We Three

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*A NOVEL*

By

OLGA AND ESTRID OTT

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

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Titlis Hotel,
Engelberg, Jan. 8th

Dear Mother,

We were sitting together in the large dining room, Father and I. We were at lunch.

Father said, "Why do you always talk about a career? Good heavens, haven't we enough money? Not many years will pass anyway before my little chickadee will fly out of the nest and marry."

Chickadee!

I shook my head and said, "Never, I don't want to get married."

Father looked at me with a smile in his eyes. "Aha, so the little one has reached that age."

"If I married," I continued, "it would be to the best man in the world, not the second best or the third or fourth best, but the very best, do you understand? And the very best! Why, it is foolish even to think he should care for me."

"Heavens, my child, how much you are like

your mother!" There were both terror and admiration in his voice.

That happened yesterday and that is why I write this letter—I cannot get it out of my thoughts. I am like my mother—we are alike—perhaps, yes, perhaps she will understand me, now when I write.

"Father," I begged, stroking his hand, "tell me a little about my mother." He drew his hand away with a slight jerk.

"You know, Vera, that there are topics so personal that one does not speak of them to a single soul."

"Not even to one's daughter?"

"No, not even to one's daughter."

"But it is *my* mother," I said, and my eyes filled with tears. "Supposing I died?"

"Vera, my child, are you afraid of dying?"

I looked at him keenly. "Are *you* afraid that I shall die?"

Father did not answer—he had been strangely low spirited during the whole meal. He nervously drew the Times out of the bundle of newspapers in front of him, looked through the advertisements and suddenly pointed to a name. "That is your mother!"

I leaned over the table, turning over an egg

cup in my eagerness and read: "Mary Saunders in the leading part."

"Is that——?"

Father had risen and nodded slightly. Then he hurriedly left the dining room without a word and forgot his eyeglasses—Father, who never forgets anything!

The doctor says that I have tuberculosis. That is why we are in Switzerland. Of course it is nonsense!—There is nothing the matter with me and I suspect the doctor is using me as a pretext to get Father to travel. He needs recreation, poor Father, who wears himself out in his business.

Now if I had been a boy I could have started right in at the office, but I am only a girl. I have begged and begged to be allowed to start, if only as a licker of stamps, until he sees how efficient I am—and he *won't* let me.

Father never speaks about his business at home and says, "My home and my business are two different things." (Did he say the same to *you?*—those days.)

He spoils me terribly. I consented to go away only on the condition that he would travel with me, and that I did not have to go to a sanitarium.

So now we are here in Engelberg, deep in the

recesses of a mountain pass, where the high peaks tempt me almost beyond endurance—I want so to go climbing; but the doctor says I cannot stand it.

The air is clear and pure and the whole of fashionable Europe—or at any rate a part of it—has run away from the gloomy, raw cold slush of its native lands to the sparkling winter and wonderful sports of Engelberg.

But that is not at all what I want to write about. As soon as I pick up a pen I just go scribbling on. Thoughts come rushing, step all over themselves, and are down on paper before I can arrange them. I am simply compelled to write them down. New thoughts are pressing, and they all want to be in it.

I was five years old when you left us. I am almost nineteen now; so I have grown somewhat since you saw me. Isn't it strange to think that if I went to London and met you on the street one day, you would not know that I am your child.—But at any rate, now I know where you live, and for that I am happy. I have so often tried to learn something about you from Grandmother and Aunt Edith, but, like Father, they have seven seals closing their mouths.—And I cannot remember you.

Erna (that was my chum in school) says that

she was only four years old when her father died, and yet she remembers a lot of things about him.

I believe it is because his picture hangs everywhere, and because her mother always speaks about him. I want so much to remember You. You have no idea how many times I have racked my brain to recall some of your traits and characteristics; but, to be sure, I didn't try until several years after you had left and there is no one here who will help me.

It must surely have been you who were in the wrong when you parted or I should not have been here with Father.—I have said so to myself many a time, and it seems as if this thought gave me more courage to write to you,—since you are not like the other mothers, always admonishing and prohibiting. I think you would be a great mother—I mean, you know, to speak to as if you were a comrade—and I need just such a mother.

But perhaps it is all not so at all.

I have often wondered if you have ever missed me and if you were sorry to give me up. Now, I *must* know it.

Father is terribly sweet, but there is nevertheless so much he doesn't understand at all, and especially so lately.—I hardly know myself any more.—Sometimes I have a desire to raise the

dickens. I sit and wonder what the guests would say if I should suddenly, during meals, start to sing at the top of my voice, and sometimes I am wild to do all the things I do not dare to do.

I do not know just how to explain it; for instance, I want to drive the car down the road with closed eyes.—I don't dare.—But I can't help myself. Last week I ran against a tree. I opened my eyes at the last moment, so fortunately nothing happened except that the mudguard was bent. Afterwards I bawled like a baby. It seems pitiful that I have become so hysterical and hectic, just like those schoolmates of mine for whom I had the greatest contempt. But the day after I crawled out of the window and swung myself up on the slanting roof of the hotel. It was icy and I was terribly afraid of falling, so I really don't understand why I did it.

Yes, I believe it is because I *must* have something to do. I am not bored, I am accustomed to being alone, and I really like it—but something inside of me urges me to *do* something—to *be* something. I am fired with ambition,—but what is the use? Now if we were poor, we should be compelled to earn money—but darn it! we are not, and I envy all the lucky dogs who

build up their own lives and futures. At night I lie awake dreaming how I will run away from it all and go out into the wide, wide world to create a name for myself. But in the morning I realize how foolish it is. Why is it the men who always do the big things? The reason for this lies in the fact that they get a training which is denied me. *I* am expected to marry. But I have decided to be an old maid.

That will annoy Father, but I don't care. He likes me to be very popular, and here at the hotel I am surrounded like a little queen. (There is a shortage of women.) Mon Dieu! What stupid compliments young fellows can think of! If I were a man I am sure I could think of more subtle things to say.

And it irritates me beyond measure that they treat me as if I were made of glass—because I am "delicate." I am always to have my way, no one must contradict me, and whenever I appear they all put on such an expression of compassion—I want to stick my tongue out at them. Why should I be treated as if I were at the end of my rope, when I feel strong and healthy—and burn with an energy which can find no outlet?

You must help me, Mother! I beg and implore you. It is of no use to speak seriously to

Father. To him I am always the "baby" and "chickadee" and we get nowhere.

What shall I do? What shall I do to become somebody, for I *will* not go about as a parasite all my life?

However much I meditate upon it I cannot think of anything to which I am particularly suited. I was graduated from high-school this summer—scraped through by the skin of my teeth—lazy—and I don't care to study.

Nurse? I believe I would pinch the patients when I was in a bad humor. Teach? I love children and don't like to torture them.

Office? Yes, if I could find a place where I could work myself up, as the boys do; but it is only in inferior positions they care to have women, and I will not go into a blind alley—never.

Governess? No, thanks—would rather be a cook.

Actress? Now you must not propose that to me. I admire you because you dare, and at that, in a foreign tongue. Nothing would be more impossible for me than to appear in public. I have not the slightest desire to stand face to face with an audience who afterwards criticise my language, my appearance, walk, the conception of my part, and God knows what.

The only thing I really care for is to figure out what other people think about, where they come from, where they are going, with whom they are in love, and things like that.

I love to sit in a hidden corner in the hotel lobby and see them come in.—I think, by the way, I should like to be a *Portier,* for even now I am sure how each one should be treated and I am getting quite proficient in languages. But they don't use women for such work, and I suppose there are no places where they can use young girls who understand how to talk to people? Or, are there?

When I started this letter I said to myself: Only four pages—she may not even receive the letter, as the only address you have is the theatre in London. Your mother is perhaps studying a new part and is very busy. Perhaps she is married and has other children—perhaps she wishes to forget both you and Father and—you may not even receive an answer.

But here it is—eight pages, closely written, large foolscap—for I *can't* stop when once I get started.

Dear, how happy I am that I do not need to send my thoughts to Mother out into the empty spaces any longer. I now understand why Father asked me every time I went to the theatre

(for I love to go) if I could ever think of becoming an actress,—He, of course, thought of you. I am not going to tell him anything about this letter. I am afraid it will hurt him; perhaps he would even forbid me to write.

But why should not a daughter write to her own mother, when she needs her so very much?

There were so many other things I wanted to tell you, but I will wait—wait for your answer.

I count the days until I receive your letter. —Vera Dahl, General Delivery, Engelberg, Schweitz.—I enclose a photograph which will show you that "the Baby" is not so very small.

If you only knew how I long . . .

Yours,

Vera.

London, January 12th

Child—Darling Vera!

At last you came to me—came of your own accord—came because in the midst of a circle which loves and adores you you felt lonely—came—because you are like me.

Father is right. You *are* like me—spiritually and physically. Even your handwriting looks like mine.

When I came here to the theatre for rehearsal the door-man gave me your letter. I was startled when I held it in my hand, for it was my own handwriting—but the post-mark "Schweitz" I did not understand. I carried it up to my dressing-room and did not open it until I was alone.

From the moment I held it in my hand I knew —the miracle had happened!

