Pelle quietly.

"Oh, you don't want to gain anything more than happiness? That's easy enough, of course!" said Madam Johnsen, laughing loudly. "Why, to be sure, in my pretty young days too the men wanted to go to the capital to make their fortunes. I was just sixteen when I came here for purposes of my own--where was a pretty girl to find everything splendid, if not here? One easily made friends--there were plenty to go walking with a nice girl in thin shoes, and they wanted to give her all sorts of fine things, and every day brought its happiness with it. But then I met a

man who wanted to do the best thing by me, and who believed in himself, too. He got me to believe that the two of us together might manage something lasting. And he was just such a poor bird as I was, with empty hands--but he set to valiantly. Clever in his work he was, too, and he thought we could make ourselves a quiet, happy life, cozy between our four walls, if only we'd work. Happiness--pooh! He wanted to be a master, at all costs--for what can a journeyman earn! And more than once

we had scraped a little together, and thought things would be easier now; but misfortune always fell on us and took it all away. It's always hovering like a great bird over the poor man's home; and you must have a long stick if you want to drive it away! It was always the same story whenever we managed to get on a little. A whole winter he was ill. We only kept alive by pawning all we'd got, stick by stick. And when the last thing had gone to the devil we borrowed a bit on the pawn-ticket." The old woman had to pause to recover her breath.

"Why are we hurrying like this?" she said, panting. "Any one would think the world was trying to run away from us!"

"Well, there was nothing left!" she continued, shuffling on again. "And he was too tired to begin all over again, so we moved into the 'Ark.' And when he'd got a few shillings he sought consolation--but it was a poor consolation for me, who was carrying Hanne, that you may believe! She was like a gift after all that misfortune; but he couldn't bear her, because our fancy for a little magnificence was born again in her. She had inherited that from us--poor little thing!--with rags and dirt to set it off. You should just have seen her, as quite a little child, making up the fine folks' world out of the rags she got together out of the dustbins. 'What's that?' Johnsen he said once--he was a little less full than usual. 'Oh, that's the best room with the carpet on the floor, and there by the stove is your room, father. But you mustn't spit on the floor, because we are rich people.'"

Madam Johnsen began to cry. "And then he struck her on the head. 'Hold your tongue!' he cried, and he cursed and swore at the child something frightful. 'I don't want to hear your infernal chatter!' That's the sort he was. Life began to be a bit easier when he had drowned himself in the sewer. The times when I might have amused myself he'd stolen from me with his talk of the future, and now I sit there turning old soldiers' trousers that fill the room with filth, and when I do two a day I can earn a mark. And Hanne goes about like a sleep-walker. Happiness! Is there a soul in the 'Ark' that didn't begin with a firm belief in something better? One doesn't move from one's own choice into such a mixed louse's nest, but one ends up there all the same. And is there anybody here who is really sure of his daily bread? Yes, Olsens with the warm wall, but they've got their daughter's shame to thank for that."

"All the more reason to set to work," said Pelle.

"Yes, you may well say that! But any one who fights against the unconquerable will soon be tired out. No, let things be and amuse yourself while you are still young. But don't you take any notice of my complaining--me--an old whimperer, I am--walking with you and being in the dumps like this--now we'll go and amuse ourselves!" And now she looked quite contented again.

"Then take my arm--it's only proper with a pair of sweethearts," said Pelle, joking. The old woman took his arm and went tripping youthfully along. "Yes, if it had been in my young days, I would soon have known how to dissuade you from your silly tricks," she said gaily. "I should have been taking you to the dance."

"But you didn't manage to get Johnsen to give them up," said Pelle in reply.

"No, because then I was too credulous. But no one would succeed in

robbing me of my youth now!"

The meeting was held in a big hall in one of the side streets by the North Bridge. The entertainment, which was got up by some of the agitators, was designed principally for young people; but many women and young girls were present. Among other things a poem was read which dealt with an old respectable blacksmith who was ruined by a strike. "That may be very fine and touching," whispered Madam Johnsen, polishing her nose in her emotion, "but they really ought to have something one can laugh over. We see misfortune every day."

Then a small choir of artisans sang some songs, and one of the older leaders mounted the platform and told them about the early years of the movement. When he had finished, he asked if there was no one else who had something to tell them. It was evidently not easy to fill out the evening.

There was no spirit in the gathering. The women were not finding it amusing, and the men sat watching for anything they could carp at. Pelle knew most of those present; even the young men had hard faces, on which could be read an obstinate questioning. This homely, innocent entertainment did not appease the burning impatience which filled their hearts, listening for a promise of better things.

Pelle sat there pained by the proceedings; the passion for progress and agitation was in his very blood. Here was such an opportunity to strike a blow for unification, and it was passing unused. The women only needed a little rousing, the factory-girls and the married women too, who held back their husbands. And they stood up there, frittering away the time with their singing and their poetry-twaddle! With one leap he stood on the platform.

"All these fine words may be very nice," he cried passionately, "but they are very little use to all those who can't live on them! The clergyman and the dog earn their living with their mouths, but the rest of us are thrown on our own resources when we want to get anything. Why do we slink round the point like cats on hot bricks, why all this palaver and preaching? Perhaps we don't yet know what we want? They say we've been slaves for a thousand years! Then we ought to have had time enough to think it out! Why does so little happen, although we are all waiting for something, and are ready? Is there no one anywhere who has the courage to lead us?"

Loud applause followed, especially from the young men; they stamped and shouted. Pelle staggered down from the platform; he was covered with sweat.

The old leader ascended the platform again and thanked his colleagues for their acceptable entertainment. He turned also with smiling thanks to Pelle. It was gratifying that there was still fire glowing in the young men; although the occasion was unsuitable. The old folks had led the movement through evil times; but they by no means wished to prevent youth from testing itself.

Pelle wanted to stand up and make some answer, but Madam Johnsen held him fast by his coat. "Be quiet, Pelle," she whispered anxiously; "you'll venture too far." She would not let go of him, so he had to sit down again to avoid attracting attention. His cheeks were burning, and he was as breathless as though he had been running up a hill. It was the

first time he had ventured on a public platform; excitement had sent him thither.

The people began to get up and to mix together. "Is it over already?" asked Madam Johnsen. Pelle could see that she was disappointed.

"No, no; now we'll treat ourselves to something," he said, leading the old woman to a table at the back of the hall. "What can I offer you?"

"Coffee, please, for me! But you ought to have a glass of beer, you are so warm!"

Pelle wanted coffee too. "You're a funny one for a man!" she said, laughing. "First you go pitching into a whole crowd of men, and then you sit down here with an old wife like me and drink coffee! What a crowd of people there are here; it's almost like a holiday!" She sat looking about her with shining eyes and rosy cheeks, like a young girl at a dance. "Take some more of the skin of the milk, Pelle; you haven't got any. This really is cream!"

The leader came up to ask if he might make Pelle's acquaintance. "I've heard of you from the president of your Union," he said, giving Pelle his hand. "I am glad to make your acquaintance; you have done a pretty piece of work."

"Oh, it wasn't so bad," said Pelle, blushing. "But it really would be fine if we could really get to work!"

"I know your impatience only too well," retorted the old campaigner, laughing. "It's always so with the young men. But those who really want to do something must be able to see to the end of the road." He patted Pelle on the shoulders and went.

Pelle felt that the people were standing about him and speaking of him. God knows whether you haven't made yourself ridiculous, he thought. Close by him two young men were standing, who kept on looking at him sideways. Suddenly they came up to him.

"We should much like to shake hands with you," said one of them. "My name is Otto Stolpe, and this is my brother Frederik. That was good, what you said up there, we want to thank you for it!" They stood by for some little while, chatting to Pelle. "It would please my father and mother too, if they could make your acquaintance," said Otto Stolpe. "Would you care to come home with us?"

"I can't very well this evening; I have some one with me," replied Pelle.

"You go with them," said Madam Johnsen. "I see some folks from Kristianshavn back there, I can go home with them."

"But we were meaning to go on the spree a bit now that we've at last come out!" said Pelle, smiling.

"God forbid! No, we've been on the spree enough for one evening, my old head is quite turned already. You just be off; that's a thing I haven't said for thirty years! And many thanks for bringing me with you." She laughed boisterously.

The Stolpe family lived in Elm Street, on the second floor of one of the new workmen's tenement houses. The stairs were roomy, and on the door there was a porcelain plate with their name on it. In the entry an elderly, well-dressed woman up to them.

"Here is a comrade, mother," said Otto.

"Welcome," she said, as she took Pelle's hand. She held it a moment in her own as she looked at him.

In the living room sat Stolpe, a mason, reading *_The Working Man_*. He was in shirt sleeves, and was resting his heavy arms on the table. He read whispering to himself, he had not noticed that a guest was in the room.

"Here's some one who would like to say how-d'ye-do to father," said Otto, laying his hand on his father's arm.

Stolpe raised his head and looked at Pelle. "Perhaps you would like to join the Union?" he asked, rising with difficulty, with one hand pressed on the table. He was tall, his hair was sprinkled with gray; his eyes were mottled from the impact of splinters of limestone.

"You and your Union!" said Madam Stolpe. "Perhaps you think there's no one in it but you!"

"No, mother; little by little a whole crowd of people have entered it, but all the same I was the first."

"I'm already in the Union," said Pelle. "But not in yours. I'm a shoemaker, you know."

"Shoemaker, ah, that's a poor trade for a journeyman; but all the same a man can get to be a master; but to-day a mason can't do that--there's a great difference there. And if one remains a journeyman all his life long, he has more interest in modifying his position. Do you understand? That's why the organization of the shoemakers has never been of more than middling dimensions. Another reason is that they work in their own rooms, and one can't get them together. But now there's a new man come, who seems to be making things move."

"Yes, and this is he, father," said Otto, laughing.

"The deuce, and here I stand making a fool of myself! Then I'll say how-d'ye-do over again! And here's good luck to your plans, young comrade." He shook Pelle by the hand. "I think we might have a drop of beer, mother?"

Pelle and Stolpe were soon engaged in a lively conversation; Pelle was in his element. Until now he had never found his way to the heart of the movement. There was so much he wanted to ask about, and the old man incontinently told him of the growth of the organization from year to year, of their first beginning, when there was only one trades unionist in Denmark, namely, himself, down to the present time. He knew all the numbers of the various trades, and was precisely informed as to the development of each individual union. The sons sat silent, thoughtfully listening. When they had something to say, they always waited until the old man nodded his head to show that he had finished. The younger, Frederik, who was a mason's apprentice, never said "thou" to his father;

he addressed him in the third person, and his continual "father says, father thinks," sounded curious to Pelle's ears.

While they were still talking Madam Stolpe opened the door leading into an even prettier room, and invited them to go in and to drink their coffee. The living-room had already produced an extremely pleasant impression on Pelle, with its oak-grained dining-room suite and its horse-hair sofa. But here was a red plush suite, an octagonal table of walnut wood, with a black inlaid border and twisted wooden feet, and an etagere full of knick-knacks and pieces of china; mostly droll, impudent little things. On the walls hung pictures of trades unions and assemblies and large photographs of workshops; one of a building during construction, with the scaffolding full of the bricklayers and their mortar-buckets beside them, each with a trowel or a beer-bottle can in his hand. On the wall over the sofa hung a large half-length portrait of a dark, handsome man in a riding-cloak. He looked half a dreamy adventurer, half a soldier.

"That's the grand master," said Stolpe proudly, standing at Pelle's side. "There was always a crowd of women at his heels. But they kept themselves politely in the background, for a fire went out of him at such times--do you understand? Then it was--Men to the front! And even the laziest fellow pricked up his ears."

"Then he's dead now, is he?" asked Pelle, with interest.

Stolpe did not answer. "Well," he said briefly, "shall we have our coffee now?" Otto winked at Pelle; here evidently was a matter that must not be touched upon.

Stolpe sat staring into his cup, but suddenly he raised his head. "There are things one doesn't understand," he cried earnestly. "But this is certain, that but for the grand master here I and a whole host of other men wouldn't perhaps be respectable fathers of families to-day. There were many smart fellows among us young comrades, as is always the case; but as a rule the gifted ones always went to the dogs. For when a man has no opportunity to alter things, he naturally grows impatient, and then one fine day he begins to pour spirit on the flames in order to stop his mouth. I myself had that accursed feeling that I must do something, and little by little I began to drink. But then I discovered the movement, before it existed, I might venture to say; it was in the air like, d'you see. It was as though something was coming, and one sniffed about like a dog in order to catch a glimpse of it. Presently it was, Here it is! There it is! But when one looked into it, there was just a few hungry men bawling at one another about something or other, but the devil himself didn't know what it was. But then the grand master came forward, and that was like a flash of light for all of us. For he could say to a nicety just where the shoe pinched, although he didn't belong to our class at all. Since that time there's been no need to go searching for the best people--they were always to be found in the movement! Although there weren't very many of them, the best people were always on the side of the movement."

"But now there's wind in the sails," said Pelle.

"Yes, now there's talk of it everywhere. But to whom is that due? God knows, to us old veterans--and to him there!"

Stolpe began to talk of indifferent matters, but quite involuntarily the

conversation returned to the movement; man and wife lived and breathed for nothing else. They were brave, honest people, who quite simply divided mankind into two parts: those who were for and those who were against the movement. Pelle seemed to breathe more freely and deeply in this home, where the air was as though steeped in Socialism.

He noticed a heavy chest which stood against the wall on four twisted legs. It was thickly ornamented with nail-heads and looked like an old muniment chest.

"Yes--that's the standard!" said Madam Stolpe, but she checked herself in alarm. Mason Stolpe knitted his brows.

"Ah, well, you're a decent fellow, after all," he said. "One needn't slink on tiptoe in front of you!" He took a key out of a secret compartment in his writing-table. "Now the danger's a thing of the past, but one still has to be careful. That's a vestige of the times when things used to go hardly with us. The police used to be down on all our badges of common unity. The grand master himself came to me one evening with the flag under his cloak, and said to me, 'You must look out for it, Stolpe, you are the most reliable of us all.'"

He and his wife unfolded the great piece of bunting. "See, that's the banner of the International. It looks a little the worse for wear, for it has undergone all sorts of treatment. At the communist meetings out in the fields, when the troops were sent against us with ball cartridge, it waved over the speaker's platform, and held us together. When it flapped over our heads it was as though we were swearing an oath to it. The police understood that, and they were mad to get it. They went for the flag during a meeting, but nothing came of it, and since then they've hunted for it so, it's had to be passed from man to man. In that way it has more than once come to me."

"Yes, and once the police broke in here and took father away as we were sitting at supper. They turned the whole place upside down, and dragged him off to the cells without a word of explanation. The children were little then, and you can imagine how miserable it seemed to me. I didn't know when they would let him out again."

"Yes, but they didn't get the colors," said Stolpe, and he laughed heartily. "I had already passed them on, they were never very long in one place in those days. Now they lead a comparatively quiet life, and mother and the rest of us too!"

The young men stood in silence, gazing at the standard that had seen so many vicissitudes, and that was like the hot red blood of the movement. Before Pelle a whole new world was unfolding itself; the hope that had burned in the depths of his soul was after all not so extravagant. When he was still running, wild at home, playing the games of childhood or herding the cows, strong men had already been at work and had laid the foundations of the cause.... A peculiar warmth spread through him and rose to his head. If only it had been he who had waved the glowing standard in the face of the oppressor--he, Pelle!

"And now it lies here in the chest and is forgotten!" he said dejectedly.

"It is only resting," said Stolpe. "Forgotten, yes; the police have no idea that it still exists. But fix it on a staff, and you will see how

the comrades flock about it! Old and young alike. There's fire in that bit of cloth! True fire, that never goes out!"

Carefully they folded the colors and laid them back in the chest. "It won't do even now to speak aloud of the colors! You understand?" said Stolpe.

There was a knock, and Stolpe made haste to lock the chest and hide the key, while Frederik went to the door. They looked at one another uneasily and stood listening.

"It is only Ellen," said Frederik, and he returned, followed by a tall dark girl with an earnest bearing. She had a veil over her face, and before her mouth her breath showed like a pearly tissue.

"Ah, that's the lass!" cried Stolpe, laughing. "What folly--we were quite nervous, just as nervous as in the old days. And you're abroad in the streets at this hour of night! And in this weather?" He looked at her affectionately; one could see that she was his darling. Outwardly they were very unlike.

She greeted Pelle with the tiniest nod, but looked at him earnestly. There was something still and gracious about her that fascinated him. She wore dark clothes, without the slightest adornment, but they were of good sound stuff.

"Won't you change?" asked the mother, unbuttoning her cloak. "You are quite wet, child."

"No, I must go out again at once," Ellen replied. "I only wanted to peep in."

"But it's really very late," grumbled Stolpe. "Are you only off duty now?"

"Yes, it's not my going-out day."

"Not to-day again? Yes, it's sheer slavery, till eleven at night!"

"That's the way things are, and it doesn't make it any better for you to scold me," said Ellen courageously.

"No, but you needn't go out to service. There's no sense in our children going out to service in the houses of the employers. Don't you agree with me?" He turned to Pelle.

Ellen laughed brightly. "It's all the same--father works for the employers as well."

"Yes, but that's a different thing. It's from one fixed hour to another, and then it's over. But this other work is a home; she goes from one home to another and undertakes all the dirty work."

"Father's not in a position to keep me at home."

"I know that very well, but all the same I can't bear it. Besides, you could surely get some other kind of work."

"Yes, but I don't want to! I claim the right to dispose of myself!" she

replied heatedly.

The others sat silent, looking nervously at one another. The veins swelled on Stolpe's forehead; he was purple, and terribly angry. But Ellen looked at him with a little laugh. He got up and went grumbling into the other room.

Her mother shook her head at Ellen. She was quite pale. "Oh, child, child!" she whispered.

After a while Stolpe returned with some old newspapers, which he wanted to show Pelle. Ellen stood behind his chair, looking down at them; she rested her arm on his shoulders and idly ruffled his hair. The mother pulled at her skirt. The papers were illustrated, and went back to the stirring times.

The clock struck the half-hour; it was half-past eleven. Pelle rose in consternation; he had quite forgotten the time.

"Take the lass with you," said Stolpe. "You go the same way, don't you, Ellen? Then you'll have company. There's no danger going with her, for she's a saint." It sounded as though he wanted to make up for his scolding. "Come again soon; you will always be welcome here."

They did not speak much on the way home. Pelle was embarrassed, and he had a feeling that she was considering him and thinking him over as they walked, wondering what sort of a fellow he might be. When he ventured to say something, she answered briefly and looked at him searchingly. And yet he found it was an interesting walk. He would gladly have prolonged it.

"Many thanks for your company," he said, when they stood at her house-door. "I should be very glad to see you again."

"You will if we meet," she said taciturnly; but she gave him her hand for a moment.

"We are sure to meet again! Be sure of that!" cried Pelle jovially. "But you are forgetting to reward me for my escort?" He bent over her.

She gazed at him in astonishment--with eyes that were turning him to stone, he thought. Then she slowly turned and went indoors.

X

One day, after his working hours, Pelle was taking some freshly completed work to the Court shoemaker's. The foreman took it and paid for it, and proceeded to give out work to the others, leaving Pelle standing. Pelle waited impatiently, but did no more than clear his throat now and again. This was the way of these people; one had to put up with it if one wanted work. "Have you forgotten me?" he said at last, a little impatiently.

"You can go," said the foreman. "You've finished here."

"What does that mean?" asked Pelle, startled.

"It means what you hear. You've got the sack--if you understand that better."

Pelle understood that very well, but he wanted to establish the fact of his persecution in the presence of his comrades. "Have you any fault to find with my work?" he asked.

"You mix yourself up too much with things that don't concern you, my good fellow, and then you can't do the work you ought to do."

"I should like very much to know what fault you have to find with my work," said Pelle obstinately.

"Go to the devil! I've told you already!" roared the foreman.

The Court shoemaker came down through the door of the back room and looked about him. When he saw Pelle, he went up to him.

"You get out of here, and that at once!" he cried, in a rage. "Do you think we give bread to people that undermine us? Out, out of my place of business, Mossoo Trades-Unionist!"

Pelle stood his ground, and looked his employer in the eyes; he would have struck the man a blow in the face rather than allow himself to be sent away. "Be cool, now; be cool!" he said to himself. He laughed, but his features were quivering. The Court shoemaker kept a certain distance, and continued to shout, "Out with him! Here, foreman, call the police at once!"

"Now you can see, comrades, how they value one here," said Pelle, turning his broad back on Meyer. "We are dogs; nothing more!"

They stood there, staring at the counter, deaf and dumb in their dread of taking sides. Then Pelle went. He made his way northward. His heart was full of violent emotion. Indignation raged within him like a tempest, and by fits and starts found utterance on his lips. Meyer's work was quite immaterial to him; it was badly paid, and he only did it as a stop-gap. But it was disgusting to think they could buy his convictions with badly-paid work! And there they stood not daring to show their colors, as if it wasn't enough to support such a fellow with their skill and energy! Meyer stood there like a wall, in the way of any real progress, but he needn't think he could strike at Pelle, for he'd get a blow in return if he did!

He went straight to Mason Stolpe, in order to talk the matter over with him; the old trades unionist was a man of great experience.

"So he's one of those who go in for the open slave-trade!" said Stolpe. "We've had a go at them before now. 'We've done with you, my good man; we can make no use of agitators!' And if one steals a little march on them 'Off you go; you're done with here!' I myself have been like a hunted cur, and at home mother used to go about crying. I could see what she was feeling, but when I put the matter before her she said, 'Hold out, Stolpe, you shan't give in!' 'You're forgetting our daily bread, mother,' I say. 'Oh, our daily bread. I can just go out washing!' That was in those days--they sing another tune to us now! Now the master politely raises his hat to old Stolpe! If he thinks he can allow himself

to hound a man down, an embargo must be put on him!"

Pelle had nothing to say against that. "If only it works," he said. "But our organization looks weak enough as yet."

"Only try it; in any case, you can always damage him. He attacks your livelihood in order to strike at your conscience, so you hit back at his purse--that's where his conscience is! Even if it does no good, at least it makes him realize that you're not a slave."

Pelle sat a while longer chatting. He had secretly hoped to meet Ellen again, but he dared not ask whether that was her day for coming home. Madam Stolpe invited him to stay and to have supper with them she was only waiting for her sons. But Pelle had no time; he must be off to think out instructions for the embargo. "Then come on Sunday," said the mother; "Sunday is Ellen's birthday."

With rapid strides he went off to the president of the Union; the invitation for the following Sunday had dissipated the remains of his anger. The prospect of a tussle with Meyer had put him in the best of tempers. He was certain of winning the president, Petersen, for his purpose, if only he could find him out of bed; he himself had in his time worked for wholesale shoemakers, and hated them like the plague. It was said that Petersen had worked out a clever little invention--a patent button for ladies' boots--which he had taken to Meyer, as he himself did not know how to exploit it. But Meyer had, without more ado, treated the invention as his own, inasmuch as it was produced by one of his workmen. He took out a patent and made a lot of money by it, trifling as the thing was. When Petersen demanded a share of the profits, he was dismissed. He himself never spoke of the matter; he just sat in his cellar brooding over the injustice, so that he never managed to recover his position. Almost his whole time had been devoted to the Union, so that he might revenge himself through it; but it never really made much progress. He fired up passionately enough, but he was lacking in persistence. And his lungs were weak.

He trembled with excitement when Pelle explained his plan. "Great God in heaven, if only we could get at him!" he whispered hoarsely, clenching his skinny fists which Death had already marked with its dusky shadows. "I would willingly give my miserable life to see the scoundrel ruined! Look at that!" He bent down, whispering, and showed Pelle a file ground to a point, which was fastened into a heavy handle. "If I hadn't the children, he would have got that between his ribs long before this!" His gray, restless eyes, which reminded Pelle of Anker, the crazy clockmaker, had a cold, piercing expression.

"Yes, yes," said Pelle, laying his hand soothingly on the other's; "but it's no use to do anything stupid. We shall only do what we want to do if we all stand together."

The day was well spent; on the very next evening the members of the Union were summoned to a meeting. Petersen spoke first, and beginning with a fiery speech. It was like the final efforts of a dying man. "You organize the struggle," said Petersen. "I'm no good nowadays for that--and I've no strength. But I'll sound the assault--ay, and so that they wake up. Then you yourself must see to keeping the fire alight in them." His eyes burned in their shadowy sockets; he stood there like a martyr upholding the necessity of the conflict. The embargo was agreed upon unanimously!

Then Pelle came forward and organized the necessary plan of campaign. It was his turn now. There was no money in the chest, but every man had to promise a certain contribution to be divided among those who were refusing to work. Every man must do his share to deprive Meyer of all access to the labor market. And there was to be no delirious enthusiasm--which they would regret when they woke up next morning. It was essential that every man should form beforehand a clear conception of the difficulties, and must realize what he was pledging himself to. And then--three cheers for a successful issue!

This business meant a lot of running about. But what of that! Pelle, who had to sit such a lot, wouldn't suffer from getting out into the fresh air! He employed the evenings in making up for lost time. He got work from the small employers in Kristianshavn, who were very busy in view of Christmas, which made up for that which he had lost through the Court shoemaker.

On the second day after his dismissal, the declaration of the embargo appeared under the "Labor Items" in The Working Man. "Assistance strictly prohibited!" It was like the day's orders, given by Pelle's own word of mouth. He cut the notice out, and now and again, as he sat at his work, he took it out and considered it. This was Pelle--although it didn't say so--

Pelle and the big employer were having a bit of a tussle! Now they should see which was the stronger!

Pelle went often to see Stolpe. Strangely enough, his visits always coincided with Ellen's days off. Then he accompanied her homeward, and they walked side by side talking of serious things. There was nothing impetuous about them--they behaved as though a long life lay before them. His vehemence cooled in the conflict with Meyer. He was sure of Ellen's character, unapproachable though she was. Something in him told him that she ought to be and would remain so. She was one of those natures to whom it is difficult to come out of their shell, so as to reveal the kernel within; but he felt that there was something that was growing for him within that reserved nature, and he was not impatient.

One evening he had as usual accompanied her to the door, and they stood there bidding one another good night. She gave him her hand in her shy, awkward manner, which might even mean reluctance, and was then about to go indoors.

"But are we going on like this all our lives?" said Pelle, holding her fingers tightly. "I love you so!"

She stood there a while, with an impenetrable expression, then advanced her face and kissed him mechanically, as a child kisses, with tightly closed lips. She was already on her way to the house when she suddenly started back, drew him to herself, and kissed him passionately and unrestrainedly. There was something so violent, so wild and fanatical in her demeanor, that he was quite bewildered. He scarcely recognized her, and when he had come to himself she was already on her way up the kitchen steps. He stood still, as though blinded by a rain of fire, and heard her running as though pursued.

Since that day she had been another creature. Her love was like the spring that comes in a single night. She could not be without him for a

day; when she went out to make purchases, she came running over to the "Ark." Her nature had thrown off its restraint; there was tension in her manner and her movements; and this tension now and again escaped from within in little explosions. She did not say very much; when they were together, she clung to him passionately as though to deaden some pain, and hid her face; if he lifted it, she kept her eyes persistently closed. Then she breathed deeply, and sat down smiling and humming to herself when he spoke to her.

It was as though she was delving deep into his inmost being, and Pelle, who felt the need to reach and to know that inner nature, drew confidence from her society. No matter what confronted him, he had always sought in his inner self for his natural support, anxiously listening for that which came to the surface, and unconsciously doubting and inquiring. And now, so surely as she leaned silently on his arm, she confirmed something deep within him, and her steadfast gaze vibrated within him like a proud vocation, and he felt himself infinitely rich. She spoke to something deep within him when she gazed at him so thoughtfully. But what she said he did not know--nor what answer she received. When he recalled her from that gaze of hers, as of one bewitched, she only sighed like one awaking, and kissed him.

Ellen was loyal and unselfish and greatly valued by her employers. There was no real development to be perceived in her--she longed to become his--and that was all. But the future was born on Pelle's own lips under her dreamy gaze, as though it was she who inspired him with the illuminating words. And then she listened with an absent smile--as to something delightful; but she herself seemed to give no thought to the future. She seemed full of a hidden devotion, that filled Pelle with an inward warmth, so that he held up his head very high toward the light. This constant devotion of Ellen's made the children "Family" teasingly call her "the Saint."

It gave him much secret pleasure to be admitted to her home, where the robust Copenhagen humor concealed conditions quite patriarchal in their nature. Everything was founded on order and respect for the parents, especially the father, who spoke the decisive word in every matter, and had his own place, in which no one else ever sat. When he came home from his work, the grown-up sons would always race to take him his slippers, and the wife always had some extra snack for him. The younger son, Frederik, who was just out of his apprenticeship, was as delighted as a child to think of the day when he should become a journeyman and be able to drink brotherhood with the old man.

They lived in a new, spacious, three-roomed tenement with a servant's room thrown in; to Pelle, who was accustomed to find his comrades over here living in one room with a kitchen, this was a new experience. The sons boarded and lodged at home; they slept in the servant's room. The household was founded on and supported by their common energies; although the family submitted unconditionally to the master of the house, they did not do so out of servility; they only did as all others did. For Stolpe was the foremost man in his calling, an esteemed worker and the veteran of the labor movement. His word was unchallenged.

Ellen was the only one who did not respect his supremacy, but courageously opposed him, often without any further motive than that of contradiction. She was the only girl of the family, and the favorite; and she took advantage of her position. Sometimes it looked as though Stolpe would be driven to extremities; as though he longed to pulverize

her in his wrath; but he always gave in to her.

He was greatly pleased with Pelle. And he secretly admired his daughter more than ever. "You see, mother, there's something in that lass! She understands how to pick a man for himself!" he would cry enthusiastically.

"Yes; I've nothing against him, either," Madam Stolpe would reply. "A bit countrified still, but of course he's growing out of it."

"Countrified? He? No, you take my word, he knows what he wants. She's really found her master there!" said Stolpe triumphantly.

In the two brothers Pelle found a pair of loyal comrades, who could not but look up to him.

XI

With the embargo matters were going so-so. Meyer replied to it by convoking the employers to a meeting with a view to establishing an employers' union, which would refuse employment to the members of the trade union. Then the matter would have been settled at one blow.

However, things did not go so far as that. The small employers were afraid the journeymen would set up for themselves and compete against them. And instinctively they feared the big employers more than the journeymen, and were shy of entering the Union with them. The inner tendency of the industrial movement was to concentrate everything in a few hands, and to ruin the small business. The small employers had yet another crow to pluck with Meyer, who had extended his business at the expense of their own.

Through Master Beck, Pelle learned what was taking place among the employers. Meyer had demanded that Beck should discharge Pelle, but Beck would not submit to him.

"I can't really complain of you," he said. "Your trades-unionism I don't like--you would do better to leave it alone. But with your work I am very well satisfied. I have always endeavored to render justice to all parties. But if you can knock Meyer's feet from under him, we small employers will be very grateful to your Union, for he's freezing us out."

To knock his feet from under him--that wasn't an easy thing to do. On the contrary, he was driving the weaker brethren out of the Union, and had always enough workers--partly Swedes, with whom he had a written contract, and whom he had to pay high wages. The system of home employment made it impossible to get to grips with him. Pelle and the president of the Union carefully picketed the warehouse about the time when the work was delivered, in order to discover who was working for him. And they succeeded in snatching a few workers away from him and in bringing them to reason, or else their names were published in *The Working Man*. But then the journeymen sent their wives or children with the work--and there was really nothing that could be done. It cost Meyer large sums of money to keep his business going, but the Union suffered

more. It had not as yet sufficient authority, and the large employers stood by Meyer and would not employ members of the Union as long as the embargo lasted. So it was finally raised.

That was a defeat; but Pelle had learned something, none the less! The victory was to the strong, and their organization was not as yet sufficient. They must talk and agitate, and hold meetings! The tendency to embrace the new ideas certainly inclined the men to organize themselves, but their sense of honor was as yet undeveloped. The slightest mishap dispersed them.

Pelle did not lose heart; he must begin all over again, that was all.

On the morning after the defeat was an accomplished fact he was up early. His resolution to go ahead with redoubled energies, he had, so to speak, slept into him, so that it pervaded his body and put energy and decision into his hammer-strokes.

He whistled as the work progressed rapidly under his hands. The window stood open so that the night air might escape; hoar frost lay on the roofs, and the stars twinkled overhead in the cold heavens. But Pelle was not cold! He had just awakened the "Family" and could hear them moving about in their room. People were beginning to tumble out into the gangway, still drunken with sleep. Pelle was whistling a march. On the previous evening he had sent off the last instalment of his debt to Sort, and at the same time had written definitely to Father Lasse that he was to come. And now the day was dawning!

Marie came and reached him his coffee through the door. "Good morning!" she cried merrily, through the crack of the door. "We're going to have fine weather to-day, Pelle!" She was not quite dressed yet and would not let herself be seen. The boys nodded good morning as they ran out. Karl had his coat and waistcoat under his arm. These articles of clothing he always used to put on as he ran down the stairs.

When it was daylight Marie came in to set the room in order. She conversed with him as she scrubbed.

"Look here, Marie!" cried Pelle suddenly. "Ellen came here yesterday and asked you to bring me a message when I came home. You didn't do it."

Marie's face became set, but she did not reply.

"It was only by pure chance that I met her yesterday, otherwise we should have missed one another."

"Then I must have forgotten it," said Marie morosely.

"Why, of course you forgot it. But that's the second time this week. You must be in love!" he added, smiling.

Marie turned her back on him. "I've got nothing to do with her--I don't owe her anything!" suddenly she cried defiantly. "And I'm not going to clean your room any longer, either--let her do it--so there!" She seized her pail and scrubbing-brush and ran into her own room. After a time he heard her voice from within the room; at first he thought she was singing a tune to herself, but then he heard sobs.

He hurried into the room; she was lying on the bed, weeping, biting the

pillow and striking at it angrily with her roughened hands. Her thin body burned as if with fever.

"You are ill, Marie dear," said Pelle anxiously, laying his hand on her forehead. "You ought to go to bed and take something to make you sweat. I'll warm it up for you."

She was really ill; her eyes were dry and burning, and her hands were cold and clammy. But she would agree to nothing. "Go away!" she said angrily, "and attend to your own work! Leave me alone!" She had turned her back on him and nudged him away defiantly with her shoulder. "You'd best go in and cuddle Ellen!" she cried suddenly, with a malicious laugh.

"Why are you like this, Marie?" said Pelle, distressed. "You are quite naughty!"

She buried her face in the bed and would neither look at him nor answer him. So he went back to his work.

After a time she came into his room again and resumed her work of cleaning. She banged the things about; pulling down some work of his that he had set to dry by the stove, and giving him a malicious sidelong look. Then a cup containing paste fell to the ground and was broken. "She did that on purpose," he thought unhappily, and he put the paste into an empty box. She stood watching him with a piercing, malicious gaze.

He turned to his work again, and made as though nothing had happened. Suddenly he felt her thin arms about his neck. "Forgive me!" she said, weeping, and she hid her face against his shoulder.

"Come, come, nothing very dreadful has happened! The silly old cup!" he said consolingly, as he stroked her head. "You couldn't help it!"

But at that she broke down altogether, and it seemed as though her crying would destroy her meager body. "Yes, I did it on purpose!" she bellowed. "And I threw down the boots on purpose, and yesterday I didn't give you the message on purpose. I would have liked to hurt you still more, I'm so bad, bad, bad! Why doesn't some one give me a good beating? If you'd only once be properly angry with me!"

She was quite beside herself and did not know what she was saying.

"Now listen to me at once--you've got to be sensible!" said Pelle decidedly, "for this sort of thing is not amusing. I was pleased to think I was going to be at home to-day, so as to work beside you, and then you go and have an attack just like a fine lady!"

She overcame her weeping by a tremendous effort, and went back to her room, gently sobbing. She returned at once with a cracked cup for the paste and a small tin box with a slit in the lid. This was her money-box.

"Take it," she said, pushing the box onto his lap. "Then you can buy yourself lasts and needn't go asking the small employers for work. There's work enough here in the 'Ark.'"

"But, Marie--that's your rent!" said Pelle, aghast.

"What does that matter? I can easily get the money together again by the first."

Oh, she could easily do that! Pelle laughed, a bewildered laugh. How cheerfully she threw her money about, the money that cost her thirty days of painful thought and saving, in order to have it ready each month!

"What do you think Peter and Karl would say to your chucking your money about like that? Put the box away again safely-and be quick about it!"

"Oh, take it!" she cried persistently, thrusting the box upon him. again. "Yes--or I'll throw it out of the window!" She quickly opened one of the sashes. Pelle stood up.

"It's true I still owe you for the last washing," he said, offering to put a krone in the box.

"A good thing you reminded me." She stared at him with an impenetrable expression and ran back to her room.

In there she moved about singing in her harsh voice. After a while she went out to make some purchases clad in a gray shawl, with her housewife's basket on her arm. He could follow her individual step, which was light as a child's, and yet sounded so old--right to the end of the tunnel. Then he went into the children's room and pulled out the third drawer in the chest of drawers. There she always hid her money-box, wrapped up in her linen. He still possessed two kroner, which he inserted in the box.

He used always to pay her in this way. When she counted out her money and found there was too much, she believed the good God had put the money in her box, and would come jubilantly into his room to tell him about it. The child believed blindly in Fortune, and accepted the money as a sign of election; and for her this money was something quite different to that which she herself had saved.

About noon she came to invite him into her room. "There's fried herring, Pelle, so you can't possibly say no," she said persuasively, "for no Bornholmer could! Then you needn't go and buy that stuffy food from the hawker, and throw away five and twenty ore." She had bought half a score of the fish, and had kept back five for her brothers when they came home. "And there's coffee after," she said. She had set out everything delightfully, with a clean napkin at one end of the table.

The factory girl's little Paul came in and was given a mouthful of food. Then he ran out into the gangway again and tumbled about there, for the little fellow was never a moment still from the moment his mother let him out in the morning; there was so much to make up for after his long imprisonment. From the little idiot whom his mother had to tie to the stove because he had water on the brain and wanted to throw himself out of the window, he had become a regular vagabond. Every moment he would thrust his head in at the door and look at Pelle; and he would often come right in, put his hand on Pelle's knee, and say, "You's my father!" Then he would rush off again. Marie helped him in all his infantile necessities--he always appealed to her!

After she had washed up, she sat by Pelle with her mending, chattering

away concerning her household cares. "I shall soon have to get jackets for the boys--it's awful what they need now they're grown up. I peep in at the second-hand clothes shop every day. And you must have a new blouse, too, Pelle; that one will soon be done for; and then you've none to go to the wash. If you'll buy the stuff, I'll soon make it up for you--I can sew! I made my best blouse myself--Hanne helped me with it! Why, really, don't you go to see Hanne any longer?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Hanne has grown so peculiar. She never comes down into the courtyard now to dance with us. She used to. Then I used to watch out of the window, and run down. It was so jolly, playing with her. We used to go round and round her and sing! 'We all bow to Hanne, we curtsy all to Hanne, we all turn round before her!' And then we bowed and curtsied and suddenly we all turned round. I tell you, it was jolly! You ought to have taken Hanne."

"But you didn't like it when I took Ellen. Why should I have taken Hanne?"

"Oh, I don't know ... Hanne...." Marie stopped, listened, and suddenly wrenched the window open.

Down in the "Ark" a door slammed, and a long hooting sound rose up from below, sounding just like a husky scream from the crazy Vinslev's flute or like the wind in the long corridors. Like a strange, disconnected snatch of melody, the sound floated about below, trickling up along the wooden walls, and breaking out into the daylight with a note of ecstasy: "Hanne's with child! The Fairy Princess is going to be confined!"

Marie went down the stairs like a flash. The half-grown girls were shrieking and running together in the court below; the women on the galleries were murmuring to others above and below. Not that this was in itself anything novel; but in this case it was Hanne herself, the immaculate, whom as yet no tongue had dared to besmirch. And even now they dared hardly speak of it openly; it had come as such a shock. In a certain sense they had all entered into her exaltation, and with her had waited for the fairy-tale to come true; as quite a child she had been elected to represent the incomprehensible; and now she was merely going to have a child! It really was like a miracle just at first; it was such a surprise to them all!

Marie came back with dragging steps and with an expression of horror and astonishment. Down in the court the grimy-nosed little brats were screeching, as they wheeled hand in hand round the sewer-grating--it was splendid for dancing round--

"Bro-bro-brille-brid
Hanne's doin' to have a tid!"

They couldn't speak plainly yet.

And there was "Grete with the baby," the mad-woman, tearing her cellar-window open, leaning out of it backward, with her doll on her arm, and yelling up through the well, so that it echoed loud and shrill: "The Fairy Princess has got a child, and Pelle's its father!"

Pelle bent over his work in silence. Fortunately he was not the king's

son in disguise in this case! But he wasn't going to wrangle with women.

Hanne's mother came storming out onto her gallery. "That's a shameless lie!" she cried. "Pelle's name ain't going to be dragged into this--the other may be who he likes!"

Overhead the hearse-driver came staggering out onto his gallery. "The princess there has run a beam into her body," he rumbled, in his good-natured bass. "What a pity I'm not a midwife! They've got hold of the wrong end of it!"

"Clear off into your hole and hold your tongue, you body-snatcher!" cried Madam Johnsen, spitting with rage. "You've got to stick your brandy-nose into everything!"

He stood there, half drunk, leaning over the rail, babbling, teasing, without returning Madam Johnsen's vituperation. But then little Marie flung up a window and came to her assistance, and up from her platform Ferdinand's mother emerged. "How many hams did you buy last month? Fetch out your bear hams, then, and show us them! He kills a bear for every corpse, the drunkard!" From all sides they fell upon him. He could do nothing against them, and contented himself with opening his eyes and his mouth and giving vent to a "Ba-a-a!" Then his red-haired wife came out and hailed him in.

XII

From the moment when the gray morning broke there was audible a peculiar note in the buzzing of the "Ark," a hoarse excitement, which thrust all care aside. Down the long corridors there was a sound of weeping and scrubbing; while the galleries and the dark wooden stair-cases were sluiced with water. "Look out there!" called somebody every moment from somewhere, and then it was a question of escaping the downward-streaming flood. During the whole morning the water poured from one gallery to another, as over a mill-race.

But now the "Ark" stood freezing in its own cleanliness, with an expression that seemed to say the old warren didn't know itself. Here and there a curtain or a bit of furniture had disappeared from a window--it had found its way to the pawn shop in honor of the day. What was lacking in that way was made up for by the expectation and festive delight on the faces of the inmates.

Little fir-trees peeped out of the cellar entries in the City Ward, and in the market-place they stood like a whole forest along the wall of the prison. In the windows of the basement-shops hung hearts and colored candles, and the grocer at the corner had a great Christmas goblin in his window--it was made of red and gray wool-work and had a whole cat's skin for its beard.

On the stairs of the "Ark" the children lay about cleaning knives and forks with sand sprinkled on the steps.

Pelle sat over his work and listened in secret. His appearance usually had a quieting effect on these crazy outbursts of the "Ark," but he did

not want to mix himself up with this affair. And he had never even dreamed that Hanne's mother could be like this! She was like a fury, turning her head, quick as lightning, now to one side, now to the other, and listening to every sound, ready to break out again!

Ah, she was protecting her child now that it was too late! She was like a spitting cat.

"The youngest of all the lordlin's,"

sang the children down in the court. That was Hanne's song. Madam Johnsen stood there as though she would like to swoop down on their heads. Suddenly she flung her apron over her face and ran indoors, sobbing.

"Ah!" they said, and they slapped their bellies every time an odor of something cooking streamed out into the court. Every few minutes they had to run out and buy five or ten ore worth of something or other; there was no end to the things that were needed in preparation for Christmas Eve. "We're having lovely red beetroot!" said one little child, singing, making a song of it--"We're having lovely red beetroot, aha, aha, aha!" And they swayed their little bodies to and fro as they scoured.

"Frederik!" a sharp voice cried from one of the corridors. "Run and get a score of firewood and a white roll--a ten-ore one. But look out the grocer counts the score properly and don't pick out the crumb!"

Madam Olsen with the warm wall was frying pork. She couldn't pull her range out onto the gallery, but she did let the pork burn so that the whole courtyard was filled with bluish smoke. "Madam Olsen! Your pork is burning!" cried a dozen women at once.

"That's because the frying-pan's too small!" replied Frau Olsen, thrusting her red head out through the balusters. "What's a poor devil to do when her frying-pan's too small?" And Madam Olsen's frying-pan was the biggest in the whole "Ark"!

Shortly before the twilight fell Pelle came home from the workshop. He saw the streets and the people with strange eyes that diffused a radiance over all things; it was the Christmas spirit in his heart. But why? he asked himself involuntarily. Nothing in particular was in store for him. To-day he would have to work longer than usual, and he would not be able to spend the evening with Ellen, for she had to be busy in her kitchen, making things jolly for others. Why, then, did this feeling possess him? It was not a memory; so far as he could look back he had never taken part in a genuine cheerful Christmas Eve, but had been forced to content himself with the current reports of such festivities. And all the other poor folks whom he met were in the same mood as he himself. The hard questioning look had gone from their faces; they were smiling to themselves as they went. To-day there was nothing of that wan, heavy depression which commonly broods over the lower classes like the foreboding of disaster; they could not have looked more cheerful had all their hopes been fulfilled! A woman with a feather-bed in her arms passed him and disappeared into the pawn-shop; and she looked extremely well pleased. Were they really so cheerful just because they were going to have a bit of a feast, while to do so they were making a succession of lean days yet leaner? No, they were going to keep festival because the Christmas spirit prevailed in their hearts, because they must keep

holiday, however dearly it might cost them!

It was on this night to be sure that Christ was born. Were the people so kind and cheerful on that account?

Pelle still knew by heart most of the Bible texts of his school-days. They had remained stowed away somewhere in his mind, without burdening him or taking up any room, and now and again they reappeared and helped to build up his knowledge of mankind. But of Christ Himself he had formed his own private picture, from the day when as a boy he first stumbled upon the command given to the rich: to sell all that they had and to give to the starving. But they took precious good care not to do so; they took the great friend of the poor man and hanged him on high! He achieved no more than this, that He became a promise to the poor; but perhaps it was this promise that, after two thousand years, they were now so solemnly celebrating!

They had so long been silent, holding themselves in readiness, like the wise virgins in the Bible, and now at last it was coming! Now at last they were beginning to proclaim the great Gospel of the Poor--it was a goodly motive for all this Christmas joy! Why did they not assemble the multitudes on the night of Christ's birth and announce the Gospel to them? Then they would all understand the Cause and would join it then and there! There was a whirl of new living thoughts in Pelle's head. He had not hitherto known that that in which he was participating was so great a thing. He felt that he was serving the Highest.

He stood a while in the market-place, silently considering the Christmas-trees--they led his thoughts back to the pasture on which he had herded the cows, and the little wood of firs. It pleased him to buy a tree, and to take the children by surprise; the previous evening they had sat together cutting out Christmas-tree decorations, and Karl had fastened four fir-tree boughs together to make a Christmas-tree.

At the grocer's he bought some sweets and Christmas candles. The grocer was going about on tip-toe in honor of the day, and was serving the dirty little urchins with ceremonious bows. He was "throwing things in," and had quite forgotten his customary, "Here, you, don't forget that you still owe for two lots of tea and a quarter of coffee!" But he was cheating with the scales as usual.

Marie was going about with rolled-up sleeves, and was very busy. But she dropped her work and came running when she saw the tree. "It won't stand here yet, Pelle," she cried, "it will have to be cut shorter. It will have to be cut still shorter even now! Oh, how pretty it is! No, at the end there--at the end! We had a Christmas-tree at home; father went out himself and cut it down on the cliffs; and we children went with him. But this one is much finer!" Then she ran out into the gangway, in order to tell the news, but it suddenly occurred to her that the boys had not come home yet, so she rushed in to Pelle once more.

Pelle sat down to his work. From time to time he lifted his head and looked out. The seamstress, who had just moved into Pipman's old den, and who was working away at her snoring machine, looked longingly at him. Of course she must be lonely; perhaps there was nowhere where she could spend the evening.

Old Madam Frandsen came out on her platform and shuffled down the steep stairs in her cloth slippers. The rope slipped through her trembling

hands. She had a little basket on her arm and a purse in her hand--she too looked so lonely, the poor old worm! She had now heard nothing of her son for three months. Madam Olsen called out to her and invited her in, but the old woman shook her head. On the way back she looked in on Pelle.

"He's coming this evening," she whispered delightedly. "I've been buying brandy and beefsteak for him, because he's coming this evening!"

"Well, don't be disappointed, Madam Frandsen," said Pelle, "but he daren't venture here any more. Come over to us instead and keep Christmas with us."

She nodded confidently. "He'll come tonight. On Christmas Eve he has always slept in mother's bed, ever since he could crawl, and he can't do without it, not if I know my Ferdinand!" She had already made up a bed for herself on the chairs, so certain was she.

The police evidently thought as she did, for down in the court strange footsteps were heard. It was just about twilight, when so many were coming and going unremarked. But at these steps a female head popped back over the balustrade, a sharp cry was heard, and at the same moment every gallery was filled with women and children. They hung over the rails and made an ear-splitting din, so that the whole deep, narrow shaft was filled with an unendurable uproar. It sounded as though a hurricane came raging down through the shaft, sweeping with it a hailstorm of roofing-slates. The policeman leaped back into the tunnel-entry, stupefied. He stood there a moment recovering himself before he withdrew. Upstairs, in the galleries, they leaned on the rails and recovered their breath, exhausted by the terrific eruption; and then fell to chattering like a flock of small birds that have been chasing a flying hawk.

"Merry Christmas!" was now shouted from gallery to gallery. "Thanks, the same to you!" And the children shouted to one another, "A jolly feast and all the best!" "A dainty feast for man and beast!"

Christmas Eve was here! The men came shuffling home at a heavy trot, and the factory-girls came rushing in. Here and there a feeble wail filtered out of one of the long corridors, so that the milk-filled breast ached. Children incessantly ran in and out, fetching the last ingredients of the feast. Down by the exit into the street they had to push two tramps, who stood there shuddering in the cold. They were suspicious-looking people. "There are two men down there, but they aren't genuine," said Karl. "They look as if they came out of a music-hall."

"Run over to old Madam Frandsen and tell her that," said Pelle. But her only answer was, "God be thanked, then they haven't caught him yet!"

Over at Olsen's their daughter Elvira had come home. The blind was not drawn, and she was standing at the window with her huge hat with flowers in it, allowing herself to be admired. Marie came running in. "Have you seen how fine she is, Pelle?" she said, quite stupefied. "And she gets all that for nothing from the gentlemen, just because they think she's so pretty. But at night she paints her naked back!"

The children were running about in the gangway, waiting until Pelle should have finished. They would not keep Christmas without him. But now he, too, had finished work; he pulled on a jacket, wrapped up his work,

and ran off.

Out on the platform he stood still for a moment. He could see the light of the city glimmering in the deep, star-filled sky. The night was so solemnly beautiful. Below him the galleries were forsaken; they were creaking in the frost. All the doors were closed to keep the cold out and the joy in. "Down, down from the green fir-trees!"--it sounded from every corner. The light shone through the window and in all directions through the woodwork. Suddenly there was a dull booming sound on the stairs--it was the hearse-driver staggering home with a ham under either arm. Then all grew quiet--quiet as it never was at other times in the "Ark," where night or day some one was always complaining. A child came out and lifted a pair of questioning eyes, in order to look at the Star of Bethlehem! There was a light at Madam Frandsen's. She had hung a white sheet over the window today, and had drawn it tight; the lamp stood close to the window, so that any one moving within would cast no shadow across it.

