The Son of A Servant

By
August
Strindberg

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By August Strindberg

The Inferno

Zones of the Spirit

The Son of a Servant

August Strindberg.

From a photograph.

THE SON OF A SERVANT

BY

AUGUST STRINDBERG
AUTHOR OF "THE INFERNO," "ZONES OF THE SPIRIT," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

CLAUD FIELD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HENRY VACHER-BURCH

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INTRODUCTION

AUGUST STRINDBERG AS NOVELIST

From the Publication of "The Son of a Servant" to "The Inferno" (1886–1896)

A CELEBRATED statesman is said to have described the biography of a cardinal as being like the Judgment Day. In reading August Strindberg's autobiographical writings, as, for example, his *Inferno*, and the book for which this study is a preface, we must remember that he portrays his own Judgment Day. And as his works have come but lately before the great British public, it may be well to consider what attitude should be adopted towards the amazing candour of his self-revelation. In most provinces of life other than the comprehension of our fellows, the art of understanding is making great progress. We comprehend new phenomena without the old strain upon our capacity for readjusting our point of view. But do we equally well understand our fellow-being whose way of life is not ours? We are patient towards new phases of philosophy, new discoveries in science, new sociological facts, observed in other lands; but in considering an abnormal type of man or woman, hasty judgment or a too contracted outlook is still liable to cloud the judgment.

Now, it is obvious that if we would understand any worker who has accomplished what his contemporaries could only attempt to do, we must have a sufficiently wide knowledge of his work. Neither the inconsequent gossip attaching to such a personality, nor the chance perusal of a problem-play, affords an adequate basis for arriving at a true estimate of the man. Few writers demand, to the same degree as August Strindberg, those graces of judgment, patience, and reverence. And for this reason first of all: most of us live sheltered lives. They are few who stand in the heart of the storm made by Europe's

progress. Especially is this true in Southern Europe, where tradition holds its secular sway, where such a moulding energy as constitutional practice exerts its influence over social life, where the aims and ends of human attainment are defined and sanctioned by a consciousness developing with the advancement of civilisation. There is often engendered under such conditions a nervous impatience towards those who, judged from behind the sheltered walls of orthodoxy, are more or less exposed to the criticism of their fellows. The fault lies in yielding to this impatience. The proof that August Strindberg was of the few who must stand in the open, and suffer the full force of all the winds that blow, cannot now be attempted. Our sole aim must be to enable the reader of *The Son of a Servant* to take up a sympathetic standpoint. This book forms *part* of the autobiography of a most gifted man, through whose life the fierce winds of Europe's opinions blew into various expression.

The second reason for the exercise of impartiality, is that Strindberg's recent death has led to the circulation through Europe of certain phrases which are liable to displace the balance of judgment in reviewing his life and work. There are passages in his writings, and phases of his autobiography, that raise questions of Abnormal Psychology. Hence pathological terms are used to represent the whole man and his work. Again, from the jargon of a prevalent Nietzschianism—a doctrine at once like and unlike the teaching of that solitary thinker—descriptions of the Superman are borrowed, and with these Strindberg is labelled. Or again, certain incidents in his domestic affairs are seized upon to prove him a decadent libertine. The facts of this book, *The Son of a Servant*, are true: Strindberg lived them. His *Inferno*, in like manner, is a transcript of a period of his life. And if these books are read as they should be read, they are neither more nor less than the records of the progress of a most gifted life along the Dolorous Way.

The present volume is the record of the early years of Strindberg's life, and the story is incomparably told. For the sympathetic reader it will represent the history of a temperament to which the world could not come in easy fashion, and for which circumstances had contrived a world where it would encounter at each step tremendous difficulties. We find in Strindberg the consciousness of vast powers thwarted by neglect, by misunder-

standing, and by the shackles of an ignominious parentage. He sets out on life as a viking, sailing the trackless seas that beat upon the shores of unknown lands, where he must take the sword to establish his rights of venture, and write fresh pages in some Heimskringla of a later age.

A calm reading of the book may induce us to suggest that this is often the fate of genius. The man of great endowments is made to walk where hardship lies on every side. And though a recognition of the hardness of the way is something, it must be borne in mind that while some are able to pass along it in serenity, others face it in tears, and others again in terrible revolt. Revolt was the only possible attitude for the Son of a Servant.

How true this is may be realised by recalling the fact that towards the end of the same year in which *The Son of a Servant* appeared, viz., 1886, our author published the second part of a series of stories entitled *Marriage*, in which that relationship is subjected to criticism more intense than is to be found in any of the many volumes devoted to this subject in a generation eminently given to this form of criticism. Side by side with this fact should be set the contents of one such story from his pen. Here he has etched, with acid that bites deeper than that of the worker in metal, the story of a woman's pettiness and inhumanity towards the husband who loves her. By his art her weakness is made to dominate every detail of the domestic *ménage*, and what was once a woman now appears to be the spirit of neglect, whose habitation is garnished with dust and dead flowers. Her great weakness calls to the man's pity, and we are told how, into this disorder, he brings the joy of Christmastide, and the whispered words of life, like a wind from some flower-clad hill. The natural conclusion, as regards both his autobiographical works and his volume of stories, is this: that Strindberg finds the Ideal to be a scourge, and not a Pegasus. And this is a distinction that sharply divides man from man, whether endowed for the attainment of saintship, for the apprehension of the vision, or with powers that enable him to wander far over the worlds of thought.

Had Strindberg intended to produce some more finished work to qualify the opinion concerning his pessimism, he could have done no better than write the novel that comes next in the order of his works, *Hemso Folk*, which was given to the world

in the year 1887. It is the first of his novels to draw on the natural beauties of the rocky coast and many tiny islands which make up the splendour of the Fjord whose crown is Stockholm, and which, continuing north and south, provide fascinating retreats, still unspoilt and unexplored by the commercial agent. It may be noticed here that this northern Land of Faery has not long since found its way into English literature through a story by Mr. Algernon Blackwood, in his interesting volume, *John Silence*. The adequate description of this region was reserved for August Strindberg, and among his prose writings there are none to compare with those that have been inspired by the islands and coast he delighted in. Among them, *Hemso Folk* ranks first. In this work he shows his mastery, not of self-portraiture, but of the portraiture of other men, and his characters are painted with a mastery of subject and material which in a sister art would cause one to think of Velasquez. Against a background of sea and sky stand the figures of a schoolmaster and a priest—the portraits of both depicted with the highest art,—and throughout the book may be heard the authentic speech of the soul of Strindberg's North. He may truly be claimed to be most Swedish here; but he may also with equal truth be claimed to be most universal, since *Hemso Folk* is true for all time, and in all places.

In the following year (1888) was published another volume of tales by Strindberg, entitled *Life on the Skerries*, and again the sea, and the sun, and the life of men who commune with the great waters are the sources of his virile inspiration. Other novels of a like kind were written later, but at this hour of his life he yielded to the command of the idea—a voice which called him more strongly than did the magnificence of Nature, whose painter he could be when he had respite from the whirlwind.

Tschandala, his next book, was the fruit of a holiday in the country. This novel was written to show a man of uncommon powers of mind in the toils of inferior folk—the proletariat of soul bent on the ruin of the elect in soul. Poverty keeps him in chains. He is forced to deal with neighbours of varying degrees of degradation. A landlady deceives her husband for the sake of a vagrant lover. This person attempts to subordinate the uncommon man; who, however, discovers that he can be dominated through his superstitious fears. He is enticed one night into a

field, where the projections from a lantern, imagined as supernatural beings, so play upon his fears that he dies from fright. In this book we evidently have the experimental upsurging of his imagination: supposing himself the victim of a sordid environment, he can see with unveiled eyes what might happen to him. Realistic in his apprehension of outward details, he sees the idea in its vaguest proportions. This creates, this informs his pictures of Nature; this also makes his heaven and hel. Inasmuch as a similar method is used by certain modern novelists, the curious phrase "a novel of ideas" has been coined. As though it were a surprising feature to find an idea expressed in novels! And not rarely such works are said to be lacking in warmth, because they are too full of thought.

After *Tschandala* come two or three novels of distinctly controversial character—books of especial value in essaying an understanding of Strindberg's mind. The pressure of ideas from many quarters of Europe was again upon him, and caused him to undertake long and desperate pilgrimages. *In the Offing* and *To Damascus* are the suggestive titles of these books. Seeing, however, that a detailed sketch of the evolution of Strindberg's opinions is not at this moment practicable, we merely mention these works, and the years 1890 and 1892.

Meanwhile our author has passed through two intervals in his life of a more peaceful character than was usually his lot. The first of these was spent among his favourite scenes in the vicinity of the Gulf of Bothnia, where he lived like a hermit, writing poetry and painting pictures. He might have become a painter of some note, had it not come so natural to him to use the pen. At any rate, during the time that he wielded the brush he put on canvas the scenes which he succeeded in reproducing so marvellously in his written works. The other period of respite was during a visit to Ola Hansson, a Swedish writer of rare distinction, then living near Berlin. The author of *Sensitiva Amorosa* was the antithesis of Strindberg. A consummate artist, with a wife of remarkable intellectual power, the two enfolded him in their peace, and he was able to give full expression to his creative faculty.

Strindberg now enters upon the period which culminates in the writing of *The Inferno*. From the peace of Ola Hansson's home he set out on his wedding tour, and during the early part of it

came over to England. In a remarkable communication to a Danish man of letters, Strindberg answers many questions concerning his personal tastes, among them several regarding his English predilections. We may imagine them present to him as he looks upon the sleeping city from London Bridge, in the greyness of a Sunday morning, after a journey from Gravesend. His favourite English writer is Dickens, and of his works the most admired is *Little Dorrit*. A novel written in the period described in *The Son of a Servant*, and which first brought him fame, was inspired by the reading of *David Copperfield!* His favourite painter is Turner. These little sidelights upon the personality of the man are very interesting, throwing into relief as they do the view of him adopted by the writer of the foregoing pages. London, however, he disliked, and a crisis in health compelled him to leave for Paris, from which moment begins his journey through the "Inferno."

A play of Strindberg's has been performed in Paris—the height of his ambition. Once attained, it was no longer to be desired; accordingly, he turned from the theatre to Science. He takes from their hiding-place some chemical apparatus he had purchased long before. Drawing the blinds of his room he burns pure sulphur until he believes that he has discovered in it the presence of carbon. His sentences are written in terse, swift style. A page or two of the book is turned over, and we find his pen obeying the impulse of his penetrating sight. . . . Separation from his wife; the bells of Christmas; his visit to a hospital, and the people he sees there, begin to occupy him. Gratitude to the nursing sister, and the reaching forward of his mind into the realm of the alchemical significance of his chemical studies, arouse in him a spirit of mystical asceticism. Pages of *The Inferno* might be cited to show their resemblance to documents which have come to us from the Egyptian desert, or from the narrow cell of a recluse. Theirs is the search for a spiritual union: his is the quest of a negation of self, that his science might be without fault. A notion of destiny is grafted upon his mysticism of science. He wants to be led, as did the ascetic, though for him the goal is lore hidden from mortal eyes. He now happens upon confirmation of his scientific curiosity, in the writings of an older chemist. Then he meets with Balzac's novel *Seraphita*, and a new ecstasy is added to his outreaching towards the knowledge

he aspires to. Vivid temptations assail him; he materialises as objective personalities the powers that appear to place obstacles in the way of his researches. Again we observe the same phenomena as in the soul of the monk, yet always with this difference: Strindberg is the monk of science. Curious little experiences—that others would brush into that great dust-bin, Chance—are examined with a rare simplicity to see if they may hold significance for the order of his life. These details accumulate as we turn the pages of *The Inferno*, and force one to the conclusion that they are akin to the material which we have only lately begun to study as phenomena peculiar to the psychology of the religious life. Their summary inclusion under the heading of "Abnormal Psychology" will, however, lead to a shallow interpretation of Strindberg. The voluntary isolation of himself from the relations of life and the world plays havoc with his health. Soon he is established under a doctor's care in a little southern Swedish town, with its memories of smugglers and pirates; and he immediately likens the doctor's house to a Buddhist cloister. The combination is typically Strindbergian! He begins to be haunted with the terrible suspicion that he is being plotted against. Nature is exacting heavy dues from his overwrought system. After thirty days' treatment he leaves the establishment with the reflection that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.

Dante wrote his Divine Comedy; Strindberg his Mortal Comedy. There are three great stages in each, and the literary vehicle of their perilous journeyings is aptly chosen. Readers of the wonderful Florentine will recall the familiar words:

> "Surge ai mortali per diverse foci
> la lucerna de mondo."[1]

And they have found deeper content in Strindberg's self-discoveries. The first part of his *Inferno* tells of his Purgatory; the second part closes with the poignant question, Whither? If, for a moment, we step beyond the period of his life with which this study deals, we shall find him telling of his Paradise in a mystery-play entitled *Advent*, where he, too, had a starry vision of "un simplice lume," a simple flame that ingathers the many

[1] "There riseth up to mortals through diverse trials the light of the world."

and scattered gleams of the universe's revelation. His guide through Hell is Swedenborg. Once more the note is that of the anchorite; for at the outset of his acceptance of Swedenborg's guidance he is tempted to believe that even his guide's spiritual teaching may weaken his belief in a God who chastens. He desires to deny himself the gratification of the sight of his little daughter, because he appears to consider her prattle, that breaks into the web of his contemplation, to be the instrument of a strange power. From step to step he goes until his faith is childlike as a peasant's. How he is hurled again into the depths of his own Hell, the closing pages of his book will tell us. Whatever views the reader may hold, it seems impossible that he should see in this Mortal Comedy the utterances of deranged genius. Rather will his charity of judgment have led him to a better understanding of one who listened to the winds that blow through Europe, and was buffeted by their violence.

We may close this brief study by asking the question: What, then, is Strindberg's legacy for the advancement of Art, as found in this decade of his life? It will surely be seen that Strindberg's realism is of a peculiarly personal kind. Whatever his sympathy with Zola may have been, or Zola's with him, Strindberg has never confounded journalism with Art. He has also recognised in his novels that there is a difference between the function of the camera and the eye of the artist. More than this—and it is important if Strindberg is to be understood—his realism has always been subservient to the idea. And it is this power that has essentially rendered Strindberg's realism peculiarly personal; that is to say, incapable of being copied or forming a school. It can only be used by such as he who, standing in the maelstrom of ideas, is fashioned and attuned by the whirling storms, as they strive for complete expression. Not always, however, is he subservient to their dominion. Sometimes cast down from the high places whence the multitudinous voice can be heard, he may say and do that which raises fierce criticism. A patient study of Strindberg will lay bare such matters; but their discovery must not blind our eyes to the truth that these are moments of insensitiveness towards, or rejection of, the majestic power which is ceaselessly sculpturing our highest Western civilisation.

HENRY VACHER-BURCH.

The Son of a Servant

I

FEAR AND HUNGER

In the third story of a large house near the Clara Church in Stockholm, the son of the shipping agent and the servant-maid awoke to self-consciousness. The child's first impressions were, as he remembered afterwards, fear and hunger. He feared the darkness and blows, he feared to fall, to knock himself against something, or to go in the streets. He feared the fists of his brothers, the roughness of the servant-girl, the scolding of his grandmother, the rod of his mother, and his father's cane. He was afraid of the general's manservant, who lived on the ground-floor, with his skull-cap and large hedge-scissors; he feared the landlord's deputy, when he played in the courtyard with the dust-bin; he feared the landlord, who was

a magistrate. Above him loomed a hierarchy of authorities wielding various rights, from the right of seniority of his brothers to the supreme tribunal of his father. And yet above his father was the deputy-landlord, who always threatened him with the landlord. This last was generally invisible, because he lived in the country, and perhaps, for that reason, was the most feared of all. But again, above all, even above the manservant with the skull-cap, was the general, especially when he sallied forth in uniform wearing his plumed three-cornered hat. The child did not know what a king looked like, but he knew that the general went to the King. The servant-maids also used to tell stories of the King, and showed the child his picture. His mother generally prayed to God in the evening, but the child could form no distinct idea of God, except that He must certainly be higher than the King.

This tendency to fear was probably not the child's own peculiarity, but due to the troubles which his parents had undergone shortly before his birth. And the troubles had been great. Three children had been born before their marriage and John soon after it. Probably his birth had not been desired, as his father had gone bankrupt

just before, so that he came to the light in a now pillaged house, in which was only a bed, a table, and a couple of chairs. About the same time his father's brother had died in a state of enmity with him, because his father would not give up his wife, but, on the contrary, made the tie stronger by marriage. His father was of a reserved nature, which perhaps betokened a strong will. He was an aristocrat by birth and education. There was an old genealogical table which traced his descent to a noble family of the sixteenth century. His paternal ancestors were pastors from Zemtland, of Norwegian, possibly Finnish blood. It had become mixed by emigration. His mother was of German birth, and belonged to a carpenter's family. His father was a grocer in Stockholm, a captain of volunteers, a freemason, and adherent of Karl Johann.

John's mother was a poor tailor's daughter, sent into domestic service by her stepfather. She had become a waitress when John's father met her. She was democratic by instinct, but she looked up to her husband, because he was of "good family," and she loved him; but whether as deliverer, as husband, or as family-provider, one does not know, and it is difficult to decide.

He addressed his manservant and maid as "thou," and she called him "sir." In spite of his come-down in the world, he did not join the party of malcontents, but fortified himself with religious resignation, saying, "It is God's will," and lived a lonely life at home. But he still cherished the hope of being able to raise himself again.

He was, however, fundamentally an aristocrat, even in his habits. His face was of an aristocratic type, beardless, thin-skinned, with hair like Louis Philippe. He wore glasses, always dressed elegantly, and liked clean linen. The manservant who cleaned his boots had to wear gloves when doing so, because his hands were too dirty to be put into them.

John's mother remained a democrat at heart. Her dress was always simple but clean. She wished the children to be clean and tidy, nothing more. She lived on intimate terms with the servants, and punished a child, who had been rude to one of them, upon the bare accusation, without investigation or inquiry. She was always kind to the poor, and however scanty the fare might be at home, a beggar was never sent empty away. Her old nurses, four in number, often came to see her, and were received as old friends. The storm

of financial trouble had raged severely over the whole family, and its scattered members had crept together like frightened poultry, friends and foes alike, for they felt that they needed one another for mutual protection. An aunt rented two rooms in the house. She was the widow of a famous English discoverer and manufacturer, who had been ruined. She received a pension, on which she lived with two well-educated daughters. She was an aristocrat, having formerly possessed a splendid house, and conversed with celebrities. She loved her brother, though disapproving of his marriage, and had taken care of his children when the storm broke. She wore a lace cap, and the children kissed her hand. She taught them to sit straight on their chairs, to greet people politely, and to express themselves properly. Her room had traces of bygone luxury, and contained gifts from many rich friends. It had cushioned rose-wood furniture with embroidered covers in the English style. It was adorned with the picture of her deceased husband dressed as a member of the Academy of Sciences and wearing the order of Gustavus Vasa. On the wall there hung a large oil-painting of her father in the uniform of a major of volunteers. This man the children always

regarded as a king, for he wore many orders, which later on they knew were freemasonry insignia. The aunt drank tea and read English books. Another room was occupied by John's mother's brother, a small trader in the New Market, as well as by a cousin, the son of the deceased uncle, a student in the Technological Institute.

In the nursery lived the grandmother. She was a stern old lady who mended hose and blouses, taught the A B C, rocked the cradle, and pulled hair. She was religious, and went to early service in the Clara Church. In the winter she carried a lantern, for there were no gas-lamps at that time. She kept in her own place, and probably loved neither her son-in-law nor his sister. They were too polite for her. He treated her with respect, but not with love.

John's father and mother, with seven children and two servants, occupied three rooms. The furniture mostly consisted of tables and beds. Children lay on the ironing boards and the chairs, children in the cradles and the beds. The father had no room for himself, although he was constantly at home. He never accepted an invitation from his many business friends, because he could not return it. He never went to the restaurant

or the theatre. He had a wound which he concealed and wished to heal. His recreation was the piano. One of the nieces came every other evening and then Haydn's symphonies were played *à quatre mains*, later on Mozart, but never anything modern. Afterwards he had also another recreation as circumstances permitted. He cultivated flowers in window-boxes, but only pelargoniums. Why pelargoniums? When John had grown older and his mother was dead, he fancied he always saw her standing by one. She was pale, she had had twelve confinements and suffered from lung-complaint. Her face was like the transparent white leaves of the pelargonium with its crimson veins, which grow darker towards the pistil, where they seemed to form an almost black eye, like hers.

The father appeared only at meal-times. He was melancholy, weary, strict, serious, but not hard. He seemed severer than he really was, because on his return home he always had to settle a number of things which he could not judge properly. Besides, his name was always used to frighten the children. "I will tell papa that," signified a thrashing. It was not exactly a pleasant rôle which fell to his share. Towards the

mother he was always gentle. He kissed her after every meal and thanked her for the food. This accustomed the children, unjustly enough, to regard her as the giver of all that was good, and the father as the dispenser of all that was evil. They feared him. When the cry "Father is coming!" was heard, all the children ran and hid themselves, or rushed to the nursery to be combed and washed. At the table there was deathly silence, and the father spoke only a little.

The mother had a nervous temperament. She used to become easily excited, but soon quieted down again. She was relatively content with her life, for she had risen in the social scale, and had improved her position and that of her mother and brother. She drank her coffee in bed in the mornings, and had her nurses, two servants, and her mother to help her. Probably she did not over-exert herself.

But for the children she played the part of Providence itself. She cut overgrown nails, tied up injured fingers, always comforted, quieted, and soothed when the father punished, although she was the official accuser. The children did not like her when she "sneaked," and she did not win their respect. She could be unjust, violent, and

punish unseasonably on the bare accusation of a servant; but the children received food and comfort from her, therefore they loved her. The father, on the other hand, always remained a stranger, and was regarded rather as a foe than a friend.

That is the thankless position of the father in the family—the provider for all, and the enemy of all. If he came home tired, hungry, and ill-humoured, found the floor only just scoured and the food ill-cooked, and ventured a remark, he received a curt reply. He lived in his own house as if on sufferance, and the children hid away from him. He was less content than his wife, for he had come down in the world, and was obliged to do without things to which he had formerly been accustomed. And he was not pleased when he saw those to whom he had given life and food discontented.

But the family is a very imperfect arrangement. It is properly an institution for eating, washing, and ironing, and a very uneconomical one. It consists chiefly of preparations for meals, market-shopping, anxieties about bills, washing, ironing, starching, and scouring. Such a lot of bustle for so few persons! The keeper of a restaurant, who serves hundreds, hardly does more.

The education consisted of scolding, hair-pulling, and exhortations to obedience. The child heard only of his duties, nothing of his rights. Everyone else's wishes carried weight; his were suppressed. He could begin nothing without doing wrong, go nowhere without being in the way, utter no word without disturbing someone. At last he did not dare to move. His highest duty and virtue was to sit on a chair and be quiet. It was always dinned into him that he had no will of his own, and so the foundation of a weak character was laid.

Later on the cry was, "What will people say?" And thus his will was broken, so that he could never be true to himself, but was forced to depend on the wavering opinions of others, except on the few occasions when he felt his energetic soul work independently of his will.

The child was very sensitive. He wept so often that he received a special nickname for doing so. He felt the least remark keenly, and was in perpetual anxiety lest he should do something wrong. He was very awake to injustice, and while he had a high ideal for himself, he narrowly watched the failings of his brothers. When they were unpunished, he felt deeply injured; when they were

undeservedly rewarded, his sense of justice suffered. He was accordingly considered envious. He then complained to his mother. Sometimes she took his part, but generally she told him not to judge so severely. But they judged him severely, and demanded that he should judge himself severely. Therefore he withdrew into himself and became bitter. His reserve and shyness grew on him. He hid himself if he received a word of praise, and took a pleasure in being overlooked. He began to be critical and to take a pleasure in self-torture; he was melancholy and boisterous by turns.

His eldest brother was hysterical; if he became vexed during some game, he often had attacks of choking with convulsive laughter. This brother was the mother's favourite, and the second one the father's. In all families there are favourites; it is a fact that one child wins more sympathy than another. John was no one's favourite. He was aware of this, and it troubled him. But the grandmother saw it, and took his part; he read the A B C with her and helped her to rock the cradle. But he was not content with this love; he wanted to win his mother; he tried to flatter her, but did it clumsily and was repulsed.

Strict discipline prevailed in the house; false-

hood and disobedience were severely punished. Little children often tell falsehoods because of defective memories. A child is asked, "Did you do it?" It happened only two hours ago, and his memory does not reach back so far. Since the act appeared an indifferent matter to the child, he paid it no attention. Therefore little children can lie unconsciously, and this fact should be remembered. They also easily lie out of self-defence; they know that a "no" can free them from punishment, and a "yes" bring a thrashing. They can also lie in order to win an advantage. The earliest discovery of an awakening consciousness is that a well-directed "yes" or "no" is profitable to it. The ugliest feature of childish untruthfulness is when they accuse one another. They know that a misdeed must be visited by punishing someone or other, and a scapegoat has to be found. That is a great mistake in education. Such punishment is pure revenge, and in such cases is itself a new wrong.

The certainty that every misdeed will be punished makes the child afraid of being accused of it, and John was in a perpetual state of anxiety lest some such act should be discovered.

One day, during the mid-day meal, his

father examined his sister's wine-flask. It was empty.

"Who has drunk the wine?" he asked, looking round the circle. No one answered, but John blushed.

"It is you, then," said his father.

John, who had never noticed where the wine-flask was hidden, burst into tears and sobbed, "I did n't drink the wine."

"Then you lie too. When dinner is over, you will get something."

The thought of what he would get when dinner was over, as well as the continued remarks about "John's secretiveness," caused his tears to flow without pause. They rose from the table.

"Come here," said his father, and went into the bedroom. His mother followed. "Ask father for forgiveness," she said. His father had taken out the stick from behind the looking-glass.

"Dear papa, forgive me!" the innocent child exclaimed. But now it was too late. He had confessed the theft, and his mother assisted at the execution. He howled from rage and pain, but chiefly from a sense of humiliation. "Ask papa now for forgiveness," said his mother.

The child looked at her and despised her. He

felt lonely, deserted by her to whom he had always fled to find comfort and compassion, but so seldom justice. "Dear papa, forgive," he said, with compressed and lying lips.

And then he stole out into the kitchen to Louise the nursery-maid, who used to comb and wash him, and sobbed his grief out in her apron.

"What have you done, John?" she asked sympathetically.

"Nothing," he answered. "I have done nothing."

The mother came out. "What does John say?" she asked Louise. "He says that he did n't do it." "Is he lying still?"

And John was fetched in again to be tortured into the admission of what he had never done.

Splendid, moral institution! Sacred family! Divinely appointed, unassailable, where citizens are to be educated in truth and virtue! Thou art supposed to be the home of the virtues, where innocent children are tortured into their first falsehood, where wills are broken by tyranny, and self-respect killed by narrow egoism. Family! thou art the home of all social evil, a charitable institution for comfortable women, an anchorage for house-fathers, and a hell for children.

After this John lived in perpetual disquiet. He dared not confide in his mother, or Louise, still less his brothers, and least of all his father. Enemies everywhere! God he knew only through hymns. He was an atheist, as children are, but in the dark, like savages and animals, he feared evil spirits.

"Who drank the wine?" he asked himself; who was the guilty one for whom he suffered? New impressions and anxieties caused him to forget the question, but the unjust treatment remained in his memory. He had lost the confidence of his parents, the regard of his brothers and sisters, the favour of his aunt; his grandmother said nothing. Perhaps she inferred his innocence on other grounds, for she did not scold him, and was silent. She had nothing to say. He felt himself disgraced—punished for lying, which was so abominated in the household, and for theft, a word which could not be mentioned, deprived of household rights, suspected and despised by his brothers because he had been caught. All these consequences, which were painful and real for him, sprang out of something which never existed—his guilt.

. . . . . .

It was not actual poverty which reigned in the house, but there was overcrowding. Baptisms, and burials followed each other in rapid succession. Sometimes there were two baptisms without a burial between them. The food was carefully distributed, and was not exactly nourishing. They had meat only on Sundays, but John grew sturdy and was tall for his age. He used now to be sent to play in the "court," a well-like, stone-paved area in which the sun never shone. The dust-bin which resembled an old bureau with a flap-cover and a coating of tar, but burst, stood on four legs by the wall. Here slop-pails were emptied and rubbish thrown, and through the cracks a black stream flowed over the court. Great rats lurked under the dust-bin and looked out now and then, scurrying off to hide themselves in the cellar. Woodsheds and closets lined one side of the court. Here there was dampness, darkness, and an evil smell. John's first attempt to scrape out the sand between the great paving-stones was frustrated by the irascible landlord's deputy. The latter had a son with whom John played, but never felt safe. The boy was inferior to him in physical strength and intelligence, but when disputes arose he used to appeal to his father.

His superiority consisted in having an authority behind him.

The baron on the ground-floor had a staircase with iron banisters. John liked playing on it, but all attempts to climb on the balustrade were hindered by the servant who rushed out.

He was strictly forbidden to go out in the street. But when he looked through the doorway, and saw the churchyard gate, he heard the children playing there. He had no longing to be with them, for he feared children; looking down the street, he saw the Clara lake and the drawbridges. That looked novel and mysterious, but he feared the water. On quiet winter evenings he had heard cries for help from drowning people. These, indeed, were often heard. As they were sitting by the lamp in the nursery, one of the servant-maids would say, "Hush!" and all would listen while long, continuous cries would be heard. . . . "Now someone is drowning," one of the girls said. They listened till all was still, and then told stories of others who had been drowned.

The nursery looked towards the courtyard, and through the window one saw a zinc roof and a pair of attics in which stood a quantity of old disused furniture and other household stuff.

This furniture, without any people to use it, had a weird effect. The servants said that the attics were haunted. What "haunted" meant they could not exactly say, only that it had something to do with dead men going about. Thus are we all brought up by the lower classes. It is an involuntary revenge which they take by inoculating our children with superstitions which we have cast aside. Perhaps this is what hinders development so much, while it somewhat obliterates the distinction between the classes. Why does a mother let this most important duty slip from her hands—a mother who is supported by the father in order that she may educate her children? John's mother only occasionally said his evening prayer with him; generally it was the maidservant. The latter had taught him an old Catholic prayer which ran as follows:

"Through our house an angel goes,
In each hand a light he shows."