I read the first words "Dear Mother" and I kept on repeating them to myself. "Dear Mother"—I could not go on for I could not see any longer—the tears blinded my eyes. I cried —cried.

I haven't cried since the day I left you—at

least not over anything concerning myself. I have cried when I played a part which touched the broken chords in my heart—and I have cried when I saw a dirty, ill-kept child on the street. But never over any troubles of my own.

A very wise man once said to me, "If one could get accustomed to eating a toad every day for breakfast, anything else one eats the rest of the day would taste very fine,"—and he was right.

When the worst that can happen happens, all other sorrows and troubles are of no consequence.

But now I cried.—I felt as if I were an ice-maiden, who had lived for many years in the heart of an iceberg and who is suddenly called back to life by summer and sun.

Your picture stands on my table, and I have searched and searched each feature. No—I could never have passed you on the street without recognizing you. The eyes and mouth would have betrayed you at once—for you look like me and you *are* like me—and that is why you, at last, have come.

You cannot remember me—not one feature or characteristic can you recall. But on my mind's eye picture after picture are indelibly stamped—from the day when first you hid your little mouth at your Mother's breast, until the evening when you lay in your little bed and did not

know that your mother bent over you crying her heart out to bid you a last good-bye.

And yet—even that night I knew you would come to me—for you and I are alike.

You were only three years old when I first noticed it. You were lying in your bed on Easter morning when Grandmother came to you with a little Easter rabbit. I saw your eyes sparkle with joy and impulsively you stretched out your hand to take it—but—Grandmother stipulated conditions. "Now you must be very sweet to the little bunny—pat it nicely—and give it a little kiss."

At once you became cold and hard, but Grandmother continued, "Come with that little hand and pat it." There came into your eyes a steely, hard look. You reached out and in an instant you had broken one of the rabbit's legs, while you looked at your Grandmother with an almost triumphant expression. She dropped the rabbit and exclaimed, "But, Child! You are a bad girl. How could you do that—How could you be so naughty!" Whereupon she turned her back to you and went out.

I stood hidden behind the three-fold screen that protected your bed from the draft—I wanted to see what would happen.

You lay very still until the sound of footsteps

had died away, and then you slid to the floor beside the rabbit. You examined the leg and cried very softly—you took it into bed with you and put it next to your cheek. You petted it and wet it with your tears.

From that day on you practically never let it out of your hand. Even when it was only a dirty woolen rag you crushed it between your warm little hands and it was with you wherever you went. The others wanted to take it away from you—their interest in the Easter rabbit was over, for it was no longer the immaculate, unblemished white rabbit. They did not understand that for you it was a poor little stunted thing which you had taken under your wing—that your child-heart was filled with pity and sorrow over your own hardheartedness, for which you wanted to atone.

You listened to your own heart's silent whisper and followed its bidding, and any interference from the outside you met with defiance.

I recognized myself in you!

You write—"it must surely have been you who was in the wrong——"

Yes, it was I who was in the wrong—always I—and your father who was right. There was never any question but that he was right—It was impossible, for he was the world's best man.

On that point also do we resemble each other, I would have none but the world's best man—and I got him.

Now I know that it would have been much better for me to have been satisfied with the third or fourth best—to have married a man who was not so absolutely without fault. For nothing is so hopeless as always to be the one who is wrong and to know it will never be otherwise.

He was the world's best man—but he was also the world's best son and the world's best brother. And those two—his mother and his sister—loved him with a love more egotistical than mine. They adored blindly, and demanded that I adore blindly, the result of which was that I ceased to adore at all. But the fault was mine—for he *was* the world's best man.

I was alone in the world—without any family or friends. I had only him. I surrendered myself completely and I demanded of him—well—I demanded too much of him, and there I was wrong. At last I committed a cruel act out of sheer defiance.

Like you I once did the thing I really did not dare to do—like you I drove forward with closed eyes—(promise me, by the way, never to do it again). And when I opened them it was not just the mud-guard which was bent, but a life

which was torn to pieces, and a home whose walls I had blasted and broken down.

That evening I saw you for the last time. When in later years I thought of you, it was most frequently in that picture I recalled you—safely sleeping in your little bed—your blonde curls framing your delicate face, and the little hands tightly clasped around the neck of your doll.

Time after time I kissed those wee plump hands while you slept peacefully and quiet, never feeling the tears which dropped on your hair.

How many times since then have I not lain sleepless through the night and recalled this picture to my mind! It was ever the little hands I longed to press to my lips again.

Once I played a part in a German play of an unmarried mother who killed her infant. She could not bear the thought that it was to live in a world where people could be so cruel to each other. When she recovered her senses after the crime, it was always the little white dead hands that lingered in her thoughts. "Those tiny little hands," she kept repeating in her misery.

It was one of those evenings when my tears, coming from the depths of my heart, touched the soul of my audience so that they felt life's deepest sorrow, and cried with me as loving and sympathetic friends will do.

But when I came home after the performance my heart was so heavy that I could not sleep. Continuously I repeated to myself, "Those tiny little hands—those tiny little hands."

You asked if I have missed you. Yes, I have missed you and longed for you. Not in the beginning when I was still cold with defiance, but more and more as time went on.

It is *triste* indeed when one cannot enjoy others' happiness, but when I saw mothers happy with their children or children who clung to their parents, I was most miserable and despairing. And yet, I had not, like the character in the play, left my child cold and dead in a lonely spot, but safely sleeping in its lovely warm bed. And I knew it was surrounded by good and loving beings, who are so good that they will never understand you—or me.

But how can I advise you—how dare I? On that evening I promised your father that I would never communicate with you, that I would never try to influence you. And even if I had not given that promise, how can I know anything about your ability or strength to finish this fight you are so anxious to begin?

And besides, through your letter, in your language, in your longing to be of value to other

people, in your ability to listen, to observe and retain, I feel the fiery pulsebeat of the artist. But the path of the artist is rough and strewn with thorns. He must find it himself and he must walk it alone. Have you the strength?

You write that you are sick, and name a disease which you do not believe in and do not heed. I hope sincerely that you are not mistaken and that it is the anxiety of the family which is exaggerated. But how do I know?

Now more than ever do I long to be with you and clasp your hand in mine, to share your thoughts and guard your way. But I have no right. I cannot come to you, for the others, the good and the righteous, form a circle around you which I must not enter.

But promise me, Little Girl, that you will be sensible and wise. Do everything in your power to be well. Concentrate your strong will upon this, that first and foremost you must be well—absolutely well again.

If I only had you here at my side that I could hear your voice. There are still so many things I would like to talk to you about. So much of my life I wish to tell you, and a letter, however long, says so little.

But of course we have no other means if we

wish to learn and understand a little of each other.

Therefore you must write soon again. Tell me about yourself, your life, and tell me about your father.

Is he still just as handsome and straight—is his hair just as thick and black as ever, or—have the years also marked him?

May I whisper something to you?—I loved your father. When you were born I loved him madly—and perhaps—perhaps—but he must not know that.

I do not understand that he mentioned my name. Is it his love for you which made him do it, or—is he also. . . . No, no, I will not think of such things. You said yourself, "Father never forgets anything."

There is one thing I would like to know. Has my little girl learned to smile? Does she know nature's most radiant gift? *That* I must know if I shall guide you—for the impulsive soul of the artist is ever swinging between laughter and tears.

Write to me, write from your innermost heart about the good and the bad—about happiness and sorrow. In this way only can I learn to know you, for only then can we solve the problems together.

I send you a little picture of myself, but do not believe in it. Beneath the make-up demanded by my profession life has put its marks and grief its furrows.

I am at home after the theatre, writing.

My home—yes. Yesterday it was only the reception salon of an artist. To-day it is a home—a lovely, cozy home. For in front of me, on my desk lighted up by the golden glow of the lamp, stands the picture of my daughter, smiling at me, and I smile back. Good-night, my Beloved Child.

Mother.

P.S.—Keep on addressing your letters to the theatre as I get my letters there more quickly than at home.

Hotel Titlis,
Engelberg, Jan. 15th

Mother, Mother, Mother:

I am the happiest person in all the world. This morning when the sun's pale ray broke in between the snow-covered mountains, I stood with my new friend, a young girl, on the highest peak of Titlis and shouted with joy. The guide was sitting a little away from us, gorging his breakfast. It was not the first time that *he* had scaled Engelberg's highest point.

And there we saw the break of dawn! A touch of purple on the mountain tops beneath us, a blue tinge through the northern pass, a blood-red stain on the white snow in the deep cleft, and, slowly, the sun rose above the peaks, pouring its piercing yellow light through a narrow slit for an instant, effacing all colors in the next moment—and behold! the night was turned into day!

We did not speak—my friend and I. We listened silently to nature's voice, and I think she also had tears in her eyes.

Have you ever wept for joy over the great, the wonderful, the incomprehensible? Just that you

are alive, that you exist, that you have power, will, talents—Oh, Mother! I felt as if my heart must burst up there in the thin clear air; while the sun rose higher and higher, slowly uncovering peak after peak, slowly enlarging our vision and completely routing the fog. But far away, in the distance, the mountains remained blue.

At that moment I knew I could conquer. I *am* strong and healthy! It was my new friend who made me try, who strengthened my will.