The poor old worm! thought Pelle, as he ran past; she might have spared herself the trouble! When he had delivered his work he hurried over to Holberg Street, in order to wish Ellen a happy Christmas. The table was finely decked out in his room when he got home; there was pork chops, rice boiled in milk, and Christmas beer. Marie was glowing with pride over her performance; she sat helping the others, but she herself took nothing.

"You ought to cook a dinner as good as this every day, lass!" said Karl, as he set to. "God knows, you might well get a situation in the King's kitchen."

"Why don't you eat any of this nice food?" said Pelle.

"Oh, no, I can't," she replied, touching her cheeks; her eyes beamed upon him.

They laughed and chattered and clinked their glasses together. Karl came out with the latest puns and the newest street-songs; so he had gained something by his scouring of the city streets. Peter sat there looking impenetrably now at one, now at another; he never laughed, but from time to time he made a dry remark by which one knew that he was amusing himself. Now and again they looked over at old Madam Frandsen's window--it was a pity that she wouldn't be with them.

Five candles were now burning over there--they were apparently fixed on a little Christmas tree which stood in a flowerpot. They twinkled like distant stars through the white curtain, and Madam Frandsen's voice sounded cracked and thin: "O thou joyful, O thou holy, mercy-bringing Christmas-tide!" Pelle opened his window and listened; he wondered that the old woman should be so cheerful.

Suddenly a warning voice sounded from below: "Madam Frandsen, there are visitors coming!"

Doors and windows flew open on the galleries round about. People tumbled out of doorways, their food in their hands, and leaned over the railings. "Who dares to disturb our Christmas rejoicings?" cried a deep, threatening voice.

"The officers of the law!" the reply came out of the darkness. "Keep

quiet, all of you--in the name of the law!"

Over on Madam Frandsen's side two figures became visible, noiselessly running up on all fours. Upstairs nothing was happening; apparently they had lost their heads. "Ferdinand, Ferdinand!" shrieked a girl's voice wildly; "they're coming now!"

At the same moment the door flew open, and with a leap Ferdinand stood on the platform. He flung a chair down at his pursuers, and violently swayed the hand-rope, in order to sweep them off the steps. Then he seized the gutter and swung himself up onto the roof. "Good-bye, mother!" he cried from above, and his leap resounded in the darkness. "Good-bye, mother, and a merry Christmas!" A howl like that of a wounded beast flung the alarm far out into the night, and they heard the stumbling pursuit of the policemen over the roofs. And then all was still.

They returned unsuccessful. "Well, then you haven't got him!" cried Olsen, leaning out of his window down below.

"No; d'you think we are going to break our necks for the like of him?" retorted the policemen, as they scrambled down. "Any one going to stand a glass of Christmas beer?" As no response followed, they departed.

Old Madam Frandsen went into her room and locked up; she was tired and worried and wanted to go to bed. But after a time she came shuffling down the long gangway. "Pelle," she whispered, "he's in bed in my room! While they were scrambling about on the roofs he slipped quietly back over the garrets and got into my bed! Good God, he hasn't slept in a bed for four months! He's snoring already!" And she slipped out again.

Yes, that was an annoying interruption! No one felt inclined to begin all over again excepting Karl, and Marie did not count him, as he was always hungry. So she cleared away, gossiping as she went in and out; she did not like to see Pelle so serious.

"But the secret!" she cried of a sudden, quite startled. The boys ran in to her; then they came back, close together, with Marie behind them, carrying something under her apron. The two boys flung themselves upon Pelle and closed his eyes, while Marie inserted something in his mouth. "Guess now!" she cried, "guess now!" It was a porcelain pipe with a green silken tassel. On the bowl of the pipe, which was Ellen's Christmas gift, was a representation of a ten-kroner note. The children had inserted a screw of tobacco. "Now you'll be able to smoke properly," said Marie, pursing her lips together round the mouthpiece; "you are so clever in everything else."

The children had invited guests for the Christmas-tree; the seamstress, the old night-watchman from the courtyard, the factory-hand with her little boy; all those who were sitting at home and keeping Christmas all alone. They didn't know themselves, there were so many of them! Hanne and her mother were invited too, but they had gone to bed early--they were not inclined for sociability. One after another they were pulled into the room, and they came with cheerful faces. Marie turned the lamp out and went in to light up the Christmas tree.

They sat in silence and expectation. The light from the stove flickered cheerfully to and fro in the room, lighting up a face with closed eyelids and eager features, and dying away with a little crash. The

factory hand's little boy was the only one to chatter; he had sought a refuge on Pelle's knee and felt quite safe in the darkness; his childish voice sounded strangely bright in the firelight. "Paul must be quite good and quiet," repeated the mother admonishingly.

"Mus'n't Paul 'peak?" asked the child, feeling for Pelle's face.

"Yes, to-night Paul can do just as he likes," replied Pelle. Then the youngster chattered on and kicked out at the darkness with his little legs.

"Now you can come!" cried Marie, and she opened the door leading to the gangway. In the children's room everything had been cleared away. The Christmas-tree stood in the middle, on the floor, and was blazing with light. And how splendid it was--and how tall! Now they could have a proper good look! The lights were reflected in their eyes, and in the window-panes, and in the old mahogany-framed mirror, and the glass of the cheap pictures, so that they seemed suddenly to be moving about in the midst of myriads of stars, and forgot all their miseries. It was as though they had escaped from all their griefs and cares, and had entered straightway into glory, and all of a sudden a pure, clear voice arose, tremulous with embarrassment, and the voice sang:

"O little angel, make us glad!
Down from high Heaven's halls
Through sunshine flown, in splendor clad,
Earth's shadow on thee falls!"

It sounded like a greeting from the clouds. They closed their eyes and wandered, hand in hand, about the tree. Then the seamstress fell silent, blushing. "You aren't singing with me!" she cried.

"We'll sing the Yule Song--we all know that," said Pelle.

"Down, down from the high green tree!"--It was Karl who struck up. And they just did sing that! It fitted in so admirably--even the name of Peter fitted in! And it was great fun, too, when all the presents cropped up in the song; every single person was remembered! Only, the lines about the purse, at the end, were all too true! There wasn't much more to be said for that song! But suddenly the boys set the ring-dance going; they stamped like a couple of soldiers, and then they all went whirling round in frantic movement--a real witches' dance!

"Hey dicker dick,
My man fell smack;
It was on Christmas Eve!
I took a stick
And broke it on his back,
It was on Christmas Eve!"

How hot all the candles made it, and how it all went to one's head! They had to open the door on to the gangway.

And there outside stood the inmates of the garrets, listening and craning their necks. "Come inside," cried the boys. "There's room enough if we make two rings!" So once again they moved round the tree, singing Christmas carols. Every time there was a pause somebody struck up a new carol, that had to be sung through. The doors opposite were open too, the old rag-picker sat at the head of his table singing on his own

account. He had a loaf of black bread and a plate of bacon in front of him, and after every carol he took a mouthful. In the other doorway sat three coal-porters playing "sixty-six" for beer and brandy. They sat facing toward the Christmas-tree, and they joined in the singing as they played; but from time to time they broke off in the middle of a verse in order to say something or to cry "Trumped!" Now they suddenly threw down their cards and came into the room. "We don't want to sit here idle and look on while others are working," they said, and they joined the circle.

Finally they had all had enough of circling round the tree and singing. So chairs and stools were brought in from the other rooms; they had to squeeze close together, right under the sloping roof, and some sat up on the window-sill. There was a clear circle left round the Christmas-tree. And there they sat gossiping, crouching in all sorts of distorted postures, as though that was the only way in which their bodies could really find repose, their arms hanging loosely between their knees. But their faces were still eager and excited; and the smoke from the candles and the crackling fir-boughs of the tree veiled them in a bluish cloud, through which they loomed as round as so many moons. The burning turpentine gave the smoke a mysterious, alluring fragrance, and the devout and attentive faces were like so many murmuring spirits, hovering in the clouds, each above its outworn body.

Pelle sat there considering them till his heart bled for them--that was his Christmas devotion. Poor storm-beaten birds, what was this splendid experience which outweighed all their privations? Only a little light! And they looked as though they could fall down before it and give up their lives! He knew the life's story of each one of them better than they knew. But their faces were still eager and excited; and they themselves; when they approached the light they always burned themselves in it, like the moths, they were so chilled!

"All the same, that's a queer invention, when one thinks about it," said one of the dockers, nodding toward the Christmas-tree. "But it's fine. God knows what it really is supposed to mean!"

"It means that now the year is returning toward the light again," said the old night-watchman.

"No; it stands for the joy of the shepherds over the birth of Christ," said the rag-picker, stepping into the doorway.

"The shepherds were poor folks, like ourselves, who lived in the darkness. That's why they rejoiced so over Him, because He came with the light."

"Well, it don't seem to me we've been granted such a terrible deal of light! Oh, yes, the Christmas-tree here, that's splendid, Lord knows it is, and we should all of us like to thank the children for it--but one can't have trees like that to set light to every day; and as for the sun--well, you see, the rich folks have got a monopoly of that!"

"Yes, you are right there, Jacob," said Pelle, who was moving about round the tree, taking down the hearts and packages for the children, who distributed the sweets. "You are all three of you right--curiously enough. The Christmas-tree is to remind us of Christ's birth, and also that the year is returning toward the sun--but that's all the same thing. And then it's to remind us, too, that we too ought to have a

share in things; Christ was born especially to remind the poor of their rights! Yes, that is so! For the Lord God isn't one to give long-winded directions as to how one should go ahead; He sends the sun rolling round the earth every day, and each of us must look out for himself, and see how best he himself can get into the sunshine. It's just like the wife of a public-house keeper I remember at home, who used to tell travellers, 'What would you like to eat? You can have ducks or pork chops or sweets--anything you've brought with you!'"

"That was a devilish funny statement!" said his hearers, laughing.

"Yes, it's easy enough to invite one to all sorts of fine things when all the time one has to bring them along one's self! You ought to have been a preacher."

"He'd far better be the Devil's advocate!" said the old rag-picker. "For there's not much Christianity in what he says!"

"But you yourself said that Christ came bringing light for the poor," said Pelle; "and He Himself said as much, quite plainly; what He wanted was to make the blind to see and the dead to walk, and to restore consideration to the despised and rejected. Also, He wanted men to have faith!"

"The blind shall see, the lame shall walk, the leper shall be clean, the deaf shall hear, and the dead shall arise, and the Word shall be preached to the poor," said the rag-picker, correcting Pelle. "You are distorting the Scriptures, Pelle."

"But I don't believe He meant only individual cripples--no, He meant all of us in our misery, and all the temptations that lie in wait for us. That's how Preacher Sort conceived it, and he was a godly, upright man. He believed the millennium would come for the poor, and that Christ was already on the earth making ready for its coming."

The women sat quite bemused, listening with open mouths; they dared scarcely breathe. Paul was asleep on his mother's lap.

"Can He really have thought about us poor vermin, and so long beforehand?" cried the men, looking from one to another. "Then why haven't we long ago got a bit more forward than this?"

"Yes, I too don't understand that," said Pelle, hesitating. "Perhaps we ourselves have got to work our way in the right direction--and that takes time."

"Yes, but--if He would only give us proper conditions of life. But if we have to win them for ourselves we don't need any Christ for that!"

This was something that Pelle could not explain even to himself, although he felt it within him as a living conviction, A man must win what was due to him himself--that was clear as the day, and he couldn't understand how they could be blind to the fact; but why he must do so he couldn't--however he racked his brains--explain to another person. "But I can tell you a story," he said.

"But a proper exciting story!" cried Earl, who was feeling bored. "Oh, if only Vinslev were here--he has such droll ideas!"

"Be quiet, boy!" said Marie crossly. "Pelle makes proper speeches--before whole meetings," she said, nodding solemnly to the others. "What is the story called?"

"Howling Peter."

"Oh, it's a story with Peter in it--then it's a fairy-tale! What is it about?"

"You'll know that when you hear it, my child," said the old night-watchman.

"Yes, but then one can't enjoy it when it comes out right. Isn't it a story about a boy who goes out into the world?"

"The story is about"--Pelle bethought himself a moment; "the story is about the birth of Christ," he said quickly, and then blushed a deep red at his own audacity. But the others looked disappointed, and settled themselves decently and stared at the floor, as though they had been in church.

And then Pelle told them the story of Howling Peter; who was born and grew up in poverty and grief, until he was big and strong, and every man's cur to kick. For it was the greatest pity to see this finely-made fellow, who was so full of fear and misery that if even a girl so much as touched him he must flood himself with tears; and the only way out of his misery was the rope. What a disgrace it was, that he should have earned his daily bread and yet have been kept in the workhouse, as though they did him a kindness in allowing him a hole to creep into there, when with his capacity for work he could have got on anywhere! And it became quite unendurable as he grew up and was still misused by all the world, and treated like a dog. But then, all of a sudden, he broke the magic spell, struck down his tormentors, and leaped out into the daylight as the boldest of them all!

They drew a deep breath when he had finished. Marie clapped her hands. "That was a real fairy-tale!" she cried. Karl threw himself upon Peter and pummeled away at him, although that serious-minded lad was anything but a tyrant!

They cheerfully talked the matter over. Everybody had something to say about Howling Peter. "That was damned well done," said the men; "he thrashed the whole crew from beginning to end; a fine fellow that! And a strong one too! But why the devil did he take such a long time about it? And put up with all that?"

"Yes, it isn't quite so easy for us to understand that--not for us, who boast such a lot about our rights!" said Pelle, smiling.

"Well, you're a clever chap, and you've told it us properly!" cried the cheerful Jacob. "But if ever you need a fist, there's mine!" He seized and shook Pelle's hand.

The candles had long burned out, but they did not notice it.

Their eyes fastened on Pelle's as though seeking something, with a peculiar expression in which a question plainly came and went. And suddenly they overwhelmed him with questions. They wanted to know enough, anyhow! He maintained that a whole world of splendors belonged

to them, and now they were in a hurry to get possession of them. Even the old rag-picker let himself be carried away with the rest; it was too alluring, the idea of giving way to a little intoxication, even if the everyday world was to come after it.

Pelle stood among them all, strong and hearty, listening to all their questions with a confident smile. He knew all that was to be theirs--even if it couldn't come just at once. It was a matter of patience and perseverance; but that they couldn't understand just now. When they had at last entered into their glory they would know well enough how to protect it. He had no doubts; he stood there among them like their embodied consciousness, happily growing from deeply-buried roots.

XIII

From the foundations of the "Ark" rose a peculiar sound, a stumbling, countrified footstep, dragging itself in heavy footgear over the flagstones. All Pelle's blood rushed to his heart; he threw down his work, and with a leap was on the gallery, quite convinced that this was only an empty dream.... But there below in the court stood Father Lasse in the flesh, staring up through the timbers, as though he couldn't believe his own eyes. He had a sack filled with rubbish on his back.

"Hallo!" cried Pelle, taking the stairs in long leaps. "Hallo!"

"Good-day, my lad!" said Lasse, in a voice trembling with emotion, considering his son with his lashless eyes. "Yes, here you have Father Lasse--if you will have him. But where, really, did you come from? Seems to me you fell down from heaven?"

Pelle took his father's sack. "You just come up with me," he said. "You can trust the stairs all right; they are stronger than they look."

"Then they are like Lasse," answered the old man, trudging up close behind him; the straps of his half-Wellingtons were peeping out at the side, and he was quite the old man. At every landing he stood still and uttered his comments on his surroundings. Pelle had to admonish him to be silent.

"One doesn't discuss everything aloud here. It might so easily be regarded as criticism," he said.

"No, really? Well, one must learn as long as one lives. But just look how they stand about chattering up here! There must be a whole courtyard-full! Well, well. I won't say any more. I knew they lived one on top of another, but I didn't think there'd be so little room here. To hang the backyard out in front of the kitchen door, one on top of another, that's just like the birds that build all on one bough. Lord God, suppose it was all to come tumbling down one fine day!"

"And do you live here?" he cried, gazing in a disillusioned manner round the room with its sloping ceiling. "I've often wondered how you were fixed up over here. A few days ago I met a man at home who said they were talking about you already; but one wouldn't think so from your lodgings. However, it isn't far to heaven, anyhow!"

Pelle was silent. He had come to love his den, and his whole life here; but Father Lasse continued to enlarge upon his hopes of his son's respectability and prosperity, and he felt ashamed. "Did you imagine I was living in one of the royal palaces?" he said, rather bitterly.

Lasse looked at him kindly and laid both hands on his shoulders. "So big and strong as you've grown, lad," he said, wondering. "Well, and now you have me here too! But I won't be a burden to you. No, but at home it had grown so dismal after what happened at Due's, that I got ready without sending you word. And then I was able to come over with one of the skippers for nothing."

"But what's this about Due?" asked Pelle. "I hope nothing bad?"

"Good God, haven't you heard? He revenged himself on his wife because he discovered her with the Consul. He had been absolutely blind, and had only believed the best of her, until he surprised her in her sin. Then he killed her, her and the children they had together, and went to the authorities and gave himself up. But the youngest, whom any one could see was the Consul's, he didn't touch. Oh, it was a dreadful misfortune! Before he gave himself up to the police he came to me; he wanted just one last time to be with some one who would talk it over with him without hypocrisy. 'I've strangled Anna,' he said, as soon as he had sat down. 'It had to be, and I'm not sorry. I'm not sorry. The children that were mine, too. I've dealt honestly with them.' Yes, yes, he had dealt honestly with the poor things! 'I just wanted to say goodbye to you, Lasse, for my life's over now, happy as I might have been, with my contented nature. But Anna always wanted to be climbing, and if I got on it was her shame I had to thank for it. I never wanted anything further than the simple happiness of the poor man--a good wife and a few children--and now I must go to prison! God be thanked that Anna hasn't lived to see that! She was finer in her feelings than the rest, and she had to deceive in order to get on in the world.' So he sat there, talking of the dead, and one couldn't notice any feeling in him. I wouldn't let him see how sick at heart he made me feel. For him it was the best thing, so long as his conscience could sleep easy. 'Your eyes are watering, Lasse,' he said quietly; 'you should bathe them a bit; they say urine is good.' Yes, God knows, my eyes did water! God of my life, yes! Then he stood up. 'You, too, Lasse, you haven't much longer life granted you,' he said, and he gave me his hand. 'You are growing old now. But you must give Pelle my greetings--he's safe to get on!'"

Pelle sat mournfully listening to the dismal story. But he shuddered at the last words. He had so often heard the expression of that anticipation of his good fortune, which they all seemed to feel, and had rejoiced to hear it; it was, after all, only an echo of his own self-confidence. But now it weighed upon him like a burden. It was always those who were sinking who believed in his luck; and as they sank they flung their hopes upward toward him. A grievous fashion was this in which his good fortune was prophesied! A terrible and grievous blessing it was that was spoken over him and his success in life by this man dedicated to death, even as he stepped upon the scaffold. Pelle sat staring at the floor without a sign of life, a brooding expression on his face; his very soul was shuddering at the foreboding of a superhuman burden; and suddenly a light was flashed before his eyes; there could never be happiness for him alone--the fairy-tale was dead! He was bound up with all the others--he must partake of happiness or misfortune with them; that was why the unfortunate Due gave him his blessing. In his

soul he was conscious of Due's difficult journey, as though he himself had to endure the horror of it. And Fine Anna, who must clamber up over his own family and tread them in the dust! Never again could he wrench himself quite free as before! He had already encountered much unhappiness and had learned to hate its cause. But this was something more--this was very affliction itself!

"Yes," sighed Lasse, "a lucky thing that Brother Kalle did not live to see all this. He worked himself to skin and bone for his children, and now, for all thanks, he lied buried in the poorhouse burying-ground. Albinus, who travels about the country as a conjurer, was the only one who had a thought for him; but the money came too late, although it was sent by telegraph. Have you ever heard of a conjuring-trick like that--to send money from England to Bornholm over the telegraph cable? A devilish clever acrobat! Well, Brother Kalle, he knew all sorts of conjuring-tricks too, but he didn't learn them abroad. They had heard nothing at all of Alfred at the funeral. He belongs to the fine folks now and has cut off all connection with his poor relations. He has been appointed to various posts of honor, and they say he's a regular bloodhound toward the poor--a man's always worst toward his own kind. But the fine folks, they say, they think great things of him."

Pelle heard the old man's speech only as a monotonous trickle of sound.

Due, Due, the best, the most good-natured man he knew, who championed Anna's illegitimate child against her own mother, and loved her like his own, because she was defenceless and needed his love--Due was now to lay his head on the scaffold! So dearly bought was the fulfilment of his wish, to obtain a pair of horses and become a coachman! He had obtained the horses and a carriage on credit, and had himself made up for the instalments and the interest--the Consul had merely stood security for him. And for this humble success he was now treading the path of shame! His steps echoed in Pelle's soul; Pelle did not know how he was going to bear it. He longed for his former obtuseness.

Lasse continued to chatter. For him it was fate--grievous and heavy, but it could not be otherwise. And the meeting with Pelle had stirred up so many memories; he was quite excited. Everything he saw amused him. However did anybody hit on the idea of packing folks away like this, one on top of another, like herrings in a barrel? And at home on Bornholm there were whole stretches of country where no one lived at all! He did not venture to approach the window, but prudently stood a little way back in the room, looking out over the roofs. There, too, was a crazy arrangement! One could count the ears in a cornfield as easily as the houses over here!

Pelle called Marie, who had discreetly remained in her own room. "This is my foster-mother," he said, with his arm round her shoulders. "And that is Father Lasse, whom you are fond of already, so you always say. Now can you get us some breakfast?" He gave her money.

"She's a good girl, that she is," said Lasse, feeling in his sack. "She shall have a present. There's a red apple," he said to Marie, when she returned; "you must eat it, and then you'll be my sweetheart." Marie smiled gravely and looked at Pelle.

They borrowed the old clothes dealer's handcart and went across to the apple barges to fetch Lasse's belongings. He had sold most of them in order not to bring too great a load to the city. But he had retained a

bedstead with bedding, and all sorts of other things. "And then I have still to give you greetings from Sort and Marie Nielsen," he said.

Pelle blushed. "I owe her a few words, but over here I quite forgot it somehow! And I have half promised her my portrait. I must see now about sending it."

"Yes, do," said Father Lasse. "I don't know how close you two stand to each other, but she was a good woman. And those who stay behind, they're sad when they're forgotten. Remember that."

At midday Lasse had tidied himself a trifle and began to brush his hat.

"What now?" inquired Pelle. "You don't want to go out all alone?"

"I want to go out and look at the city a bit," replied Lasse, as though it were quite a matter of course. "I want to find some work, and perhaps I'll go and have a peep at the king for once. You need only explain in which direction I must go."

"You had better wait until I can come with you--you'll only lose yourself."

"Shall I do that?" replied Lasse, offended. "But I found my way here alone, I seem to remember!"

"I can go with the old man!" said Marie.

"Yes, you come with the old man, then no one can say he has lost his youth!" cried Lasse jestingly, as he took her hand. "I think we two shall be good friends."

Toward evening they returned. "There are folks enough here," said Lasse, panting, "but there doesn't seem to be a superfluity of work. I've been asking first this one and then that, but no one will have me. Well, that's all right! If they won't, I can just put a spike on my stick and set to work collecting the bits of paper in the streets, like the other old men; I can at least do that still."

"But I can't give my consent to that," replied Pelle forcibly. "My father shan't become a scavenger!"

"Well--but I must get something to do, or I shall go back home again. I'm not going to go idling about here while you work."

"But you can surely rest and enjoy a little comfort in your old days, father. However, we shall soon see."

"I can rest, can I? I had better lie on my back and let myself be fed like a long-clothes child! Only I don't believe my back would stand it!"

They had placed Lasse's bed with the footboard under the sloping ceiling; there was just room enough for it. Pelle felt like a little boy when he went to bed that night; it was so many years since he had slept in the same room as Father Lasse. But in the night he was oppressed by evil dreams; Due's dreadful fate pursued him in his sleep. His energetic, good-humored face went drifting through the endless grayness, the head bowed low, the hands chained behind him, a heavy iron chain was about his neck, and his eyes were fixed on the ground as though he were

searching the very abyss. When Pelle awoke it was because Father Lasse stood bending over his bed, feeling his face, as in the days of his childhood.

XIV

Lasse would not sit idle, and was busily employed in running about the city in search of work. When he spoke to Pelle he put a cheerful face on a bad business; and looked hopeful; but the capital had already disillusioned him. He could not understand all this hubbub, and felt that he was too old to enter into it and fathom its meaning--besides, perhaps it had none! It really looked as though everybody was just running to and fro and following his own nose, without troubling in the least about all the rest. And there were no greetings when you passed folks in the street; the whole thing was more than Lasse could understand. "I ought to have stayed at home," he would often think.

And as for Pelle--well, Pelle was taken up with his own affairs! That was only to be expected in a man. He ran about going to meetings and agitating, and had a great deal to do; his thoughts were continually occupied, so that there was no time for familiar gossip as in the old days. He was engaged, moreover, so that what time was not devoted to the Labor movement was given to his sweetheart. How the boy had grown, and how he had altered, bodily and in every way! Lasse had a feeling that he only reached up to Pelle's belt nowadays. He had grown terribly serious, and was quite the man; he looked as though he was ready to grasp the reins of something or other; you would never, to look at him, have thought that he was only a journeyman cobbler. There was an air of responsibility about him--just a little too much may be!

Marie got into the way of accompanying the old man. They had become good friends, and there was plenty for them to gossip over. She would take him to the courtyard of the Berlingske Tidende, where the people in search of work eddied about the advertisement board, filling up the gateway and forming a crowd in the street outside.

"We shall never get in there!" said Lasse dejectedly. But Marie worked herself forward; when people scolded her she scolded them back. Lasse was quite horrified by the language the child used; but it was a great help!

Marie read out the different notices, and Lasse made his comments on every one, and when the bystanders laughed Lasse gazed at them uncomprehendingly, then laughed with them, and nodded his head merrily. He entered into everything.

"What do you say? Gentleman's coachman? Yes, I can drive a pair of horses well enough, but perhaps I'm not fine enough for the gentry--I'm afraid my nose would drip!"

He looked about him importantly, like a child that is under observation. "But errand boy--that isn't so bad. We'll make a note of that. There's no great skill needed to be everybody's dog! House porter! Deuce take it--there one need only sit downstairs and make angry faces out of a basement window! We'll look in there and try our luck."

They impressed the addresses on their minds until they knew them by heart, and then squeezed their way out through the crowd. "Damn funny old codger!" said the people, looking after him with a smile--Lasse was quite high-spirited. They went from house to house, but no one had any use for him. The people only laughed at the broken old figure with the wide-toed boots.

"They laugh at me," said Lasse, quite cast down; "perhaps because I still look a bit countrified. But that after all can soon be overcome."

"I believe it's because you are so old and yet want to get work," said Marie.

"Do you think it can be on that account? Yet I'm only just seventy, and on both my father's and mother's side we have almost all lived to ninety. Do you really think that's it? If they'd only let me set to work they'd soon see there's still strength in old Lasse! Many a younger fellow would sit on his backside for sheer astonishment. But what are those people there, who stand there and look so dismal and keep their hands in their pockets?"

"Those are the unemployed; it's a slack time for work, and they say it will get still worse."

"And all those who were crowding round the notice-board--were they idle hands too?"

Marie nodded.

"But then it's worse here than at home--there at least we always have the stone-cutting when there is nothing else. And I had really believed that the good time had already begun over here!"

"Pelle says it will soon come," said Marie consolingly.

"Yes, Pelle--he can well talk. He is young and healthy and has the time before him."

Lasse was in a bad temper; nothing seemed right to him. In order to give him pleasure, Marie took him to see the guard changed, which cheered him a little.

"Those are smart fellows truly," he said. "Hey, hey, how they hold themselves! And fine clothes too. But that they know well enough themselves! Yes--I've never been a king's soldier. I went up for it when I was young and felt I'd like it; I was a smart fellow then, you can take my word for it! But they wouldn't have me; my figure wouldn't do, they said; I had worked too hard, from the time I was quite a child. They'd got it into their heads in those days that a man ought to be made just so and so. I think it's to please the fine ladies. Otherwise I, too, might have defended my country."

Down by the Exchange the roadway was broken up; a crowd of navvies were at work digging out the foundation for a conduit. Lasse grew quite excited, and hurried up to them.

"That would be the sort of thing for me," he said, and he stood there and fell into a dream at the sight of the work. Every time the workers

swung their picks he followed the movement with his old head. He drew closer and closer. "Hi," he said to one of the workers, who was taking a breath, "can a man get taken on here?"

The man took a long look at him. "Get taken on here?" he cried, turning more to his comrades than to Lasse. "Ah, you'd like to, would you? Here you foreigners come running, from Funen and Middlefart, and want to take the bread out of the mouths of us natives. Get away with you, you Jutland carrion!" Laughing, he swung his pick over his head.

Lasse drew slowly back. "But he was angry!" he said dejectedly to Marie.

In the evening Pelle had to go to all his various meetings, whatever they might be. He had a great deal to do, and, hard as he worked, the situation still remained unfavorable. It was by no means so easy a thing, to break the back of poverty!

"You just look after your own affairs," said Lasse. "I sit here and chat a little with the children--and then I go to bed. I don't know why, but my body gets fonder and fonder of bed, although I've never been considered lazy exactly. It must be the grave that's calling me. But I can't go about idle any longer--I'm quite stiff in my body from doing it."

Formerly Lasse never used to speak of the grave; but now he had seemingly reconciled himself to the idea. "And the city is so big and so confusing," he told the children. "And the little one has put by soon runs through one's fingers."

He found it much easier to confide his troubles to them. Pelle had grown so big and so serious that he absolutely inspired respect. One could take no real pleasure in worrying him with trivialities.

But with the children he found himself in tune. They had to contend with little obstacles and difficulties, just as he did, and could grasp all his troubles. They gave him good, practical advice, and in return he gave them his senile words of wisdom.

"I don't exactly know why it is so," he said, "but this great city makes me quite confused and queer in the head. To mention nothing else, no one here knows me and looks after me when I go by. That takes all the courage out of my knees. At home there was always one or another who would turn his head and say to himself, 'Look, there goes old Lasse, he'll be going down to the harbor to break stone; devil take me, but how he holds himself! Many a man would nod to me too, and I myself knew every second man. Here they all go running by as if they were crazy! I don't understand how you manage to find employment here, Karl?"

"Oh, that's quite easy," replied the boy. "About six in the morning I get to the vegetable market; there is always something to be delivered for the small dealers who can't keep a man. When the vegetable market is over I deliver flowers for the gardeners. That's a very uncertain business, for I get nothing more than the tips. And besides that I run wherever I think there's anything going. To the East Bridge and out to Frederiksborg. And I have a few regular places too, where I go every afternoon for an hour and deliver goods. There's always something if one runs about properly."

"And does that provide you with an average good employment every day?"

said Lasse wonderingly. "The arrangement looks to me a little uncertain. In the morning you can't be sure you will have earned anything when the night comes."

"Ah, Karl is so quick," said Marie knowingly. "When the times are ordinarily good he can earn a krone a day regularly."

"And that could really be made a regular calling?" No, Lasse couldn't understand it.

"Very often it's evening before I have earned anything at all, but one just has to stir one's stumps; there's always something or other if one knows where to look for it."

"What do you think--suppose I were to go with you?" said Lasse thoughtfully.

"You can't do that, because I run the whole time. Really you'd do much better to hide one of your arms."

"Hide one of my arms?" said Lasse wonderingly.

"Yes--stick one arm under your coat and then go up to people and ask them for something. That wouldn't be any trouble to you, you look like an invalid."

"Do I, indeed?" asked Lasse, blinking his eyes. "I never knew that before. But even if that were so I shouldn't like to beg at people's doors. I don't think any one will get old Lasse to do that."

"Then go along to the lime works--they are looking for stone-breakers these days," said the omniscient youngster.

"Now you are talking!" said Lasse; "so they have stone here? Yes, I brought my stone-cutter's tools with me, and if there's one thing on earth I long to do it is to be able to bang away at a stone again!"

XV

Pelle was now a man; he was able to look after his own affairs and a little more besides; and he was capable of weighing one circumstance against another. He had thrust aside his horror concerning Due's fate, and once again saw light in the future. But this horror still lurked within his mind, corroding everything else, lending everything a gloomy, sinister hue. Over his brow brooded a dark cloud, as to which he himself was not quite clear. But Ellen saw it and stroked it away with her soft fingers, in order to make it disappear. It formed a curious contrast to his fresh, ruddy face, like a meaningless threat upon a fine spring day.

He began to be conscious of confidence like a sustaining strength. It was not only in the "Ark" that he was idolized; his comrades looked up to him; if there was anything important in hand their eyes involuntarily turned to him. Although he had, thoughtlessly enough, well-nigh wrecked the organism in order to come to grips with Meyer, he had fully made up for his action, and the Union was now stronger than ever, and this was

his doing. So he could stretch his limbs and give a little thought to his own affairs.

He and Ellen felt a warm longing to come together and live in their own little home. There were many objections that might be opposed to such a course, and he was not blind to them. Pelle was a valiant worker, but his earnings were not so large that one could found a family on them; it was the naked truth that even a good worker could not properly support a wife and children. He counted on children as a matter of course, and the day would come also when Father Lasse would no longer be able to earn his daily bread. But that day lay still in the remote future, and, on the other hand, it was no more expensive to live with a companion than alone--if that companion was a good and saving wife. If a man meant to enjoy some little share of the joy of life, he must close his eyes and leap over all obstacles, and for once put his trust in the exceptional.

"It'll soon be better, too," said Mason Stolpe. "Things look bad now in most trades, but you see yourself, how everything is drawing to a great crisis. Give progress a kick behind and ask her to hurry herself a little--there's something to be gained by that. A man ought to marry while he's still young; what's the good of going about and hankering after one another?"

Madam Stolpe was, as always, of his opinion. "We married and enjoyed the sweetness of it while our blood was still young. That's why we have something now that we can depend on," she said simply, looking at Pelle.

So it was determined that the wedding should be held that spring. In March the youngest son would complete his apprenticeship, so that the wedding feast and the journeyman's feast could be celebrated simultaneously.

On the canal, just opposite the prison, a little two-roomed dwelling was standing vacant, and this they rented. Mason Stolpe wanted to have the young couple to live out by the North Bridge, "among respectable people," but Pelle had become attached to this quarter. Moreover, he had a host of customers there, which would give him a foothold, and there, too, were the canals. For Pelle, the canals were a window opening on the outer world; they gave his mind a sense of liberty; he always felt oppressed among the stone walls by the North Bridge. Ellen let him choose--it was indifferent to her where they lived. She would gladly have gone to the end of the world with him, in order to yield herself.

She had saved a little money in her situation, and Pelle also had a little put by; he was wise in his generation, and cut down all their necessities. When Ellen was free they rummaged about buying things for their home. Many things they bought second-hand, for cheapness, but not for the bedroom; there everything was to be brand-new!

It was a glorious time, in which every hour was full of its own rich significance; there was no room for brooding or for care. Ellen often came running in to drag him from his work; he must come with her and look at something or other--one could get it so cheap--but quickly, quickly, before it should be gone! On her "off" Sundays she would reduce the little home to order, and afterward they would walk arm in arm through the city, and visit the old people.

Pelle had had so much to do with the affairs of others, and had given so little thought to his own, that it was delightful, for once in a way, to

be able to rest and think of himself. The crowded outer world went drifting far away from him; he barely glanced at it as he built his nest; he thought no more about social problems than the birds that nest in spring.

And one day Pelle carried his possessions to his new home, and for the last time lay down to sleep in the "Ark." There was no future for any one here; only the shipwrecked sought an abiding refuge within these walls. It was time for Pelle to move on. Yet from all this raggedness and overcrowding rose a voice which one did not hear elsewhere; a careless twittering, like that of unlucky birds that sit and plume their feathers when a little sunlight falls on them. He looked back on the time he had spent here with pensive melancholy.

On the night before his wedding he lay restlessly tossing to and fro. Something seemed to follow him in his sleep. At last he woke, and was sensible of a stifled moaning, that came and went with long intervals in between, as though the "Ark" itself were moaning in an evil dream. Suddenly he stood up, lit the lamp, and began to polish his wedding-boots, which were still on the lasts, so that they might retain their handsome shape. Lasse was still asleep, and the long gangway outside lay still in slumber.

The sound returned, louder and more long-drawn, and something about it reminded him of Stone Farm, and awaked the horror of his childish days. He sat and sweated at his work. Suddenly he heard some one outside--some one who groped along the gangway and fumbled at his door. He sprang forward and opened it. Suspense ran through his body like an icy shudder. Outside stood Hanne's mother, shivering in the morning cold.

"Pelle," she whispered anxiously, "it's so near now--would you run and fetch Madam Blom from Market Street? I can't leave Hanne. And I ought to be wishing you happiness, too."

The errand was not precisely convenient, nevertheless, he ran off. And then he sat listening, working still, but as quietly as possible, in order not to wake Father Lasse. But then it was time for the children to get up; for the last time he knocked on the wall and heard Marie's sleepy "Ye--es!" At the same moment the silence of night was broken; the inmates tumbled out and ran barefooted to the lavatories, slamming their doors. "The Princess is lamenting," they told one another. "She's lamenting because she's lost what she'll never get again." Then the moaning rose to a loud shriek, and suddenly it was silent over there.

Poor Hanne! Now she had another to care for--and who was its father? Hard times were in store for her.

Lasse was not going to work to-day, although the wedding-feast was not to be held until the afternoon. He was in a solemn mood, from the earliest morning, and admonished Pelle not to lay things cross-wise, and the like. Pelle laughed every time.

"Yes, you laugh," said Lasse, "but this is an important day--perhaps the most important in your life. You ought to take care lest the first trifling thing you do should ruin everything."

He pottered about, treating everything as an omen. He was delighted with the sun--it rose out of a sack and grew brighter and brighter in the course of the day. It was never lucky for the sun to begin too blazing.

Marie went to and fro, considering Pelle with an expression of suppressed anxiety, like a mother who is sending her child into the world, and strives hard to seem cheerful, thought Pelle. Yes, yes, she had been like a mother to him in many senses, although she was only a child; she had taken him into her nest as a little forsaken bird, and with amazement had seen him grow. He had secretly helped her when he could. But what was that in comparison with the singing that had made his work easy, when he saw how the three waifs accepted things as they were, building their whole existence on nothing? Who would help them now over the difficult places without letting them see the helping hand? He must keep watchful eye on them.

Marie's cheeks were a hectic red, and her eyes were shining when he held her roughened hands in his and thanked her for being such a good neighbor. Her narrow chest was working, and a reflection of hidden beauty rested upon her. Pelle had taught her blood to find the way to her colorless face; whenever she was brought into intimate contact with him or his affairs, her cheeks glowed, and every time a little of the color was left behind. It was as though his vitality forced the sap to flow upward in her, in sympathy, and now she stood before him, trying to burst her stunted shell, and unfold her gracious capacities before him, and as yet was unable to do so. Suddenly she fell upon his breast. "Pelle, Pelle," she said, hiding her face against him. And then she ran into her own room.

Lasse and Pelle carried the last things over to the new home, and put everything tidy; then they dressed themselves in their best and set out for the Stolpes' home. Pelle was wearing a top-hat for the first time in his life, and looked quite magnificent in it. "You are like a big city chap," said Lasse, who could not look at him often enough. "But what do you think they'll say of old Lasse? They are half-way fine folks themselves, and I don't know how to conduct myself. Wouldn't it perhaps be better if I were to turn back?"

"Don't talk like that, father!" said Pelle.

Lasse was monstrously pleased at the idea of attending the wedding-feast, but he had all sorts of misgivings. These last years had made him shy of strangers, and he liked to creep into corners. His holiday clothes, moreover, were worn out, and his every-day things were patched and mended; his long coat he had hired expressly for the occasion, while the white collar and cuffs belonged to Peter. He did not feel at all at home in his clothes, and looked like an embarrassed schoolboy waiting for confirmation.

At the Stolpes' the whole household was topsy-turvy. The guests who were to go to the church had already arrived; they were fidgeting about in the living-room and whistling to themselves, or looking out into the street, and feeling bored. Stople's writing-table had been turned into a side-board, and the brothers were opening bottles of beer and politely pressing everybody: "Do take a sandwich with it--you'll get a dry throat standing so long and saying nothing."

In the best room Stolpe was pacing up and down and muttering. He was in his shirtsleeves, waiting until it was his turn to use the bedroom, where Ellen and her mother had locked themselves in. From time to time the door was opened a little, and Ellen's bare white arm appeared, as she threw her father some article of attire. Then Pelle's heart began to

thump.

On the window-sill stood Madam Stolpe's myrtle; it was stripped quite bare.

Now Stolpe came back; he was ready! Pelle had only to button his collar for him. He took Lasse's hand and then went to fetch _The Working Man_. "Now you just ought to hear this, what they say of your son," he said, and began to read:

"Our young party-member, Pelle, to-day celebrates his nuptials with the daughter of one of the oldest and most respected members of the party, Mason Stolpe. This young man, who has already done a great deal of work for the Cause, was last night unanimously proposed as President of his organization. We give the young couple our best wishes for the future."

"That speaks for itself, eh?" Stolpe handed the paper to his guests.

"Yes, that looks well indeed," they said, passing the paper from hand to hand. Lasse moved his lips as though he, too, were reading the notice through. "Yes, devilish good, and they know how to put these things," he said, delighted.

"But what's wrong with Petersen--is he going to resign?" asked Stolpe.

"He is ill," replied Pelle. "But I wasn't there last night, so I don't know anything about it." Stolpe gazed at him, astonished.

Madam Stolpe came in and drew Pelle into the bedroom, where Ellen stood like a snow-white revelation, with a long veil and a myrtle-wreath in her hair. "Really you two are supposed not to see one another, but I think that's wrong," she said, and with a loving glance she pushed them into each other's arms.

Frederik, who was leaning out of the window, in order to watch for the carriage, came and thundered on the door. "The carriage is there, children!" he roared, in quite a needlessly loud voice. "The carriage is there!"

And they drove away in it, although the church was only a few steps distant. Pelle scarcely knew what happened to him after that, until he found himself back in the carriage; they had to nudge him every time he had to do anything. He saw no one but Ellen.

She was his sun; the rest meant nothing to him. At the altar he had seized her hand and held it in his during the whole service.

Frederik had remained at home, in order to admit, receive messages and people who came to offer their congratulations. As they returned he leaned out of the window and threw crackers and detonating pellets under the horses' feet, as a salute to the bridal pair.

People drank wine, touched glasses with the young couple, and examined the wedding-presents. Stolpe looked to see the time; it was still quite early. "You must go for a bit of a stroll, father," said Madam Stolpe. "We can't eat anything for a couple of hours yet." So the men went across to Ventegodt's beer-garden, in order to play a game of skittles, while the women prepared the food.

Pelle would rather have stopped in the house with Ellen, but he must not; he and Lasse went together. Lasse had not yet properly wished Pelle happiness; he had waited until they should be alone.

"Well, happiness and all blessings, my boy," he said, much moved, as he pressed Pelle's hand. "Now you, too, are a man with a family and responsibilities. Now don't you forget that the women are like children. In serious matters you mustn't be too ceremonious with them, but tell them, short and plain. This is to be so! It goes down best with them. If once a man begins discussing too much with them, then they don't know which way they want to go. Otherwise they are quite all right, and it's easy to get on with them--if one only treats them well. I never found it any trouble, for they like a firm hand over them. You've reason to be proud of your parents-in-law; they are capital people, even if they are a bit proud of their calling. And Ellen will make you a good wife--if I know anything of women. She'll attend to her own affairs and she'll understand how to save what's left over. Long in the body she is, like a fruitful cow--she won't fail you in the matter of children."

Outdoors in the beer-garden Swedish punch was served, and Lasse's spirits began to rise. He tried to play at skittles--he had never done so before; and he plucked up courage to utter witticisms.

The others laughed, and Lasse drew himself up and came out of his shell. "Splendid people, the Copenhageners!" he whispered to Pelle. "A ready hand for spending, and they've got a witty word ready for everything."

Before any one noticed it had grown dark, and now they must be home!

At home the table was laid, and the rest of the guests had come. Madam Stolpe was already quite nervous, they had stopped away so long. "Now we'll all wobble a bit on our legs," whispered Stolpe, in the entry; "then my wife will go for us! Well, mother, have you got a warm welcome ready for us?" he asked, as he tumbled into the room.

"Ah, you donkey, do you think I don't know you?" cried Madam Stolpe, laughing. "No, one needn't go searching in the taverns for my man!"

Pelle went straight up to Ellen in the kitchen and led her away. Hand in hand they went round the rooms, looking at the last presents to arrive. There was a table-lamp, a dish-cover in German silver, and some enamelled cooking-utensils. Some one, too, had sent a little china figure of a child in swaddling-clothes, but had forgotten to attach his name.

Ellen led Pelle out into the entry, in order to embrace him, but there stood Morten, taking off his things. Then they fled into the kitchen, but the hired cook was in possession; at length they found an undisturbed haven in the bedroom. Ellen wound her arms round Pelle's neck and gazed at him in silence, quite lost in happiness and longing. And Pelle pressed the beloved, slender, girlish body against his own, and looked deep in her eyes, which were dark and shadowy as velvet, as they drank in the light in his. His heart swelled within him, and he felt that he was unspeakably fortunate--richer than any one else in the whole world--because of the treasure that he held in his arms. Silently he vowed to himself that he would protect her and cherish her and have no other thought than to make her happy.

An impatient trampling sounded from the other room. "The young couple--

the young couple!" they were calling. Pelle and Ellen hastened in, each by a different door. The others were standing in their places at the table, and were waiting for Pelle and Ellen to take their seats. "Well, it isn't difficult to see what she's been about!" said Stolpe teasingly. "One has only to look at the lass's peepers--such a pair of glowing coals!"

Otto Stolpe, the slater, was spokesman, and opened the banquet by offering brandy. "A drop of spirits," he said to each: "we must make sure there's a vent to the gutter, or the whole thing will soon get stopped up."

"Now, take something, people!" cried Stolpe, from the head of the table, where he was carving a loin of roast pork. "Up with the bricks there!" He had the young couple on his right and the newly-baked journeyman on his left. On the table before him stood a new bedroom chamber with a white wooden cover to it; the guests glanced at it and smiled at one another. "What are you staring at?" he asked solemnly. "If you need anything, let the cat out of the bag!"

"Ah, it's the tureen there!" said his brother, the carpenter, without moving a muscle. "My wife would be glad to borrow it a moment, she says."

His wife, taken aback, started up and gave him a thwack on the back. "Monster!" she said, half ashamed, and laughing. "The men must always make a fool of somebody!"

Then they all set to, and for a while eating stopped their mouths. From time to time some droll remark was made. "Some sit and do themselves proud, while others do the drudging," said the Vanishing Man, Otto's comrade. Which was to say that he had finished his pork. "Give him one in the mouth, mother!" said Stolpe.

When their hunger was satisfied the witticisms began to fly. Morten's present was a great wedding-cake. It was a real work of art; he had made it in the form of a pyramid. On the summit stood a youthful couple, made of sugar, who held one another embraced, while behind them was a highly glazed representation of the rising sun. Up the steps of the pyramid various other figures were scrambling to the top, holding their arms outstretched toward the summit. Wine was poured out when they came to the cake, and Morten made a little speech in Pelle's honor, in which he spoke of loyalty toward the new comrade whom he had chosen. Apparently the speech concerned Ellen only, but Pelle understood that his words were meant to be much more comprehensive; they had a double meaning all the time.

"Thank you, Morten," he said, much moved, and he touched glasses with him.

Then Stolpe delivered a speech admonishing the newly-married pair. This was full of precious conceits and was received with jubilation.

"Now you see how father can speak," said Madam Stolpe. "When nothing depends on it then he can speak!"

"What's that you say, mother?" cried Stolpe, astonished. He was not accustomed to criticism from that source. "Just listen to that now--one's own wife is beginning to pull away the scaffolding-poles from

under one!"

"Well, that's what I say!" she rejoined, looking at him boldly. Her face was quite heated with wine. "Does any one stand in the front of things like father does? He was the first, and he has been always the most zealous; he has done a good stroke of work, more than most men. And to-day he might well have been one of the leaders and have called the tune, if it weren't for that damned hiccoughing. He's a clever man, and his comrades respect him too, but what does all that signify if a man hiccoughs? Every time he stands on the speaker's platform he has the hiccoughs."

"And yet it isn't caused by brandy?" said the thick-set little Vanishing Man, Albert Olsen.

"Oh, no, father has never gone in for bottle agitation," replied Madam Stolpe.

"That was a fine speech that mother made about me," said Stolpe, laughing, "and she didn't hiccough. It is astonishing, though--there are some people who can't. But now it's your turn, Frederik. Now you have become a journeyman and must accept the responsibility yourself for doing things according to plumb-line and square. We have worked on the scaffold together and we know one another pretty well. Many a time you've been a clown and many a time a sheep, and a box on the ears from your old man has never been lacking. But that was in your fledgling years. When only you made up your mind there was no fault to be found with you. I will say this to your credit--that you know your trade--you needn't be shamed by anybody. Show what you can do, my lad! Do your day's work so that your comrades don't need to take you in tow, and never shirk when it comes to your turn!"

"Don't cheat the drinker of his bottle, either," said Albert Olsen, interrupting. Otto nudged him in the ribs.

"No, don't do that," said Stolpe, and he laughed. "There are still two things," he added seriously. "Take care the girls don't get running about under the scaffold in working hours, that doesn't look well; and always uphold the fellowship. There is nothing more despicable than the name of strikebreaker."

"Hear, hear!" resounded about the table. "A true word!"

Frederik sat listening with an embarrassed smile.

He was dressed in a new suit of the white clothes of his calling, and on his round chin grew a few dark downy hairs, which he fingered every other moment. He was waiting excitedly until the old man had finished, so that he might drink brotherhood with him.

"And now, my lad," said Stolpe, taking the cover from the "tureen," "now you are admitted to the corporation of masons, and you are welcome! Health, my lad." And with a sly little twinkle of his eye, he set the utensil to his mouth, and drank.

"Health, father!" replied Frederik, with shining eyes, as his father passed him the drinking-bowl. Then it went round the table. The women shrieked before they drank; it was full of Bavarian beer, and in the amber fluid swam Bavarian sausages. And while the drinking-bowl made its

cheerful round, Stolpe struck up with the Song of the Mason:

"The man up there in snowy cap and blouse,
He is a mason, any fool could swear.
Just give him stone and lime, he'll build a house
Fine as a palace, up in empty air!
Down in the street below stands half the town:
Ah, ah! Na, na!
The scaffold sways, but it won't fall down!

"Down in the street he's wobbly in his tread,
He tumbles into every cellar door;
That's 'cause his home is in the clouds o'erhead,
Where all the little birds about him soar.
Up there he works away with peaceful mind:
Ah, ah. Na, na!
The scaffold swings in the boisterous wind!

"What it is to be giddy no mason knows:
Left to himself he'd build for ever,
Stone upon stone, till in Heaven, I s'pose!
But up comes the Law, and says--Stop now, clever!
There lives the Almighty, so just come off!
Ah, ah! Na, na!
Sheer slavery this, but he lets them scoff!

"Before he knows it the work has passed:
He measures all over and reckons it up.
His wages are safe in his breeches at last,
And he clatters off home to rest and to sup.
And a goodly wage he's got in his pocket:
Ah, ah! Na, na!
The scaffold creaks to the winds that rock it!"

The little thick-set slater sat with both arms on the table, staring right in front of him with veiled eyes. When the song was over he raised his head a little. "Yes, that may be all very fine--for those it concerns. But the slater, he climbs higher than the mason." His face was purple.

"Now, comrade, let well alone," said Stolpe comfortably. "It isn't the question, to-night, who climbs highest, it's a question of amusing ourselves merely."