The other rooms looked out on the Clara churchyard. Above the lime-trees the nave of the church rose like a mountain, and on the mountain sat the giant with a copper hat, who kept up a never-ceasing clamour in order to announce the flight of time. He sounded the quarter hours in soprano,

and the hours in bass. He rang for early morning prayer with a tinkling sound, for matins at eight o'clock and vespers at seven. He rang thrice during the forenoon, and four times during the afternoon. He chimed all the hours from ten till four at night; he tolled in the middle of the week at funerals, and often, at the time I speak of, during the cholera epidemic. On Sundays he rang so much that the whole family was nearly reduced to tears, and no one could hear what the other said. The chiming at night, when John lay awake, was weird; but worst of all was the ringing of an alarm when a fire broke out. When he heard the deep solemn boom in the middle of the night for the first time he shuddered feverishly and wept. On such occasions the household always awoke, and whisperings were heard: "There is a fire!"—"Where?" They counted the strokes, and then went to sleep again; but he kept awake and wept. Then his mother came upstairs, tucked him up, and said: "Don't be afraid; God protects unfortunate people!" He had never thought that of God before. In the morning the servant-girls read in the papers that there had been a fire in Söder, and that two people had been killed. "It was God's will," said the mother.

His first awakening to consciousness was mixed with the pealing, chiming, and tolling of bells. All his first thoughts and impressions were accompanied by the ringing for funerals, and the first years of his life were counted out by strokes of the quarter. The effect on him was certainly not cheerful, even if it did not decidedly tell on his nervous system. But who can say? The first years are as important as the nine months which precede them.

The recollections of childhood show how the senses first partly awaken and receive the most vivid impressions, how the feelings are moved by the lightest breath, how the faculty of observation first fastens on the most striking outward appearances and, later, on moral relations and qualities, justice and injustice, power and pity.

These memories lie in confusion, unformed and undefined, like pictures in a thaumatrope. But when it is made to revolve, they melt together and form a picture, significant or insignificant as the case may be.

One day the child sees splendid pictures of emperors and kings in blue and red uniforms, which the servant-girls hang up in the nursery. He sees another representing a building which flies in the

air and is full of Turks. Another time he hears someone read in a newspaper how, in a distant land, they are firing cannon at towns and villages, and remembers many details—for instance, his mother weeping at hearing of poor fishermen driven out of their burning cottages with their children. These pictures and descriptions referred to Czar Nicholas and Napoleon III., the storming of Sebastopol, and the bombardment of the coast of Finland. On another occasion his father spends the whole day at home. All the tumblers in the house are placed on the window-ledges. They are filled with sand in which candles are inserted and lit at night. All the rooms are warm and bright. It is bright too in the Clara school-house and in the church and the vicarage; the church is full of music. These are the illuminations to celebrate the recovery of King Oscar.

One day there is a great noise in the kitchen. The bell is rung and his mother called. There stands a man in uniform with a book in his hand and writes. The cook weeps, his mother supplicates and speaks loud, but the man with the helmet speaks still louder. It is the policeman! The cry goes all over the house, and all day long they talk of the police. His father is summoned to the

police-station. Will he be arrested? No; but he has to pay three rix-dollars and sixteen skillings, because the cook had emptied a utensil in the gutter in the daytime.

One afternoon he sees them lighting the lamps in the street. A cousin draws his attention to the fact that they have no oil and no wicks, but only a metal burner. They are the first gas-lamps.

For many nights he lies in bed, without getting up by day. He is tired and sleepy. A harsh-voiced man comes to the bed, and says that he must not lay his hands outside the coverlet. They give him evil-tasting stuff with a spoon; he eats nothing. There is whispering in the room, and his mother weeps. Then he sits again at the window in the bedroom. Bells are tolling the whole day long. Green biers are carried over the churchyard. Sometimes a dark mass of people stand round a black chest. Gravediggers with their spades keep coming and going. He has to wear a copper plate suspended by a blue silk ribbon on his breast, and chew all day at a root. That is the cholera epidemic of 1854.

One day he goes a long way with one of the servants—so far that he becomes homesick and cries for his mother. The servant takes him into

a house; they sit in a dark kitchen near a green water-butt. He thinks he will never see his home again. But they still go on, past ships and barges, past a gloomy brick house with long high walls behind which prisoners sit. He sees a new church, a new alley lined with trees, a dusty highroad along whose edges dandelions grow. Now the servant carries him. At last they come to a great stone building hard by which is a yellow wooden house with a cross, surrounded by a large garden. They see limping, mournful-looking people dressed in white. They reach a great hall where are nothing but beds painted brown, with old women in them. The walls are whitewashed, the old women are white, and the beds are white. There is a very bad smell. They pass by a row of beds, and in the middle of the room stop at a bed on the right side. In it lies a woman younger than the rest with black curly hair confined by a night-cap. She lies half on her back; her face is emaciated, and she wears a white cloth over her head and ears. Her thin hands are wrapped up in white bandages and her arms shake ceaselessly so that her knuckles knock against each other. When she sees the child, her arms and knees tremble violently, and she bursts into tears. She kisses his head, but the

boy does not feel comfortable. He is shy, and not far from crying himself. "Don't you know Christina again?" she says; but he does not. Then she dries her eyes and describes her sufferings to the servant, who is taking eatables out of a basket.

The old women in white now begin to talk in an undertone, and Christina begs the servant not to show what she has in the basket, for they are so envious. Accordingly the servant pushes surreptitiously a yellow rix-dollar into the psalm-book on the table. The child finds the whole thing tedious. His heart says nothing to him; it does not tell him that he has drunk this woman's milk, which really belonged to another; it does not tell him that he had slept his best sleep on that shrunken bosom, that those shaking arms had cradled, carried, and dandled him; his heart says nothing, for the heart is only a muscle, which pumps blood indifferent as to the source it springs from. But after receiving her last fervent kisses, after bowing to the old women and the nurse, and breathing freely in the courtyard after inhaling the close air of the sick-ward, he becomes somehow conscious of a debt, which can only be paid by perpetual gratitude, a few eatables, and a rix-dollar slipped into a

psalm-book, and he feels ashamed at being glad to get away from the brown-painted beds of the sufferers.

It was his wet-nurse, who subsequently lay for fifteen years in the same bed, suffering from fits of cramp and wasting disease, till she died. Then he received his portrait in a schoolboy's cap, sent back by the directors of the Sabbatsberg infirmary, where it had hung for many years. During that time the growing youth had only once a year given her an hour of indescribable joy, and himself one of some uneasiness of conscience, by going to see her. Although he had received from her inflammation in his blood, and cramp in his nerves, still he felt he owed her a debt, a representative debt. It was not a personal one, for she had only given him what she had been obliged to sell. The fact that she had been compelled to sell it was the sin of society, and as a member of society he felt himself in a certain degree guilty.

Sometimes the child went to the churchyard, where everything seemed strange. The vaults with the stone monuments bearing inscriptions and carved figures, the grass on which one might not step, the trees with leaves which one might not touch. One day his uncle plucked a leaf, but the

police were instantly on the spot. The great building in the middle was unintelligible to him. People went in and out of it, and one heard singing and music, ringing and chiming. It was mysterious. At the east end was a window with a gilded eye. That was God's eye. He did not understand that, but at any rate it was a large eye which must see far.

Under the window was a grated cellar-opening. His uncle pointed out to him the polished coffins below. "Here," he said, "lives Clara the Nun." Who was she? He did not know, but supposed it must be a ghost.

One day he stands in an enormous room and does not know where he is; but it is beautiful, everything in white and gold. Music, as if from a hundred pianos, sounds over his head, but he cannot see the instrument or the person who plays it. There stand long rows of benches, and quite in front is a picture, probably of some Bible story. Two white-winged figures are kneeling, and near them are two large candlesticks. Those are probably the angels with the two lights who go about our house. The people on the benches are bowed down as though they were sleeping. "Take your caps off," says his uncle, and holds

his hat before his face. The boys look round, and see close beside them a strange-looking seat on which are two men in grey mantles and hoods. They have iron chains on their hands and feet, and policemen stand by them.

"Those are thieves," whispers their uncle.

All this oppresses the boy with a sense of weirdness, strangeness, and severity. His brothers also feel it, for they ask their uncle to go, and he complies.

Strange! Such are the impressions made by that form of worship which was intended to symbolise the simple truths of Christianity. But it was not like the mild teaching of Christ. The sight of the thieves was the worst—in iron chains, and such coats!

. . . . . .

One day, when the sun shines warmly, there is a great stir in the house. Articles of furniture are moved from their place, drawers are emptied, clothes are thrown about everywhere. A morning or two after, a waggon comes to take away the things, and so the journey begins. Some of the family start in a boat from "the red shop," others go in a cab. Near the harbour there is a smell of oil, tar, and coal smoke; the freshly painted steam-

boats shine in gay colours and their flags flutter in the breeze; drays rattle past the long row of lime-trees; the yellow riding-school stands dusty and dirty near a woodshed. They are going on the water, but first they go to see their father in his office. John is astonished to find him looking cheerful and brisk, joking with the sunburnt steamer captains and laughing in a friendly, pleasant way. Indeed, he seems quite youthful, and has a bow and arrows with which the captains amuse themselves by shooting at the window of the riding-school. The office is small, but they can go behind the green partition and drink a glass of porter behind a curtain. The clerks are attentive and polite when his father speaks to them. John had never before seen his father at work, but only known him in the character of a tired, hungry provider for his family, who preferred to live with nine persons in three rooms, than alone in two. He had only seen his father at leisure, eating and reading the paper when he came home in the evening, but never in his official capacity. He admired him, but he felt that he feared him now less, and thought that some day he might come to love him.

He fears the water, but before he knows where

he is he finds himself sitting in an oval room ornamented in white and gold, and containing red satin sofas. Such a splendid room he has never seen before. But everything rattles and shakes. He looks out of a little window, and sees green banks, bluish-green waves, sloops carrying hay, and steamers passing by. It is like a panorama or something seen at a theatre. On the banks move small red and white houses, outside which stand green trees with a sprinkling of snow upon them; larger green meadows rush past with red cows standing in them, looking like Christmas toys. The sun gets high, and now they reach trees with yellow foliage and brown caterpillars, bridges with sailing-boats flying flags, cottages with fowls pecking and dogs barking. The sun shines on rows of windows which lie on the ground, and old men and women go about with water-cans and rakes. Then appear green trees again bending over the water, and yellow and white bath-houses; overhead a cannon-shot is fired; the rattling and shaking cease; the banks stand still; above him he sees a stone wall, men's coats and trousers and a multitude of boots. He is carried up some steps which have a gilded rail, and sees a very large castle. Somebody says, "Here the King lives."

It was the castle of Drottningholm—the most beautiful memory of his childhood, even including the fairy-tale books.

Their things are unpacked in a little white house on a hill, and now the children roll on the grass, on real green grass without dandelions, like that in the Clara churchyard. It is so high and bright, and the woods and fiords are green and blue in the distance.

The dust-bin is forgotten, the schoolroom with its foul atmosphere has disappeared, the melancholy church-bells sound no more, and the graves are far away. But in the evening a bell rings in a little belfry quite near at hand. With astonishment he sees the modest little bell which swings in the open air, and sends its sound far over the park and bay. He thinks of the terrible deep-toned bell in the tower at home, which seemed to him like a great black maw when he looked into it, as it swung, from below. In the evening, when he is tired and has been washed and put to bed, he hears how the silence seems to hum in his ears, and waits in vain to hear the strokes and chiming of the bell in the tower.

The next morning he wakes to get up and play. He plays day after day for a whole week. He is in

nobody's way, and everything is so peaceful. The little ones sleep in the nursery, and he is in the open air all day long. His father does not appear; but on Saturday he comes out from the town and pinches the boys' cheeks because they have grown and become sunburnt. "He does not beat us now any more," thinks the child; but he does not trace this to the simple fact that here outside the city there is more room and the air is purer.

The summer passes gloriously, as enchanting as a fairy-tale; through the poplar avenues run lackeys in silver-embroidered livery, on the water float sky-blue dragon-ships with real princes and princesses, on the roads roll golden chaises and purple-red coaches drawn by Arab horses four-in-hand, and the whips are as long as the reins.

Then there is the King's castle with the polished floors, the gilt furniture, marble-tiled stoves and pictures; the park with its avenues like long lofty green churches, the fountains ornamented with unintelligible figures from story-books; the summer-theatre that remained a puzzle to the child, but was used as a maze; the Gothic tower, always closed and mysterious, which had nothing else to do but to echo back the sound of voices.

He is taken for a walk in the park by a cousin

whom he calls "aunt." She is a well-dressed maiden just grown up, and carries a parasol. They come into a gloomy wood of sombre pines; here they wander for a while, ever farther. Presently they hear a murmur of voices, music, and the clatter of plates and forks; they find themselves before a little castle; figures of dragons and snakes wind down from the roof-ridge, other figures of old men with yellow oval faces, black slanting eyes and pigtails, look from under them; letters which he cannot read, and which are unlike any others he has seen, run along the eaves. But below on the ground-floor of the castle royal personages sit at table by the open windows and eat from silver dishes and drink wine.

"There sits the King," says his aunt.

The child becomes alarmed, and looks round to see whether he has not trodden on the grass, or is not on the point of doing something wrong. He believes that the handsome King, who looks friendly, sees right through him, and he wants to go. But neither Oscar I. nor the French field-marshals nor the Russian generals trouble themselves about him, for they are just now discussing the Peace of Paris, which is to make an end of the war in the East. On the other hand, police-

guards, looking like roused lions, are marching about, and of them he has an unpleasant recollection. He needs only to see one, and he feels immediately guilty and thinks of the fine of three rix-dollars and sixteen skillings. However, he has caught a glimpse of the highest form of authority—higher than that of his brother, his mother, his father, the deputy-landlord, the landlord, the general with the plumed helmet, and the police.

On another occasion, again with his aunt, he passes a little house close to the castle. In a courtyard strewn with sand there stands a man in a panama hat and a summer suit. He has a black beard and looks strong. Round him there runs a black horse held by a long cord. The man springs a rattle, cracks a whip, and fires shots.

"That is the Crown Prince," says his aunt.

He looked like any other man, and was dressed like his uncle Yanne.

Another time, in the park, deep in the shade of some trees, a mounted officer meets them. He salutes the boy's aunt, makes his horse stop, talks to her, and asks his name. The boy answers, but somewhat shyly. The dark-visaged man with the kind eyes looks at him, and he hears a loud peal of laughter. Then the rider disappears. It was the

Crown Prince again. The Crown Prince had spoken to him! He felt elevated, and at the same time more sure of himself. The dangerous potentate had been quite pleasant.

One day he learns that his father and aunt are old acquaintances of a gentleman who lives in the great castle and wears a three-cornered hat and a sabre. The castle thenceforward assumes a more friendly aspect. He is also acquainted with people in it, for the Crown Prince has spoken with him, and his father calls the chamberlain "thou." Now he understands that the gorgeous lackeys are of inferior social rank to him, especially when he hears that the cook goes for walks with one of them in the evenings. He discovers that he is, at any rate, not on the lowest stair in the social scale.

Before he has had time to realise it, the fairy-tale is over. The dust-bin and the rats are again there, but the deputy-landlord does not use his authority any more when John wants to dig up stones, for John has spoken with the Crown Prince, and the family have been for a summer holiday. The boy has seen the splendour of the upper classes in the distance. He longs after it, as after a home, but the menial blood he has from his mother rebels against it. From instinct he reveres

the upper classes, and thinks too much of them ever to be able to hope to reach them. He feels that he belongs neither to them nor to the menial class. That becomes one of the struggles in his life.

II

BREAKING-IN

THE storm of poverty was now over. The members of the family who had held together for mutual protection could now all go their own way. But the overcrowding and unhappy circumstances of the family continued. However, death weeded them out. Black papers which had contained sweets distributed at the funeral were being continually gummed on the nursery walls. The mother constantly went about in a jacket; all the cousins and aunts had already been used up as sponsors, so that recourse had now to be made to the clerks, ships' captains, and restaurant-keepers.

In spite of all, prosperity seemed gradually to return. Since there was too little space, the family removed to one of the suburbs, and took a six-roomed house in the Norrtullsgata. At the same time John entered the Clara High School at the age of seven. It was a long way for short legs to

go four times a day, but his father wished that the children should grow hardy. That was a laudable object, but so much unnecessary expenditure of muscular energy should have been compensated for by nourishing food. However, the household means did not allow of that, and the monotonous exercise of walking and carrying a heavy school-satchel provided no sufficient counterpoise to excessive brain-work. There was, consequently, a loss of moral and physical equilibrium and new struggles resulted. In winter the seven-year-old boy and his brothers are waked up at 6 A.M. in pitch darkness. He has not been thoroughly rested, but still carries the fever of sleep in his limbs. His father, mother, younger brothers and sisters, and the servants are still asleep. He washes himself in cold water, drinks a cup of barley-coffee, eats a French roll, runs over the endings of the Fourth Declension in *Rabe's Grammar*, repeats a piece of "Joseph sold by his brethren," and memorises the Second Article with its explanation.

Then the books are thrust in the satchel and they start. In the street it is still dark. Every other oil-lantern sways on the rope in the cold wind, and the snow lies deep, not having been yet

cleared away before the houses. A little quarrel arises among the brothers about the rate they are to march. Only the bakers' carts and the police are moving. Near the Observatory the snow is so deep that their boots and trousers get wet through. In Kungsbacken Street they meet a baker and buy their breakfast, a French roll, which they usually eat on the way.

In Haymarket Street he parts from his brothers, who go to a private school. When at last he reaches the corner of Berg Street the fatal clock in the Clara Church strikes the hour. Fear lends wings to his feet, his satchel bangs against his back, his temples beat, his brain throbs. As he enters the churchyard gate he sees that the class-rooms are empty; it is too late!

In the boy's case the duty of punctuality took the form of a given promise, a *force majeure*, a stringent necessity from which nothing could release him. A ship-captain's bill of lading contains a clause to the effect that he binds himself to deliver the goods uninjured by such and such a date "if God wills." If God sends snow or storm, he is released from his bond. But for the boy there are no such conditions of exemption. He has neglected his duty, and will be punished: that is all.

With a slow step he enters the hall. Only the school porter is there, who laughs at him, and writes his name on the blackboard under the heading "Late." A painful hour follows, and then loud cries are heard in the lower school, and the blows of a cane fall thickly. It is the headmaster, who has made an onslaught on the late-comers or takes his exercise on them. John bursts into tears and trembles all over—not from fear of pain but from a feeling of shame to think that he should be fallen upon like an animal doomed to slaughter, or a criminal. Then the door opens. He starts up, but it is only the chamber-maid who comes in to trim the lamp.

"Good-day, John," she says. "You are too late; you are generally so punctual. How is Hanna?"

John tells her that Hanna is well, and that the snow was very deep in the Norrtullsgata.

"Good heavens! You have not come by Norrtullsgata?"

Then the headmaster opens the door and enters.

"Well, you!"

"You must not be angry with John, sir! He lives in Norrtullsgata."

"Silence, Karin!" says the headmaster, "and

go.—Well," he continues: "you live in the Norrtullsgata. That is certainly a good way. But still you ought to look out for the time."

Then he turns and goes. John owed it to Karin that he escaped a flogging, and to fate that Hanna had chanced to be Karin's fellow-servant at the headmaster's. Personal influence had saved him from an injustice.

And then the school and the teaching! Has not enough been written about Latin and the cane? Perhaps! In later years he skipped all passages in books which dealt with reminiscences of school life, and avoided all books on that subject. When he grew up his worst nightmare, when he had eaten something indigestible at night or had a specially troublesome day, was to dream that he was back at school.

The relation between pupil and teacher is such, that the former gets as one-sided a view of the latter as a child of its parent. The first teacher John had looked like the ogre in the story of Tom Thumb. He flogged continually, and said he would make the boys crawl on the floor and "beat them to pulp" if they did their exercises badly.

He was not, however, really a bad fellow, and John and his school-fellows presented him with an

album when he left Stockholm. Many thought well of him, and considered him a fine character. He ended as a gentleman farmer and the hero of an Ostgothland idyll.

Another was regarded as a monster of malignity. He really seemed to beat the boys because he liked it. He would commence his lesson by saying, "Bring the cane," and then try to find as many as he could who had an ill-prepared lesson. He finally committed suicide in consequence of a scathing newspaper article. Half a year before that, John, then a student, had met him in Uggelvikswald, and felt moved by his old teacher's complaints over the ingratitude of the world. A year previous he had received at Christmas time a box of stones, sent from an old pupil in Australia. But the colleagues of the stern teacher used to speak of him as a good-natured fool at whom they made jests. So many points of view, so many differing judgments! But to this day old boys of the Clara School cannot meet each other without expressing their horror and indignation at his unmercifulness, although they all acknowledge that he was an excellent teacher.

These men of the old school knew perhaps no better. They had themselves been brought up

on those lines, and we, who learn to understand everything, are bound also to pardon everything.

This, however, did not prevent the first period of school life from appearing to be a preparation for hell and not for life. The teachers seemed to be there only to torment, not to punish; our school life weighed upon us like an oppressive nightmare day and night; even having learned our lessons well before we left home did not save us. Life seemed a penal institution for crimes committed before we were born, and therefore the boy always went about with a bad conscience.

But he learned some social lessons. The Clara School was a school for the children of the better classes, for the people of the district were well off. The boy wore leather breeches and greased leather boots which smelt of train-oil and blacking. Therefore, those who had velvet jackets did not like sitting near him. He also noticed that the poorly dressed boys got more floggings than the well-dressed ones, and that pretty boys were let off altogether. If he had at that time studied psychology and æsthetics, he would have understood this, but he did not then.

The examination day left a pleasant, unforgetable memory. The old dingy rooms were freshly

scoured, the boys wore their best clothes, and the teachers frock-coats with white ties; the cane was put away, all punishments were suspended. It was a day of festival and jubilee, on which one could tread the floor of the torture-chambers without trembling. The change of places in each class, however, which had taken place in the morning, brought with it certain surprises, and those who had been put lower made certain comparisons and observations which did not always redound to the credit of the teacher. The school testimonials were also rather hastily drawn up, as was natural. But the holidays were at hand, and everything else was soon forgotten. At the conclusion, in the lower schoolroom, the teachers received the thanks of the Archbishop, and the pupils were reproved and warned. The presence of the parents, especially the mothers, made the chilly rooms seem warm, and a sigh involuntarily rose in the boys' hearts, "Why cannot it be always like to-day?" To some extent the sigh has been heard, and our present-day youth no longer look upon school as a penal institute, even if they do not recognise much use in the various branches of superfluous learning.

John was certainly not a shining light in the

school, but neither was he a mere good-for-nothing. On account of his precocity in learning he had been allowed to enter the school before the regulation age, and therefore he was always the youngest. Although his report justified his promotion into a higher class, he was still kept a year in his present one. This was a severe pull-back in his development; his impatient spirit suffered from having to repeat old lessons for a whole year. He certainly gained much spare time, but his appetite for learning was dulled, and he felt himself neglected. At home and school alike he was the youngest, but only in years; in intelligence he was older than his school-fellows. His father seemed to have noticed his love for learning, and to have thought of letting him become a student. He heard him his lessons, for he himself had had an elementary education. But when the eight-year-old boy once came to him with a Latin exercise, and asked for help, his father was obliged to confess that he did not know Latin. The boy felt his superiority in this point, and it is not improbable that his father was conscious of it also. He removed John's elder brother, who had entered the school at the same time, abruptly from it, because the teacher one day had made the younger, as monitor, hear the elder

his lessons. This was stupid on the part of the teacher, and it was wise of his father to prevent it.

His mother was proud of his learning, and boasted of it to her friends. In the family the word "student" was often heard. At the students' congress in the fifties, Stockholm was swarming with white caps.

"Think if you should wear a white cap some day," said his mother.

When the students' concerts took place, they talked about it for days at a time. Acquaintances from Upsala sometimes came to Stockholm and talked of the gay students' life there. A girl who had been in service in Upsala called John "the student."

In the midst of his terribly mysterious school life, in which the boy could discover no essential connection between Latin grammar and real life, a new mysterious factor appeared for a short time and then disappeared again. The nine-year-old daughter of the headmaster came to the French lessons. She was purposely put on the last bench, in order not to be seen, and to look round was held to be a great misdemeanour. Her presence, however, was felt in the class-room. The boy, and probably the whole class, fell in love. The

lessons always went well when she was present; their ambition was spurred, and none of them wanted to be humiliated or flogged before her. She was, it is true, ugly, but well dressed. Her gentle voice vibrated among the breaking voices of the boys, and even the teacher had a smile on his severe face when he spoke to her. How beautifully her name sounded when he called it out—one Christian name among all the surnames.

John's love found expression in a silent melancholy. He never spoke to her, and would never have dared to do it. He feared and longed for her. But if anyone had asked him what he wanted from her, he could not have told them. He wanted nothing from her. A kiss? No; in his family there was no kissing. To hold her? No! Still less to possess her. Possess? What should he do with her? He felt that he had a secret. This plagued him so that he suffered under it, and his whole life was overclouded. One day at home he seized a knife and said, "I will cut my throat." His mother thought he was ill. He could not tell her. He was then about nine years old.

Perhaps if there had been as many girls as boys in the school present in all the classes, probably innocent friendships would have been formed, the

electricity would have been carried off, the Madonna-worship brought within its proper limits, and wrong ideas of woman would not have followed him and his companions through life.

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His father's contemplative turn of mind, his dislike of meeting people after his bankruptcy, the unfriendly verdict of public opinion regarding his originally illegal union with his wife, had induced him to retire to the Norrtullsgata. Here he had rented a house with a large garden, wide-stretching fields, with a pasture, stables, farmyard, and conservatory. He had always liked the occupations of a country life and agriculture. Before this he had possessed a piece of land outside the town, but could not look after it. Now he rented a garden for his own sake and the children's, whose education a little resembled that described in Rousseau's *Emile*. The house was separated from its neighbours by a long fence. The Norrtullsgata was an avenue lined with trees which as yet had no pavement, and had been but little built upon. The principal traffic consisted of peasants and milk-carts on their way to the hay market. Besides these there were also funerals moving slowly along to the "New Churchyard," sledging

parties to Brunnsvik, and young people on their way to Norrbucka or Stallmastergarden.

The garden which surrounded the little one-storied house was very spacious. Long alleys with at least a hundred apple-trees and berry-bearing bushes crossed each other. Here and there were thick bowers of lilac and jasmine, and a huge aged oak still stood in a corner. There was plenty of shade and space, and enough decay to make the place romantic. East of the garden rose a gravel-hill covered with maples, beeches, and ash-trees; on the summit of it stood a temple belonging to the last century. The back of the hill had been dug away in parts in an unsuccessful attempt to take away gravel, but it had picturesque little dells filled with osier and thorn bushes. From this side neither the street nor the house was visible. From here one obtained a view over Bellevue, Cedardalsberg, and Lilljanskog. One saw only single scattered houses in the far distance, but on the other hand numberless gardens and drying-houses for tobacco.

Thus all the year round they enjoyed a country life, to which they had no objection. Now the boy could study at first-hand the beauty and secrets of plant life, and his first spring there was a

period of wonderful surprises. When the freshly turned earth lay black under the apple-tree's white and pink canopy, when the tulips blazed in oriental pomp of colour, it seemed to him as he went about in the garden as if he were assisting at a solemnity more even than at the school examination, or in church, the Christmas festival itself not excepted.

But he had also plenty of hard bodily exercise. The boys were sent with ships' scrapers to clear the moss from the trees; they weeded the ground, swept the paths, watered and hoed. In the stable there was a cow with calves; the hayloft became a swimming school where they sprang from the beams, and they rode the horses to water.

They had lively games on the hill, rolled down blocks of stone, climbed to the tops of the trees, and made expeditions. They explored the woods and bushes in the Haga Park, climbed up young trees in the ruins, caught bats, discovered edible wood-sorrel and ferns, and plundered birds' nests. Soon they laid their bows and arrows aside, discovered gunpowder, and shot little birds on the hills. They came to be somewhat uncivilised. They found school more distasteful and the streets more hateful than ever.

Boys' books also helped in this process. *Robinson Crusoe* formed an epoch in his life; the *Discovery of America*, the *Scalp-Hunter*, and others aroused in him a sincere dislike of school-books.

During the long summer holidays their wildness increased so much that their mother could no longer control the unruly boys. As an experiment they were sent at first to the swimming school in Riddarholm, but it was so far that they wasted half the day on the road thither. Finally, their father resolved to send the three eldest to a boarding-school in the country, to spend the rest of the summer there.

III

AWAY FROM HOME

Now he stands on the deck of a steamer far out at sea. He has had so much to look at on the journey that he has not felt any tedium. But now it is afternoon, which is always melancholy, like the beginning of old age. The shadows of the sun fall and alter everything without hiding everything, like the night. He begins to miss something. He has a feeling of emptiness, of being deserted, broken off. He wants to go home, but the consciousness that he cannot do so at once fills him with terror and despair and he weeps. When his brothers ask him why, he says he wants to go home to his mother. They laugh at him, but her image recurs to his mind, serious, mild, and smiling. He hears her last words at parting: "Be obedient and respectful to all, take care of your clothes, and don't forget your evening prayer." He thinks how disobedient he has been to her, and wonders whether she may be ill. Her

image seems glorified, and draws him with unbreakable cords of longing. This feeling of loneliness and longing after his mother followed him all through his life. Had he come perhaps too early and incomplete into the world? What held him so closely bound to his mother?

To this question he found no answer either in books or in life. But the fact remained: he never became himself, was never liberated, never a complete individuality. He remained, as it were, a mistletoe, which could not grow except upon a tree; he was a climbing plant which must seek a support. He was naturally weak and timid, but he took part in all physical exercises; he was a good gymnast, could mount a horse when on the run, was skilled in the use of all sorts of weapons, was a bold shot, swimmer, and sailor, but only in order not to appear inferior to others. If no one watched him when bathing, he merely slipped into the water; but if anyone *was* watching, he plunged into it, head-over-heels, from the roof of the bathing-shed. He was conscious of his timidity, and wished to conceal it. He never attacked his school-fellows, but if anyone attacked him, he would strike back even a stronger boy than himself. He seemed to have been born fright-

ened, and lived in continual fear of life and of men.