Yesterday afternoon we set out. Last night we stopped at an inn half way up, and at four o'clock this morning we scaled the last and most dangerous part to reach the top.

My foot stood firmly planted on the glacier. I did not become dizzy when I climbed the high granite mounts and only stopped for a moment. My nose was bleeding, but that is rather the usual thing up in the thin air.

When I stood at the goal and saw the sun rise, I felt my heart swell with happiness—and I knew for a certainty that when I descended the letter would have arrived from *my* mother.

The two others could barely follow me in the descent. I sat down in the snow and slid long stretches; I jumped easily over clefts, around which I had walked carefully during the climb.

My friend began to scold, "Remember what you promised your father."

But how was she to know what awaited me at the postoffice?

The postmaster smiled at my assurance and my eagerness, when I asked for the letter.

I glanced at the writing. My own—returned!

A sharp pain shot through my heart. Then I saw the address, and caught the fine perfumed fragrance emanating from the envelope.

I put it hurriedly into one of my many pockets, almost forgot my alpenstock, and, in a moment, stood with the others out in the sunlight, flushed and confused.

The guide was dismissed, and we went to the hotel together. Father came to meet us, eagerly, waving his hands, evidently relieved to see me looking so well. I became wild, bursting with deviltry, beaming. He wanted to hear about everything, know everything, and insisted upon my having something hot to eat and drink.

He was really almost offended because I did not feel cold. And all the while, a letter was lying in my pocket, waiting, waiting. . . .

I joked and laughed; I was almost mad with joy. My cheeks were red for the first time in many months; my hands burned, and I was on pins and needles; while the letter waited, waited.

Then suddenly came the reaction, the fatigue. I became faint and drowsy. My eyelids felt heavy. I fought to keep them open, but father noticed it, and insisted upon my going to bed—in the middle of the afternoon.

I made no objection. While the curtains were drawn in my room to keep the daylight out, I sat on my chair, sleepily undoing my heavy mountain boots. After that, I locked my door, drew forth the letter, and put it on my bed. I would not read it until I had changed from my heavy sport clothes into a soft silk kimona. Oh, dear! I always love to prolong the joy of receiving a letter! And I continued to fuss around, hanging my clothes away and putting my shoes outside the door to be cleaned, in order to draw out the time and heighten the tension.

At last I got into bed and tore open the envelope.

"Child—my darling little Vera. . . ."

My eyes became heavier and heavier. "Child. . . . my darling little Vera. . . ." I slept.

It is four o'clock now. I awoke suddenly with a strange feeling of joy. Then I remembered. I read on. I know that *you* also need *me!*

I am utterly dumbfounded with delight just to think that you remember all the little incidents of my childhood. Some day we will meet in

London, won't we? Then we shall have a real talk with each other. Yes, we shall, even though Father objects, for *I* have not promised him anything. But do you think he will have the heart to deny *me* any pleasure—my sweet old daddy?

By the way, I want to defend him. Father has lots of faults, but you grown-ups cannot see them. Of course I have had his virtues flung in my face many a time, both at school and at home, but I don't care a rap about that, for I know he is not as thoroughly good as they want to make him out to be.

For the world's most wonderful man is not at all without faults or blemishes. No! on the contrary, the world's most wonderful man is something quite different, something indefinable, but when he comes I shall recognize him.

I wonder if Father has changed any since you saw him. I don't believe so. He belongs to that category of men who never change. Of course he has acquired a few silver threads at the temples, but they are very becoming to him. Then there is something around the eyes which has made its appearance during the last few years, some very fine wrinkles, which I call his grandfather wrinkles.

Yesterday, when I had gone to bed up there in the mountains, in order to sleep a few hours be-

fore we continued our climb, I lay thinking of all the new things that had come into my life, and suddenly it flashed through my mind that Father was in London two years ago.

I remember it plainly now. It was just before Christmas. We were at dinner, Father and I, and of course Grandmother and Aunt Edith.

Suddenly Father said: "To-morrow I am going abroad on a business trip."

"Berlin?" asked my aunt, indifferently. That is where he usually goes.

"No. London."

"To London?" And Grandmother's voice trembled with indignation.

Father rose from the table impatiently and threw his napkin down.

"Yes, there is something I must have settled, once and for all."

"But you surely don't mean——" Grandmother almost shouted the words.

I interrupted, irritably, "For heaven's sake, Grandmother! You surely aren't afraid of his sailing for the North Sea so long after the war?"

"No, of course not!" They exchanged glances and kept quiet. But I did not understand a word of it, until last night, almost two years later.

And now, when I have read your lovely letter,

I cannot get it out of my thoughts that perhaps he sat in the theatre and heard you say in deep, deep anguish: "Those tiny hands! those tiny hands!" Oh, could I but ask him! . . . but I do not dare.

The whole thing is very tragic to think about! None the less, I am so happy, so happy, because I have a real mother now, and because I have discovered what I want to be!

You were right. No one could help me. I have to decide for myself. However, Fate intervened and pointed toward the goal.

It happened four days ago. I sat in a dark corner of the lobby when the bus brought new guests to the hotel.

The first one who jumped out was a slender young woman, with a very pale face, and jet black bobbed hair.

The manner in which she entered the hall told me that she was traveling alone and that she was accustomed to traveling alone. I sat admiring her dress while she spoke to the *Portier*. She felt that she was being watched, turned quickly, and let her eyes rove searchingly around the lobby. When they fell on me, she smiled, and at that moment she looked about fifteen years old. (I had taken her to be about twenty-five.)

She spoke English fluently, but when I heard

her mention Copenhagen as her home, I decided to make her acquaintance.

You know it is so very easy when one comes from a small country.

"I hear you are Danish. So am I. Is there anything I can help you with?"

"It is strange to meet a person from one's own country in this little hole."

We were acquainted.

She is a journalist, and has been sent down here by her paper. The four days she has been here have gone so quickly that I cannot understand how the time has flown.

Her name—I almost forgot that—Inger Beck, twenty-two years old, both parents dead, independent, frightfully amusing, and possessing an energy that makes me dizzy.

But you may be sure that I do not let her feel that it is hard for me to keep up with her tempo. The week she is here must be utilized to the utmost.

It is astounding how much I have to learn, and she is a wonderfully enlightening teacher.

I am going to be a journalist. When I hear her speak about the work and the life of a newspaper office, I know *that* is the life for me.

I am determined to learn it. I *shall* learn it!

"Do you think I can do it?" I ask her, timidly.

"Not if you have the slightest doubt about your abilities. Everyone will tell you that you *cannot,* and that will rob you of your courage."

"*Of course* I can!" I answer in a firm voice. "No one can make me doubt my powers." (I am quick to learn, am I not?)

"Then show it!"

"How?"

"There you are! That is for you to find out!"

My brain nearly split, thinking. The same evening I handed her an article—"Winter modes in Switzerland," nonchalantly and indifferently, without telling her that I had written and rewritten it at least ten different ways before I found the right style—pungent, light, and entertaining.

"How much do you want for it?" she asked after reading it.

"I don't want anything!" I answered, embarrassed.

"Are you mad? Did you not tell me yesterday that you wanted to be independent? But it is harder for women to become accustomed to that than men. I have learned through bitter experience that a laborer is worthy of his hire. You shall not only take it, but you shall demand it!"

Suddenly she struck another note.

"I am sure you thought I was terribly arrogant yesterday."

"Oh, I don't know."

"Yes. Everyone calls me arrogant. Also in the office. But I don't care. It is because there is no question in my mind but that I can become somebody. For I have the determination and the *power,* though one is not supposed to realize that, because it is pretentious and arrogant."

"One does not need to talk about it," I demurred. "Is it not sufficient to know it?"

"It is expressed through one's personality without talking," she answered. "Your article is clever, but you lack technique. You ought to be associated with a small-town paper for a year or two. Then the rest will be easy."

She talks and talks and I just listen.

I have read some of her articles. I can see that they possess a style that mine lacks, and she is both witty and quick at repartee, but I must admit I was slightly disappointed. I believe I could do it better myself after I learned the trick. (There you are! my arrogance is already blooming!)

Oh, Mother! just imagine being part of such a life, of such work! Isn't that just the thing I have always longed for? At present I must be content merely to interview the journalist herself, but some day when I really start and it becomes a reality! . . .

I have a goal now, and do not need to waste my energy any longer in aimless and silly drifting. My first step will be to persuade Father. How on earth I shall do it, I have not the slightest idea, but it must be done!

And of course I now have you to lean upon. For you are going to encourage me—aren't you! You will have faith in my ability, and you will write to me often, very often!

You, too, had a hard fight before you "arrived." Did you have someone to help you?

I am your daughter, and I shall reach as far as you have, for we are alike, you and I, and we are going to stick together—always!

Father is outside, knocking at my door. He asks me if I am never coming down to dinner. I must give him a kiss . . . from you, also . . . because he is so good to me. . . . I shall not tell him about it.

Lots of love,
Yours, Vera.

London, January 20.

Darling Vera:

Thank you for your letter. Such joy of youth, beauty, and health breathes from its pages! Such a faith in life, happiness, and the future! You must know that, as I can help you, so can you help me; you have done so already in your last letter.