"Yes, that may be," replied Olsen, letting his head sink again. "But the slater, he climbs the highest." After which he sat there murmuring to himself.

"Just leave him alone," whispered Otto. "Otherwise he'll get in one of his Berserker rages. Don't be so grumpy, old fellow," he said, laying his arm on Olsen's shoulders. "No one can compete with you in the art of tumbling down, anyhow!"

The Vanishing Man was so called because he was in the habit--while lying quite quietly on the roof at work--of suddenly sliding downward and disappearing into the street below. He had several times fallen from the roof of a house without coming to any harm; but on one occasion he had broken both legs, and had become visibly bow-legged in consequence. In order to appease him, Otto, who was his comrade, related how he had

fallen down on the last occasion.

"We were lying on the roof, working away, he and I, and damned cold it was. He, of course, had untied the safety-rope, and as we were lying there quite comfortably and chatting, all of a sudden he was off. 'The devil!' I shouted to the others, 'now the Vanishing Man has fallen down again!' And we ran down the stairs as quick as we could. We weren't in a humor for any fool's tricks, as you may suppose. But there was no Albert Olsen lying on the pavement. 'Damn and blast it all, where has the Vanisher got to?' we said, and we stared at one another, stupefied. And then I accidentally glanced across at a beer-cellar opposite, and there, by God, he was sitting at the basement window, winking at us so, with his forefinger to his nose, making signs to us to go down and have a glass of beer with him. 'I was so accursedly thirsty,' was all he said; 'I couldn't wait to run down the stairs!'"

The general laughter appeased the Vanishing Man. "Who'll give me a glass of beer?" he said, rising with difficulty. He got his beer and sat down in a corner.

Stolpe was sitting at the table playing with his canary, which had to partake of its share in the feast. The bird sat on his red ear and fixed its claws in his hair, then hopped onto his arm and along it onto the table. Stolpe kept on asking it, "What would you like to smoke, Hansie?" "Peep!" replied the canary, every time. Then they all laughed. "Hansie would like a pipe!"

"How clever he is, to answer like that!" said the women.

"Clever?--ay, and he's sly too! Once we bought a little wife for him; mother didn't think it fair that he shouldn't know what love is. Well, they married themselves very nicely, and the little wife lay two eggs. But when she wanted to begin to sit Hansie got sulky; he kept on calling to her to come out on the perch. Well, she wouldn't, and one fine day, when she wanted to get something to eat, he hopped in and threw the eggs out between the bars! He was jealous--the rascal! Yes, animals are wonderfully clever--stupendous it is, that such a little thing as that could think that out! Now, now, just look at him!"

Hansie had hopped onto the table and had made his way to the remainder of the cake. He was sitting on the edge of the dish, cheerfully flirting his tail as he pecked away. Suddenly something fell upon the table-cloth. "Lord bless me," cried Stolpe, in consternation, "if that had been any one else! Wouldn't you have heard mother carry on!"

Old Lasse was near exploding at this. He had never before been in such pleasant company. "It's just as if one had come upon a dozen of Brother Kalle's sort," he whispered to Pelle. Pelle smiled absently. Ellen was holding his hand in her lap and playing with his fingers.

A telegram of congratulation came for Pelle from his Union, and this brought the conversation back to more serious matters. Morten and Stolpe became involved in a dispute concerning the labor movement; Morten considered that they did not sufficiently consider the individual, but attached too much importance to the voice of the masses. In his opinion the revolution must come from within.

"No," said Stolpe, "that leads to nothing. But if we could get our comrades into Parliament and obtain a majority, then we should build up

the State according to our own programme, and that is in every respect a legal one!"

"Yes, but it's a question of daily bread," said Morten, with energy.

"Hungry people can't sit down and try to become a majority; while the grass grows the cow starves! They ought to help themselves. If they do not, their self-consciousness is imperfect; they must wake up to the consciousness of their own human value. If there were a law forbidding the poor man to breathe the air, do you think he'd stop doing so? He simply could not. It's painful for him to look on at others eating when he gets nothing himself. He is wanting in physical courage. And so society profits by his disadvantage. What has the poor man to do with the law? He stands outside all that! A man mustn't starve his horse or his dog, but the State which forbids him to do so starves its own workers. I believe they'll have to pay for preaching obedience to the poor; we are getting bad material for the new order of society that we hope to found some day."

"Yes, but we don't obey the laws out of respect for the commands of a capitalist society," said Stolpe, somewhat uncertainly, "but out of regard for ourselves. God pity the poor man if he takes the law into his own hands!"

"Still, it keeps the wound fresh! As for all the others, who go hungry in silence, what do they do? There are too few of them, alas--there's room in the prisons for them! But if every one who was hungry would stick his arm through a shop window and help himself--then the question of maintenance would soon be solved. They couldn't put the whole nation in prison! Now, hunger is yet another human virtue, which is often practised until men die of it--for the profit of those who hoard wealth. They pat the poor, brave man on the back because he's so obedient to the law. What more can he want?"

"Yes, devil take it, of course it's all topsy-turvy," replied Stolpe.

"But that's precisely the reason why----No, no, you won't persuade me, my young friend! You seem to me a good deal too 'red.' It wouldn't do! Now I've been concerned in the movement from the very first day, and no one can say that Stolpe is afraid to risk his skin; but that way wouldn't suit me. We have always held to the same course, and everything that we have won we have taken on account."

"Yes, that's true," interrupted Frau Stolpe. "When I look back to those early years and then consider these I can scarcely believe it's true. Then it was all we could do to find safe shelter, even among people of our own standing; they annoyed us in every possible way, and hated father because he wasn't such a sheep as they were, but used to concern himself about their affairs. Every time I went out of the kitchen door I'd find a filthy rag of dishcloth hung over the handle, and they smeared much worse things than that over the door--and whose doing was it? I never told father; he would have been so enraged he would have torn the whole house down to find the guilty person. No, father had enough to contend against already. But now: 'Ah, here comes Stolpe--Hurrah! Long live Stolpe! One must show respect to Stolpe, the veteran!'"

"That may be all very fine," muttered Albert Olsen, "but the slater, he climbs the highest." He was sitting with sunken head, staring angrily before him.

"To be sure he climbs highest," said the women. "No one says he doesn't."

"Leave him alone," said Otto; "he's had a drop too much!"

"Then he should take a walk in the fresh air and not sit there and make himself disagreeable," said Madam Stolpe, with a good deal of temper.

The Vanishing Man rose with an effort. "Do you say a walk in the fresh air, Madam Stolpe? Yes, if any one can stand the air, by God, it's Albert Olsen. Those big-nosed masons, what can they do?" He stood with bent head, muttering angrily to himself. "Yes, then we'll take a walk in the fresh air. I don't want to have anything to do with your fools' tricks." He staggered out through the kitchen door.

"What's he going to do there?" cried Madam Stolpe, in alarm.

"Oh, he'll just go down into the yard and turn himself inside out," said Otto. "He's a brilliant fellow, but he can't carry much."

Pelle, still sitting at table, had been drawing with a pencil on a scrap of paper while the others were arguing. Ellen leaned over his shoulder watching him. He felt her warm breath upon his ear and smiled happily as he used his pencil. Ellen took the drawing when he had finished and pushed it across the table to the others. It showed a thick-set figure of a man, dripping with sweat, pushing a wheelbarrow which supported his belly. "Capitalism--when the rest of us refuse to serve him any longer!" was written below. This drawing made a great sensation. "You're a deuce of a chap!" cried Stolpe. "I'll send that to the editor of the humorous page--I know him."

"Yes, Pelle," said Lasse proudly, "there's nothing he can't do; devil knows where he gets it from, for he doesn't get it from his father." And they all laughed.

Carpenter Stolpe's good lady sat considering the drawing with amazement, quite bewildered, looking first at Pelle's fingers and then at the drawing again. "I can understand how people can say funny things with their mouths," she said, "but with their fingers--that I don't understand. Poor fellow, obliged to push his belly in front of him! It's almost worse than when I was going to have Victor."

"Cousin Victor, her youngest, who is so deucedly clever," said Otto, in explanation, giving Pelle a meaning wink.

"Yes, indeed he is clever, if he is only six months old. The other day I took him downstairs with me when I went to buy some milk. Since then he won't accept his mother's left breast any more. The rascal noticed that the milkman drew skim milk from the left side of the cart and full-cream milk from the tap on the right side. And another time----"

"Now, mother, give over!" said Carpenter Stolpe; "don't you see they're sitting laughing at you? And we ought to see about getting home presently." He looked a trifle injured.

"What, are you going already?" said Stolpe. "Why, bless my soul, it's quite late already. But we must have another song first."

"It'll be daylight soon," said Madam Stolpe; she was so tired that she

was nodding.

When they had sung the Socialist marching song, the party broke up. Lasse had his pockets filled with sweets for the three orphans.

"What's become of the Vanishing Man?" said Otto suddenly.

"Perhaps he's been taken bad down in the yard," said Stolpe. "Run down and see, Frederick." They had quite forgotten him.

Frederik returned and announced that Albert Olsen was not in the yard--and the gate was locked.

"Surely he can't have gone on the roof?" said one. They ran up the back stairs; the door of the loft was open, and the skylight also.

Otto threw off his coat and swung himself up through the opening. On the extreme end of the ridge of the roof sat Albert Olsen, snoring.

He was leaning against the edge of the party-wall, which projected upward about eighteen inches. Close behind him was empty space.

"For God's sake don't call him," said Mother Stolpe, under her breath; "and catch hold of him before he wakes."

But Otto went straight up to his comrade. "Hullo, mate! Time's up!" he cried.

"Righto!" said the Vanisher, and he rose to his feet. He stood there a moment, swaying above the abyss, then, giving the preference to the way leading over the roof, he followed in Otto's track and crept through the window.

"What the dickens were you really doing there?" asked Stolpe, laughing. "Have you been to work?"

"I just went up there and enjoyed the fresh air a bit. Have you got a bottle of beer? But what's this? Everybody going home already?" "Yes, you've been two hours sitting up there and squinting at the stars," replied Otto.

Now all the guests had gone. Lasse and the young couple stood waiting to say farewell. Madam Stolpe had tears in her eyes. She threw her arms round Ellen. "Take good care of yourself, the night is so cold," she said, in a choking voice, and she stood nodding after them with eyes that were blinded with tears.

"Why, but there's nothing to cry about!" said Mason Stolpe, as he led her indoors. "Go to bed now--I'll soon sing the Vanishing Man to sleep! Thank God for to-day, mother!"

XVI

Pelle had placed his work-bench against the wall-space between the two windows of the living-room. There was just room to squeeze past between

the edge of the bench and the round table which stood in the middle of the room. Against the wall by the door stood an oak-stained sideboard, which was Ellen's pride, and exactly opposite this, on the opposing wall, stood the chest of drawers of her girlhood, with a mirror above it and a white embroidered cover on the top. On this chest of drawers stood a polished wooden workbox, a few photographs, and various knick-knacks; with its white cover it was like a little altar.

Pelle went to Master Beck's only every other day; the rest of the time he sat at home playing the little master. He had many acquaintances hereabouts, really poor folks, who wore their boots until their stockings appeared before they had them repaired; nevertheless, it was possible to earn a day's pay among them. He obtained work, too, from Ellen's family and their acquaintances. These were people of another sort; even when things went badly with them they always kept up appearances and even displayed a certain amount of luxury. They kept their troubles to themselves.

He could have obtained plenty of journeyman work, but he preferred this arrangement, which laid the foundation of a certain independence; there was more chance of a future in it. And there was a peculiar feeling about work done with his home as the background. When he lifted his eyes from his work as he sat at home a fruitful warmth came into his heart; things looked so familiar; they radiated comfort, as though they had always belonged together. And when the morning sun shone into the room everything wore a smile, and in the midst of it all Ellen moved busily to and fro humming a tune. She felt a need always to be near him, and rejoiced over every day which he spent at home. On those days she hurried through her work in the kitchen as quickly as possible, and then sat down to keep him company. He had to teach her how to make a patch, and how to sew a sole on, and she helped him with his work.

"Now you are the master and I'm the journeyman!" she would say delightedly. She brought him customers too; her ambition was to keep him always at home. "I'll help you all I can. And one fine day you'll have so much work you'll have to take an apprentice--and then a journeyman." Then he would take her in his arms, and they worked in emulation, and sang as they worked.

Pelle was perfectly happy, and had cast off all his cares and burdens. This was his nest, where every stick and stone was worth more than all else in the world besides. They had their work cut out to keep it together and feed themselves a little daintily; and Pelle tackled his work as joyfully as though he had at last found his true vocation. Now and again a heavy wave came rolling up from the struggling masses, making his heart beat violently, and then he would break out into fiery speech; or his happiness would weave radiant pictures before his eyes, and he would describe these to Ellen. She listened to him proudly, and with her beloved eyes upon him he would venture upon stronger expression and more vivid pictures, as was really natural to him. When at last he was silent she would remain quietly gazing at him with those dark eyes of hers that always seemed to be looking at something in him of which he himself was unaware.

"What are you thinking of now?" Pelle would ask, for he would have enjoyed an exposition of the ideas that filled his mind. There was no one for him but Ellen, and he wanted to discuss the new ideas with her, and to feel the wonderful happiness of sharing these too with her.

"I was thinking how red your lips are when you speak! They certainly want to be kissed!" she replied, throwing her arms round his neck.

What happened round about her did not interest her; she could only speak of their love and of what concerned herself. But the passionate gaze of her eyes was like a deep background to their life. It had quite a mysterious effect upon his mind; it was like a lure that called to the unknown depths of his being. "The Pelle she sees must be different to the one I know," he thought happily. There must be something fine and strong in him for her to cling to him so closely and suffer so when parted from him only for a moment. When she had gazed at him long enough she would press herself against him, confused, and hide her face.

Without his remarking it, she directed his energies back to his own calling. He could work for two when she sat at the bench facing him and talked to him as she helped him. Pelle really found their little nest quite comfortable, but Ellen's mind was full of plans for improvement and progress. His business was to support a respectable home with dainty furniture and all sorts of other things; she was counting on these already. This home, which to him was like a beloved face that one cannot imagine other than it is, was to her only a temporary affair, which would by degrees be replaced by something finer and better. Behind her intimate gossip of every-day trivialities she concealed a far-reaching ambition. He must do his utmost if he was to accomplish all she expected of him!

Ellen by no means neglected her housekeeping, and nothing ever slipped through her fingers. When Pelle was away at the workshop she turned the whole place upside down, sweeping and scrubbing, and had always something good on the table for him. In the evening she was waiting for him at the door of the workshop. Then they would take a stroll along the canal, and across the green rampart where the children played. "Oh, Pelle, how I've longed for you to-day!" she would say haltingly. "Now, I've got you, and yet I've still got quite a pain in my breasts; they don't know yet that you're with me!"

"Shan't we work a little this evening--just a quarter of an hour?" she would say, when they had eaten, "so that you can become a master all the sooner and make things more comfortable for yourself." Pelle perhaps would rather have taken a walk through the city with her, or have gone somewhere where they could enjoy the sunset, but her dark eyes fixed themselves upon him.

She was full of energy from top to toe, and it was all centered on him. There was something in her nature that excluded the possibility of selfishness. In relation to herself, everything was indifferent; she only wanted to be with him--and to live for him. She was beneficent and intact as virgin soil; Pelle had awakened love in her--and it took the shape of a perpetual need of giving. He felt, humbly, that she brought all she had and was to him as a gift, and all he did was done to repay her generosity.

He had refused to undertake the direction of the labor organization. His life together with Ellen and the maintenance of the newly established household left him no time for any effectual efforts outside his home. Ellen did not interfere in the matter; but when he came home after spending the evening at a meeting he could see she had been crying. So he stopped at home with her; it was weak of him, but he did not see what else he could do. And he missed nothing; Ellen more than made amends.

She knew how to make their little home close itself about him, how to turn it into a world of exuberant inner life. There was no greater pleasure than to set themselves to achieve some magnificent object--as, for instance, to buy a china flower-pot, which could stand on the window-sill and contain an aspidistra. That meant a week of saving, and when they had got it they would cross over to the other side of the canal, arm in arm, and look up at the window in order to see the effect. And then something else would be needed; a perforating machine, an engraved nameplate for the door; every Saturday meant some fresh acquisition.

The Working Man lay unread. If Pelle laid down his work a moment in order to glance at it, there was Ellen nipping his ear with her lips; his free time belonged to her, and it was a glorious distraction in work-time, to frolic as carelessly as a couple of puppies, far more delightful than shouldering the burden of the servitude of the masses! So the paper was given up; Ellen received the money every week for her savings-bank. She had discovered a corner in Market Street where she wanted to set up a shop and work-room with three or four assistants--that was what she was saving for. Pelle wondered at her sagacity, for that was a good neighborhood.

After their marriage they did not visit Ellen's parents so often. Stolpe found Pelle was cooling down, and used to tease him a little, in order to make him answer the helm; but that angered Ellen, and resulted in explosions--she would tolerate no criticism of Pelle. She went to see them only when Pelle proposed it; she herself seemed to feel no desire to see her family, but preferred staying at home. Often they pretended they were not at home when "the family" knocked, in order to go out alone, to the Zoological Gardens or to Lyngby.

They did not see much of Lasse. Ellen had invited him once for all to eat his supper with them. But when he came home from work he was too tired to change his clothes, and wash himself, and make himself tidy, and Ellen was particular about her little home. He had a great respect for her, but did not feel properly at home in her living-room.

He had taken Pelle's old room, and was boarding with the three orphans. They thought great things of him, and all their queer care for the big foundling Pelle was now transferred to old Lasse. And here they fell on better soil. Lasse was becoming a child again, and had felt the need of a little pampering. With devout attention he would listen to Marie's little troubles, and the boy's narrations of everything that they did and saw. In return he told them the adventures of his boyhood, or related his experiences in the stone-breaking yard, swaggering suitably, in order not to be outdone. When Pelle came to fetch his father the four of them would be sitting down to some childish game. They would wrangle as to how the game should be played, for Lasse was the most skilful. The old man would excuse himself.

"You mustn't be angry, lad, because I neglect you--but I'm tired of an evening and I go to bed early."

"Then come on Sunday--and breakfast with us; afterward we go out."

"No, I've something on for Sunday--an assignation," said Lasse roguishly, in order to obviate further questions. "Enjoy your youthful happiness; it won't last forever."

He would never accept help. "I earn what I need for my food and a few clothes; I don't need much of either, and I am quite contented. And you've enough to see to yourself," was his constant answer.

Lasse was always gentle and amiable, and appeared contented, but there was a curious veil over his eyes, as though some disappointment were gnawing at his heart.

And Pelle knew well what it was--it had always been an understood thing that Lasse should spend his old age at Pelle's fireside. In his childish dreams of the future, however various they might be, Father Lasse was always at hand, enjoying a restful old age, in return for all he had done for Pelle.

That was how it should be; at home in the country in every poor home a gray-headed old man sat in the chimney-corner--for children among the poor are the only comfort of age.

For the time being this could not be arranged; there was no room in their two little rooms. Ellen was by no means lacking in heart; she often thought of this or that for the old man's comfort, but her passionate love would permit of no third person to approach them too closely. Such a thing had never entered her mind; and Pelle felt that if he were to persuade her to take Father Lasse into their home, the wonder of their life together would be killed. They lived so fully from hour to hour; theirs was a sacred happiness, that must not be sacrificed, but which itself demanded the sacrifice of all else. Their relation was not the usual practical self-love, but love itself, which seldom touches the every-day life of the poor, save that they hear it in tragic and beautiful songs of unhappy lovers. But here, to them, had come its very self--a shining wonder!

And now Ellen was going to bear a child. Her figure grew fuller and softer. Toward all others she was cold and remote in her behavior; only to Pelle she disclosed herself utterly. The slight reserve which had always lurked somewhere within her, as though there was something that he could not yet conquer, had disappeared. Her gaze was no longer fixed and searching; but sought his own with quiet self-surrender. A tender and wonderful harmony was visible in her, as though she had now come into her own, and from day to day she grew more beautiful.

Pelle was filled with pride to see how luxuriantly she unfolded beneath his caresses. He was conscious of a sense of inexhaustible liberality, such as the earth had suddenly inspired in him at times in his childhood; and an infinite tenderness filled his heart. There was an alluring power in Ellen's helplessness, so rich in promise as it was. He would joyfully have sacrificed the whole world in order to serve her and that which she so wonderfully bore within her.

He got up first in the morning, tidied the rooms, and made coffee before he went to work. He was vexed if when he came home Ellen had been sweeping or scrubbing. He made two of himself in order to spare her, stinted himself of sleep, and was restlessly busy; his face had assumed a fixed expression of happiness, which gave him almost a look of stupidity. His thoughts never went beyond the four walls of his home; Ellen's blessed form entirely engrossed him.

The buying of new furniture was discontinued; in its place Ellen made curious purchases of linen and flannel and material for swaddling-bands,

and mysterious conversations were continually taking place between her and her mother, from which Pelle was excluded; and when they went to see Ellen's parents Madam Stolpe was always burrowing in her chests of drawers, and giving Ellen little packages to be taken home.

The time passed only too quickly. Exclusively as they had lived for their own affairs, it seemed as if they could never get everything finished. And one day it was as though the world was shattered about their heads. Ellen lay in bed, turning from side to side and shrieking as though an evil spirit had taken possession of her body. Pelle bent over her with a helpless expression, while at the foot of the bed sat Madam Blom; she sat there knitting and reading the papers as though nothing whatever was amiss. "Shriek away, little woman," she said from time to time, when Ellen became silent; "that's part of the business!" Ellen looked at her spitefully and defiantly pressed her lips together, but next moment she opened her mouth wide and roared wildly. A rope was fastened to the foot of the bed, and she pulled on this while she shrieked. Then she collapsed, exhausted. "You wicked, wicked boy," she whispered, with a faint smile. Pelle bent over her happily; but she pushed him suddenly away; her beautiful body contorted itself, and the dreadful struggle was raging again. But at last a feeble voice relieved hers and filled the home with a new note. "Another mouth to fill," said Madam Blom, holding the new-born child in the air by one leg. It was a boy.

Pelle went about blushing and quite bewildered, as though something had happened to him that no one else had ever experienced. At first he took Master Beck's work home with him and looked after the child himself at night. Every other moment he had to put down his work and run in to the mother and child. "You are a wonderful woman, to give me such a child for a kiss," he said, beaming, "and a boy into the bargain! What a man he'll be!"

"So it's a boy!" said the "family." "Don't quite lose your head!"

"That would be the last straw!" said Pelle gravely.

The feminine members of the family teased him because he looked after the child. "What a man--perhaps he'd like to lie in child-bed, too!" they jeered.

"I don't doubt it," growled Stolpe. "But he's near becoming an idiot, and that's much more serious. And it pains me to say it, but that's the girl's fault. And yet all her life she has only heard what is good and proper. But women are like cats--there's no depending on them."

Pelle only laughed at their gibes. He was immeasurably happy.

And now Lasse managed to find his way to see them! He had scarcely received the news of the event, when he made his appearance just as he was. He was full of audaciously high spirits; he threw his cap on the ground outside the door, and rushed into the bedroom as though some one were trying to hold him back.

"Ach, the little creature! Did any one ever see such an angel!" he cried, and he began to babble over the child until Ellen was quite rosy with maternal pride.

His joy at becoming a grandfather knew no limits. "So it's come at last,

it's come at last!" he repeated, over and over again. "And I was always afraid I should have to go to my grave without leaving a representative behind me! Ach, what a plump little devil! He's got something to begin life on, he has! He'll surely be an important citizen, Pelle! Just look how plump and round he is! Perhaps a merchant or a manufacturer or something of that sort! To see him in his power and greatness--but that won't be granted to Father Lasse." He sighed. "Yes, yes, here he is, and how he notices one already! Perhaps the rascal's wondering, who is this wrinkled old man standing there and coming to see me in his old clothes? Yes, it's Father Lasse, so look at him well, he's won his magnificence by fair means!"

Then he went up to Pelle and fumbled for his hand. "Well, I've hardly dared to hope for this--and how fine he is, my boy! What are you going to call him?" Lasse always ended with that question, looking anxiously at his son as he asked it. His old head trembled a little now when anything moved him.

"He's to be called Lasse Frederik," said Pelle one day, "after his two grandfathers."

This delighted the old man. He went off on a little carouse in honor of the day.

And now he came almost every day. On Sunday mornings he made himself scrupulously tidy, polishing his boots and brushing his clothes, so as to make himself thoroughly presentable. As he went home from work he would look in to ask whether little Lasse had slept well. He eulogized Ellen for bringing such a bright, beautiful youngster into the world, and she quite fell in love with the old man, on account of his delight in the child.

She even trusted him to sit with the little one, and he was never so pleased as when she wished to go out and sent for him accordingly.

So little Lasse succeeded, merely by his advent, in abolishing all misunderstandings, and Pelle blessed him for it. He was the deuce of a fellow already--one day he threw Lasse and Ellen right into one another's arms! Pelle followed step by step the little creature's entrance into the world; he noticed when first his glance showed a watchful attention, and appeared to follow an object, and when first his hand made a grab at something. "Hey, hey, just look! He wants his share of things already!" he cried delightedly. It was Pelle's fair moustache the child was after--and didn't he give it a tug!

The little hand gripped valiantly and was scarcely to be removed; there were little dimples on the fingers and deep creases at the wrist. There was any amount of strength in Ellen's milk!

They saw nothing more of Morton. He had visited them at first, but after a time ceased coming. They were so taken up with one another at the time, and Ellen's cool behavior had perhaps frightened him away. He couldn't know that that was her manner to everybody. Pelle could never find an idle hour to look him up, but often regretted him. "Can you understand what's amiss with him?" he would ask Ellen wonderingly. "We have so much in common, he and I. Shall I make short work of it and go and look him up?"

Ellen made no answer to this; she only kissed him. She wanted to have

him quite to herself, and encompassed him with her love; her warm breath made him feel faint with happiness. Her will pursued him and surrounded him like a wall; he had a faint consciousness of the fact, but made no attempt to bestir himself. He felt quite comfortable as he was.

The child occasioned fresh expenses, and Ellen had all she could do; there was little time left for her to help him. He had to obtain suitable work, so that they might not suffer by the slack winter season, but could sit cozily between their four walls. There was no time for loafing about and thinking. It was an obvious truth, which their daily life confirmed, that poor people have all they can do to mind their own affairs. This was a fact which they had not at once realized.

He no longer gave any thought to outside matters. It was really only from old habit that, as he sat eating his breakfast in the workshop, he would sometimes glance at the paper his sandwiches were wrapped in--part of some back number of *The Working Man*. Or perhaps it would happen that he felt something in the air, that passed him by, something in which he had no part; and then he would raise his head with a listening expression. But Ellen was familiar with the remoteness that came into his eyes at such times, and she knew how to dispel it with a kiss.

One day he met Morten in the street. Pelle was delighted, but there was a sceptical expression in Morten's eyes. "Why don't you ever come to see me now?" asked Pelle. "I often long to see you, but I can't well get away from home."

"I've found a sweetheart--which is quite an occupation."

"Are you engaged?" said Pelle vivaciously. "Tell me something about her!"

"Oh, there's not much to tell," said Morten, with a melancholy smile. "She is so ragged and decayed that no one else would have her--that's

why I took her."

"That is truly just like you!" Pelle laughed. "But seriously, who is the girl and where does she live?"

"Where does she live?" Morten stared at him for a moment uncomprehendingly. "Yes, after all you're right. If you know where people live you know all about them. The police always ask that question."

Pelle did not know whether Morten was fooling him or whether he was speaking in good faith; he could not understand him in the least to-day. His pale face bore signs of suffering. There was a curious glitter in his eyes. "One has to live somewhere in this winter cold."

"Yes, you are right! And she lives on the Common, when the policeman doesn't drive her away. He's the landlord of the unfortunate, you know! There has been a census lately--well, did you observe what happened? It was given out that everybody was to declare where he lodged on a particular night. But were the census-papers distributed among the homeless? No--all those who live in sheds and outhouses, or on the Common, or in newly erected buildings, or in the disused manure-pits of the livery stables--they have no home, and consequently were not counted

in the census. That was cleverly managed, you know; they simply don't exist! Otherwise there would be a very unpleasant item on the list--the number of the homeless. Only one man in the city here knows what it is; he's a street missionary, and I've sometimes been out with him at night; it's horrifying, what we've seen! Everywhere, wherever there's a chink, they crowd into it in order to find shelter; they lie under the iron staircases even, and freeze to death. We found one like that--an old man--and called up a policeman; he stuck his red nose right in the corpse's mouth and said, 'Dead of drink.' And now that's put down, where really it ought to say, 'Starved to death!' It mustn't be said that any one really suffers need in this country, you understand. No one freezes to death here who will only keep moving; no one starves unless it's his own fault. It must necessarily be so in one of the most enlightened countries in the world; people have become too cultivated to allow Want to stalk free about the streets; it would spoil their enjoyment and disturb their night's rest. And they must be kept at a distance too; to do away with them would be too troublesome; but the police are drilled to chase them back into their holes and corners. Go down to the whaling quay and see what they bring ashore in a single day at this time of the year--it isn't far from your place. Accidents, of course! The ground is so slippery, and people go too near the edge of the quay. The other night a woman brought a child into the world in an open doorway in North Bridge Street--in ten degrees of frost. People who collected were indignant; it was unpardonable of her to go about in such a condition--she ought to have stopped at home. It didn't occur to them that she had no home. Well then, she could have gone to the police; they are obliged to take people in. On the other hand, as we were putting her in the cab, she began to cry, in terror, 'Not the maternity hospital--not the maternity hospital!' She had already been there some time or other. She must have had some reason for preferring the doorstep--just as the others preferred the canal to the workhouse."

Morten continued, regardless of Pelle, as though he had to ease some inward torment. Pelle listened astounded to this outburst of lacerating anguish with a shamed feeling that he himself had a layer of fat round his heart. As Morten spoke poverty once more assumed a peculiar, horrible, living glimmer.

"Why do you tell me all this as if I belonged to the upper classes?" he said. "I know all this as well as you do."

"And we haven't even a bad year," Morten continued, "the circumstances are as they always are at this time of year. Yesterday a poor man stole a loaf from the counter and ran off with it; now he'll be branded all his life. 'My God, that he should want to make himself a thief for so little!' said the master's wife--it was a twopenny-ha'penny roll. It's not easy to grasp--branded for his whole life for a roll of bread!"

"He was starving," said Pelle stupidly.

"Starving? Yes, of course he was starving! But to me it's insanity, I tell you--I can't take it in; and every one else thinks it's so easy to understand. Why do I tell you this, you ask? You know it as well as I do. No, but you don't know it properly, or you'd have to rack your brains till you were crazy over the frightful insanity of the fact that these two words--bread and crime--can belong together! Isn't it insane, that the two ends should bend together and close in a ring about a human life? That a man should steal bread of all things--bread, do you understand? Bread ought not to be stolen. What does any man want with

thieving who eats enough? In the mornings, long before six o'clock, the poor people gather outside our shop, and stand there in rows, in order to be the first to get the stale bread that is sold at half-price. The police make them stand in a row, just as they do outside the box-office at the theater, and some come as early as four, and stand two hours in the cold, in order to be sure of their place. But besides those who buy there is always a crowd of people still poorer; they have no money to buy with, but they stand there and stare as though it interested them greatly to see the others getting their bread cheap. They stand there waiting for a miracle in the shape of a slice of bread. One can see that in the way their eyes follow every movement, with the same desperate hope that you see in the eyes of the dogs when they stand round the butcher's cart and implore Heaven that the butcher may drop a bit of meat. They don't understand that no one will pity them. Not we human beings--you should see their surprise when we give them anything!--but chance, some accident. Good God, bread is so cheap, the cheapest of all the important things in this world--and yet they can't for once have enough of it! This morning I slipped a loaf into an old woman's hand--she kissed it and wept for joy! Do you feel that that's endurable?" He stared at Pelle with madness lurking in his gaze.

"You do me an injustice if you think I don't feel it too," said Pelle quietly. "But where is there a quick way out of this evil? We must be patient and organize ourselves and trust to time. To seize on our rights as they've done elsewhere won't do for us."

"No, that's just it! They know it won't do for us--that's why justice never goes forward. The people get only what's due to them if the leaders know that if the worst comes to the worst they can provide for themselves."

"I don't believe that any good would come of a revolution," said Pelle emphatically. He felt the old longing to fight within him.

"You can't understand about that unless you've felt it in yourself," replied Morten passionately. "Revolution is the voice of God, which administers right and justice, and it cannot be disputed. If the poor were to rise to see that justice was done it would be God's judgment, and it would not be overthrown. The age has surely the right to redeem itself when it has fallen into arrears in respect of matters so important; but it could do so only by a leap forward. But the people don't rise, they are like a damp powder! You must surely some time have been in the cellar of the old iron merchant under the 'Ark,' and have seen his store of rags and bones and old iron rubbish? They are mere rakings of the refuse-heap, things that human society once needed and then rejected. He collects them again, and now the poor can buy them. And he buys the soldiers' bread too, when they want to go on the spree, and throws it on his muck-heap; he calls it fodder for horses, but the poor buy it of him and eat it. The refuse-heap is the poor man's larder--that is, when the pigs have taken what they want. The Amager farmers fatten their swine there, and the sanitary commission talks about forbidding it; but no one has compassion on the Copenhagen poor."

Pelle shuddered. There was something demoniacal in Morten's hideous knowledge--he knew more of the "Ark" than Pelle himself. "Have you, too, been down in that loathsome rubbish-store?" he asked, "or how do you know all this?"

"No, I've not been there--but I can't help knowing it--that's my curse!

Ask me even whether they make soup out of the rotten bones they get there. And not even the poison of the refuse-heap will inflame them; they lap it up and long for more! I can't bear it if nothing is going to happen! Now you've pulled yourself out of the mire--and it's the same with everybody who has accomplished anything--one after another--either because they are contented or because they are absorbed in their own pitiful affairs. Those who are of any use slink away, and only the needy are left."

"I have never left you in the lurch," said Pelle warmly. "You must realize that I haven't."

"It isn't to be wondered at that they get weary," Morten continued. "Even God loses patience with those who always let themselves be trampled upon. Last night I dreamed I was one of the starving. I was going up the street, grieving at my condition, and I ran up against God. He was dressed like an old Cossack officer, and had a knout hanging round his neck."

"'Help me, dear God!' I cried, and fell on my knees before him. 'My brothers won't help me.'"

"'What ails you?' he asked, 'and who are you?'"

"'I am one of Thy chosen folk, one of the poor,' I answered. 'I am starving!'"

"'You are starving and complain of your brothers, who have set forth food for you in abundance?' he said angrily, pointing to all the fine shops. 'You do not belong to my chosen people--away with you!' And then he lashed me over the back with his knout."

Morten checked himself and spoke no more; it was as though he neither saw nor heard; he had quite collapsed. Suddenly he turned away, without saying good-bye.

Pelle went home; he was vexed by Morten's violence, which was, he felt, an attack upon himself. He knew this of himself--that he was not faithless; and no one had any right to grudge him the happiness of founding a family. He was quite indignant--for the first time for a long time. That they should taunt him, who had done more for the cause than most!--just because he looked after his own affairs for a time! Something unruly was rising within him; he felt a sudden need to lay about him; to fight a good stiff battle and shake the warm domesticity out of his bones.

Down by the canal they were engaged cutting the ice in order to clear the water. It was already spring tide, and the ice-cakes were drifting toward the sea, but with unbelievable slowness. After all, that's the work for you, he told himself as he turned away. He was conscious of that which lay beneath the surface, but he would not let it rise.

As soon as he was between four walls again he grew calmer. Ellen sat by the stove busied with little Lasse, who lay sprawling on his belly in her lap.

"Only look what a sweet little roly-poly he is! There isn't a trace of chafing anywhere!"

From his place at the window Pelle could look out over the canal and the bridge by the prison, where the prisoners lay on the rafts, washing wool. He recognized Ferdinand's tall, powerful figure; shortly after Christmas they had captured him in an underground vault in the cemetery, where he had established himself; the snow had betrayed his hiding-place. And now he lay yonder, so near the "Ark" and his mother! From time to time he raised his closely-shorn head and looked thither.

Beyond the bridge toward the market, was the potter with his barge; he had piled up his Jutland wares on the quay, and the women from Kristianshavn came to deal with him. And behind at the back of all rose the mass of the "Ark."

It was so huge that it did not give the impression of a barracks, but had rather the character of a fantastic village--as though a hundred hamlets had been swept together in one inextricable heap. Originally it had been a little frame building of one story with a gabled roof. Then it had gradually become an embryo town; it budded in all directions, upward as well, kaleidoscopically increasing to a vast mass of little bits of facade, high-pitched roofs, deep bays, and overhanging gables, all mingled together in an endless confusion, till in the middle it was five stories high. And there a bluish ring of vapor always hovered, revealing the presence of the well, that hidden ventilating shaft for the thronging inmates of the "Ark." One could recognize Madam Frandsen's garret with its chimney-cowl, and farther back, in a deep recess, which ran far into the mass of the building, Pelle could distinguish Hanne's window. Otherwise he could not place many of the little windows. They stared like failing eyes. Even the coal-dealer, who was the deputy landlord of the "Ark," was imperfectly acquainted with all its holes and corners.

He could see the inmates of the "Ark" running to and fro across the bridge, careless and myopic; they always rushed along, having started at the last moment.. There was something tranquilizing about their negligence, which was evoked by privation; in the "Ark" a man began to worry about his food only, when he sat down to table and discovered there wasn't any!

And among them little groups of workmen wandered in and out across the bridge; that steady march from the North Bridge had travelled hither, as though seeking him out.

The masses were now no longer vaguely fermenting; a mighty will was in process of formation. Amid the confusion, the chaotic hubbub, definite lines became visible; a common consciousness came into being and assumed a direction; the thousands of workers controlled themselves in a remarkable way, and were now progressing, slowly and prudently, with the ideal of closing up the ranks. One whose hearing was a little dull might have received the impression that nothing was happening--that they were reconciled with their lot; but Pelle knew what was going on. He himself had put his shoulder to the wheel, and was secretly one of their number.

He was happy in Ellen's divided love, and all he undertook had reference

to her and the child.

But now again the sound of footsteps echoed through his brain; and it would not be silenced. They had penetrated further than he himself could go. It was as though a deadening screen had suddenly been removed and whether he wished it or not, he heard every step of the wanderers outside.

The hard times forced them to proceed quietly, but work was being done in secret. The new ideas were in process of becoming current, the newspapers introduced them into the bosom of the family, and they were uttered from the speaker's platform, or discussed at meal-times in workshop and factory. The contagion ran up staircases and went from door to door. Organizations which more than once had been created and broken up were created afresh--and this time to endure. The employers fought them, but could not defeat them; there was an inward law working upon the masses, making a structure behind which they must defend themselves.

They taxed themselves and stole the bread out of their own mouths in order to increase the funds of their organization, in the blind conviction that eventually something miraculous would come of it all. The poor achieved power by means of privation, tears, and self-denial, and had the satisfaction of feeling that they were rich through their organization. When many united together they tasted of the sweets of wealth; and, grateful as they were, they regarded that already as a result. A sense of well-being lifted them above the unorganized, and they felt themselves socially superior to the latter. To join the trades unions now signified a rise in the social scale. This affected many, and others were driven into the movement by the strong representations of their house-mates. The big tenement buildings were gradually leavened by the new ideas; those who would not join the Union must clear out. They were treated as the scum of society, and could only settle down in certain quarters of the city. It no longer seemed impossible to establish the organization of labor in a stable fashion, and to accomplish something for the workers--if only some courageous worker would place himself at the head of affairs. The fact that most of them worked at home in their lodgings could no longer make them invisible--the movement had eyes everywhere. Pelle, with surprise, caught himself sitting at his bench and making plans for the development of the movement.

He put the matter from him, and devoted his whole mind to Ellen and the child. What had he to do with the need of strangers, when these two called for all his ability and all his strength, if he was to provide them merely with necessities? He had tortured himself enough with the burden of poverty--and to no end. And now he had found his release in a blessed activity, which, if he was to neglect nothing, would entirely absorb him. What then was the meaning of this inward admonition, that seemed to tell him that he was sinning against his duty?

He silenced the inward voice by dwelling on his joy in his wife and child. But it returned insidiously and haunted his mind like a shadow.

At times, as he sat quietly working, something called him: "Pelle, Pelle!"--or the words throbbed in his ears in the depth of the night.

At such times he sat upright in bed, listening. Ellen and the child were fast asleep; he could hear a faint whistling as little Lasse drew his breath. He would go to the door and open it, although he shook his head

at his own folly. It was surely a warning that some one near to him was in trouble!

At this time Pelle threw himself passionately into his life with Ellen and the child; he lived for them as wholly as though he had anticipated an immediate parting.

They had purchased a perambulator on the instalment system, and every Sunday they packed sandwiches under the apron and pushed it before them to the Common, or they turned into some beer-garden in the neighborhood of the city, where they ate their provisions and drank coffee. Often too they made their way along the coast road, and went right out into the forest. Lasse-Frederik, as Ellen called him, sat throned in all his splendor in the perambulator, like a little idol, Pelle and Ellen pushing him alternately. Ellen did not want to permit this. "It's no work for a man, pushing a perambulator," she would say. "You won't see any other man doing it! They let their wives push the family coach."

"What are other people to me?" replied Pelle. "I don't keep a horse yet."

She gave him a grateful look; nevertheless, she did not like it.

They spent glorious hours out there. Little Lasse was allowed to scramble about to his heart's content, and it was wonderful how he tumbled about; he was like a frolicsome little bear. "I believe he can smell the earth under him," said Pelle, recalling his own childish transports. "It's a pity he has to live in that barrack there!" Ellen gazed at him uncomprehendingly.

They did not move about much; it contented them to lie there and to delight in the child, when he suddenly sat up and gazed at them in astonishment, as though he had just discovered them. "Now he's beginning to think!" said Pelle, laughing.

"You take my word for it, he's hungry." And little Lasse scrambled straight up to his mother, striking at her breast with his clenched hands, and saying, "Mam, mam!" Pelle and the perambulator had to station themselves in front of her while he was fed.

When they reached home it was evening. If the doormat was displaced it meant that some one had been to call on them; and Ellen was able to tell, from its position, who the visitor had been. Once it stood upright against the wall.

"That's Uncle Carpenter," said Pelle quietly. Little Lasse was sleeping on his arm, his head resting on Pelle's shoulder.

"No, it will have been Cousin Anna," said Ellen, opening the door. "Thank the Lord we weren't at home, or we should have had such a business till late in the evening! They never eat anything at home on Sundays, they simply drink a mouthful of coffee and then go round eating their relations out of house and home."

Pelle often thought with concern of the three orphans in the "Ark." They were learning nothing that would be of use to them in the future, but had all they could do to make a living. The bad times had hit them too, and little Karl in particular; people were stingy with their tips. In these days they were never more than a day ahead of destitution, and the slightest misfortune would have brought them face to face with it. But they let nothing of this be seen--they were only a little quieter and more solemn than usual. He had on several occasions made inquiries as to obtaining help for them, but nothing could be done without immediately tearing them asunder; all those who were in a position to help them cried out against their little household, and separation was the worst that could befall them.

When he went to see them Marie always had plenty to tell and to ask him; he was still her particular confidant, and had to listen to all her household cares and give her his advice. She was growing tall now, and had a fresher look than of old; and Pelle's presence always filled her eyes with joy and brought the color to her cheeks. Father Lasse she eulogized, in a voice full of emotion, as though he were a little helpless child; but when she asked after Ellen a little malice glittered in her eyes.

One morning, as he sat working at home, while Ellen was out with the child, there was a knock at the door. He went out and opened it. In the little letter-box some one had thrust a number of _The Working Man_, with an invitation to take the paper regularly. He opened the paper eagerly, as he sat down to his bench again; an extraordinary feeling of distress caused him first of all to run through the "Accidents."

He started up in his chair; there was a heading concerning a fourteen-year-old boy who worked in a tinplate works and had had the fingers of the right hand cut off. A premonition told him that this misfortune had befallen the little "Family"; he quickly drew on a coat and ran over to the "Ark."

Marie met him anxiously. "Can you understand what has happened to Peter? He never came home last night!" she said, in distress. "Lots of boys roam about the streets all night, but Peter has never been like that, and I kept his supper warm till midnight. I thought perhaps he'd got into bad company."

Pelle showed her _The Working Man_. In a little while the inmates of the "Ark" would see the report and come rushing up with it. It was better that he should prepare her beforehand. "But it's by no means certain," he said, to cheer her. "Perhaps it isn't he at all."

Marie burst into tears. "Yes, of course it is! I've so often gone about worrying when he's been telling me about those sharp knives always sliding between their fingers. And they can't take proper care of themselves; they must work quickly or they get the sack. Oh, poor dear Peter!" She had sunk into her chair and now sat rocking to and fro with her apron to her eyes, like an unhappy mother.

"Now be grown-up and sensible," said Pelle, laying his hand on her shoulder. "Perhaps it's not so bad after all; the papers always exaggerate. Now I'll run out and see if I can trace him."

"Go to the factory first, then," said Marie, jumping to her feet, "for, of course, they'll know best. But you mustn't in any case say where we live--do you hear? Remember, we've not been to school, and he hasn't been notified to the pastor for confirmation. We could be punished if they found that out."

"I'll take good care," said Pelle, and he hurried away.

At the factory he received the information that Peter was lying in hospital. He ran thither, and arrived just at the time for visitors. Peter was sitting upright in bed, his hand in a sling; this gave him a curiously crippled appearance. And on the boy's face affliction had already left those deep, ineradicable traces which so dismally distinguish the invalided worker. The terrible burden of the consequences of mutilation could already be read in his pondering, childish gaze.

He cheered up when he saw Pelle, made an involuntary movement with his right hand, and then, remembering, held out his left. "There--I must give you my left fist now," he said, with a dismal smile. "That'll seem queer to me for a bit. If I can do anything at all. Otherwise"--he made a threatening movement of the head--"I tell you this--I'll never be a burden to Marie and Karl all my life. Take my word for it, I shall be able to work again."

"We shall soon find something for you," said Pelle, "and there are kind people, too. Perhaps some one will help you so that you can study." He himself did not know just where that idea came from; he certainly had never seen such a case. The magical dreams of his childhood had been responsible for a whole class of ideas, which were nourished by the anecdotes of poor boys in the reading-books. He was confronted by the impossible, and quite simply he reached out after the impossible.

Peter had no reading-books at his back. "Kind people!" he cried scornfully--"they never have anything themselves, and I can't even read--how should I learn how to study? Karl can read; he taught himself from the signs in the streets while he was running his errands; and he can write as well. And Hanne has taught Marie a little. But all my life I've only been in the factory." He stared bitterly into space; it was melancholy to see how changed his face was--it had quite fallen in.

"Don't worry now," said Pelle confidently: "we shall soon find something."

"Only spare me the poor-relief! Don't you go begging for me--that's all!" said Peter angrily. "And, Pelle," he whispered, so that no one in the room should hear, "it really isn't nice here. Last night an old man lay there and died--close to me. He died of cancer, and they didn't even put a screen round him. All the time he lay there and stared at me! But in a few days I shall be able to go out. Then there'll be something to be paid--otherwise the business will come before the Poor Law guardians, and then they'll begin to snuff around--and I've told them fibs, Pelle! Can't you come and get me out? Marie has money for the house-rent by her--you can take that."

Pelle promised, and hurried back to his work. Ellen was at home; she was moving about and seemed astonished. Pelle confided the whole affair to her. "Such a splendid fellow he is," he said, almost crying. "A little too solemn with all his work--and now he's a cripple! Only a child, and

an invalided worker already--it's horrible to think of!"

Ellen went up to him and pulled his head against her shoulder; soothingly she stroked his hair. "We must do something for him, Ellen," he said dully.

"You are so good, Pelle. You'd like to help everybody; but what can we do? We've paid away all our savings over my lying-in."

"We must sell or pawn some of our things."

She looked at him horrified. "Pelle, our dear home! And there's nothing here but just what is absolutely necessary. And you who love our poor little belongings so! But if you mean that, why, of course! Only you are doing something for him already in sacrificing your time."

After that he was silent. She several times referred to the matter again, as something that must be well deliberated, but he did not reply. Her conversation hurt him--whether he replied to it or was silent.

In the afternoon he invented an errand in the city, and made his way to the factory. He made for the counting-house, and succeeded in seeing the manufacturer himself. The latter was quite upset by the occurrence, but pleaded in vindication that the accident was entirely the result of negligence. He advised Pelle to make a collection among the workers in the factory, and he opened it himself with a contribution of twenty kroner. He also held out the prospect that Peter, who was a reliable lad, might take a place as messenger and collector when he was well again.

Peter was much liked by his comrades; a nice little sum was collected. Pelle paid his hospital dues, and there was so much left that he would be able to stay at home and rest with an easy mind until his hand was healed and he could take the place of messenger at the factory. The young invalid was in high spirits, knowing that his living was assured; he passed the time in lounging about the town, wherever there was music to be heard, in order to learn fresh tunes. "This is the first holiday I've had since I went to the factory," he told Pelle.

He did not get the place as messenger--some one stole a march on him; but he received permission to go back to his old work! With the remains of his right hand he could hold the sheet of tin-plate on the table, while the left hand had to accustom itself to moving among the threatening knives. This only demanded time and a little extra watchfulness.

This accident was branded on Pelle's soul, and it aroused his slumbering resentment. Chance had given him the three orphans in the place of brothers and sisters, and he felt Peter's fate as keenly as if it had been his own. It was a scandal that young children should be forced to earn their living by work that endangered their lives, in order to keep the detested Poor Law guardians at bay. What sort of a social order was this? He felt a suffocating desire to strike out, to attack it.

The burden of Pelle's fate, aggravated by this fresh misfortune, was once more visible in his face; Ellen's gentle hand, could not smooth it away. "Don't look so angry, now--you frighten the child so!" she would say, reaching him the boy. And Pelle would try to smile; but it was only a grim sort of smile.

He did not feel that it was necessary to allow Ellen to look into his bleeding soul; he conversed with her about indifferent things. At other times he sat gazing into the distance, peering watchfully at every sign; he was once more full of the feeling that he was appointed to some particular purpose. He was certain that tidings of some kind were on the way to him.

And then Shoemaker Petersen died, and he was again asked to take over the management of the Union.

"What do you say to that?" he asked Ellen, although his mind was irrevocably made up.

"You must know that yourself," she replied reservedly. "But if it gives you pleasure, why, of course!"

"I am not doing it to please myself," said Pelle gloomily. "I am not a woman!"

He regretted his words, and went over to Ellen and kissed her. She had tears in her eyes, and looked at him in astonishment.

XIX

There was plenty to be done. The renegades must be shepherded back to the organization--shepherded or driven; Pelle took the most willing first, allowing numbers to impress the rest. Those who were quite stubborn he left to their own devices for the time being; when they were isolated and marked men into the bargain, they could do no further mischief.

He felt well rested, and went very methodically to work. The feeling that his strength would hold out to the very end lent him a quiet courage that inspired confidence. He was not over-hasty, but saw to everything from the foundations upward; individual questions he postponed until the conditions for solving them should be at hand. He knew from previous experience that nothing could be accomplished unless the ranks were tightly knit together.

So passed the remainder of the summer. And then the organization was complete; it looked as though it could stand a tussle. And the first question was the tariff. This was bad and antiquated; thoroughly behind the times in all respects; the trade was groaning under a low rate of wages, which had not kept step with the general development and the augmentation of prices. But Pelle allowed his practical common sense to prevail. The moment was not favorable for a demand for higher wages. The organization could not lend the demand sufficient support; they must for the time being content themselves with causing the current tariff to be respected. Many of the large employers did not observe it, although they themselves had introduced it. Meyer was a particularly hard case; he made use of every possible shift and evasion to beat down the clearest wages bill.