The ship steams out of the bay and there opens before them a blue stretch of sea without a shore. The novelty of the spectacle, the fresh wind, the liveliness of his brothers, cheer him up. It has just occurred to him that they have come eighteen miles by sea when the steamboat turns into the Nykopingså river.

When the gangway has been run out, there appears a middle-aged man with blond whiskers, who, after a short conversation with the captain, takes over charge of the boys. He looks friendly, and is cheerful. It is the parish clerk of Vidala. On the shore there stands a waggon with a black mare, and soon they are above in the town and stop at a shopkeeper's house which is also an inn for the country people. It smells of herrings and small beer, and they get weary of waiting. The boy cries again. At last Herr Linden comes in a country cart with their baggage, and after many handshakes and a few glasses of beer they leave the town. Fallow fields and hedges stretch in a long desolate perspective, and over some red roofs there rises the edge of a wood in the distance. The sun sets, and they have to drive for three miles

through the dark wood. Herr Linden talks briskly in order to keep up their spirits. He tells them about their future school-fellows, the bathing-places, and strawberry-picking. John sleeps till they have reached an inn where there are drunken peasants. The horses are taken out and watered. Then they continue their journey through dark woods. In one place they have to get down and climb up a hill. The horses steam with perspiration and snort, the peasants on the baggage-cart joke and drink, the parish clerk chats with them and tells funny stories. Still they go on sleeping and waking, getting down and resting alternately. Still there are more woods, which used to be haunted by robbers, black pine woods under the starry sky, cottages and hedges. The boy is quite alarmed, and approaches the unknown with trembling.

At last they are on a level road; the day dawns, and the waggon stops before a red house. Opposite it is a tall dark building—a church—once more a church. An old woman, as she appears to him, tall and thin, comes out, receives the boys, and conducts them into a large room on the ground-floor, where there is a cover-table. She has a sharp voice which does not sound friendly, and

John is afraid. They eat in the gloom, but do not relish the unusual food, and one of them has to choke down tears. Then they are led in the dark into an attic. No lamp is lit. The room is narrow; pallets and beds are laid across chairs and on the floor, and there is a terrible odor. There is a stirring in the beds, and one head rises, and then another. There are whispers and murmurs, but the new-comers can see no faces. The eldest brother gets a bed to himself, but John and the second brother lie foot to foot. It is a new thing for them, but they creep into bed and draw the blankets over them. His elder brother stretches himself out at his ease, but John protests against this encroachment. They push each other with their feet, and John is struck. He weeps at once. The eldest brother is already asleep. Then there comes a voice from a corner on the ground: "Lie still, you young devils, and don't fight!"

"What do you say?" answers his brother, who is inclined to be impudent.

The bass voice answers, "What do I say? I say—Leave the youngster alone."

"What have you to do with that?"

"A good deal. Come here, and I 'll thrash you."

"*You* thrash *me!*"

His brother stands up in his night-shirt. The owner of the bass voice comes towards him. All that one can see is a short sturdy figure with broad shoulders. A number of spectators sit upright in their beds.

They fight, and the elder brother gets the worst of it.

"No! don't hit him! don't hit him!"

The small brother throws himself between the combatants. He could not see anyone of his own flesh and blood being beaten or suffering without feeling it in all his nerves. It was another instance of his want of independence and consciousness of the closeness of the blood-tie.

Then there is silence and dreamless sleep, which Death is said to resemble, and therefore entices so many to premature rest.

Now there begins a new little section of life—an education without his parents, for the boy is out in the world among strangers. He is timid, and carefully avoids every occasion of being blamed. He attacks no one, but defends himself against bullies. There are, however, too many of them for the equilibrium to be maintained. Justice is administered by the broad-shouldered boy men-

tioned above, who is humpbacked, and always takes the weaker one's part when unrighteously attacked.

In the morning they do their lessons, bathe before dinner, and do manual labour in the afternoon. They weed the garden, fetch water from the spring, and keep the stable clean. It is their father's wish that the boys should do physical work, although they pay the usual fees.

But John's obedience and conscientiousness do not suffice to render his life tolerable. His brothers incur all kinds of reprimands, and under them he also suffers much. He is keenly conscious of their solidarity, and is in this summer only as it were the third part of a person. There are no other punishments except detention, but even the reprimands disquiet him. Manual labour makes him physically strong, but his nerves are just as sensitive as before. Sometimes he pines for his mother, sometimes he is in extremely high spirits and indulges in risky amusements, such as piling up stones in a limestone quarry and lighting a fire at the bottom of it, or sliding down steep hills on a board. He is alternately timid and daring, overflowing with spirits or brooding, but without proper balance.

The church stands on the opposite side of the way, and with its black roof and white walls throws a shadow across the summer-like picture. Daily from his window he sees monumental crosses which rise above the churchyard wall. The church clock does not strike day and night as that in the Clara Church did, but in the evenings at six o'clock one of the boys is allowed to pull the bell-rope which hangs in the tower. It was a solemn moment when, for the first time, his turn came. He felt like a church official, and when he counted three times the three bell-strokes, he thought that God, the pastor, and the congregation would suffer harm if he rang one too many. On Sundays the bigger boys were allowed to ring the bells. Then John stood on the dark wooden staircase and wondered.

In the course of the summer there arrived a black-bordered proclamation which caused great commotion when read aloud in church. King Oscar was dead. Many good things were reported of him, even if no one mourned him. And now the bells rang daily between twelve and one o'clock. In fact, church-bells seemed to follow him.

The boys played in the churchyard among the graves and soon grew familiar with the church.

On Sundays they were all assembled in the organ-loft. When the parish clerk struck up the psalm, they took their places by the organ-stops, and when he gave them a sign, all the stops were drawn out and they marched into the choir. That always made a great impression on the congregation.

But the fact of his having to come in such proximity to holy things, and of his handling the requisites of worship, etc., made him familiar with them, and his respect for them diminished. For instance, he did not find the Lord's Supper edifying when on Saturday evening he had eaten some of the holy bread in the parish clerk's kitchen, where it was baked and stamped with the impression of a crucifix. The boys ate these pieces of bread, and called them wafers. Once after the Holy Communion he and the churchwarden were offered the rest of the wine in the vestry.

Nevertheless, after he had been parted from his mother, and felt himself surrounded by unknown threatening powers, he felt a profound need of having recourse to some refuge and of keeping watch. He prayed his evening prayer with a fair amount of devotion; in the morning, when the sun shone, and he was well rested, he did not feel the need of it.

One day when the church was being aired the boys were playing in it. In an access of high spirits they stormed the altar. But John, who was egged on to something more daring, ran up into the pulpit, reversed the hour-glass, and began to preach out of the Bible. This made a great sensation. Then he descended, and ran along the tops of the pews through the whole church. When he had reached the pew next to the altar, which belonged to a count's family, he stepped too heavily on the reading-desk, which fell with a crash to the ground. There was a panic, and all the boys rushed out of church. He stood alone and desolate. In other circumstances he would have run to his mother, acknowledged his fault, and implored her help. But she was not there. Then he thought of God; he fell on his knees before the altar, and prayed through the Paternoster. Then, as though inspired with a thought from above, he arose calmed and strengthened, examined the desk, and found that its joints were not broken. He took a clamp, dovetailed the joints together, and, using his boot as a hammer, with a few well-directed blows repaired the desk. He tried it, and found it firm. Then he went greatly relieved out of the church. "How

simple!" he thought to himself, and felt ashamed of having prayed the Lord's Prayer. Why? Perhaps he felt dimly that in this obscure complex which we call the soul there lives a power which, summoned to self-defence at the hour of need, possesses a considerable power of extricating itself. He did not fall on his knees and thank God, and this showed that he did not believe it was He who had helped him. That obscure feeling of shame probably arose from the fact of his perceiving that he had crossed a river to fetch water, *i. e.*, that his prayer had been superfluous.

But this was only a passing moment of self-consciousness. He continued to be variable and capricious. Moodiness, caprice, or *diables noirs*, as the French call it, is a not completely explained phenomenon. The victim of them is like one possessed; he wants something, but does the opposite; he suffers from the desire to do himself an injury, and finds almost a pleasure in self-torment. It is a sickness of the soul and of the will, and former psychologists tried to explain it by the hypothesis of a duality in the brain, the two hemispheres of which, they thought, under certain conditions could operate independently each for itself and against the other. But this explana-

tion has been rejected. Many have observed the phenomenon of duplex personality, and Goethe has handled this theme in *Faust.* In capricious children who "do not know what they want," as the saying is, the nerve-tension ends in tears. They "beg for a whipping," and it is strange that on such occasions a slight chastisement restores the nervous equilibrium and is almost welcomed by the child, who is at once pacified, appeased, and not at all embittered by the punishment, which in its view must have been unjust. It really had asked for a beating as a medicine. But there is also another way of expelling the "black dog." One takes the child in one's arms so that it feels the magnetism of friendship and is quieted. That is the best way of all.

John suffered from similar attacks of caprice. When some treat was proposed to him, a strawberry-picking expedition for example, he asked to be allowed to remain at home, though he knew he would be bored to death there. He would have gladly gone, but he insisted on remaining at home. Another will stronger than his own commanded him to do so. The more they tried to persuade him, the stronger was his resistance. But then if someone came along jovially and with a jest

seized him by the collar, and threw him into the haycart, he obeyed and was relieved to be thus liberated from the mysterious will that mastered him. Generally speaking, he obeyed gladly and never wished to put himself forward or be prominent. So much of the slave was in his nature. His mother had served and obeyed in her youth, and as a waitress had been polite towards everyone.

One Sunday they were in the parsonage, where there were young girls. He liked them, but he feared them. All the children went out to pluck strawberries. Someone suggested that they should collect the berries without eating them, in order to eat them at home with sugar. John plucked diligently and kept the agreement; he did not eat one, but honestly delivered up his share, though he saw others cheating. On their return home the berries were divided by the pastor's daughter, and the children pressed round her in order that each might get a full spoonful. John kept as far away as possible; he was forgotten and berryless.

He had been passed over! Full of the bitter consciousness of this, he went into the garden and concealed himself in an arbour. He felt himself to be the last and meanest. He did not weep,

however, but was conscious of something hard and cold rising within, like a skeleton of steel. After he had passed the whole company under critical review, he found that he was the most honest, because he had not eaten a single strawberry outside; and then came the false inference—he had been passed over because he was better than the rest. The result was that he really regarded himself as such, and felt a deep satisfaction at having been overlooked.

He had also a special skill in making himself invisible, or keeping concealed so as to be passed over. One evening his father brought home a peach. Each child received a slice of the rare fruit, with the exception of John, and his otherwise just father did not notice it. He felt so proud at this new reminder of his gloomy destiny that later in the evening he boasted of it to his brothers. They did not believe him, regarding his story as improbable. The more improbable the better, he thought. He was also plagued by antipathies. One Sunday in the country a cart full of boys came to the parish clerk's. A brown-complexioned boy with a mischievous and impudent face alighted from it. John ran away at the first sight of him, and hid himself in the attic. They found

him out: the parish clerk cajoled him, but he remained sitting in his corner and listened to the children playing till the brown-complexioned boy had gone away.

Neither cold baths, wild games, nor hard physical labour could harden his sensitive nerves, which at certain moments became strung up to the highest possible pitch. He had a good memory, and learned his lessons well, especially practical subjects such as geography and natural science. He liked arithmetic, but hated geometry; a science which seemed to deal with unrealities disquieted him. It was not till later, when a book of land mensuration came into his hands and he had obtained an insight into the practical value of geometry, that the subject interested him. He then measured trees and houses, the garden and its avenues, and constructed cardboard models.

He was now entering his tenth year. He was broad-shouldered, with a sunburnt complexion; his hair was fair, and hung over a sickly looking high and prominent forehead, which often formed a subject of conversation and caused his relatives to give him the nickname of "the professor." He was no more an automaton, but began to make his own observations and to draw inferences.

He was approaching the time when he would be severed from his surroundings and go alone. Solitude had to take for him the place of desert-wandering, for he had not a strong enough individuality to go his own way. His sympathies for men were doomed not to be reciprocated, because their thoughts did not keep pace with his. He was destined to go about and offer his heart to the first comer; but no one would take it, because it was strange to them, and so he would retire into himself, wounded, humbled, overlooked, and passed by.

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The summer came to an end, and when the school-term began he returned to Stockholm. The gloomy house by the Clara churchyard seemed doubly depressing to him now, and when he saw the long row of class-rooms through which he must work his way in a fixed number of years in order to do laboriously the same through another row of class-rooms in the High School, life did not seem to him particularly inviting. At the same time his self-opinionatedness began to revolt against the lessons, and consequently he got bad reports. A term later, when he had been placed lower in his class, his father took him from the Clara

School and placed him in the Jacob School. At the same time they left the Norrtullsgata and took a suburban house in the Stora Grabergsgata near the Sabbatsberg.

IV

INTERCOURSE WITH THE LOWER CLASSES

CHRISTINENBERG, so we will call the house, had a still more lonely situation than that in the Norrtullsgata.[1] The Grabergsgata had no pavement. Often for hours at a time one never saw more than a single pedestrian in it, and the noise of a passing cart was an event which brought people to their windows. The house stood in a courtyard with many trees, and resembled a country parsonage. It was surrounded by gardens and tobacco plantations; extensive fields with ponds stretched away to Sabbatsberg. But their father rented no land here, so that the boys spent their time in loafing about. Their playfellows now consisted of the children of poorer people, such as the miller's and the milkman's. Their chief playground was the hill on which the

[1] Gata = street.

mill stood, and the wings of the windmill were their playthings.

The Jacob School was attended by the poorer class of children. Here John came in contact with the lower orders. The boys were ill dressed; they had sores on their noses, ugly features, and smelt bad. His own leather breeches and greased boots produced no bad effect here. In these surroundings, which pleased him, he felt more at his ease. He could be on more confidential terms with these boys than with the proud ones in the Clara School. But many of these children were very good at their lessons, and the genius of the school was a peasant boy. At the same time there were so-called "louts" in the lower classes, and these generally did not get beyond the second class. He was now in the third, and did not come into contact with them, nor did they with those in the higher classes. These boys worked out of school, had black hands, and were as old as fourteen or fifteen. Many of them were employed during the summer on the brig *Carl Johann*, and then appeared in autumn with tarry trousers, belts, and knives. They fought with chimney-sweeps and tobacco-binders, took drams, and visited restaurants and coffee-houses. These boys

were liable to ceaseless examinations and expulsions and were generally regarded, but with great injustice, as a bad lot. Many of them grew up to be respectable citizens, and one who had served on the "louts' brig" finally became an officer of the Guard. He never ventured to talk of his sea voyages, but said that he used to shudder when he led the watch to relieve guard at Nybrohanm, and saw the notorious brig lying there.

One day John met a former school-fellow from the Clara School, and tried to avoid him. But the latter came directly towards him, and asked him what school he was attending. "Ah, yes," he said, on being told, "you are going to the louts' school."

John felt that he had come down, but he had himself wished it. He did not stand above his companions, but felt himself at home with them, on friendly terms, and more comfortable than in the Clara School, for here there was no pressure on him from above. He himself did not wish to climb up and press down others, but he suffered himself from being pressed down. He himself did not wish to ascend, but he felt a need that there should be none above him. But it annoyed him to feel that his old school-fellows

thought that he had gone down. When at gymnastic displays he appeared among the grimy-looking troop of the Jacobites, and met the bright files of the Clara School in their handsome uniforms and clean faces, then he was conscious of a class difference, and when from the opposite camp the word "louts" was heard, then there was war in the air. The two schools fought sometimes, but John took no part in these encounters. He did not wish to see his old friends, and to show how he had come down.

The examination day in the Jacob School made a very different impression from that in the Clara School. Artisans, poorly clad old women, restaurant-keepers dressed up for the occasion, coachmen, and publicans formed the audience. And the speech of the school inspector was quite other than the flowery one of the Archbishop. He read out the names of the idle and the stupid, scolded the parents because their children came too late or did not turn up at all, and the hall re-echoed the sobs of poor mothers who were probably not at all to blame for the easily explained non-attendances, and who in their simplicity believed that they had bad sons. It was always the well-to-do citizens' sons who had had the leisure

to devote themselves exclusively to their tasks, who were now greeted as patterns of virtue.

In the moral teaching which the boy received he heard nothing of his rights, only of his duties. Everything he was taught to regard as a favour; he lived by favour, ate by favour, and went as a favour to school. And in this poor children's school more and more was demanded of them. It was demanded from them, for instance, that they should have untorn clothes—but from whence were they to get them?

Remarks were made upon their hands because they had been blackened by contact with tar and pitch. There was demanded of them attention, good morals, politeness, *i. e.*, mere impossibilities. The æsthetic susceptibilities of the teachers often led them to commit acts of injustice. Near John sat a boy whose hair was never combed, who had a sore under his nose, and an evil-smelling flux from his ears. His hands were dirty, his clothes spotted and torn. He rarely knew his lessons, and was scolded and caned on the palms of his hands. One day a school-fellow accused him of bringing vermin into the class. He was then made to sit apart in a special place. He wept bitterly, ah! so bitterly, and then kept away from school.

John was sent to look him up at his house. He lived in the Undertakers' street. The painter's family lived with the grandmother and many small children in one room. When John went there he found George, the boy in question, holding on his knee, a little sister, who screamed violently. The grandmother carried a little one on her arm. The father and mother were away at work. In this room, which no one had time to clean, and which could not be cleaned, there was a smell of sulphur fumes from the coals and from the uncleanliness of the children. Here the clothes were dried, food was cooked, oil-colours were rubbed, putty was kneaded. Here were laid bare the grounds of George's immorality. "But," perhaps a moralist may object, "one is never so poor that one cannot keep oneself clean and tidy." *Sancta simplicitas!* As if to pay for sewing (when there was anything whole to sew), soap, clothes-washing, and time cost nothing. Complete cleanliness and tidiness is the highest point to which the poor can attain; George could not, and was therefore cast out.

Some younger moralists believe they have made the discovery that the lower classes are more immoral than the higher. By "immoral" they mean that they do not keep social contracts so

well as the upper classes. That is a mistake, if not something worse. In all cases, in which the lower classes are not compelled by necessity, they are more conscientious than the upper ones. They are more merciful towards their fellows, gentler to children, and especially more patient. How long have they allowed their toil to be exploited by the upper classes, till at last they begin to be impatient!

Moreover, the social laws have been kept as long as possible in a state of instability and uncertainty. Why are they not clearly defined and printed like civil and divine laws? Perhaps because an honestly written moral law would have to take some cognizance of rights as well as duties.

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John's revolt against the school-teaching increased. At home he learned all he could, but he neglected the school-lessons. The principal subjects taught in the school were now Latin and Greek, but the method of teaching was absurd. Half a year was spent in explaining a campaign in *Cornelius*. The teacher had a special method of confusing the subject by making the scholar analyse the "grammatical construction" of the sentence. But he never explained what this

meant. It consisted in reading the words of the text in a certain order, but he did not say in which. It did not agree with the Swedish translation, and when John had tried to grasp the connection, but failed, he preferred to be silent. He was obstinate, and when he was called upon to explain something he was silent, even when he knew his lesson. For as soon as he began to read, he was assailed with a storm of reproaches for the accent he put on the words, the pace at which he read, his voice, everything.

"Cannot you, do not you understand?" the teacher shouted, beside himself.

The boy was silent, and looked at the pedant contemptuously.

"Are you dumb?"

He remained silent. He was too old to be beaten; besides, this form of punishment was gradually being disused. He was therefore told to sit down.

He could translate the text into Swedish, but not in the way the teacher wished. That the teacher only permitted one way of translating seemed to him silly. He had already rushed through *Cornelius* in a few weeks, and this deliberate, unreasonable crawling when one

could run, depressed him. He saw no sense in it.

The same kind of thing happened in the history lessons. "Now, John," the teacher would say, "tell me what you know about Gustav I."

The boy stands up, and his vagrant thoughts express themselves as follows: "What I know about Gustav I. Oh! a good deal. But I knew that when I was in the lowest class (he is now in the fourth), and the master knows it too. What is the good of repeating it all again?"

"Well! is that all you know?"

He had not said a word about Gustav I., and his school-fellows laughed. Now he felt angry, and tried to speak, but the words stuck in his throat. How should he begin? Gustav was born at Lindholm, in the province of Roslagen. Yes, but he and the teacher knew that long ago. How stupid to oblige him to repeat it.

"Ah, well!" continues the teacher, "you don't know your lesson, you know nothing of Gustav I."

Now he opens his mouth, and says curtly and decidedly: "Yes, I know his history well."

"If you do, why don't you answer?"

The master's question seems to him a very stupid one, and now he will not answer. He

drives away all thoughts about Gustav I. and forces himself to think of other things, the maps on the wall, the lamp hanging from the ceiling. He pretends to be deaf.

"Sit down, you don't know your lesson," says the master. He sits down, and lets his thoughts wander where they will, after he has settled in his own mind that the master has told a falsehood.

In this there was a kind of aphasia, an incapability or unwillingness to speak, which followed him for a long time through life till the reaction set in in the form of garrulousness, of incapacity to shut one's mouth, of an impulse to speak whatever came into his mind. He felt attracted to the natural sciences, and during the hour when the teacher showed coloured pictures of plants and trees the gloomy class-room seemed to be lighted up; and when the teacher read out of Nilsson's *Lectures on Animal Life*, he listened and impressed all on his memory. But his father observed that he was backward in his other subjects, especially in Latin. Still, John had to learn Latin and Greek. Why? He was destined for a scholar's career. His father made inquiries into the matter. After hearing from the teacher of Latin that the latter regarded his son as an idiot, his *amour propre* must

have been hurt, for he determined to send his son to a private school, where more practical methods of instruction were employed. Indeed, he was so annoyed that he went so far in private as to praise John's intelligence and to say some severe things regarding his teacher.

Meanwhile, contact with the lower classes had aroused in the boy a decided dislike to the higher ones. In the Jacob School a democratic spirit prevailed, at any rate among those of the same age. None of them avoided each other's society except from feelings of personal dislike. In the Clara School, on the other hand, there were marked distinctions of class and birth. Though in the Jacob School the possession of money might have formed an aristocratic class, as a matter of fact none of them were rich. Those who were obviously poor were treated by their companions sympathetically without condescension, although the beribboned school inspector and the academically educated teacher showed their aversion to them.

John felt himself identified and friendly with his school-fellows; he sympathised with them, but was reserved towards those of the higher class. He avoided the main thoroughfares, and always went through the empty Hollandergata or

the poverty stricken Badstugata. But his schoolfellows' influence made him despise the peasants who lived here. That was the aristocratism of town-people, with which even the meanest and poorest city children are imbued.

These angular figures in grey coats which swayed about on milk-carts or hay-waggons were regarded as fair butts for jests, as inferior beings whom to snowball was no injustice. To mount behind on their sledges was regarded as the boys' inherent privilege. A standing joke was to shout to them that their waggon-wheels were going round, and to make them get down to contemplate the wonder.

But how should children, who see only the motley confusion of society, where the heaviest sinks and the lightest lies on the top, avoid regarding that which sinks as the worse of the two? Some say we are all aristocrats by instinct. That is partly true, but it is none the less an evil tendency, and we should avoid giving way to it. The lower classes are really more democratic than the higher ones, for they do not want to mount up to them, but only to attain to a certain level; whence the assertion is commonly made that they wish to elevate themselves.

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Since there was now no longer physical work to do at home, John lived exclusively an inner, unpractical life of imagination. He read everything which fell into his hands.

On Wednesday or Saturday afternoon the eleven-year-old boy could be seen in a dressing-gown and cap which his father had given him, with a long tobacco-pipe in his mouth, his fingers stuck in his ears, and buried in a book, preferably one about Indians. He had already read five different versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, and derived an incredible amount of delight from them. But in reading Campe's edition he had, like all children, skipped the moralisings. Why do all children hate moral applications? Are they immoral by nature? "Yes," answer modern moralists, "for they are still animals, and do not recognise social conventions." That is true, but the social law as taught to children informs them only of their duties, not of their rights; it is therefore unjust towards the child, and children hate injustice. Besides this, he had arranged an herbarium, and made collections of insects and minerals. He had also read Liljenblad's *Flora*, which he had found in his father's bookcase. He liked this book better than the school botany, because it contained a

quantity of information regarding the use of various plants, while the other spoke only of stamens and pistils.

When his brothers deliberately disturbed him in reading, he would run at them and threaten to strike them. They said his nerves were over-strained. He dissolved the ties which bound him to the realities of life, he lived a dream-life in foreign lands and in his own thoughts, and was discontented with the grey monotony of everyday life and of his surroundings, which ever became more uncongenial to him. His father, however, would not leave him entirely to his own fancies, but gave him little commissions to perform, such as fetching the paper and carrying letters. These he looked upon as encroachments on his private life, and always performed them unwillingly.

In the present day much is said about truth and truth-speaking as though it were a difficult matter, which deserved praise. But, apart from the question of praise, it is undoubtedly difficult to find out the real facts about anything.

A person is not always what rumour reports him or her to be; a whole mass of public opinion may be false; behind each thought there lurks a passion; each judgment is coloured by prejudice. But the

art of separating fact from fancy is extremely difficult, *e. g.*, six newspaper reporters will describe a king's coronation robe as being of six different colours. New ideas do not find ready entrance into brains which work in a groove; elderly people believe only themselves, and the uneducated believe that they can trust their own eyes. This, however, owing to the frequency of optical illusions, is not the case.

In John's home truth was revered. His father was in the habit of saying, "Tell the truth, happen what may," and used at the same time to tell a story about himself. He had once promised a customer to send home a certain piece of goods by a given day. He forgot it, but must have had means of exculpating himself, for when the furious customer came into the office and overwhelmed him with reproaches, John's father humbly acknowledged his forgetfulness, asked for forgiveness, and declared himself ready to make good the loss. The result was that the customer was astonished, reached him his hand, and expressed his regard for him. People engaged in trade, he said, must not expect too much of each other.

Well! his father had a sound intelligence, and as an elderly man felt sure of his conclusions.

John, who could never be without some occupation, had discovered that one could profitably spend some time in loitering on the high-road which led to and from school. He had once upon the Hollandergata, which had no pavement, found an iron screw-nut. That pleased him, for it made an excellent sling-stone when tied to a string. After that he always walked in the middle of the street and picked up all the pieces of iron which he saw. Since the streets were ill-paved and rapid driving was forbidden, the vehicles which passed through them had a great deal of rough usage. Accordingly an observant passer-by could be sure of finding every day a couple of horse-shoe nails, a waggon-pin, or at any rate a screw-nut, and sometimes a horse-shoe. John's favourite find was screw-nuts which he had made his specialty. In the course of two months he had collected a considerable quantity of them.

One evening he was playing with them when his father entered the room.

"What have you there?" he asked in astonishment.

"Screw-nuts," John answered confidently.

"Where did you get them from?"

"I found them."

"Found them? Where?"

"On the street."

"In one place?"

"No, in several—by walking down the middle of the street and looking about."

"Look here! I don't believe that. You are lying. Come in here. I have something to say to you." The something was a caning.

"Will you confess now?"

"I have found them on the street."

The cane was again plied in order to make him "confess." What should he confess? Pain, and fear that the scene would continue indefinitely, forced the following lie from him:

"I have stolen them."

"Where?"

Now he did not know to which part of a carriage the screw-nuts belonged, but he guessed it was the under part.

"Under the carriages."

"Where?"

His fancy suggested a place, where many carriages used to stand together. "By the timber-yard opposite the lane by the smith's."

This specification of the place lent an air of probability to his story. His father was now

certain that he had elicited the truth from him. He continued:

"And how could you get them off merely with your fingers?"

He had not expected this question, but his eye fell on his father's tool-box.

"With a screw-driver."

Now one cannot take hold of nuts with a screw-driver, but his father was excited, and let himself be deceived.

"But that is abominable! You are really a thief. Suppose a policeman had come by."

John thought for a moment of quieting him by telling him that the whole affair was made up, but the prospect of getting another caning and no supper held him mute. When he had gone to bed in the evening, and his mother had come and told him to say his evening prayer, he said in a pathetic tone and raising his hand:

"May the deuce take me, if I have stolen the screw-nuts."

His mother looked long at him, and then she said, "You should not swear so."

The corporal punishment had sickened and humbled him; he was angry with God, his parents, and especially his brothers, who had not spoken

up for him, though they knew the real state of the case. That evening he did not say his prayers, but he wished that the house would take fire without his having to light it. And then to be called a thief!

From that time he was suspected, or rather his bad reputation was confirmed, and he felt long the sting of the memory of a charge of theft which he had not committed. Another time he caught himself in a lie, but through an inadvertency which for a long time he could not explain. This incident is related for the consideration of parents. A school-fellow with his sister came one Sunday morning in the early part of the year to him and asked him whether he would accompany them to the Haga Park. He said, "Yes," but he must first ask his mother's permission. His father had gone out.

"Well, hurry up!" said his friend.

He wanted to show his herbarium, but the other said, "Let us go now."

"Very well, but I must first ask mother."

His little brother then came in and wanted to play with his herbarium. He stopped the interruption and showed his friend his minerals. In the meantime he changed his blouse. Then he took a

piece of bread out of the cupboard. His mother came and greeted his friends, and talked of this and that domestic matter. John was in a hurry, begged his mother's permission, and took his friends into the garden to see the frog-pond.

At last they went to the Haga Park. He felt quite sure that he had asked his mother's leave to do so.

When his father came home, he asked John on his return, "Where have you been?"

"With friends to the Haga Park."

"Did you have leave from mother?"

"Yes."

His mother denied it. John was dumb with astonishment.

"Ah, you are beginning to lie again."

He was speechless. He was quite sure he had asked his mother's leave, especially as there was no reason to fear a refusal. He had fully meant to do it, but other matters had intervened; he had forgotten, but was willing to die, if he had told a lie. Children as a rule are afraid to lie, but their memory is short, their impressions change quickly, and they confuse wishes and resolves with completed acts. Meanwhile the boy long continued to believe that his mother had told a falsehood.