The last few days I have been studying a part in one of these rather empty English conversational plays which are the vogue of to-day. The action takes place in the same world as that in which I lived before I retired to devote myself exclusively to my art. Mrs. G. is visiting Mrs. E. and a little gossip around the tea table starts the intrigue. The types are good enough, true enough to life, but of no consequence whatever.

I already have played many such parts and have been highly praised for my portrayals. There were always some people who would recognize a good friend through my slightly exaggerated impersonation—never anyone who would recognize himself.

But in the conception of this particular part—

a lady of my own age with a grown daughter, I was at a loss—could not get the right angle.

The world war changed the young girl's whole trend of thought. She wanted, like you, to be of some use in the world; wanted to go her own way; but the family objected. She tries to win her mother to her side, and reproaches her for not helping her.

But the mother answers sorrowfully:

"I cannot help you, child. I have lived so long among the people here that I have become like them."

I could not get in contact with this mother. Her lack of energy and resistance amazed me. Her words were too vague and helpless. There was nothing to take hold of.

Then came your letter, sparkling with youthfulness, energy and ambition. It awakened old feelings and thoughts in me. I listened, like the old race-horse, for the signal to start, and suddenly the words, "I have lived so long among the people here that I have become like them," acquired a new meaning. And in that moment the part was created!

Her mind is now in a troubled, nervous state. A strange, half-conscious restlessness permeates her being, like the sound of old, well-known melodies. One feels throughout the lines her solitary

inner struggle, until she succumbs to the influence of those around her. And when the daughter's will prevails and she leaves her home, the mother is not left behind sorrowing and resigned, but happily smiling, she looks ahead as if a new hope is blossoming in her heart.

There was a great deal of discussion about my conception of the part, but I won the victory, the stage director taking sides with me.

"It looks as if you had had a vision," he said.

Did I not have—your letter!

I am thinking of what you wrote about Father's visit to London. If he really went to the theatre that time and saw me play, it was not in a German play, however. They have been banished from here since the beginning of the war, unfortunately.

But I remember one evening, about that time, someone sent me a bouquet of La France roses, without a card.

I thought of him a great deal that evening—my wedding bouquet consisted of those flowers. Was that perhaps a greeting from—no!

But we are going to talk about you, and the decision you have made.

I see you in my thoughts, standing at the cross road, vacillating and puzzled. Then she arrives, your new friend with the jet black bobbed hair,

the easy jargon, and the superb self-esteem, and crosses your path. Her assurance awes you, and you decide at once to follow her. You believe that if you only follow in her footsteps, you are on the right road.

I also have had my ideals, my models whom I blindly followed. But not until the day when I fully found myself, when I trod my own path and stood isolated and alone, did I really arrive.

But you just follow the road you believe lies plainly before you. Perhaps then you will find the seed from whence your future shall bloom. Or, perhaps—who knows?—you will find on the road the world's most wonderful man, who, as I know now, does not need to be without faults and blemishes, but just the one who speaks the right words to your heart.

You ask me if I have ever cried with joy. Yes, oh, yes! I suppose once in the life of every human being, gladness and happiness come so violently surging through the being, that the heart cannot hold it all, and tears burst forth.

You wrote in your last letter that you admire me because I dare to act—and, at that, in a foreign language.

But English was my father's language—not my mother's; she was French. If you ever meet the world's most wonderful man, I would wish,

for your sake, that he was of your own nationality. Education and the customs of daily life are different in every country, and regardless of how madly in love one is, there comes the day when the different points of view must clash.

Mother and Father were much in love, but they tortured each other in spite of themselves. Each one held doggedly to his own views, and, one day, they separated.

I lived with Mother for two years, and when she died, my father took me away from Paris. He was an English civil engineer, and traveled a great deal. I went everywhere with him. He could not get along without me.

He had been longing for me every day for two years, and it was as if this longing had intensified his love for me. He wanted to rear me in his own manner, and often he would talk bitterly about how inefficient and confused I had become from the French manner of education.

So, like you, I was brought up by a man.

I felt I was very fortunate to accompany my father on his travels. We lived now here, now there—the whole world was ours. Wherever we stopped, a new home was created for us.

"We two," Father so often said in the tenderest voice, while he pressed me closely to his heart,

"We two." That was our alliance in which no outside power could interfere.

We went to Denmark, to a little provincial town on the east coast of Jutland. Father was to supervise the installation of Danish cream separators and other machinery into a great dairy under construction there. He was very busy, and we were rarely together, except in the evening. There were many people who wanted to look after me, but they did not understand me, and I did not understand them. For the first time, I was in a country in which the language was an obstacle to me.

I was growing very rapidly just then, pale and scrawny, and Father became very anxious about me. At last I was sent out to the country, following the advice of a physician.

But even then I did not gain in weight and health. I walked among these strangers still more lonely and forlorn. I longed for Father with whom I was wont to share all my thoughts.

I ate like a bird, the lady of the house said. And every night I cried myself to sleep between the heavy, multi-colored blankets in the great guest chamber.

I called for Father in my sleep, and woke up in terror when I heard my own voice.

At last some one became frightened at my con-

dition, and wrote to Father. But I knew nothing about it, as it was to be a surprise for me.

I remember I sat on the high stone steps, playing with some pebbles, when the carriage which had been down to the station drove into the yard.

I looked up indifferently, but at that instant I saw my father and uttered a cry.

I raced to him; I moaned while I ran. I could not get a sound through my lips for the choking sensation in my throat.

Father immediately jumped from the carriage and took me in his arms. His voice was also hoarse with suppressed emotion when he pressed me to his heart and whispered in his tenderest tone: "We two."

With my arms around his neck, I sobbed for joy. I cried out all my longing, all my feeling of loneliness there, on his breast.

We did not part for a moment all day long, and the next day he took me into town with him. Never, never again would he be without me!

That was the first time I wept for joy.

Two months later we parted forever. Father died suddenly, just the day he laid the finishing touch to his work there, the day before we were to return to England. But the day he died, I gained a new friend, the only one I have ever had

beside the two who have been nearest to me in life,—my father and my husband.

Father became ill while sitting on a bench near the dairy. He had gone there the last evening to take a final look at his work before he left.

He was brought home, dying, and a few minutes afterwards he drew his last breath.

I stood without tears as if turned into stone when they laid him on the sofa. The rooms became filled with strangers, but I did not see them.

Then *he* came—the aristocratic old gentleman who lived near the hotel where we were. He did not come as the other noisy, scared people, but entered, silently and gravely. My eyes met his, which were filled with tears, expressing the deepest compassion for the lonely foreign child. Without realizing what I was doing, I threw my arms around his neck, and wildly sobbing, I kept repeating these words:

"I haven't a father any longer."

He pressed my hand silently and took me away from there. My trembling little hand rested contentedly in his, and I followed him as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

I lived in his house. I had only distant relatives who had never seen me and had no interest in me. Matters were therefore easily arranged in regard to my adoption by him.

I grew up in his beautiful home in the calm, peaceful atmosphere of a small provincial town. I went to school there. I became a Dane.

Years after, in his home, I met your father,—and our wedding took place there. Shortly after that, my only friend died.

That time the tears came as a vent for all happiness and all sorrows. But I have also cried, as you said in your letter, from utter joy, over the great, the wonderful, the incomprehensible; over the fact that I have strength and will and talent.

That was on the first night I conquered my audience, when I stood on the stage with the plaudits thundering about me, and I felt as if the sun were rising higher and higher, scattering all clouds, all sorrows.

That night I thought I had won a lasting victory, but in time I found that the laurel wreath of art has to be won over and over again.

You asked me how I struggled through the battle, if anyone gave me a helping hand.

More than any living being could, did the memory of my two dead friends help me, my own father and my adopted father. They had believed in me and loved me, and for the sake of them I conquered myself and my own rebellious spirit.

Those two would never have approved of my actions when I left home. But they would have understood that I acted as I was bound to, following the dictates of my own unbalanced nature. They would have *forgiven* me and *continued to believe in me,* and their faith in me, which they carried with them to their graves, I *could* not destroy.

But what helped me as much as anything else was the opposition I met. There are people born to a peaceful life; there were others born to a life of striving and struggling, and each one carries the lot meted out to him. I have had to struggle hard on my road to success, but I was tempered by it, and I do not pity myself, for I do not know what I should have done with repose.

It is late now, and I must finish.

While I read this letter through, I become aware of the difference between your letter to me and my answer to you. Yours is filled with visions and hopes of the future; mine with memories of the past.

The richness of your life lies hidden in the future. The past is the sumptuous spring from which I draw sorrow and joy, dearly bought experiences, with which I augment and heighten my art. Every age has its well to draw from, its dreams to live upon.

Now you know so much more about your unknown mother. Little by little, you shall learn to know me through my letters, and only then can you judge if I am worthy of your love.

I am anxious to know how Father will react toward your decision. Tell me everything that happens.

Kiss him once more for me; kiss him on the kind grandfather wrinkles, but do not mention my name. Never mention it. It will only hurt him.

Good-night, my darling little girl!

Mother.

Hotel Titlis, Engelberg.
January 26.