Complaints were continually coming in, and one day Pelle went to him in

order to discuss the situation and come to some agreement. He was prepared to fight for the inviolability of the tariff, otherwise Meyer would make big promises and afterward break them. He had really expected Meyer to show him the door; however, he did not do so, but treated him with a sort of polite effrontery. Hatred of his old enemy awaked in Pelle anew, and it was all he could do to control himself. "The embargo will be declared against you if you don't come to an arrangement with your workers within a week," he said threateningly.

Meyer laughed contemptuously. "What's that you say? Oh, yes, your embargo, we know something about that! But then the employers will declare a lock-out for the whole trade--what do you think of that? Old hats will be selling cheap!"

Pelle was silent, and withdrew; it was the only way in which he could succeed in keeping cool. He had said what had to be said, and he was no diplomat, to smile quietly with a devil lurking in the corners of his eyes.

Meyer obligingly accompanied him to the door. "Can I oblige you in any other way--with work, for example? I could very well find room for a worker who will make children's boots and shoes."

When Pelle reached the street he drew a long breath. Poof! That was tough work; a little more insolence and he'd have given him one on the jaw! That would have been the natural answer to the fellow's effrontery! Well, it was a fine test for his hot temper, and he had stood it all right! He could always be master of the situation if he held his tongue.

"Now suppose we do put an embargo on Meyer," he thought, as he went down the street. "What then? Why, then he'll hit back and declare a lock-out. Could we hold out? Not very long, but the employers don't know that--and then their businesses would be ruined. But then they would introduce workers from abroad--or, if that didn't answer, they would get the work done elsewhere; or they would import whole cargoes of machinery, as they have already begun to do on a small scale."

Pelle stood still in the middle of the street. Damn it all, this wouldn't do! He must take care that he didn't make a hash of the whole affair. If these foreign workers and machines were introduced, a whole host of men would in a moment be deprived of their living. But he wanted to have a go at Meyer; there must be some means of giving the bloodsucker a blow that he would feel in his purse!

Next morning he went as usual to Beck's. Beck looked at him from over his spectacles. "I've nothing more to do with you, Pelle," he said, in a low voice.

"What!" cried Pelle, startled. "But we've such a lot of work on hand, master!"

"Yes, but I can't employ you any longer. I'm not doing this of my own free will; I have always been very well pleased with you; but that's how it stands. There are so many things one has to take into consideration; a shoemaker can do nothing without leather, and one can't very well do without credit with the leather merchants."

He would not say anything further.

But Pelle had sufficiently grasped the situation. He was the president of the Shoemakers' Union; Master Beck had been compelled to dismiss him, by the threat of stopping his source of supplies. Pelle was a marked man because he was at the head of the organization--although the latter was now recognized. This was an offence against the right of combination. Still there was nothing to be done about the matter; one had the right to dismiss a man if one had no further need of him. Meyer was a cunning fellow!

For a time Pelle drifted about dejectedly. He was by no means inclined to go home to Ellen with this melancholy news; so he went to see various employers in order to ask them for work. But as soon as they heard who he was they found they had nothing for him to do. He saw that a black mark had been set against his name.

So he must confine himself to home work, and must try to hunt up more acquaintances of his acquaintances. And he must be ready day and night lest some small shoemaker who muddled along without assistance should suddenly have more to do than he could manage.

Ellen took things as they came, and did not complain. But she was mutely hostile to the cause of their troubles. Pelle received no help from her in his campaign; whatever he engaged in, he had to fight it out alone. This did not alter his plans, but it engendered a greater obstinacy in him. There was one side of his nature that Ellen's character was unable to reach; well, she was only a woman, after all. One must be indulgent with her! He was kind to her, and in his thoughts he more and more set her on a level with little Lasse. In that way he avoided considering her opinion concerning serious matters--and thereby felt more of a man.

Thanks to his small salary as president of his Union, they suffered no actual privation. Pelle did not like the idea of accepting this salary; he felt greatly inclined to refuse the few hundred kroner. There was not a drop of bureaucratic blood in his veins, and he did not feel that a man should receive payment for that which he accomplished for the general good. But now this money came in very conveniently; and he had other things to do than to make mountains out of molehills. He had given up the embargo; but he was always racking his brains for some way of getting at Meyer; it occupied him day and night.

One day his thoughts blundered upon Meyer's own tactics. Although he was quite innocent, they had driven him away from his work. How would it be if he were to employ the same method and, quite secretly, take Meyer's workmen away from him? Meyer was the evil spirit of the shoemaker's craft. He sat there like a tyrant, thanks to his omnipotence, and oppressed the whole body of workers. It would not be so impossible to set a black mark against his name! And Pelle did not mean to be too particular as to the means.

He talked the matter over with his father-in-law, whose confidence in him was now restored. Stolpe, who was an old experienced tactician, advised him not to convoke any meeting on this occasion, but to settle the matter with each man face to face, so that the Union could not be attacked. "You've got plenty of time," he said. "Go first of all to the trustworthy fellows, and make them understand what sort of a man Karl Meyer is; take his best people away first of all; it won't do him much good to keep the bad ones. You can put the fear of God into your mates when you want to! Do your business so well that no one will have the courage any longer to take the place of those that leave him. He must be

branded as what he is--but between man and man."

Pelle did not spare himself; he went from one comrade to another, fiery and energetic. And what had proved impossible three years before he was now able to accomplish; the resentment of Meyer's injustice had sunk into the minds of all.

Meyer had been in the habit of letting his workers run about to no purpose; if the work was not quite ready for them they could call again. And when the work was given out to them they had, as a rule, to finish it with a rush; there was intention in this; it made the people humble and submissive.

But now the boot was on the other leg. The workers did not call; they did not deliver urgent commissions at the appointed time; Meyer had to send to them, and got his own words as answer; they were not quite ready yet, but they would see what they could do for him! He had to run after his own workers in order not to offend his rich customers. In the first instances he settled the matter, as a rule, by dismissal. But that did not help him at all; the devil of arrogance had entered into the simple journeymen! It looked as though they had got their ideas of master and subordinate reversed! He had to give up trusting to the hard hand on the rein; he must seek them out with fair words! His business had the whole fashionable world as customer, and always required a staff of the very best workers. But not even friendly approaches availed. Scarcely did he find a good journeyman-worker but he was off again, and if he asked the reason he always received the same jeering answer: they didn't feel inclined to work. He offered high wages, and at great expense engaged qualified men from outside; but Pelle was at once informed and immediately sought them out. When they had been subjected to his influence only for a few days they went back to the place they came from, or found other masters, who, now that Meyer's business was failing, were getting more orders. People who went to the warehouse said that Meyer was raging about upstairs, abusing innocent people and driving them away from him.

Meyer was conscious of a hand behind all this, and he demanded that the Employers' Union should declare a lock-out. But the other masters scented a move for his benefit in this.

His own business was moribund, so he wanted to bring theirs to a standstill also. They had no fundamental objection to the new state of affairs; in any case they could see no real occasion for a lock-out.

So he was forced to give in, and wrote to Pelle requesting him to enter into negotiations--in order to put an end to the unrest affecting the craft. Pelle, who as yet possessed no skill in negotiations, answered Meyer in a very casual manner, practically sending him about his business. He showed his reply to his father-in-law before dispatching it.

"No, deuce take it, that won't do!" said Stolpe. "Look you, my lad, everything depends on the tone you take, if you are dealing with labor politics! These big folks think such a damn lot about the way a thing is wrapped up! If I were setting about this business I'd come out with the truth and chuck it in their faces--but that won't answer; they'd be so wild there'd be no dealing with them. Just a nice little lie--that answers much better! Yes, yes, one has to be a diplomatist and set a fox to catch a fox. Now you write what I tell you! I'll give you an example.

Now--"

Stolpe paced up and down the room a while, with a thoughtful expression; he was in shirt-sleeves and slippers and had thrust both his forefingers in his waistcoat pockets. "Are you ready, son-in-law? Then we'll begin!"

"To the President of the Employers' Union, Herre H. Meyer, Shoemaker to the Court.

"Being in receipt of your honored favor of yesterday's date hereby acknowledged, I take the liberty of remarking that so far as is known to me complete quiet and the most orderly conditions prevail throughout the trade. There appears therefore to be no motive for negotiation.

"For the Shoemakers' Union,

"Your obedient servant,

"PELLE."

"There, that's to the point, eh? Napoleon himself might have put his name to that! And there's enough sting to it, too!" said Stolpe, much gratified. "Now write that out nicely, and then get a big envelope."

Pelle felt quite important when he had written this out on a big sheet of paper; it was like an order of the day issued by a sheriff or burgomaster at home. Only in respect of its maliciousness he entertained a certain doubt.

One morning, a few days later, he was sitting at home working. In the meantime he had been obliged to undertake casual jobs for sailors in the harbor, and now he was soling a pair of sea-boots for a seaman on board a collier. On the other side of the bench sat little Lasse, chattering and aping his movements, and every time Pelle drove a peg home the youngster knocked his rattle against the edge of the table, and Pelle smiled at him. Ellen was running in and out between the living-room and the kitchen. She was serious and silent.

There was a knock at the door. She ran to the stove, snatching away some of the child's linen which was drying there, ran out, and opened the door.

A dark, corpulent gentleman in a fur overcoat entered, bowing, holding his tall hat before him, together with his gloves and stick. Pelle could not believe his eyes--it was the Court shoemaker! "He's come to have it out!" thought Pelle, and prepared himself for a tussle. His heart began to thump, there was a sudden sinking inside him; his old submissiveness was on the point of coming to the surface and mastering him. But that was only for a moment; then he was himself again. Quietly he offered his guest a chair.

Meyer sat down, looking about the neat, simple room as though he wanted to compare his enemy's means with his own before he made a move. Pelle gathered something from his wandering glance, and suddenly found himself considerably richer in his knowledge of human nature. "He's sitting there staring about him to see if something has gone to the pawnshop," he thought indignantly.

"H'm! I have received your favor of the other day," began Meyer. "You

are of opinion that there is no occasion for a discussion of the situation; but--however--ah--I think--"

"That is certainly my opinion," answered Pelle, who had resolved to adhere to the tone of the letter. "The most perfect order prevails everywhere. But generally speaking it would seem that matters ought to go smoothly now, when we each have our Union and can discuss affairs impartially." He gazed innocently at Meyer.

"Ah, you think so too! It cannot be unknown to you that my workers have left me one after another--not to say that they were taken away from me. Even to please you I can't call those orderly conditions."

Pelle sat there getting angrier and angrier at his finicking tone. Why the devil couldn't he bluster like a proper man instead of sitting there and making his damned allusions? But if he wanted that sort of foolery he should have it! "Ah! your people are leaving you?" he said, in an interested manner.

"They are," said Meyer, and he looked surprised. Pelle's tone made him feel uncertain. "And they are playing tricks on me; they don't keep to their engagements, and they keep my messengers running about to no purpose. Formerly every man came to get his work and to deliver it, but now I have to keep messengers for that; the business can't stand it."

"The journeymen have had to run about to no purpose--I myself have worked for you," replied Pelle. "But you are perhaps of opinion that we can better bear the loss of time?"

Meyer shrugged his shoulders. "That's a condition of your livelihood--its conditions are naturally based on order. But if only I could at least depend on getting hands! Man, this can't go on!" he cried suddenly, "damn and blast it all, it can't go on, it's not honorable!"

Little Lasse gave a jump and began to bellow. Ellen came hurrying in and took him into the bedroom.

Pelle's mouth was hard. "If your people are leaving you, they must surely have some reason for it," he replied; he would far rather have told Meyer to his face that he was a sweater! "The Union can't compel its members to work for an employer with whom perhaps they can't agree. I myself even have been dismissed from a workshop--but we can't bother two Unions on those grounds!" He looked steadily at his opponent as he made this thrust; his features were quivering slightly.

"Aha!" Meyer responded, and he rubbed his hands with an expression that seemed to say that--now at last he felt firm ground under his feet. "Aha--so it's out at last! So you're a diplomatist into the bargain--a great diplomatist! You have a clever husband, little lady!" He turned to Ellen, who was busying herself at the sideboard. "Now just listen, Herre Pelle! You are just the man for me, and we must come to an arrangement. When two capable men get talking together something always comes of it--it couldn't be otherwise! I have room for a capable and intelligent expert who understands fitting and cutting. The place is well paid, and you can have a written contract for a term of years. What do you say to that?"

Pelle raised his head with a start. Ellen's eyes began to sparkle, and then became mysteriously dark; they rested on him compellingly, as

though they would burn their purpose into him. For a moment he gazed before him, bewildered. The offer was so overpowering, so surprising; and then he laughed. What, what, was he to sell himself to be the understrapper of a sweater!

"That won't do for me," he replied.

"You must naturally consider my offer," said Meyer, rising. "Shall we say three days?"

When the Court shoemaker had gone, Ellen came slowly back and laid her arm round Pelle's shoulders. "What a clever, capable man you are, then!" she said, in a low voice, playing with his hair; there was something apologetic in her manner. She said nothing to call attention to the offer, but she began to sing at her work. It was a long time since Pelle had heard her sing; and the song was to him like a radiant assurance that this time he would be the victor.

XX

Pelle continued the struggle indefatigably, contending with opposing circumstances and with disloyalty, but always returning more boldly to the charge. Many times in the course of the conflict he found himself back at the same place; Meyer obtained a new lot of workers from abroad, and he had to begin all over again; he had to work on them until they went away again, or to make their position among their housemates so impossible that they resigned. The later winter was hard and came to Meyer's assistance. He paid his workers well now, and had brought together a crowd of non-union hands; for a time it looked as though he would get his business going again. But Pelle had left the non-unionists alone only through lack of time; now he began to seek them out, and he spoke with more authority than before. Already people were remarking on his strength of will; and most of them surrendered beforehand. "The devil couldn't stand up against him!" they said. He never wavered in his faith in an ultimate victory, but went straight ahead; he did not philosophize about the other aspect of the result, but devoted all his energies to achieving it. He was actuated by sheer robust energy, and it led him the shortest way. The members of the Union followed him willingly, and willingly accepted the privations involved in the emptying of the workshops. He possessed their confidence, and they found that it was, after all, glorious sport to turn the tables, when for once in a way they could bring the grievance home to its point of departure! They knew by bitter experience what it was to run about to no purpose, to beg for work, and to beg for their wages, and to haggle over them--in short, to be the underdog. It was amusing to reverse the roles. Now the mouse was playing with the cat and having a rattling good time of it--although the claws did get home now and again! Pelle felt their confidence, the trust of one and all, in the readiness with which they followed him, as though he were only the expression of their own convictions. And when he stood up at the general meetings or conferences, in order to make a report or to conduct an agitation, and the applause of his comrades fell upon his ears, he felt an influx of sheer power. He was like the ram of a ship; the weight of the whole was behind him. He began to feel that he was the expression of something great; that there was a purpose within him.

The Pelle who dealt so quietly and cleverly with Meyer and achieved precisely what he willed was not the usual Pelle. A greater nature was working within him, with more responsibility, according to his old presentiment. He tested himself, in order to assimilate this as a conviction, and he felt that there was virtue in the idea.

This higher nature stood in mystical connection with so much in his life; far back into his childhood he could trace it, as an abundant promise. So many had involuntarily expected something from him; he had listened to them with wonder, but now their expectation was proving prophetic.

He paid strict attention to his words in his personal relations, now that their illimitable importance had been revealed to him. But in his agitator's work the strongest words came to him most naturally; came like an echo out of the illimitable void that lay behind him. He busied himself with his personality. All that had hitherto had free and careless play must now be circumscribed and made to serve an end. He examined his relations with Ellen, was indulgent to her, and took pains to understand her demand for happiness. He was kind and gentle to her, but inflexible in his resolve.

He had no conscientious scruples in respect of the Court shoemaker. Meyer had in all respects misused his omnipotence long enough; owing to his huge business he had made conditions and ruled them; and the evil of those conditions must be brought home to him. It was now summer and a good time for the workers, and his business was rapidly failing. Pelle foresaw his fall, and felt himself to be a righteous avenger.

The year-long conflict absorbed his whole mind. He was always on his feet; came rushing home to the work that lay there waiting for him, threw it aside like a maniac, and hurried off again. He did not see much of Ellen and little Lasse these days; they lived their own life without him.

He dared not rest on what he had accomplished, now that the cohesion of the Union was so powerful. He was always seeking means to strengthen and to undermine; he did not wish to fall a sacrifice to the unforeseen. His indefatigability infected his comrades, they became more eager the longer the struggle lasted. The conflict was magnified by the sacrifice it demanded, and by the strength of the opposition; Meyer gradually became a colossus whom all must stake their welfare to hew down. Families were ruined thereby, but the more sacrifice the struggle demanded the more recklessly they struggled on. And they were full of jubilation on the day when the colossus fell, and buried some of them in his fall!

Pelle was the undisputed victor. The journeyman-cobbler had laid low the biggest employer in the trade. They did not ask what the victory had cost, but carried his name in triumph. They cheered when they caught sight of him or when his name was mentioned. Formerly this would have turned his head, but now he regarded his success as entirely natural--as the expression of a higher power!

A few days later he summoned a general meeting of the Union, laid before them the draft of a new tariff which was adapted to the times, and proposed that they should at once begin the fight for its adoption. "We could never have a better opportunity," he said. "Now they have seen

what we can do! With the tariff question we struck down Meyer! We must strike the iron while it is hot!"

He reckoned that his comrades were just in the mood for battle, despite all the privations that the struggle had entailed, and he was not mistaken. His proposal was unanimously accepted.

But there was no fight for better wages. Meyer was now making the rounds of the employers' establishments with the sample-box of one of the leather firms. The sight of this once so mighty man had a stimulating effect. The masters' Union appointed a few employers with whom the workers' Union could discuss the question of the tariff.

XXI

It often happened that Pelle would look back with longing on his quiet home-life with Ellen and the child, and he felt dejectedly that they lived in a happier world, and were on the point of accustoming themselves to live without him. "When once you have got this out of hand you can live really comfortably with them again," he thought.

But one thing inevitably followed on another, and one question arose from the solution of another, and the poor man's world unfolded itself like the development of a story. The fame of his skill as organizer spread itself abroad; everywhere men were at work with the idea of closing up the ranks, and many began to look toward him with expectant eyes.

Frequently workers came to him begging him to help them to form an organization--no one had such a turn for the work as he. Then they called a meeting together, and Pelle explained the process to them. There was a certain amount of fancifulness and emphasis in his speech, but they understood him very well. "He talks so as to make your ears itch," they told one another. He was the man they trusted, and he initiated them into the practical side of the matter.

"But you must sacrifice your wages--so that you can start a fund," he told them continually; "without money nothing can be done. Remember, it's capital itself we are fighting against!"

"Will it be any use to understand boxing when the fight comes on?" asked a simple-minded workman one day.

"Yes--cash-boxing!" retorted Pelle swiftly. They laughed, and turned their pitiful pockets inside out. They gazed a moment at the money before they gave it away. "Oh, well, it's of no consequence," they said.

"The day will soon come when it will be of consequence--if we only hang together," said Pelle confidently.

It was the dripping they had scraped off their bread--he knew that well, but there was no help for it! In these days he was no better situated than they were.

His activities were leading him abroad, in wider and wider circles,

until he found himself at length in the very midst of the masses. Their number did not astonish him; he had always really been conscious of that. And he grew by this contact, and measured himself and the movement by an ever-increasing standard.

At this time he underwent a noticeable change in his outer man. In his forehead were always those deep creases which in young men speak of a gloomy childhood; they were the only bitter token of that which he had taken upon himself, and reminded one of a clouded sky. Otherwise he looked fresh and healthy enough; his hard life was not undermining his strength; he thrived on the sense of community, and was almost always cheerful. His cheeks grew round as those of a cornet-player, and his distended nostrils spoke of his fiery zeal; he needed much air, and always wore his clothes open upon his chest. His carriage was upright and elastic; his whole appearance was arresting, challenging. When he spoke at meetings there was energy in his words; he grew deeply flushed, and wet with perspiration. Something of this flush remained in his face and neck, and there was always a feeling of heat in his body. When he strode forward he looked like a trumpeter at the head of a column.

The many--that was his element. There were many who were to be brought under one hat. Yet most of them lacked a clear understanding; old suspicions suddenly came to light; and many doubts were abroad among the masses. Some believed blindly; others said, "It's all one whether this party or that does the plucking of us!" Nothing of palpable importance occurred, such as to catch the eye; but they came to trust in his personality as the blind man trusts his leader, and they were forever demanding to hear his voice. Pelle became their darling speaker. He felt that their blind confidence bore him up, and for them he gazed far over the hubbub and confusion. He had always been a familiar of Fortune; now he saw it plainly, far out along the route of march, and inflamed them all with his enthusiasm.

One evening he was summoned to rouse a calling that was in low water. It was the dustmen who applied to him. In order to stimulate their self-consciousness he showed them what a vast power they possessed in their despised activity. He imagined, as an example, that they refused to work, and painted, with much humor, the results which their action would have for the world of rich people. This had a tremendous effect on the meeting. The men stared at one another as if they had just discovered themselves, and then sat laughing like one man. To follow up his effect, he showed how one kind of work depends on another, and imagined one calling to support another, until a general strike had laid its paralyzing hand on the city. What a fantastic picture it was! Pelle knew nothing of the theory of the labor movement, but his energy and enthusiasm lifted the veil from the remotest consequences. Stimulated and startled by the terrible power which lay in their hands, the dustmen went home.

There was something in all this that did not satisfy him; it was in his nature to create, not to destroy. But if only the poor would, they could make society all over again--so Morten had one day said, and the words had never ceased to haunt Pelle's mind. But he could not endure the idea of violent revolution; and now he had found a good way out of his difficulty. He felt convinced that cohesion was irresistible, and that life would undergo a peaceful change.

He had welded his own Union together so that the members hung together through thick and thin. He had accomplished something there, but if a

real result were to be achieved the Unions here must work in conjunction with those of all the cities in the country, and that was being done to a certain small extent, in his own trade as well as in others. But all these federations of local Unions must be combined in a mighty whole, so that the whole country would be of one single mind. In other countries matters were progressing as here, so why not summon all countries to one vast work of cooperation?

Before Pelle was aware, he had included the whole world in his solidarity. He knew now that poverty is international. And he was convinced that the poor man felt alike all the world over.

The greatness of this idea did not go to his head. It had evolved naturally on the lines of his own organization--it was just like the idea at the base of the latter. But he continued to play with it until it assumed a definite form. Then he went with his plan to his father-in-law, who was a member of the party executive, and through him was invited to lay the matter before the Central Committee.

Pelle was a practised speaker by now, but he was feverishly excited when he stood in the presence of the actual heart of the labor movement. His words delighted the many, but would he succeed in winning over these tried and experienced men, the leaders who stood behind the whole movement, while quietly going about their own business? He felt that this was the most significant day in his life.

These were men with quieter temperaments than his own. They sat there immovable, listening with half-closed eyes; his big words brought the faintest smile to their lips--they had long got over that sort of thing! They were artisans and craftsmen who worked hard all day for a living, as did he himself, but several of them had given themselves a considerable education; they must be regarded as scholarly persons. In the evening and on Sundays they worked for the Cause, devising political schemes and devoting themselves to keeping accounts and the ever-increasing work of administration. They were awkward at these unaccustomed tasks, which had hitherto been reserved by quite a different class of society, and had had to grow accustomed thereto; their heads were gray and wrinkled.

Pelle felt that he was still only at the beginning. These men gave him the impression of a great secret council; outside they looked like any one else, but here at the green table they sat creating the vast organization into which he merely drove the masses. Here high politics came into play. There was something impious in this--as though one saw ants making plans to overturn a mountain; and he must do the same if he wanted to accomplish anything! But here something more than big words was needed! He involuntarily moderated his tone and did his best to speak in a dry, professional manner.

He received no applause when he had finished; the men sat there gazing in front of them with a slightly pondering expression. The silence and the great empty room had the effect of making him feel dizzy. All his faculties were directed outward, drawing strength from the echo from without of the many who had shaped him. But at this decisive moment they were silent, leaving him in suspense, without any kind of support. Was the whole stupendous plan of federation a piece of madness, and was he a fool to propound it? No one replied. The leaders quietly asked him the details of his plan, and undertook to consider it.

Pelle left in a state of dreadful suspense. He felt that he had touched upon something on which a great decision depended, and he wanted corroboration of the fact that he had set about the matter rightly. In this moment of need he turned to himself. It was not his way to ask questions of his inner self, but now no other could answer him. He must look to himself for recognition.

This was the first time that Pelle had sought refuge in his own ego, or learned to fall back upon it in critical moments. But solitude did not suit him and he sought it only under the compulsion of necessity. His heart beat uncontrollably within him when he learned that his plan was approved. A committee was appointed to put it into execution, and Pelle was on the committee.

At one stroke the National Federation made a single army of the many divisions, and was effective merely by the attractive virtue of its mass. It became a heavy and fatiguing task to organize the swarms that came streaming in, as water rushes to the sea, by virtue of a natural law. It needed the talent of a great general to marshal them for a conclusive battle and to lead them into the line of fire.

Pelle was naturally placed in the front ranks of the organization; his work was properly that of the pioneer and agitator; no one possessed the ear of the crowd as he did. He had received regular employment from one of the larger employers, which amounted to a recognition of the organization, and the increased rate of wages meant that he earned a moderate income. He did not object to the fact that the work had to be done away from home. Life at home had lost its radiance. Ellen was loving enough, but she had always some purpose in view--and he would not allow himself to be tied!

When he went home--and as a rule he managed to include a meal--it was only to make himself ready and to rush out again--to general or committee meetings. Father Lasse was there as a rule in the evenings, and he gazed longingly after Pelle when the latter left his wife and child; he did not understand it, but he did not venture to say anything --he felt a great respect for the lad's undertakings. Ellen and the old man had discovered one another; they were like a pair of horses in harness; there was a great consolation in that.

Pelle went forward in a sort of intoxication of power, produced by the sense of the multiplying hosts. He was like an embodiment of those hosts, and he heard their step echoing in his own; it was natural that the situation should assume large dimensions. He was a product of an ancient culture, but a culture that had always dwelt in the shadow, and was based on stern and narrow tenets, each of which summed up a lifetime of bitter experience. The need of light and sunshine, continually suppressed, had been accumulating, through illimitable years, until it had resulted in a monstrous tension. Now it had exploded, and was mounting dizzily upward. His mind was reeling in the heights, in a blinding cloud of light!

But fundamentally he was still the sturdy realist and stood with his feet on the earth! The generations beneath him had been disciplined by the cold, and had learned to content themselves with bare necessities; a lesson which they handed down to him, simply and directly, with no inheritance of frivolity. In his world, cause and effect were in a direct line; an obtrusive odor did not translate itself into a spectral chattering of the teeth. The result was in a direct line with the cause

--but their relation was often that of the match and the bonfire. Herein lay the strength of his imagination; this was why he could encompass all things with so simple a preparation.

He was not afraid to consider the fate of the masses; when he could not see ahead, his old fatalism came to his help. His words flamed high despite himself and kept the hope alive in many who did not themselves understand the meaning of the whole movement, but saw that its adherents grew ever more numerous, and that in other respects they were just as well off. Where he himself could not see he was like a lens that collects the half-darkness and gives it out again as a beam of light.

Morten he preferred to avoid. Pelle had gradually absorbed all the theories of the labor movement, and they comfortably filled his mind. And how could one accomplish more than by remaining in harmony with the whole? Morten had an unfruitful tendency to undermine the certainty of one's mind; he always brought forth his words from his inner consciousness, from places where no one else had ever been, and he delivered them as though they had been God's voice in the Bible, which always made people pause in their designs. Pelle respected his peculiar nature, which never marched with the crowd, and avoided him.

But his thoughts often returned to him. Morten had first thrown a light upon chaos--upon the knowledge of Pelle's world, the poor man's world; and when he was confronted by any decisive question he involuntarily asked himself how Morten would have dealt with it.

At times they met at meetings called together by the workers themselves, and at which they both collaborated. Morten had no respect for the existing laws and little for the new. He did not play a very zealous part in the work of party organization, and was rather held at arm's length by the leaders. But his relations with the man in the street were of the closest. He worked independently; there was scarcely his match in individual cases of need or injustice; and he was always laboring to make people think for themselves.

And they loved him. They looked up to Pelle and the rest, and made way for them with shining eyes; but they smilingly put themselves in Morten's way. They wanted to press his hand--he could scarcely make his way to the speaker's platform. His pale face filled them with joy--women and children hung on to him. When he passed through the streets of the poor quarters in his simple clothes, the women smiled at him. "That's him, the master-journeyman, who is so good and so book-learned," they would say. "And now he has sold all his books in order to help a poor child!" And they gave their own children a little push, and the children went up to him and held out their hands and followed him right to the end of the street.

XXII

When Pelle went now and again to the "Ark," to see his brothers and sister, the news of his visit spread quickly through the building. "Pelle is here!" sounded from gallery to gallery, and they hurried up the stairs in order to nod to him and to seek to entice him to swallow a cup of coffee. Old Madam Frandsen had moved; she disappeared when

Ferdinand came out of prison--no one knew whither. Otherwise there were no changes. A few factory women left by night on account of their rent, and others had taken their places. And from time to time some one completed his term, and was carried out of the dark corridors and borne away on the dead-cart--as always. But in the "Ark" there was no change to be observed.

It happened one day that he went over to call on Widow Johnsen. She looked very melancholy sitting there as she turned her old soldiers' trousers and attended to Hanne's child, which promised to be a fine girl. She had aged; she was always sitting at home and scolding the child; when Pelle visited her he brought a breath of fresh air into her joyless existence. Then she recalled the excursion to the forest, and the cozy evenings under the hanging lantern, and sighed. Hanne never looked at Pelle. When she came running home from the factory, she had no eyes for anything but her little girl, who threw herself upon her mother and immediately wanted to play. For the remainder of the day the child was close under her eyes, and Hanne had to hold her hand as she moved about, and play with her and the doll.

"Far up the mountain did I climb,"

sang Hanne, and the child sang with her--she could sing already! Hanne's clear, quiet eyes rested on the child, and her expression was as joyful as though fortune had really come to her. She was like a young widow who has lived her share of life, and in the "Ark" every one addressed her as Widow Hanne. This was a mark of respect paid to her character; they threw a widow's veil over her fate because she bore it so finely. She had expected so much, and now she centered everything in her child, as though the Stranger could have brought her no more valuable present.

Peter's misfortune had struck the little home a serious blow. They had always only just kept their heads above water; and now he earned less than ever with his crippled hand. Karl wanted to get on in the world, and was attending confirmation classes, which cost money and clothes. They had made up for Peter's loss of earning power by giving up Father Lasse's room and moving his bed into their own room. But all three were growing, and needed food and clothing.

Peter's character had taken on a little kink; he was no longer so cheerful over his work, and he often played the truant, loafing about the streets instead of going to the factory. Sometimes he could not be got out of bed in the morning; he crept under the bedclothes and hid himself. "I can't work with my bad hand," he would say, crying, when Marie wanted to drag him out; "every moment the knives are quite close to it and nearly chop it off."

"Then stay at home!" said Marie at last. "Look after the house and I will go out and see if I can earn something. I can get work as a charwoman in the new buildings in Market Street."

But at that he got up and slunk away; he would not allow a woman to earn his food for him.

Karl was a brisk, merry young vagabond; nothing made any impression on him. The streets had brought him up, had covered his outer man with a coating of grime, and had lit the inextinguishable sparks in his eyes. He was like the sparrows of the capital; black with soot, but full of an urban sharpness, they slip in and out among the heavy wagon-wheels, and

know everything. He was always getting into difficulties, but always came home with a whole skin. His continual running about seemed to have got into his blood like a never-resting impulse.

He was full of shifts for lessening the uncertainty of his earnings, and the little household depended principally on him. But now he had had enough of seeking his living in the streets; he wanted to get on; he wanted most of all to be a shopkeeper. The only thing that held him back was his regard for his home.

Pelle saw that the little home would have to be broken up. Marie was developing rapidly; she must leave the "Ark," and if Karl could not live his own life, but was forced to sacrifice himself to his brother and sister, he would end as a street-loafer. Pelle resolved suddenly to deal with the matter himself, as his habit was. He obtained an outfit for Karl from a charitable society, and placed him as apprentice with a shopkeeper for whom the boy had run errands.

One Sunday afternoon he went over to the "Ark" with a big parcel under his arm. He was holding Young Lasse by the hand; every moment the child stooped down, picked up a little stone, dragged his father to the quay-wall, and threw the stone into the water. He chattered incessantly.

Pelle mechanically allowed himself to be pulled aside, and answered the child at random. He was thinking of the children's little home, which had once been so hospitably opened to him, and must now be broken up. Perhaps it would be the salvation of Karl and Marie; there was a future for them outside; they were both young and courageous. And Father Lasse could come to him; it would be quite possible to make up his bed in the living-room at night and put it out of the way in the daytime. Ellen was no longer so particular. But Peter--what was to become of him? The home was the only thing that still held him.

When Young Lasse looked through the tunnel-entry into the darkness of the "Ark" he did not want to go in. "Ugly, ugly!" he said, in energetic refusal. Pelle had to take him in his arms. "Lasse not like that!" he said, pushing with his hands against his father's shoulders. "Lasse wants to go back! get down!"

"What!" said Pelle, laughing, "doesn't Young Lasse like the 'Ark'? Father thinks it's jolly here!"

"Why?" asked the boy, pouting.

"Why?" Well, Pelle could not at once explain. "Because I lived here once on a time!" he replied.

"And where was Young Lasse then?"

"Then you used to sit in mother's eyes and laugh at father."

At this the child forgot his fear of the darkness and the heavy timbers. He pressed his round little nose against his father's, and gazed into his eyes, in order to see whether a little boy was sitting in them too. He laughed when he glimpsed himself in them. "Who sits in mother's eyes now?" he asked.

"Now a little sister sits there, who likes to play with Young Lasse," said Pelle. "But now you must walk again--it doesn't do for a man to sit

on anybody's arm!"

The three orphans were waiting for him eagerly; Karl hopped and leaped into the air when he saw Pelle.

"Where is Father Lasse?" asked Pelle.

"He has gone out with the hand-cart for the second-hand dealer," said Marie; "he had to fetch a sofa." She had taken Young Lasse on her lap and was almost eating him.

Karl put on his fine new clothes, his fresh face beaming with delight. The trousers were fully long enough, but it was quite fashionable to go about with turned-up trousers. That was easily got over.

"Now you look like a real grocer!" said Pelle, laughing.

Karl ran out into the gangway and came back immediately with his head wetted and his hair parted down the middle. "Ach, you fool, why don't you leave well alone!" cried Marie, ruffling his head. A fight ensued. Peter sat in a corner, self-absorbed, staring gloomily out of the window.

"Now, Peter, hold your head up!" cried Pelle, clapping him on the shoulder. "When we've got the great Federation together and things are working properly, I'll manage something for you too. Perhaps you can act as messenger for us."

Peter did not reply, but turned his head away.

"He's always like that--he's so grumpy! Do at least be a little polite, Peter!" said Marie irritably. The boy took his cap and went out.

"Now he's going out by the North Bridge, to his sweetheart--and we shan't see anything of him for the next few days," said Marie, looking after him. "She's a factory girl--she's had a child by one man--he deserted her," said Marie.

"He has a sweetheart already?" said Pelle.

"What of that? He's seventeen. But there's nothing in her."

"She has red hair! And she drags one leg behind her as though she wanted to take the pavement with her," said Karl. "She might well be his mother."

"I don't think you ought to tease him," said Pelle seriously.

"We don't," said Marie. "But he won't have it when we try to be nice to him. And he can't bear to see us contented. Lasse says it is as though he were bewitched."

"I have a situation for you too, Marie," said Pelle. "With Ellen's old employers in Holberg Street--you'll be well treated there. But you must be ready by October."

"That will be fine! Then Karl and I can go into situations on the same day!" She clapped her hands. "But Peter!" she cried suddenly. "Who will look after him? No, I can't do it, Pelle!"

"We must see if we can't find nice lodgings for him. You must take the situation--you can't go on living here."

From the end of the long gangway came a curious noise, which sounded like a mixture of singing and crying. Young Lasse got down onto his feet near the open door, and said, "Sh! Singing! Sh!"

"Yes! That's the pasteboard-worker and her great Jutlander," said Marie. "They've got a funeral to-day. The poor little worm has ceased to suffer, thank God!"

"Is that any one new?" said Pelle.

"No, they are people who moved here in the spring. He hasn't been living here, but every Saturday he used to come here and take her wages. 'You are crazy to give him your wages when he doesn't even live with you!' we told her. 'He ought to get a thrashing instead of money!' 'But he's the child's father!' she said, and she went on giving him her money. And on Sunday, when he had drunk it, he regretted it, and then he used to come and beat her, because she needn't have given it to him. She was an awful fool, for she could just have been out when he came. But she was fond of him and thought nothing of a few blows--only it didn't do for the child. She never had food for it, and now it's dead."

The door at the end of the gangway opened, and the big Jutlander came out with a tiny coffin under his arm. He was singing a hymn in an indistinct voice, as he stood there waiting. In the side passage, behind the partition-wall, a boy's voice was mocking him. The Jutlander's face was red and swollen with crying, and the debauch of the night before was still heavy in his legs. Behind him came the mother, and now they went down the gangway with funeral steps; the woman's thin black shawl hung mournfully about her, and she held her handkerchief to her mouth; she was crying still. Her livid face had a mildewed appearance.

Pelle and Young Lasse had to be off. "You are always in such a hurry!" said Marie dolefully. "I wanted to make coffee."

"Yes, I've got a lot to do to-day still. Otherwise I'd gladly stay with you a bit."

"Do you know you are gradually getting quite famous?" said Marie, looking at him in admiration. "The people talk almost as much about you as they do about the big tinplate manufacturer. They say you ruined the biggest employer in the city."

"Yes. I ruined his business," said Pelle, laughing. "But where has the shopwalker got to?"

"He's gone down into the streets to show himself!"

Karl, sure enough, was strolling about below and allowing the boys and girls to admire him. "Look, when we come into the shop and the grocer isn't there you'll stand us treat!" Pelle heard one of them say.

"You don't catch me! And if you dare you'll get one in the jaw!" replied Karl. "Think I'm going to have you loafing about?"

At the end of the street the great Jutlander was rolling along, the

coffin under his arm; the girl followed at a distance, and they kept to the middle of the road as though they formed part of a funeral procession. It was a dismal sight. The gray, dismal street was like a dungeon.

The shutters were up in all the basement windows, excepting that of the bread-woman. Before the door of her shop stood a crowd of grimy little children, smearing themselves with dainties; every moment one of them slipped down into the cellar to spend an ore. One little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, with a tightly braided head, was balancing herself on the edge of the curbstone with a big jug of cream in her hand; and in a doorway opposite stood a few young fellows meditating some mischief or other.

"Shall we go anywhere to-day?" asked Ellen, when Pelle and young Lasse got home. "The fine season is soon over."

"I must go to the committee-meeting," Pelle replied hesitatingly. He was sorry for her; she was going to have another child, and she looked so forsaken as she moved about the home. But it was impossible for him to stay at home.

"When do you think you'll be back?"

"That I don't know, Ellen. It is very possible it will take the whole day."

Then she was silent and set out his food.

XXIII

That year was, if possible, worse than the preceding. As early as September the unemployed stood in long ranks beside the canals or in the market-place, their feet in the wet. The bones of their wrists were blue and prominent and foretold a hard winter, of which the corns of the old people had long ago given warning; and sparks of fire were flying up from under poor folks' kettles. "Now the hard winter is coming and bringing poverty with it," said the people. "And then we shall have a pretty time!"

In October the frost appeared and began to put an end to all work that had not already been stopped by the hard times.

In the city the poor were living from hand to mouth; if a man had a bad day it was visible on his plate the next morning. Famine lay curled up beneath the table in ten thousand households; like a bear in its winter sleep it had lain there all summer, shockingly wasted and groaning in its evil dreams; but they were used to its society and took no notice of it so long as it did not lay its heavy paw upon the table. One day's sickness, one day's loss of work--and there it was!

"Ach, how good it would be if we only had a brine-tub that we could go to!" said those who could still remember their life in the country. "But the good God has taken the brine-tub and given us the pawnbroker instead!" and then they began to pledge their possessions.

It was sad to see how the people kept together; the city was scattered to the winds in summer, but now it grew compacter; the homeless came in from the Common, and the great landowners returned to inhabit their winter palaces. Madam Rasmussen, in her attic, suddenly appeared with a husband; drunken Valde had returned--the cold, so to speak, had driven him into her arms! At the first signs of spring he would be off again, into the arms of his summer mistress, Madam Grassmower. But as long as he was here, here he was! He stood lounging in the doorway downstairs, with feathers sticking in the shaggy hair of his neck and bits of bed-straw adhering to his flat back. His big boots were always beautifully polished; Madam Rasmussen did that for him before she went to work in the morning; after which she made two of herself, so that her big strong handsome protector should have plenty of time to stand and scratch himself.

Week by week the cold locked up all things more closely; it locked up the earth, so that the husbandmen could not get at it; and it closed the modest credit account of the poor. Already it had closed all the harbors round about. Foreign trade shrunk away to nothing; the stevedores and waterside workers might as well stop at home. It tightened the heart-strings--and the strings of the big purse that kept everything going. The established trades began to work shorter hours, and the less stable trades entirely ceased. Initiative drew in its horns; people began nothing new, and did no work for the warehouses; fear had entered into them. All who had put out their feelers drew them back; they were frostbitten, so to speak. The earth had withdrawn its sap into itself and had laid a crust of ice over all; humanity did the same. The poor withdrew their scanty blood into their hearts, in order to preserve the germ of life. Their limbs were cold and bloodless, their skin gray. They withdrew into themselves, and into the darkest corners, packed closely together. They spent nothing. And many of those who had enough grudged themselves even food; the cold ate their needs away, and set anxiety in their place. Consumption was at a standstill.

One could not go by the thermometer, for according to that the frost had been much harder earlier in the year. "What, is it no worse!" said the people, taken aback. But they felt just as cold and wretched as ever. What did the thermometer know of a hard winter? Winter is the companion of hard times, and takes the same way whether it freezes or thaws--and on this occasion it froze!

In the poor quarters of the city the streets were as though depopulated. A fall of snow would entice the dwellers therein out of their hiding-places; it made the air milder, and made it possible, too, to earn a few kroner for sweeping away the snow. Then they disappeared again, falling into a kind of numb trance and supporting their life on incredibly little--on nothing at all. Only in the mornings were the streets peopled--when the men went out to seek work. But everywhere where there was work for one man hundreds applied and begged for it. The dawn saw

the defeated ones slinking home; they slept the time away, or sat all day with their elbows on the table, never uttering a word. The cold, that locked up all else, had an opposite effect upon the heart; there was much compassion abroad. Many whose wits had been benumbed by the cold, so that they did not attempt to carry on their avocations, had suffered no damage at heart, but expended their means in beneficence. Kindly people called the poor together, and took pains to find them out, for they were not easy to find.

But the Almighty has created beings that live upon the earth and creatures that live under the earth; creatures of the air and creatures of the water; even in the fire live creatures that increase and multiply. And the cold, too, saw the growth of a whole swarm of creatures that live not by labor, but on it, as parasites. The good times are their bad times; then they grow thin, and there are not many of them about. But as soon as cold and destitution appear they come forth in their swarms; it is they who arouse beneficence--and get the best part of what is going. They scent the coming of a bad year and inundate the rich quarters of the city. "How many poor people come to the door this year!" people say, as they open their purses. "These are hard times for the poor!"

In the autumn Pelle had removed; he was now dwelling in a little two-roomed apartment on the Kapelvej. He had many points of contact with this part of the city now; besides, he wanted Ellen to be near her parents when she should be brought to bed. Lasse would not accompany him; he preferred to be faithful to the "Ark"; he had got to know the inmates now, and he could keep himself quite decently by occasional work in the neighboring parts of the city.

Pelle fought valiantly to keep the winter at bay. There was nothing to do at the workshop; and he had to be on the go from morning to night. Wherever work was to be had, there he applied, squeezing his way through hundreds of others. His customers needed footwear now more than ever; but they had no money to pay for it.

Ellen and he drew nearer at this season and learned to know one another on a new side. The hard times drew them together; and he had cause to marvel at the stoutness of her heart. She accepted conditions as they were with extraordinary willingness, and made a little go a very long way. Only with the stove she could do nothing. "It eats up everything we scrape together," she said dejectedly; "it sends everything up the chimney and doesn't give out any warmth. I've put a bushel of coal on it to-day, and it's as cold as ever! Where I was in service we were able to warm two big rooms with one scuttle! I must be a fool, but won't you look into it?" She was almost crying.

"You mustn't take that to heart so!" said Pelle gloomily. "That's the way with poor folks' stoves. They are old articles that are past use, and the landlords buy them up as old iron and then fit them in their workmen's dwellings! And it's like that with everything! We poor people get the worst and pay the dearest--although we make the things! Poverty is a sieve."

"Yes, it's dreadful," said Ellen, looking at him with mournful eyes. "And I can understand you so well now!"

Threatening Need had spread its pinions above them. They hardly dared to think now; they accepted all things at its hands.

One day, soon after Ellen had been brought to bed, she asked Pelle to go at once to see Father Lasse. "And mind you bring him with you!" she said. "We can very well have him here, if we squeeze together a little. I'm afraid he may be in want."

Pelle was pleased by the offer, and immediately set out. It was good of Ellen to open her heart to the old man when they were by no means

certain of being able to feed themselves.

The "Ark" had a devastated appearance. All the curtains had disappeared--except at Olsen's; with the gilt mouldings they always fetched fifty ore. The flowers in the windows were frostbitten. One could see right into the rooms, and inside also all was empty. There was something shameless about the winter here; instead of clothing the "Ark" more warmly it stripped it bare--and first of all of its protecting veils. The privies in the court had lost their doors and covers, and it was all Pelle could do to climb up to the attics! Most of the balustrades had vanished, and every second step was lacking; the "Ark" was helping itself as well as it could! Over at Madam Johnsen's the bucket of oak was gone that had always stood in the corner of the gallery when it was not lent to some one--the "Ark" possessed only the one. And now it was burned or sold. Pelle looked across, but had not the courage to call. Hanne, he knew, was out of work.

A woman came slinking out of the third story, and proceeded to break away a fragment of woodwork; she nodded to Pelle. "For a drop of coffee!" she said, "and God bless coffee! You can make it as weak as you like as long as it's still nice and hot."

The room was empty; Lasse was not there. Pelle asked news of him along the gangway. He learned that he was living in the cellar with the old clothes woman. Thin gray faces appeared for a moment in the doorways, gazed at him, and silently disappeared.

The cellar of the old clothes woman was overcrowded with all sorts of objects; hither, that winter, the possessions of the poor had drifted. Lasse was sitting in a corner, patching a mattress; he was alone down there. "She has gone out to see about something," he said; "in these times her money finds plenty of use! No, I'm not going to come with you and eat your bread. I get food and drink here--I earn it by helping her--and how many others can say this winter that they've their living assured? And I've got a corner where I can lie. But can't you tell me what's become of Peter? He left the room before me one day, and since then I've never seen him again."

"Perhaps he's living with his sweetheart," said Pelle. "I'll see if I can't find out."

"Yes, if you will. They were good children, those three, it would be a pity if one of them were to come to any harm."

Pelle would not take his father away from a regular situation where he was earning a steady living. "We don't very well see what we could offer you in its place. But don't forget that you will always be welcome--Ellen herself sent me here."

"Yes, yes! Give her many thanks for that! And now you be off, before the old woman comes back," said Lasse anxiously. "She doesn't like any one to be here--she's afraid for her money."

The first thing that had to go was Pelle's winter overcoat. He pawned it one day, without letting Ellen know, and on coming home surprised her with the money, which he delightedly threw on the table, krone by krone. "How it rings!" he said to Young Lasse. The child gave a jump, and wanted the money to play with.

"What do I want with a winter coat?" he retorted, to Ellen's kindly reproaches. "I'm not cold, and it only hangs up indoors here. I've borne with it all the summer. Ah, that's warm!" he cried, to the child, when Ellen had brought some fuel. "That was really a good winter coat, that of father's! Mother and sister and Young Lasse can all warm themselves at it!"

The child put his hands on his knees and peeped into the fire after his father's winter coat. The fire kindled flames in his big child's eyes, and played on his red cheeks. "Pretty overcoat!" he said, laughing all over his face.

They did not see much of the tenants of the house; nor of the family. People were living quietly, each one fighting his own privations within his four walls. On Sundays they gave the children to one of the neighbors, went into the city, and stood for an hour outside some concert-hall, freezing and listening to the music. Then they went home again and sat vegetating in the firelight, without lighting the lamp.

One Sunday things looked bad. "The coals will hold out only till midday," said Ellen; "we shall have to go out. And there's no more food either. But perhaps we can go to the old folks; they'll put up with us till evening."

As they were about to start, Ellen's brother Otto arrived, with his wife and two children, to call on them. Ellen exchanged a despairing glance with Pelle. Winter had left its stamp on them too; their faces were thin and serious. But they still had warm clothes. "You must keep your cloaks on," said Ellen, "for I have no more coal. I forgot it yesterday, I had so much to do; I had to put off ordering it until to-day, and to-day, unfortunately, the coal dealer isn't at home."

"If only the children aren't cold," said Pelle, "we grown-ups can easily keep ourselves warm."

"Well, as long as they haven't icicles hanging from their noses they won't come to any harm!" said Otto with a return of his old humor.

They moved restlessly about the room and spoke of the bad times and the increasing need. "Yes, it's terrible that there isn't enough for everybody," said Otto's wife.

"But the hard winter and the misery will come to an end and then things will be better again."

"You mean we shall come to an end first?" said Otto, laughing despairingly.

"No, not we--this poverty, of course. Ach, you know well enough what I mean. But he's always like that," she said, turning to Pelle.

"Curious, how you women still go about in the pious belief that there's not enough for all!" said Pelle. "Yet the harbor is full of stacks of coal, and there's no lack of eatables in the shops. On the contrary--there is more than usual, because so many are having to do without--and you can see, too, that everything in the city is cheaper. But what good is that when there's no money? It's the distribution that's all wrong."

"Yes, you are quite right!" said Otto Stolpe. "It's really damnable that

no one has the courage to help himself!"

Pelle heard Ellen go out through the kitchen door, and presently she came back with firing in her apron. She had borrowed it. "I've scraped together just a last little bit of coal," she said, going down on her knees before the stove. "In any case it's enough to heat the water for a cup of coffee."

Otto and his wife begged her urgently not to give herself any trouble; they had had some coffee before they left home--after a good solid breakfast. "On Sundays we always have a solid breakfast," said young Madam Stolpe; "it does one such a lot of good!" While she was speaking her eyes involuntarily followed Ellen's every moment, as though she could tell thereby how soon the coffee would be ready.

Ellen chatted as she lit the fire. But of course they must have a cup of coffee; they weren't to go away with dry throats!

Pelle sat by listening in melancholy surprise; her innocent boasting only made their poverty more glaring. He could see that Ellen was desperately perplexed, and he followed her into the kitchen.

"Pelle, Pelle!" she said, in desperation. "They've counted on stopping here and eating until the evening. And I haven't a scrap in the house. What's to be done?"

"Tell them how it is, of course!"

"I can't! And they've had nothing to eat to-day--can't you see by looking at them?" She burst into tears.

"Now, now, let me see to the whole thing!" he said consolingly. "But what are you going to give us with our coffee?"

"I don't know! I have nothing but black bread and a little butter."