But later, after frequent reflections on the incident, he came to think she had forgotten or not heard his request. Later on still he began to suspect that his memory might have played him a trick. But he had been so often praised for his good memory, and there was only an interval of two or three hours between his going to the Haga Park and his return.

His suspicions regarding his mother's truthfulness (and why should she not tell an untruth, since women so easily confuse fancies and facts?) were shortly afterwards confirmed. The family had bought a set of furniture—a great event. The boys just then happened to be going to their aunt's. Their mother still wished to keep the novelty a secret and to surprise her sister on her next visit. Therefore she asked the children not to speak of the matter. On their arrival at their aunt's, the latter asked at once:

"Has your mother bought the yellow furniture?"

His brothers were silent, but John answered cheerfully, "No."

On their return, as they sat at table, their mother asked, "Well, did aunt ask about the furniture?"

"Yes."

"What did you say?"

"I said 'No,' " answered John.

"So, then, you dared to lie," interrupted his father.

"Yes, mother said so," the boy answered.

His mother turned pale, and his father was silent. This in itself was harmless enough, but, taken in connection with other things, not without significance. Slight suspicions regarding the truthfulness of "others" woke in the boy's mind and made him begin to carry on a silent siege of adverse criticism. His coldness towards his father increased, he began to have a keen eye for instances of oppression, and to make small attempts at revolt.

The children were marched to church every Sunday; and the family had a key to their pew. The absurdly long services and incomprehensible sermons soon ceased to make any impression. Before a system of heating was introduced, it was a perfect torture to sit in the pew in winter for two hours at a stretch with one's feet freezing; but still they were obliged to go, whether for their souls' good, or for the sake of discipline, or in order to have quiet in the house—who knows? His

father personally was a theist, and preferred to read Wallin's sermons to going to church. His mother began to incline towards pietism.

One Sunday the idea occurred to John, possibly in consequence of an imprudent Bible exposition at school, which had touched upon freedom of the spirit, or something of the sort, not to go to church. He simply remained at home. At dinner, before his father came home, he declared to his brothers and sisters and aunts that no one could compel the conscience of another, and that therefore he did not go to church. This seemed original, and therefore for this once he escaped a caning. but was sent to church as before.

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The social intercourse of the family, except with relatives, could not be large, because of the defective form of his father's marriage. But companions in misfortune draw together, and so intercourse was kept up with an old friend of their father's who also had contracted a *mésalliance*, and had therefore been repudiated by his family. He was a legal official. With him they met another family in the same circumstances owing to an irregular marriage. The children naturally knew nothing of the tragedy below the surface.

There were children in both the other families, but John did not feel attracted to them. After the sufferings he had undergone at home and school, his shyness and unsociability had increased, and his residence on the outside of the town and in the country had given him a distaste for domestic life. He did not wish to learn dancing, and thought the boys silly who showed off before the girls. When his mother on one occasion told him to be polite to the latter, he asked, "Why?" He had become critical, and asked this question about everything. During a country excursion he tried to rouse to rebellion the boys who carried the girls' shawls and parasols. "Why should we be these girls' servants?" he said; but they did not listen to him. Finally, he took such a dislike to going out that he pretended to be ill, or dirtied his clothes in order to be obliged to stay at home as a punishment. He was no longer a child, and therefore did not feel comfortable among the other children, but his elders still saw in him only a child. He remained solitary.

When he was twelve years old, he was sent in the summer to another school kept by a parish clerk at Mariefred. Here there were many

boarders, all of so-called illegitimate birth. Since the parish clerk himself did not know much, he was not able to hear John his lessons. At the first examination in geometry, he found that John was sufficiently advanced to study best by himself. Now he felt himself a grandee, and did his lessons alone. The parish clerk's garden adjoined the park of the lord of the manor, and here he took his walks free from imposed tasks and free from oversight. His wings grew, and he began to feel himself a man.

In the course of the summer he fell in love with the twenty-year-old daughter of the inspector who often came to the parish clerk's. He never spoke to her, but used to spy out her walks, and often went near her house. The whole affair was only a silent worship of her beauty from a distance, without desire, and without hope. His feeling resembled a kind of secret trouble, and might as well have been directed towards anyone else, if girls had been numerous there. It was a Madonna-worship which demanded nothing except to bring the object of his worship some great sacrifice, such as drowning himself in the water under her eyes. It was an obscure consciousness of his own inadequacy as a half man, who did not

wish to live without being completed by his "better half."

He continued to attend church-services, but they made no impression on him; he found them merely tedious.

This summer formed an important stage in his development, for it broke the links with his home. None of his brothers were with him. He had accordingly no intermediary bond of flesh and blood with his mother. This made him more complete in himself, and hardened his nerves; but not all at once, for sometimes he had severe attacks of homesickness. His mother's image rose up in his mind in its usual ideal shape of protectiveness and mildness, as the source of warmth and the preserver.

In summer, at the beginning of August, his eldest brother Gustav was going to a school in Paris, in order to complete his business studies and to learn the language. But previous to that, he was to spend a month in the country and say good-bye to his brother. The thought of the approaching parting, the reflected glory of the great town to which his brother was going, the memory of his brother's many heroic feats, the longing for home and the joy to see again someone

of his own flesh and blood,—all combined to set John's emotion and imagination at work. During the week in which he expected his brother, he described him to a friend as a sort of superman to whom he looked up. And Gustav certainly was, as a man, superior to him. He was a plucky, lively youth, two years older than John, with strong, dark features; he did not brood, and had an active temperament; he was sagacious, could keep silence when necessary, and strike when occasion demanded it. He understood economy, and was sparing of his money. "He was very wise," thought the dreaming John. He learned his lessons imperfectly, for he despised them, but he understood the art of life.

John needed a hero to worship, and wished to form an ideal out of some other material than his own weak clay, round which his own aspirations might gather, and now he exercised his art for eight days. He prepared for his brother's arrival by painting him in glowing colours before his friends, praised him to the teacher, sought out playing-places with little surprises, contrived a spring-board at the bathing-place, and so on.

On the day before his brother's arrival he went

into the wood and plucked cloud-berries and blueberries for him. He covered a table with white paper, on which he spread out the berries, yellow and blue alternately, and in the centre he arranged them in the shape of a large G, and surrounded the whole with flowers.

His brother arrived, cast a hasty look at the design and ate the berries, but either did not notice the dexterously-contrived initial, or thought it a piece of childishness. As a matter of fact, in their family every ebullition of feeling was regarded as childish.

Then they went to bathe. The minute after Gustav had taken off his shirt, he was in the water, and swam immediately out to the buoy. John admired him and would have gladly followed him, but this time it gave him more pleasure to think that his brother obtained the reputation of being a good swimmer, and that he was only second-best. At dinner Gustav left a fat piece of bacon on his plate—a thing which no one before had ever dared to do. But he dared everything. In the evening, when the time came to ring the bells for church, John gave up his turn of ringing to Gustav, who rang violently. John was frightened, as though the parish had been exposed

to danger thereby, and half in alarm and half laughing, begged him to stop.

"What the deuce does it matter?" said Gustav.

Then he introduced him to his friend the big son of the carpenter, who was about fifteen. An intimacy at once sprang up between the two of equal age, and John's friend abandoned him as being too small. But John felt no bitterness, although the two elder ones jested at him, and went out alone together with their guns in their hands. He only wished to give, and he would have given his betrothed away, had he possessed one. He did actually inform his brother about the inspector's daughter, and the latter was pleased with her. But, instead of sighing behind the trees like John, Gustav went straight up to her and spoke to her in an innocent boyish way. This was the most daring thing which John had ever seen done in his life, and he felt as if it had added a foot to his own stature. He became visibly greater, his weak soul caught a contagion of strength from his brother's strong nerves, and he identified himself with him. He felt as happy as if he had spoken with the girl himself. He made suggestions for excursions and boating expeditions and his brother carried them out. He dis-

covered birds' nests and his brother climbed the trees and plundered them.

But this lasted only for a week. On the last day before they were to leave, John said to Gustav: "Let us buy a fine bouquet for mother."

"Very well," replied his brother.

They went to the nursery-man, and Gustav gave the order that the bouquet should be a fine one. While it was being made up, he went into the garden and plucked fruit quite openly. John did not venture to touch anything.

"Eat," said his brother. No, he could not. When the bouquet was ready, John paid twenty-four shillings for it. Not a sign came from Gustav. Then they parted.

When John came home, he gave his mother the bouquet as from Gustav, and she was touched. At supper-time the flowers attracted his father's attention. "Gustav sent me those," said his mother. "He is always a kind boy," and John received a sad look because he was so cold-hearted. His father's eyes gleamed behind his glasses.

John felt no bitterness. His youthful, enthusiastic love of sacrifice had found vent, the struggle against injustice had made him a self-tormentor, and he kept silent. He also said nothing when his

father sent Gustav a present of money, and with unusual warmth of expression said how deeply he had been touched by this graceful expression of affection.

In fact, he kept silence regarding this incident during his whole life, even when he had occasion to feel bitterness. Not till he had been overpowered and fallen in the dirty sand of life's arena, with a brutal foot placed upon his chest and not a hand raised to plead in his behalf, did he say anything about it. Even then, it was not mentioned from a feeling of revenge, but as the self-defence of a dying man.

V

CONTACT WITH THE UPPER CLASSES

THE private schools had been started in opposition to the terrorising sway of the public schools. Since their existence depended on the goodwill of the pupils, the latter enjoyed great freedom, and were treated humanely. Corporal punishment was forbidden, and the pupils were accustomed to express their thoughts, to ask questions, to defend themselves against charges, and, in a word, were treated as reasonable beings. Here for the first time John felt that he had rights. If a teacher made a mistake in a matter of fact, the pupils were not obliged to echo him, and swear by his authority; he was corrected and spiritually lynched by the class who convinced him of his error. Rational methods of teaching were also employed. Few lessons were set to be done at home. Cursory explanations in the languages themselves gave the pupils an idea

of the object aimed at, *i.e.*, to be able to translate. Moreover, foreign teachers were appointed for modern languages, so that the ear became accustomed to the correct accent, and the pupils acquired some notion of the right pronunciation.

A number of boys had come from the state schools into this one, and John also met here many of his old comrades from the Clara School. He also found some of the teachers from both the Clara and Jacob Schools. These cut quite a different figure here, and played quite another part. He understood now that they had been in the same hole as their victims, for they had had the headmaster and the School Board over them. At last the pressure from above was relaxed, his will and his thoughts obtained a measure of freedom, and he had a feeling of happiness and well-being.

At home he praised the school, thanked his parents for his liberation, and said that he preferred it to any former one. He forgot former acts of injustice, and became more gentle and unreserved in his behaviour. His mother began to admire his erudition. He learned five languages besides his own. His eldest brother was already in a place of business, and the second in Paris. John

received a kind of promotion at home and became a companion to his mother. He gave her information from books on history and natural history, and she, having had no education, listened with docility. But after she had listened awhile, whether it was that she wished to raise herself to his level, or that she really feared worldly knowledge, she would speak of the only knowledge which, she said, could make man happy. She spoke of Christ; John knew all this very well, but she understood how to make a personal application. He was to beware of intellectual pride, and always to remain simple. The boy did not understand what she meant by "simple," and what she said about Christ did not agree with the Bible. There was something morbid in her point of view, and he thought he detected the dislike of the uncultured to culture. "Why all this long school course," he asked himself, "if it was to be regarded as nothing in comparison with the mysterious doctrine of Christ's Atonement?" He knew also that his mother had caught up this talk from conversations with nurses, seamstresses, and old women, who went to the dissenting chapels. "Strange," he thought, "that people like that should grasp the highest wisdom of which neither

the priest in the church nor the teacher in the school had the least notion!" He began to think that these humble pietists had a good deal of spiritual pride, and that their way to wisdom was an imaginary short-cut. Moreover, among his school-fellows there were sons of barons and counts, and, when in his stories out of school he mentioned noble titles, he was warned against pride.

Was he proud? Very likely; but in school he did not seek the company of aristocrats, though he preferred looking at them rather than at the others, because their fine clothes, their handsome faces, and their polished finger-nails appealed to his æsthetic sense. He felt that they were of a different race and held a position which he would never reach, nor try to reach, for he did not venture to demand anything of life. But when, one day, a baron's son asked for his help in a lesson, he felt himself in this matter, at any rate, his equal or even his superior. He had thereby discovered that there was something which could set him by the side of the highest in society, and which he could obtain for himself, *i.e.*, knowledge.

In this school, because of the liberal spirit which was present, there prevailed a democratic tone, of

which there had been no trace in the Clara School. The sons of counts and barons, who were for the most part idle, had no advantage above the rest. The headmaster, who himself was a peasant's son from Smaland, had no fear of the nobility, nor, on the other hand, had he any prejudice against them or wish to humiliate them. He addressed them all, small and big ones, familiarily, studied them individually, called them by their Christian names, and took a personal interest in them. The daily intercourse of the townspeople's sons with those of the nobility led to their being on familiar terms with one another. There were no flatterers, except in the upper division, where the adolescent aristocrats came into class with their riding-whips and spurs, while a soldier held their horses outside. The precociously prudent boys, who had already an insight into the art of life, courted these youths, but their intercourse was for the most part superficial. In the autumn term some of the young grandees returned from their expeditions as supernumerary naval cadets. They then appeared in class with uniform and dirk. Their fellows admired them, many envied them, but John, with the slave blood in his veins, was never presumptuous enough to think of rivalling them; he recognised

their privileges, never dreamed of sharing them, guessed that he would meet with humiliations among them, and therefore never intruded into their circle. But he *did* dream of reaching equal heights with theirs through merit and hard work. And when in the spring those who were leaving came into the classes to bid farewell to their teachers, when he saw their white students' caps, their free and easy manners and ways, then he noticed that they were also an object of admiration to the naval cadets.

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In his family life there was now a certain degree of prosperity. They had gone back to the Norrtullsgata, where it was more homely than the Sabbatsberg, and the landlord's sons were his school-fellows. His father no longer rented a garden, and John busied himself for the most part with his books. He led the life of a well-to-do-youth. Things were more cheerful at home; grown-up cousins and the clerks from his father's office came on Sundays for visits, and John, in spite of his youth, made one of the company. He now wore a coat, took care of his personal appearance, and, as a promising scholar, was thought more highly of than one of his years would other-

wise have been. He went for walks in the garden, but the berries and the apple-trees no longer tempted him.

From time to time there came letters from his brother in Paris. They were read aloud, and listened to with great attention. They were also read to friends and acquaintances, and that was a triumph for the family. At Christmas his brother sent a photograph of himself in a French school uniform. That was the climax. John had now a brother who wore a uniform and spoke French! He exhibited the photograph in the school, and rose in the social scale thereby. The naval cadets were envious, and said it was not a proper uniform, for he had no dirk. But he had a "kepi," and shining buttons, and some gold lace on his collar.

At home they had also stereoscopic pictures from Paris to show, and they now seemed to live in Paris. They were as familiar with the Tuileries and the Arc de Triomphe as with the castle and statue of Gustavus Adolphus. The proverb that a father "lives in his children" really seemed to be justified. Life now lay open before the youth; the pressure he had formerly been subjected to had diminished, and perhaps he would have traversed a

smooth and easy path through life if a change of circumstances had not thrown him back.

His mother had passed through twelve confinements, and consequently had become weak. Now she was obliged to keep her bed, and only rose occasionally. She was more given to moods than before, and contradictions would set her cheek aflame. The previous Christmas she had fallen into a violent altercation with her brother regarding the pietist preachers. While sitting at the dinner-table, the latter had expressed his preference for Fredman's *Epistles* as exhibiting deeper powers of thought than the sermons of the pietists. John's mother took fire at this, and had an attack of hysteria. That was only a symptom.

Now, during the intervals when she got up, she began to mend the children's linen and clothes, and to clear out all the drawers. She often talked to John about religion and other high matters. One day she showed him some gold rings. "You boys will get these, when Mamma is dead," she said. "Which is mine?" asked John, without stopping to think about death. She showed him a plaited girl's ring with a heart. It made a deep impression on the boy, who had never possessed anything of gold, and he often thought of the ring.

About that time a nurse was hired for the children. She was young and good-looking, taciturn, and smiled in a critical sort of way. She had served in a count's mansion in the Tradgardsgatan, and probably thought that she had come into a poverty-stricken house. She was supposed to look after the children and the servant-maids, but was on almost intimate terms with the latter. There were now three servants—a housekeeper, a man-servant, and a girl from Dalecarlia. The girls had their lovers, and a cheerful life went on in the great kitchen, where polished copper and tin vessels shone brightly. There was eating and drinking, and the boys were invited in. They were called "sir," and their health was drunk. Only the man-servant was not there; he thought it was "vulgar" to live like that, while the mistress of the house was ill. The home seemed to be undergoing a process of dissolution, and John's father had had many difficulties with the servants since his mother had been obliged to keep her bed. But she remained the servants' friend till death, and took their side by instinct, but they abused her partiality. It was strictly forbidden to excite the patient, but the servants intrigued against each other, and against their master. One day

John had melted lead in a silver spoon. The cook blabbed of it to his mother, who was excited and told his father. But his father was only annoyed with the tell-tale. He went to John and said in a friendly way, as though he were compelled to make a complaint: "You should not melt lead in silver spoons. I don't care about the spoon; that can be repaired; but this devil of a cook has excited mother. Don't tell the girls when you have done something stupid, but tell me, and we will put it right."

He and his father were now friends for the first time, and he loved him for his condescension.

One night his father's voice awoke him from sleep. He started up, and found it dark in the room. Through the darkness he heard a deep trembling voice, "Come to mother's death-bed!" It went through him like a flash of lightning. He froze and shivered while he dressed, the skin of his head felt ice-cold, his eyes were wide-open and streaming with tears, so that the flame of the lamp looked like a red bladder.

Then they stood round the sick-bed and wept for one, two, three hours. The night crept slowly onward. His mother was unconscious and knew no one. The death-struggle, with rattling in the

throat, and cries for help, had commenced. The little ones were not aroused. John thought of all the sins which he had committed, and found no good deeds to counterbalance them. After three hours his tears ceased, and his thoughts began to take various directions. The process of dying was over. "How will it be," he asked himself, "when mother is no longer there?" Nothing but emptiness and desolation, without comfort or compensation—a deep gloom of wretchedness in which he searched for some point of light. His eye fell on his mother's chest of drawers, on which stood a plaster statuette of Linnæus with a flower in his hand. There was the only advantage which this boundless misfortune brought with it—he would get the ring. He saw it in imagination on his hand. "That is in memory of my mother," he would be able to say, and he would weep at the recollection of her, but he could not suppress the thought, "A gold ring looks fine after all." Shame! Who could entertain such thoughts at his mother's death-bed? A brain that was drunk with sleep? A child which had wept itself out? Oh, no, an heir. Was he more avaricious than others? Had he a natural tendency to greed? No, for then he would never have related the

matter, but he bore it in memory his whole life long; it kept on turning up, and when he thought of it in sleepless nights, and hours of weariness, he felt the flush mount into his cheeks. Then he instituted an examination of himself and his conduct, and blamed himself as the meanest of all men. It was not till he was older and had come to know a great number of men, and studied the processes of thought, that he came to the conclusion that the brain is a strange thing which goes its own way, and there is a great similarity among men in the double life which they lead, the outward and the inward, the life of speech and that of thought.

John was a compound of romanticism, pietism, realism, and naturalism. Therefore he was never anything but a patchwork. He certainly did not exclusively think about the wretched ornament. The whole matter was only a momentary distraction of two minutes' duration after months of sorrow, and when at last there was stillness in the room, and his father said, "Mother is dead," he was not to be comforted. He shrieked like one drowning. How can death bring such profound despair to those who hope to meet again? It must needs press hard on faith when the annihilation of

personality takes place with such inflexible consistency before our eyes. John's father, who generally had the outward imperturbability of the Icelander, was now softened. He took his sons by the hands and said: "God has visited us; we will now hold together like friends. Men go about in their self-sufficiency, and believe they are enough for themselves; then comes a blow, and we see how we all need one another. We will be sincere and considerate with each other."

The boy's sorrow was for a moment relieved. He had found a friend, a strong, wise, manly friend whom he admired.

White sheets were now hung up at the windows of the house in sign of mourning. "You need not go to school, if you don't want to," said his father. "If you don't want"—that was acknowledgment that he had a will of his own. Then came aunts, cousins, relations, nurses, old servants, and all called down blessings on the dead. All offered their help in making the mourning clothes—there were four small and three elder children. Young girls sat by the sickly light that fell through the sheeted windows and sewed, while they conversed in undertones. That was melancholy, and the period of mourning brought a whole chain of

peculiar experiences with it. Never had the boy been the object of so much sympathy, never had he felt so many warm hands stretched out, nor heard so many friendly words.

On the next Sunday his father read a sermon of Wallin's on the text "Our friend is not dead, but she sleeps." With what extraordinary faith he took these words literally, and how well he understood how to open the wounds and heal them again! "She is not dead, but she sleeps," he repeated cheerfully. The mother really slept there in the cold anteroom, and no one expected to see her awake.

The time of burial approached; the place for the grave was bought. His father's sister-in-law helped to sew the suits of mourning; she sewed and sewed, the old mother of seven penniless children, the once rich burgher's wife, sewed for the children of the marriage which her husband had cursed.

One day she stood up and asked her brother-in-law to speak with her privately. She whispered with him in a corner of the room. The two old people embraced each other and wept. Then John's father told them that their mother would be laid in their uncle's family grave. This was a

much-admired monument in the new churchyard, which consisted of an iron pillar surmounted by an urn. The boys knew that this was an honour for their mother, but they did not understand that by her burial there a family quarrel had been extinguished, and justice done after her death to a good and conscientious woman who had been despised because she became a mother before her marriage.

Now all was peace and reconciliation in the house, and they vied with one another in acts of friendliness. They looked frankly at each other, avoided anything that might cause disturbance, and anticipated each other's wishes.

Then came the day of the funeral. When the coffin had been screwed down and was carried through the hall, which was filled with mourners dressed in black, one of John's little sisters began to cry and flung herself in his arms. He took her up and pressed her to himself, as though he were her mother and wished to protect her. When he felt how her trembling little body clung close to him, he grew conscious of a strength which he had not felt for a long time. Comfortless himself he could bestow comfort, and as he quieted the child he himself grew calm. The black coffin and the crowd of people had frightened her—that was all;

for the smaller children hardly missed their mother; they did not weep for her, and had soon forgotten her. The tie between mother and child is not formed so quickly, but only through long personal acquaintance. John's real sense of loss hardly lasted for a quarter of a year. He mourned for her indeed a long time, but that was more because he wished to continue in that mood, though it was only an expression of his natural melancholy, which had taken the special form of mourning for his mother.

After the funeral there followed a long summer of leisure and freedom. John occupied two rooms with his eldest brother, who did not return from business till the evening. His father was out the whole day, and when they met they were silent. They had laid aside enmity, but intimacy was impossible. John was now his own master; he came and went, and did what he liked. His father's housekeeper was sympathetic with him, and they never quarrelled. He avoided intercourse with his school-fellows, shut himself in his room, smoked, read, and meditated. He had always heard that knowledge was the best thing, a capital fund which could not be lost, and which afforded a footing, however low one might sink in

the social scale. He had a mania for explaining and knowing everything. He had seen his eldest brother's drawings and heard them praised. In school he had drawn only geometrical figures. Accordingly, he wished to draw, and in the Christmas holidays he copied with furious diligence all his brother's drawings. The last in the collection was a horse. When he had finished it, and saw that it was unsatisfactory, he had done with drawing.

All the children except John could play some instrument. He heard scales and practising on the piano, violin, and violoncello, so that music was spoiled for him and became a nuisance, like the church-bells had formerly been. He would have gladly played, but he did not wish to practise scales. He took pieces of music when no one was looking and played them—as might be supposed—very badly, but it pleased him. As a compensation for his vanity, he determined to learn technically the pieces which his sisters played, so that he surpassed them in the knowledge of musical technique. Once they wanted someone to copy the music of the *Zauberflöte* arranged for a quartette. John offered to do so.

"Can you copy notes?" he was asked.

"I 'll try," he said.

He practised copying for a couple of days, and then copied out the four parts. It was a long, tedious piece of work, and he nearly gave it up, but finally completed it. His copy was certainly inaccurate in places, but it was usable. He had no rest till he had learned to know all the varieties of plants included in the Stockholm Flora. When he had done so he dropped the subject. A botanical excursion afforded him no more interest; roamings through the country showed him nothing new. He could not find any plant which he did not know. He also knew the few minerals which were to be found, and had an entomological collection. He could distinguish birds by their notes, their feathers, and their eggs. But all these were only outward phenomena, mere names for things, which soon lost their interest. He wanted to reach what lay behind them. He used to be blamed for his destructiveness, for he broke toys, watches, and everything that fell into his hands. Accidently he heard in the Academy of Sciences a lecture on Chemistry and Physics, accompanied by experiments. The unusual instruments and apparatus fascinated him. The Professor was a magician, but one who explained how the miracles

took place. This was a novelty for him, and he wished himself to penetrate these secrets.

He talked with his father about his new hobby, and the latter, who had himself studied electricity in his youth, lent him books from his bookcase—Fock's *Physics*, Girardin's *Chemistry*, Figuier's *Discoveries and Inventions*, and the *Chemical Technology* of Nyblæus. In the attic was also a galvanic battery constructed on the old Daniellian copper and zinc system. This he got hold of when he was twelve years old, and made so many experiments with sulphuric acid as to ruin handkerchiefs, napkins, and clothes. After he had galvanised everything which seemed a suitable object, he laid this hobby also aside. During the summer he took up privately the study of chemistry with enthusiasm. But he did not wish to carry out the experiments described in the text-book; he wished to make discoveries. He had neither money nor any chemical apparatus, but that did not hinder him. He had a temperament which must carry out its projects in spite of every difficulty, and on the spot. This was still more the case, since he had become his own master, after his mother's death. When he played chess, he directed his plan of campaign against his opponent's king.

He went on recklessly, without thinking of defending himself, sometimes gained the victory by sheer recklessness, but frequently also lost the game.

"If I had had one move more, you would have been checkmated," he said on such occasions.

"Yes, but you had n't, and therefore *you* are checkmated," was the answer.

When he wished to open a locked drawer, and the key was not at hand, he took the tongs and broke the lock, so that, together with its screws, it came loose from the wood.

"Why did you break the lock?" they asked.

"Because I wished to get at the drawer."

This impetuosity revealed a certain pertinacity, but the latter only lasted while the fit was on him. For example: On one occasion he wished to make an electric machine. In the attic he found a spinning-wheel. From it he broke off whatever he did not need, and wanted to replace the wheel with a round pane of glass. He found a double window, and with a splinter of quartz cut a pane out. But it had to be round and have a whole in the middle. With a key he knocked off one splinter of glass after another, each not larger than a grain of sand, this took him several days, but at last he had made

the pane round. But how was he to make a hole in it? He contrived a bow-drill. In order to get the bow, he broke an umbrella, took a piece of whale-bone out, and with that and a violin-string made his bow. Then he rubbed the glass with the splinter of quartz, wetted it with turpentine, and bored. But he saw no result. Then he lost patience and reflection, and tried to finish the job with a piece of cracking-coal. The pane of glass split in two. Then he threw himself, weak, exhausted, hopeless, on the bed. His vexation was intensified by a consciousness of poverty. If he had only had money. He walked up and down before Spolander's shop in the Vesterlanggata and looked at the various sets of chemical apparatus there displayed. He would have gladly ascertained their price, but dared not go in. What would have been the good? His father gave him no money.

When he had recovered from this failure, he wanted to make what no one has made hitherto, and no one can make—a machine to exhibit "perpetual motion." His father had told him that for a long time past a reward had been offered to anyone who should invent this impossibility. This tempted him. He constructed a waterfall with a

"Hero's fountain,"[1] which worked a pump; the waterfall was to set the pump in motion, and the pump was to draw up the water again out of the "Hero's fountain." He had again to make a raid on the attic. After he had broken everything possible in order to collect material, he began his work. A coffee-making machine had to serve as a pipe; a soda-water machine as a reservoir; a chest of drawers furnished planks and wood; a bird-cage, iron wire; and so on. The day of testing it came. Then the housekeeper asked him if he would go with his brothers and sisters to their mother's grave. "No," he said, "he had no time." Whether his conscience now smote him, and spoiled his work, or whether he was nervous—anyhow, it was a failure. Then he took the whole apparatus, without trying to put right what was wrong in it, and hurled it against the tiled stove. There lay the work, on which so many useful things had been wasted, and a good while later on the ruin was discovered in the attic. He received a reproof, but that had no longer an effect on him.

In order to have his revenge at home, where he was despised on account of his unfortunate experiments, he made some explosions with detonating

[1] An artifical fountain of water, worked by pressure of air.

gas, and contrived a Leyden jar. For this he took the skin of a dead black cat which he had found on the Observatory Hill and brought home in his pocket-handkerchief. One night, when his eldest brother and he came home from a concert, they could find no matches, and did not wish to wake anyone. John hunted up some sulphuric acid and zinc, produced hydrogen, procured a flame by means of the electricity conductor, and lighted the lamp. This established his reputation as a scientific chemist. He also manufactured matches like those made at Jönkoping. Then he laid chemistry aside for a time.

His father's bookshelves contained a small collection of books which were now at his disposal. Here, besides the above-mentioned works on chemistry and physics, he found books on gardening, an illustrated natural history, Meyer's *Universum*, a German anatomical treatise with plates, an illustrated German history of Napoleon, Wallin's, Franzen's, and Tegner's poems, *Don Quixote*, Frederika Bremer's romances, etc.