Dear Mother:

It has happened. I have won, and the fight was neither hard nor long. The whole thing came so unexpectedly. And now, well, now I stand at the gate, proud, but slightly scared. It is not the same feeling of joy which caught me when I stood on the peak of Mount Titlis.

I am afraid, afraid that perhaps I have made the wrong choice, afraid that, after all, I may not be equal to the task. Whenever I think of my friend who never for an instant ceases to believe in her abilities and power, I become still more frightened.

My panic alone seems to me to be an indication that perhaps I have made an error.

However, you must not think that I show any outward signs of my doubts. To all appearances, I am as calm and sure of myself as she was—and I catch myself thinking that she, too, perhaps was only outwardly so. Or can self-confidence become a habit? Perhaps!

There are days when everything seems to go

against me. As the day before yesterday, for instance.

It started with my friend's going away. We did not fall crying upon each other's necks at the station. I think it would have been as impossible for her as for me. We parted with an "auf wiedersehen in Copenhagen," but I do not believe that either of us thought we would meet again.

At school I always had the reputation of being unfaithful to my friends, because I did not go about with the same ones for years at a stretch. Oh, I admit I *am* fickle. I greedily hang on to every new person I come in contact with, trying to draw from them their experiences, opinions, thoughts, and observations, and when I have squeezed the lemon thoroughly, I throw it away.

I could have learned a great deal more from my new friend, but it was *she* who first squeezed me thoroughly and my vanity was wounded.

On the same day I had expected a letter from you, and none arrived. That was really the day's keenest disappointment, even though it was my fault, as I had calculated wrongly.

In the afternoon I went skiing with a young Mr. Donald from London. In vain did I keep the conversation going on the subject of "the theatre" in the hope that he would mention your

name. But he did not, and I was on the verge of tears.

Once I was on a Christmas vacation with father in Norway, so I am not an absolute idiot when it comes to skiing. But I am not particularly skilful, and he was.

I have always liked him because he treats me like a boy and never pays me any compliments, but it was really not necessary for him to choose one of the most difficult hills which has two turns and a fairly long jump.

Of course it would never occur to me to let him see that I was afraid. I raced along, again and again, and continually lost my balance on the first turn or jump, and presto! there I was, lying in the snow. I would not have minded it, but I kept on rolling and sliding down, in the wake of the skiis and the sticks, which continued their difficult descent.

I wanted to learn it to perfection, and at last I persuaded Mr. Donald to let me try his skiis. They are furnished with straps so that they can be fastened to the feet. They do not fall off in the jumps, but they are dangerous if you stumble, for that very reason.

I cleared the first turn beautifully, also the jump, and faster and faster I went. It was impossible for me in this wild race to retain my

control over those skiis, which were so much heavier than my own. I fell at the last turn, was thrown forward and sideways, felt a stinging pain in my left foot which I could not get loose, and kept on sliding, with those heavy, impossible skis still on my feet.

Mr. Donald, who stood at the foot of the hill, stopped me and unstrapped the skiis. He was as pale as a ghost, and insisted that we return home. We decided to walk instead of ski to the hotel, for my foot was still hurting me.

I find it somewhat difficult to tell what happened next. I feel that I have no right to tell it, as it concerns another person too, but I have promised to write you about everything that happens to me, and it is a question to which I *must* have an answer.

Do you believe that a young girl is entirely responsible if a young man proposes to her? I mean, could she prevent it, and ought she to do so if she does not want to accept him?

Of course I do not mean those insufferable girls who keep a collection of their conquests, so to speak, and boast of them afterward. There exists a type of modern girl which is not averse to a kiss behind the door, and is supposed therefore to be considered more mature mentally than the rest of us. As a matter of fact they are less

so. If they had any idea what love really means, they would not promiscuously portion it out to Tom, Dick and Harry, but keep it intact until the right one comes along. But do you for an instant believe that I could have—well, yes—have prevented Mr. Donald from proposing to me, for *that* was what he did on our way back.

I assure you it never occurred to me that he was in love with me. I do not know if I am different from other young girls who insist that one is *always* conscious of such things. I have never been conscious of them. I have the reputation of being able to keep the young and too venturesome bloods at a distance with almost too much impudence. But I do it because they irritate me, and not because I am afraid they might propose to me. Thank heavens I am not as conceited as that!

And now here is Mr. Donald, who was always so nice and sweet. I do not understand it. His voice suddenly became so strange, and there was something in his eyes that frightened me. Then it dawned on me that he was on the verge of proposing, and I stared at him, terror-stricken.

"No! no! no!" I said, alarmed and on the point of tears, and he kept silent, while his head dropped forward on his breast, and his face turned as white as a sheet.

It was strange to see, and made me very unhappy. The pain in my foot became worse, but I did not dare to ask if I might lean on him for fear that he would misinterpret my meaning. Besides, he carried the skiis and the sticks. When we reached the hotel, I hurried to my room, before he had time to say anything more.

My foot had swelled to such a size that I was compelled to cut the shoelaces in order to get the shoe off. I went to bed at once and sent word to Father. He saw that I had been crying, but thought it was because of the pain in my foot. It was impossible for me to sleep. I could not forget Mr. Donald's unhappy face. It seemed to me that I had treated him brutally and heartlessly, and regretted that I had not tried to make him understand me. He was undoubtedly more wretched than I was.

At ten o'clock Father came up again to see me. Was my foot any better? They were dancing downstairs, and Mr. Donald was there, too. I was surprised, and no less so when I received a note the next morning (yesterday), in which he asked me to forget what he had said. He had forgotten himself on the spur of the moment.

I had had a sleepless night. The blankets seemed to lie like lead on my foot, but at last I hit upon the idea of putting my foot into my

waste basket, and putting the blankets on top. That helped.

Late in the afternoon the doctor called. It was the usual procedure. He listened to my lungs. I believe he would have done that if I had told him that it was my appendix which hurt me. Always those lungs. The foot did not particularly interest him. I had strained a muscle . . . bandages . . . a few days in bed.

But he told Father that my lungs were now perfectly well. They spoke very earnestly together.

The doctor said: "You can go home any time now, but your daughter needs something to occupy her mind."

Father answered: "At home she is interested in many things: books, theatres, friends and social affairs in general."

The doctor looked at him seriously, and said, "No. I mean work."

Then they continued their talk outside in the hall.

A servant brought a box of flowers from a young Frenchman. He had heard of my accident, but hoped soon to have the pleasure of dancing with me again. I sent the servant over to the postoffice to ask if there was any letter

from you. There was, and time flew while I read it.

I feel like a different and superior being, now that I know I have a French grandmother and an English grandfather. There aren't many who can boast of such an ancestry.

You write that they were not very happily married because they belonged to two different nations, and that you hope I will eventually marry a man of my own nationality. But you did not do that yourself in spite of your knowledge and experience, and when all is said and done, I am half English, don't you know. By the way, Father's parents had two widely divergent natures, although of the same nationality.

I have often asked Father how on earth it could occur to a rather solid, heavy landowner from the moors of Jutland to marry such a slender, delicate and slightly snobbish young society girl as I imagine Grandmother must have been in her youth. His only answer is that Grandfather had a great sense of humor.

It is too bad that he died so young. Otherwise Grandmother would not have moved to Copenhagen. Just think! I could have spent my summers on his moors instead of tramping

from one seaside resort to another, for I don't call that being in the country.

Did you know Grandfather? Did you meet Father there on the farm? I should like to know if it is true that no one can plow a furrow as straight as he, nor drive a team of horses as well.

I am inclined to believe him, for he is a sportsman to his finger tips. When he drives the automobile, I feel perfectly safe. It would not matter how suddenly something might cross our path, he would be sure to steer clear of it. His eye is so calm and steady, and his face almost transfigured when he drives through a crowded street.

I should think he could manage a pair of high-spirited horses in the same calm, steady way, and it would be impossible to feel unsafe.

I look forward to the moment when my foot is well again, for then we are going home, and I shall race across the continent with my own big daddy at the wheel.

I am so proud of him, but now when I have read your letter, I can see how different he is from *your* father. Father never says, "we two," but "for *your* sake." I would rather that it should be "we two" though; it is so beautiful.

Yesterday afternoon he came into my room, smiling, with his hands behind his back.

"Tell me now what little provincial journalist is smitten with you?" he asked, jestingly.

I paled and blushed alternately and stretched out my hand.

"Is there a letter for me?"

"Yes. With the address of the newspaper on the envelope." He laughed. "Do you want to enjoy it in privacy?"

"No, Father. Don't go," I begged, and he sat down obediently and looked away while I read.

I knew it was an answer from the paper I had written to and impatiently I tore open the envelope. I was accepted!

Despondent over having nothing to do, and over my general uselessness, I had daily scanned the "help wanted" column in the Danish papers. Just about the time that my friend arrived here, I found an advertisement offering a position to a young man as cub reporter. I applied for the job.

I wrote a humorous letter to the editor, in which I excused myself for not being a young man. Evidently my epistle amused him. At any rate, here I was with his answer in my hand. He wrote that it was just such lively stuff they needed for the paper; that I would receive the munificent sum of forty kronen a month, and that I must telegraph my decision at once.

Mother, dear, I did not tell you about it in my last letter, it was all so uncertain. I really did not have much hope, and the offer came like lightning out of a clear sky.