"Lord, what a little donkey!" he said, smiling, and he took her face between his hands. "And you stand there lamenting! Just you be cutting the bread-and-butter!"

Ellen set to work hesitatingly. But before she appeared with the refreshments they heard her bang the front door and go running down the steps. After a time she returned. "Oh, Lord! Now the baker has sold out of white bread," she said, "so you must just have black bread-and-butter with your coffee."

"But that's capital," they cried. "Black bread always goes best with coffee. Only it's a shame we are giving you so much trouble!"

"Look here," said Pelle, at last. "It may please you to play hide-and-seek with one another, but it doesn't me--I am going to speak my mind. With us things are bad, and it can't be any better with you. Now how is it, really, with the old folks?"

"They are struggling along," said Otto. "They always have credit, and I think they have a little put by as well."

"Then shan't we go there to-night and have supper? Otherwise I'm afraid we shan't get anything."

"Yes, we will! It's true we were there the day before yesterday--but what does that matter? We must go somewhere, and at least it's sticking to the family!"

* * * * *

The cold had no effect on Pelle; the blood ran swiftly through his veins. He was always warm. Privation he accepted as an admonition, and merely felt the stronger for it; and he made use of his involuntary holiday to work for the Cause.

It was no time for public meetings and sounding words--many had not even clothes with which to go to meetings. The movement had lost its impetus through the cold; people had their work cut out to keep the little they already had. Pelle made it his business to encourage the hopes of the rejected, and was always on the run; he came into contact with many people. Misery stripped them bare and developed his knowledge of humanity.

Wherever a trade was at a standstill, and want had made its appearance, he and others were at hand to prevent demoralization and to make the prevailing conditions the subject of agitation. He saw how want propagates itself like the plague, and gradually conquers all--a callous accomplice in the fate of the poor man. In a week to a fortnight unemployment would take all comfort from a home that represented the scraping and saving of many years--so crying was the disproportion. Here was enough to stamp a lasting comprehension upon the minds of all, and enough to challenge agitation. All but persons of feeble mind could see now what they were aiming at.

And there were people here like those at home. Want made them even more submissive. They could hardly believe that they were so favored as to be permitted to walk the earth and go hungry. With them there was nothing to be done. They were born slaves, born with slavery deep in their hearts, pitiful and cur-like.

They were people of a certain age--of an older generation than his. The younger folk were of another and a harder stuff; and he often was amazed to find how vigorously their minds echoed his ideas. They were ready to dare, ready to meet force with force. These must be held back lest they should prejudice the movement--for them its progress was never sufficiently rapid.

His mind was young and intact and worked well in the cold weather; he restlessly drew comparisons and formed conclusions in respect of everything he came into contact with. The individual did not seem to change. The agitation was especially directed to awakening what was actually existent. For the rest, they must live their day and be replaced by a younger generation in whom demands for compensation came more readily to the tongue. So far as he could survey the evolution of the movement, it did not proceed through the generations, but in some amazing fashion grew out of the empty space between them. So youth, even at the beginning, was further ahead than age had been where it left off.

The movements of the mind had an obscure and mystical effect upon him, as had the movement of his blood in childhood; sometimes he felt a mysterious shudder run through him, and he began to understand what Morten had meant when he said that humanity was sacred. It was terrible

that human beings should suffer such need, and Pelle's resentment grew deeper.

Through his contact with so many individuals he learned that Morten was not so exceptional; the minds of many betrayed the same impatience, and could not understand that a man who is hungry should control himself and be content with the fact of organization. There was a revolutionary feeling abroad; a sterner note was audible, and respectable people gave the unemployed a wide berth, while old people prophesied the end of the world. The poor had acquired a manner of thinking such as had never been known.

One day Pelle stood in a doorway with some other young people, discussing the aspect of affairs; it was a cold meeting-place, but they had not sufficient means to call a meeting in the usual public room. The discussion was conducted in a very subdued tune; their voices were bitter and sullen. A well-dressed citizen went by. "There's a fine overcoat," cried one; "I should like to have one like that! Shall we fetch him into the doorway and pull his coat off?" He spoke loudly, and was about to run out into the street.

"No stupidity!" said Pelle sadly, seizing him by the arm. "We should only do ourselves harm! Remember the authorities are keeping their eyes on us!"

"Well, what's a few weeks in prison?" the man replied. "At least one would get board and lodging for so long." There was a look that threatened mischief in his usually quiet and intelligent eyes.

XXIV

There were rumors that the city authorities intended to intervene in order to remedy the condition of the unemployed, and shortly before Christmas large numbers of navvies were given employment. Part of the old ramparts was cleared away, and the space converted into parks and boulevards. Pelle applied among a thousand others and had the good fortune to be accepted. The contractor gave the preference to youthful energy.

Every morning the workers appeared in a solid phalanx; the foreman of the works chose those he had need of, and the rest were free to depart. At home sat their wives and children, cheered by the possibility of work; the men felt no inclination to go home with bad news, so they loafed about in the vicinity.

They came there long before daybreak in order to be the first, although there was not much hope. There was at least an excuse to leave one's bed; idleness was burning like hell fire in their loins. When the foreman came they thronged silently about him, with importunate eyes. One woman brought her husband; he walked modestly behind her, kept his eyes fixed upon her, and did precisely as she did. He was a great powerful fellow, but he did nothing of his own accord--did not even blow his nose unless she nudged him. "Come here, Thorvald!" she said, cuffing him so hard as to hurt him. "Keep close behind me!" She spoke in a harsh voice, into the empty air, as though to explain her behavior to the

others; but no one looked at her. "He can't speak for himself properly, you see," she remarked at random. Her peevish voice made Pelle start; she was from Bornholm. Ah, those smart young girls at home, they were a man's salvation! "And the children have got to live too!" she continued. "We have eight. Yes, eight."

"Then he's some use for something," said a workman who looked to be perishing with the cold.

The woman worked her way through them, and actually succeeded in getting her man accepted. "And now you do whatever they tell you, nicely, and don't let them tempt you to play the fool in any way!" she said, and she gave him a cuff which set him off working in his place. She raised her head defiantly as contemptuous laughter sounded about her.

The place was like a slave-market. The foreman, went to and fro, seeking out the strongest, eyeing them from head to foot and choosing them for their muscular development and breadth of back. The contractor too was moving about and giving orders. "One of them rich snobs!" said the laborers, grumbling; "all the laborers in town have to march out here so that he can pick himself the best. And he's beaten down the day's wages to fifty ore. He's been a navvy himself, too; but now he's a man who enjoys his hundred thousand a year. A regular bloodsucker, he is!"

The crowd continued to stand there and to loaf about all the day, in the hope that some one would give up, or fall ill--or go crazy--so that some one could take his place. They could not tear themselves away; the mere fact that work was being done chained them to the spot. They looked as though they might storm the works at any moment, and the police formed a ring about the place. They stood pressing forward, absorbed by their desire for work, with a sick longing in their faces. When the crowd had pressed forward too far it hesitatingly allowed itself to be pushed back again. Suddenly there was a break in the ranks; a man leaped over the rail and seized a pickaxe. A couple of policemen wrested the tool from his hand and led him away.

And as they stood there a feeling of defiance rose within them, a fierce contempt for their privations and the whole shameless situation. It expressed itself in an angry half-suppressed growl. They followed the contractor with curious eyes as though they were looking for something in him but could not conceive what it was.

In his arrogance at receiving such an excessive offer of labor, he decided to go further, and to lengthen the working day by an hour. The workers received an order to that effect one morning, just as they had commenced work. But at the same moment the four hundred men, all but two, threw down their implements and returned to their comrades. They stood there discussing the matter, purple with rage. So now their starving condition was to be made use of, in order to enrich the contractor by a further hundred thousand! "We must go to the city authorities," they cried. "No, to the newspaper!" others replied. "The paper! The paper is better!"

"It's no use going to the city council--not until we have elected members of our own party to it," cried Pelle. "Remember that at the elections, comrades! We must elect men of our party everywhere, their encroachments will never be stopped until then. And now we must stand together and be firm! If it's got to be, better starve to death at once than do it slowly!"

They did not reply, but pressed closely about him, heavily listening. There was something altogether too fierce and profound in their attention. These men had declared a strike in midwinter, as their only remedy. What were they thinking of doing now? Pelle looked about him and was daunted by their dumb rage. This threatening silence wouldn't do; what would it lead to? It seemed as though something overwhelming, and uncontrollable, would spring from this stony taciturnity. Pelle sprang upon a heap of road-metal.

"Comrades!" he cried, in a powerful voice. "This is merely a change, as the fox said when they flayed his skin off. They have deprived us of clothes and food and drink, and comfort at home, and now they want to find a way of depriving us of our skins too! The question to-day is--forward or back? Perhaps this is the great time of trial, when we shall enter into possession of all we have desired! Hold together, comrades! Don't scatter and don't give way! Things are difficult enough now, but remember, we are well on in the winter, and it promises to break up early. The night is always darkest before daybreak! And shall we be afraid to suffer a little--we, who have suffered and been patient for hundreds of years? Our wives are sitting at home and fretting--perhaps they will be angry with us. We might at least have accepted what was offered us, they may say. But we can't go on seeing our dear ones at home fading away in spite of our utmost exertions! Hitherto the poor man's labor has been like an aimless prayer to Heaven: Deliver us from hunger and dirt, from misery, poverty, and cold, and give us bread, and again bread! Deliver our children from our lot--let not their limbs wither and their minds lapse into madness! That has been our prayer, but there is only one prayer that avails, and that is, to defy the wicked! We are the chosen people, and for that reason we must cry a halt! We will no longer do as we have done--for our wives' sakes, and our children's, and theirs again! Ay, but what is posterity to us? Of course it is something to us--precisely to us! Were your parents as you are? No, they were ground down into poverty and the dust, they crept submissively before the mighty. Then whence did we get all that makes us so strong and causes us to stand together? Time has stood still, comrades! It has placed its finger on our breast and he said, 'Thus you shall do!' Here where we stand, the old time ceases and the new time begins; and that is why we have thrown down our tools, with want staring us in the face--such a thing as has never been seen before! We want to revolutionize life--to make it sweet for the poor man! And for all time! You, who have so often staked your life and welfare for a florin--you now hold the whole future in your hands! You must endure, calmly and prudently! And you will never be forgotten, so long as there are workers on the earth! This winter will be the last through which we shall have to endure--for yonder lies the land toward which we have been wandering! Comrades! Through us the day shall come!"

Pelle himself did not know what words he uttered. He felt only that something was speaking through him--something supremely mighty, that never lies. There was a radiant, prophetic ring in his voice, which carried his hearers off their feet; and his eyes were blazing. Before their eyes a figure arose from the hopeless winter, towering in radiance, a figure that was their own, and yet that of a young god. He rose, new-born, out of misery itself, struck aside the old grievous idea of fate, and in its place gave them a new faith--the radiant faith in their own might! They cried up to him--first single voices, then all. He gathered up their cries into a mighty cheer, a paean in honor of the new age!

Every day they stationed themselves there, not to work, but to stand there in dumb protest. When the foreman called for workers they stood about in silent groups, threatening as a gloomy rock. Now and again they shouted a curse at those who had left them in the lurch. The city did nothing. They had held out a helping hand to the needy, and the latter had struck it away--now they must accept the consequences. The contractor had received permission to suspend the work entirely, but he kept it going with a few dozen strike-breakers, in order to irritate the workers.

All over the great terrace a silence as of death prevailed, except in that corner where the little gang was at work, a policeman beside it, as though the men had been convicts. The wheelbarrows lay with their legs in the air; it was as though the pest had swept over the works.

The strike-breakers were men of all callings; a few of the unemployed wrote down their names and addresses, in order to insert them in _The Working Man_. One of Stolpe's fellow-unionists was among them; he was a capable pater-familias, and had taken part in the movement from its earliest days. "It's a pity about him," said Stolpe; "he's an old mate of mine, and he's always been a good comrade till now. Now they'll give it him hard in the paper--we are compelled to. It does the trade no good when one of its representatives goes and turns traitor."

Madame Stolpe was unhappy. "It's such a nice family," she said; "we have always been on friendly terms with them; and I know they were hungry a long time. He has a young wife, father; it's not easy to stand out."

"It hurts me myself," replied Stolpe. "But one is compelled to do it, otherwise one would be guilty of partisanship. And no one shall come to me and say that I'm a respecter of persons."

"I should like to go and have a talk with them," said Pelle. "Perhaps they'd give it up then."

He got the address and went there after working hours. The home had been stripped bare. There were four little children. The atmosphere was oppressive. The man, who was already well on in years, but was still powerful, sat at the table with a careworn expression eating his supper, while the children stood round with their chins on the edge of the table, attentively following every bite he took. The young wife was going to and fro; she brought him his simple food with a peculiarly loving gesture.

Pelle broached the question at issue. It was not pleasant to attack this old veteran. But it must be done.

"I know that well enough," said the man, nodding to himself. "You needn't begin your lecture--I myself have been in the movement since the first days, and until now I've kept my oath. But now it's done with, for me. What do you want here, lad? Have you a wife and children crying for bread? Then think of your own!"

"We don't cry, Hans," said the woman quietly.

"No, you don't, and that makes it even worse! Can I sit here and look on, while you get thinner day by day, and perish with the cold? To hell with the comrades and their big words--what have they led to? Formerly

we used to go hungry just for a little while, and now we starve outright--that's the difference! Leave me alone, I tell you! Curse it, why don't they leave me in peace?"

He took a mouthful of brandy from the bottle. His wife pushed a glass toward him, but he pushed it violently away.

"You'll be put in the paper to-morrow," said Pelle, hesitating. "I only wanted to tell you that."

"Yes, and to write of me that I'm a swine and a bad comrade, and perhaps that I beat my wife as well. You know yourself it's all lies; but what is that to me? Will you have a drink?"

No, Pelle wouldn't take anything. "Then I will myself," said the man, and he laughed angrily. "Now you can certify that I'm a hog--I drink out of the bottle! And another evening you can come and listen at the keyhole--perhaps then you'll hear me beating my wife!"

The woman began to cry.

"Oh, damn it all, they might leave me in peace!" said the man defiantly.

Pelle had to go with nothing effected.

XXV

The "Ark" was now freezing in the north wind; all outward signs of life were stripped from it. The sounds that in summer bubbled up from its deep well-like shaft were silent now; the indistinguishable dripping of a hundred waste-pipes, that turned the court into a little well with green slimy walls, was silent too. The frost had fitted them all with stoppers; and where the toads had sat gorging themselves in the cavities of the walls--fantastic caverns of green moss and slimy filaments--a crust of ice hung over all; a grimy glacier, which extended from the attics right down to the floor of the court.

Where were they now, the grimy, joyful children? And what of the evening carouse of the hearse-driver, for which his wife would soundly thrash him? And the quarrelsome women's voices, which would suddenly break out over this or that railing, criticizing the whole court, sharp as so many razors?

The frost was harder than ever! It had swept all these things away and had locked them up as closely as might be. The hurdy-gurdy man lay down below in his cellar, and had as visitor that good friend of the north wind, the gout; and down in the deserted court the draught went shuffling along the dripping walls. Whenever any one entered the tunnel-entry the draught clutched at his knees with icy fingers, so that the pain penetrated to the very heart.

There stood the old barrack, staring emptily out of its black windows. The cold had stripped away the last shred of figured curtain, and sent it packing to the pawn-shop. It had exchanged the canary for a score of firewood, and had put a stop to the day-long, lonely crying of the

little children behind the locked doors--that hymn of labor, which had ceased only in the evening, when the mothers returned from the factories. Now the mothers sat with their children all day long, and no one but the cold grudged them this delight. But the cold and its sister, hunger, came every day to look in upon them.

On the third floor, away from the court, Widow Johnsen sat in the corner by the stove. Hanne's little girl lay cowering on the floor, on a tattered patchwork counterpane. Through the naked window one saw only ice, as though the atmosphere were frozen down to the ground. Transparent spots had formed on the window-panes every time the child had breathed on them in order to look out, but they had soon closed up again. The old woman sat staring straight into the stove with big, round eyes; her little head quivered continually; she was like a bird of ill omen, that knew a great deal more than any one could bear to hear.

"Now I'm cold again, grandmother," said the child quietly.

"Don't keep from shivering, then you'll be warm," said the old woman.

"Are you shivering?"

"No, I'm too old and stiff for it--I can't shiver any more. But the cold numbs my limbs, so that I can't feel them. I could manage well enough if it wasn't for my back."

"You lean your back against the cold stove too!"

"Yes, the cold grips my poor back so."

"But that's stupid, when the stove isn't going."

"But if only my back would get numb too!" said the old woman piteously.

The child was silent, and turned her head away.

Over the whole of the wall were tiny glittering crystals. Now and again there was a rustling sound under the wall-paper.

"Grandmother, what's that funny noise?" asked the child.

"That's the bugs--they are coming down," said the old woman. "It's too cold for them up there in the attics, and they don't like it here. You should see them; they go to Olsen's with the warm wall; they stay there in the cold."

"Is the wall at Olsen's always warm, then?"

"Yes, when there's fire in the boiler of the steam mill."

Then the child was silent a while, wearily turning her head from side to side. A dreadful weariness was stamped on her face. "I'm cold," she complained after a time.

"See if you can't shiver!"

"Hadn't I better jump a bit?"

"No, then you'd just swallow down the cold--the air is like ice. Just

keep still, and soon mother will be here, and she'll bring something!"

"She never gets anything," said the child. "When she gets there it's always all over."

"That's not true," said Madam Johnsen severely. "There's food enough in the soup kitchens for all; it's just a matter of understanding how to go about it. The poor must get shame out of their heads. She'll bring something to-day!"

The child stood up and breathed a hole in the ice on the window-pane.

"Look now, whether it isn't going to snow a little so that the poor man can get yet another day's employment," said the old woman.

No, the wind was still blowing from the north, although it commonly shuffled along the canal; but now, week after week, it blew from the Nicolai tower, and played the flute on the hollow bones of poverty. The canals were covered with ice, and the ground looked horribly hard. The naked frost chased the people across it like withered leaves. With a thin rustling sound they were swept across the bridges and disappeared.

A great yellow van came driving by. The huge gates of the prison opened slowly and swallowed it. It was the van containing the meat for the prisoners. The child followed it with a desolate expression.

"Mother isn't coming," she said. "I am so hungry."

"She will soon come--you just wait! And don't stand in the light there; come here in the corner! The light strikes the cold right through one."

"But I feel colder in the dark."

"That's just because you don't understand. I only long now for the pitch darkness."

"I long for the sun!" retorted the child defiantly.

There was a creaking of timber out in the yard. The child ran out and opened the door leading to the gallery. It was only the people opposite, who were tearing a step away.

But then came mother, with a tin pail in her hand, and a bundle under her arm; and there was something in the pail--it looked heavy. Tra-la-la! And the bundle, the bundle! What was in that? "Mother, mother!" she cried shrilly, leaning far over the rickety rail.

Hanne came swiftly up the stairs, with open mouth and red cheeks; and a face peeped out of every little nest.

"Now Widow Hanne has taken the plunge," they said. They knew what a point of honor it had been with her to look after her mother and her child unaided. She was a good girl.

And Widow Hanne nodded to them all, as much as to say, "Now it's done, thank God!"

She stood leaning over the table, and lifted the cover off the pail. "Look!" she said, as she stirred the soup with a ladle: "there's pearl

barley and pot-herbs. If only we had something we could warm it up with!"

"We can tear away a bit of the woodwork like other people," said the mother.

"Yes," replied Hanne breathlessly, "yes, why not? If one can beg one can do that!"

She ran out onto the gallery and tore away a few bits of trellis, so that the sound re-echoed through the court. People watched her out of all the dark windows. Widow Hanne had knocked off the head of her pride!

Then they sat down to their soup, the old woman and the child. "Eat!" said Hanne, standing over them and looking on with glowing eyes. Her cheeks were burning. "You look like a flower in the cold!" said her mother. "But eat, yourself, or you'll starve to death."

No, Hanne would not eat. "I feel so light," she said, "I don't need any food." She stood there fingering her bundle; all her features were quivering, and her mouth was like that of a person sick of a fever.

"What have you there?" asked Madam Johnsen.

"Clothes for you and little Marie. You were so cold. I got them downstairs from the old clothes woman--they were so cheap."

"Do you say you bought them?"

"Yes--I got them on credit."

"Well, well, if you haven't given too much for them! But it will do one good to have something warm on one's back!"

Hanne undid the bundle, while the others looked on in suspense. A light summer dress made its appearance, pleated and low-necked, blue as little Marie's eyes, and a pair of thin kid shoes. The child and the old woman gazed wonderingly at the dress. "How fine!" they said. They had forgotten everything, and were all admiration. But Hanne stood staring with horror, and suddenly burst into sobs.

"Come, come, Hanne!" said her mother, clapping her on the back. "You have bought a dress for yourself--that's not so dreadful! Youth will have its rights."

"No, mother, no, I didn't buy it at all! I knew you both needed something to keep you warm, so I went into a fine house and asked if they hadn't any cast-off things, and there was a young lady--she gave me this--and she was so kind. No, I didn't know at all what was in the bundle--I really didn't know, dear mother!"

"Well, well, they are fine enough!" said the old woman, spreading the dress out in front of her. "They are fine things!" But Hanne put the things together and threw them into the corner by the stove.

"You are ill!" said her mother, gazing at her searchingly; "your eyes are blazing like fire."

The darkness descended, and they went to bed. People burned no useless

lights in those days, and it was certainly best to be in bed. They had laid the feather-bed over themselves cross-wise, when it comfortably covered all three; their daytime clothes they laid over their feet. Little Marie lay in the middle. No harm could come to her there. They talked at random about indifferent matters. Hanne's voice sounded loud and cheerful in the darkness as though it came from a radiant countryside.

"You are so restless," said the mother. "Won't you try to sleep a little? I can feel the burning in you from here!"

"I feel so light," replied Hanne; "I can't lie still." But she did lie still, gazing into space and humming inaudibly to herself, while the fever raged in her veins.

After a time the old woman awoke; she was cold. Hanne was standing in the middle of the room, with open mouth; and was engaged in putting on her fine linen underclothing by the light of a candle-end.

Her breath came in short gasps and hung white on the air.

"Are you standing there naked in the cold?" said Madam Johnsen reproachfully. "You ought to take a little care of yourself."

"Why, mother, I'm so warm! Why, it's summer now!"

"What are you doing, child?"

"I am only making myself a little bit smart, mother dear!"

"Yes, yes--dance, my baby. You've still got the best of your youth before you, poor child! Why didn't you get a husband where you got the child from?"

Hanne only hummed a tune to herself, and proceeded to don the bright blue summer costume. It was a little full across the chest, but the décolletage sat snugly over her uncovered bosom. A faint cloud of vapor surrounded her person like a summer haze.

Her mother had to hook up the dress at the back. "If only we don't wake Marie!" she whispered, entirely absorbed by the dress. "And the fine lace on the chemise--you can always let that peep out of the dress a little--it looks so pretty like that. Now you really look like a summer girl!"

"I'll just run down and show it to Madam Olsen," said Hanne, pressing her hand to her glowing cheeks.

"Yes, do--poor folks' joys must have their due," replied the old woman, turning over to the wall.

Hanne ran down the steps and across the yard and out into the street. The ground was hard and ringing in the frost, the cold was angry and biting, but the road seemed to burn Hanne through her thin shoes. She ran through the market, across the bridge, and into the less crowded quarter of the city--right into Pelle's arms. He was just going to see Father Lasse.

Pelle was wearied and stupefied with the continual battle with hard

reality. The bottomless depths of misery were beginning to waste his courage. Was it really of any use to hold the many together? It only made the torture yet harder for them to bear. But in a moment everything looked as bright as though he had fallen into a state of ecstasy, as had often happened lately. In the midst of the sternest realities it would suddenly happen that his soul would leap within him and conjure up the new age of happiness before his eyes, and the terrible dearth filled his arms to overflowing with abundance! He did not feel the cold; the great dearth had no existence; violent spiritual excitement and insufficient nourishment made the blood sing continually in his ears. He accepted it as a happy music from a contented world. It did not surprise him that he should meet Hanne in summer clothing and attired as for a ball.

"Pelle, my protector!" she said, grasping his hand. "Will you go to the dance with me?"

"That's really the old Hanne," thought Pelle delightedly--"the careless Princess of the 'Ark,' and she is feverish, just as she used to be then." He himself was in a fever. When their eyes met they emitted a curious, cold, sparkling light. He had quite forgotten Father Lasse and his errand, and went with Hanne.

The entrance of "The Seventh Heaven" was flooded with light, which exposed the merciless cold of the street. Outside, in the sea of light, thronged the children of the terrible winter, dishevelled and perishing with the cold. They stood there shuddering, or felt in their pockets for a five-ore piece, and if they found it they slipped through the blood-red tunnel into the dancing-hall.

But it was cold in there too; their breath hung like white powder on the air; and crystals of ice glittered on the polished floor. Who would dream of heating a room where the joy of life was burning? and a thousand candles? Here carelessness was wont to give of its abundance, so that the lofty room lay in a cloud and the musicians were bathed in sweat.

But now the cold had put an end to that. Unemployed workers lounged about the tables, disinclined for movement. Winter had not left the poor fellows an ounce of frivolity. Cerberus Olsen might spare himself the trouble of going round with his giant arms outspread, driving the two or three couples of dancers with their five-ore pieces indoors toward the music, as though they had been a whole crowd. People only toiled across the floor in order to have the right to remain there. Good Lord! Some of them had rings and watches, and Cerberus had ready cash--what sort of dearth was that? The men sat under the painted ceiling and the gilded mirrors, over a glass of beer, leaving the girls to freeze--even Elvira had to sit still. "Mazurka!" bellowed Cerberus, going threateningly from table to table. They slunk into the hall like beaten curs, dejectedly danced once round the floor, and paid.

But what is this? Is it not Summer herself stepping into the hall? All glowing and lightly clad in the blue of forget-me-nots, with a rose in her fair hair? Warmth lies like fleeting summer upon her bare shoulders, although she has come straight out of the terrible winter, and she steps with boldly moving limbs, like a daughter of joy. How proudly she carries her bosom, as though she were the bride of fortune--and how she burns! Who is she? Can no one say?

Oh, that is Widow Hanne, a respectable girl, who for seven long years

faithfully trod her way to and from the factory, in order to keep her old mother and her child!

But how comes it then that she has the discreet Pelle on her arm? He who has sold his own youth to the devil, in order to alleviate poverty? What does he want here on the dancing-floor? And Hanne, whence did she get her finery? She is still out of employment! And how in all the world has she grown so beautiful?

They whisper behind her, following her as she advances; and in the midst of the hall she stands still and smiles. Her eyes burn with a volcanic fire. A young man rushes forward and encircles her with his arm. A dance with Hanne! A dance with Hanne!

Hanne dances with a peculiar hesitation, as though her joy had brought her from far away. Heavily, softly, she weighs on the arms of her partners, and the warmth rises from her bare bosom and dispels the cold of the terrible winter. It is as though she were on fire! Who could fail to be warmed by her?

Now the room is warm once more. Hanne is like a blazing meteor that kindles all as it circles round; where she glides past the fire springs up and the blood runs warmly in the veins. They overturn the chairs in their eagerness to dance with her. "Hi, steward! Five kroner on my watch--only be quick!" "Ach, Hanne, a dance with me!"--"Do you remember we were at the factory together?"--"We used to go to school together!"

Hanne does not reply, but she leaves Pelle and lays her naked arm upon their shoulders, and if they touch it with their cheeks the fire streams through them. They do not want to let her go again; they hold her fast embraced, gliding along with her to where the musicians are sitting, where all have to pay. No word passes her lips, but the fire within her is a promise to each of them, a promise of things most precious. "May I see you home to-night?" they whisper, hanging on her silent lips.

But to Pelle she speaks as they glide along. "Pelle, how strong you are! Why have you never taken me? Do you love me?" Her hand is clasping his shoulder as she whirls along beside him. Her breath burns in his ear.

"I don't know!" he says uneasily. "But stop now--you are ill."

"Hold me like that! Why have you never been stronger than I? Do you want me, Pelle? I'll be yours!"

Pelle shakes his head. "No, I love you only like a sister now."

"And now I love you! Look--you are so distant to me--I don't understand you--and your hand is as hard as if you came from another world! You are heavy, Pelle! Have you brought me happiness from a foreign land with you?"

"Hanne, you are ill! Stop now and let me take you home!"

"Pelle, you were not the right one. What is there strange about you? Nothing! So let me alone--I am going to dance with the others as well!"

Hitherto Hanne has been dancing without intermission. The men stand waiting for her; when one releases her ten spring forward, and this evening Hanne wants to dance with them all. Every one of them should be

permitted to warm himself by her! Her eyes are like sparks in the darkness; her silent demeanor excites them; they swing her round more and more wildly. Those who cannot dance with her must slake the fire within them with drink. The terrible winter is put to flight, and it is warm as in Hell itself. The blood is seething in their brains; it injects the whites of their eyes, and expresses itself in wanton frolic, in a need to dance till they drop, or to fight.

"Hanne is wild to-night--she has got her second youth," says Elvira and the other girls maliciously.

Hold your tongues. No one shall criticize Hanne's behavior! It is wonderful to touch her; the touch of her skin hurts one, as though she was not flesh and blood, but fire from Heaven! They say she has not had a bite of food for a week. The old woman and the child have had all there was. And yet she is burning! And see, she has now been dancing without a break for two whole hours! Can one understand such a thing? Hanne dances like a messenger from another world, where fire, not cold, is the condition of life. Every dancer leaves his partner in the lurch as soon as she is free! How lightly she dances! Dancing with her, one soars upward, far away from the cold. One forgets all misery in her eyes.

But she has grown paler and paler; she is dancing the fire out of her body while others are dancing it in! Now she is quite white, and Olsen's Elvira comes up and tugs at her dress, with anxiety in her glance. "Hanne, Hanne!" But Hanne does not see her; she is only longing for the next pair of arms--her eyes are closed. She has so much to make up for! And who so innocent as she? She does not once realize that she is robbing others of their pleasure. Is she suffering from vertigo or St. Vitus's dance, in her widowhood?

Hold your tongue! How beautiful she is! Now she is growing rosy again, and opening her eyes. Fire darts from them; she has brought Pelle out of his corner and is whispering something to him, blushing as she does so; perhaps that precious promise that hitherto no one has been able to draw from her. Pelle must always be the lucky man!

"Pelle, why don't you dance with me oftener? Why do you sit in the corner there always and sulk? Are you angry with me as you used to be, and why are you so hard and cold? And your clothes are quite stiff!"

"I come from outside all this--from the terrible winter, Hanne, where the children are crying for bread, and the women dying of starvation, and the men go about with idle hands and look on the ground because they are ashamed of their unemployment!"

"But why? It is still summer. Only look how cheerful every one is! Take me, then, Pelle!"

Hanne grows red, redder than blood, and leans her head on his shoulder. Only see how she surrenders herself, blissful in her unashamed ecstasy! She droops backward in his arms, and from between her lips springs a great rose of blood, that gushes down over the summer-blue dress.

Fastened to the spot by his terrible burden, Pelle stands there unable to move. He can only gaze at Hanne, until Cerberus takes her in his giant's arms and bears her out. She is so light in her summer finery--she weighs nothing at all!

"Mazurka!" he bellows, as he returns, and goes commandingly along the ranks of dancers.

XXVI

At the end of January, Pelle obtained a place as laborer in the "Denmark" machine works. He was badly paid, but Ellen rejoiced, none the less; with nothing one could only cry--with a little one could grow strong again. She was still a little pale after her confinement, but she looked courageous. At the first word of work her head was seething with comprehensive plans. She began at once to redeem various articles and to pay off little debts; she planned out a whole system and carried it out undeviatingly.

The new sister was something for Young Lasse; he understood immediately that she was some one given to him in order to amuse him in his loneliness.

During the confinement he had remained with his grandparents, so that the stork should not carry him away when it came with his little sister --for he was dear to them! But when he returned home she was lying asleep in her cradle. He just touched her eyelids, to see if she had eyes like his own. They snatched his fingers away, so he could not solve the exciting problem that day.

But sister had eyes, great dark eyes, which followed him about the room, past the head of the bed and round the other side, always with the same attentive expression, while the round cheeks went out and in like those of a sucking animal. And Young Lasse felt very distinctly that one was under obligations when eyes followed one about like that. He was quite a little man already, and he longed to be noticed; so he ran about making himself big, and rolling over like a clown, and playing the strong man with the footstool, while his sister followed him with her eyes, without moving a muscle of her face. He felt that she might have vouchsafed him a little applause, when he had given himself so much trouble.

One day he inflated a paper bag and burst it before her face. That was a help. Sister forgot her imperturbability, gave a jump, and began to roar. He was smacked for that, but he had his compensation. Her little face began to quiver directly he approached her, in order to show her something; and she often began to roar before he had performed his trick. "Go away from your sister Lasse Frederik!" said his mother. "You are frightening her!"

But things were quite different only a month later. There was no one who understood Young Lasse's doings better than sister. If he did but move his plump little body, or uttered a sound, she twittered like a starling.

Ellen's frozen expression had disappeared; now that she had something to work at again. The cold had weaned her from many of her exactions, and others were gratified by the children. The two little ones kept her very busy; she did not miss Pelle now. She had become accustomed to his being continually away from home, and she had taken possession of him in her

thoughts, in her own fashion; she held imaginary conversations with him as she went about her work; and it was a joy to her to make him comfortable during the short time that he was at home.

Pelle conceived his home as an intimate little world, in which he could take shelter when he was weary. He had redeemed that obscure demand in Ellen's eyes--in the shape of two dear little creatures that gave her plenty to do. Now it was her real self that advanced to meet him. And there was a peculiar loyalty about her, that laid hold of his heart; she no longer resented his small earnings, and she did not reproach him because he was only a workman.

He had been obliged to resign his position as president of his Union on account of his longer hours. There was no prospect at present of his being able to return to his vocation; but the hard bodily labor agreed with him.

In order to help out his small earnings, he busied himself with repairs in the evenings. Ellen helped him, and they sat together and gossiped over their work. They ignored the labor movement--it did not interest Ellen, and he by no means objected to a brief rest from it. Young Lasse sat at the table, drawing and putting in his word now and then. Often, when Pelle brought out the work, Ellen had done the greater part of it during the day, and had only left what she did not understand. In return he devised little ways of pleasing her.

In the new year the winter was not so severe. Already in February the first promise of spring was perceptible. One noticed it in Ellen.

"Shan't we pack a picnic-basket and go out to one of the beer-gardens on Sunday? It would do the children good to get into the air," she would say.

Pelle was very willing. But on Sunday there was a meeting of the party leaders and a meeting concerning the affairs of the factory--he must be present at both. And in the evening he had promised to speak before a trade union.

"Then we'll go out ourselves, the children and I!" said Ellen peacefully. When they came home it seemed they had amused themselves excellently; Pelle was no longer indispensable.

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The hard winter was over at last. It was still freezing--especially at night--but the people knew it was over in spite of that. And the ice in the canals knew it also. It began to show fractures running in all directions, and to drift out toward the sea. Even the houses gave one a feeling of spring; they were brighter in hue; and the sun was shining into the sky overhead; if one looked for it one could see it glowing above the roofs. Down in the narrow lanes and the well-like courtyards the children stamped about in the snowy slush and sang to the sun which they could not see.

People began to recover from the long privations of the winter. The cold might return at any moment; but all were united in their belief in the spring. The starlings began to make their appearance, and the moisture of the earth rose again to the surface and broke its way through the hard crust, in dark patches; and business ventured to raise its head. A

peculiar universal will seemed to prevail in all things. Down under the earth it sprouted amid frost and snow, and crept forth, young, and seemingly brought forth by the cold itself; and in all things frozen by winter the promise unfolded itself--in spite of all.

The workmen's quarter of the city began to revive; now it was once more of some use to go about looking for work. It did one good to get out and walk in the daylight for a while. And it also did one good once more to fill one's belly every day and to fetch the household goods home from the pawn-shop, and to air one's self a little, until one's turn came round again.

But things did not go as well as they should have done. It looked as though the cold had completely crippled the sources of commercial activity. The spring came nearer; the sun rose higher every day, and began to recover its power; but business showed no signs of real recovery as yet; it did no more than supply what was needed from day to day. There was no life in it, as there had been of old! At this time of the year manufacturers were glad as a rule to increase their stocks, so as to meet the demands of the summer; it was usual to make up for the time lost during the winter; the workers would put forth their utmost strength, and would work overtime.

Many anxious questions were asked. What was the matter? Why didn't things get going again? _The Working Man_ for the present offered no explanation, but addressed a covert warning to certain people that they had best not form an alliance with want.

Gradually the situation assumed more definite outlines; the employers were making preparations of some kind, for which reason they did not resume business with any great vigor. In spite of their privations during the winter, the workers had once again returned some of their own representatives to Parliament, and now they were getting ready to strike a blow at the municipal elections. That was the thing to do now! And in the forefront of the battle stood the ever-increasing organization which now included all vocations and the whole country a single body, and which claimed a decisive voice in the ordering of conditions! The poor man was made to feel how little he could accomplish without those who kept everything going!

In the meantime there were rumors that a lock-out was being prepared, affecting every occupation, and intended to destroy the Federation at one blow. But that was inconceivable. They had experienced only small lock-outs, when there was disagreement about some particular point. That any one could think of setting the winter's distress in opposition to the will of Nature, when every man was willing to work on the basis of the current tariff--no, the idea was too fiendish!

But one distinction was being made. Men who had done any particular work for the movement would find it more difficult to obtain employment. They would be degraded, or simply replaced by others, when they applied for their old places after the standstill of the winter. Uncertainty prevailed, especially in those trades which had the longest connection with the labor organization; one could not but perceive this to be a consequence of combination. For that reason the feeling of insecurity increased. Every one felt that the situation was unendurable and untenable, and foresaw some malicious stroke. Especially in the iron industry relations were extremely strained; the iron-founders were always a hard-handed lot; it was there that one first saw what was about

to develop.

Pelle anxiously watched events. If a conflict were to occur just now, it would mean a defeat of the workers, who were without supplies and were stripped to the buff. With the winter had ceased even the small chance of employment on the ramparts; it was obvious that an assault would shatter their cohesion. He did not express his anxieties to them. They were at bottom like little children; it would do no good for them to suffer too great anxiety. But to the leaders he insisted that they must contrive to avoid a conflict, even if it entailed concessions. For the first time Pelle proposed a retreat!

One week followed another, and the tension increased, but nothing happened. The employers were afraid of public opinion. The winter had struck terrible blows; they dared not assume the responsibility for declaring war.

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In the "Denmark" machine-works the tension was of long standing. At the time when the farmers were compelled, by the conditions of the world-market, to give up the cultivation of cereals for dairy-farming, the directors of the factory had perceived in advance that the future would lie in that direction, and had begun to produce dairy machinery. The factory succeeded in constructing a centrifugal separator which had a great sale, and this new branch of industry absorbed an ever-increasing body of workers. Hitherto the best-qualified men had been selected; they were continually improving the manufacture, and the sales were increasing both at home and abroad. The workers gradually became so skilled in their specialty that the manufacturers found themselves compelled to reduce their wages--otherwise they would have earned too much. This had happened twice in the course of the years, and the workers had received the hint that was necessary to meet competition in foreign markets. But at the same time the centrifugal separators were continually increasing in price, on account of the great demand for them. The workers had regarded the lowering of their wages as something inevitable, and took pains yet further to increase their skill, so that their earnings had once more come to represent a good average wage.

Now, immediately after the winter slackness, there were rumors in circulation that the manufacturers intended once more to decrease the rate of pay. But this time the men had no intention of accommodating themselves to the decrease. Their resentment against the unrighteousness of this proceeding went to their heads; they were very near demonstrating at the mere rumor. Pelle, however, succeeded in persuading them that they were confronted by nothing more than foolish gossip for which no one was responsible. Afterward, when their fear had evaporated and all was again going as usual, they came to him and thanked him.

But on the next pay-day there was a notice from the office to the effect that the current rate of wages was not in accordance with the times--it was to be improved. This sounded absolutely innocent, but every one knew what lay behind it.

It was one of the first days of spring. The sun was shining into the vast workshop, casting great shafts of light across it, and in the blue haze pulleys and belts were revolving. The workers, as they stood at their work, were whistling in time with the many wheels and the ringing of metal. They were like a flock of birds, who have just landed on a

familiar coast and are getting the spring.

Pelle was carrying in some raw material when the news came and extinguished all their joy. It was passed on a scrap of paper from man to man, brief and callous. The managers of the factory wanted to have nothing to do with the organization, but silently went behind it. All had a period of fourteen days in which to subscribe to the new tariff. "No arguments, if you please--sign, or go!" When the notice came to Pelle all eyes were turned upon him as though they expected a signal; tools were laid down, but the machinery ran idly for a time. Pelle read the notice and then bent over his work again.

During the midday pause they crowded about him. "What now?" they asked; and their eyes were fixed upon him, while their hands were trembling. "Hadn't we better pack up and go at once? This shearing will soon be too much for us, if they do it every time a little wool has grown on us."

"Wait!" said Pelle. "Just wait! Let the other side do everything, and let us see how far they will go. Behave as if nothing had happened, and get on with your work. You have the responsibility of wives and children!"

They grumblingly followed his advice, and went back to their work. Pelle did not wonder at them; there had been a time when he too would throw down his work if any one imposed on him, even if everything had gone to the devil through it. But now he was responsible for many--which was enough to make a man prudent. "Wait!" he told them over and over again. "To-morrow we shall know more than we do to-day--it wants thinking over before we deal with it!"

So they put the new tariff aside and went to work as though nothing had happened. The management of the factory treated the matter as settled; and the directors went about with a contented look. Pelle wondered at his comrades' behavior; after a few days they were in their usual spirits, indulging in all kinds of pastimes during their meal-time.

As soon as the whistle sounded at noon the machinery stopped running, and the workers all dropped their tools. A few quickly drew their coats on, intending to go home for a mouthful of warm food, while some went to the beer-cellars of the neighborhood. Those who lived far from their homes sat on the lathe-beds and ate their food there. When the food was consumed they gathered together in groups, gossiping, or chaffing one another. Pelle often made use of the midday rest to run over to the "Ark" in order to greet Father Lasse, who had obtained work in one of the granaries and was now able to get along quite nicely.

One day at noon Pelle was standing in the midst of a group of men, making a drawing of a conceited, arrogant foreman with a scrap of chalk on a large iron plate. The drawing evoked much merriment. Some of his comrades had in the meantime been disputing as to the elevating machinery of a submarine. Pelle rapidly erased his caricature and silently sketched an elevation of the machinery in question. He had so often seen it when the vessel lay in the harbor at home. The others were obliged to admit that he was right.

There was a sudden silence as one of the engineers passed through the workshop. He caught sight of the drawing and asked whose work it was.

Pelle had to go to the office with him. The engineer asked him all sorts

of questions, and was amazed to learn that he had never had lessons in drawing. "Perhaps we could make use of you upstairs here," he said. "Would you care for that?"

Pelle's heart gave a sudden leap. This was luck, the real genuine good fortune that seized upon its man and lifted him straightway into a region of dazzling radiance! "Yes," he stammered, "yes, thank you very much!" His emotion was near choking him.

"Then come to-morrow at seven--to the drawing-office," said the engineer. "No, what's to-day? Saturday. Then Monday morning." And so the affair was settled, without any beating about the bush! There was a man after Pelle's own heart!

When he went downstairs the men crowded about him, in order to hear the result. "Now your fortune's made!" they said; "they'll put you to machine-drawing now, and if you know your business you'll get independent work and become a constructor. That's the way Director Jeppesen got on; he started down here on the moulding-floor, and now he's a great man!" Their faces were beaming with delight in his good fortune. He looked at them, and realized that they regarded him as capable of anything.

He spent the rest of the day as in a dream, and hurried home to share the news with Ellen. He was quite confused; there was a surging in his ears, as in childhood, when life suddenly revealed one of its miracles to him. Ellen flung her arms round his neck in her joy; she would not let him go again, but held him fast gazing at him wonderingly, as in the old days. "I've always known you were intended for something!" she said, looking at him with pride. "There's no one like you! And now, only think. But the children, they must know too!" And she snatched little sister from her sleep, and informed her what had happened. The child began to cry.

"You are frightening her, you are so delighted," said Pelle, who was himself smiling all over his face.

"But now--now we shall mix with genteel people," said Ellen suddenly, as she was laying the table. "If only I can adapt myself to it! And the children shall go to the middle-class school."

When Pelle had eaten he was about to sit down to his cobbling. "No!" said Ellen decidedly, taking the work away, "that's no work for you any longer!"

"But it must be finished," said Pelle; "we can't deliver half-finished work!"

"I'll soon finish it for you; you just put your best clothes on; you look like a--"

"Like a working-man, eh?" said Pelle, smiling.

Pelle dressed himself and went off to the "Ark" to give Father Lasse the news. Later he would meet the others at his father-in-law's. Lasse was at home, and was eating his supper. He had fried himself an egg over the stove, and there was beer and brandy on the table. He had rented a little room off the long corridor, near crazy Vinslev's; there was no window, but there was a pane of glass over the door leading into the

gloomy passage. The lime was falling from the walls, so that the cob was showing in great patches.

"Well, well," said Lasse, delighted, "so it's come to this! I've often wondered to myself why you had been given such unprofitable talents--such as lying about and painting on the walls or on paper--you, a poor laborer's son. Something must be intended by that, I used to tell myself, in my own mind; perhaps it's the gift of God and he'll get on by reason of it! And now it really seems as if it's to find its use."

"It's not comfortable for you here, father!" said Pelle.

"But I shall soon take you away from here, whether you like it or not. When we've paid off a few of the winter's debts we shall be moving into a three-roomed apartment, and then you'll have a room for your own use; but you mustn't go to work any longer then. You must be prepared for that."

"Yes, yes, I've nothing against living with you, so long as I'm not taking the bread out of others' mouths. Ah, no, Pelle, it won't be difficult for me to give up my work; I have overworked myself ever since I could crawl; for seventy years almost I've toiled for my daily bread--and now I'm tired! So many thanks for your kind intentions. I shall pass the time well with the children. Send me word whenever you will."

The news was already known in the "Ark," and the inmates came up to wish him luck as he was leaving. "You won't be running in here any more and gossiping with us when once you are settled in your new calling," they said. "That would never do! But don't quite forget all about us just because we are poor!"

"No, no, Pelle has been through so many hungry times with us poor folks; he's not one of those who forget old friendship!" they themselves replied.

Only now, when he had left the "Ark," did he realize that there was something to which he was bidding farewell. It was the cordial community with all his kind, their radiant faith in him, and his own belief in his mission there; he had known a peculiar joy in the half-embittered recklessness, the community of feeling, and the struggle. Was he not, so to speak, the Prince of poverty, to whom they all looked up, and of whom they all expected that he would lead them into a strange world? And could he justify himself for leaving them all in the lurch because of his own good fortune? Perhaps he was really appointed to lead the movement--perhaps he was the only one who could do so!

This belief had always been faintly glimmering in the back of his mind, had stood behind his endurance in the conflict, and behind all the gladness with which he bore privation. Was he in his arrogance to repudiate the place that had formed him? No, he was not so blatant as all that! There was plenty beside himself capable of seeing the movement through--and Fortune had tapped him on the shoulder. "March forward, Pelle!" an inward voice exhorted him. "What have you to consider? You have no right to thrust success away from you? Do you want to ruin yourself without profiting others? You have been a good comrade, but here your ways divide. God Himself has given you talent; even as a child you used to practise it; no one will gain by your remaining poor. Choose your own path!"

Yes, Pelle had chosen readily enough! He knew very well that he must accept this good fortune, whatever the world might say to it. Only it hurt him to leave the others behind! He was bound to poverty by such intimate ties; he felt the solidarity of the poor so keenly that it hurt him to tear himself away. Common cares had made him a man, and the struggle had given him a peculiar and effective strength. But now he would attend no more meetings! It would be droll indeed if he were to have nothing more to do with the Cause, but were to belong to the other side--he, Pelle, who had been a flaming torch! No, he would never leave them in the lurch, that he knew; even if he were to climb ever so high--and he entertained no doubts as to that--he would always feel for his old comrades and show them the way to obtain good relations between worker and employer.

Ellen saw how serious he was--perhaps she guessed that he was feeling remorseful. She would help him to get over that.

"Can't we have your father here to-morrow?" she said. "He can lie on the long chair in the living-room until we move into our new home. It isn't right to let him stay where he is, and in your new situation you couldn't do it."

XXVII

The unrest increased in the workshops round about; no one who had anything to do with the organization felt really secure. It was evidently the intention of the employers to drive the workers to extremes, and thereby to force them to break the peace. "They want to destroy the trades unions, so that they can scrape the butter off our bread again," said the workers. "They think it'll be easier now that the winter has made us thankful for a dry crust! But that's an infernal lie!"

The masses grew more and more embittered; everywhere they were ready for a fight, and asked nothing better than to plunge into it. The women wept and shuddered; most of them understood only that the sufferings of the winter were going to begin all over again. They took desperate steps to prevent this; they threw their shawls over their heads and rushed off to the offices, to the manufacturers, and pleaded with them to avert the disaster. The central Committee counselled a peaceful demeanor and caution. Everything depended upon their having the right on their side in the opinion of the public.

It was easy for Pelle to follow all that was happening, although he now stood outside the whole movement. He went to work in his good clothes and elastic-sided boots, and did not need to arrive before seven, while the others had to be there at six--which at once altered his point of view.

He would soon be trusted with rule and compasses; for the present he was kept busy copying a few worn-out working-drawings, or "filling in." He felt in a curiously exalted frame of mind--as though he had been slightly intoxicated; this was the first time in his life that he had been employed on work that was of a clean nature and allowed him to wear good clothes. It was particularly curious to survey life from where he

stood; a new perspective lay open before him. The old life had nothing in prospect but a miserable old age; but this led upward. Here he could achieve what he willed--even the highest place! What if he finally crept up to the very topmost point, and established an eight-hour day and a decent day's wage? Then he would show them that one could perfectly well climb up from below without forgetting his origin and becoming a bloodsucker! They should still drink to the health of Pelle, their good comrade, although he would have left their ranks.

At home there was much to be done; as soon as he crossed the threshold he was the prisoner of Ellen's hundred and one schemes. He must have a new suit of clothes--a gray suit for the office, and more linen; and at least twice a week he must go to the barber; he could no longer sit down and scrape himself with an old razor with an edge like a saw. Pelle was made to feel that it was not so easy after all to become an "upper-classer," as he called it.

And all this cost money. There was the same searching, the same racking of one's brains to find the necessary shillings as during the dearth of the winter famine; but this time it was quite amusing; there was a cheerful purpose in it all, and it would only last until he had properly settled down. Lasse looked very respectable; he was wearing Pelle's second-best suit, which Ellen had cleaned for him, and a black watered silk cravat, with a white waterproof collar, and well-polished slippers on his feet. These last were his old watertight boots--those in which Pelle had left Stone Farm. They were still in existence, but had been cut down to form house-slippers. The legs of them now formed part of a pair of clogs.

Lasse was happiest with the children, and he looked quite an aged grandfather now, with his wrinkled face and his kind glance, which was now a little weak-sighted. When Young Lasse hid himself in the opposite corner of the room Father Lasse could not see him, and the young rascal took advantage of the fact; he could never understand those eyes, which could not see farther than across the table, and was always asking questions about them.

"It's because I have seen too much misery in my life," the old man would always reply.

Otherwise he was quite overflowing with happiness, and his old worn-out body manifested its gratitude, for he began to put on flesh again; and his cheeks had soon grown quite full. He had a peculiar knack for looking after the children; Pelle and Ellen could feel quite easy as they went about their multitudinous affairs. There were a hundred things that had to be seen to before they could move into the new home. They thought of raising a loan of a few hundred kroner. "Father will go security for us," said Ellen.