Besides books about Indians and the *Thousand and One Nights*, John had hitherto no acquaintance with pure literature. He had looked into some romances and found them tedious, especially

as they had no illustrations. But after he had floundered about chemistry and natural science, he one day paid a visit to the bookcase. He looked into the poets; here he felt as though he were floating in the air and did not know where he was. He did not understand it. Then he took Frederika Bremer's *Pictures from Daily Life*. Here he found domesticity and didacticism, and put them back. Then he seized hold of a collection of tales and fairy stories called *Der Jungfrauenturm*. These dealt with unhappy love, and moved him. But most important of all was the circumstance that he felt himself an adult with these adult characters. He understood what they said, and observed that he was no longer a child. He, too, had been unhappy in love, had suffered and fought, but he was kept back in the prison of childhood. And now he first became aware that his soul was in prison. It had long been fledged, but they had clipped its wings and put it in a cage. Now he sought his father and wished to talk with him as a comrade, but his father was reserved and brooded over his sorrow.

In the autumn there came a new throw-back and check for him. He was ripe for the highest class, but was kept back in the school because he was

too young. He was infuriated. For the second time he was held fast by the coat when he wished to jump. He felt like an omnibus-horse continually pressing forward and being as constantly held back. This lacerated his nerves, weakened his will-power, and laid the foundation for lack of courage in the future. He never dared to wish anything very keenly, for he had seen how often his wishes were checked. He wanted to be industrious and press on, but industry did not help him; he was too young. No, the school course was too long. It showed the goal in the distance, but set obstacles in the way of the runners. He had reckoned on being a student when he was fifteen, but had to wait till he was eighteen. In his last year, when he saw escape from his prison so near, another year of punishment was imposed upon him by a rule being passed that they were to remain in the highest class for two years.

His childhood and youth had been extremely painful; the whole of life was spoiled for him, and he sought comfort in heaven.

VI

THE SCHOOL OF THE CROSS

SORROW has the fortunate peculiarity that it preys upon itself. It dies of starvation. Since it is essentially an interruption of habits, it can be replaced by new habits. Constituting, as it does, a void, it is soon filled up by a real "horror vacui."

A twenty-years' marriage had come to an end. A comrade in the battle against the difficulties of life was lost; a wife, at whose side her husband had lived, had gone and left behind an old celibate; the manager of the house had quitted her post. Everything was in confusion. The small, black-dressed creatures, who moved everywhere like dark blots in the rooms and in the garden, kept the feeling of loss fresh. Their father thought they felt forlorn and believed them defenceless. He often came home from his work in the afternoon and sat alone in a lime-tree arbour, which looked

towards the street. He had his eldest daughter, a child of seven, on his knee, and the others played at his feet. John often watched the grey-haired man, with his melancholy, handsome features, sitting in the green twilight of the arbour. He could not comfort him, and did not seek his company any more. He saw the softening of the old man's nature, which he would not have thought possible before. He watched how his fixed gaze lingered on his little daughter as though in the childish lines of her face he would reconstruct in imagination the features of the dead. From his window John often watched this picture between the stems of the trees down the long vista of the avenue; it touched him deeply, but he began to fear for his father, who no longer seemed to be himself.

Six months had passed, when his father one autumn evening came home with a stranger. He was an elderly man of unusually cheerful aspect. He joked good-naturedly, was friendly and kindly towards children and servants, and had an irresistible way of making people laugh. He was an accountant, had been a school friend of John's father, and was now discovered to be living in a house close by. The two old men talked of their

youthful recollections, which afforded material to fill the painful void John's father felt. His stern, set features relaxed, as he was obliged to laugh at his friend's witty and humorous remarks. After a week he and the whole family were laughing as only those can who have wept for a long time. Their friend was a wit of the first water, and more, could play the violin and guitar, and sing Bellman's[1] songs. A new atmosphere seemed to pervade the house, new views of things sprang up, and the melancholy phantoms of the mourning period were dissipated. The accountant had also known trouble; he had lost his betrothed, and since then remained a bachelor. Life had not been child's play for him, but he had taken things as they came.

Soon after John's brother Gustav returned from Paris in uniform, mixing French words with Swedish in his talk, brisk and cheerful. His father received him with a kiss on the forehead, and was somewhat depressed again by the recollection that this son had not been at his mother's death-bed. But he soon cheered up again and the house grew lively. Gustav entered his father's business, and the latter had someone now with

[1] Famous Swedish poet.

whom he could talk on matters which interested him.

One evening, late in autumn, after supper, when the accountant was present and the company sat together, John's father stood up and signified his wish to say a few words: "My boys and my friend," he began, and then announced his intention of giving his little children a new mother, adding that the time of youthful passion was past for him, and that only thoughts for the children had led to the resolve to make Fräulein—his wife.

She was the housekeeper. He made the announcement in a somewhat authoritative tone, as though he would say, "You have really nothing to do with it; however, I let you know." Then the housekeeper was fetched to receive their congratulations, which were hearty on the part of the accountant, but of a somewhat mixed nature on the part of the three boys. Two of them had rather an uncomfortable conscience on the matter, for they had strongly but innocently admired her; but the third, John, had latterly been on bad terms with her. Which of them was most embarrassed would be difficult to decide.

There ensued a long pause, during which the youths examined themselves, mentally settled

their accounts, and thought of the possible consequences of this unexpected event. John must have been the first to realise what the situation demanded, for he went the same evening into the nursery straight to the housekeeper. It seemed dark before his eyes as he repeated the following speech, which he had hastily composed and learned by heart in his father's fashion:

"Since our relations with each other will henceforward be on a different footing," he said, "allow me to ask you to forget the past and to be friends."

This was a prudent utterance, sincerely meant, and had no *arrière pensée* behind it. It was also a balancing of accounts with his father, and the expression of a wish to live harmoniously together for the future. At noon the next day John's father came up to his room, thanked him for his kindness towards the housekeeper, and, as a token of his pleasure at it, gave him a small present, but one which he had long desired. It was a chemical apparatus. John felt ashamed to take the present, and made little of his kindness. It was a natural result of his father's announcement, and a prudent thing to do, but his father and the housekeeper must have seen in it a good augury for their wedded happiness. They soon discovered their

mistake, which was naturally laid at the boy's door.

There is no doubt that the old man married again for his children's sake, but it is also certain that he loved the young woman. And why should he not? It is nobody's affair except that of the persons concerned, but it is a fact of constant occurrence, both that widowers marry again, however galling the bonds of matrimony may have been, and that they also feel they are committing a breach of trust against the dead. Dying wives are generally tormented with the thought that the survivor will marry again.

The two elder brothers took the affair lightly, and accommodated themselves to it. They regarded their father with veneration, and never doubted the rightness of what he did. They had never considered that fatherhood is an accident which may happen to anyone.

But John doubted. He fell into endless disputes with his brothers, and criticised his father for becoming engaged before the expiration of the year of mourning. He conjured up his mother's shade, prophesied misery and ruin, and let himself go to unreasonable lengths.

The brothers' argument was: "We have no-

thing to do with father's acts." "It was true," retorted John, "that it was not their business to judge; still, it concerned them deeply." "Word-catcher!" they replied, not seeing the distinction.

One evening, when John had come home from school, he saw the house lit up and heard music and talking. He went to his room in order to study. The servant came up and said that his father wished him to come down as there were guests present.

"Who?" asked John.

"The new relations."

John replied that he had no time. Then one of his brothers appeared. He first abused John, then he begged him to come, saying that he ought to for his father's sake, even if it were only for a moment; he could soon go up again.

John said he would consider the matter.

At last he went down; he saw the room full of ladies and gentlemen: three aunts, a new grandmother, an uncle, a grandfather. The aunts were young girls. He made a bow in the centre of the room politely but stiffly.

His father was vexed, but did not wish to show it. He asked John whether he would have a glass of punch. John took it. Then the old man asked

ironically whether he had really so much work for the school. John said "Yes," and returned to his room. Here it was cold and dark, and he could not work when the noise of music and dancing ascended to him. Then the cook came up to fetch him to supper. He would not have any. Hungry and angry he paced up and down the room. At intervals he wanted to go down where it was warm, light, and cheerful, and several times took hold of the door-handle. But he turned back again, for he was shy. Timid as he was by nature, this last solitary summer had made him still more uncivilised. So he went hungry to bed, and considered himself the most unfortunate creature in the world.

The next day his father came to his room and told him he had not been honest when he had asked the housekeeper's pardon.

"Pardon!" exclaimed John, "he had nothing to ask pardon for." But now his father wanted to humble him. "Let him try," thought John to himself. For a time no obvious attempts were made in that direction, but John stiffened himself to meet them, when they should come.

One evening his brother was reading by the lamp in the room upstairs. John asked, "What

are you reading?" His brother showed him the title on the cover; there stood in old black-letter type on a yellow cover the famous title: *Warning of a Friend of Youth against the most Dangerous Enemy of Youth.*

"Have you read it?" asked Gustav.

John answered "Yes," and drew back. After Gustav had done reading, he put the book in his drawer and went downstairs. John opened the drawer and took out the mysterious work. His eyes glanced over the pages without venturing to fix on any particular spot. His knees trembled, his face became bloodless, his pulses froze. He was, then, condemned to death or lunacy at the age of twenty-five! His spinal marrow and his brain would disappear, his hair would fall out, his hands would tremble—it was horrible! And the cure was—Christ! But Christ could not heal the body, only the soul. The body was condemned to death at five-and-twenty; the only thing left was to save the soul from everlasting damnation.

This was Dr. Kapff's famous pamphlet, which has driven so many youths into a lunatic asylum in order to increase the adherents of the Protestant Jesuits. Such a dangerous work should have been prosecuted, confiscated, and burnt, or, at any rate,

counteracted by more intelligent ones. One of the latter sort fell into John's hands later, and he did his best to circulate it, as it was excellent. The title was Uncle Pallé's *Advice to Young Sinners*, and its authorship was attributed to the medical councillor, Dr. Westrand. It was a cheerfully written book, which took the matter lightly, and declared that the dangers of the evil habit had been exaggerated; it also gave practical advice and hygienic directions. But even to the present time Kapff's absurd pamphlet is in vogue, and doctors are frequently visited by sinners, who with beating hearts make their confessions.[1]

For half a year John could find no word of comfort in his great trouble. He was, he thought, condemned to death; the only thing left was to lead a virtuous and religious life, till the fatal hour should strike. He hunted up his mother's pietistic books and read them. He considered himself merely as a criminal and humbled himself. When on the next day he passed through the street, he stepped off the pavement in order to make room

[1] In a later work, *Legends* (1898), Strindberg says: "When I wrote that youthful confession (*The Son of a Servant*) the liberal tendency of that period seems to have induced me to use too bright colours, with the pardonable object of freeing from fear young men who have fallen into precocious sin."

for everyone he met. He wished to mortify himself, to suffer for the allotted period, and then to enter into the joy of his Lord.

One night he awoke and saw his brothers sitting by the lamplight. They were discussing the subject. He crept under the counterpane and put his fingers in his ears in order not to hear. But he heard all the same. He wished to spring up to confess, to beg for mercy and help, but dared not, to hear the confirmation of his death sentence. Had he spoken, perhaps he would have obtained help and comfort, but he kept silence. He lay still, with perspiration breaking out, and prayed. Wherever he went he saw the terrible word written in old black letters on a yellow ground, on the walls of the houses, on the carpets of the room. The chest of drawers in which the book lay contained the guillotine. Every time his brother approached the drawer he trembled and ran away. For hours at a time he stood before the looking-glass in order to see if his eyes had sunk in, his hair had fallen out, and his skull was projecting. But he looked ruddy and healthy.

He shut himself up in himself, was quiet and avoided all society. His father imagined that by this behaviour he wished to express his disapproval

of the marriage; that he was proud, and wanted to humble him. But he was humbled already, and as he silently yielded to the pressure his father congratulated himself on the success of his strategy.

This irritated the boy, and sometimes he revolted. Now and then there arose a faint hope in him that his body might be saved. He went to the gymnasium, took cold baths, and ate little in the evening.

Through home-life, intercourse with schoolfellows, and learning, he had developed a fairly complicated ego, and when he compared himself with the simpler egos of others, he felt superior. But now religion came and wanted to kill this ego. That was not so easy and the battle was fierce. He saw also that no one else denied himself. Why, then, in heaven's name, should he do so?

When his father's wedding-day came, he revolted. He did not go to kiss the bride like his brothers and sisters, but withdrew from the dancing to the toddy-drinkers, and got a little intoxicated. But a punishment was soon to follow on this, and his ego was to be broken.

He became a collegian, but this gave him no joy. It came too late, like a debt that had been

long due. He had had the pleasure of it beforehand. No one congratulated him, and he got no collegian's cap. Why? Did they want to humble him or did his father not wish to see an outward sign of his learning? At last it was suggested that one of his aunts should embroider the college wreath on velvet, which could then be sewn on to an ordinary black cap. She embroidered an oak and laurel branch, but so badly that his fellow-students laughed at him. He was the only collegian for a long time who had not worn the proper cap. The only one—pointed at, and passed over!

Then his breakfast-money, which hitherto had been five öre, was reduced to four. This was an unnecessary cruelty, for they were not poor at home, and a boy ought to have more food. The consequence was that John had no breakfast at all, for he spent his weekly money in tobacco. He had a keen appetite and was always hungry. When there was salt cod-fish for dinner, he ate till his jaws were weary, but left the table hungry. Did he then really get too little to eat? No; there are millions of working-men who have much less, but the stomachs of the upper classes must have become accustomed to stronger and more con-

centrated nourishment. His whole youth seemed to him in recollection a long fasting period.

Moreover, under the stepmother's rule the scale of diet was reduced, the food was inferior, and he could change his linen only once instead of twice a week. This was a sign that one of the lower classes was guiding the household. The youth was not proud in the sense that he despised the housekeeper's low birth, but the fact that she who had formerly been beneath him tried to oppress him, made him revolt—but now Christianity came in and bade him turn the other cheek.

He kept growing, and had to go about in clothes which he had outgrown. His comrades jeered at his short trousers. His school-books were old editions out of date, and this caused him much annoyance in the school.

"So it is in my book," he would say to the teacher.

"Show me your book."

Then the teacher was scandalised, and told him to get the newest edition, which he never did.

His shirt-sleeves reached only half-way down his arm and could not be buttoned. In the gymnasium, therefore, he always kept his jacket on. One day in his capacity as leader of the troop he

was having a special lesson from the teacher of gymnastics.

"Take off your jackets, boys, we want to put our backs into it," said the instructor.

All besides John did so.

"Well, are you ready?"

"No, I am freezing," answered John.

"You will soon be warm," said the instructor; "off with your jacket."

He refused. The instructor came up to him in a friendly way and pulled at his sleeves. He resisted. The instructor looked at him. "What is this?" he said. "I ask you kindly and you won't oblige me. Then go!"

John wished to say something in his defence; he looked at the friendly man, with whom he had always been on good terms, with troubled eyes—but he kept silence and went. What depressed him was poverty imposed as a cruelty, not as a necessity. He complained to his brothers, but they said he should not be proud. Difference of education had opened a gulf between him and them. They belonged to a different class of society, and ranged themselves with the father who was of their class and the one in power.

Another time he was given a jacket which had

been altered from a blue frock-coat with bright buttons. His school-fellows laughed at him as though he were pretending to be a cadet, but this was the last idea in his mind, for he always plumed himself on being rather than seeming. This jacket cost him untold suffering.

After this a systematic plan of humbling him was pursued. John was waked up early in the mornings to do domestic tasks before he went to school. He pleaded his school-work as an excuse, but it did not help him at all. "You learn so easily," he was told. This was quite unnecessary, as there was a man-servant, besides several other servants, in the house. He saw that it was merely meant as a chastisement. He hated his oppressors and they hated him.

Then there began a second course of discipline. He had to get up in the morning and drive his father to the town before he went to school, then return with the horse and trap, take out the horse, feed it, and sweep the stable. The same manœuvre was repeated at noon. So, besides his school-work, he had domestic work and must drive twice daily to and from Riddarholm. In later years he asked himself whether this had been done with forethought; whether his wise

father saw that too much activity of brain was bad for him, and that physical work was necessary. Or perhaps it was an economical regulation in order to save some of the man-servant's work time. Physical exertion is certainly useful for boys, and should be commended to the consideration of all parents, but John could not perceive any beneficent intention in the matter, even though it may have existed. The whole affair seemed so dictated by malice and an intention to cause pain, that it was impossible for him to discover any good purpose in it, though it may have existed along with the bad one.

In the summer holidays the driving out degenerated into stable-work. The horse had to be fed at stated hours, and John was obliged to stay at home in order not to miss them. His freedom was at an end. He felt the great change which had taken place in his circumstances, and attributed them to his stepmother. Instead of being a free person who could dispose of his own time and thoughts, he had become a slave, to do service in return for his food. When he saw that his brothers were spared all such work, he became convinced that it was imposed on him out of malice. Straw-cutting, room-sweeping, water-

carrying, etc., are excellent exercises, but the motive spoiled everything. If his father had told him it was good for his health, he would have done it gladly, but now he hated it. He feared the dark, for he had been brought up like all children by the maid-servants, and he had to do violence to himself when he went up to the hay-loft every evening. He cursed it every time, but the horse was a good-natured beast with whom he sometimes talked. He was, moreover, fond of animals, and possessed canaries of which he took great care.

He hated his domestic tasks because they were imposed upon him by the former housekeeper, who wished to revenge herself on him and to show him her superiority. He hated her, for the tasks were exacted from him as payment for his studies. He had seen through the reason why he was being prepared for a learned career. They boasted of him and his learning; he was not then being educated out of kindness.

Then he became obstinate, and on one occasion damaged the springs of the trap in driving. When they alighted at Riddarhustorg, his father examined it. He observed that a spring was broken.

"Go to the smith's," he said.

John was silent.

"Did you hear?"

"Yes, I heard."

He had to go to the Malargata, where the smith lived. The latter said it would take three hours to repair the damage. What was to be done? He must take the horse out, lead it home and return. But to lead a horse in harness, while wearing his collegian's cap, through the Drottningsgata, perhaps to meet the boys by the observatory who envied him for his cap, or still worse, the pretty girls on the Norrtullsgata who smiled at him—No! he would do anything rather than that. He then thought of leading the horse through the Rorstrandsgata, but then he would have to pass Karlberg, and here he knew the cadets. He remained in the courtyard, sitting on a log in the sunshine and cursed his lot. He thought of the summer holidays which he had spent in the country, of his friends who were now there, and measured his misfortune by that standard. But had he thought of his brothers who were now shut up for ten hours a day in the hot and gloomy office without hope of a single holiday, his meditations on his lot would have taken a different turn; but he did not do that. Just now

he would have willingly changed places with them. They, at any rate, earned their bread, and did not have to stay at home. They had a definite position, but he had not. Why did his parents let him smell at the apple and then drag him away? He longed to get away—no matter where. He was in a false position, and he wished to get out of it, to be either above or below and not to be crushed between the wheels.

Accordingly, one day he asked his father for permission to leave the school. His father was astonished, and asked in a friendly way his reason. He replied that everything was spoiled for him, he was learning nothing, and wished to go out into life in order to work and earn his own living.

"What do you want to be?" asked his father.

He said he did not know, and then he wept.

A few days later his father asked him whether he would like to be a cadet. A cadet! His eyes lighted up, but he did not know what to answer. To be a fine gentleman with a sword! His boldest dreams had never reached so far.

"Think over it," said his father. He thought about it the whole evening. If he accepted, he would now go in uniform to Karlberg, where he had once bathed and been driven away by the

cadets. To become an officer—that meant to get power; the girls would smile on him and no one would oppress him. He felt life grow brighter, the sense of oppression vanished from his breast and hope awoke. But it was too much for him. It neither suited him nor his surroundings. He did not wish to mount and to command; he wished only to escape the compulsion to blind obedience, the being watched and oppressed. The stoicism which asks nothing of life awoke in him. He declined the offer, saying it was too much for him.

The mere thought that he could have been what perhaps all boys long to be, was enough for him. He renounced it, descended, and took up his chain again. When, later on, he became an egotistic pietist, he imagined that he had renounced the honour for Christ's sake. That was not true, but, as a matter of fact, there was some asceticism in his sacrifice. He had, moreover, gained clearer insight into his parents' game; they wished to get honour through him. Probably the cadet idea had been suggested by his stepmother.

But there arose more serious occasions of contention. John thought that his younger brothers

and sisters were worse dressed than before, and he had heard cries from the nursery.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "she beats them."

Now he kept a sharp look-out. One day he noticed that the servant teased his younger brother as he lay in bed. The little boy was angry and spat in her face. His step-mother wanted to interfere, but John intervened. He had now tasted blood. The matter was postponed till his father's return. After dinner the battle was to begin. John was ready. He felt that he represented his dead mother. Then it began! After a formal report, his father took hold of Pelle, and was about to beat him. "You must not beat him!" cried John in a threatening tone, and rushed towards his father as though he would have seized him by the collar.

"What in heaven's name are you saying?"

"You should not touch him. He is innocent."

"Come in here and let me talk to you; you are certainly mad," said his father.

"Yes, I will come," said the generally timid John, as though he were possessed.

His father hesitated somewhat on hearing his confident tone, and his sound intelligence must

have told him that there was something queer about the matter.

"Well, what have you to say to me?" asked his father, more quietly but still distrustfully.

"I say that it is Karin's fault; she did wrong, and if mother had lived——"

That struck home. "What are you talking nonsense about your mother for? You have now a new mother. Prove what you say. What has Karin done?"

That was just the trouble; he could not say it, for he feared by doing so to touch a sore point. He was silent. A thousand thoughts coursed through his mind. How should he express them? He struggled for utterance, and finally came out with a stupid saying which he had read somewhere in a school-book.

"Prove!" he said. "There are clear matters of fact which can neither be proved nor need to be proved." (How stupid! he thought to himself, but it was too late.)

"Now you are simply stupid," said his father.

John was beaten, but he still wished to continue the conflict. A new repartee learned at school occurred to him.

"If I am stupid, that is a natural fault, which no one has the right to reproach me with."

"Shame on you for talking such rubbish! Go out and don't let me see you any more!" And he was put out.

After this scene all punishments took place in John's absence. It was believed he would spring at their throats if he heard any cries, and that was probable enough.

There was yet another method of humbling him —a hateful method which is often employed in families. It consisted of arresting his mental and moral growth by confining him to the society of his younger brothers and sisters. Children are often obliged to play with their brothers and sisters whether they are congenial to them or not. That is tyranny. But to compel an elder child to go about with the younger ones is a crime against nature; it is the mutilation of a young growing tree. John had a younger brother, a delightful child of seven, who trusted everyone and worried no one. John loved him and took good care that he was not ill-treated. But to have intimate intercourse with such a young child, who did not understand the talk and conversation of its elders, was impossible.

But now he was obliged to do so. On the first of May, when John had hoped to go out with his friends, his father said, as a matter of course, "Take Pelle and go with him to the Zoölogical Gardens, but take good care of him." There was no possibility of remonstrance. They went into the open plain, where they met some of his comrades, and John felt the presence of his little brother like a clog on his leg. He took care that no one hurt him, but he wished the little boy was at home. Pelle talked at the top of his voice and pointed with his finger at passers-by; John corrected him, and as he felt his solidarity with him, felt ashamed on his account. Why must he be ashamed because of a fault in etiquette which he had not himself committed? He became stiff, cold, and hard. The little boy wanted to see some sight but John would not go, and refused all his little brother's requests. Then he felt ashamed of his hardness; he cursed his selfishness, he hated and despised himself, but could not get rid of his bad feelings. Pelle understood nothing; he only looked troubled, resigned, patient, and gentle. "You are proud," said John to himself; "you are robbing the child of a pleasure." He felt remorseful, but soon afterwards hard again.

At last the child asked him to buy some gingerbread nuts. John felt himself insulted by the request. Suppose one of his fellow-collegians who sat in the restaurant and drank punch saw him buying gingerbread nuts! But he bought some, and stuffed them in his brother's pocket. Then they went on. Two cadets, John's acquaintances, came towards him. At this moment a little hand reached him a gingerbread nut—"Here 's one for you, John!" He pushed the little hand away, and simultaneously saw two blue faithful eyes looking up to him plaintively and questioningly. He felt as if he could weep, take the hurt child in his arms, and ask his forgiveness in order to melt the ice which had crystallised round his heart. He despised himself for having pushed his brother's hand away. They went home.

He wished to shake the recollection of his misdeed from him, but could not. But he laid the blame of it partly at the door of those who had caused this sorry situation. He was too old to stand on the same level with the child, and too young to be able to condescend to it.

His father, who had been rejuvenated by his marriage with a young wife, ventured to oppose John's learned authorities, and wished to humble

him in this department also. After supper one evening, they were sitting at table, his father with his three papers, the *Aftonbladet*, *Allehanda*, and *Post-tidningen*, and John with a school-book. Presently his father stopped reading.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

"Philosophy."

A long pause. The boys always used to call logic "philosophy."

"What is philosophy, really?"

"The science of thought."

"Hm! Must one learn how to think? Let me see the book." He put his pince-nez on and read. Then he said, "Do you think the peasant members of the Riks-Dag"[1] (he hated the peasants, but now used them for the purpose of his argument) "have learned philosophy? I don't, and yet they manage to corner the professors delightfully. You learn such a lot of useless stuff!" Thus he dismissed philosophy.

His father's parsimoniousness also sometimes placed John in very embarrassing situations. Two of his friends offered during the holidays to give him lessons in mathematics. John asked his father's permission.

[1] The Swedish Parliament.

"All right," he said, "as far as I am concerned."

When the time came for them to receive an honorarium, his father was of the opinion that they were so rich that one could not give them money.

"But one might make them a present," said John.

"I won't give anything," was the answer.

John felt ashamed for a whole year and realised for the first time the unpleasantness of a debt. His two friends gave at first gentle and then broad hints. He did not avoid them, but crawled after them in order to show his gratitude. He felt that they possessed a part of his soul and body; that he was their slave and could not be free. Sometimes he made them promises, because he imagined he could fulfil them, but they could not be fulfilled, and the burden of the debt was increased by their being broken. It was a time of infinite torment, probably more bitter at the time than it seemed afterwards.

Another step in arresting his progress was the postponement of his Confirmation. He learned theology at school, and could read the Gospels in Greek, but was not considered mature enough for Confirmation.

He felt the grinding-down process at home all

the more because his position in the school was that of a free man. As a collegian he had acquired certain rights. He was not made to stand up in class, and went out when he wished without asking permission; he remained sitting when the teachers asked questions, and disputed with them. He was the youngest in the class but sat among the oldest and tallest. The teacher now played the part of a lecturer rather than of a mere hearer of lessons. The former ogre from the Clara School had become an elderly man who expounded Cicero's *De Senectute* and *De Amicitia* without troubling himself much about the commentaries. In reading Virgil, he dwelt on the meeting of Æneas and Dido, enlarged on the topic of love, lost the thread of his discourse, and became melancholy. (The boys found out that about this time he had been wooing an old spinster.) He no longer assumed a lofty tone, and was magnanimous enough to admit a mistake he had made (he was weak in Latin) and to acknowledge that he was not an authority in that subject. From this he drew the moral that no one should come to school without preparation, however clever he might be. This produced a great effect upon the boys. He won more credit as a man than he lost as a teacher.

John, being well up in the natural sciences, was the only one out of his class elected to be a member of the "Society of Friends of Science." He was now thrown with school-fellows in the highest class, who the next year would become students. He had to give a lecture, and talked about it at home. He wrote an essay on the air, and read it to the members. After the lecture, the members went into a restaurant in the Haymarket and drank punch. John was modest before the big fellows, but felt quite at his ease. It was the first time he had been lifted out of the companionship of those of his own age. Others related improper anecdotes; he shyly related a harmless one. Later on, some of the members visited him and took away some of his best plants and chemical apparatus.

By an accident John found a new friend in the school. When he was top of the first class the Principal came in one day with a tall fellow in a frock-coat, with a beard, and wearing a pince-nez.

"Here, John!" he said, "take charge of this youth; he is freshly come from the country, and show him round." The wearer of the pince-nez looked down disdainfully at the boy in the jacket. They sat next each other; John took the book

and whispered to him; the other, however, knew nothing, but talked about cards and cafés.

One day John played with his friend's pince-nez and broke the spring. His friend was vexed. John promised to have it repaired, and took the pince-nez home. It weighed upon his mind, for he did not know whence he should get the money in order to have it mended. Then he determined to mend it himself. He took out the screws, bored holes in an old clock-spring, but did not succeed. His friend jogged his memory; John was in despair. His father would never pay for it. His friend said, "I will have it repaired, and you must pay." The repair cost fifty öre. On Monday John handed over twelve coppers, and promised to pay the rest the following Monday. His friend smelt a rat. "That is your breakfast-money," he said; "do you get only twelve coppers a week?" John blushed and begged him to take the money. The next Monday he handed over the remainder. His friend resisted, but he pressed it on him.

The two continued together as school-fellows till they went to the university at Upsala and afterwards. John's friend had a cheerful temperament and took the world as it came. He did not argue much with John, but always made him

laugh. In contrast to his dreary home, John found the school a cheerful refuge from domestic tyranny. But this caused him to lead a double life, which was bound to produce moral dislocation.

VII

FIRST LOVE

If the character of a man is the stereotyped rôle which he plays in the comedy of social life, John at this time had no character, *i. e.*, he was quite sincere. He sought, but found nothing, and could not remain in any fixed groove. His coarse nature, which flung off all fetters that were imposed upon it, could not adapt itself; and his brain, which was a revolutionary's from birth, could not work automatically. He was a mirror which threw back all the rays which struck it, a compendium of various experiences, of changing impressions, and full of contradictory elements. He possessed a will which worked by fits and starts and with fanatical energy; but he really did not will anything deeply; he was a fatalist, and believed in destiny; he was sanguine, and hoped all things. Hard as ice at home, he was sometimes sensitive to the point of sentimentality; he would

give his last shirt to a poor man, and could weep at the sight of injustice. He was a pietist, and as sincere an one as is possible for anyone who tries to adopt an old-world point of view. His home-life, where everything threatened his intellectual and personal liberty, compelled him to be this. In the school he was a cheerful worldling, not at all sentimental, and easy to get on with. Here he felt he was being educated for society and possessed rights. At home he was like an edible vegetable, cultivated for the use of the family, and had no rights.