I looked at Father. He sat in his chair, smiling.

"Father," I said, trying to speak as casually as possible, "have you been thinking of what the doctor said about work?"

And his answer was the last thing in the world I had expected. He said:

"Yes, I have been thinking about it. The doctor and I had lunch together, and we spoke about you. I think it would be better if you chose the work you would like to do, yourself."

"Oh, Father!" I opened my arms to give him a big hug. He sat down on the knee of my bad leg, but I forgot to yell in my excitement.

I showed him the letter, and his face became grave. He had not expected that we should have to part. There were so many things I could do in Copenhagen. I did not need to take myself too seriously. Why bury one's self in a small provincial town when one is young and full of life? But he had promised me, and you know that Father always keeps his promises—always!

"Vera, dear," he said, tenderly, and took my hand, "don't stay there too long. I can't get

along without you, but I will do it for your sake!"

"Father," I cried, and hugged him again. "We two." I thought of you and your father when I said it, and Father took off his glasses which had become slightly moist.

"We two," he repeated. "Dear little child! We two!"

And already, only two days later, I am frightened.

Father is anxious to get home. He has told me that there are some business matters he has to attend to. For that reason he is really glad to go, in addition to the fact that I am well again. He has been puttering with the automobile all day long. A little while ago, when he came in, he had a black smudge on his nose, but it was really becoming to him. Everything is becoming to him, don't you think? I nodded to him and said, "We two." He did not know that I meant "we three," and that it was you who had taught me the right words.

Yours,

VERA.

P.S. Please send your next letter to, General Delivery, Charlottenlund.

London, February 2.

Darling Vera:

So you are again in Denmark. In my thoughts I have accompanied you and Father on your auto trip, up through Germany, away from the snow and the sun and the clear air of the Alps, into the darkness, and the desolate plains, the fog and the rain. Through silent forests of evergreen you go, speeding along torpid rivers, farther and farther north, on roads of sand and pebbles, out toward the ocean.

Father sits at the wheel, calm and sure of himself, enjoying the excitement of the sport, and you at his side, wrapped in furs to the tip of your nose.

I know you well enough already to be sure you would not creep under shelter in the tonneau of the car, behind his back. *You* want to enjoy the speed, to feel the pressure of the wind against your face, to follow the turns in the road with your eyes, and count the milestones along its edge. Meanwhile you listen with rapture to the loud whir of the engine which fills you with nervous energy.

Home! Home to work!

And I see "you two" stand at the rail of the ferryboat that carries you across *"Östersöen,"* your eyes sparkling in anticipation of the future. Father is tender and sorrowful, because he knows that the future which beckons to his little girl, will leave him sad and alone.

But at that, for a little while yet, you are with him, and perhaps he still hopes deep down in his heart that you will change your mind at the last moment. The fact that he gave you his permission, that he voluntarily renounced the pleasure of your companionship, that he only thought of *your* happiness, is a proof to me that life has also taught him resignation.

At last you stop in front of the Villa in Charlottenlund. It is ablaze with welcoming lights, and the rooms are filled with flowers. Grandmother and Aunt Edith receive you at the entrance. Coziness and warmth radiate from everywhere. They carry you in triumph to your own rooms and unwrap the furs about you.

Your own rooms! I wonder how they look now! When I left you, they were furnished to suit your infantile needs, with diminutive white lacquered chairs and tables, toy closets, naïve pictures on the walls and shelves full of all sorts of story books.

Now, when they are occupied by a pampered young lady, I suppose they look quite different, reflecting your own taste and individuality.

Don't you feel a slight pain in your heart when you think that you will soon leave your own cozy nest, and move into a lonely little room, far away from the loving care of those nearest you?

For, whatever they are, one way or another, they certainly pamper and spoil you.

And what do you think they will say, those two, when they hear what you intend to do? I wonder if you won't have to look for the worst struggle there. I wonder if you will find the same unselfish understanding that you found in your father?

You see, they don't understand that there are human beings who demand that life be interpreted by a succession of violent chords, and who cannot be contented to listen to the hushed and simple melodies of the home.

Dear, if they but knew how often we who live in the very midst of the world catch ourselves listening for a homelike, well known strain, and are touched to the heart when we hear it. If they but knew that there lives in us a deep longing for what we left behind, for what we sacrifice—the sweet atmosphere of the home! And from that longing, eternal art is created!

He who has not experienced what it is to yearn or be lonesome, does not know what real love is, and that is why we must go out into solitude, away from everything which binds us with the strongest ties.

I see before my mind's eye my former home. I see the table festively arrayed. I see, behind the vase of flowers, your father's handsome, serious face, and I hear the slight quiver of his voice when he lifts his glass and bids you "Welcome home!" Already the grey day looms before him when you again will part . . . Poor Father!

Why must we human beings always hurt each other—often hurting most poignantly those we love the best?

You have already experienced that yourself. In your last letter you told me how deeply grieved you were because you had to hurt the feelings of a young man—a good comrade. And you ask me if it is not possible to avoid such things.

I do not think so, and you should not censure yourself too much, for in this case, at any rate, you were without blame.

In its first stages, love is mere play, a game of hide-and-seek, I am tempted to think, in which neither of the participants dare show themselves in their true colors. It may last for days, weeks,

months. Sometimes you are sure; sometimes not. You are afraid to show your feelings because they may not be reciprocated. You become cold and unapproachable in order not to betray your innermost self. Many times two people who were really made for each other, have gone their separate ways because neither dared to be the first to show his hand.

Toward the man in whom you only see the friend and the comrade, you are, on the contrary, sincere and unaffected, quite without any calculation or scruples; and this attitude, of course, might be misinterpreted by a man who is of an emotional and susceptible nature.

So don't worry yourself. Mr. Donald will get over it. He is perhaps already over it. But it is sad to lose your good friends that way.

I wrote you that I *wished* for your sake that when you meet the right one, he would be of your own nationality. But when you do meet the right one, you are not able to pass him by. You must stop, no matter from where he hails, and *must* follow wherever he goes. Neither your own experiences nor those of others can help you in the least when you are in love. And I *was* in love with your father.

How did it come about that your grandfather married your grandmother? you ask. I really

don't know. The French have a clever litttle saying which expresses the whole matter in a nutshell: *Les extrêmes se touchent.*

One thing is sure, and that is that no two people could be more complete contrasts than those two. He met her while she was learning to manage a house, as all Danish girls do, even from the highest walks of life, in a parsonage near his estate. She is supposed to have been absolutely cold toward his advances in the beginning, and perhaps it wounded his vanity and awakened his love of conquest, and she permitted herself to be taken by surprise. Perhaps, also, the thought of being able to twist the strong will of this man around her little finger flattered her vanity.

Well, do you think that his infatuation endured much beyond her entry into his home, when she began to turn everything in the ancient manor upside down. She changed the old rooms, which were distinguished by an air of heavy solidity, into a luxuriously furnished society nest, where Grandfather never learned to feel at home.

I believe I have told you that I met your father at the home of my old friend and foster-father. He stopped over there for a short visit on his way home, where he was to spend his vacation,

and in his two days there we became much more than merely good friends.

The day after he left I received a letter from his parents, inviting me over to visit them, and I went at once.

Oh, dear! in the month following, we played just such a love game as that of which I have just written, alternately happy and wretched. Every other day I stood at the pinnacle of happiness; and every second day I went to bed crying, with the intention of packing my trunks and going away.

But the following morning, when he knocked at my window and asked me to go out into the fields with him and watch the men at work, I forgot all about my resolutions and went with him.

And, at last, when we were to part, each to go his own way, it dawned upon us both that we could not get along without each other.

We did not doubt for one moment that our love was deep and eternal. It was impossible for us to imagine that a condition should ever exist between us as existed between his parents, whose wretched married life was always before us. For I soon discovered in the month I was there that everything between these two was over. They did not enjoy anything in common, not a thought, not a taste, not even the rooms.

As Father says, Grandfather had a great sense of humor, and I must tell you one of his practical jokes.

The day I arrived there, your father met me at the station. It had been raining, but just as the train arrived the sun broke through the clouds.

"The sun is bidding you welcome," said Father, and smiled.

It was not a long walk to the house, and Father and I, who had not seen each other for three days, and therefore decided that we had many things to talk about, sent the trunks on with the carriage, and walked home.

We entered the hall unseen, and Father helped me off with my coat. Then he opened the door into the main living room to let me enter first. But I stopped, confused, when I saw a big sign right inside the door, which read:

"Please wipe your feet well. The carpet is of a delicate color."

I flew out again, and started to scrape my feet well on the mat, while your father laughed. Still, when I walked across the carpet to pay my respects to Grandmother, who sat at the other end of the room and looked at me above her spectacles, I could not help looking behind me to see if I had left any marks. And ever after I had

a feeling of insecurity whenever I walked about in this much-too-dainty room.

I was told afterward that Grandmother had put up this sign because Grandfather could never learn to change his boots when he came in from the field, but always came bursting in.

The first day the sign was there, Grandfather came in, as usual, but stopped to read it. He burst into laughter, turned on his heel, and went into his own rooms. He never again put his foot inside the door of the living room. But he had his revenge.