"Yes, then I should have the means of taking proper drawing-lessons," said Pelle; "I particularly need to get thoroughly grounded."

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On Saturday the term of the old tariff expired. The temper of the workers was badly strained, but each completed his work, and contained himself and waited. At noon the foreman went round asking each man for his answer. They refused all information, as agreed, but in the afternoon three men formed a deputation and entered the office, asking

if they could speak with the manager. As he entered Munck, the engine-driver, stepped forward as spokesman, and began: "We have come in the name of our comrades." He could get no further; the manager let fly at him, pointing to the stairs, and crying, "I don't argue with my work-people!"

So they went down again. The men stared up at them--this was quick work! The burly Munck moved his lips, as though he were speaking, but no one could hear a word on account of the frightful din of the machinery. With a firm stride he went through the shop, picked up a hammer, and struck three blows on the great steel gong. They sounded like the stroke of doom, booming through the whole factory. At the same moment the man's naked, blackened arms were lifted to strike the belts from the live pulleys. The machinery ceased running, and the roar of it died away; it was as still as though Death had passed through the workshop. The dense

network of belts that crossed the shop in all directions quivered and hung slack; the silence yawned horribly in the great room.

The foremen ran from bench to bench, shouting and hardly knowing what to do. Word was sent to the office, while the workers went to their buckets and washed themselves, silent and melancholy as a funeral procession. Their faces were uncommunicative. Did they perhaps foresee that those three blows were the signal for a terrible conflict? Or were they merely following their first angry impulse? They knew enough, at all events; it was stamped upon their faces that this was fate--the inevitable. They had summoned the winter because they were driven to it, and the winter would return once more to ravage his victims.

They reappeared, washed and clean, each with his bundle under his arm, and stood in silence waiting their turn to be paid. The foreman ran to and fro apportioning the wages with nervous hands, comparing time-sheets and reckoning the sum due to each. The manager came down the stairs of his office, proud and unapproachable, and walked through the shop; the workers made way for him. He looked sharply around him, as though he would imprint the likeness of every individual worker on his mind, laid his hand on the shoulder of one of the foremen, and said in a loud voice, so that all heard him, "Make haste, now, Jacobsen, so that we can be rid of these fellows quickly!" The workers slowly turned their serious faces toward him, and here and there a fist was clenched. They left the factory one by one, as soon as they were paid.

Outside they gathered in little groups, and relieved their feelings by giving vent to significant exclamations. "Did you see the old man? He was savage, he was; he'll hold out quite a while before we get back again!"

Pelle was in a curious frame of mind; he knew that now the fight had begun; first blood had been drawn, and one blow would follow on another. Young Lasse, who heard his step on the stairs, ran into his arms as he reached home; but Pelle did not notice him.

"You are so solemn!" said Ellen, "has anything happened?" He told her quietly.

"Good God!" she cried, shuddering. "Now the unemployment will begin all over again! Thank God it doesn't affect us!" Pelle did not reply. He sat down in silence to his supper; sat hanging his head as though ashamed of himself.

XXVIII

A most agitating time followed. For a number of years the conflict had, so to speak, been preparing itself, and the workers had made ready for it, had longed for it, had sought to precipitate it, in order to determine once for all whether they were destined always to be slaves and to stand still, or whether there was a future for them. Now the conflict had come--and had taken them all by surprise; they would willingly have concluded peace just now.

But there was no prospect of a peaceful solution of any kind. The employers found the occasion favorable for setting their house in order; the matter was to be fought out now! This was as good as telling the men to go. Every morning there was news of a fresh lot of workers turned into the streets, or leaving of their own accord.

One trade involved another. The iron-masters made common cause with the "Denmark" factory, and declared a lock-out of the machine-smiths; then the moulders and pattern-makers walked out, and other branches of the industry joined the strike; they all stood by one another.

Pelle could survey them all from his point of vantage. Old memories of battle rose to his mind; his blood grew warm, and he caught himself, up in the drawing-office, making plans of campaign for this trade or that. His was the quick-fighting blood that assumes the offensive, and he noted their blunders; they were not acting with sufficient energy. They were still exhausted, and found it hard to reconcile themselves to another period of unemployment. They made no counter-attack that could do any damage. The employers, who were acting energetically under the leadership of the iron industry, enjoyed from the beginning a considerable ascendancy. The "Denmark" factory was kept running, but the trade was on its last legs.

It was kept alive by the help of a few strike-breakers, and every one of the officials of the company who had the requisite knowledge was set to work downstairs; even the manager of the machine department had donned a blouse and was working a lathe. It was a matter of sapping the courage of the strikers, while proving to them that it was possible to do without them.

In the drawing-office and the counting-house all was confusion; the strike-breakers had all to be obtained from abroad; while others ran away and had to be replaced. Under these circumstances Pelle had to look after himself and assimilate what he could. This did not suit him; it was a long way to the top, and one couldn't learn quickly enough.

One day he received the summons to come downstairs and lend a hand in the centrifugal separator department. The workers had made common cause with the machine-smiths. This summons aroused him from delightful dreams of the future. He was swiftly awakened. "I am no strike-breaker!" he replied, offended.

Then the engineer himself came up. "Do you realize that you are refusing to perform your duty?" he said.

"I can't take work away from my comrades," replied Pelle, in a low voice.

"They may think that very nice of you. But now those men down there are no longer your comrades. You are a salaried employee, and as such you must serve the firm wherever you are asked to do so."

"But I can't do that! I can't strike the bread out of other folks' hands."

"Then your whole future is at stake. Think a moment, man! I am sorry for you, for you might have done something here; but I can't save you from the results of your own obstinacy. We require absolute obedience here."

The engineer stood waiting for his answer, but Pelle had nothing to say.

"Now, I'll go so far as to give you till to-morrow to think over it--although that's against the rules of the factory. Now think it over well, and don't hang on to this stupid sentimentality of yours. The first thing is to stand by those you belong to, through thick and thin. Well, till to-morrow."

Pelle went. He did not want to go home before the usual time, only to be met with a string of unseasonable questions. They would come soon enough in any case. So he strolled through the mercantile quarter and gazed at the shipping. Well, now his dream of success was shattered--and it had been a short one. He could see Ellen's look of disappointment, and an utter mental depression came over him. He was chiefly sorry for her; as for him, there was nothing to be said--it was fate! It never occurred to him for a moment to choose between his comrades and the future; he had quite forgotten that the engineer had given him time for reflection.

At the usual time he strolled homeward. Ellen welcomed him cheerfully and light-heartedly; she was living in a continual thrill of delight; and it was quite touching to see what trouble she was taking to fit herself for a different stratum of society. Her movements were delightful to watch, and her mouth had assumed an expression which was intended to betoken refinement. It suited her delightfully, and Pelle was always seized by a desire to kiss her lips and so disarrange the expression; but to-day he sat down to his supper in silence. Ellen was accustomed to put aside his share of the midday dinner, and to warm it up for him when he came home in the evening; at midday he ate bread-and-butter in the office.

"When we have once got properly settled we'll all have dinner at six o'clock; that is much more comfortable."

"That's what the fine folks do, I've been told," said Lasse. "That will be pleasant, to give it a try."

Lasse was sitting with Young Lasse on his knee, telling him funny stories. Little Lasse laughed, and every time he laughed his sister screeched with delight in her cradle, as though she understood it all. "What is it to be now, then--the story of the old wife? Then you must listen carefully, or your ears won't grow! Well, then, the old wife."

"Wife!" said Young Lasse, with the very accent of the old man.

"Yes, the old wife!" repeated Lasse, and then all three laughed.

"What shall I do first?" said the old wife, when she went to work; 'eat or sleep? I think I'll eat first. What shall I do first?' asked the old wife, when she had eaten; 'shall I sleep first or work? I think I'll sleep first.' And then she slept, until it was evening, and then she went home and went to bed."

Ellen went up to Pelle and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"I've been to see my former mistress, and she is going to help me to turn my wedding-dress into a visiting-dress," she said. "Then we shall only need to buy a frock-coat for you."

Pelle looked up slowly. A quiver passed over his features. Poor thing! She was thinking about visiting-dresses! "You can save yourself the trouble," he said, in a low voice. "I've finished with the office. They asked me to turn strike-breaker, so I left."

"Ach, ach!" said Lasse, and he was near letting the child fall, his withered hands were trembling so. Ellen gazed at Pelle as though turned to stone. She grew paler and paler, but not a sound came from her lips. She looked as though she would fall dead at his feet.

XXIX

Pelle was once more among his own people; he did not regret that fortune had withdrawn her promise; at heart he was glad. After all, this was where he belonged. He had played a great part in the great revolt--was he to be excluded from the battle?

The leaders welcomed him. No one could draw the people as he could, when it came to that; the sight of him inspired them with a cheerful faith, and gave them endurance, and a fearless pugnacity. And he was so skilled, too, in making plans!

The first thing every morning he made his way to the lock-out office, whence the whole campaign was directed; here all the many threads ran together. The situation for the moment was considered, men who had precise knowledge of the enemy's weak points were called together, in order to give information, and a comprehensive plan of campaign was devised. At secret meetings, to which trustworthy members of the various trades were invited, all sorts of material for offence was collected--for the attack upon the employers, and for carrying on the newspaper agitation. It was a question of striking at the blood-suckers, and those who were loose in the saddle! There were trades which the employers kept going for local reasons--these must be hunted out and brought to a standstill, even at the cost of increasing unemployment. They were making energetic preparations for war, and it was not the time to be squeamish about their weapons. Pelle was in his element. This was something better than ruining a single shoemaker, even if he was the biggest in the city! He was rich in ideas, and never wavered in carrying them into execution. Warfare was warfare!

This was the attacking side; but, permeated as he was by a sense of

community, he saw clearly that the real battle was for maintenance. The utmost foresight and widely comprehensive instructions were required if the masses were to last out the campaign; in the long run it would be a question of endurance! Foreign strike-breakers had to be kept at a distance by prompt communications to the party newspapers of the different countries, and by the setting of pickets in the railway stations and on the steamers. For the first time the workers took the telegraph into their own service. The number of the foreign strikebreakers must by every possible means be kept down, and in the first place supplies must be assured, so that the unemployed masses could keep famine at bay.

In a vision, Pelle had beheld the natural solidarity of the workers extended over the whole earth, and now this vision was of service to him. The leaders issued a powerful manifesto to the workers of Denmark; pointing to the abyss from which they had climbed and to the pinnacles of light toward which they were striving upward; and warning them, in impressive phrases, to stand firm and to hold together. A statement as to the origin of the lock-out and the intention which lay behind it was printed and distributed throughout the country, with appeal for assistance and support, in the name of freedom! And by means of appeals to the labor parties of foreign countries they reminded the people of the vast solidarity of labor. It was a huge machine to set in motion; federation had increased from one small trade union until it comprehended the whole kingdom, and now they were striving to comprehend the laboring populations of the whole world, in order to win them over as confederates in the campaign. And men who had risen from the masses and were still sharing the same conditions, were managing all this! They had kept step with the rapid growth of the movement, and they were still growing.

The feeling that they were well prepared inspired them with courage and the prospect of a favorable result. From the country offers of employment for the locked-out workers daily reached the central office. Money was sent too--and assistance in the form of provisions; and many families outside the capital offered to take in the children of unemployed parents. Remittances of money came from abroad, and the liberal circles of the capital sympathized with the workers; and in the workers' quarter of the city shopkeepers and publicans began to collect for the Federation.

The workers displayed an extraordinary readiness to undergo sacrifices. Books of coupons were circulated everywhere in the workshops, and thousands of workers gave each week a fourth part of their modest wages. The locked-out workers left their work with magnificent courage; the sense of community made them heroic. Destitute though they were as a result of the hard winter, they agreed, during the first two weeks, to do without assistance. Many of them spared the treasury altogether, helping themselves as well as they could, seeking a little private employment, or going out into the country to work on the land. The young unmarried men went abroad.

The employers did what they could to cope with all these shifts. They forbade the merchants and contractors to supply those who worked at home on their own account with materials for their work; and secret agents were despatched all over the country to the small employers and the farmers, in order to prejudice them against the locked-out workers; and the frontier of the country was covered with placards.

Their intention was obvious enough--an iron ring was to be drawn round the workers, and once imprisoned therein they could do nothing but keep starvation at bay until they had had enough, and surrendered. This knowledge increased their resistance. They were lean with wandering through the wilderness, but they were just in the mood for a fight. Many of them had not until now understood the entire bearings of the campaign; the new ideas had been stirring within them, but in a fragmentary and isolated condition--as an expression of a dumb feeling that the promised land was at hand at last. Often it was just one single word that had fixed itself in their minds, and had to serve to express the whole position. Any one might approach them with plausible arguments and strike it from under them, and shatter the theory to which they had clung; but faith itself remained, and the far-reaching concord; deep in their hearts was the dim, immovable knowledge that they were chosen to enter into the time of promise.

And now everything was gradually becoming plain to them. The battle shed light both backward and forward. It illumined their existence in all its harshness. Life was the same as it had always been, but now it was revealed so plainly that all could see it. All the many whips and scorns of life had been bound together in one vast scourge--the scourge of famine--which was to drive them back into the midst of poverty! Want was to be set upon them in its compactest form! This was the last, most extreme weapon; it confirmed them in the certainty that they were now on the right track, and near the goal. The night was always darkest before the break of day!

There were all sorts of things that they could understand now. People used to go about saying that the Germans were the hereditary enemy, and that the Fatherland was taking the lead of all other countries. But now the employers were sending to Germany for troops of hirelings, and were employing them to drive their own countrymen into a state of poverty. All that talk about patriotic feeling had been only fine words! There were only two nations--the oppressors and the oppressed!

That was how things appeared on closer inspection! One could never be very sure of what those above one told one--and yet all teaching came from them! A brave lot the clergy were--they knew very well which master they had to serve! No, the people ought to have had their own schools, where the children would learn the new ideas instead of religion and patriotism! Then there would long ago have been an end of the curse of poverty! So they profited by the campaign and their compulsory idleness in order to think things over, and to endeavor to solve all manner of problems.

The specter of hunger presently began to go from house to house, but the result was not what was expected; it awakened only hatred and defiance. It was precisely in this direction that they were invincible! In the course of time they had learned to suffer--they had learned nothing more thoroughly; and this came to their help now. They had an inexhaustible fund to draw upon, from which they could derive their strength to resist; they were not to be defeated. Weren't they nearly ready to surrender? Very well--another thousand workers on the streets! But the distress, to all appearance, became no greater than before; they had learned to endure their privations in decency--that was their share in the increasing culture. One saw no obtrusive signs of want; they compromised with it in secret, and appeared full of courage. This weakened the faith of their opponents in the infallible nature of their means.

They even adopted hunger as their own weapon, boycotting the employers and their dependents, striking the enemy a blow they were familiar with! Many a great employer's door was marked with a cross, and all behind it were doomed to ruin.

It was as though the courage of the people increased in proportion as famine threatened them more closely. No one could tell how long this would last; but they would make hay as long as the sun shone! Their clothes were still tidy, and in the early spring there were many excursions; the people went forth singing, with banners at their head, and singing they came home.

This was the first time they had ever enjoyed their freedom, although there was work enough to be done--it was their first holiday! As they held the whip hand through their purchasing capacity, they boycotted all the business concerns of their own quarter which did not array themselves on the side of the workers. Their hatred was aroused; it was "for us or against us"; all must declare themselves by taking sides. The small shopkeepers concealed their convictions--if they had any--and rivalled one another in friendliness toward the workers. On their counters lay books of coupons for those who would contribute to the funds, and some of them gave a percentage of their own takings. There was plenty of time to keep a strict eye on such; the people's hatred was aroused at last, and it grew more and more bitter.

The leaders held back and counselled prudence. But there was something intoxicating in this battle for bare life--and for happiness! Something that went to the head and tempted them to hazard all on the cast of the dice. The leaders had given great attention to the problem of restricting the number of idle hands--it was difficult for them to procure sufficient funds. But those workers who still had work to do forsook it, in order to join themselves, in blind solidarity, to their locked-out comrades. They thought it was required of them!

One day the masons made an unexpected demand that an hour should be struck off the day's work. They received a refusal. But that evening they knocked off at six instead of seven. The men were unreasonable: to demand shorter hours in the slack season following on a hard winter!

This move took the leaders by surprise. They feared that it might diminish the general sympathy for the workers. It surprised them particularly that the prudent and experienced Stolpe had not opposed this demand. As president of the organization for many years, he had great influence over the men; he must try to persuade them to go to work again. Pelle opened negotiations with him.

"That is not my business," Stolpe replied. "I did not propose the cessation of work, but at the general meeting the majority was in favor of it--and with that there's no more to be said. I don't oppose my comrades."

"But that's perverse of you," said Pelle. "You are the responsible person, and your trade has the most favorable conditions of labor--and you ought to remember the conflict in which we are engaged."

"Yes, the conflict! Of course we thought of it. And you are right, I have a good and comfortable home, because my craft is in a good position; and we masons have obtained good conditions, and we earn good

money. But are we to enjoy ourselves and look on while the others are fighting for dry bread? No, we are with them when it comes to a fight!"

"But the support you were giving--it was ten thousand kroner a week, and now we shall have to do without it! Your action may have incalculable consequences for us. You must put an end to this, father-in-law! You must see that the majority doesn't have its way."

"That would be diplomatic, wouldn't it? But you seem anxious to side with our opponents! We hold the suffrage in honor, and it is the suffrage that is to reform society. If once one begins to meddle with the voting-papers!--"

"But that isn't necessary in the least! The people aren't really clear as to what they are doing--you can't expect any quickness of perception from them! You could demand a fresh vote--if I could first have a talk with them about the campaign!"

"So you think we couldn't see what we were doing!" replied Stolpe, much offended. "But we can accept the consequences--we can do that! And you want to get up on the platform and talk them silly, and then they are to vote the other way round! No, no nonsense here! They voted according to their convictions--and with that the matter's settled, whether it's right or wrong! It won't be altered!"

Pelle had to give in; the old man was not to be moved from his point of view. The masons increased the unemployed by a few thousand men.

The employers profited by this aggression, which represented them to the public in a favorable aspect, in order to strike a decisive blow. The universal lock-out was declared.

XXX

At home matters were going badly with Pelle. They had not yet recovered from the winter when he was drawn into the conflict; and the preparations for his new position had plunged them into debt. Pelle received the same relief as the other locked-out workers--ten to twelve kroner a week--and out of this Ellen had to provide them with food and firing. She thought he ought, as leader, to receive more than the others, but Pelle did not wish to enjoy other conditions than those allotted to the rest.

When he came home, thoroughly exhausted after his strenuous day, he was met by Ellen's questioning eyes. She said nothing, but her eyes obstinately repeated the same question day after day. It was as though they asked him: "Well, have you found employment?" This irritated him, for she knew perfectly well that he was not looking for work, that there was none to look for. She knew what the situation was as well as he did, but she persistently behaved as though she knew nothing of all that he and his comrades were endeavoring to achieve, and when he turned the conversation on to that subject she preserved a stubborn silence; she did not wish to hear anything about it.

When the heat of battle rose to Pelle's head, there was no one with whom

he would rather have shared his opinions and his plans of campaign. In other directions she had urged him on, and he had felt this as a confirmation and augmentation of his own being; but now she was silent. She had him and her home and the children, and all else besides was nothing to her. She had shared the privations of the winter with him and had done so cheerfully; they were undeserved. But now he could get work whenever he wished. She had resumed her dumb opposition, and this had an oppressive effect upon him; it took something from the joy of battle.

When he reached home and related what had been said and done during the day, he addressed himself to Lasse. She moved about the home immersed in her own cares, as though she were dumb; and she would suddenly interrupt his conversation with the statement that this or that was lacking. So he weaned himself from his communicative habits, and carried on all his work away from home. If there was writing to be done, or if he had negotiations to accomplish, he selected some tavern where he would be free of her constraining presence. He avoided telling her of his post of confidence, and although she could not help hearing about it when away from home she behaved as if she knew nothing. For her he was still merely Pelle the working-man, who shirked supporting his wife and children. This obstinate attitude pained him; and the bitterness of his home life made him throw himself with greater energy into the struggle. He became a hard and dangerous opponent.

Lasse used to gaze at them unhappily. He would willingly have intervened, but he did not know how to set about it; and he felt himself superfluous. Every day he donned his old clothes and went out in order to offer his services as casual laborer, but there were plenty of idle hands younger than his. And he was afraid of obtaining employment that might take the bread out of other folks' mouths. He could not understand the campaign, and he found it difficult to understand what was forbidden ground; but for Pelle he felt an unconditional respect. If the lad said this or the other, then it was right; even if one had to go hungry for it--the lad was appointed to some special end.

One day he silently left the house; Pelle scarcely noticed it, so absorbed was he. "He must have gone back to the old clothes woman at the 'Ark,'" he thought; "it's by no means amusing here."

Pelle had charge of the external part of the campaign; he knew nothing of bookkeeping or administration, but simply threw himself into the fight. Even as a child of eight he had been faced with the problem of mastering life by his own means, and he had accomplished it, and this he profited by now. He enjoyed the confidence of the masses; his speech sounded natural to them, so that they believed in him even when they did not understand him. If there was any one who did not wish to follow where Pelle led, he had to go just the same; there was no time just now for lengthy argument; where civil words didn't answer he took more energetic means.

The campaign consisted in the first place of the federation of the masses, and Pelle was continually away from home; wherever anything was afoot, there he put in an appearance. He had inaugurated a huge parade, every morning all the locked-out workers reported themselves at various stations in the city, and there the roll was called, every worker being entered according to his Union. By means of this vast daily roll-call of nearly forty thousand men it was possible to discover which of them had deserted in order to act as strike-breakers. A few were always absent, and those who had a good excuse had to establish it in order to draw

their strike-pay. Pelle was now here, now there, and always unexpected, acting on impulse as he did. "Lightning Pelle," they called him, on account of the suddenness of his movements. His actions were not based upon long deliberations; nevertheless, he had a radical comprehension of the entire movement; one thing grew out of another, naturally, until the whole was more than any conscious intelligence could comprehend. And Pelle grew with it, and by virtue of his impulsiveness was a summary of it all.

There was plenty to be done; at the roll-call all those who failed to attend had to be entered, and those who knew anything about them must give information. This man had gone abroad; that one had gone into the country, to look for work; so far, so good. If any fell away and acted as strike-breaker, instructions were immediately given for his punishment. In this way Pelle kept the ranks closed. There were many weak elements among them--degenerate, ignorant fellows who didn't understand the importance of the movement, but a strong controlling hand and unfailing justice made it a serious matter for them to break away.

At the outset he had organized with Stolpe's assistance a large body of the best workers as pickets or watchmen. These were zealous, fanatical members of the various trades, who had taken part in the organization of their own professional organization, and knew every individual member thereof. They stationed themselves early in the morning in the neighborhood of the various places of employment, marking those who went to work there and doing their best to prevent them. They were in constant conflict with the police, who put every possible obstacle in their way.

Morten he met repeatedly. Privation had called him out of his retirement. He did not believe that the campaign would lead to better conditions, and on that account he took no part in it. But what he knew as did no other; his insight in that direction was mysteriously keen. The distribution of relief in the form of provisions could not have been entrusted to better hands. He superintended the whole business of distribution, but what he liked best was to stand, knife in hand, cutting up pork for the families of locked-out workers. The portions were strictly weighed; none the less, the women always thronged about him. There was a blessing in that faint smile of his--they felt sure his portions were the biggest!

Morten and Pelle were in disagreement on almost every point. Even now, when everything depended on a strict cohesion, Morten could never be trusted to behave with severity. "Remember, they aren't of age yet," he would say continually. And it could not be gainsaid that there were many to whom the conflict was unintelligible--they understood nothing of it, although otherwise they were thoughtful and intelligent enough. These were mostly people who had come in from the provinces at a somewhat advanced age; indeed some had been small employers there. For them trades unionism was a sort of lynch law, and they profited by the strike in all simplicity in order to obtain well-paid employment. When they were reviled as strikebreakers or "gentlemen," they laughed like little children who are threatened with a revolver. Slow-witted as they were, in this respect, they took the consequences to heart, although they could not see the reason for them. These must be compelled to obey.

The iron industry was doing its utmost to keep going, as a trade which must fulfill its contracted engagements, under penalty of seeing the business fall into foreign hands. This industry had if possible to be

disabled. The pickets were at work, and _The Working Man_ published the names and addresses of the strike-breakers. When these left the factory they encountered a crowd of people who treated them with scorn and contempt; they had to be escorted by the police. But the resentment aroused by their treachery followed them home even to the barracks they lived in. The wives and children of the locked-out workers resumed the battle and carried on hostilities against the families of the strike-breakers, so that they had to move. One saw them of a night, with all their possessions on a handcart, trudging away to seek a new home under cover of the darkness. But the day revealed them, and again they were fugitives, until the police took them in hand and found lodging for them.

One day a large factory by the North Bridge resumed operations with the help of foreign labor and strike-breakers. Pelle set to work to prepare a warm reception for the workers when they went homeward, but in the course of the day a policeman who was friendly to the workers tipped him the wink that two hundred police would be concealed in a neighboring school, ready for the workers' departure.

In the afternoon people began to collect--unemployed workers, poor women, and children. They came early, for it well might be that the workers would be released an hour before their time, in order to avoid a clash, and they were missing nothing by waiting there. Finally several thousand people stood before the gates of the factory, and the police were moving to and fro through the crowd, which stood many men deep, but they had to give up the effort to drive them asunder. The street urchins began to make an uproar, and to egg the watchers on. They felt the need of warming themselves a little, so they gradually began to bait the police.

"Hullo, there!" suddenly shouted a mighty voice. "In the school over there are two hundred police, waiting for us to make a disturbance, so that they can come and use their truncheons on us. Hadn't we better leave them where they are? I think it's quite as well they should go back to school for a time!" "Hurrah!" they cried. "Hurrah! Long live 'Lightning'!" A movement went through the crowd. "That's Pelle!" The whisper passed from mouth to mouth, and the women stood on tiptoe to see him.

Pelle and Stolpe were standing against a wall, surrounded by a few dozen pickets. The police went up to them and reprimanded them. They had orders to hinder the picketing, but they had no desire to meddle with Pelle. They lived in the workers' quarter, were at home there, and a word from him would make the city impossible for them.

The usual time for stopping work came round, but the workers were not released from the factory. The crowd used its wits to keep itself warm; punning remarks concerning strike-breakers and capitalists buzzed through the air. But suddenly an alarm ran through the crowd. The street urchins, who are always the first to know everything, were whistling between their fingers and running down the side streets. Then the crowd began to move, and the police followed at a quick march, keeping to the middle of the street. The factory had discharged the workers by a back door. They were moving down Guldberg Street by now, disheartened and with never a glance behind them, while a whole escort of police accompanied them. They were soon overtaken and brought home to the accompaniment of a sinister concert, which now and again was interrupted by cries of, "Three cheers for the gentlemen!"

The pickets walked in a long file, close to the procession, zealously occupied in noting each individual worker, while Pelle moved in the midst of the crowd, endeavoring to prevent over-hasty action. There was need to be careful. Several men were still in prison because during the winter they had come to blows with the strike-breakers, and the police had received stringent orders from the authorities. The press of the propertied classes was daily calling for stricter measures, demanding that every meeting in the streets, and especially before the gates of a factory, should be broken up by the police.

Now and then a strike-breaker parted from the squad and ran into the door of his dwelling, followed by a long whistle.

Among the workers was a solitary, elderly man, still powerful, whom Pelle recognized. He kept at the extreme edge of the police, walking heavily, with bowed head, along the pavement close to the houses. His hair was quite gray, and his gait was almost crippled. This was Mason Hansen, Stolpe's old comrade and fellow-unionist, whom Pelle had interviewed in the winter, in the hope of persuading him to refrain from strikebreaking.

"It's going badly with him," thought Pelle, involuntarily keeping his eyes on him. The results of strike-breaking had dealt hardly with him.

By St. Hans Street he turned the corner, winking at the policeman who was about to follow him, and went down the street alone, looking neither to right nor left, embarrassed, and with hanging head. Every time a child cried aloud, he started. Then he stood as though riveted to the ground, for in front of his door a heap of poverty-stricken household goods lay in the gutter. A crowd of gaping children stood round the heap, and in the midst of the group stood a youngish woman, with four children, who were keeping tearful watch over the heap of trash. The man pressed through the crowd and exchanged a few words with the woman, then clenched his fists and shook them threateningly at the tenement house.

Pelle went up to him. "Things aren't going well with you, comrade," he said, laying his hand on the other's shoulder. "And you are much too good for what you are doing. You had better come with me and re-enter the organization."

The man slowly turned his head. "Oh, it's you!" he said, shaking Pelle's hand away with a jerk. "And you seem as cool and impudent as ever. Poverty hasn't dealt hardly with you! It's not at all a bad business, growing fat on the pence of the workers, eh?"

Pelle grew crimson with anger, but he controlled himself. "Your insults don't hurt me," he said. "I have gone hungry for the Cause while you have been playing the turncoat. But that will be forgotten if you'll come with me."

The man laughed bitterly, pointing at the tenement-house. "You'd better go and give them a medal. Three months now they've tormented me and made hell hot for my wife and children, in order to drive us away. And as that didn't answer, they went to the landlord and forced him to give me notice. But Hansen is obstinate--he wouldn't be shown the door. So now they've got the bailiffs to turn me out, see?" He gave a hollow laugh. "But these few sticks, why, we can soon carry them up again, damn it all! Shall we begin, mother?"

"I'll willingly speak to the landlord. Remember, you are an old unionist."

"An old--yes, I was in it from the very beginning." The man drew himself proudly erect. "But for all that I don't let my wife and children starve. So you want to go begging favors for me, eh? You be gone--at once, will you? Be off, to the devil, or I'll beat you to a jelly with this!" He seized a table-leg; his eyes were quite blood-shot. His young wife went up to him and took his hand. "Hansen!" she said quietly. He let his weapon fall. Pelle felt the woman's pleading eyes upon him, and went.

XXXI

When Pelle, tired to death, made his way homeward in the evening, he had lost the feeling of invincibility and his thoughts turned to Ellen.

In the daytime he felt neither hesitation nor certainty. When he set to work it was always with thousands behind him. He felt the great body of workers at his back, whether he was fighting in the open or waiting with close-buttoned coat to deal with the leaders of the opposing camp. But when he went home to Ellen he had only himself to rely on for support. And he could not get near her. Strongly as he was drawn by the life away from home, she still held the secret of his life in her hands. She was strong and would not be swept aside. He was forced to ponder over her nature and to search for a solution.

Pelle had to deal with countless numbers of families, and what he saw was not always edifying. Home was a conception which was only now forcing its way downward from the middle classes. Even in periods of normal employment the workers earned little enough when it came to providing a decent family life, and the women knew nothing of making a comfortable home. The man might be tidy and well-dressed when one met him out of doors, but if you went to his home it was always the same thing; a dark, grimy den and a worn-out wife, who moved about scolding amidst a swarm of children. Wages were enough for one only to live in comfort. The man represented the household out of doors. He must take sandwiches to his work, and he must have something decent too when he got home. The others managed with a little bread and coffee; it was of no use to talk of regular family meals. And the man must have clothes; he was the visible portion of the household, and he supported it. It was of no use to look for anything further in the way of ideas from these women; they saw nothing but unemployment and the want at home, and when the husband showed himself they drove him out of the house with their scolding ways. "You go out and meddle with everything you can think of that doesn't concern us--politics and big talk--instead of doing your work properly and leaving the fools to squabble among themselves!" The result was that they did their work for the organization in the taverns. Many of them held positions of confidence, and Pelle went to the taverns to confer with them. They were dejected, when they arrived, and had before all else to be thawed out.

There Pelle came to them, with his brilliant hopes. When they lamented in their dejection, he promised great things of the future. "Our wives

will soon see that we are in the right. The day will soon come when we shall be able to go home with a proper week's wages, that will be enough for the whole family."

"And suppose it doesn't come off?" they would say.

"It will come off--if only we hold out!" he cried, smiting the table.

Yes, he might well see the bright side of things. He had a wife who came from a long-established home, who kept things clean and tidy for him, and knew how to make much do the work of little; the daughter of an old unionist who had grown up in the midst of the movement--a wife who saw her husband's doings with understanding eyes; yes, he might well smile! As to the last, Pelle was silent.

In this particular she had accepted neither inheritance nor teaching; she was as she was, and she would never be different, whatever might pass over her head. Pelle was sacrificing wife and children to a fixed idea, in order not to leave a few indifferent comrades in the lurch! That, and the strike, and the severe condemnation of those who would not keep step, was, and remained, for her, so much tavern nonsense. It was something the workers had got into their heads as a result of talking when they were not precisely sober.

That was what it was, and it filled her heart with pain and mortification that she and hers should be set aside for people who were nothing to them. And this pain made her beautiful, and justified her in her own eyes.

She did not complain in words, and she was always careful to set before Pelle whatever the house could provide. He always found everything in order, and he understood what efforts it must cost her--considering the smallness of the means which she had at her disposal. There was no weak point in her defences; and this made the position still more oppressive; he could not evoke an explosion, a ventilation of her grievances; it was impossible to quarrel with her and make friends again.

Often he wished that Ellen would become neglectful, like so many others. But she was always attentive; the more the circumstances enabled her to condemn him, the more correctly did she behave.

If only he could have explained her lack of comprehension by supposing that her mind was barren and self-seeking! But in his eyes she had always been quite simple and single-minded, and yet her nature was to him a continual enigma! It was true she was not excessively benevolent or sympathetic where others were concerned; but on the other hand she asked nothing for herself--her thoughts were all for him and the children. He must admit that she had, without a thought, sacrificed everything to him--her home, her whole world--and that she had a right to ask something in return.

And she was still unchangeably the same. She was indifferent where she herself was concerned, if only Pelle and the children had something she was contented; she herself needed so little, yet she seemed to take enough when he watched her eating. Pelle often wondered that she retained her healthy appearance, although the food she ate was so inferior. Perhaps she helped herself in secret--but he drove the thought away, and was ashamed. She was always completely indifferent as to what she ate; she did not notice what it was, but served him and the children

with the best of it--especially himself--yet she seemed to thrive. Yes, even now she gave the best to him. It was as though she was fulfilling some deep-rooted law of her nature, which was independent of their relations to one another. In this nothing could alter her habits. She might have been compared to a great beautiful bitch that lies attentively marking the appetite of her young, although none can tell, from her deliberate quiet, that her own bowels are twisted with hunger. If they left anything, she noticed it. "I have eaten," she would say, so quietly that she succeeded as a rule in deceiving them. Yes, it made him feel desperate to think about it; the more he thought of it the more unendurable it was. She was sacrificing herself for him, yet she must condemn all his doings! She knew how to defy starvation far better than he--and she did not understand why they must go hungry!

But from all these painful deliberations she emerged always more prominently capable, incomprehensible, and beautiful in all her strangeness! And he would hurry home, full of burning longing and devotion, continually hoping that this time she would come to him glowing with love, to hide her eyes, full of confusion, on his shoulder. The disappointment only flung him yet more violently into the struggle; the longing of his heart for a tender, careless hand made his own hard.

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He was always exerting himself to find some means of making money. At first, of course, there was no way, and he became so completely absorbed in the conflict that finally the question no longer occupied his mind. It lurked in his consciousness, like a voluptuous wish that merely tinged his daily existence; it was as though something within his mind had taken possession of his talent for design, and was always designing beautiful paper money and displaying it to his imagination.

One day when he reached home he found Widow Rasmussen tending the children and working on a pair of canvas shoes. Drunken Valde had left her again--had flown out into the spring! Ellen had gone out to work. A sudden pain shot through him. Her way of doing this, without saying a word to him, was like a blow in the face, and at first he was angry. But disloyalty was foreign to his nature. He had to admit that she was within her rights; and with that his anger evaporated, leaving him bewildered; something within him seemed tottering; surely this was a topsy-turvy world! "I might as well stay at home and look after the children," he thought bitterly.

"I'll stay with the children now, Madam Rasmussen!" he said. The woman put her work together.

"Yes, they've got a lot to go through," she said, standing in the doorway. "I don't myself understand what it's all about, but one must always do something! That's my motto. For things can't be worse than they are. 'Widow!' Pooh! They won't let us behave ourselves! A man can scarcely look after himself, let alone a family, in this accursed world --and one needn't call one's self Madam to get children! Here have I been knocking about all my life, ruining my health and happiness, and have I earned as much from all my blackguards as would pay for the rags I've worn? No; I've had to beg them nicely of the fine folks for whom I do washing! Yes, they are ready to skin one alive--Madam Rasmussen has proved that. So I say, one must always try something! To-day the boy comes home and says, 'Mother, they've put up the price of firewood again--an ore the two dozen!' 'What does that matter to us, boy? Can we

buy two dozen at once?' I say. 'Yes, mother, but then the one dozen will cost an ore more.' And eggs, they cost one krone twenty a score where the rich folks buy them--but here! 'No, my dear madam, if you take two eggs you must pay fifteen ore!' That makes eight ore for an egg, for if one takes the smallest quantity the profits aren't in proportion. It's hard to be poor. If it's never going to be better, may the devil take him that's made it all! That was a fine swear!"

Pelle sat playing with Young Lasse. Madam Rasmussen's words had aroused something in him. That was the eternal complaint, the old, old cry! Whenever he heard it, the world of the poor man became even more plainly visible for what it was--and he ought to know it! It was a frightful abyss that he looked down into; it was bottomless; and it seemed forever to reveal fresh depths. And he was right--he was right.

He sat carelessly drawing something for the child on a scrap of paper, thinking of things quite different; but involuntarily the drawing took shape from within his hand. "That's money, that's money!" cried Young Lasse, clapping his hands. Pelle waked up and examined his drawing; sure enough, there was a rough sketch of a ten-kroner note! It flattered his father's heart that the child had recognized it; and he was seized by the desire to see how like it was. But where in all the world was he to get a "blue"? Pelle, who at this time superintended the collection and distributing of millions, did not possess ten kroner! The pipe! The pipe! That was what the boy got his idea from! His old Christmas present, queerly enough, had a ten-kroner note on the bowl--and that gave him an idea! He got it out and compared it; it was a long time since he had smoked the pipe--he couldn't afford it. He began eagerly to fill in the drawing while Young Lasse stood by, amusing himself by watching the rapid movements of the pencil. "Father is clever--Father draw!" he said, and wanted to wake his sister so that she could take part in the game.

No, the result was not good! The design would have to be cut in wood and printed in color for the appearance really to be similar. But then Ellen came home, and he hid it away. "Won't you give up going out to work?" he said. "I'll provide what is absolutely necessary."

"Why?" she retorted resolutely. "I'm not too good to do anything!" There was no tone in her voice from which he could elicit anything; so he got ready to go to the meeting.

Now, when Ellen went out to work, he ran home as often as he had time in order to look after the children. He had obtained a piece of hard wood and a ten-kroner note. With great care he transferred the design onto the wood, and began to engrave it while he sat there chattering to the children. This task occupied unused faculties; it engrossed him as an artistic exercise, which lingered at the back of his mind and automatically continued to carry itself out, even when he was away from home. This work filled his mind with a peculiar beauty so long as he was engaged on it. A warm, blissful world was evoked by the sight of this ten-kroner note, which shone ever more plainly out of the darkness and swept all privations aside. When Pelle sat at this work his mind soared above all oppression as though intoxicated; unhappy things no longer existed for him. He became an optimist and mentally made Ellen all sorts of costly presents.

It was all fundamentally so simple--it was only a misunderstanding--nothing more! He must speak to her, and she would see at once what a

happy life they were going to live--if only they held out. Silence had filled her with resentment. Fortune! Fortune! It was nearer than ever now, greater and more splendid than on that other occasion when it had knocked at their door! Why, he did not know--that did not seem very clear!

But when he heard her step on the stairs his dream was shattered. He was awake. He concealed his work, ashamed to think that she should come home from work and find him at play.

At times he was oppressed by a feeling of the unattainable in his relations with Ellen. Even to himself he could not explain the contradiction between the constant longing for more ample and stable conditions, for triumph and victory, and his impotency at home, where his fortunes were declining. He wearied himself in trying to puzzle it out, and he was seized by a desire that he might become indifferent to the whole matter. He felt no inclination to drink, but none the less something was working convulsively within him; a certain indifference as to his own welfare, causing him to run risks, not caring whether he might not commit some stupidity that would do him harm. And at such times a voice cried loudly within him, especially when he was confronted by the bitter utterances of want. "That is my old complaint," he thought, and he became observant. In his childhood it had been a sort of seizure; now it had become a voice.

XXXII

Early one morning Pelle wandered into the city. He had risen before Ellen, in order to avoid the painfulness of sitting down to breakfast with her. Ellen tried all sorts of ruses in order to give him a proper breakfast, and it was not difficult to persuade his stomach; but afterward he felt ashamed that he should have been cared for at the cost of others; and cunning though he was too, he could not get the better of her save by slipping away while she was still asleep.

His fasting condition endowed the city, and the whole of life, with a curiously unsubstantial aspect. Before him lay a long day full of terrific labors, and behind him was the fresh triumph of the day before.

As matters now stood, the employers in the iron industry had conceived the cunning idea of founding a blackleg Union for smiths and mechanics, and of giving it a name closely resembling that of the genuine Union. Then they sent circulars to the men, stating that work would be resumed on the following day. Many of the men were not accustomed to read, and regarded the circular as an order from their own Union, while others were enticed by the high wages offered by the new society. There was great confusion among the workers of these trades. As soon as the trick was exposed every respectable man drew back; but there was a great deal of disappointment, and they felt horribly ashamed before their comrades.

Pelle was furious at this trick, which affected him more especially, as the leader in open battle; he had suffered a defeat, and he meditated revenge. In spite of all the efforts of the pickets, it was not possible to procure a full list of the strikebreakers; his chagrin on this account burned in his heart, like a shameful sense of impotency;

hitherto he had been noted for getting to the bottom of anything he undertook! He resolved then and there to meet ruse with ruse. He set a trap for his opponents, so that they themselves should deliver the strikebreakers into his hands. One morning he published his list in _The Working Man_ with the proud remark, "Look, the enemy has no more!" Did the employers really fall into the trap, or was the fate of the strike-breakers really indifferent to them? Next morning their organ protested, and gave the number of the black-legs and their names into the bargain!

This was a smack! A good one this; it brought a light to the thin, impassive faces. There was an answer to the trick of the other day! This Pelle was a deuce of a fellow! Three cheers for "Lightning Pelle!" Hip, hip, hurrah!

Pelle was the deuce of a fellow as he strode along ruddy and full of pugnacity, with the echoes from the side-streets and the tenement-houses mingled with his own vigorous footsteps. Streets and houses were white with the night's hoar frost, and overhead the air was full of a peculiar glow that came from the city--a light flowing from hidden sources. He had left all his cares at home; on every hand working-folk were greeting him, and his greeting in return was like an inspiriting song. He did not know them, but they knew him! The feeling that his work--however deep the scars it might leave--was arousing gratitude, had an uplifting effect upon him.

The city was in its morning mood. The lock-out lay like a paralyzing hand upon everything; business was slack, and the middle classes were complaining, but there was no prospect of peace; both sides were irreconcilable. The workers had lost nothing through the rash cessation of the masons. Sympathy for the lower classes had become a political principle; and contributions were still pouring in from the country. Considerable sums came from abroad. The campaign was now costing the workers half a million kroner a week; and the help from outside was like a drop in the ocean. But it had the effect of a moral support, and it stimulated the self-taxation to which all were subject. The hundred thousand households of the poor parted with their last possessions in order to continue the struggle; they meant to force a decision that should affect their whole future. The employers tried to hinder the great National Federation by calling the attention of the authorities to an ancient statute concerning mendicancy; but that merely aroused merriment. A little laughter over such expedients was permissible.

The workers had become accustomed to starvation. They went no more into the forest, but strolled thoughtfully through the streets like people who have too much time on their hands, so that the city's face wore a peculiar stamp of meditative poverty. Their loitering steps aroused no echo, and in the houses the quietness gave one food for reflection. The noisy, ever-hungry children were scattered over the face of the country --they at least had plenty to eat. But the place was empty for the lack of them!

Pelle met several squads of workers; they were on the way to the various roll-calls. They raised their heads as he passed; his footsteps echoed loudly enough for all! It was the hope and the will of forty thousand men that passed there--Pelle was the expression of them all. They stared at his indomitable figure, and drew themselves up. "A devil of a chap!" they told one another joyfully; "he looks as if he could trample 'em all underfoot! Look at him--he scarcely makes way for that great loaded

wagon! Long live Pelle, boys!"

The tavern-keepers stood on their cellar stairs gaping up at the morning sky--this was a time of famine for them! In the tavern windows hung cards with the inscription: "Contributions received here for the locked-out workers!"

On the Queen Luise Bridge Pelle encountered a pale, fat little man in a shabby coat. He had flabby features and a great red nose. "Good morning, General!" cried Pelle gaily; the man made a condescending movement with his hand. This was _The Working Man's_ man of straw; a sometime capitalist, who for a small weekly wage was, as far as the public was concerned, the responsible editor of the paper. He served various terms of imprisonment for the paper, and for a further payment of five kroner a week he also worked out in prison the fines inflicted on the paper. When he was not in jail he kept himself alive by drinking. He suffered from megalomania, and considered that he led the whole labor movement; for which reason he could not bear Pelle.

In the great court-yard of _The Working Man_ building the dockers were assembled to answer the roll. The president of their Union met Pelle in the doorway; he was the very man whom Pelle and Howling Peter had rescued down by the harbor--now he was working for the new ideas!

"Well, how goes it?" asked Pelle, shaking his hand.

"Splendid! A thousand men all but seven!"

"But where's the joyful Jacob? Is he ill?"

"He's in jail," replied the other gloomily. "He couldn't bear to see his old folks starving--so he broke into a grocery, he and his brother--and now they're both in prison."

For a moment the lines on Pelle's forehead were terribly deep and gloomy; he stood gazing blindly into space; the radiant expression left his countenance, which was filled with a pitying gravity. The docker stared at him--was he going to sleep on his feet? But then he pulled himself together.

"Well, comrades, are you finding the days too long?" he cried gaily.

"Ach, as for that! It's the first time one's had the time to get to know one's own wife and children properly!" they replied. "But for all that it would be fine to get busy again!"

It was obvious that idleness was at last beginning to depress them; there was a peculiar pondering expression on their impassive features, and their eyes turned to him with a persistent questioning. They asked that this undertaking of his should be settled one way or the other. They were not weakening; they always voted for the continuance of the campaign, for that which they sought depended thereon; but they gazed into his face for a look that might promise success.

He had to answer many singular questions; privation engendered in the most fantastic ideas, which revealed the fact that their quiet, controlled bearing was the product of the observation and the energy of the many.

"Shall we deprive the rich of all their wealth and power?" asked one man, after long pondering and gazing at Pelle. The struggle seemed to have dealt hardly with him; but it had lit a spark in his eyes.

"Yes, we are going now to take our rights as men, and we shall demand that the worker shall be respected," Pelle replied. "Then there'll be no more talk of poor man and gentleman!"

"But suppose they try to get on top of us again? We must make short work of them, so that they can't clamber on our backs and ride us again."

"Do you want to drive them all onto the Common and shoot them? That's not necessary," said his neighbor. "When this is settled no one will dare to take the food out of our mouths again."

"Won't there be any more poverty then?" asked the first speaker, turning to Pelle.

"No, once we get our affairs properly in going order; then there will be comfort in every home. Don't you read your paper?"

Yes, he read it, but there was no harm in hearing the great news confirmed by Pelle himself. And Pelle could confirm it, because he never harbored a doubt. It had been difficult to get the masses to grasp the new conception of things--as difficult as to move the earth! Something big must happen in return!

A few of the men had brought out sandwiches and began to eat them as they debated. "Good digestion!" said Pelle, nodding farewell to them. His mouth was watering, and he remembered that he had had nothing to eat or drink. But he had no time to think about it; he must go to Stolpe to arrange about the posting of the pickets.

Over the way stood Marie in a white cap, with a basket over her arm; she nodded to him, with rosy cheeks. Transplantation had made her grow; every time he saw her she was more erect and prettier.

At his parents'-in-law the strictest economy prevailed. All sorts of things--household possessions--had disappeared from that once so comfortable home; but there was no lack of good spirits. Stolpe was pottering about waiting for his breakfast; he had been at work early that morning.

"What's the girl doing?" he asked. "We never see her now."

"She has such a lot to do," said Pelle apologetically. "And now she's going out to work as well."

"Well, well, with things as they are she's not too fine to lend a hand. But we don't really know what's amiss with her--she's a rebellious nature! Thank God she's not a man--she would have brought dissolution into the ranks!"

Breakfast consisted of a portion of coffee and bread-and-butter and porridge. Madam Stolpe could not find her fine new silver coffee-service, which her children had given her on her silver-wedding day. "I must have put it away," she said.

"Well, well, that'll soon be found again, mother!" said Stolpe. "Now we

shall soon have better times; many fine things will make their appearance again then, we shall see!"

"Have you been to the machine-works this morning, father-in-law?" asked Pelle.

"Yes, I've been there. But there is nothing more for the pickets to do. The employers have quartered all the men in the factory; they get full board and all there. There must be a crowd of foreign strike-breakers there--the work's in full swing."

This was an overwhelming piece of news! The iron-masters had won the first victory! This would quickly have a most depressing effect on the workers, when they saw that their trade could be kept going without them.

"We must put a bridle on them," said Pelle, "or they'll get off the course and the whole organization will fall to pieces. As for those fellows in there, we must get a louse under their shirts somehow."

"How can we do that when they are locked in, and the police are patrolling day and night in front of the gates? We can't even speak to them." Stolpe laughed despairingly.

"Then some one must slink in and pretend he's in want of employment!"

Stolpe started. "As a strike-breaker? You'll never in this life get a respectable man to do that, even if it's only in jest! I wouldn't do it myself! A strike-breaker is a strike-breaker, turn and twist it how you will."

"A strike-breaker, I suppose, is one who does his comrades harm. The man who risks his skin in this way deserves another name."

"I won't admit that," said Stolpe. "That's a little too abstract for me; anyhow, I'm not going to argue with you. But in my catechism it says that he is a strike-breaker who accepts employment where assistance is forbidden--and that I stick to!"

Pelle might talk as much as he liked; the old man would not budge an inch. "But it would be another matter if you wanted to do it yourself," said Stolpe. "You don't have to account to any one for what you do--you just do what comes into your head."

"I have to account to the Cause for my doings," said Pelle sharply, "and for that very reason I want to do it myself!"

Stolpe contracted his arms and stretched them out again. "Ah, it would be good to have work again!" he cried suddenly. "Idleness eats into one's limbs like the gout. And now there's the rent, mother--where the devil are we to get that? It must be paid on the nail on Saturday, otherwise out we go--so the landlord says."

"We'll soon find that, father!" said Madam Stolpe. "Don't you lose heart!"

Stolpe looked round the room. "Yes, there's still a bit to take, as Hunger said when he began on the bowels. But listen, Pelle--do you know what? I'm your father-in-law-to be sure--but you haven't a wife like

mine!"

"I'm contented with Ellen as she is," said Pelle.

There was a knock; it was Stolpe's brother, the carpenter. He looked exhausted; he was thin and poorly dressed; his eyes were surrounded by red patches. He did not look at those whose hands he took.

"Sit down, brother," said Stolpe, pushing a chair toward him.

"Thanks--I must go on again directly. It was--I only wanted to tell you --well...." He stared out of the window.

"Is anything wrong at home?"