He was also a pietist from spiritual pride, as all pietists are. Beskow, the repentant lieutenant, had come home from his pilgrimage to the grave of Christ. His *Journal* was read at home by John's step-mother, who inclined to pietism. Beskow made pietism gentlemanly, and brought it into fashion, and a considerable portion of the lower classes followed this fashion. Pietism was then what spiritualism is now—a presumably higher knowledge of hidden things. It was therefore eagerly taken up by all women and uncultivated people, and finally found acceptance at Court.

Did all this spring from some universal spiritual need? Was the period so hopelessly reactionary

that one had to be a pessimist? No! The king led a jovial life in Ulriksdal, and gave society a bright and liberal tone. Strong agitations were going on in the political world, especially regarding representation in parliament. The Dano-German war aroused attention to what was going on beyond our boundaries; the volunteer movement awoke town and country with drums and music; the new Opposition papers, *Dagens Nyheter* and the powerful *Sondags-Nisse*, were vent-holes for the confined steam which must find an outlet; railways were constructed everywhere, and brought remote and sparsely inhabited places into connection with the great motor nerve-centres. It was no melancholy age of decadence, but, on the contrary, a youthful season of hope and awakening. Whence then, came this strong breath of pietism? Perhaps it was a short-cut for those who were destitute of culture, by which they saved themselves from the pressure of knowledge from above; there was a certain democratic element in it, since all high and low had thereby access to a certain kind of wisdom which abolished class-distinctions. Now, when the privileges of birth were nearing their end, the privileges of culture asserted themselves, and were felt to be oppressive. But it was

believed that they could be nullified at a stroke through pietism.

John became a pietist from many motives. Bankrupt on earth, since he was doomed to die at twenty-five without spinal marrow or a nose, he made heaven the object of his search. Melancholy by nature, but full of activity, he loved what was melancholy. Tired of text-books, which contained no living water because they did not come into contact with life, he found more nourishment in a religion which did so at every turn. Besides this, there was the personal motive, that his step-mother, aware of his superiority in culture, wished to climb above him on the Jacob's ladder of religion. She conversed with his eldest brother on the highest subjects, and when John was near, he was obliged to hear how they despised his worldly wisdom. This irritated him, and he determined to catch up with them in religion. Moreover, his mother had left a written message behind in which she warned him against intellectual pride. The end was that he went regularly every Sunday to church, and the house was flooded with pietistic writings.

His step-mother and eldest brother used to go over afterwards in memory the sermons they had heard in church. One Sunday after service

John wrote out from memory the whole sermon which they admired. He could not deny himself the pleasure of presenting it to his step-mother. But his present was not received with equal pleasure; it was a blow for her. However, she did not yield a hair-breadth. "God's word should be written in the heart and not on paper," she said. It was not a bad retort, but John believed he detected pride in it. She considered herself further on in the way of holiness than he, and as already a child of God.

He began to race with her, and frequented the pietist meetings. But his attendance was frowned upon, for he had not yet been confirmed, and was not therefore ripe for heaven. John continued religious discussions with his elder brother; he maintained that Christ had declared that even children belonged to the kingdom of heaven. The subject was hotly contested. John cited Norbeck's *Theology*, but that was rejected without being looked at. He also quoted Krummacher, Thomas à Kempis, and all the pietists on his side. But it was no use. "It must be so," was the reply. "How?" he asked. "As I have it, and as you cannot get it." "As I!" There we have the formula of the pietists—self-righteousness.

One day John said that all men were God's children. "Impossible!" was the reply; "then there would be no difficulty in being saved. Are all going to be saved?"

"Certainly!" he replied. "God is love and wishes no one's destruction."

"If all are going to be saved, what is the use of chastising oneself?"

"Yes, that is just what I question."

"You are then a sceptic, a hypocrite?"

"Quite possibly they all are."

John now wished to take heaven by storm, to become a child of God, and perhaps by doing so defeat his rivals. His step-mother was not consistent. She went to the theatre and was fond of dancing. One Saturday evening in summer it was announced that the whole family would make an excursion into the country the next day—Sunday. All were expected to go. John considered it a sin, did not want to go, and wished to use the opportunity and seek in solitude the Saviour whom he had not yet found. According to what he had been told, conversion should come like a flash of lightning, and be accompanied by the conviction that one was a child of God, and then one had peace.

While his father was reading his paper in the evening, John begged permission to remain at home the next day.

"Why?" his father asked in a friendly tone.

John was silent. He felt ashamed to say.

"If your religious conviction forbids you to go, obey your conscience."

His step-mother was defeated. She had to desecrate the Sabbath, not he.

The others went. John went to the Bethlehem Church to hear Rosenius. It was a weird, gloomy place, and the men in the congregation looked as if they had reached the fatal twenty-fifth year, and lost their spinal marrow. They had leaden-grey faces and sunken eyes. Was it possible that Dr. Kapff had frightened them all into religion? It seemed strange.

Rosenius looked like peace itself, and beamed with heavenly joy. He confessed that he had been an old sinner, but Christ had cleansed him, and now he was happy. He looked happy. Is it possible that there is such a thing as a happy man? Why, then, are not all pietists?

In the afternoon John read à Kempis and Krummacher. Then he went out to the Haga Park and prayed the whole length of the Norrtulls-

gata that Jesus would seek him. In the Haga Park there sat little groups of families picnicking, with the children playing about. Is it possible that all these must go to hell? he thought. Yes, certainly. "Nonsense!" answered his intelligence. But it is so. A carriage full of excursionists passed by: and these are all condemned already! But they seemed to be amusing themselves, at any rate. The cheerfulness of other people made him still more depressed, and he felt a terrible loneliness in the midst of the crowd. Wearied with his thoughts, he went home as depressed as a poet who has looked for a thought without being able to find one. He laid down on his bed and wished he was dead.

In the evening his brothers and sisters came home joyful and noisy, and asked him if he had had a good time.

"Yes," he said. "And you?"

They gave him details of the excursion, and each time he envied them he felt a stab in his heart. His step-mother did not look at him, for she had broken the Sabbath. That was his comfort. He must by this time soon have detected his self-deceit and thrown it off, but a new powerful element entered into his life, which stirred up his

asceticism into fanaticism, till it exploded and disappeared.

His life during these years was not so uniformly monotonous as it appeared in retrospect later on, when there were enough dark points to give a grey colouring to the whole. His boyhood, generally speaking, was darkened by his being treated as a child when arrived at puberty, the uninteresting character of his school-work, his expectation of death at twenty-five, the uncultivated minds of those around him, and the impossibility of being understood.

His step-mother had brought three young girls, her sisters, into the house. They soon made friends with the step-sons, and they all took walks, played games, and made sledging excursions together. The girls tried to bring about a reconciliation between John and his step-mother. They acknowledged their sister's faults before him, and this pacified him so that he laid aside his hatred. The grandmother also played the part of a mediator, and finally revealed herself as a decided friend of John's. But a fatal chance robbed him of this friend also. His father's sister had not welcomed the new marriage, and, as a consequence, had broken off communications with her

brother. This vexed the old man very much. All intercourse ceased between the families. It was, of course, pride on his sister's part. But one day John met her daughter, an elegantly-dressed girl, older than himself, on the street. She was eager to hear something of the new marriage, and walked with John along the Drottningsgata.

When he got home, his grandmother rebuked him sharply for not having saluted her when she passed, but, of course, she added, he had been in too grand company to take notice of an old woman! He protested his innocence, but in vain. Since he had only a few friends, the loss of her friendship was painful to him.

One summer he spent with his step-mother at one of her relatives', a farmer in Östergötland. Here he was treated like a gentleman, and lived on friendly terms with his step-mother. But it did not last long, and soon the flames of strife were stirred up again between them. And thus it went on, up and down, and to and fro.

About this time, at the age of fifteen, he first fell in love, if it really was love, and not rather friendship. Can friendship commence and continue between members of opposite sexes? Only apparently, for the sexes are born enemies and

remain always opposed to each other. Positive and negative streams of electricity are mutually hostile, but seek their complement in each other. Friendship can exist only between persons with similiar interests and points of view. Man and woman by the conventions of society are born with different interests and differents points of view. Therefore a friendship between the sexes can arise only in marriage where the interests are the same. This, however, can be only so long as the wife devotes her whole interest to the family for which the husband works. As soon as she gives herself to some object outside the family, the agreement is broken, for man and wife then have separate interests, and then there is an end to friendship. Therefore purely spiritual marriages are impossible, for they lead to the slavery of the man, and consequently to the speedy dissolution of the marriage.

The fifteen-year old boy fell in love with a woman of thirty. He could truthfully assert that his love was entirely ideal. How came he to love her? As generally is the case, from many motives, not from one only.

She was the landlord's daughter, and had, as such, a superior position; the house was well-

appointed and always open for visitors. She was cultivated, admired, managed the house, and spoke familiarly to her mother; she could play the hostess and lead the conversation; she was always surrounded by men who courted her. She was also emancipated without being a man-hater; she smoked and drank, but was not without taste. She was engaged to a man whom her father hated and did not wish to have for his son-in-law. Her *fiancé* stayed abroad and wrote seldom. Among the visitors to this hotel were a district judge, a man of letters, students, clerics, and townsmen who all hovered about her. John's father admired her, his step-mother feared her, his brothers courted her. John kept in the background and observed her. It was a long time before she discovered him. One evening, after she had set all the hearts around her aflame, she came exhausted into the room in which John sat.

"Heavens! how tired I am!" she said to herself, and threw herself on a sofa.

John made a movement and she saw him. He had to say something.

"Are you so unhappy, although you are always laughing? You are certainly not as unhappy as I am."

She looked at the boy; they began a conversation and became friends. He felt lifted up. From that time forward she preferred his conversation to that of others. He felt embarrassed when she left a circle of grown men to sit down near him. He questioned her regarding her spiritual condition, and made remarks on it which showed that he had observed keenly and reflected much. He became her conscience. Once, when she had jested too freely, she came to the youth to be punished. That was a kind of flagellation as pleasant as a caress. At last her admirers began to tease her about him.

"Can you imagine it," she said one evening, "they declare I am in love with you!"

"They always say that of two persons of opposite sexes who are friends."

"Do you believe there can be a friendship between man and woman?"

"Yes, I am sure of it," he answered.

"Thanks," she said, and reached him her hand. "How could I, who am twice as old as you, who am sick and ugly, be in love with you? Besides, I am engaged."

After this she assumed an air of superiority and became motherly. This made a deep impression

on him; and when later on she was rallied on account of her liking for him, she felt herself almost embarrassed, banished all other feelings except that of motherliness, and began to labour for his conversion, for she also was a pietist.

They both attended a French conversation class, and had long walks home together, during which they spoke French. It was easier to speak of delicate matters in a foreign tongue. He also wrote French essays, which she corrected. His father's admiration for the old maid lessened, and his step-mother did not like this French conversation, which she did not understand. His elder brother's prerogative of talking French was also neutralised thereby. This vexed his father, so that one day he said to John, that it was impolite to speak a foreign language before those who did not understand it, and that he could not understand that Fräulein X., who was otherwise so cultivated, could commit such a *bêtise*. But, he added, cultivation of the heart was not gained by book-learning.

They no longer endured her presence in the house, and she was "persecuted." At last her family left the house altogether, so that now there was little intercourse with them. The day after

their removal, John felt lacerated. He could not live without her daily companionship, without this support which had lifted him out of the society of those of his own age to that of his elders. To make himself ridiculous by seeking her as a lover—that he could not do. The only thing left was to write to her. They now opened a correspondence, which lasted for a year. His step-mother's sister, who idolised the clever, bright spinster, conveyed the letters secretly. They wrote in French, so that their letters might remain unintelligible if discovered; besides, they could express themselves more freely in this medium. Their letters treated of all kinds of subjects. They wrote about Christ, the battle against sin, about life, death and love, friendship and scepticism. Although she was a pietist, she was familiar with free-thinkers, and suffered from doubts on all kinds of subjects. John was alternately her stern preceptor and her reprimanded son. One or two translations of John's French essays will give some idea of the chaotic state of the minds of both.

Is Man's Life a Life of Sorrow? 1864

"Man's life is a battle from beginning to end.

We are all born into this wretched life under conditions which are full of trouble and grief. Childhood to begin with has its little cares and disagreeables; youth has its great temptations, on the victorious resistance to which the whole subsequent life depends; mature life has anxieties about the means of existence and the fulfilment of duties; finally, old age has its thorns in the flesh, and its frailty. What are all enjoyments and all joys, which are regarded by so many men as the highest good in life? Beautiful illusions! Life is a ceaseless struggle with failures and misfortunes, a struggle which ends only in death.

"But we will consider the matter from another side. Is there no reason to be joyful and contented? I have a home and parents who care for my future; I live in fairly favourable circumstances, and have good health—ought I not then to be contented and happy? Yes, and yet I am not. Look at the poor labourer, who, when his day's work is done, returns to his simple cottage where poverty reigns; he is happy and even joyful. He would be made glad by a trifle which I despise. I envy thee, happy man, who hast true joy!

"But I am melancholy. Why? 'You are dis-

contented,' you answer. No, certainly not; I am quite contented with my lot and ask for nothing. Well, what is it then? Ah! now I know; I am not contented with myself and my heart, which is full of anger and malice. Away from me, evil thoughts! I will, with God's help, be happy and contented. For one is happy only when one is at peace with oneself, one's heart, and one's conscience."

John's friend did not approve of his self-contentment, but asserted in contradiction to the last sentence, that one ought to remain discontented with life. She wrote: "We are not happy till our consciousness tells us that we have sought and found the only Good Physician, who can heal the wounds of all hearts, and when we are ready to follow His advice with sincerity."

This assertion, together with long conversations, caused the rapid conversion of the youth to the true faith, *i.e.*, that of his friend, and gave occasion for the following effusion in which he expressed his idea of faith and works:

No Happiness without Virtue; no Virtue without Religion. 1864

" What is happiness? Most worldlings regard

the possession of great wealth and worldly goods, happiness, because they afford them the means of satisfying their sinful desires and passions. Others who are not so exacting find happiness in a mere sense of well-being, in health, and domestic felicity. Others, again, who do not expect worldly happiness at all, and who are poor, and enjoy but scanty food earned by hard work, are yet contented with their lot, and even happy. They can even think 'How happy I am in comparison with the rich, who are never contented.' Meanwhile, *are* they really happy, because they are contented? No, there is no happiness without virtue. No one is happy except the man who leads a really virtuous life. Well, but there are many really virtuous men. There are men who have never fallen into gross sin, who are modest and retiring, who injure no one, who are placable, who fulfil their duties conscientiously, and who are even religious. They go to church every Sunday, they honour God and His Holy Word, but yet they have not been born again of the Holy Spirit. Now, are they happy, since they are virtuous? There is no virtue without *real religion*. These virtuous worldlings are, as a matter of fact, much worse than the most wicked men. They slumber

in the security of mere morality. They think themselves better than other men, and righteous in the eyes of the Most Holy. These Pharisees, full of self-love, think to win everlasting salvation by their good deeds. But what are our good deeds before a Holy God? Sin, and nothing but sin. These self-righteous men are the hardest of all to convert, because they think they need no Mediator, since they wish to win heaven by their deeds. An 'old sinner,' on the other hand, once he is awakened, can realise his sinfulness and feel his need of a Saviour. True happiness consists in having 'Peace in the heart with God through Jesus Christ.' One can find no peace till one confesses that one is the chief of sinners, and flies to the Saviour. How foolish of us to push such happiness away! We all know where it is to be found, but instead of seeking it, seek unhappiness, under the pretence of seeking happiness."

Under this his friend wrote: "Very well written." They were her own thoughts, or, at any rate, her own words which she had read.

But sometimes doubt worried him, and he examined himself carefully. He wrote as follows on a subject which he had himself chosen:

Egotism is the Mainspring of all our Actions

"People commonly say, 'So-and-so is so kind and benevolent towards his neighbours; he is virtuous, and all that he does springs from compassion and love of the true and right.' Very well, open your heart and examine it. You meet a beggar in the street; the first thought that occurs to you is certainly as follows: 'How unfortunate this man is; I will do a good deed and help him.' You pity him and give him a coin. But have n't you some thought of this kind?—'Oh, how beautiful it is to be benevolent and compassionate; it does one's heart good to give alms to a poor man.' What is the real motive of your action? Is it really love or compassion? Then your dear 'ego' gets up and condemns you. You did it for your own sake, in order to set at rest *your* heart and to placate *your* conscience.

"It was for some time my intention to be a preacher, certainly a good intention. But what was my motive? Was it to serve my Redeemer, and to work for Him, or only out of love to Him? No, I was cowardly, and I wished to escape my burden and lighten my cross, and avoid the great temptations which met me everywhere. I feared men—that was the motive. The times alter. I

saw that I could not lead a life in Christ in the society of companions to whose godless speeches I must daily listen, and so I chose another path in life where I could be independent, or at any rate——"

Here the essay broke off, uncorrected. Other essays deal with the Creator, and seem to have been influenced by Rousseau, extracts from whose works were contained in Staaff's *French Reading Book*. They mention, for example, flocks and nightingales, which the writer had never seen or heard.

He and his friend also had long discussions regarding their relation to one another. Was it love or friendship? But she loved another man, of whom she scarcely ever spoke. John noticed nothing in her but her eyes, which were deep and expressive. He danced with her once, but never again. The tie between them was certainly only friendship, and her soul and body were virile enough to permit of a friendship existing and continuing. A spiritual marriage can take place only between those who are more or less sexless, and there is always something abnormal about it. The best marriages, *i. e.*, those which fulfil their

real object the best, are precisely those which are "*mal assortis.*"

Antipathy, dissimilarity of views, hate, contempt, can accompany true love. Diverse intelligences and characters can produce the best endowed children, who inherit the qualities of both.

. . . . . .

In the meantime his Confirmation approached. It had been postponed as long as possible, in order to keep him back among the children. But the Confirmation itself was to be used as a means of humiliating him. His father, at the same time that he announced his decision that it should take place, expressed the hope that the preparation for it might melt the ice round John's heart.

So John found himself again among lower-class children. He felt sympathy with them, but did not love them, nor could nor would be on intimate terms with them. His education had alienated him from them, as it had alienated him from his family.

He was again a school-boy, had to learn by heart, stand up when questioned, and be scolded along with the rest. The assistant pastor, who taught them, was a pietist. He looked as though

he had an infectious disease or had read Dr. Kapff. He was severe, merciless, emotionless, without a word of grace or comfort. Choleric, irritable, nervous, this young rustic was petted by the ladies.

He made an impression by dint of perpetual repetition. He preached threateningly, cursed the theatre and every kind of amusement. John and his friend resolved to alter their lives, and not to dance, go to the theatre, or joke any more. He now infused a strong dash of pietism into his essays, and avoided his companions in order not to hear their frivolous stories.

"Why, you are a pietist!" one of his schoolfellows said one day to him.

"Yes, I am," he answered. He would not deny his Redeemer. The school grew intolerable to him. He suffered martyrdom there, and feared the enticements of the world, of which he was already in some degree conscious. He considered himself already a man, wished to go into the world and work, earn his own living and marry. Among his other dreams he formed a strange resolve, which was, however, not without its reasons; he resolved to find a branch of work which was easy to learn, would soon provide him with a maintenance, and

give him a place where he would not be the last, nor need he stand especially high—a certain subordinate place which would let him combine an active life in the open air with adequate pecuniary profit. The opportunity for plenty of exercise in the open air was perhaps the principal reason why he wished to be a subaltern in a cavalry regiment, in order to escape the fatal twenty-fifth year, the terrors of which the pastor had described. The prospect of wearing a uniform and riding a horse may also have had something to do with it. He had already renounced the cadet uniform, but man is a strange creature.

His friend strongly dissuaded him from taking such a step; she described soldiers as the worst kind of men in existence. He stood firm, however, and said that his faith in Christ would preserve him from all moral contagion, yes! he would preach Christ to the soldiers and purify them all. Then he went to his father. The latter regarded the whole matter as a freak of imagination, and exhorted him to be ready for his approaching final examination, which would open the whole world to him.

A son had been born to his step-mother. John instinctively hated him as a rival to whom his

younger brothers and sisters would have to yield. But the influence of his friend and of pietism was so strong over him, that by way of mortifying himself he tried to love the newcomer. He carried him on his arm and rocked him.

"Nobody saw you do it," said his step-mother later on, when he adduced this as a proof of his goodwill. Exactly so; he did it in secret, as he did not wish to gain credit for it, or perhaps he was ashamed of it. He had made the sacrifice sincerely; when it became disagreeable, he gave it up.

The Confirmation took place, after countless exhortations in the dimly-lit chancel, and a long series of discourses on the Passion of Christ and self-mortification, so that they were wrought up to a most exalted mood. After the catechising, he scolded his friend whom he had seen laughing.

On the day on which they were to receive the Holy Communion, the senior pastor gave a discourse. It was the well-meaning counsel of a shrewd old man to the young; it was cheering and comforting, and did not contain threats or denunciations of past sins. Sometimes during the sermon John felt the words fall like balm on his wounded heart, and was convinced that the

old man was right. But in the act of Communion, he did not get the spiritual impression he had hoped for. The organ played and the choir sang, "O Lamb of God, have mercy upon us!" The boys and girls wept and half-fainted as though they were witnessing an execution. But John had become too familiar with sacred things in the parish-clerk's school. The matter seemed to him driven to the verge of absurdity. His faith was ripe for falling. And it fell.

. . . . . .

He now wore a high hat, and succeeded to his elder brother's cast-off clothes. Now his friend with the pince-nez took him in hand. He had not deserted him during his pietistic period. He treated the matter lightly and good-humouredly, with a certain admiration of John's asceticism and firm faith. But now he intervened. He took him for a mid-day walk, pointed out by name the actors they saw at the corner of the Regeringsgata, and the officers who were reviewing the troops. John was still shy, and had no self-reliance.

It was about twelve o'clock, the time for going to the gymnasium. John's friend said, "Come along! we will have lunch in the 'Three Cups.'"

"No," said John, "we ought to go to the Greek class."

"Ah! we will dispense with Greek to-day."

It would be the first time he cut it, thought John, and he might take a little scolding for once. "But I have no money," he said.

"That does not matter; you are my guest;" his friend seemed hurt. They entered the restaurant. An appetising odour of beefsteaks greeted them; the waiter received their coats and hung up their hats.

"Bring the bill of fare, waiter," said his friend in a confident tone, for he was accustomed to take his meals here. "Will you have beefsteak?"

"Yes," answered John; he had tasted beefsteak only twice in his life.

His friend ordered butter, cheese, brandy and beer, and without asking, filled John's glass with brandy.

"But I don't know whether I ought to," said John.

"Have you never drunk it before?"

"No."

"Oh, well, go ahead! it tastes good."

He drank. Ah! his body glowed, his eyes watered, and the room swam in a light mist; but

he felt an access of strength, his thoughts worked freely, new ideas rose in his mind, and the gloomy past seemed brighter. Then came the juicy beef-steak. That was something like eating! His friend ate bread, butter, and cheese with it. John said, "What will the restaurant-keeper say?"

His friend laughed, as if he were an elderly uncle.

"Eat away; the bill will be just the same."

"But butter and cheese with beef-steak! That is too luxurious! But it tastes good all the same." John felt as though he had never eaten before. Then he drank beer. "Is each of us to drink half a bottle?" he asked his friend. "You are really mad!"

But at any rate it was a meal,—and not such an empty enjoyment either, as anæmic ascetics assert. No, it is a real enjoyment to feel strong blood flowing into one's half-empty veins, strengthening the nerves for the battle of life. It is an enjoyment to feel vanished virile strength return, and the relaxed sinews of almost perished will-power braced up again. Hope awoke, and the mist in the room became a rosy cloud, while his friend depicted for him the future as it is imagined by youthful friendship. These youthful illusions

about life, from whence do they come? From superabundance of energy, people say. But ordinary intelligence, which has seen so many childish hopes blighted, ought to be able to infer the absurdity of expecting a realisation of the dreams of youth.

John had not learned to expect from life anything more than freedom from tyranny and the means of existence. That would be enough for him. He was no Aladdin and did not believe in luck. He had plenty of power, but did not know it. His friend had to discover him to himself.

"You should come and amuse yourself with us," he said, "and not sit in a corner at home."

"Yes, but that costs money, and I don't get any."

"Give lessons."

"Lessons! What? Do you think I could give lessons?"

"You know a lot. You would not find it difficult to get pupils."

He knew a lot! That was a recognition or a piece of flattery, as the pietists call it, and it fell on fertile soil.

"Yes, but I have no acquaintances or connections."

"Tell the headmaster! I did the same!"

John hardly dared to believe that he could get the chance of earning money. But he felt strange when he heard that others could, and compared himself with them. *They* certainly had luck. His friend urged him on, and soon he obtained a post as teacher in a girls' school.

Now his self-esteem awoke. The servants at home called him Mr. John, and the teachers in the school addressed the class as "Gentlemen." At the same time he altered his course of study at school. He had for a long time, but in vain, asked his father to let him give up Greek. He did it now on his own responsibility, and his father first heard of it at the examination. In its place he substituted mathematics, after he had learned that a Latin scholar had the right to dispense with a testamur in that subject. Moreover, he neglected Latin, intending to revise it all a month before the examination. During the lessons he read French, German, and English novels. The questions were asked each pupil in turn, and he sat with his book in his hand till the questions came and he could be ready for them. Modern languages and natural science were now his special subjects.

Teaching his juniors was a new and dangerous

retrograde movement for him, but he was paid for it. Naturally, the boys who required extra lessons were those with a certain dislike of learning. It was hard work for his active brain to accommodate himself to them. They were impossible pupils, and did not know how to attend. He thought they were obstinate. The truth was they lacked the will-power to become attentive. Such boys are wrongly regarded as stupid. They are, on the contrary, wide awake. Their thoughts are concerned with realities, and they seem already to have seen through the absurdity of the subjects they are taught. Many of them became useful citizens when they grew up, and many more would have become so if they had not been compelled by their parents to do violence to their natures and to continue their studies.

Now ensued a new conflict with his lady friend against his altered demeanour. She warned him against his other friend who, she said, flattered him, and against young girls of whom he spoke enthusiastically. She was jealous. She reminded him of Christ, but John was distracted by other subjects, and withdrew from her society.

He now led an active and enjoyable life. He took part in evening concerts, sang in a quartette,

drank punch, and flirted moderately with waitresses. All this time religion was in abeyance, and only a weak echo of piety and asceticism remained. He prayed out of habit, but without hoping for an answer, since he had so long sought the divine friendship which people say is so easily found, if one but knocks lightly at the door of grace. Truth to say, he was not very anxious to be taken at his word. If the Crucified had opened the door and bidden him enter, he would not have rejoiced. His flesh was too young and sound to wish to be mortified.

VIII

THE SPRING THAW

THE school educates, not the family. The family is too narrow; its aims are too petty, selfish, and anti-social. In the case of a second marriage, such abnormal relations are set up, that the only justification of the family comes to an end. The children of a deceased mother should simply be taken away, if the father marries again. This would best conduce to the interests of all parties, not least to those of the father, who perhaps is the one who suffers most in a second marriage.

In the family there is only one (or two) ruling wills without appeal; therefore justice is impossible. In the school, on the other hand, there is a continual watchful jury, which rigorously judges boys as well as teachers. The boys become more moral; brutality is tamed; social instincts awaken; they begin to see that individual

interests must be generally furthered by means of compromises. There cannot be tyranny, for there usually are enough to form parties and to revolt. A teacher who is badly treated by a pupil can soonest obtain justice by appealing to the other pupils. Moreover, about this time there was much to arouse their sympathy in great universal interests.

During the Danish-German War of 1864 a fund was raised in the school for the purchase of war-telegrams. These were fastened on the blackboard and read with great interest by both teachers and pupils. They gave rise to familiar talks and reflections on the part of the teachers regarding the origin and cause of the war. They were naturally all one-sidedly Scandinavian, and the question was judged from the point of view of the students' union. Seeds of hatred towards Russia and Germany for some future war were sown, and at the burial of the popular teacher of gymnastics, Lieutenant Betzholtz, this reached a fanatical pitch.

The year of the Reform Bill,[1] 1865, approached. The teacher of history, a man of kindliness and fine feeling, and an aristocrat of high birth, tried

[1] See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Sweden."

to interest the pupils in the subject. The class had divided into opposite parties, and the son of a speaker in the Upper House, a Count S., universally popular, was the chief of the opposition against reform. He was sprung from an old German family of knightly descent; was poor, and lived on familiar terms with his classmates, but had a keen consciousness of his high birth. Battles more in sport than in earnest took place in the class, and tables and forms were thrown about indiscriminately.

The Reform Bill passed. Count S. remained away from the class. The history teacher spoke with emotion of the sacrifice which the nobility had laid upon the altar of the fatherland by renouncing their privileges. The good man did not know yet that privileges are not rights, but advantages which have been seized and which can be recovered like other property, even by illegal means.

The teacher bade the class to be modest over their victory and not to insult the defeated party. The young count on his return to the class was received with elaborate courtesy, but his feelings so overcame him at the sight of the involuntary elevation of so many pupils of humble birth, that

he burst into tears and had to leave the class again.

John understood nothing of politics. As a topic of general interest, they were naturally banished from family discussions, where only topics of private interest were regarded, and that in a very one-sided way. Sons were so brought up that they might remain sons their whole lives long, without any regard to the fact that some day they might be fathers. But John already possessed the lower-class instinct which told him, with regard to the Reform Bill, that now an injustice had been done away with, and that the higher scale had been lowered, in order that it might be easier for the lower one to rise to the same level. He was, as might be expected, a liberal, but since the king was a liberal, he was also a royalist.

Parallel with the strong reactionary stream of pietism ran that of the new rationalism, but in the opposite direction. Christianity, which, at the close of the preceding century, had been declared to be mythical, was again received into favour, and as it enjoyed State protection, the liberals could not prevent themselves being reinoculated by its teaching. But in 1835 Strauss's *Life of*

Christ had made a new breach, and even in Sweden fresh water trickled into the stagnant streams. The book was made the subject of legal action, but upon it as a foundation the whole work of the new reformation was built up by self-appointed reformers, as is always the case.