Bordering on the garden lay a field which adjoined that of the parsonage. Many times during the day, Grandmother visited this place where she felt at home since the time she had been a pupil of house-managing and where, as she put it, "there were people she could talk to."

She always went the same way, through the garden and across the fields to the parsonage; it was a much shorter cut than the main road.

But when she came down there the day after she had put up her sign, she found the gate closed, and a six-foot barbed-wire fence in front of it. A sign exactly like her own was hung on the post, which read:

"Go down the main road, please. The grass is painted."

Dear, I could tell you many stories from that place, amusing and pathetic. Only in the fields and woods was it possible to breathe freely; and so your father and I were there most of the time.

I will have to put my pen aside for today, as I do not feel quite well. It is my head—neuralgia. I caught cold at the theatre last night. There was something wrong with the heating system, which suddenly refused to work, and it was terribly cold everywhere. We wandered about on the stage between artificial roses, in thin summer dresses, and nearly froze to death. Fortunately, at present, there are no more rehearsals. The play I spoke to you about has opened and is a big success.

It was a great personal triumph, but it did not give me much satisfaction. On the contrary, as an artist, I feel that the piece is below standard.

I am anxious to know if you really are going away to that small town, if you have the courage, and if you have the permission.

A thousand loving wishes,

Your Mother.

P. S.—Pardon the writing and the general slovenliness, which are all on account of my head.

Postal card.

Main Railroad Station,

February 14.


Aunt Edith.


Father.


I.


Mother.


Grandmother.

Dear Mother:

Think of me! In a few minutes the train will leave the station for Jutland, and I will be left to my own resources for the first time in my life! Thank you for the letter!

Heavens! how dissipated I am! Above, you see the champagne glasses from which the family drank to my health. I have permitted myself to send one to you, but it was unfortunately absent at the feast.

Father settled the whole matter with Auntie and Grandmother, without me. They were highly indignant, and I am therefore absolutely sure I am on the right track.

I promise to send you a *real* letter soon, but have done nothing but fly from one farewell party to another.

I have no sleeper—Grandmother is blubbering —I hope the train waits for me—but I simply *had* to send these lines—good-bye! good-bye!—address letter, care newspaper—not General Delivery, thank heavens!

Yours, Vera.

P. S.—I hope you are rid of your neuralgia. I know of a treatment—shall I come to you? Ha! Ha!

London, February 20.

Dearest Vera:

Thanks for your postal card. Again, out into the wide, wide world—and all by yourself. I did not think it would be as soon as that. I had palpitation of the heart when I read the few lines you had scrawled down at the railroad station.

You haven't lost your high spirits, I see—or was the little "ha! ha!" at the end of the card perhaps an outburst of nervousness? You can understand that I look forward to your next letter with great impatience. I am dying to hear about your new enterprise, what sort of assignments you get, what sort of people you work with, how your days are spent and what you do in the evening when you have finished your work.

Where are you living? What people are there you can associate with? There are a thousand different questions I would like to ask. But I expect now that with your well-known talent for letter writing, you will paint me a word picture of the entire little amusing—or do you find it boresome—town in which you live.

I wish I could pack my trunk and come to visit

you. Wouldn't it be wonderful? We would take long walks in the outskirts of the town, and in the evening we two would eat our dinner at the hotel. How we should talk together!—a thing one cannot fully do through letters, because each question must wait so long for its answer.

I regret that I cannot write very much to you today, because I am still quite ill and tired. It takes such a time for me to recuperate, because I must play at the theatre every evening.

The piece is a great box-office success, but this success depends on my playing the principal role. I do not say so in a spirit of boasting but the producer insists it is so and was greatly put out when he heard I was ill.

So I lie in bed all day, and at six o'clock I get up, have my dinner, and go to the theatre.

I must take pill after pill to keep the fever down, and when I return home in the evening, my sweet old housekeeper is there with a hot lemonade all ready to be served me in bed. I sleep very little, have bad dreams, and am delirious.

Last night it was all about you. I saw you jump on the train when it was already started. You lost your balance on the step, and I saw Father catch you in his arms and hold you close,

while the train went on its way and disappeared in the distance. Both of you cried, and you hid your head on his breast as if you feared that he would let you go. Did you catch that train? Or did you change your mind at the last moment? What does the dream mean?

Perhaps nothing at all; only a reaction from your letter.

I cannot write any longer. Perhaps you can see from my writing how difficult it is for me. But I must send you my warmest congratulations for your new life at once.

"Shall I come to you?" you ask, and laugh at your own crazy question. You know a treatment.

I close my eyes and think of you sitting at my bedside, laying your little cool hand on my brow and stroking it lightly and lovingly. And suddenly my eyes fill with tears and I cry so that I am awakened by my own sobs. Still, I feel slightly better now. You have been in my room and have touched my brow. I will soon be well again.

Good-bye, darling Vera! and the heartiest congratulations from

Your Mother.

February 20.

Dear Mother:

Heavens and earth! I have been here five days and I haven't written a word! Well, I hope that a letter from you will cross mine somewhere out in the North Sea. Perhaps at this very moment you are writing to me—wonderful thought!

Acclimatized! I hope I shall never be! I say to myself every morning when I arise, and every night when I go to bed, that this is only a step to something better, or I don't think I would be able to stand it.

This is a dreadful place, but beautiful. Dear, how I enjoy it!—and hate it! I have a good time—and am lonesome. Let me start with the present. It will be easier for me.

Very well. I am sitting this very minute at my desk by a window looking out upon the yard. I have just had a conference with "Amtstidende" and "Stiftstidende" (our worst competitors, with whom we always fight, officially, but otherwise are friendly with), as to who should cover

a high school meeting, a director's meeting, and a revival meeting.

*I* got the last. One has to put up with a good many things when one is new in the game. Afterward we shall exchange reports.

But I must tell you about my arrival here. *Some* arrival, to use the king's English!

I slept like a stone as soon as we passed the sound. (I strongly advise a bridge across that narrow sound. One turns bolshevik when one is compelled to go out on a cold dark night while the lucky ones who have berths enjoy a comfortable sleep. Perhaps I haven't the right "swing of it." I can't help thinking that if Father had been with me he would have seen to it that I had a berth.)

Now, about the arrival. The conductor stuck his head in the window and said: "Hello, little lady! You get out at the next station!"

I know of nothing worse than being called "little lady." However, I forgave him, as otherwise I would have slept on to the end of the road.

While I was combing my hair, I put my hairpins on the windowsill (if it can be called that); when, oh horror! suddenly the pins disappeared in the crack between the window and the sill and I could not get them out again.

So I arrived at seven o'clock, sleepy-eyed, with

my hair down my back. I bought a piece of stale chocolate from a stale old woman in the ladies' waiting room, and asked her with my most ingratiating smile if I could not also buy a package of hairpins.

No, she didn't have any; but with a magnificent gesture, she drew a couple from her own head and handed them to me. (Three cheers! ha! ha! I didn't get those from Father!)

Next, I telephoned to the paper, and the editor told me to walk up the main street. It is the narrowest street in the city; so it is called Broad Street. Walking in the afternoon on this superbly gay thoroughfare one sees nothing but faces glued against the window panes. I feel like sticking my tongue out at these critical "spiders" when I pass. I call them spiders, because they lie in wait for a poor fly whom they can devour.

But the arrival. (The editor says I lack a sense of continuity. I suppose because new thoughts crowd into my head, and I *must* write them down before I forget them.)

So! my editor, who possesses the aristocratic euphonious and thoroughly Danish name of Christian Petersen, is a very nice and harmless person. He never swears, never bawls you out, and practically never says a word, excepting to make a slightly ironical remark. He stood in the

door, big and broad, in embroidered slippers, a long pipe in his mouth, and cried "stop!" when I was going to pass by.

He told me to go to this place and that place, where I would be able to rent a room.

I followed his directions and in the outskirts of the city, with a lovely view of field and forest, I found what I was looking for.

"Sure sure!" said the woman who opened the door. "We are used to them 'news people,' but them fellows were always men!"

I excused myself volubly because I did not happen to be a fellow who was a man, and she said perhaps it would be "sort o' nice" for a change! She had a grin on her face through the whole procedure and the price of the room was eighteen kronen.

"Goodness me! does the young lady think it cheap? The last one only paid sixteen kronen, and I was afraid you would say it was too much. But the young lady is much too modest. Won't the young lady say that she will only take the room if she can have a bureau. Because I want one, and that's the only way I can make my husband get one."

"What! no bureau? Why of course I want one! The idea!"

She giggled happily.

And the lower part of the windows are nailed down "so they won't get too much air."

But what a lark it is to have my own room with a separate entrance and letterbox and everything.

Mine host sleeps in the adjoining room. He snores terribly, but is otherwise quite nice and courteous. They vie with each other in trying to please me. My room has acquired all sorts of pictures and furniture, because I am so "modest." I am the happy lessee of eight pillows on my sofa and on one is embroidered the neat little motto, "Only Half an Hour's Snooze!"

I eat at a boarding house on Broad Street. Up a high stoop and directly into the dining room. I am the only female at the table. Several dry-goods clerks eat there, two of whom have deformed heads. They are very patriotic, and make long political speeches which already have appeared in the morning newspaper. Many of their diatribes are directed against that poor being, Woman, and as I am the only representative of the sex, I have to stand for the whole deluge.