"No, no, not that exactly. I just wanted to say--I want to give notice that I'm deserting!" he cried suddenly.

Stolpe sprang to his feet; he was as white as chalk. "You think what you are doing!" he cried threateningly.

"I've had time enough to think. They are starving, I tell you--and there's got to be an end of it. I only wanted to tell you beforehand so that you shouldn't hear it from others--after all, you're my brother."

"Your brother--I'm your brother no longer! You do this and we've done with one another!" roared Stolpe, striking the table. "But you won't do it, you shan't do it! God damn me, I couldn't live through the shame of seeing the comrades condemning my own brother in the open street! And I shall be with them! I shall be the first to give you a kick, if you are my brother!" He was quite beside himself.

"Well, well, we can still talk it over," said the carpenter quietly. "But now you know--I didn't want to do anything behind your back." And then he went.

Stolpe paced up and down the room, moving from one object to another. He picked them up and put them down again, quite unthinkingly. His hands were trembling violently; and finally he went to the other room and shut himself in. After a time his wife entered the room. "You had better go, Pelle! I don't think father is fit for company to-day. He's lying there quite gray in the face--if he could only cry even! Oh, those two brothers have always been so much to each other till now! They wore so united in everything!"

Pelle went; he was thinking earnestly. He could see that Stolpe, in his integrity, would consider it his duty to treat his brother more harshly than others, dearly as he loved him; perhaps he himself would undertake the picketing of the place where his brother went to work.

Out by the lakes he met a squad of pickets who were on their way out of the city; he accompanied them for some distance, in order to make certain arrangements. Across the road a young fellow came out of a doorway and slunk round the corner. "You there, stop!" cried one of the comrades. "There he is--the toff!" A few pickets followed him down Castle Street and came back leading him among them. A crowd began to form round the whole party, women and children speedily joining it.

"You are not to do anything to him," said Pelle decisively.

"God knows no one wants to touch him!" they retorted. For a while they stood silently gazing at him, as though weighing him in their minds; then one after another spat at him, and they went their way. The fellow went silently into a doorway and stood there wiping the spittle from his face with his sleeve. Pelle followed him in order to say a kind word to him and lead him back into the organization. The lad pulled himself up hastily as Pelle approached.

"Are you coming to spit at me?" he said contemptuously. "You forgot it before--why didn't you do it then?"

"I don't spit at people," said Pelle, "but your comrades are right to despise you. You have left them in the lurch. Come with me, and I'll enter you in the organization again, and no one shall molest you."

"I am to go about as a culprit and be taunted--no, thanks!"

"Do you prefer to injure your own comrades?"

"I ask for permission to look after my old mother. The rest of you can go to the devil. My mother isn't going to hang about courtyards singing, and picking over the dustbins, while her son plays the great man! I leave that to certain other people!"

Pelle turned crimson. He knew this allusion was meant for Father Lasse; the desperate condition of the old man was lurking somewhere in his mind like an ingrowing grief, and now it came to the surface. "Dare you repeat what you said?" he growled, pressing close up to the other.

"And if I were married I shouldn't let my wife earn my daily bread for me--I should leave that to the pimps!"

Oho! That was like the tattlers, to blacken a man from behind! Evidently they were spreading all sorts of lying rumors about him, while he had placed all that he possessed at their disposal. Now Pelle was furious; the leader could go to hell! He gave the fellow a few sound boxes on the ear, and asked him which he would rather do--hold his mouth or take some more?

Morten appeared in the doorway--this had happened in the doorway of the house in which he worked. "This won't do!" he whispered, and he drew Pelle away with him. Pelle could make no reply; he threw himself on Morten's bed. His eyes were still blazing with anger at the insult, and he needed air.

"Things are going badly here now," said Morten, looking at him with a peculiar smile.

"Yes, I know very well you can't stand it--all the same, they must hold together."

"And supposing they don't get better conditions?"

"Then they must accept the consequences. That's better than the whole Cause should go to the wall!"

"Are those the new ideas? I think the ignorant have always had to take the consequences! And there has never been lacking some one to spit on

them!" said Morten sadly.

"But, listen!" cried Pelle, springing to his feet. "You'll please not blame me for spitting at anybody--the others did that!" He was very near losing his temper again, but Morten's quiet manner mastered him.

"The others--that was nothing at all! But it was you who spat seven times over into the poor devil's face--I was standing in the shop, and saw it."

Pelle stared at him, speechless. Was this the truth-loving Morten who stood there lying?

"You say you saw me spit at him?"

Morten nodded. "Do you want to accept the applause and the honor, and sneak out of the beastliness and the destruction? You have taken a great responsibility on yourself, Pelle. Look, how blindly they follow you--at the sight of your bare face, I'm tempted to say. For I'm not myself quite sure that you give enough of yourself. There is blood on your hands--but is any of it your own blood?"

Pelle sat there heavily pondering; Morten's words always forced his thoughts to follow paths they had never before known. But now he understood him; and a dark shadow passed over his face, which left its traces behind it. "This business has cost me my home," he said quietly. "Ellen cares nothing for me now, and my children are being neglected, and are drifting away from me. I have given up splendid prospects for the future; I go hungry every day, and I have to see my old father in want and wretchedness! I believe no one can feel as homeless and lonely and forsaken as I do! So it has cost me something--you force me to say it myself." He smiled at Morten, but there were tears in his eyes.

"Forgive me, my dear friend!" said Morten. "I was afraid you didn't really know what you were doing. Already there are many left on the field of battle, and it's grievous to see them--especially if it should all lead to nothing."

"Do you condemn the Movement, then? According to you, I can never do anything wise!"

"Not if it leads to an end! I myself have dreamed of leading them on to fortune--in my own way; but it isn't a way after their own heart. You have power over them--they follow you blindly--lead them on, then! But every wound they receive in battle should be yours as well--otherwise you are not the right man for the place. And are you certain of the goal?"

Yes, Pelle was certain of that. "And we are reaching it!" he cried, suddenly inspired. "See how cheerfully they approve of everything, and just go forward!"

"But, Pelle!" said Morten, with a meaning smile, laying his hand on his shoulder, "a leader is not Judge Lynch. Otherwise the parties would fight it out with clubs!"

"Ah, you are thinking of what happened just now!" said Pelle. "That had nothing to do with the Movement! He said my father was going about the backyards fishing things out of dustbins--so I gave him a few on the

jaw. I have the same right as any one else to revenge an insult." He did not mention the evil words concerning Ellen; he could not bring himself to do so.

"But that is true," said Morten quietly.

"Then why didn't you tell me?" asked Pelle.

"I thought you knew it. And you have enough to struggle against as it is--you've nothing to reproach yourself with."

"Perhaps you can tell me where he could be found?" said Pelle, in a low voice.

"He is usually to be found in this quarter."

Pelle went. His mind was oppressed; all that day fresh responsibilities had heaped themselves upon him; a burden heavy for one man to bear. Was he to accept the responsibility for all that the Movement destroyed as it progressed, simply because he had placed all his energies and his whole fortune at its disposal? And now Father Lasse was going about as a scavenger. He blushed for shame--yet how could he have prevented it? Was he to be made responsible for the situation? And now they were spitting upon Ellen--that was the thanks he got!

He did not know where to begin his search, so he went into the courts and backyards and asked at random. People were crowding into a courtyard in Blaagaard Street, so Pelle entered it. There was a missionary there who spoke with the sing-song accent of the Bornholmer, in whose eyes was the peculiar expression which Pelle remembered as that of the "saints" of his childhood. He was preaching and singing alternately. Pelle gazed at him with eyes full of reminiscence, and in his despairing mood he was near losing control of himself and bellowing aloud as in his childish years when anything touched him deeply. This was the very lad who had said something rude about Father Lasse, and whom he--young as he was--had kicked so that he became ruptured. He was able to protect his father in those days, at all events!

He went up to the preacher and held out his hand. "It's Peter Kune! So you are here?"

The man looked at him with a gaze that seemed to belong to another world. "Yes, I had to come over here, Pelle!" he said significantly. "I saw the poor wandering hither from the town and farther away, so I followed them, so that no harm should come to them. For you poor are the chosen people of God, who must wander and wander until they come into the Kingdom. Now the sea has stayed you here, and you can go no farther; so you think the Kingdom must lie here. God has sent me to tell you that you are mistaken. And you, Pelle, will you join us now? God is waiting and longing for you; he wants to use you for the good of all these little ones." And he held Pelle's hand in his, gazing at him compellingly; perhaps he thought Pelle had come in order to seek the shelter of his "Kingdom."

Here was another who had the intention of leading the poor to the land of fortune! But Pelle had his own poor. "I have done what I could for them," he said self-consciously.

"Yes, I know that well; but that is not the right way, the way you are

following! You do not give them the bread of life!"

"I think they have more need of black bread. Look at them--d'you think they get too much to eat?"

"And can you give them food, then? I can give them the joy of God, so that they forget their hunger for a while. Can you do more than make them feel their hunger even more keenly?"

"Perhaps I can. But I've got no time to talk it over now; I came to look for my old father."

"Your father, I have met in the streets lately, with a sack on his back --he did not look very cheerful. And I met him once over yonder with Sort the shoemaker; he wanted to come over here and spend his old age with his son."

Pelle said nothing, but ran off. He clenched his fists in impotent wrath as he rushed out of the place. People went about jeering at him, one more eagerly than the other, and the naked truth was that he--young and strong and capable as he was in his calling--could not look after his wife and children and his old father, even when he had regular work. Yes, so damnable were the conditions that a man in the prime of his youth could not follow the bidding of nature and found a family without plunging those that were dependent on him into want and misery! Curse it all, the entire system ought to be smashed! If he had power over it he would want to make the best use of it!

In Stone Street he heard a hoarse, quavering voice singing in the central courtyard of one of the houses. It was Father Lasse. The rag-bag lay near him, with the hook stuck into it. He was clasping the book with one hand, while with the other he gesticulated toward the windows as he sang. The song made the people smile, and he tried to make it still more amusing by violent gestures which ill-suited his pitiful appearance.

It cut Pelle to the heart to see his wretched condition. He stepped into a doorway and waited until his father should have finished his song. At certain points in the course of the song Lasse took off his cap and smacked it against his head while he raised one leg in the air. He very nearly lost his equilibrium when he did this, and the street urchins who surrounded him pulled at his ragged coat-tails and pushed one another against him. Then he stood still, spoke to them in his quavering voice, and took up his song again.

"O listen to my song, a tale of woe:
I came into the world as do so many:
My mother bore me in the street below,
And as for father, why, I hadn't any!
Till now I've faithfully her shame concealed:
I tell it now to make my song complete.
O drop a shilling down that I may eat,
For eat I must, or soon to Death I yield.

"Into this world without deceit I came,
That's why you see me wear no stockings now.
A poor old man who drudges anyhow,
I have a wealthy brother, more's the shame.
But he and I are opposites in all;
While I rake muck he rakes his money up:

Much gold is his and many a jewelled cup,
And all he fancies, that is his at call.

"My brother, he has built a palace splendid,
And silver harness all his horses bear.
Full twenty crowns an hour he gets, I hear,
By twiddling thumbs and wishing day were ended!
Gold comes to him as dirt to Lasse, blast him!
And everywhere he turns there money lies.
'Twill all be mine when once my brother dies--
If I but live--so help me to outlast him!

"Luck tried to help me once, but not again!
Weary with toiling I was like to swoon.
When God let fall milk-porridge 'stead of rain!

And I, poor donkey, hadn't brought a spoon!
Yes, Heaven had meant to help me, me accurst!
I saw my luck but couldn't by it profit!
Quickly my brother made a banquet of it--
Ate my milk-porridge till he nearly burst!

"Want bears the sceptre here on earth below,
And life is always grievous to the poor.
But God, who rules the world, and ought to know,
Says all will get their rights when life is o'er.
Therefore, good people, hear me for His sake--
A trifle for the poor man's coffin give,
Wherein his final journey he must take;
Have mercy on my end while yet I live!

"Yet one thing God has given me--my boy.
And children are the poor man's wealth, I know.
O does he think of me, my only joy,
Who have no other treasure here below?
Long time have we been parted by mishap:
I'm tired of picking rags and sick of song;
God who sees all reward you all ere long:
O drop a trifle in poor Lasse's cap!"

When Lasse had finished his song the people clapped and threw down coins wrapped in paper, and he went round picking them up. Then he took his sack on his back and stumped away, bent almost double, through the gateway.

"Father!" cried Pelle desperately. "Father!"

Lasse stood up with a jerk and peered through the gateway with his feeble eyes. "Is that you, lad? Ach, it sounded like your voice when you were a child, when any one was going to hurt you and you came to me for help." The old man was trembling from head to foot. "And now I suppose you've heard the whole thing and are ashamed of your old father?" He dared not look at his son.

"Father, you must come home with me now--do you hear?" said Pelle, as they entered the street together.

"No, that I can't do! There's not enough even for your own mouths--no, you must let me go my own way. I must look after myself--and I'm doing

quite well."

"You are to come home with me--the children miss you, and Ellen asks after you day after day."

"Yes, that would be very welcome.... But I know what folks would think if I were to take the food out of your children's mouths! Besides--I'm a rag-picker now! No, you mustn't lead me into temptation."

"You are to come with me now--never mind about anything else. I can't bear this, father!"

"Well, then, in God's name, I must publish my shame before you, lad--if you won't let me be! See now, I'm living with some one--with a woman. I met her out on the refuse-heaps, where she was collecting rubbish, just as I was. I had arranged a corner for myself out there--for the night, until I could find a lodging--and then she said I was to go home with her--it wouldn't be so cold if there were two of us. Won't you come home with me, so that you can see where we've both got to? Then you can see the whole thing and judge for yourself. We live quite close."

They turned into a narrow lane and entered a gateway. In the backyard, in a shed, which looked like the remains of an old farm cottage, was Lasse's home. It looked as though it had once been used as a fuel-shed; the floor was of beaten earth and the roof consisted of loose boards. Under the roof cords were stretched, on which rags, paper, and other articles from the dustbins were hung to dry. In one corner was a mean-looking iron stove, on which a coffee-pot was singing, mingling its pleasant fragrance with the musty stench of the rubbish. Lasse stretched himself to ease his limbs.

"Ach, I'm quite stiff!" he said, "and a little chilled. Well, here you see my little mother--and this is my son, Pelle, my boy." He contentedly stroked the cheeks of his new life's partner.

This was an old, bent, withered woman, grimy and ragged; her face was covered with a red eruption which she had probably contracted on the refuse-heaps. But a pair of kind eyes looked out of it, which made up for everything else.

"So that is Pelle!" she said, looking at him. "So that's what he is like! Yes, one has heard his name; he's one of those who will astonish the world, although he hasn't red hair."

Pelle had to drink a cup of coffee. "You can only have bread-and-butter with it; we old folks can't manage anything else for supper," said Lasse. "We go to bed early, both of us, and one sleeps badly with an over-full stomach."

"Well, now, what do you think of our home?" said Father Lasse, looking proudly about him. "We pay only four kroner a month for it, and all the furniture we get for nothing--mother and I have brought it all here from the refuse-heaps, every stick of it, even the stove. Just look at this straw mattress, now--it's really not bad, but the rich folks threw it away! And the iron bedstead--we found that there; I've tied a leg to it. And yesterday mother came in carrying those curtains, and hung them up. A good thing there are people who have so much that they have to throw it on the dust-heap!"

Lasse was quite cheerful; things seemed to be going well with him; and the old woman looked after him as if he had been the love of her youth. She helped him off with his boots and on with his list slippers, then she brought a long pipe out of the corner, which she placed between his lips; he smiled, and settled down to enjoy himself.

"Do you see this pipe, Pelle? Mother saved up for this, without my knowing anything about it--she has got such a long one I can't light it myself! She says I look like a regular pope!" Lasse had to lean back in his chair while she lit the pipe.

When Pelle left, Lasse accompanied him across the yard. "Well, what do you think of it?" he said.

"I am glad to see things are going so well with you," said Pelle humbly.

Lasse pressed his hand. "Thanks for that! I was afraid you would be strict about it. As quite a little boy, you used to be deucedly strict in that direction. And see now, of course, we could marry--there is no impediment in either case. But that costs money--and the times are hard. As for children coming, and asking to be brought into the world respectably, there's no danger of that."

Pelle could not help smiling; the old man was so much in earnest.

"Look in on us again soon--you are always welcome," said Lasse. "But you needn't say anything of this to Ellen--she is so peculiar in that respect!"

XXXIII

No, Pelle never told Ellen anything now. She had frozen his speech. She was like the winter sun; the side that was turned away from her received no share of her warmth. Pelle made no claims on her now; he had long ago satisfied himself that she could not respond to the strongest side of his nature, and he had accustomed himself to the idea of waging his fight alone. This had made him harder, but also more of a man.

At home the children were ailing--they did not receive proper care, and the little girl was restless, especially during the night. The complaining and coughing of the children made the home uncomfortable. Ellen was dumb; like an avenging fate she went about her business and cared for the children. Her expressive glance never encountered his; although he often felt that her eyes were resting on him. She had grown thin of late, which lent her beauty, a fanatical glow, and a touch of malice. There were times when he would have given his life for an honest, burning kiss as a token of this woman's love.

He understood her less and less, and was often filled with inexplicable anxiety concerning her. She suffered terribly through the condition of the children; and when she quieted them, with a bleeding heart, her voice had a fateful sound that made him shudder. Sometimes he was driven home by the idea that she might have made away with herself and the children.

One day, when he had hurried home with this impression in his mind, she met him smiling and laid on the table five and twenty kroner.

"What's that?" asked Pelle, in amazement.

"I've won that in the lottery!" she said.

So that was why her behavior had been so peculiarly mysterious during the last few days--as though there had been something which he must not on any account get to know. She had ventured her last shilling and was afraid he would find it out!

"But where did you get the money?" he asked.

"I borrowed it from my old friend, Anna--we went in for it together. Now we can have the doctor and medicine for the children, and we ourselves can have anything we want," she said.

This money worked a transformation in Ellen, and their relations were once more warmly affectionate. Ellen was more lovingly tender in her behavior than ever before, and was continually spoiling him. Something had come over her that was quite new; her manner showed a sort of contrition, which made her gentle and loving, and bound Pelle to his home with the bonds of ardent desire. Now once more he hurried home. He took her manner to be an apology for her harsh judgment of him; for here, too, she was different, and began to interest herself in his work for the Cause, inciting him, by all sorts of allusions, to continue it. It was evident that in spite of her apparent coldness she had kept herself well informed concerning it. Her manner underwent a most extraordinary transformation. She, the hard, confident Ellen, became mild and uncertain in her manner. She no longer kept sourly out of things, and had learned to bow her head good-naturedly. She was no longer so self-righteous.

One day, toward evening, Pelle was sitting at home before the looking-glass, and shaving himself; he had cut off the whole of his fine big moustache and was now shaving off the last traces of it. Ellen was amused to see how his face was altered. "I can scarcely recognize you!" she said. He had thought she would have opposed its removal, and have put his moustache before the Cause; but she was pleasant about the whole matter. He could not at all understand this alteration in her.

When he had finished he stood up and went over to Young Lasse, but the child cried out in terror. Then he put on his old working-clothes, made his face and head black, and made his way to the machine-works.

The factory was in full swing now; they were working alternate shifts,

day and night, with the help of interned strike-breakers, the "locked-in" workers, as the popular wit called them.

The iron-masters had followed up their victory and had managed to set yet another industry in motion again. If this sort of thing went much further the entire iron industry would one day be operated without the locked-out workers, who could stand outside and look on. But now a blow was about to be struck! Pelle's heart was full of warmth and joy as he left home, and he felt equal for anything.

He slipped through the pickets unnoticed, and succeeded in reaching the

door of the factory. "They're asleep--the devils!" he thought angrily, and was very near spoiling the whole thing by administering a reprimand. He knocked softly on the door and was admitted. The doorkeeper took him to the foreman, who was fortunately a German.

Pelle was given employment in the foundry, with very good wages. He was also promised that he should receive a bonus of twenty-five kroner when he had been there a certain time. "That's the Judas money," said the foreman, grinning. "And then as soon as the lock-out is over you'll of course be placed in the forefront of the workers. Now you are quite clear about this--that you can't get out of here until then. If you want to send something to your wife, we'll see to that."

He was shown to a corner where a sack full of straw lay on the floor; this was his dwelling-place and his refuge for the night.

In the factory the work went on as best it might. The men rushed at their work as in a frolic, drifted away again, lounged about the works, or stood here and there in groups, doing as they chose. The foremen did not dare to speak to them; if they made a friendly remark they were met with insults. The workers were taking advantage of the fact that they were indispensable; their behavior was sheer tyranny, and they were continually harping on the fact that they would just as soon go as stay. These words made them the masters of the situation.

They were paid big wages and received abundance to eat and to drink. And the working day or shift was shorter than usual. They did not understand the real significance of this change of life, but went about playing the bally. But there was a peculiar hesitation visible in their faces, as though they were not quite sure of one another. The native workers, who were in the minority, kept to themselves--as though they felt an inward contempt for those fellows who had travelled so far to fish in the troubled waters of their distress.

They were working three shifts, each of eight hours' duration.

"Oho!" thought Pelle, "why, this, good God, is the eight-hours' day! This is surely the State of the future!" At the very moment of his arrival one shift was completed, and the men immediately proceeded to make the most infernal uproar, hammering on metal and shouting for food and brandy. A huge cauldron full of beef and potatoes was dragged in. Pelle was told off to join a mess of ten men.

"Eat, matey!" they said. "Hungry, ain't you? How long had you been out of work before you gave in?"

"Three months," said Pelle.

"Then you must be peckish. Here with the beef! More beef here!" they cried, to the cook's mate. "You can keep the potatoes and welcome! We've eaten enough potatoes all our lives!"--"This is Tom Tiddler's land, with butter sauce into the bargain! This is how we've always said it ought to be--good wages and little to do, lots to eat and brandy to drink! Now you can see it was a good thing we held out till it came to this--now we get our reward! Your health! Here, damme, what's your name, you there?"

"Karlsen," said Pelle.

"Here's to you, Karlsen! Well, and how are things looking outside? Have

you seen my wife lately? She's easy to recognize--she's a woman with seven children with nothing inside their ribs! Well, how goes it with the strikers?"

After eating they sat about playing cards, and drinking, or they loafed about and began to quarrel; they were a sharp-tongued crew; they went about actuated by a malicious longing to sting one another. "Come and have a game with us, mate--and have a drink!" they cried to Pelle. "Damn it all, how else should a man kill the time in this infernal place? Sixteen hours' sleep a day--no, that's more than a chap can do with!"

There was a deafening uproar, as though the place had been a vast tavern, with men shouting and abusing one another; each contributed to the din as though he wanted to drown it by his own voice. They were able to buy drink in the factory, and they drank what they earned. "That's their conscience," thought Pelle. "At heart they are good comrades." There seemed to be some hope of success for his audacious maneuver. A group of Germans took no part in the orgy, but had set up a separate colony in the remotest corner of the hall. They were there to make money!

In one of the groups a dispute broke out between the players; they were reviling one another in no measured language, and their terms of abuse culminated in the term "strike-breaker." This made them perfectly furious. It was as though an abscess had broken; all their bottled-up shame and anger concerning their infamous position burst forth. They began to use knives and tools on one another. The police, who kept watch on the factory day and night, were called in, and restored tranquillity. A wounded smith was bandaged in the office, but no arrest was made. Then a sudden slackness overcame them.

They constantly crowded round Pelle. He was a new man; he came from outside. "How are things going out there?" was the constant question.

"Things are going very well out there. It's a worse lookout for us in here," said Pelle.

"Going very well, are they? We've been told they are near giving in."

"Who told you that?"

"The bosses of the factory here."

"Then they were fooling you, in order to keep you here."

"That's a lie! And what d'you mean by saying it's a worse look-out for us? Out with it, now!"

"We shall never get regular work again. The comrades are winning--and when they begin work again they'll demand that we others shall be locked out."

"The devil--and they've promised us the best positions!" cried a great smith. "But you're a liar! That you are! And why did you come here if they are nearly winning outside? Answer me, damn it all! A man doesn't come slinking into this hell unless he's compelled!"

"To leave his comrades in the lurch, you might add," replied Pelle harshly. "I wanted to see how it feels to strike the bread away from the

mouths of the starving."

"That's a lie! No one would be so wicked! You are making fools of us, you devil!"

"Give him a thrashing," said another. "He's playing a crooked game. Are you a spy, or what do you want here? Do you belong to those idiots outside?"

It had been Pelle's plan to put a good face on a crooked job, and cautiously to feel his way; but now he grew angry.

"You had better think what you're doing before you call honorable men idiots," he retorted violently. "Do you know what you are? Swine! You lie there eating your fill and pouring the drink down your throats and living easy on the need of your comrades! Swine, that you are--Judases, who have sold a good cause for dirty money! How much did you get? Five and twenty kroner, eh? And out there they are loyally starving, so that all of us--yes, you too--can live a little more like human beings in the future!"

"You hold your jaw!" said the big smith. "You've no wife and children--you can easily talk!"

"Aren't you the fellow who lives in Jaegersborg Street?" Pelle demanded. "Perhaps you are sending what you earn to your wife and children? Then why are they in want? Yesterday they were turned out of doors; the organization took them in and found a roof to go over their heads--although they were a strike-breaker's family!" Pelle himself had made this possible.

"Send--damn and blast it all--I'll send them something! But if one lives this hell of a life in here the bit of money one earns all goes in rot-gut! And now you're going to get a thrashing!" The smith turned up his shirt-sleeves so that his mighty muscles were revealed. He was no longer reasonable, but glared at Pelle like an angry bull.

"Wait a bit," said an older man, stepping up to Pelle. "I think I've seen you before. What is your real name, if I may make bold to ask?"

"My name? You are welcome to know it. I am Pelle."

This name produced an effect like that of an explosion. They were dazzled. The smith's arms fell slack; he turned his head aside in shame. Pelle was among them! They had left him in the lurch, had turned their backs on him, and now he stood there laughing at them, not the least bit angry with them. What was more, he had called them comrades; so he did not despise them! "Pelle is here!" they said quietly; further and further spread the news, and their tongues dwelt curiously on his name. A murmur ran through the shops. "What the devil--has Pelle come?" they cried, stumbling to their legs. Pelle had leaped onto a great anvil. "Silence!" he cried, in a voice of thunder; "silence!" And there was silence in the great building. The men could hear their own deep breathing.

The foremen came rushing up and attempted to drag him down. "You can't make speeches here!" they cried.

"Let him speak!" said the big smith threateningly. "You aren't big

enough to stop his mouth, not by a long chalk!" He seized a hammer and stationed himself at the foot of the anvil.

"Comrades!" Pelle began, in an easy tone, "I have been sent here to you with greetings from those outside there--from the comrades who used to stand next to you at work, from your friends and fellow-unionists. Where are our old comrades?--they are asking. We have fought so many battles by their side, we have shared good and evil with them--are we to enter into the new conditions without them? And your wives and children are asking after you! Outside there it is the spring! They don't understand why they can't pack the picnic basket and go out into the forest with father!"

"No, there's no picnic basket!" said a heavy voice.

"There are fifty thousand men accepting the situation without grumbling," Pelle earnestly replied. "And they are asking after you--they don't understand why you demand more than they do. Have you done more for the movement than they have?--they ask. Or are you a lot of dukes, that you can't quietly stand by the rank and file? And now it's the spring out there!" he cried once more. "The poor man's winter is past, and the bright day is coming for him! And here you go over to the wrong side and walk into prison! Do you know what the locked-out workers call you? They call you the locked-in workers!"

There were a few suppressed smiles at this. "That's a dam' good smack!" they told, one another. "He made that up himself!"

"They have other names for us as well!" cried a voice defiantly.

"Yes, they have," said Pelle vigorously. "But that's because they are hungry. People get unreasonable then, you know very well--and they grudge other folks their food!"

They thronged about him, pressing closer and closer. His words were scorching them, yet were doing them good. No one could hit out like Pelle, and yet at the same time make them feel that they were decent fellows after all. The foreign workers stood round about them, eagerly listening, in order that they, too, might catch a little of what was said.

Pelle had suddenly plunged into the subject of the famine, laying bare the year-long, endless despair of their families, so that they all saw what the others had suffered--saw really for the first time. They were amazed that they could have endured so much, but they knew that it was so; they nodded continually, in agreement; it was all literally true. It was Pelle's own desperate struggle that was speaking through him now, but the refrain of suffering ran through it all. He stood before them radiant and confident of victory, towering indomitably over them all.

Gradually his words became keen and vigorous. He reproached them with their disloyalty; he reminded them how dearly and bitterly they had bought the power of cohesion, and in brief, striking phrases he awakened the inspiring rhythm of the Cause, that lay slumbering in every heart. It was the old, beloved music, the well-known melody of the home and labor. Pelle sounded it with a new accent. Like all those that forsake their country, they had forgotten the voice of their mother--that was why they could not find their way home; but now she was calling them, calling them back to the old dream of a Land of Fortune! He could see it

in their faces, and with a leap he was at them: "Do you know of anything more infamous than to sell your mother-country? That is what you have done--before ever you set foot in it--you have sold it, with your brothers, your wives, and your children! You have foresworn your religion--your faith in the great Cause! You have disobeyed orders, and have sold yourselves for a miserable Judas-price and a keg of brandy!"

He stood with his left hand on the big smith's shoulder, his right hand he clenched and held out toward them. In that hand he was holding them; he felt that so strongly that he did not dare to let it sink, but continued to hold it outstretched. A murmuring wave passed through the ranks, reaching even to the foreign workers. They were infected by the emotion of the others, and followed the proceedings with tense attention, although they did not understand much of the language. At each sally they nodded and nudged one another, until now they stood there motionless, with expectant faces; they, too, were under the spell of his words. This was solidarity, the mighty, earth-encircling power! Pelle recognized the look of wonder on their faces; a cold shudder ran up and down his spine. He held them all in his hand, and now the blow was to be struck before they had time to think matters over. Now!

"Comrades!" he cried loudly. "I told those outside that you were honorable men, who had been led into the devil's kitchen by want, and in a moment of misunderstanding. And I am going in to fetch your friends and comrades out, I said. They are longing to come out to you again, to come out into the spring! Did I lie when I spoke well of you?"

"No, that you didn't!" they replied, with one voice. "Three cheers for Pelle! Three cheers for 'Lightning'!"

"Come along, then!" Swiftly he leaped down from the anvil and marched through the workshop, roaring out the Socialist marching-song. They followed him without a moment's consideration, without regret or remorse; the rhythm of the march had seized them; it was as though the warm spring wind were blowing them out into the freedom of Nature. The door was unlocked, the officials of the factory were pushed aside. Singing in a booming rhythm that seemed to revenge itself for the long days of confinement, they marched out into North Bridge Street, with Pelle at their head, and turned into the Labor Building.

XXXIV.

That was a glorious stroke! The employers abandoned all further idea of running the works without the Federation. The victory was the completer in that the trades unions gave the foreign workers their passage-money, and sent them off before they had time for reflection. They were escorted to the steamers, and the workers saw them off with a comradely "Hurrah!"

Pelle was the hero of the day. His doings were discussed in all the newspapers, and even his opponents lowered their swords before him.

He took it all as a matter of course; he was striving with all his might toward a fresh goal. There was no excuse for soaring into the clouds; the lock-out was still the principal fact, and a grievous and burdensome

fact, and now he was feeling its whole weight. The armies of workers were still sauntering about the streets, while the nation was consuming its own strength, and there was no immediate prospect of a settlement. But one day the springs would run dry--and what then?

He was too deeply immersed in the conflict to grow dizzy by reason of a little flattery; and the general opinion more than ever laid the responsibility for the situation on him. If this terrible struggle should end in defeat, then his would be the blame! And he racked his brains to find a means of breaking down the opposition of the enemy. The masses were still enduring the conditions with patience, but how much longer would this last? Rumors, which intended mischief, were flying about; one day it was said that one of the leaders, who had been entrusted with making collections, had run off with the cash-box; while another rumor declared that the whole body of workers had been sold to the employers! Something must happen! But what?

* * * * *

One afternoon he went home to see his family before going to a meeting. The children were alone. "Where is mother?" he asked, taking Young Lasse on his knee. Little Sister was sitting upright in her cradle, playing.

"Mother made herself fine and went out into the city," replied the child. "Mother so fine!"

"So? Was she so fine?" Pelle went into the bed-room; he looked into the wardrobe. Ellen's wedding-dress was not there.

"That is curious," he thought, and began to play with the children. The little girl stretched her tiny arms toward him. He had to take her up and sit with a child on either knee. The little girl kept on picking at his upper lip, as though she wanted to say something. "Yes, father's moustache has fallen off, Little Sister," said Young Lasse, in explanation.

"Yes, it has flown away," said Pelle. "There came a wind and--phew!--away it went!" He looked into the glass with a little grimace--that moustache had been his pride! Then he laughed at the children.

Ellen came home breathless, as though she had been running; a tender rosiness lay over her face and throat. She went into the bedroom with her cloak on. Pelle followed her. "You have your wedding-dress on," he said wonderingly.

"Yes, I wanted something done to it, so I went to the dressmaker, so that she could see the dress on me. But run out now, I'll come directly; I only want to put another dress on."

Pelle wanted to stay, but she pushed him toward the door. "Run away!" she said, pulling her dress across her bosom. The tender red had spread all over her bosom--she was so beautiful in her confusion!

After a time she came into the living-room and laid some notes on the table before him.

"What's this again?" he cried, half startled by the sight of all this money.

"Yes, haven't I wonderful luck? I've won in the lottery again! Haven't you a clever wife?" She was standing behind him with her arm across his shoulders.

Pelle sat there for a moment, bowed down as though he had received a blow on the head. Then he pushed her arm aside and turned round to her. "You have won again already, you say? Twice? Twice running?" He spoke slowly and monotonously, as though he wanted to let every word sink in.

"Yes; don't you think it's very clever of me?" She looked at him uncertainly and attempted to smile.

"But that is quite impossible!" he said heavily. "That is quite impossible!" Suddenly he sprang to his feet, seizing her by the throat. "You are lying! You are lying!" he cried, raging. "Will you tell me the truth? Out with it!" He pressed her back over the table, as though he meant to kill her. Young Lasse began to cry.

She stared at him with wondering eyes, which were full of increasing terror. He released her and averted his face in order not to see those eyes; they were full of the fear of death. She made no attempt to rise, but fixed him with an intolerable gaze, like that of a beast that is about to be killed and does not know why. He rose, and went silently over to the children, and busied himself in quieting them. He had a horrible feeling in his hands, almost as when once in his childhood he had killed a young bird. Otherwise he had no feeling, except that everything was so loathsome. It was the fault of the situation ... and now he would go.

He realized, as he packed his things, that she was standing by the table, crying softly. He realized it quite suddenly, but it was no concern of his.... When he was ready and had kissed the children, a shudder ran through her body; she stepped before him in her old energetic way.

"Don't leave me--you mustn't leave me!" she said, sobbing. "Oh--I only wanted to do what was best for you--and you didn't see after anything. No, that's not a reproach--but our daily bread, Pelle! For you and the children! I could no longer look on and see you go without everything--especially you--Pelle! I love you so! It was out of love for you--above all, out of love for you!"

It sounded like a song in his ears, like a strange, remote refrain; the words he did not hear. He put her gently aside, kissed the boy once more, and stroked his face. Ellen stood as though dead, gazing at his movements with staring, bewildered eyes. When he went out to the door she collapsed.

Pelle left his belongings downstairs with the mangling-woman, and he went mechanically toward the city; he heard no sound, no echo; he went as one asleep. His feet carried him toward the Labor House, and up the stairs, into the room whence the campaign was directed. He took his place among the others without knowing what he did, and there he sat, gazing down at the green table-cloth.

The general mood showed signs of dejection. For a long time now the bottom of the cash-box had been visible, and as more and more workers were turned into the street the product of self-imposed taxation was gradually declining. And the readiness of those outside the movement to

make sacrifices was rapidly beginning to fail. The public had now had enough of the affair. Everything was failing, now they would have to see if they could not come to some arrangement. Starvation was beginning to thrust its grinning head among the fifty thousand men now idle. The moment had come upon which capital was counting; the moment when the crying of children for bread begins to break the will of the workers, until they are ready to sacrifice honor and independence in order to satisfy the little creatures' hunger. And the enemy showed no sign of wishing for peace!

This knowledge had laid its mark on all the members of the Council; and as they sat there they knew that the weal or woe of hundreds of thousands depended on them. No one dared accept the responsibility of making a bold proposal in this direction or that. With things as they stood, they would have, in a week or two, to give up the fight! Then nearly a quarter of a million human beings would have suffered torment for nothing! A terrible apathy would be the result of that suffering and of the defeat; it would put them back many years. But if the employers could not long withstand the pressure which the financial world was beginning to exert on them, they would be throwing away the victory if they gave up the fight now.

The cleverest calculations were useless here. A blind, monstrous Pate would prevail. Who could say that he had lifted the veil of the future and could point out the way?

No one! And Pelle, the blazing torch, who had shown them the road regardless of all else--he sat there drowsing as though it meant nothing to him! Apparently he had broken down under his monstrous labors.

The secretary came in with a newspaper marked with red pencil. He passed it to the chairman, who stared for a while at the underlined portion, then he rose and read it out; the paper was quivering in his hands.

"About thirty working women--young and of good appearance--can during the lock-out find a home with various bachelors. Good treatment guaranteed. The office of the paper will give further information."

Pelle sprang up out of his half-slumber; the horrible catastrophe of his own home was blindingly clear now! "So it's come to that!" he cried. "Now capital has laid its fingers on our wives--now they are to turn whore! We must fight on, fight, fight! We must strike one last blow--and it must be a heavy one!"

"But how?" they asked.

Pelle was white with enforced calm. His mind had never been so radiantly clear. Now Ellen should be revenged on those who took everything, even the poor man's one ewe lamb!

"In the first place we must issue an optimistic report--this very day!" he said, smiling. "The cash-box is nearly empty--good! Then we will state that the workers have abundant means to carry on the fight for another year if need be, and then we'll go for them!"

Born of anger, an old, forgotten phantasy had flashed into his mind as a definite plan.

"Hitherto we have fought passively," he continued, "with patience as our

chief weapon! We have opposed our necessities of life to the luxuries of the other side; and if they strike at us in order to starve us to skin and bone and empty our homes of our last possessions, we answered them by refusing to do the work which was necessary to their comfort! Let us for once strike at their vital necessities! Let us strike them where they have struck us from the beginning! In the belly! Then perhaps they'll turn submissive! Hitherto we have kept the most important of the workers out of the conflict--those on whom the health and welfare of the public depend, although we ourselves have benefited nothing thereby. Why should we bake their bread? We, who haven't the means to eat it! Why should we look after their cleanliness? We, who haven't the means to keep ourselves clean! Let us bring the dustmen and the street-cleaners into the line of fire! And if that isn't enough we'll turn off their gas and water! Let us venture our last penny--let us strike the last blow!"

Pelle's proposal was adopted, and he went westward immediately to the president of the Scavengers' Union. He had just got up and was sitting down to his midday meal. He was a small, comfortable little man, who had always a twinkle in his eye; he came from the coal country. Pelle had helped him at one time to get his organization into working order, and he knew that he could count on him and his men.

"Do you remember still, how I once showed you that you are the most important workers in the city, Lars Hansen?"

The president nodded. "Yes, one would have to be a pretty sort of fool to forget that! No, as long as I live I shall never forget the effect your words had on us despised scavengers! It was you who gave us faith in ourselves, and an organization! And even if we aren't quite the most important people, still--"

"But that's just what you are--and now it's your turn to prove it! Could you suspend work this night?"

Lars Hansen sat gazing thoughtfully into the lamp while he chewed his food. "Our relations with the city are rather in the nature of a contract," he said slowly and at length. "They could punish us for it, and compel us to resume work. But if you want it, irrespective, why of course we'll do it. There can be only one view as to that among comrades! What you may gain by it you yourself know best."

"Thanks!" said Pelle, holding out his hand. "Then that is settled--no more carts go out. And we must bring the street-cleaners to a standstill too!"

"Then the authorities will put other men on--there are plenty to be found for that work."

"They won't do that--or we'll put a stop to it if they do!"

"That sounds all right! It'll be a nasty business for the swells! It's all the same to the poor, they haven't anything to eat. But suppose the soldiers are ordered to do it! Scavenging must be done if the city isn't to become pestilential!"

A flash of intelligence crossed Pelle's face. "Now listen, comrade! When you stop working, deliver up all the keys, so that the authorities can't touch you! Only put them all in a sack and give them a good shake-up!"

Lars Hansen broke into a resounding laugh. "That will be the deuce of a joke!" he groaned, smacking his thighs. "Then they'll have to come to us, for no one else will be able to sort them out again so quickly! I'll take them the keys myself--I'll go upstairs as innocent as anything!"

Pelle thanked him again. "You'll save the whole Cause," he said quietly. "It's the bread and the future happiness of many thousands that you are now holding in your hands." He smiled brightly and took his leave. As soon as he was alone his smile faded and an expression of deathly weariness took its place.

* * * * *

Pelle walked the streets, strolling hither and thither. Now all was settled. There was nothing more to strive for. Everything within him seemed broken; he had not even strength to decide what he should do with himself. He walked on and on, came out into the High Street, and turned off again into the side streets. Over the way, in the Colonial Stores, he saw Karl, smiling and active, behind the counter serving customers. "You ought really to go in and ask him how he's getting on," he thought, but he strolled on. Once, before a tenement-house, he halted and involuntarily looked up. No, he had already done his business here--this was where the president of the Scavengers' Union lived. No, the day's work was over now--he would go home to Ellen and the children!

Home? No home for him now--he was forsaken and alone! And yet he went toward the north; which road he went by he did not know, but after a time he found himself standing before his own door and staring at the rusty little letter box. Within there was a sound of weeping; he could hear Ellen moving to and fro, preparing everything for the night. Then he turned and hastened away, and did not breathe easily until he had turned the corner of the street.

He turned again and again, from one side street into another. Inside his head everything seemed to be going round, and at every step he felt as if it would crack. Suddenly he seemed to hear hasty but familiar steps behind him. Ellen! He turned round; there was no one there. So it was an illusion! But the steps began again as soon as he went on. There was something about those steps--it was as though they wanted to say something to him; he could hear plainly that they wanted to catch up with him. He stopped suddenly--there was no one there, and no one emerged from the darkness of the side streets.

Were these strange footsteps in his own mind, then? Pelle found them incomprehensible; his heart began to thump; his terrible exhaustion had made him helpless. And Ellen--what was the matter with her? That reproachful weeping sounded in his ears! Understand--what was he to understand? She had done it out of love, she had said! Ugh--away with it all! He was too weary to justify her offence.

But what sort of wanderer was this? Now the footsteps were keeping time with his now; they had a double sound. And when he thought, another creature answered to him, from deep within him. There was something persistent about this, as there was in Morten's influence; an opinion that made its way through all obstacles, even when reduced to silence. What was wanted of him now--hadn't he worked loyally enough? Was he not Pelle, who had conducted the great campaign? Pelle, to whom all looked up? But there was no joy in the thought now; he could not now hear the march of his fifty thousand comrades in his own footsteps! He was left

in the lurch, left alone with this accursed Something here in the deserted streets--and loneliness had come upon him! "You are afraid!" he thought, with a bitter laugh.

But he did not wish to be alone; and he listened intently. The conflict had taken all that he possessed. So there was a community--mournful as it was--between him and the misery around him here. What had he to complain of?

The city of the poor lay about him, terrible, ravaged by the battle of unemployment--a city of weeping, and cold, and darkness, and want! From the back premises sounded the crying of children--they were crying for bread, he knew--while drunken men staggered round the corners, and the screaming of women sounded from the back rooms and the back yards. Ugh--this was Hell already! Thank God, victory was near!

Somewhere he could plainly hear voices; children were crying, and a woman, who was moving to and fro in the room, was soothing them, and was lulling the youngest to sleep--no doubt she had it in her arms. It all came down to him so distinctly that he looked up. There were no windows in the apartment! They were to be driven out by the cold, he thought indignantly, and he ran up the stairs; he was accustomed to taking the unfortunate by surprise.

"The landlord has taken out the doors and windows; he wanted to turn us into the street, but we aren't going, for where should we go? So he wants to drive us out through the cold--like the bugs! They've driven my husband to death--" Suddenly she recognized Pelle. "So it's you, you accursed devil!" she cried. "It was you yourself who set him on! Perhaps you remember how he used to drink out of the bottle? Formerly he always used to behave himself properly. And you saw, too, how we were turned out of St. Hans Street--the tenants forced us to go--didn't you see that? Oh, you torturer! You've followed him everywhere, hunted him like a wild beast, taunted him and tormented him to death! When he went into a tavern the others would stand away from him, and the landlord had to ask him to go. But he had more sense of honor than you! 'I'm infected with the plague!' he said, and one morning he hanged himself. Ah, if I could pray the good God to smite you!" She was tearless; her voice was dry and hoarse.

"You have no need to do that," replied Pelle bitterly. "He has smitten me! But I never wished your husband any harm; both times, when I met him, I tried to help him. We have to suffer for the benefit of all--my own happiness is shattered into fragments." He suddenly found relief in tears.

"They just ought to see that--the working men--Pelle crying! Then they wouldn't shout 'Hurrah!' when he appears!" she cried scornfully.

"I have still ten kroner--will you take them?" said Pelle, handing her the money.

She took it hesitating. "You must need that for your wife and children--that must be your share of your strike pay!"

"I have no wife and children now. Take it!"

"Good God! Has your home gone to pieces too? Couldn't even Pelle keep it together? Well, well, it's only natural that he who sows should reap!"

Pelle went his way without replying. The unjust judgment of this woman depressed him more than the applause of thousands would have pleased him. But it aroused a violent mental protest. Where she had struck him he was invulnerable; he had not been looking after his own trivial affairs; but had justly and honorably served the great Cause, and had led the people to victory. The wounded and the fallen had no right to abuse him. He had lost more than any one--he had lost everything!

With care-laden heart, but curiously calm, he went toward the North Bridge and rented a room in a cheap lodging house.

XXXV

The final instructions issued to the workers aroused terrible indignation in the city. At one blow the entire public was set against them; the press was furious, and full of threats and warnings. Even the independent journals considered that the workers had infringed the laws of human civilization. But _The Working Man_ quietly called attention to the fact that the conflict was a matter of life or death for the lower classes. They were ready to proceed to extremities; they still had it in their power to cut off the water and gas--the means of the capital's commercial and physical life!

Then the tide set in against the employers. Something had to give somewhere! And what was the real motive of the conflict? Merely a question of power! They wanted to have the sole voice--to have their workers bound hand and foot. The financiers, who stood at the back of the big employers, had had enough of the whole affair. It would be an expensive game first and last, and there would be little profit in destroying the cohesion of the workers if the various industries were ruined at the same time.

Pelle saw how the crisis was approaching while he wandered about the lesser streets in search of Father Lasse. Now the Cause was progressing by its own momentum, and he could rest. An unending strain was at last lifted from his shoulders, and now he wanted time to gather together the remnants of his own happiness--and at last to do something for one who had always sacrificed himself for him. Now he and Lasse would find a home together, and resume the old life in company together; he rejoiced at the thought. Father Lasse's nature never clashed with his; he had always stood by him through everything; his love was like a mother's.

Lasse was no longer living in his lair behind Baker Street. The old woman with whom he was living had died shortly before this, and Lasse had then disappeared.

Pelle continued to ask after him, and, well known as he was among the poor, it was not difficult for him to follow the old man's traces, which gradually led him out to Kristianshavn. During his inquiries he encountered a great deal of misery, which delayed him. Now, when the battle was fighting itself to a conclusion, he was everywhere confronted by need, and his old compassion welled up in his heart. He helped where he could, finding remedies with his usual energy.

Lasse had not been to the "Ark" itself, but some one there had seen him in the streets, in a deplorable condition; where he lived no one knew. "Have you looked in the cellar of the Merchant's House over yonder?" the old night watchman asked him. "Many live there in these hard times. Every morning about six o'clock I lock the cellar up, and then I call down and warn them so that they shan't be pinched. If I happen to turn away, then they come slinking up. It seems to me I heard of an old man who was said to be lying down there, but I'm not sure, for I've wadding in my ears; I'm obliged to in my calling, in order not to hear too much!" He went to the place with Pelle.

The Merchant's House, which in the eighteenth century was the palace of one of the great mercantile families of Kristianshavn, was now used as a granary; it lay fronting on one of the canals. The deep cellars, which were entirely below the level of the canal, were now empty. It was pitch dark down there, and impracticable; the damp air seemed to gnaw at one's vocal cords. They took a light and explored among the pillars, finding here and there places where people had lain on straw. "There is no one here," said the watchman. Pelle called, and heard a feeble sound as of one clearing his throat. Far back in the cellars, in one of the cavities in the wall, Father Lasse was lying on a mattress. "Yes, here I lie, waiting for death," he whispered. "It won't last much longer now; the rats have begun to sniff about me already." The cold, damp air had taken his voice away.

He was altogether in a pitiful condition, but the sight of Pelle put life into him in so far as he was able to stand on his feet. They took him over to the "Ark," the old night watchman giving up his room and going up to Widow Johnsen;--there he slept in the daytime, and at night went about his duties; a possible arrangement, although there was only one bed.

When Lasse was put into a warm bed he lay there shivering; and he was not quite clear in his mind. Pelle warmed some beer; the old man must go through a sweating cure; from time to time he sat on the bed and gazed anxiously at his father. Lasse lay there with his teeth chattering; he had closed his eyes; now and again he tried to speak, but could not.

The warm drink helped him a little, and the blood flowed once more into his dead, icy hands, and his voice returned.

"Do you think we are going to have a hard winter?" he said suddenly, turning on his side.

"We are going on toward the summer now, dear father," Pelle replied. "But you must not lie with your back uncovered."

"I'm so terribly cold--almost as cold as I was in winter; I wouldn't care to go through that again. It got into my spine so. Good God, the poor folks who are at sea!"

"You needn't worry about them--you just think about getting well again; to-day we've got the sunshine and it's fine weather at sea!"

"Let a little sunshine in here to me, then," said Lasse peevishly.

"There's a great wall in front of the window, father," said Pelle, bending down over him.

"Well, well, it'll soon be over, the little time that's still left me! It's all the same to the night watchman--he wakes all night and yet he doesn't see the sun. That is truly a curious calling! But it is good that some one should watch over us while we sleep." Lasse rocked his head restlessly to and fro.

"Yes, otherwise they'd come by night and steal our money," said Pelle jestingly.

"Yes, that they would!" Lasse tried to laugh. "And how are things going with you, lad?"

"The negotiations are proceeding; yesterday we held the first meeting."

Lasse laughed until his throat rattled. "So the fine folks couldn't stomach the smell any longer! Yes, yes, I heard the news of that when I was lying ill down there in the darkness. At night, when the others came creeping in, they told me about it; we laughed properly over that idea of yours. But oughtn't you to be at your meeting?"

"No, I have excused myself--I don't want to sit there squabbling about the ending of a sentence. Now I'm going to be with you, and then we'll both make ourselves comfortable."

"I am afraid we shan't have much more joy of one another, lad!"

"But you are quite jolly again now. To-morrow you will see--"

"Ah, no! Death doesn't play false. I couldn't stand that cellar."

"Why did you do it, father? You knew your place at home was waiting for you."

"Yes, you must forgive my obstinacy, Pelle. But I was too old to be able to help in the fight, and then I thought at least you won't lay a burden on them so long as this lasts! So in that way I have borne my share. And do you really believe that something will come of it?"

"Yes, we are winning--and then the new times will begin for the poor man!"