Pastor Cramer had the honour of being the first. As early as 1859 he published his *Farewell to the Church*, a popular but scientific criticism of the New Testament. He set the seal of sincerity on his belief by seceding from the State Church and resigning his office. His book produced a great effect, and although Ingell's writings had more vogue among the theologians, they did not reach the younger generation. In the same year appeared Rydberg's *The Last Athenian*. The influence of this book was hindered by the fact that it was hailed as a literary success, and transplanted to the neutral territory of belles-lettres. Ryllberg's *The Bible Doctrine of Christ* made a deeper impression. Renan's *Life of Jesus* in Ignell's translation had taken young and old by storm, and was read in the schools along with Cramer, which was not the case with *The Bible Doctrine of Christ*. And by Boström's attack on the *Doctrine of Hell* (1864), the door was opened

to rationalism or "free-thought," as it was called. Boström's really insignificant work had a great effect, because of his fame as a Professor at Upsala and former teacher in the Royal Family. The courageous man risked his reputation, a risk which no one incurred after him, when it was no longer considered an honour to be a free-thinker or to labour for the freedom and the right of thinking.

In short, everything was in train, and it needed only a breath to blow down John's faith like a house of cards. A young engineer crossed his path. He was a lodger in the house of John's female friend. He watched John a long while before he made any approaches. John felt respect for him, for he had a good head, and was also somewhat jealous. John's friend prepared him for the acquaintance he was likely to make, and at the same time warned him. She said the engineer was an interesting man of great ability, but dangerous. It was not long before John met him. He hailed from Wermland, was strongly built, with coarse, honest features, and a childlike laugh, when he did laugh, which occurred rarely. They were soon on familiar terms. The first evening only a slight skirmish took place on the

question of faith and knowledge. "Faith must kill reason," said John (echoing Krummacher). "No," replied his friend. "Reason is a divine gift, which raises man above the brutes. Shall man lower himself to the level of the brutes by throwing away this divine gift?"

"There are things," said John (echoing Norbeck), "which we can very well believe, without demanding a proof for them. We believe the calendar, for example, without possessing a scientific knowledge of the movement of the planets."

"Yes," answered his friend, "we believe it, because our reason does not revolt against it."

"But," said John, "in Galileo's time they revolted against the idea that the earth revolves round the sun. 'He is possessed by a spirit of contradiction,' they said, 'and wishes to be thought original.' "

"We don't live in Galileo's age," returned his friend, "and the enlightened reason of our time rejects the Deity of Christ and everlasting punishment."

"We won't dispute about these things," said John.

"Why not?"

"They are out of the reach of reason."

"Just what I said two years ago when I was a believer."

"You have been a —— pietist?"

"Yes."

"Hm! and now you have peace?"

"Yes, I have peace."

"How is that?"

"I learned through a preacher to realise the spirit of true Christianity."

"You are a Christian then?"

"Yes, I acknowledge Christ."

"But you don't believe that he was God?"

"He never said so himself. He called himself God's son, and we are all God's sons."

John's lady friend interrupted the conversation, which was a type of many others in the year 1865. John's curiosity was aroused. There were then, he said to himself, men who did not believe in Christ and yet had peace. Mere criticism would not have disturbed his old ideas of God; the "horror vacui" held him back, till Theodore Parker fell into his hands. Sermons without Christ and hell were what he wanted. And fine sermons they were. It must be confessed that he read them in extreme haste, as he was anxious that his friends and relatives should enjoy them that he might

escape their censures. He could not distinguish between the disapproval of others and his own bad conscience, and was so accustomed to consider others right that he fell into conflict with himself.

But in his mind the doctrine of Christ the Judge, the election of grace, the punishments of the last day, all collapsed, as though they had been tottering for a long time. He was astonished at the rapidity of their disappearance. It was as though he laid aside clothes he had outgrown and put on new ones.

One Sunday morning he went with the engineer to the Haga Park. It was spring. The hazel bushes were in bloom, and the anemones were opening. The weather was fairly clear, the air soft and mild after a night's rain. He and his friend discussed the freedom of the will. The pietists had a very wavering conception of the matter. No one had, they said, the power to become a child of God of his own free will. The Holy Spirit must seek one, and thus it was a matter of predestination. John wished to be converted but he could not. He had learned to pray, "Lord, create in me a new will." But how could he be held responsible for his evil will? Yes, he could,

answered the pietist, through the Fall, for when man endowed with free will chose the evil, his posterity inherited his evil will, which became perpetually evil and ceased to be free. Man could be delivered from this evil will only through Christ and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. The New Birth, however, did not depend upon his own will, but on the grace of God. Thus he was not free and at the same time was responsible! Therein lay the false inference.

Both the engineer and John were nature worshippers. What is this nature worship which in our days is regarded as so hostile to culture? A relapse into barbarism, say some; a healthy reaction against over-culture, say others. When a man has discovered society to be an institution based on error and injustice, when he perceives that, in exchange for petty advantages society suppresses too forcibly every natural impulse and desire, when he has seen through the illusion that he is a demi-god and a child of God, and regards himself more as a kind of animal—then he flees from society, which is built on the assumption of the divine origin of man, and takes refuge with nature. Here he feels in his proper environment as an animal, sees himself as a detail in the picture,

and beholds his origin—the earth and the meadow. He sees the interdependence of all creation as if in a summary—the mountains becoming earth, the sea becoming rain, the plain which is a mountain crumbled, the woods which are the children of the mountains and the water. He sees the ocean of air which man and all creatures breathe, he hears the birds which live on the insects, he sees the insects which fertilise the plants, he sees the mammalia which supply man with nourishment, and he feels at home. And in our time, when all things are seen from the scientific point of view, a lonely hour with nature, where we can see the whole evolution-history in living pictures, can be the only substitute for divine worship.

But our optimistic evolutionists prefer a meeting in a large hall where they can launch their denunciations against this same society which they admire and despise. They praise it as the highest stage of development, but wish to overthrow it, because it is irreconcilable with the true happiness of the animal. They wish to reconstruct and develop it, say some. But their reconstruction involves the destruction of all existing arrangements. Do not these people recognise that society as it exists is a case of miscarriage in

evolution, and is itself simultaneously hostile to culture and to nature?

Society, like everything else, is a natural product, they say, and civilisation is nature. Yes, but it is degenerate nature, nature on the downgrade, since it works against its own object—happiness. It was, however, the engineer, John's leader, and a nature-worshipper like himself, who revealed to him the defects of civilised society, and prepared the way for his reception of the new views of man's origin. Darwin's *Origin of Species* had appeared as early as 1859, but its influence had not yet penetrated far, much less had it been able to fertilise other minds.[1] Moleschott's influence was then in the ascendant, and materialism was the watchword of the day. Armed with this and with his geology, the engineer pulled to pieces the Mosaic story of the Creation. He still spoke of the Creator, for he was a theist and saw God's wisdom and goodness reflected in His works.

While they were walking in the park, the church bells in the city began to ring. John stood still and listened. There were the terrible bells of the

[1] In 1910 Strindberg wrote: "I keep my Bible Christianity for private use, to tame my somewhat barbarised nature—barbarised by the veterinary philosophy of Darwinism, in which, as a student, I was educated."—*Tal till Svenska nationen.*

Clara Church, which rang through his melancholy childhood; the bells of the Adolf-Fredrik, which had frightened him to the bleeding breast of the Crucified, and the bells of St. John's, which, on Saturdays, when he was in the Jacob School, had announced the end of the week. A gentle south wind bore the sound of the bells thither from the city, and it echoed like a warning under the high firs.

"Are you going to church?" asked his friend.

"No," answered John, "I am not going to church any more."

"Follow your conscience," said the engineer.

It was the first time that John had remained away from church. He determined to defy his father's command and his own conscience. He got excited, inveighed against religion and domestic tyranny, and talked of the church of God in nature; he spoke with enthusiasm of the new gospel which proclaimed salvation, happiness, and life to all. But suddenly he became silent.

"You have a bad conscience," said his friend.

"Yes," answered John; "one should either not do what one repents of, or not repent of what one does."

"The latter is the better course."

"But I repent all the same. I repent a good deed, for it would be wrong to play the hypocrite in this old idol-temple. My new conscience tells me that I am wrong. I can find no more peace."

And that was true. His new ego revolted against this old one, and they lived in discord, like an unhappy married couple, during the whole of his later life, without being able to get a separation.

The reaction in his mind against his old views, which he felt should be eradicated, broke out violently. The fear of hell had disappeared, renunciation seemed silly, and the youth's nature demanded its rights. The result was a new code of morality, which he formulated for himself in the following fashion: What does not hurt any of my fellow-men is permitted to me. He felt that the domestic pressure at home did him harm, and no one else any good, and revolted against it. He now showed his real feelings to his parents, who had never shown him love, but insisted on his being grateful, because they had given him his legal rights as a matter of favour, and accompanied by humiliations. They were antipathetic to him, and he was cold to them. To their ceaseless attacks on free-thinking he gave frank and

perhaps somewhat impertinent answers. His half-annihilated will began to stir, and he saw that he was entitled to make demands of life.

The engineer was regarded as John's seducer, and was anathematised. But he was open to the influence of John's lady friend, who had formed a friendship with his step-mother. The engineer was not of a radical turn of mind; he had accepted Theodore Parker's compromise, and still believed in Christian self-denial. One should, he said, be amiable and patient, follow Christ's example, and so forth. Urged on by John's lady friend, for whom he had a concealed tenderness, and alarmed by the consequences of his own teaching, he wrote John the following letter. It was inspired by fear of the fire which he had kindled, by regard for the lady, and by sincere conviction:

"To my friend John,—How joyfully we greet the spring when it appears, to intoxicate us with its wealth of verdure and its divine freshness! The birds begin their light and cheerful melodies, and the anemones peep shyly forth under the whispering branches of the pines——"

"It is strange," thought John, "that this unsophisticated man, who talks so simply and

sincerely, should write in such a stilted style. It rings false."

The letter continued: "What breast, whether old or young, does not expand in order to inhale the fresh perfumes of the spring, which spread heavenly peace in each heart, accompanied by a longing which seems like a foretaste of God and of His love? At such a time can any malice remain in our hearts? Can we not forgive? Ah yes, we must, when we see how the caressing rays of the spring sun have kissed away the icy cover from nature and our hearts. Just as we expect to see the ground, freed from snow, grow green again, so we long to see the warmth of a kindly heart manifest itself in loving deeds, and peace and happiness spread through all nature——"

"Forgive?" thought John. "Yes, certainly he would, if they would only alter their behaviour and let him be free. But *they* did not forgive him. With what right did they demand forbearance on his part? It must be mutual."

"John," went on the letter, "you think you have attained to a higher conception of God through the study of nature and through reason than when you believed in the Deity of Christ and the Bible, but you do not realise the tendency of

your own thoughts. You think that a true thought can of itself ennoble a man, but in your better moments you see that it cannot. You have only grasped the shadow which the light throws, but not the chief matter, not the light itself. When you held your former views you could pass over a fault in one of your fellow-men, you could take a charitable view of an action in spite of appearances, but how is it with you now? You are violent and bitter against a loving mother; you condemn and are discontented with the actions of a tender, experienced, grey-headed father——"

(As a matter of fact, when he held his former views, John could not pardon a fault in anyone, least of all in himself. Sometimes, indeed, he did pardon others; but that was stupid, that was lax morality. A loving mother, forsooth! Yes, very loving! How did his friend Axel come to think so? And a tender father? But why should he not judge his actions? In self-defence one must meet hardness with hardness, and no more turn the left cheek when the right cheek is smitten.)

"Formerly you were an unassuming, amiable child, but now you are an egotistical, conceited youth——"

("Unassuming!" Yes, and that was why he

had been trampled down, but now he was going to assert his just claims. "Conceited!" Ha! the teacher felt himself outstripped by his ungrateful pupil.)

"The warm tears of your mother flow over her cheeks——"

("Mother!" he had no mother, and his stepmother only cried when she was angry! Who the deuce had composed the letter?)

"—when she thinks in solitude about your hard heart——"

(What the dickens has she to do with my heart when she has the housekeeping and seven children to look after?)

"—your unhappy spiritual condition——"

(That's humbug! My soul has never felt so fresh and lively as now.)

"—and your father's heart is nearly breaking with grief and anxiety——"

(That 's a lie. He is himself a theist and follows Wallin; besides, he has no time to think about me. He knows that I am industrious and honest, and not immoral. Indeed, he praised me only a day or two ago.)

"You do not notice your mother's sad looks——"

(There are other reasons for that, for her marriage is not a happy one.)

"—nor do you regard the loving warnings of your father. You are like a crevasse above the snow-line, in which the kiss of the spring sun cannot melt the snow, nor turn a single atom of ice into a drop of water——"

(The writer must have been reading romances. As a matter of fact John was generally yielding towards his school-fellows. But towards his domestic enemies he had become cold. That was their fault.)

"What can your friends think of your new religion, when it produces such evil fruit? They will curse it, and your views give them the right to do so——"

(Not the right, but the occasion.)

"They will hate the mean scoundrel who has instilled the hellish poison of his teaching into your innocent heart——"

(There we have it! The mean scoundrel!)

"Show now by your actions that you have grasped the truth better than heretofore. Try to be forbearing——"

(That 's the step-mother!)

"Pass over the defects and failings of your fellow-men with love and gentleness——"

(No, he would not! They had tortured him into lying; they had snuffed about in his soul, and uprooted good seeds as though they were weeds; they wished to stifle his personality, which had just as good a right to exist as their own; they had never been forbearing with his faults, why should he be so with theirs? Because Christ had said. . . . That had become a matter of complete indifference, and had no application to him now. For the rest, he did not bother about those at home, but shut himself up in himself. They were unsympathetic to him, and could not obtain his sympathy. That was the whole thing in a nutshell. They had faults and wanted him to pardon them. Very well, he did so, if they would only leave him in peace!)

"Learn to be grateful to your parents, who spare no pains in promoting your true welfare and happiness (hm!), and that this may be brought about through love to God your Creator, who has caused you to be born in this improving (hm! hm!) environment, for obtaining peace and blessedness is the prayer of your anxious but hopeful

"Axel."

"I have had enough of father confessors and inquisitors," thought John; he had escaped and felt himself free. They stretched their claws after him, but he was beyond their reach. His friend's letter was insincere and artificial; "the hands were the hands of Esau." He returned no answer to it, but broke off all intercourse with both his friends.

They called him ungrateful. A person who insists on gratitude is worse than a creditor, for he first makes a present on which he plumes himself, and then sends in the account—an account which can never be paid, for a service done in return does not seem to extinguish the debt of gratitude; it is a mortgage on a man's soul, a debt which cannot be paid, and which stretches over the whole subsequent life. Accept a service from your friend, and he will expect you to falsify your opinion of him and to praise his own evil deeds, and those of his wife and children.

But gratitude is a deep feeling which honours a man and at the same time humiliates him. Would that a time may come when it will not be necessary to fetter ourselves with gratitude for a benefit, which perhaps is a mere duty.

John felt ashamed of the breach with his friends,

but they hindered and oppressed him. After all, what had they given him in social intercourse which he had not given back?

Fritz, as his friend with the pince-nez was called, was a prudent man of the world. These two epithets "prudent" and "man of the world" had a bad significance at that time. To be prudent in a romantic period, when all were a little cracked, and to be cracked was considered a mark of the upper classes, was almost synonymous with being bad. To be a man of the world when all attempted, as well as they could, to deceive themselves in religion, was considered still worse. Fritz was prudent. He wished to lead his own life in a pleasant way and to make a career for himself. He therefore sought the acquaintance of those in good social position. That was prudent, because they had power and money. Why should he not seek them? How did he come to make friends with John? Perhaps through a sort of animal sympathy, perhaps through long habit. John could not do any special service for him except to whisper answers to him in the class and to lend him books. For Fritz did not learn his lessons, and spent in punch the money which was intended for books.

Now when he saw that John was inwardly

purified, and that his outer man was presentable, he introduced him to his own coterie. This was a little circle of young fellows, some of them rich and some of them of good rank belonging to the same class as John. The latter was a little shy at first, but soon stood on a good footing with them. One day, at drill time, Fritz told him that he had been invited to a ball.

"I to a ball? Are you mad? I would certainly be out of place there."

"You are a good-looking fellow, and will have luck with the girls."

Hm! That was a new point of view with regard to himself. Should he go? What would they say at home, where he got nothing but blame?

He went to the ball. It was in a middle-class house. Some of the girls were anæmic; others red as berries. John liked best the pale ones who had black or blue rings round their eyes. They looked so suffering and pining, and cast yearning glances towards him. There was one among them deathly pale, whose dark eyes were deep-set and burning, and whose lips were so dark that her mouth looked almost like a black streak. She made an impression on him, but he did not venture to approach her, as she already had an admirer.

So he satisfied himself with a less dazzling, softer, and gentler girl. He felt quite comfortable at the ball and in intercourse with strangers, without seeing the critical eyes of any relative. But he found it very difficult to talk with the girls.

"What shall I say to them?" he asked Fritz.

"Can't you talk nonsense with them? Say 'It is fine weather. Do you like dancing? Do you skate?' One must learn to be versatile."

John went and soon exhausted his repertoire of conversation. His palate became dry, and at the third dance he got tired of it. He felt in a rage with himself and was silent.

"Isn't dancing amusing?" asked Fritz. "Cheer up, old coffin-polisher!"

"Yes, dancing is all right, if one only had not to talk. I don't know what to say."

So it was, as a matter of fact. He liked the girls, and dancing with them seemed manly, but as to talking with them!—he felt as though he were dealing with another kind of the species *Homo*, in some cases a higher one, in others a lower. He secretly admired his gentle little partner, and would have liked her for a wife.

His fondness for reflection and his everlasting criticism of his thoughts had robbed him of the

power of being simple and direct. When he talked with a girl, he heard his own voice and words and criticised them. This made the whole ball seem tedious. And then the girls? What was it really that they lacked? They had the same education as himself; they learned history and modern languages, read Icelandic, studied algebra, etc. They had accordingly the same culture, and yet he could not talk with them.

"Well, talk nonsense with them," said Fritz.

But he could not. Besides, he had a higher opinion of them. He wanted to give up the balls altogether, since he had no success, but he was taken there in spite of himself. It flattered him to be invited, and flattery has always something pleasant about it. One day he was paying a visit to an aristocratic family. The son of the house was a cadet. Here he met two actresses. With them he felt he could speak. They danced with him but did not answer him. So he listened to Fritz's conversation. The latter said strange things in elegant phrases, and the girls were delighted with him. That, then, was the way to get on with them!

The balls were followed by serenades and "punch evenings." John had a great longing for

strong drinks; they seemed to him like concentrated liquid nourishment. The first time he was intoxicated was at a students' supper at Djurg°rdsbrunn. He felt happy, joyful, strong, and mild, but far from mad. He talked nonsense, saw pictures on the plates and made jokes. This behaviour made him for the moment like his elder brother, who, though deeply melancholy in his youth, had a certain reputation afterwards as a comic actor. They had both played at acting in the attic; but John was embarrassed; he acted badly and was only successful when he was given the part of some high personage to play. As a comic actor he was impossible.

About this time there entered two new factors into his development—Art and Literature.

John had found in his father's bookcase Lenstrom's *Æsthetics*, Boije's *Dictionary of Painters*, and Oulibischeff's *Life of Mozart*, besides the authors previously mentioned. Through the scattering of the family of a deceased relative, a large number of books came into the house, which increased John's knowledge of belles-lettres. Among them were several copies of Talis Qualis's poems, which he did not enjoy; he found no pleasure in Strandberg's translation of Byron's *Don*

Juan, for he hated descriptive poetry; he always skipped verse quotations when they occurred in books. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, in Kullberg's translation, he found tedious; Karl von Zeipel's *Tales*, impossible. Sir Walter Scott's novels were too long, especially the descriptions. He therefore did not understand at first the greatness of Zola, when many years later he read his elaborate descriptions; the perusal of Lessing's *Laokoön* had already convinced him that such descriptions cannot convey an adequate impression of the whole. Dickens infused life even into inanimate objects and harmonised the scenery and situations with the characters. That he understood better. He thought Eugene Sue's *Wandering Jew* magnificent; he did not regard it as a novel; for novels, he thought, were only to be found in lending libraries. This, on the other hand, was a historical poem of universal interest, whose Socialistic teaching he quickly imbibed. Alexandre Dumas's works seemed to him like the boys' books about Indians. These he did not care for now; he wanted books with some serious purpose. He swallowed Shakespeare whole, in Hagberg's translation. But he had always found it hard to read plays where the eye must jump from the names of

the *dramatis personæ* to the text. He was disappointed in *Hamlet*, of which he had expected much, and the comedies seemed to him sheer nonsense.

John could not endure poetry. It seemed to him artificial and untrue. Men did not speak like that, and they seldom thought so beautifully. Once he was asked to write a verse in Fanny's album.

"You can screw yourself up to do that," said his friend.

John sat up at night, but only managed to hammer out two lines. Besides, he did not know what to say. One could not expose one's feelings to common observation. Fritz offered his help, and together they produced six or eight rhyming lines, for which Snoilsky's *A Christmas Eve in Rome* supplied the motive.

"Genius" often formed the subject of their discussions. Their teacher used to say "Geniuses" ranked above all else, like "Excellencies." John thought much about this, and believed that it was possible without high birth, without money, and without a career to get on the same level as Excellencies. But what a genius was he did not know. Once in a weak moment he said to his lady friend

that he would rather be a genius than a child of God, and received a sharp reproof from her. Another time he told Fritz that he would like to be a professor, as they can dress like scarecrows and behave as they like without losing respect. But when someone else asked him what he wished to be, he said, "A clergyman"; for all peasants' sons can be that, and it seemed a suitable calling for him also. After he had become a free-thinker, he wished to take a university degree. But he did not wish to be a teacher on any account.

In the theatre *Hamlet* made a deeper impression on him than Offenbach's operas, which were then being acted. Who is this Hamlet who first saw the footlights in the era of John III., and has still remained fresh? He is a figure which has been much exploited and used for many purposes. John forthwith determined to use him for his own.

The curtain rises to the sound of cheerful music, showing the king and his court in glittering array. Then there enters the pale youth in mourning garb and opposes his step-father. Ah! he has a step-father. "That is as bad as having a step-mother," thought John. "That 's the man for me!" And then they try to oppress him and squeeze sympathy out of him for the tyrant.

The youth's ego revolts, but his will is paralysed; he threatens, but he cannot strike.

Anyhow, he chastises his mother—a pity that it was not his step-father. But now he goes about with pangs of conscience. Good! Good! He is sick with too much thought, he gropes in his inside, inspects his actions till they dissolve into nothing. And he loves another's betrothed; that resembles John's life completely. He begins to doubt whether he is an exception after all. That, then, is a common story in life! Very well! He did not need then to worry about himself, but he had lost his consciousness of originality. The conclusion, which had been mangled, was unimpressive, but was partly redeemed by the fine speech of Horatio. John did not observe the unpardonable mistake of the adapter in omitting the part of Fortinbras, but Horatio, who was intended to form a contrast to Hamlet, was no contrast. He is as great a coward as the latter, and says only "yes" and "no." Fortinbras was the man of action, the conqueror, the claimant to the throne, but he does not appear, and the play ends in gloom and desolation.

But it is fine to lament one's destiny, and to see it lamented. At first Hamlet was only the

step-son; later on he becomes the introspective brooder, and lastly the son, the sacrifice to family tyranny. Schwarz had represented him as the visionary and idealist who could not reconcile himself to reality, and satisfied contemporary taste accordingly. A future matter-of-fact generation, to whom the romantic appears simply ridiculous, may very likely see the part of Hamlet, like that of Don Quixote, taken by a comic actor. Youths like Hamlet have been for a long time the subject of ridicule, for a new generation has secretly sprung up, a generation which thinks without seeing visions, and acts accordingly. The neutral territory of belles-lettres and the theatre, where morality has nothing to say, and the unrealities of the drama with its reconstruction of a better world than the present, were taken by John as something more than mere imagination. He confused poetry and reality, while he fancied that life outside his parent's house was ideal and that the future was a garden of Eden.

The prospect of soon going to the University of Upsala seemed to him like a flight into liberty. There one might be ill-dressed, poor, and still a student, *i. e.*, a member of the higher classes; one could sing and drink, come home intoxicated, and

fight with the police without losing one's reputation. That is an ideal land! How had he found that out? From the students' songs which he sang with his brother. But he did not know that these songs reflected the views of the aristocracy; that they were listened to, piece by piece, by princes and future kings; that the heroes of them were men of family. He did not consider that borrowing was not so dangerous, when there was a rich aunt in the background; that the examination was not so hard if one had a bishop for an uncle; and that the breaking of a window had not got to be too dearly paid for if one moved in good society. But, at any rate, his thoughts were busy with the future; his hopes revived, and the fatal twenty-fifth year did not loom so ominously before him.

About this time the volunteer movement was at its height. It was a happy idea which gave Sweden a larger army than she had hitherto had—40,000 men instead of 37,000. John went in for it energetically, wore a uniform, drilled, and learned to shoot. He came thereby into contact with young men of other classes of society. In his company there were apprentices, shop attendants, office clerks, and young artists who had not yet

achieved fame. He liked them, but they remained distant. He sought to approach them, but they did not receive him. They had their own language, which he did not understand. Now he noticed how his education had separated him from the companions of his childhood. They took for granted that he was proud. But, as a matter of fact, he looked up to them in some things. They were frank, fearless, independent, and pecuniarily better circumstanced than himself, for they always had money.

Accompanying the troops on long marches had a soothing effect on him. He was not born to command, and obeyed gladly, if the person who commanded did not betray pride or imperiousness. He had no ambition to become a corporal, for then he would have had to think, and what was still worse, decide for others. He remained a slave by nature and inclination, but he was sensitive to the injustice of tyrants, and observed them narrowly.

At one important manœuvre he could not help expostulating with regard to certain blunders committed, *e.g.*, that the infantry of the guard should be ranged up at a landing-place against the cannon of the fleet which covered the barges on

which they were standing. The cannon played about their ears from a short distance, but they remained unmoved. He expostulated and swore, but obeyed, for he had determined beforehand to do so.

On one occasion, while they were halting at Tyresö, he wrestled in sport with a comrade. The captain of the company stepped forward and forbade such rough play. John answered sharply that they were off duty, and that they were playing.

"Yes, but play may become earnest," said the captain.

"That depends on us," answered John, and obeyed. But he thought him fussy for interfering in such trifles, and believed that he noticed a certain dislike in his superior towards himself. The former was called "magister," because he wrote for the papers, but he was not even a student. "There it is," he thought, "he wants to humiliate me." And from that time he watched him closely. Their mutual antipathy lasted through their lives.

The volunteer movement was in the first place the result of the Danish-German War, and, though transitory, was in some degree advantageous. It

kept the young men occupied, and did away, to a certain extent, with the military prestige of the army, as the lower classes discovered that soldiering was not such a difficult matter after all. The insight thus gained caused a widespread resistance to the introduction of the Prussian system of compulsory service which was much mooted at the time, since Oscar II., when visiting Berlin, had expressed to the Emperor William his hope that Swedish and Prussian troops would once more be brothers-in-arms.

IX

WITH STRANGERS

One of his bold dreams had been fulfilled: he had found a situation for the summer. Why had he not found one sooner? He had not dared to hope for it, and, therefore, had never sought it, from fear of meeting with a refusal. A disappointed hope was the worst thing he could imagine. But now, all at once, Fortune shook her cornucopia over him; the post he had obtained was in the finest situation that he knew—the Stockholm archipelago—on the most beautiful of all the islands, Sotaskär. He now liked aristocrats. His step-mother's ill-treatment of him, his relations' perpetual watching to discover arrogance in him, where there was only superiority of intelligence, generosity, and self-sacrifice, the attempts of his volunteer comrades to oppress him, had driven him out of the class to which he naturally belonged. He did not think or feel any

more as they did; he had another religion, and another view of life. The well-regulated behaviour and confident bearing of his aristocratic friends satisfied his æsthetic sense; his education had brought him nearer to them, and alienated him from the lower classes. The aristocrats seemed to him less proud than the middle class. They did not oppress, but prized culture and talent; they were democratic in their behaviour towards him, for they treated him as an equal, whereas his own relatives regarded him as a subordinate and inferior. Fritz, for example, who was the son of a miller in the country, visited at the house of a lord-in-waiting, and played in a comedy with his sons before the director of the Theatre Royal, who offered him an engagement. No one asked whose son he was. But when Fritz came to a dance at John's house, he was carefully inspected behind and before, and great satisfaction was caused when some relative imparted the information that his father had once been a miller's servant.

John had become aristocratic in his views, without, however, ceasing to sympathise with the lower classes, and since about the year 1865 the nobility were fairly liberal in politics, condescend-

ing and popular for the time, he let himself be duped.

Fritz began to give him instructions how he should behave. One should not be cringing, he said, but be yielding; should not say all that one thought, for no one wished to know that; it was good if one could say polite things, without indulging in too gross flattery; one should converse, but not argue, above all things not dispute, for one never got the best of it. Fritz was certainly a wise youth. John thought the advice terribly hard, but stored it up in his mind. What he wanted to get was a salary, and perhaps the chance of a tour abroad to Rome or Paris with his pupils; that was the most he hoped for from his noble friends, and what he intended to aim at.

One Sunday he visited the wife of the baron, his future employer, as she was in the town. She seemed like the portrait of a mediæval lady; she had an aquiline nose, great brown eyes, and curled hair, which hung over her temples. She was somewhat sentimental, talked in a drawling manner, and with a nasal twang. John did not think her aristocratic, and the house was a poorer one than his own home, but they had, besides, an estate and a castle. However, she pleased him,

for she had a certain resemblance to his mother. She examined him, talked with him, and let her ball of wool fall. John sprang up and gave it to her, with a self-satisfied air which seemed to say, "I can do that, for I have often picked up ladies' handkerchiefs." Her opinion of him after the examination was a favourable one, and he was engaged. On the morning of the day on which they were to leave the city he called again. The royal secretary, for so the gentleman of the house was called, was standing in his shirt-sleeves before the mirror and tying his cravat. He looked proud and melancholy, and his greeting was curt and cold. John took a seat uninvited, and tried to commence a conversation, but was not particularly successful in keeping it up, especially as the secretary turned his back to him, and gave only short answers.