"Yes, yes; I've no part in such fine things now! It was as though one served the wicked goblin that stands over the door: Work to-day, eat to-morrow! And to-morrow never came. What kindness I've known has been from my own people; a poor bird will pull out its own feathers to cover another. But I can't complain; I have had bad days, but there are folks who have had worse. And the women have always been good to me. Bengta was a grumbler, but she meant it kindly; Karna sacrificed money and health to me--God be thanked that she didn't live after they took the farm from me. For I've been a landowner too; I had almost forgotten that in all my misery! Yes, and old Lise--Begging Lise, as they called her--she shared bed and board with me! She died of starvation, smart though she was. Would you believe that? 'Eat!' she used to say; 'we have food enough!' And I, old devil, I ate the last crust, and suspected nothing, and in the morning she was lying dead and cold at my side! There was not a scrap of flesh on her whole body; nothing but skin over dry bones. But she was one of God's angels! We used to sing together, she and I. Ach, poor people take the bread out of one another's mouths!"

Lasse lay for a time sunk in memories, and began to sing, with the gestures he had employed in the courtyard. Pelle held him down and endeavored to bring him to reason, but the old man thought he was dealing with the street urchins. When he came to the verse which spoke of his son he wept.

"Don't cry, father!" said Pelle, quite beside himself, and he laid his heavy head against that of the old man. "I am with you again!"

Lasse lay still for a time, blinking his eyes, with his hand groping to and fro over his son's face.

"Yes, you are really here," he said faintly, "and I thought you had gone away again. Do you know what, Pelle? You have been the whole light of my life! When you came into the world I was already past the best of my years; but then you came, and it was as though the sun had been born anew! 'What may he not bring with him?' I used to think, and I held my head high in the air. You were no bigger than a pint bottle! 'Perhaps he'll make his fortune,' I thought, 'and then there'll be a bit of luck for you as well!' So I thought, and so I've always believed--but now I must give it up. But I've lived to see you respected. You haven't become a rich man--well, that need not matter; but the poor speak well of you! You have fought their battles for them without taking anything to fill your own belly. Now I understand it, and my old heart rejoices that you are my son!"

When Lasse fell asleep Pelle lay on the sofa for a while. But he did not rest long; the old man slept like a bird, opening his eyes every moment. If he did not see his son close to his bed he lay tossing from side to side and complaining in a half-slumber. In the middle of the night he raised his head and held it up in a listening attitude. Pelle awoke.

"What do you want, father?" he asked, as he tumbled onto his feet.

"Ach, I can hear something flowing, far out yonder, beyond the sea-line.... It is as though the water were pouring into the abyss. But oughtn't you to go home to Ellen now? I shall be all right alone overnight, and perhaps she's sitting worrying as to where you are."

"I've sent to Ellen to tell her that I shouldn't be home overnight," said Pelle.

The old man lay considering his son with a pondering glance, "Are you happy, too, now?" he asked. "It seems to me as though there is something about your marriage that ought not to be."

"Yes, father, it's quite all right," Pelle replied in a half-choking voice.

"Well, God be thanked for that! You've got a good wife in Ellen, and she has given you splendid children. How is Young Lasse? I should dearly like to see him again before I go from here--there will still be a Lasse!"

"I'll bring him to you early in the morning," said Pelle. "And now you ought to see if you can't sleep a little, father. It is pitch dark still!"

Lasse turned himself submissively toward the wall. Once he cautiously

turned his head to see if Pelle was sleeping; his eyes could not see across the room, so he attempted to get out of bed, but fell back with a groan.

"What is it, father?" cried Pelle anxiously, and he was beside him in a moment.

"I only wanted just to see that you'd got something over you in this cold! But my old limbs won't bear me any more," said the old man, with a shamefaced expression.

Toward morning he fell into a quiet sleep, and Pelle brought Madam Johnsen to sit with the old man, while he went home for Young Lasse. It was no easy thing to do; but the last wish of the old man must be granted. And he knew that Ellen would not entrust the child to strange hands.

Ellen's frozen expression lit up as he came; an exclamation of joy rose to her lips, but the sight of his face killed it. "My father lies dying," he said sadly--"he very much wants to see the boy." She nodded and quietly busied herself in making the child ready. Pelle stood at the window gazing out.

It seemed very strange to him that he should be here once more; the memory of the little household rose to his mind and made him weak. He must see Little Sister! Ellen led him silently into the bedroom; the child was sleeping in her cradle; a deep and wonderful peace brooded over her bright head. Ellen seemed to be nearer to him in this room here; he felt her compelling eyes upon him. He pulled himself forcibly together and went into the other room--he had nothing more to do there. He was a stranger in this home. A thought occurred to him--whether she was going on with _that_? Although it was nothing to him, the question would not be suppressed; and he looked about him for some sign that might be significant. It was a poverty-stricken place; everything superfluous had vanished. But a shoemaker's sewing machine had made its appearance, and there was work on it. Strike-breaking work! he thought mechanically. But not disgraceful--for the first time he was glad to discover a case of strike-breaking. She had also begun to take in sewing--and she looked thoroughly overworked. This gave him downright pleasure.

"The boy is ready to go with you now," she said.

Pelle cast a farewell glance over the room. "Is there anything you need?" he asked.

"Thanks--I can look after myself," she replied proudly.

"You didn't take the money I sent you on Saturday!"

"I can manage myself--if I can only keep the boy. Don't forget that you told me once he should always stay with me."

"He must have a mother who can look him in the face--remember that, Ellen!"

"You needn't remind me of that," she replied bitterly.

Lasse was awake when they arrived. "Eh, that's a genuine Karlsen!" he

said. "He takes after our family. Look now, Pelle, boy! He has the same prominent ears, and he's got the lucky curl on his forehead too! He'll make his way in the world! I must kiss his little hands--for the hands, they are our blessing--the only possession we come into the world with. They say the world will be lifted up by the hands of poor; I should like to know whether that will be so! I should like to know whether the new times will come soon now. It's a pity after all that I shan't live to see it!"

"You may very well be alive to see it yet, father," said Pelle, who on the way had bought The Working Man, and was now eagerly reading it. "They are going ahead in full force, and in the next few days the fight will be over! Then we'll both settle down and be jolly together!"

"No, I shan't live to see that! Death has taken hold of me; he will soon snatch me away. But if there's anything after it all, it would be fine if I could sit up there and watch your good fortune coming true. You have travelled the difficult way, Pelle--Lasse is not stupid! But perhaps you'll be rewarded by a good position, if you take over the leadership yourself now. But then you must see that you don't forget the poor!"

"That's a long way off yet, father! And then there won't be any more poor!"

"You say that so certainly, but poverty is not so easily dealt with--it has eaten its way in too deep! Young Lasse will perhaps be a grown man before that comes about. But now you must take the boy away, for it isn't good that he should see how the old die. He looks so pale--does he get out into the sun properly?"

"The rich have borrowed the sun--and they've forgotten to pay it back," said Pelle bitterly.

Lasse raised his head in the air, as though he were striving against something. "Yes, yes! It needs good eyes to look into the future, and mine won't serve me any longer. But now you must go and take the boy with you. And you mustn't neglect your affairs, you can't outwit death, however clever you may be." He laid his withered hand on Young Lasse's head and turned his face to the wall.

Pelle got Madam Johnsen to take the boy home again, so that he himself could remain with the old man. Their paths had of late years lain so little together; they had forever been meeting and then leading far apart. He felt the need of a lingering farewell. While he moved to and fro, and lit a fire to warm up some food, and did what he could to make Father Lasse comfortable, he listened to the old man's desultory speech and let himself drift back into the careless days of childhood. Like a deep, tender murmur, like the voice of the earth itself, Lasse's monotonous speech renewed his childhood; and as it continued, it became the never-silent speech of the many concerning the conditions of life. Now, in silence he turned again from the thousands to Father Lasse, and saw how great a world this tender-hearted old man had supported. He had always been old and worn-out so long as Pelle could remember. Labor so soon robs the poor man of his youth and makes his age so long! But this very frailty endowed him with a superhuman power--that of the father! He had borne his poverty greatly, without becoming wicked or self-seeking or narrow; his heart had always been full of the cheerfulness of sacrifice, and full of tenderness; he had been strong even in his

impotence. Like the Heavenly Father Himself, he had encompassed Pelle's whole existence with his warm affection, and it would be terrible indeed when his kindly speech was no longer audible at the back of everything.

His departing soul hovered in ever-expanding circles over the way along which he had travelled--like the doves when they migrate. Each time he had recovered a little strength he took up the tale of his life anew.

"There has always been something to rejoice over, you know, but much of it has been only an aimless struggle. In the days when I knew no better I managed well enough; but from the moment when you were born my old mind began to look to the future, and I couldn't feel at peace any more. There was something about you that seemed like an omen, and since then it has always stuck in my mind; and my intentions have been restless, like the Jerusalem shoemaker's. It was as though something had suddenly given me--poor louse!--the promise of a more beautiful life; and the memory of that kept on running in my mind. Is it perhaps the longing for Paradise, out of which they drove us once?--I used to think. If you'll believe me, I, poor old blunderer as I am, have had splendid dreams of a beautiful, care-free old age, when my son, with his wife and children, would come and visit me in my own cozy room, where I could entertain them a little with everything neat and tidy. I didn't give up hoping for it even right at the end. I used to go about dreaming of a treasure which I should find out on the refuse-heaps. Ah, I did so want to be able to leave you something! I have been able to do so miserably little for you."

"And you say that, who have been father and mother to me? During my whole childhood you stood behind everything, protecting me; if anything happened to me I always used to think; 'Father Lasse will soon set that right!' And when I grew up I found in everything that I undertook that you were helping me to raise myself. It would have gone but ill indeed with everything if you hadn't given me such a good inheritance!"

"Do you say that?" cried Lasse proudly. "Shall I truly have done my share in what you have done for the Cause of the poor? Ah, that sounds good, in any case! No, but you have been my life, my boy, and I used to wonder, poor weak man as I was, to see how great my strength was in you! What I scarcely dared to think of even, you have had the power to do! And now here I lie, and have not even the strength to die. You must promise me that you won't burden yourself on my account with anything that's beyond your ability--you must leave the matter to the poor-law authorities. I've kept myself clear of them till now, but it was only my stupid pride. The poor man and the poor-laws belong together after all. I have learned lately to look at many things differently; and it is good that I am dying--otherwise I should soon be alive and thinking but have no power. If these ideas had come to me in the strength of my youth perhaps I should have done something violent. I hadn't your prudence and intelligence, to be able to carry eggs in a hop-sack...."

On the morning of the third day there was a change in Lasse, although it was not easy to say where the alteration lay. Pelle sat at the bedside reading the last issue of The Working Man, when he noticed that Lasse was gazing at him. "Is there any news?" he asked faintly.

"The negotiations are proceeding," said Pelle, "but it is difficult to agree upon a basis.... Several times everything has been on the point of breaking down."

"It's dragging out such a long time," said Lasse dejectedly; "and I

shall die to-day, Pelle. There is something restless inside me, although I should dearly like to rest a little. It is curious, how we wander about trying to obtain something different to what we have! As a little boy at home in Tommelilla I used to run round a well; I used to run like one possessed, and I believed if I only ran properly I should be able to catch my own heels! And now I've done it; for now there is always some one in front of me, so that I can't go forward, and it's old Lasse himself who is stopping the way! I am always thinking I must overtake him, but I can't find my old views of the world again, they have altered so. On the night when the big employers declared the lock-out I was standing out there among the many thousands of other poor folks, listening. They were toasting the resolution with champagne, and cheering, and there my opinions were changed! It's strange how things are in this world. Down in the granary cellar there lay a mason who had built one of the finest palaces in the capital, and he hadn't even a roof over his head."

A sharp line that had never been there before appeared round his mouth. It became difficult for him to speak, but he could not stop. "Whatever you do, never believe the clergy," he continued, when he had gathered a little strength. "That has been my disadvantage--I began to think over things too late. We mustn't grumble, they say, for one thing has naturally grown out of another, big things out of little, and all together depends on God's will. According to that our vermin must finally become thorough-bred horse for the rich--and God knows I believe that is possible! They have begun by sucking the blood of poverty--but only see how they prance in front of the carriage! Ah, yes--how will the new period take shape? What do you think about it?"

"It will be good for us all, father," replied Pelle, with anxiety in his voice. "But it will be sad for me, because you will no longer have your part in it all. But you shall have a fine resting-place, and I will give you a great stone of Bornholm granite, with a beautiful inscription."

"You must put on the stone: 'Work to-day, eat to-morrow!'" replied Lasse bitterly.

All day long he lay there in a half-sleep. But in the evening twilight he raised his head. "Are those the angels I hear singing?" he whispered. The ring had gone out of his voice.

"No, those are the little children of the factory women, their mothers will be coming home directly to give them the breast; then they'll stop."

Lasse sighed. "That will be poor food if they have to work all day. They say the rich folks drink wine at twelve and fifteen kroner a bottle; that sounds as if they take the milk away from the little children and turn it into costly liquors."

He lay there whispering; Pelle had to bend his head till it was almost against his mouth. "Hand in hand we've wandered hither, lad, yet each has gone his own way. You are going the way of youth, and Lasse--but you have given me much joy."

Then the loving spirit, which for Pelle had burned always clear and untroubled amid all vicissitudes, was extinguished. It was as though Providence had turned its face from him; life collapsed and sank into space, and he found himself sitting on a chair--alone. All night long he

sat there motionless beside the body, staring with vacant eyes into the incomprehensible, while his thoughts whispered sadly to the dead of all that he had been. He did not move, but himself sat like a dead man, until Madam Johnsen came in the morning to ask how matters were progressing.

Then he awoke and went out, in order to make such arrangements as were necessary.

XXXVI

On Saturday, at noon, it was reported that the treaty of peace was signed, and that the great strike was over. The rumor spread through the capital with incredible speed, finding its way everywhere. "Have you heard yet? Have you heard yet? Peace is concluded!" The poor were busy again; they lay huddled together no longer, but came out into the light of day, their lean faces full of sunlight. The women got out their baskets and sent the children running to make a few purchases for Sunday--for now the grocer would give them a little credit! People smiled and chattered and borrowed a little happiness! Summer had come, and a monstrous accumulation of work was waiting to be done, and at last they were going to set to work in real earnest! The news was shouted from one back door to the next; people threw down what they had in their hands and ran on with the news. It occurred to no one to stand still and to doubt; they were only too willing to believe!

Later in the afternoon _The Working Man_ issued a board-sheet confirming the rumor. Yes, it was really true! And it was a victory; the right of combination was recognized, and Capital had been taught to respect the workers as a political factor. It would no longer be possible to oppress them. And in other respects the _status quo_ was confirmed.

"Just think--they've been taught to respect us, and they couldn't refuse to accept the _status quo!_" And they laughed all over their faces with joy to think that it was confirmed, although no one knew what it was!

The men were in the streets; they were flocking to their organizations, in order to receive orders and to learn the details of the victory. One would hardly have supposed from their appearance that the victory was theirs; they had become so accustomed to gloom that it was difficult to shake it off.

There was a sound of chattering in backyards and on staircases. Work was to be resumed--beautiful, glorious labor, that meant food and drink and a little clothing for the body! Yes, and domestic security! No more chewing the cud over an empty manger; now one could once more throw one's money about a little, and then, by skimping and saving, with tears and hardship, make it suffice! To-night father would have something really good with his bread and butter, and to-morrow, perhaps, they could go out into the forest with the picnic-basket! Or at all events, as soon as they had got their best clothes back from the pawn-shop! They must have a bit of an airing before the winter came, and they had to go back into pawn! They were so overjoyed at the mere thought of peace that

they quite forgot, for the moment, to demand anything new!

Pelle had taken part in the concluding negotiations; after Father Lasse's burial he was himself again. Toward evening he was roaming about the poor quarter of the city, rejoicing in the mood of the people; he had played such an important part in the bitter struggle of the poor that he felt the need to share their joy as well. From the North Bridge he went by way of the Lakes to West Bridge; and everywhere swarms of people were afoot. In the side-streets by West Bridge all the families had emerged from their dwellings and established themselves on the front steps and the pavements; there they sat, bare-headed in the twilight, gossiping, smoking, and absorbing refreshments. It was the first warm evening; the sky was a deep blue, and at the end of the street the darkness was flooded with purple. There was something extravagant about them all; joy urged their movements to exceed the narrow every-day limits, and made them stammer and stagger as though slightly intoxicated.

Now they could all make their appearance again, all those families that had hidden themselves during the time of want; they were just as ragged, but that was of no consequence now! They were beaming with proud delight to think that they had come through the conflict without turning to any one for help; and the battles fought out in the darkness were forgotten.

Pelle had reached the open ground by the Gasworks Harbor; he wanted to go over to see his old friends in the "Ark." Yonder it lay, lifting its glowing mass into the deep night of the eastern sky. The red of the sinking sun fell over it. High overhead, above the crater of the mass, hung a cloud of vapor, like a shadow on the evening sky. Pelle, as he wandered, had been gazing at this streak of shadow; it was the dense exhalation of all the creatures in the heart of the mass below, the reek of rotting material and inferior fuel. Now, among other consequences of victory, there would be a thorough cleansing of the dens of poverty. A dream floated before him, of comfortable little dwellings for the workers, each with its little garden and its well-weeded paths. It would repay a man then to go home after the day's fatigue!

It seemed to him that the streak of smoke yonder was growing denser and denser. Or were his eyes merely exaggerating that which was occupying his thoughts? He stood still, gazing--then he began to run. A red light was striking upward against the cloud of smoke--touched a moment, and disappeared; and a fresh mass of smoke unrolled itself, and hung brooding heavily overhead.

Pelle rushed across the Staple Square, and over the long bridge. Only too well did he know the terrible bulk of the "Ark"--and there was no other exit than the tunnel! And the timber-work, which provided the sole access to the upper stories! As he ran he could see it all clearly before his eyes, and his mind began to search for means of rescue. The fire brigade was of course given the alarm at once, but it would take time to get the engines here, and it was all a matter of minutes! If the timber staging fell and the tunnel were choked all the inmates would be lost--and the "Ark" did not possess a single emergency-ladder!

Outside, in front of the "Ark," was a restless crowd of people, all shouting together. "Here comes Pelle!" cried some one. At once they were all silent, and turned their faces toward him. "Fetch the fire-escape from the prison!" he shouted to some of the men in passing, and ran to the tunnel-entry.

From the long corridors on the ground floor the inmates were rushing out with their little children in their arms. Some were dragging valueless possessions--the first things they could lay hands on. All that was left of the timber-work after the wreckage of the terrible winter was now brightly blazing. Pelle tried to run up the burning stairs, but fell through. The inmates were hanging half out of their windows, staring down with eyes full of madness; every moment they ran out onto the platforms in an effort to get down, but always ran shrieking back.

At her third-story window Widow Johnsen stood wailing, with her grandchild and the factory-girl's little Paul in her arms. Hanne's little daughter stared silently out of the window, with the deep, wondering gaze of her mother. "Don't be afraid," Pelle shouted to the old woman; "we are coming to help you now!" When little Paul caught sight of Pelle he wrenched himself away from Madam Johnsen and ran out onto the gallery. He jumped right down, lay for a moment on the flagstones, turned round and round, quite confused, and then, like a flash of lightning, he rushed by Pelle and out into the street.

Pelle sent a few of the men into the long corridor, to see whether all were out. "Break in the closed doors," he said; "there may possibly be children or sick people inside." The inmates of the first and second stories had saved themselves before the fire had got a hold on the woodwork.

Pelle himself ran up the main staircase up to the lofts and under the roof, in order to go to the assistance of the inmates of the outbuildings over the attics. But he was met by the inmates of the long roof-walk. "You can't get through any longer," said the old rag-picker; "Pipman's whole garret is burning, and there are no more up here. God in heaven have mercy on the poor souls over there!"

In spite of this, Pelle tried to find a way over the attics, but was forced to turn back.

The men had fetched the fire-escape, and had with difficulty brought it through the entry and had set it up! The burning timbers were beginning to fall; fragments of burning woodwork lay all around, and at any moment the whole building might collapse with a crash. But there was no time to think of one's self. The smoke was rolling out of Vinslev's corridor and filling the yard. There was need of haste.

"Of course, it was the lunatic who started the fire," said the men, as they held the ladder.

It reached only to the second story, but Pelle threw a rope up to Madam Johnsen, and she fastened it to the window-frame, so that he was able to clamber up. With the rope he lowered first the child and then the old woman to his comrades below, who were standing on the ladder to receive them. The smoke was smarting in his eyes and throat, and all but stifled him; he could see nothing, but he heard a horrible shrieking all about him.

Just above him a woman was wailing. "Oh, Pelle, help me!" she whimpered, half choking. It was the timid seamstress, who had moved thither; he recognized her emotional voice. "She loves me!" suddenly flashed upon his mind.

"Catch the rope and fasten it well to the window-frame, and I'll come up and help you!" he said, and he swung the end of the rope up toward the fourth story. But at the same moment a wild shriek rang out. A dark mass flew past his head and struck the flagstones with a dull thud. The flames darted hissing from the window, as though to reach after her, and then drew back.

For a moment he hung stupefied over the window-sill. This was too horrible. Was it not her gentle voice that he now heard singing with him? And then the timbers fell with a long cracking sound, and a cloud of hot ashes rose in the air and filled the lungs as with fire. "Come down!" cried his comrades, "the ladder is burning!"

A deafening, long-drawn ringing told him that the fire-brigade was near at hand.

But in the midst of all the uproar Pelle's ears had heard a faint, intermittent sound. With one leap he was in Madam Johnsen's room; he stood there listening; the crying of a child reached him from the other side of the wall, where the rooms opened on to the inner corridor. It was horrible to hear it and to stand there and be able to do nothing. A wall lay between, and there was no thoroughfare on the other side. In the court below they were shouting his name. Devil take them, he would come when he was ready. There he stood, obstinate and apathetic, held there by that complaining, childish voice. A blind fury arose in him; sullenly he set his shoulder against that accursed wall, and prepared himself for the shock. But the wall was giving! Yet again he charged it --a terrible blow--and part of the barrier was down!

He was met by a rush of stifling heat and smoke; he had to hold his breath and cover his face with his hands as he pressed forward. A little child lay there in a cradle. He stumbled over to it and groped his way back to the wall. The fire, now that it had access to the air, suddenly leaped at him with an explosive force that made him stagger. He felt as though a thirsty bull had licked his cheek. It bellowed at his heels with a voice of thunder, but was silent when he slammed the door. Half choking he found his way to the window and tried to shout to those below, but he had no voice left; only a hoarse whisper came from his throat.

Well, there he stood, with a child in his arms, and he was going to die! But that didn't matter--he had got through the wall! Behind him the fire was pressing forward; it had eaten a small hole through the door, and had thus created the necessary draught. The hole grew larger; sparks rose as under a pair of bellows, and a dry, burning heat blew through the opening. Small, almost imperceptible flames were dancing over the polished surface; very soon the whole door would burst into a blaze. His clothes smelt of singeing; his hands were curiously dry like decaying wood, and he felt as if the hair at the back of his head was curling. And down below they were shouting his name. But all that was of no consequence; only his head was so heavy with the smoke and heat! He felt that he was on the point of falling. Was the child still alive? he wondered. But he dared not look to see; he had spread his jacket over its face in order to protect it.

He clutched the window-frame, and directed his dying thoughts toward Ellen and the children. Why was he not with them? What nonsense had it been that induced him to leave them? He could no longer recollect; but if it had not been all up with him now he would have hurried home to

them, to play with Young Lasse. But now he must die; in a moment he would fall, suffocated--even before the flames could reach him.

There was some slight satisfaction in that--it was as though he had played a trick on some one.

Suddenly something shot up before his dying gaze and called him back. It was the end of a fire-escape, and a fireman rose out of the smoke just in front of him, seized the child, and handed it down. Pelle stood there wrestling with the idea that he must move from where he was; but before it had passed through his mind a fireman had seized him by the scruff of his neck and had run down the ladder with him.

The fresh air aroused him. He sprang up from the stretcher on which the fireman had laid him and looked excitedly about him. At the same moment the people began quite senselessly to shout his name and to clap their hands, and Madam Johnsen pushed her way through the barrier and threw herself upon him. "Pelle!" she cried, weeping; "oh, you are alive, Pelle!"

"Yes, of course I'm alive--but that's nothing to cry about."

"No, but we thought you were caught in there. But how you look, you poor boy!" She took him with her to a working-man's home, and helped him to set himself to rights. When he had once seen a looking-glass he understood! He was unrecognizable, what with smoke and ashes, which had burnt themselves into his skin and would not come off. And under the grime there was a bad burn on one of his cheeks. He went to one of the firemen and had a plaster applied.

"You really want a pair of eyebrows too," said the fireman. "You've been properly in the fire, haven't you?"

"Why did the fire-engines take so long?" asked Pelle.

"Long? They were ten minutes getting here after the alarm was given. We got the alarm at eight, and now it's half-past."

Pelle was silent; he was quite taken aback; he felt as though the whole night must have gone by, so much had happened. Half an hour--and in that time he had helped to snatch several people out of the claws of death and had seen others fall into them. And he himself was singed by the close passage of death! The knowledge was lurking somewhere at the back of his mind, an accomplished but elusive fact; when he clenched his fist cracks appeared in the skin, and his clothes smelt like burnt horn. In the court the firemen were working unceasingly.

Some, from the tops of their ladders in the court, were pouring streams of water upon the flames; others were forcing their way into the body of the building and searching the rooms; and from time to time a fireman made his appearance carrying a charred body. Then the inmates of the "Ark" were called inside the barrier in order to identify the body. They hurried weeping through the crowd, seeking one another; it was impossible for the police to assemble them or to ascertain how many had failed to escape.

Suddenly all eyes were directed toward the roof of the front portion of the building, where the fire had not as yet entirely prevailed. There stood the crazy Vinslev, playing on his flute; and when the cracking of

the fire was muffled for a moment one could hear his crazy music "Listen! Listen! He is playing the march!" they cried. Yes, he was playing the march, but it was interwoven with his own fantasies, so that the well-known melody sounded quite insane on Vinslev's flute.

The firemen erected a ladder and ran up to the roof in order to save him, but he fled before them. When he could go no farther he leaped into the sea of flame.

The market-place and the banks of the canal were thick with people; shoulder to shoulder they stood there, gazing at the voluptuous spectacle of the burning "Ark." The grime and poverty and the reek of centuries were going up in flames. How it rustled and blazed and crackled! The crowd was in the best of spirits owing to the victory of Labor; no one had been much inclined to sleep that night; and here was a truly remarkable display of fireworks, a magnificent illumination in honor of the victory of the poor! There were admiring cries of "Ah!" people hissed in imitation of the sound of rockets and clapped their hands when the flames leaped up or a roof crashed in.

Pelle moved about in the crowd, collecting the bewildered inmates of the "Ark" by the gates of the prison, so that those who had relatives could find them. They were weeping, and it was difficult to console them. Alas, now the "Ark" was burnt, the beloved place of refuge for so many ruined souls! "How can you take it to heart so?" said Pelle consolingly. "You will be lodged overnight by the city, and afterward you will move into proper dwelling-houses, where everything is clean and new. And you needn't cry over your possessions, I'll soon get up a collection, and you'll have better things than you had before."

Nevertheless they wept; like homeless wild beasts they whimpered and rambled restlessly to and fro, seeking for they knew not what. Their forest fastness, their glorious hiding-place, was burning! What was all the rest of the city to them? It was not for them; it was as though there was no place of refuge left for them in all the world! Every moment a few of them slipped away, seeking again to enter the site of the fire, like horses that seek to return to the burning stable. Pelle might have spared his efforts at consolation; they were races apart, a different species of humanity. In the dark, impenetrable entrails of the "Ark" they had made for themselves a world of poverty and extremest want; and they had been as fantastically gay in their careless existence as though their world had been one of wealth and fortune. And now it was all going up in flame!

The fire was unsparing; its purifying flames could not be withstood. The flames tore off great sheets of the old wallpapers and flung them out half-burned into the street. There were many layers pasted together, many colors and patterns, one dimly showing through another, making the most curious and fantastic pictures. And on the reverse side of these sheets was a layer as of coagulated blood; this was the charred remnant of the mysterious world of cupboards and chimney-corners, the fauna of the fireplace, that had filled the children's sleep with dreams, and in the little mussel-shaped bodies was contained the concentrated exhalation of the poor man's night! And now the "Ark" must have been hot right through to the ground, for the rats were beginning to leave. They came in long, winding files from the entry, and up out of the cellars of the old iron merchant and the old clothes dealer, headed by the old, scabby males which used to visit the dustbins in the middle of the day. The onlookers cheered and drove them back again.

About ten o'clock the fire was visibly decreasing and the work of clearance could begin. The crowd scattered, a little disappointed that all was over so soon. The "Ark" was an extinct bonfire! There could not have been a sackful of sound firewood in all that heap of lumber!

Pelle took Madam Johnsen and her little grand-daughter to his lodgings with him. The old woman had been complaining all the time; she was afraid of being given over to the public authorities. But when she heard that she was to go with Pelle she was reassured.

On the High Bridge they met the first dust-carts on their way outward. They were decked out with green garlands and little national flags.

XXXVII

The next day broke with a lofty, radiant Sabbath sky. There was something about it that reminded one of Easter--Easter morning, with its hymns and the pure winds of resurrection. _The Working Man_ rung in the day with a long and serious leading article--a greeting to the rosy dawn--and invited the working-classes to attend a giant assembly on the Common during the afternoon. All through the forenoon great industry prevailed--wardrobes had to be overhauled, provision-baskets packed, and liquid refreshment provided. There was much running across landings and up and down stairs, much lending and borrowing. This was to be not merely a feast of victory; it was also intended as a demonstration--that was quite clear. The world should see how well they were still holding together after all these weeks of the lock-out! They were to appear in full strength, and they must look their best.

In the afternoon the people streamed from all sides toward the Labor Building; it looked as though the whole city was flocking thither. In the big court-yard, and all along the wide street as far as High Street, the trades unions were gathered about their banners. The great review had all been planned beforehand, and all went as by clockwork by those who were accustomed to handling great masses of men; there was no running from side to side; every one found his place with ease. Pelle and Stolpe, who had devised the programme, went along the ranks setting all to rights.

With the men there were no difficulties; but the women and children had of course misunderstood their instructions. They should have gone direct to the Common, but had turned up here with all their impedimenta. They stood crowding together on both the side-walks; and when the procession got under way they broke up and attached themselves to its sides. They had fought through the campaign, and their place was beside their husbands and fathers! It was a bannered procession with a double escort of women and children! Had the like ever been seen?

No, the city had never seen such a going forth of the people! Like a giant serpent the procession unrolled itself; when its head was at the end of the street the greater part of its body was still coiled together. But what was the matter in front there? The head of the procession was turning toward the wrong side--toward the city, instead of taking the direct way to the Common, as the police had ordered! That

wouldn't do! That would lead to a collision with the police! Make haste and get Pelle to turn the stream before a catastrophe occurs!--Pelle? But there he is, right in front! He himself has made a mistake as to the direction! Ah, well, then, there is nothing to be said about it. But what in the world was he thinking of?

Pelle marches in the front rank beside the standard-bearer. He sees and hears nothing, but his luminous gaze sweeps over the heads of the crowd. His skin is still blackened by the smoke of the fire; it is peeling off his hands; his hair and moustache seem to have been cropped very strangely; and the skin is drawn round the burn on his cheek. He is conscious of one thing only: the rhythmic tread of fifty thousand men! As a child he has known it in dreams, heard it like a surging out of doors when he laid his head upon his pillow. This is the great procession of the Chosen People, and he is leading them into the Promised Land! And where should their road lie if not through the capital?

At the North Wall the mounted police are drawn up, closing the inner city. They are drawn up diagonally across the thoroughfare, and were backing their horses into the procession, in order to force it to turn aside. But they were swept aside, and the stream flowed on; nothing can stop it.

It passes down the street with difficulty, like a viscous mass that makes its way but slowly, yet cannot be held back. It is full of a peaceful might. Who would venture to hew a way into it? The police are following it like watchful dogs, and on the side-walks the people stand pressed against the houses; they greet the procession or scoff at it, according as they are friends or foes. Upstairs, behind the big windows, are gaily clad ladies and gentlemen, quizzing the procession with half-scornful, half-uneasy smiles. What weird, hungry, unkempt world is this that has suddenly risen up from obscurity to take possession of the highway? And behind their transparent lace curtains the manufacturers gaze and grumble. What novel kind of demonstration is this? The people have been forgiven, and instead of going quietly back to their work they begin to parade the city as though to show how many they are--yes, and how thin starvation has made them!

It is a curious procession in every way. If they wanted to demonstrate how roughly they have been handled, they could not have done better! They all bear the marks of battle--they are pale and sallow and ill-clad; their Sunday best hangs in the great common wardrobe still; what they wear to-day is patched and mended. Hunger has refined their features; they are more like a procession of ghosts who have shaken off the heavy bonds of earth and are ready to take possession of the world of the spirit, than people who hope to conquer the Promised Land for themselves and posterity. Such a procession of conquerors! They are all limping! A flock with broken wings, that none the less are seeking to fly. And whither are they going?

One of their choirs breaks into song: "We are bound for the Land of Fortune!"

And where does that land lie? has any of your watchers seen it? Or was it not merely a deceitful dream, engendered by hunger? Eat enough, really enough, for once, good people, and then let us talk together! What is it yonder? The emptiness that gave birth to you and even yet surges crazily in your starving blood? Or the land of the living? Is

this then the beginning of a new world for you? Or is the curse eternal that brings you into the world to be slaves?

There is a peculiar, confident rhythm in their tread which drowns all other sounds, and seems to say, "We are the masters, poor as we look to the eye! We have used four million kroner in waging the war, and twenty millions have been wasted because they brought the work of our hands to a standstill! We come from the darkness, and we go toward the light, and no one can hold us back! Behind us lie hunger and poverty, ignorance and slavery, and before us lies a happy existence, radiant with the rising sun of Freedom! From this day onward a new age begins; we are its youthful might, and we demand power for ten thousand families! The few have long enough prevailed!"

Imperturbably they march onward, despite the wounds that must yet be smarting; for see, they limp! Why should they still doubt?

Listen, they are singing! Hoarsely the sound emerges from ten thousand throats, as though the song had grown rusty, or must first tear itself free. A new instrument this, that has not yet been tuned by the master--its first notes are discords! But the song runs to and fro along the procession in rhythmical waves, it is an army on the march, and their eyes kindle and blaze with the growing sense of their power, the consciousness that they are the many! And the sound grows mighty, a storm that rolls above the housetops, "Brother, soon will dawn the day!"

Touch not the humblest of them now! A vast, intoxicating power has descended upon them; each one has grown beyond himself, and believes himself capable of performing miracles. There are no loose particles; the whole is a mighty avalanche. Touch but one of them and the might of the mass will pour into him. He will be oblivious of consequences, but will behave as though urged by destiny--as though the vast being of which he forms a part will assume all responsibility, and constitutes the law!

It is intoxicating to walk in the ranks, to be permitted to bear the Union banners; even to look on fills one with strength and joy. Mothers and children accompany the men, although they have for the most part to walk in the gutters. It is great sport to fall out and watch the whole mighty procession go by, and then, by taking a short cut, again to station one's self at the head. Stand at a street-corner, and it will take hours for the whole to pass you. _Trapp, trapp! Trapp, trapp!_ It gets into one's blood, and remains there, like an eternal rhythm.

One Union passes and another comes up; the machinists, with the sturdy Munck at their head, as standard-bearer, the same who struck the three blows of doom that summoned five and forty thousand men to the battle for the right of combination! Hurrah for Munck! Here are the house-painters, the printers, the glove-makers, the tinsmiths, the cork-cutters, the leather-dressers, and a group of seamen with bandy legs. At the head of these last marches Howling Peter, the giant transfigured! The copper-smiths, the coal-miners, the carpenters, the journeymen bakers, and the coach-builders! A queer sort of procession this! But here are the girdlers and there the plasterers, the stucco-workers, and the goldsmiths, and even the sand-blasters are here! The tailors and the shoemakers are easy to recognize. And there, God bless me, are the slipper-makers, close at their heels; they wouldn't be left in the cold! The gilders, the tanners, the weavers, and the tobacco-workers! The file-cutters, the bricklayers'-laborers, the pattern-makers, the

coopers, the book-binders, the joiners and shipbuilders! What, is there no end to them? Hi, make way for the journeymen glaziers! Yes, you may well smile--they are all their own masters! And here come the gasworkers, and the water-company's men, and the cabinet-makers, who turn in their toes like the blacksmiths, and march just in front of them, as though these had anything to learn from them! Those are the skilful ivory-turners, and those the brush-makers; spectacl'd these, and with brushes growing out of their noses--that is, when they are old. Well, so it is all over at last! The tail consists of a swarm of frolicsome youngsters.

But no--these are the milk-boys, these young vagabonds! And behind them come the factory-girls and behind them it all begins again--the pianoforte-makers, the millers, the saddlers, and the paper-hangers--banners as far as one can see! How big and how gay the world is, after all! How many callings men pursue, so that work shall never fail them! Ah, here are the masons, with all the old veterans at their head--those have been in the movement since the beginning! Look, how steady on his leg is old Stolpe! And the slaters, with the Vanishing Man at their head--they look as if they don't much care about walking on the level earth! And here are the sawyers, and the brewers, and the chair-makers! Year by year their wages have been beaten down so that at the beginning of the struggle they were earning only half as much as ten years ago; but see how cheerful they look! Now there will be food in the larder once more. Those faded-looking women there are weavers; they have no banner; eight ore the hour won't run to flags. And finally a handful of newspaper-women from _The Working Man_. God how weary they look! Their legs are like lead from going up and down so many stairs. Each has a bundle of papers under her arm, as a sign of her calling.

Trapp, trapp, trapp, trapp! On they go, with a slow, deliberate step. Whither? Where Pelle wills. " _Brother, soon will dawn the day!_" One hears the song over and over again; when one division has finished it the next takes it up. The side-streets are spewing their contents out upon the procession; shrunken creatures that against their will were sing'd in the struggle, and cannot recover their feet again. But they follow the procession with big eyes and break into fanatical explanations.

A young fellow stands on the side-walk yonder; he has hidden himself behind some women, and is stretching his neck to see. For his own Union is coming now, to which he was faithless in the conflict. Remorse has brought him hither. But the rhythm of the marching feet carries him away, so that he forgets all and marches off beside them. He imagines himself in the ranks, singing and proud of the victory. And suddenly some of his comrades seize him and drag him into the ranks; they lift him up and march away with him. A trophy, a trophy! A pity he can't be stuck on a pole and carried high overhead!

Pelle is still at the head of the procession, at the side of the sturdy Munck. His aspect is quiet and smiling, but inwardly he is full of unruly energy; never before has he felt so strong! On the side-walks the police keep step with him, silent and fateful. He leads the procession diagonally across the King's New Market, and suddenly a shiver runs through the whole; he is going to make a demonstration in front of Schloss Amalienborg! No one has thought of that! Only the police are too clever for them the streets leading to the castle are held by troops.

Gradually the procession widens out until it fills the entire market-

place. A hundred and fifty trades unions, each with its waving standard! A tremendous spectacle! Every banner has its motto or device. Red is the color of all those banners which wave above the societies which were established in the days of Socialism, and among them are many national flags--blue, red, and white--the standards of the old guilds and corporations. Those belong to ancient societies which have gradually joined the movement. Over all waves the standard of the millers, which is some hundreds of years old! It displays a curious-looking scrawl which is the monogram of the first absolute king!

But the real standard is not here, the red banner of the International, which led the movement through the first troubled years. The old men would speedily recognize it, and the young men too, they have heard so many legends attaching to it. If it still exists it is well hidden; it would have too great an effect on the authorities--would be like a red rag to a bull.

And as they stand staring it suddenly rises in the air--slashed and tattered, imperishable as to color. Pelle stands on the box of a carriage, solemnly raising it in the air. For a moment they are taken by surprise; then they begin to shout, until the shouts grow to a tempest of sound. They are greeting the flag of brotherhood, the blood-red sign of the International--and Pelle, too, who is raising it in his blistered hands--Pelle, the good comrade, who saved the child from the fire; Pelle, who has led the movement cause to victory!

And Pelle stands there laughing at them frankly, like a great child. This would have been the place to give them all a few words, but he has not yet recovered his mighty voice. So he waves it round over them with a slow movement as though he were administering an oath to them all. And he is very silent. This is an old dream of his, and at last it has come to fulfillment!

The police are pushing into the crowd in squads, but the banner has disappeared; Munck is standing with an empty stave in his hands, and is on the point of fixing his Union banner on it.

"You must take care to get these people away from here, or we shall hold you responsible for the consequences," says the Police inspector, with a look that promises mischief. Pelle looks in the face. "He'd like to throw me into prison, if only he had the courage," he thought, and then he sets the procession in motion again.

* * * * *

Out on the Common the great gathering of people rocked to and fro, in restless confusion. From beyond its confines it looked like a dark, raging sea. About each of the numerous speakers' platforms stood a densely packed crowd, listening to the leaders who were demonstrating the great significance of the day. But the majority did not feel inclined to-day to stand in a crowd about a platform. They felt a longing to surrender themselves to careless enjoyment, after all the hardships they had endured; to stand on their heads in the grass, to play the clown for a moment. Group upon group lay all over the great Common, eating and playing. The men had thrown off their coats and were wrestling with one another, or trying to revive the gymnastic exercises of their boyhood. They laughed more than they spoke; if any one introduced a serious subject it was immediately suppressed with a punning remark. Nobody was serious to-day!

Pelle moved slowly about, delighting in the crowd, while keeping a look-out for Madam Johnsen and the child, who were to have met him out here. Inwardly, at the back of everything, he was in a serious mood, and was therefore quiet. It must be fine to lie on one's belly here, in the midst of one's own family circle, eating hard-boiled eggs and bread-and-butter--or to go running about with Young Lasse on his shoulders! But what did it profit a man to put his trust in anything? He could not begin over again with Ellen; the impossible stood between them. To drive Young Lasse out of his thoughts--that would be the hardest thing of all; he must see if he could not get him away from Ellen in a friendly manner. As for applying to the law in order to get him back, that he would not do.

The entire Stolpe family was lying in a big circle, enjoying a meal; the sons were there with their wives and children; only Pelle and his family were lacking.

"Come and set to!" said Stolpe, "or you'll be making too long a day of it."

"Yes," cried Madam Stolpe, "it is such a time since we've been together. No need for us to suffer because you and Ellen can't agree!" She did not know the reason of the breach--at all events, not from him--but was none the less friendly toward him.

"I am really looking for my own basket of food," said Pelle, lying down beside them.

"Now look here, you are the deuce of a fellow," said Stolpe, suddenly laughing. "You intended beforehand to look in and say how-d'ye-do to Brother Christian, [Footnote: The king was so called.] hey? It wasn't very wise of you, really--but that's all one to me. But what you have done to-day no one else could do. The whole thing went like a dance! Not a sign of wobbling in the ranks! You know, I expect, that they mean to put you at the head of the Central Committee? Then you will have an opportunity of working at your wonderful ideas of a world-federation. But there'll be enough to do at home here without that; at the next election we must win the city--and part of the country too. You'll let them put you up?"

"If I recover my voice. I can't speak loudly at present."

"Try the raw yolk of an egg every night," said Madam Stolpe, much concerned, "and tie your left-hand stocking round your throat when you go to bed; that is a good way. But it must be the left-hand stocking."

"Mother is a Red, you know," said Stolpe. "If I go the right-hand side of her she doesn't recognize me!"

The sun must have set--it was already beginning to grow dark. Black clouds were rising in the west. Pelle felt remorseful that he had not yet found the old woman and her grandchild, so he took his leave of the Stolpes.

He moved about, looking for the two; wherever he went the people greeted him, and there was a light in their eyes. He noticed that a policeman was following him at some little distance; he was one of the secret hangers-on of the party; possibly he had something to communicate to

him. So Pelle lay down in the grass, a little apart from the crowd, and the policeman stood still and gazed cautiously about him. Then he came up to Pelle. When he was near he bent down as though picking something up. "They are after you," he said, under his breath; "this afternoon there was a search made at your place, and you'll be arrested, as soon as you leave here." Then he moved on.

Pelle lay there some minutes before he could understand the matter. A search--but what was there at his house that every one might not know of? Suddenly he thought of the wood block and the tracing of the ten-kroner note. They had sought for some means of striking at him and they had found the materials of a hobby!

He rose heavily and walked away from the crowd. On the East Common he stood still and gazed back hesitatingly at this restless sea of humanity, which was now beginning to break up, and would presently melt away into the darkness. Now the victory was won and they were about to take possession of the Promised Land--and he must go to prison, for a fancy begotten of hunger! He had issued no false money, nor had he ever had any intention of doing so. But of what avail was that? He was to be arrested--he had read as much in the eyes of the police-inspector. Penal servitude--or at best a term in prison!

He felt that he must postpone the decisive moment while he composed his mind. So he went back to the city by way of the East Bridge. He kept to the side-streets, in order not to be seen, and made his way toward St. Saviour's churchyard; the police were mostly on the Common.

For a moment the shipping in the harbor made him think of escape. But whither should he flee? And to wander about abroad as an outlaw, when his task and his fate lay here could he do it? No, he must accept his fate!

The churchyard was closed; he had to climb over the wall in order to get in. Some one had put fresh flowers on Father Lasse's grave. Maria, he thought. Yes, it must have been she! It was good to be here; he no longer felt so terribly forsaken. It was as though Father Lasse's untiring care still hovered protectingly about him.

But he must move on. The arrest weighed upon his mind and made him restless. He wandered through the city, keeping continually to the narrow side-streets, where the darkness concealed him. This was the field of battle--how restful it was now! Thank God, it was not they who condemned him! And now happiness lay before them--but for him!

Cautiously he drew near his lodging--two policemen in plain clothes were patrolling to and fro before the house. After that he drew back again into the narrow side-streets. He drifted about aimlessly, fighting

against the implacable, and at last resigning himself.

He would have liked to see Ellen--to have spoken kindly to her, and to have kissed the children. But there was a watch on his home too--at every point he was driven back into the solitude to which he was a stranger. That was the dreadful part of it all. How was he going to live alone with himself, he who only breathed when in the company of others? Ellen was still his very life, however violently he might deny it. Her questioning eyes still gazed at him enigmatically, from whatever corner of existence he might approach. He had a strong feeling now that she had

held herself ready all this time--that she had sat waiting for him, expecting him. How would she accept this?

From Castle Street he saw a light in Morten's room. He slipped into the yard and up the stairs. Morten was reading.

"It's something quite new to see you--fireman!" he said, with a kindly smile.

"I have come to say good-bye," said Pelle lightly.

Morten looked at him wonderingly. "Are you going to travel?"

"Yes ... I--I wanted...." he said, and sat down.

He gazed on the floor in front of his feet. "What would you do if the authorities were sneaking after you?" he asked suddenly. Morten stared at him for a time. Then he opened a drawer and took out a revolver. "I wouldn't let them lay hands on me," he said blackly. "But why do you ask me?"

"Oh, nothing.... Will you do me a favor, Morten? I have promised to take up a collection for those poor creatures from the 'Ark,' but I've no time for it now. They have lost all their belongings in the fire. Will you see to the matter?"

"Willingly. Only I don't understand----"

"Why, I have got to go away for a time," said Pelle, with a grim laugh. "I have always wanted to travel, as you know. Now there's an opportunity."

"Good luck, then!" said Morten, looking at him curiously as he pressed his hand. How much he had guessed Pelle did not know. There was Bornholm blood in Morten's veins; he was not one to meddle in another's affairs.

And then he was in the streets again. No, Morten's way out was of no use to him--and now he would give in, and surrender himself to the authorities! He was in the High Street now; he had no purpose in hiding himself any longer.

In North Street he saw a figure dealing with a shop-door in a very suspicious manner; as Pelle came up it flattened itself against the door. Pelle stood still on the pavement; the man, too, was motionless for a while, pressing himself back into the shadow; then, with an angry growl, he sprang out, in order to strike Pelle to the ground.

At that very moment the two men recognized one another. The stranger was Ferdinand.

"What, are you still at liberty?" he cried, in amazement. "I thought they had taken you!"

"How did you know that?" asked Pelle.

"Ach, one knows these things--it's part of one's business. You'll get five to six years, Pelle, till you are stiff with it. Prison, of course --not penal servitude."

Pelle shuddered.

"You'll freeze in there," said Ferdinand compassionately. "As for me, I can settle down very well in there. But listen, Pelle--you've been so good, and you've tried to save me--next to mother you are the only person I care anything about. If you would like to go abroad I can soon hide you and find the passage-money."

"Where will you get it?" asked Pelle, hesitating.

"Ach, I go in for the community of goods," said Ferdinand with a broad smile. "The prefect of police himself has just five hundred kroner lying in his desk. I'll try to get it for you if you like."

"No," said Pelle slowly, "I would rather undergo my punishment. But thanks for your kind intentions--and give my best wishes to your old mother. And if you ever have anything to spare, then give it to Widow Johnsen. She and the child have gone hungry since Hanne's death."

And then there was nothing more to do or say; it was all over.... He went straight across the market-place toward the court-house. There it stood, looking so dismal! He strolled slowly past it, along the canal, in order to collect himself a little before going in. He walked along the quay, gazing down into the water, where the boats and the big live-boxes full of fish were just visible. By Holmens Church he pulled himself together and turned back--he must do it now! He raised his head with a sudden resolve and found himself facing Marie. Her cheeks glowed as he gazed at her.

"Pelle," she cried, rejoicing, "are you still at liberty? Then it wasn't true! I have been to the meeting, and they said there you had been arrested. Ach, we have been so unhappy!"

"I shall be arrested--I am on the way now."

"But, Pelle, dear Pelle!" She gazed at him with tearful eyes. Ah, he was still the foundling, who needed her care! Pelle himself had tears in his eyes; he suddenly felt weak and impressible. Here was a human child whose heart was beating for him--and how beautiful she was, in her grief at his misfortune!

She stood before him, slender, but generously formed; her hair--once so thin and uncared-for--fell in heavy waves over her forehead. She had emerged from her stunted shell into a glorious maturity. "Pelle," she said, with downcast eyes, gripping both his hands, "don't go there to-night--wait till tomorrow! All the others are rejoicing over the victory to-night--and so should you! ... Come with me, to my room, Pelle, you are so unhappy." Her face showed him that she was fighting down her tears. She had never looked so much a child as now.

"Why do you hesitate? Come with me! Am I not pretty? And I have kept it all for you! I have loved you since the very first time I ever saw you, Pelle, and I began to grow, because I wanted to be beautiful for you. I owe nothing to any one but you, and if you don't want me I don't want to go on living!"

No, she owed nothing to any one, this child from nowhere, but was solely and entirely her own work. Lovely and untouched she came to him in her abandonment, as though she were sent by the good angel of poverty to

quicken his heart. Beautiful and pure of heart she had grown up out of wretchedness as though out of happiness itself, and where in the world should he rest his head, that was wearied to death, but on the heart of her who to him was child and mother and beloved?

"Pelle, do you know, there was dancing to-day in the Federation building after the meeting on the Common, and we young girls had made a green garland, and I was to crown you with it when you came into the hall. Oh, we did cry when some one came up and called out to us that they had taken you! But now you have won the wreath after all, haven't you? And you shall sleep sweetly and not think of to-morrow!"

And Pelle fell asleep with his head on her girlish bosom. And as she lay there gazing at him with the eyes of a mother, he dreamed that Denmark's hundred thousand workers were engaged in building a splendid castle, and that he was the architect. And when the castle was finished he marched in at the head of the army of workers; singing they passed through the long corridors, to fill the shining halls. But the halls were not there --the castle had turned into a prison! And they went on and on, but could not find their way out again.

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