"He is not an aristocrat," thought John; "he is a boor."

The two were antipathetic to each other, as two members of the lower class, who looked askance at each other in their clamber laboriously upwards.

The carriage was before the door; the coachman was in livery, and stood with his hat in his hand. The secretary asked John whether he would sit

in the carriage or on the box, but in such a tone that John determined to be polite and to accept the invitation to sit on the box. So he sat next the coachman. As the whip cracked, and the horses started, he had only one thought, "Away from home! Out into the world!"

At the first halting-place John got down from the box and went to the carriage window. He asked in an easy, polite, perhaps somewhat confidential tone, how his employers were. The baron answered curtly, in a tone in a way which cut off all attempts at a nearer approach. What did that mean?

They took their seats again. John lighted a cigar, and offered the coachman one. The latter, however, whispered in reply that he dared not smoke on the box. He then pumped the coachman, but cautiously, regarding the baron's friends, and so on. Towards evening they reached the estate. The house stood on a wooded hill, and was a white stone building with outside blinds. The roof was flat, and its rounded corners gave the building a somewhat Italian aspect, but the blinds, with their white and red borders, were elegance itself. John, with his three pupils, was installed in one wing, which consisted of an isolated build-

ing with two rooms; the other of which was occupied by the coachman.

After eight days John discovered that he was a servant, and in a very unpleasant position. His father's man-servant had a better room all to himself; and for several hours of the day was master of his own person and thoughts. But John was not. Night and day he had to be with the boys, teach them, and play and bathe with them. If he allowed himself a moment's liberty, and was seen about, he was at once asked, "Where are the children?" He lived in perpetual anxiety lest some accident should happen to them. He was responsible for the behaviour of four persons—his own and that of his three pupils. Every criticism of them struck him. He had no companion of his own age with whom he could converse. The steward was almost the whole day at work, and hardly ever visible.

But there were two compensations: the scenery and the sense of being free from the bondage in his parent's house. The baroness treated him confidentially, almost in a motherly way; she liked discussing literature with him. At such times he felt on the same level with her, and superior to her in point of erudition, but as soon as the

secretary came home he sank to the position of children's nurse again.

The scenery of the islands had for him a greater charm than the banks of the Mälar, and his magic recollections of Drottningholm faded. In the past year he had climbed up a hill in Tyresö with the volunteer sharpshooters. It was covered with a thick fir-wood. They crawled through bilberry and juniper bushes till they reached a steep, rocky plateau. From this they viewed a panorama which thrilled him with delight: water and islands, water and islands stretched away into infinite distance. Although born in Stockholm he had never seen the islands, and did not know where he was. The view made a deep impression on him, as if he had rediscovered a land which had appeared to him in his fairest dreams or in a former existence—in which he believed, but about which he knew nothing. The troop of sharpshooters drew off into the wood, but John remained upon the height and worshipped—that is the right word. The attacking troop approached and fired; the bullets whistled about his ears; he hid himself, but he could not go away. That was his landscape and proper environment—barren, rugged gray rocks surrounding wide stormy bays, and

the endless sea in the distance as a background. He remained faithful to this love, which could not be explained by the fact that it was his first love. Neither the Alps of Switzerland, nor the olive groves of the Mediterranean, nor the steep coast of Normandy, could dethrone this rival from his heart.

Now he was in Paradise, though rather too deep in it; the shore of Sotaskär consisted of green pasturage overshadowed by oaks, and the bay opened out to the fjord in the far distance. The water was pure and salt; that was something new. In one of his excursions with his rifle, the dogs, and the boys, he came one fine sunny day down to the water's edge. On the other side of the bay stood a castle, a large, old-fashioned stone edifice. He had discovered that his employer only rented the estate.

"Who lives in the castle?" he asked the boys.

"Uncle Wilhelm," they answered.

"What is his title?"

"Baron X."

"Do you never go there?"

"Oh, yes; sometimes."

So there was a castle here with a baron! John's walks now regularly took the direction of the shore,

from which he could see the castle. It was surrounded by a park and garden. At home they had no garden.

One fine day the baroness told him that he must accompany the boys on the morrow to the baron's, and remain there for the day. She and her husband would stay at home; "he would therefore represent the house," she added jestingly.

Then he asked what he was to wear. He could go in his summer suit, she said, take his black coat on his arm, and change for dinner in the little tapestry-room on the ground floor. He asked whether he should wear gloves. She laughed, "No, he needed no gloves." He dreamt the whole night about the baron, the castle, and the tapestry-room. In the morning a hay-waggon came to the house to fetch them. He did not like this; it reminded him of the parish clerk's school.

And so they went off. They came to a long avenue of lime trees, drove into the courtyard, and stopped before the castle. It was a real castle, and looked as if it had been built in the Middle Ages. From an arbour there came the well-known click of a draught-board. A middle-aged

gentleman in an ill-fitting, holland suit came out. His face was not aristocratic, but rather of the middle-class type, with a seaman's beard of a gray-yellow colour. He also wore earrings. John held his hat in his hand and introduced himself. The baron greeted him in a friendly way, and bade him enter the arbour. Here stood a table with a draught-board, by which sat a little old man who was very amiable in his manner. He was introduced as the pastor of a small town. John was given a glass of brandy, and asked about the Stockholm news. Since he was familiar with theatrical gossip and similar things, he was listened to with greater attention. "There it is," he thought, "the real aristocrats are much more democratic than the sham ones."

"Oh!" said the Baron. "Pardon me, Mr.——, I did not catch the name. Yes, that is it. Are you related to Oscar Strindberg?"

"He is my father."

"Good heavens! is it possible? He is an old friend of mine from my youthful days, when I was pilot on the Strengnäs."

John did not believe his ears. The baron had been pilot on a steamer! Yes, indeed, he had. But he wished to hear about his friend Oscar.

John looked around him, and asked himself if this really was the baron. The baroness now appeared; she was as simple and friendly as the baron. The bell rang for dinner. "Now we will get something to drink," said the baron. "Come along."

John at first made a vain attempt to put on his frock-coat behind a door in the hall, but finally succeeded, as the baroness had said that he ought to wear it. Then they entered the dining-hall. Yes, that was a real castle; the floor was paved with stone, the ceiling was of carved wood; the window-niches were so deep that they seemed to form little rooms; the fire place could hold a barrow-load of wood; there was a three-footed piano, and the walls were covered with dark paintings.

John felt quite at home during dinner. In the afternoon he played with the baron, and drank toddy. All the courteous usages he had expected were in evidence, and he was well pleased with the day when it was over. As he went down the long avenue, he turned round and contemplated the castle. It looked now less stately and almost poverty stricken. It pleased him all the better, though it had been more romantic to look at it as a fairy-tale castle from the other shore. Now he

had nothing more to which he could look up. But he himself, on the other hand, was no more below. Perhaps, after all, it is better to have something to which one *can* look up.

When he came home, he was examined by the baroness. "How did he like the baron?" John answered that he was pleasant and condescending. He was also prudent enough to say nothing of the baron's friendship with his father. "They will learn it anyhow," he thought. Meanwhile he already felt more at home, and was no more so timid. One day he borrowed a horse, but he rode it so roughly that he was not allowed to borrow one again. Then he hired one from a peasant. It looked so fine to sit high on a horse and gallop; he felt his strength grow at the same time.

His illusions were dispelled, but to feel on the same level with those about him, without wishing to pull anyone down, that had something soothing about it. He wrote a boasting letter to his brother at home, but received an answer calculated to set him down. Since he was quite alone, and had no one with whom he could talk, he wrote letters in diary-form to his friend Fritz. The latter had obtained a post with a merchant by the Mälar

Lake, where there were young girls, music, and good eating. John sometimes wished to be in his place. In his diary-letter he tried to idealise the realities around him, and succeeded in arousing his friend's envy.

The story of the baron's acquaintance with John's father spread, and the baroness felt herself bound to speak ill of her brother. John had, nevertheless, intelligence enough to perceive that here there was something to do with the tragedy of an estate in tail. Since he had nothing to do with the matter, he took no trouble to inquire into it.

During a visit which John paid to the pastor's house, the assistant pastor happened to hear of his idea of being a pastor himself. Since the senior pastor, on account of old age and weakness, no longer preached, his assistant was John's only acquaintance. The assistant found the work heavy, so he was very glad to come across young students who wished to make their débuts as preachers. He asked John whether he would preach. Upon John's objecting that he was not a student yet, he answered, "No matter." John said he would consider.

The assistant did not let him consider long.

He said that many students and collegians had preached here before, and that the church had a certain fame since the actor Knut Almlöf had preached here in his youth. John had seen him act as Menelaus in *The Beautiful Helen*, and admired him. He consented to his friend's request, began to search for a text, borrowed some homilies, and promised to have his trial sermon ready by Friday. So, then, only a year after his Confirmation, he would preach in the pulpit, and the baron and the ladies and gentlemen would sit as devout hearers! So soon at the goal, without a clerical examination—yes, even without his final college examination! They would lend him a gown and bands; he would pray the Lord's Prayer and read the Commandments! His head began to swell, and he walked home feeling a foot taller, with the full consciousness that he was no longer a boy.

But as he came home he began to think seriously. He was a free-thinker. Is it honourable to play the hypocrite? No, no. But must he then give up the sermon? That would be too great a sacrifice. He felt ambitious, and perhaps he would be able to sow some seeds of free-thought, which would spring up later. Yes, but it was dis-

honest. With his old egotistic morality he always regarded the motive of the actor, not the beneficial or injurious effect of the action. It was profitable for him to preach; it would not hurt others to hear something new and true. But it was not honest. He could not get away from that objection. He took the baroness into his confidence.

"Do you believe that preachers believe all they say?" she asked.

That was the preachers' affair, but John could not act a double part. Finally, he walked to the assistant pastor's house, and consulted him. It vexed the assistant to have to hear about it.

"Well," he said, "but you believe in God, I suppose?"

"Yes, certainly I do."

"Very well! don't speak of Christ. Bishop Wallin never mentioned the name of Christ in his sermons. But don't bother any more. I don't want to hear about it."

"I will do my best," said John, glad to have saved his honesty and his prospect of distinction at the same time. They had a glass of wine, and the matter was settled.

There was something intoxicating for him in

sitting over his books and homilies, and in hearing the baron ask for him, and the servant answer: "The tutor is writing his sermon."

He had to expound the text: "Jesus said, Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

That was all. He turned the sentence this way and that, but could find no meaning in it. "It is obscure," he thought. But it touched the most delicate point—the Deity of Christ. If he had the courage to explain away that, he would certainly have done something important. The prospect enticed him, and with Theodore Parker's help he composed a prose poem on Christ as the Son of God, and then put forward very cautiously the assertion that we are all God's sons, but that Christ is His chosen and beloved Son, whose teaching we must obey. But that was only the introduction, and the gospel is read after the introduction. About what, then, should he preach? He had already pacified his conscience by plainly stating his views regarding the Deity of Christ. He glowed with excitement, his courage grew, and he felt that he had a mission to fulfil. He would

draw his sword against dogmas, against the doctrine of election and pietism.

When he came to the place where, after reading the text, he ought to have said, "The text we have read gives us occasion for a short time to consider the following subject," he wrote: "Since the text of the day gives no further occasion for remark, we will, for a short time, consider what is of greater importance." And so he dealt with God's work in conversion. He made two attacks: one on the custom of preaching from the text, and the second against the Church's teaching on the subject of grace.

First he spoke of conversion as a serious matter, which required a sacrifice, and depended on the free-will of man (he was not quite clear about that). He ignored the doctrine of election, and finally flung open for all the doors of the kingdom of heaven: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." That is the gospel of Christ for all, and no one is to believe that the key of heaven is committed to him (that was a hit at the pietists), but that the doors of grace are open for all without exception.

He was very much in earnest, and felt like a

missionary. On Friday he betook himself to the church, and read certain passages of his sermon from the pulpit. He chose the most harmless ones. Then he repeated the prayers, while the assistant pastor stood under the choir gallery and called to him, "Louder! Slower!" He was approved, and they had a glass of wine together.

On Sunday the church was full of people. John put on his gown and bands in the vestry. For a moment he felt it comical, but then was seized with anxiety. He prayed to the only true God for help, now that he was to draw the sword against age-long error, and when the last notes of the organ were silent, he entered the pulpit with confidence.

Everything went well. But when he came to the place, "Since the text of the day gives no occasion for remark," and saw a movement among the faces of the congregation, which looked like so many white blurs, he trembled. But only for a moment. Then he plucked up courage and read his sermon in a fairly strong and confident voice. When he neared the end, he was so moved by the beautiful truths which he proclaimed, that he could scarcely see the writing on the paper for tears. He took a long breath, and read through

all the prayers, till the organ began and he left the pulpit. The pastor thanked him, but said one should not wander from the text; it would be a bad lookout if the Church Consistory heard of it. But he hoped no one had noticed it. He had no fault to find with the contents of the sermon. They had dinner at the pastor's house, played and danced with the girls, and John was the hero of the day. The girls said, "It was a very fine sermon, for it was so short." He had read much too fast, and had left out a prayer.

In the autumn John returned with the boys to the town, in order to live with them and look after their school-work. They went to the Clara School, so that, like a crab, he felt he was going backwards. The same school, the same head-master, the same malicious Latin teacher. John worked conscientiously with his pupils, heard their lessons, and could swear that they had been properly learned. None the less, in the report books which they took home, and which their father read, it was stated that such and such lessons had not been learned.

"That is a lie," said John.

"Well, but it is written here," answered the boys' father.

It was hard work, and he was preparing at the same time for his own examination. In the autumn holidays they went back to the country. They sat by the stove and cracked nuts, a whole sackful, and read the *Frithiof Saga*, *Axel*, and *Children of the Lord's Supper*.[1] The evenings were intolerably long. But John discovered a new steward, who was treated almost like a servant. This provoked John to make friends with him, and in his room they brewed punch and played cards. The baroness ventured to remark that the steward was not a suitable friend for John.

"Why not?" asked the latter.

"He has no education."

"That is not so dangerous."

She also said that she preferred that the tutor should spend his time with the family in the evening, or, at any rate, stay in the boys' room. He chose the latter, for it was very stuffy in the drawing-room, and he was tired of the reading aloud and the conversation. He now stayed in his own and the boys' room. The steward came there, and they played their game of cards. The boys asked to be allowed to take a hand. Why

[1] Three poems by Tegner—the last translated by Longfellow.

should they not? John had played whist at home with his father and brothers, and the innocent recreation had been regarded as a means of education for teaching self-discipline, carefulness, attention, and fairness; he had never played for money; each dishonest trick was immediately exposed, untimely exultation at a victory silenced, sulkiness at a defeat ridiculed.

At that time the boys' parents made no objections, for they were glad that the youngsters were occupied. But they did not like their being on intimate terms with the steward. John had, in the summer, formed a little military troop from his pupils and the workmen's children, and drilled them in the open air. But the baroness forbade this close intercourse with the latter. "Each class should keep to itself," she said.

But John could not understand why that should be, since in the year 1865 class distinctions had been done away with.

In the meantime a storm was brewing, and a mere trifle was the occasion of its outbreak.

One morning the baron was storming about a pair of his driving-gloves which had disappeared. He suspected his eldest boy. The latter denied having taken them, and accused the steward,

specifying the time when he said he had taken them. The steward was called.

"You have taken my driving-gloves, sir! What is the meaning of this?" said the baron.

"No, sir, I have not."

"What! Hugo says you did."

John, who happened to be present, stepped forward unsolicited, and said, "Then Hugo lies. He himself has had the gloves."

"What do you say?" said the baron, motioning to the steward to go.

"I say the truth."

"What do you mean, sir, by accusing my son in the presence of a servant?"

"Mr. X. is not a servant, and, besides, he is innocent."

"Yes, very innocent—playing cards together and drinking with the boys! That 's a nice business, eh?"

"Why did you not mention it before? Then you would have found out that I do not drink with the boys."

" 'You,' you d—d hobbledehoy! What do you mean by calling me 'you.' "

"Mr. Secretary can look for another 'hobbledehoy' to teach his boys, since Mr. Secretary is too

covetous to engage a grown person." So saying, John departed.

On the next day they were to return to the town, for the Christmas holidays were at an end. So he would have to go home again—back into hell, to be despised and oppressed, and it would be a thousand times worse after he had boasted of his new situation, and compared it with his parents' house to the disadvantage of the latter. He wept for anger, but after such an insult there was no retreat.

He was summoned to the baroness, but said she must wait awhile. Then a messenger came again for him. In a sullen mood he went up to her. She was quite mild, and asked him to stay some days with them till they had found another tutor. He promised, since she had asked him so pressingly. She said she would drive with the boys into the town.

The sleigh came to the door, and the baron stood by, and said, "You can sit on the box."

"I know my place," said John. At the first halting-place the baroness asked him to get into the sleigh, but he would not.

They stayed in the town eight days. In the meanwhile John had written a somewhat arrogant

letter, in an independent tone, home, which did not please his father, although he had flattered him in it. "I think you should have first asked if you could come home," he said. In that he was right. But John had never thought otherwise of his parents' house than of an hotel, where he could get board and lodging without paying.

So he was home again. Through an incomprehensible simplicity he had let himself be persuaded to continue to go through his former pupils' school-work with them, though he received nothing for it. One evening Fitz wanted to take him to a café.

"No," said John, "I must give some lessons."

"Where?"

"To the Secretary's boys."

"What! have n't you done with them yet?"

"No, I have promised to help them till they get a new teacher."

"What do you get for it?"

"What do I get? I have had board and lodging."

"Yes, but what do you get now, when you don't board and lodge with them?"

"Hm! I did n't think of that."

"You are a lunatic—teaching rich peoples'

children gratis. Well, you come along with me, and don't cross their threshold again."

John had a struggle with himself on the pavement. "But I promised them."

"You should not promise. Come now and write a letter withdrawing your offer."

"I must go and take leave of them."

"It is not necessary. They promised you a present at Christmas, but you got nothing; and now you let yourself be treated like a servant. Come now and write."

He was dragged to the café. The waitress brought paper and ink, and, at his friend's dictation, he wrote a letter to the effect that, in consequence of his approaching examination, he would have no more leisure for teaching.

He was free! "But I feel ashamed," he said.

"Why?"

"Because I have been impolite."

"Rubbish! Waitress, bring half a punch."

X

CHARACTER AND DESTINY

ABOUT this time the free-thought movement was at its height. After preaching his sermon, John believed it was his mission and duty to spread and champion the new doctrines. He therefore began to stay away from prayers, and stayed behind when the rest of the class went to the prayer-room. The headmaster came in and wished to drive him, and those who had remained with him, out. John answered that his religion forbade him to take part in an alien form of worship. The headmaster said one must observe law and order. John answered that Jews were excused attendance at prayers. The headmaster then asked him for the sake of example and their former friendship to be present. John yielded. But he and those who shared his views did not take part in the singing of the psalms. Then the headmaster was infuriated, and gave them a scolding; he especially singled out John, and up-

braided him. John's answer was to organise a strike. He and those who shared his views came regularly so late to school that prayers were over when they entered. If they happened to come too early, they remained in the corridor and waited, sitting on the wooden boxes and chatting with the teachers. In order to humble the rebels, the headmaster hit upon the idea, at the close of prayers, when the whole school was assembled, to open the doors and call them in. These then defiled past with an impudent air and under a hail of reproaches through the prayer-room without remaining there. Finally, they became quite used to enter of their own accord, and take their scolding as they walked through the room. The headmaster conceived a spite against John, and seemed to have the intention of making him fail in his examination. John, on the other hand, worked day and night in order to be sure of succeeding.

His theological lessons degenerated into arguments with his teacher. The latter was a pastor and theist, and tolerant of objections, but he soon got tired of them, and told John to answer according to the text-book.

"How many Persons are in the Godhead?" he asked.

"One," answered John.

"What does Norbeck say?"

"Norbeck says three!"

"Well, then, you say three, too!"

At home things went on quietly. John was left alone. They saw that he was lost, and that it was too late for any effectual interference. One Sunday his father made an attempt in the old style, but John was not at a loss for an answer.

"Why don't you go to church any more?" his father asked.

"What should I do there?"

"A good sermon can always do one some good."

"I can make sermons myself."

And there was an end of it.

The pietists had a special prayer offered for John in the Bethlehem Church after they had seen him one Sunday morning in volunteer uniform.

In May, 1867, he passed his final examination. Strange things came to light on that occasion. Great fellows with beards and pince-nez called the Malay Peninsula Siberia, and believed that India was Arabia. Some candidates obtained a testimonial in French who pronounced "en" like "y," and could not conjugate the auxiliary verbs.

It was incredible. John believed he had been stronger in Latin three years before this. In history everyone of them would have failed, if they had not known the questions beforehand. They had read too much and learned too little.

The examination closed with a prayer which a free-thinker was obliged to offer. He repeated the Lord's Prayer stammeringly, and this was wrongly attributed to his supposed state of excitement. In the evening John was taken by his companions to Storkyrkobrinken, where they bought him a student's white cap, for he had no money. Then he went to his father's office to give him the good news. He met him in the hall.

"Well! Have you passed?" said his father.

"Yes."

"And already bought the cap."

"I got it on credit."

"Go to the cashier, and have it paid for."

So they parted. No congratulation! No pressure of the hand! That was his father's Icelandic nature which could not give vent to any expressions of tenderness.

John came home as they were all sitting at supper. He was in a merry mood, and had drunk punch. But his spirits were soon damped.

All were silent. His brothers and sisters did not congratulate him. Then he became out of humour and silent also. He left the table and went to rejoin his comrades in the town. There there was joy, childish, exaggerated joy, and all too great hopes.

During the summer he remained at home and gave lessons. With the money earned he hoped to go in the autumn to the University at Upsala. Theology attracted him no more. He had done with it, and, moreover, it went against his conscience to take the ordination vow.

In the autumn he went to Upsala. Old Margaret packed his box, and put in cooking utensils, and a knife and fork. Then she obliged him to borrow fifteen kronas[1] from her. From his father he got a case of cigars, and an exhortation to help himself. He himself had eighty kronas, which he had earned by giving lessons, and with which he must manage to get through his first term at the university.

The world stood open for him; he had the ticket of admission in his hand. He had nothing to do but to enter. Only that!

. . . . . .

[1] A krona is worth about twenty-seven cents.

"A man's character is his destiny." That was then a common and favourite proverb. Now that John had to go into the world, he employed much time in attempting to cast his horoscope from his own character, which he thought was already fully formed. People generally bestow the name of "a character" on a man who has sought and found a position, taken up a rôle, excogitated certain principles of behaviour, and acts accordingly in an automatic way.

A man with a so-called character is often a simple piece of mechanism; he has often only one point of view for the extremely complicated relationships of life; he has determined to cherish perpetually certain fixed opinions of certain matters; and in order not to be accused of "lack of character," he never changes his opinion, however foolish or absurd it may be. Consequently, a man with a character is generally a very ordinary individual, and what may be called a little stupid. "Character" and automaton seem often synonymous. Dickens's famous characters are puppets, and the characters on the stage must be automata. A well-drawn character is synonymous with a caricature. John had formed the habit of "proving himself" in the Christian

fashion, and asked himself whether he had such a character as befitted a man who wished to make his way in the world.

In the first place, he was revengeful. A boy had once openly said, by the Clara Churchyard, that John's father had stood in the pillory. That was an insult to the whole family. Since John was weaker than his opponent, he caused his elder brother to execute vengeance with him on the culprit, by bombarding him with snowballs. They carried out their revenge so thoroughly, that they thrashed the culprit's younger brother who was innocent.

So he must be revengeful. That was a serious charge. He began to consider the matter more closely. Had he revenged himself on his father or his step-mother for the injustice they had done him? No; he forgot all, and kept out of the way.

Had he revenged himself on his school teachers by sending them boxes full of stones at Christmas? No. Was he really so severe towards others, and so hair-splitting in his judgment of their conduct towards him? Not at all; he was easy to get on with, was credulous, and could be led by the nose in every kind of way, provided he did not detect any tyrannous wish to oppress in

the other party. By various promises of exchange his school-fellows had cajoled away from him his herbarium, his collection of beetles, his chemical apparatus, his adventure books. Had he abused or dunned them for payment? No; he felt ashamed on their account, but let them be. At the end of one vacation the father of a boy whom John had been teaching forgot to pay him. He felt ashamed to remind him, and it was not till half a year had elapsed, that, at the instigation of his own father, he demanded payment.

It was a peculiar trait of John's character, that he identified himself with others, suffered for them, and felt ashamed on their behalf. If he had lived in the Middle Ages, he would have been marked with the stigmata. If one of his brothers did something vulgar or stupid, John felt ashamed for him. In church he once heard a boys' choir sing terribly out of tune. He hid himself in the pew with a feeling of vicarious shame.

Once he fought with a school-fellow, and gave him a violent blow on the chest, but when he saw the boy's face distorted with pain, he burst into tears and reached him his hand. If anyone asked him to do something which he was very unwilling

to do, he suffered on behalf of the one with whose request he could not comply.

He was cowardly, and could let no one go away unheard for fear of causing discontent. He was still afraid of the dark, of dogs, horses, and strangers. But he could also be courageous if necessary, as he had shown by rebelling in school, when the matter concerned his final examination, and by opposing his father.

"A man without religion is an animal," say the old copybooks. Now that it has been discovered that animals are the most religious of creatures, and that he who has knowledge does not need religion, the practical efficacy of the latter has been much reduced. By placing the source of his strength outside himself, he had lost strength and faith in himself. Religion had devoured his ego. He prayed always, and at all hours, when he was in need. He prayed at school when he was asked questions; at the card-table when the cards were dealt out. Religion had spoilt him, for it had educated him for heaven instead of earth; family life had ruined him by educating him for the family instead of for society; and school had educated him for the university instead of for life.

He was irresolute and weak. When he bought tobacco, he asked his friend what sort he should buy. Thus he fell into his friends' power. The consciousness of being popular drove away his fear of the unknown, and friendship strengthened him.

He was a prey to capricious moods. One day, when he was a tutor in the country, he came into the town in order to visit Fritz. When he got there he did not proceed any further, but remained at home, debating with himself whether he should go to Fritz or not. He knew that his friend expected him, and he himself much wished to see him. But he did not go. The next day he returned to the country, and wrote a melancholy letter to his friend, in which he tried to explain himself. But Fritz was angry, and did not understand caprices.

In all his weakness he sometimes was aware of enormous resources of strength, which made himself believe himself capable of anything. When he was twelve his brother brought home a French boys' book from Paris. John said, "We will translate that, and bring it out at Christmas." They did translate it, but as they did not know what further steps to take, the matter dropped.

An Italian grammar fell into his hands, and

he learned Italian. When he was a tutor in the country, as there was no tailor there, he undertook to alter a pair of trousers. He opened the seams, altered and stitched the trousers, and ironed them with the great stable key. He also mended his boots. When he heard his sisters and brothers play in a quartette, he was never satisfied with the performance. He would have liked to jump up, to snatch the instruments from them, and to show them how they ought to play.

John had learned to speak the truth. Like all children, he lied in his defence or in answer to impertinent questions, but he found a brutal enjoyment, during a conversation, when people were trying to conceal the truth, to say exactly what all thought. At a ball, where he was very tactiturn, a lady asked him if he liked dancing.

"No, not at all," he answered.

"Well, then, why do you dance?"

"Because I am obliged to."

He had stolen apples, like all boys, and that did not trouble him; he made no secret of it. It was a prescriptive right. In the school he had never done any real mischief. Once, on the last day before the close of the term, he and some other

boys had broken off some clothes-pegs and torn up some old exercise-books. He was the only one seized on the occasion. It was a mere outbreak of animal spirits, and was not taken seriously.

Now, when he was passing his own character under review, he collected other people's judgments on himself, and was astonished at the diversity of opinion displayed. His father considered him hard; his step-mother, malicious; his brothers, eccentric. Every servant-maid in the house had a different opinion of him; one of them liked him, and thought that his parents treated him ill; his lady friend thought him emotional; the engineer regarded him as an amiable child, and Fritz considered him melancholy and self-willed. His aunts believed he had a good heart; his grandmother that he had character; the girl he loved idolised him; his teachers did not know what to make of him. Towards those who treated him roughly, he was rough; towards his friends, friendly.

John asked himself whether it was he that was so many-sided, or the opinions about him. Was he false? Did he behave to some differently from what he did to others? "Yes," said his step-mother. When she heard anything good about him, she always declared that he was acting a part.

Yes, but all acted parts! His step-mother was friendly towards her husband, hard towards her step-children, soft towards her own child, humble towards the landlord, imperious towards the servants, polite to the powerful, rough to the weak.

That was the "law of accommodation," of which John was as yet unaware. It was a trait in human nature, a tendency to adapt oneself—to be a lion towards enemies, and a lamb towards friends,—which rested on calculation.

But when is one true, and when is one false? And where is to be found the central "ego,"—the core of character? The "ego" was a complex of impulses and desires, some of which were to be restrained, and others unfettered. John's individuality was a fairly rich but chaotic complex; he was a cross of two entirely different strains of blood, with a good deal of book-learning, and a variety of experience. He had not yet found what rôle he was to play, nor his position in life, and therefore continued to be characterless. He had not yet determined which of his impulses must be restrained, and how much of his "ego" must be sacrificed for the society into which he was preparing to enter.

If he had really been able to view himself objec-

tively, he would have found that most of the words he spoke were borrowed from books or from school-fellows, his gestures from teachers and friends, his behaviour from relatives, his temperament from his mother and wet-nurse, his tastes from his father, perhaps from his grandfather. His face had no resemblance to that of his father or mother. Since he had not seen his grandparents, he could not judge whether there was any resemblance to them. What, then, had he of his own? Nothing. But he had two fundamental characteristics, which largely determined his life and his destiny.

The first was Doubt. He did not receive ideas without criticism, but developed and combined them. Therefore he could not be an automaton, nor find a place in ordered society.

The second was—Sensitiveness to pressure. He always tried to lessen this last, in the first place, by raising his own level; in the second, by criticising what was above him, in order to observe that it was not so high after all, nor so much worth striving after.

So he stepped out into life—in order to develop himself, and still ever to remain as he was!

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