I have a pretty sharp tongue and always an answer ready, but I am angry with myself every time I go out of the door that I have honored such boobs by bothering to speak at all.

Besides these a neighborhood grocer takes his

meals there who has a bad breath and picks his teeth. I am told that he is very rich, but also very close-fisted, and in spite of his unusual lack of manners and his infamous small pig-eyes, he holds that men with money can get any woman they take a fancy to! Ugh!

The landlady has two sweet daughters who wait on the tables, but one rarely sees the man of the house. He has been bed-ridden for months, and to my great surprise, he sat on a chair at the window today when I came in.

When the grocer started a rather smutty story, he said in no uncertain tone:

"I do not permit such stories in my house!" (Three cheers!)

There is also a postmaster's assistant, and a young office man who has promised to teach me to play bridge.

They have taken that excellent stand never to say a word at the table. (I wish I had as much sense, but when I am so good at repartee——)

Dear, dear, dear, if I don't finish within another ten minutes I shan't get any supper before "covering" that revival meeting, and I have hardly written anything! But I must tell you how I spend my day.

Out of bed seven-fifteen (dark). Boarding house (breakfast). Fetch the mail for the paper.

At nine o'clock, receive telegrams from Copenhagen (five a day). Write a humorous leader for a column "Day by Day." Proof-read. (I, who can't spell!)

Yesterday the editor admonished me to be more careful. The commas didn't matter so much, for there aren't many who understand them anyway, and that's the only thing *I* know anything about!

Then I have to write a verse under the pseudonym "Poppy", and besides all this, I must "cover" meetings, lectures, and so on, forever.

The little town takes all its spiritual food in through the ear, and lectures and orators swarm around like busy bees. I have learned to write the reports during the meetings, or I could never get through.

There is a sub-editor here whom I call "Fieldmouse." He is almost a "Copenhagener," and it is generally conceded that he is a great lady-killer, despite his mouse-like teeth.

Further, the business department, one elderly, straight-laced lady who tries to smile pleasantly; three telephones; reporters' room; editorial room; and office—all in one.

Oh, there are so many more things to tell!

I spend my free evenings trying to write stories or poems, which I burn eventually.

But in my letters to Father, everything is quite marvelous here. The dry-goods clerks are bright young business people, and so on, in that key.

I am therefore glad to have you to whom I can tell the truth. To begin with, I found it hard to be ordered around—especially by the Field-mouse. But I have forced myself to get used to it.

Expenditures.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Room ..... | 18 | kronen |
| Board ..... | 90 | " |
| Library ..... | 5 | " |
| Cigarettes ..... | 4 | " |
| Total ..... | 117 | " |

Balance—8 kronen for candy, etc.

Father sends me plenty of pin-money, but I should like to get along all by myself.

Of course I would have to get rid of my expensive habits, for instance: buying second-class railroad tickets to attend meetings in neighboring towns. The paper only pays for third class.

Dear me! I *must* close. Duty calls.

So long!

Vera.

P. S.—I like to interview people. Don't you think it is fun to see through people and later expose them through their talk?

P. S. P. S.—To begin with, I found it difficult to understand the patois of these Jutlanders, but my colleagues were very kind in helping me.

P. S. P. S. P. S.—I must be creating a sensation. The "spiders" are busy at the windows.

London, February 28.

Dearest Vera:

Do you remember what to-day is? Of course you do! Your father's birthday!

In the old days it was a festive season. We celebrated it all by ourselves to Grandmother's great annoyance, who did not like to be cheated out of anything so important. But Father did not care for long speeches and other eulogies. It was of no interest to others that he became one year older; only to us.

With whom does he celebrate to-day? Is he at home with Grandmother and Aunt Edith, or has he been persuaded by Grandmother this once to invite his friends to dinner, fearing the loneliness? Or will he dine out by himself, to avoid speaking about his longing, and to dream about the past?

How strange and meaningless that we three, father, mother, and child, who ought to form a home, should be living apart, each fighting his own battle! You and I, lonely, among strangers and Father perhaps, is still more lonely in his home, broken up because his too delicate sense

of duty permitted outside forces to invade it, which broke the harmony.

I am not accusing anyone—least of all your father, who could not act otherwise, considering his nature and his bringing-up. But I have suffered so much, and now, when I am forced to think of the past through your letters, I sometimes feel a little touch of the old bitterness, which burned in my heart the day I left my home in anger.

Through all these years I have used my work as a soothing potion against my painful thoughts and dreadful longings. My naturally fine sensibilities have become hardened in life's battles. The door which I, with wounded pride, slammed after me, should never be opened again. I would never come as a humble penitent and knock at it. I wanted to forget.

And then, one day, the mail man brought me a letter with a Swiss stamp. The handwriting is known to me. I imagine I see my own helpless yet bold handwriting. The look of the letter alone makes me nervous. It is as if something within me shakes the bolted door; and as I read your letter, it stands suddenly wide open before my mind's eye.

The cozy warmth and bright pleasures of the home pour out to me. The want of all that I left

behind calls again to me; and the child I once held in my arms calls to me.

Is it not a miracle—no one has talked to you about me, and yet I have held a place in your heart? No one has mentioned to you what you were missing, and yet you have always felt a craving—the craving for your mother?

And now it is hopeless for me to battle against it. Every day brings forth some memory; every letter from you or to you brings forth pictures from the past.

For instance, as I dated this letter, I thought at once of the first time you were big enough to congratulate your father before anyone else. I see you standing in your long white nightdress, with your arms full of beautiful roses, impatiently dancing around outside his bedroom. You are waiting for the maid to fetch the birthday cake which you are going to give to your father.

I see you, flushed with excitement, throw the flowers on top of the bed cover, while you try to crawl up into the bed. And when you succeed, you snuggle close to Father, who pretends to be asleep.

You tickle him on the nose and kiss his eyelids and when he opens them in mock alarm, you repeat again and again: "Happy birthday, Dad-

dy!" You cuddle closer still and hug him tightly, and when Father asks you: "How much do you love me?" you answer: "I love you five miles long!"

I sit at the edge of the bed. Father lays his hand on top of mine, looks from you to me, and smiles, "My whole little world," he says, and his voice is so soft and tender that my eyes fill with tears. I am so happy!

That was in the days before those two arrived.

Dear, I wonder if it ever occurs to him that there were some things in my favor when I rebelled later on and went away.

But what *am* I doing! Here I sit and write about the past and forget completely to thank you for your letter. It was very amusing, for I recognized all the types from my early youth spent in small towns.

I thank you for telling me everything as it is and as you see it.

It *must* look a little sordid to you after what you are accustomed to, but your keen sense of humor shines through the whole letter. You possess the happy faculty of being able to laugh at the stupidity of others and to smile at your trials and tribulations.

The windows and the spiders. Yes, I remember how they used to frighten me when I walked

down the main street as a little girl with my hand clutching my father's. I was afraid of all the staring, inquisitive eyes; but inside myself I was raging.

I did not understand that to gaze at new faces was one of the few pleasures the natives had. They knew their own townspeoples' to the last line.

They all knew that Mrs. Peterson had at last bought the new spring dress which her husband at first had refused her. They knew that the mayor's daughter went horseback riding with Lieutenant Svane, and hoped for news from that source. They were fully aware of the fact that when Mr. Jensen, the dry-goods merchant, was seen for the third time in a month carrying a traveling bag, he was going to visit a "she" in the city.

Later on, many years after, when newly engaged and arm in arm with my fiancé, I passed in review before the same windows, I saw a familiar face in each, and was greeted with a smile from everyone. And I smiled back. I knew then that engagements, weddings, and funerals, were important events in the small town. From those sources they drew their spiritual and mental stimulants.

Some day, when you have made friends with a

few people, you will be amused to find out how busily the spiders spin their webs from thin air, and stretch their nets of nothingness from door to door, from home to home.

In those days, every child in town knew all about the little English girl—how many dresses she had, what she ate for dinner, how odd and exquisite the underwear she wore, what she had said in this place, and done in that. I was like an open book to them, in which they read about foreign manners and habits—real fairy tales.

And now I am here in this great ant hill, London. My name sparkles from a big electric sign in front of the theatre. The papers publish pictures of me in my different roles, but only a few know my real face and no one knows anything about me after I leave the theatre.

How different a famous artist's life is from what it is popularly supposed to be! The audience, which only sees its favorite actress in a series of triumphant conquests, thinks that her life must be one gorgeous dream. It knows nothing about the labor that precedes and the fatigue that follows; they do not believe that from the moment she leaves the theatre her life is just like others—filled with the same petty sorrows and troubles, with the same desire for love and ten-

derness, with the same craving for trust and appreciation.

The same sorrows, the same cravings, yes! but many times intensified by the contrasts of her life.

On one side of the footlights which marks the boundary of her double life, the enthusiastic faces, ardent eyes, outstretched hands which she can never reach. On the other side, when the curtain falls and she turns her back to the light: the darkness, the solitude, the dismal drive home to empty rooms where there is no one to greet her. She has only sleep to long for, and often that fails her.

I suppose, now, you think I am a real weeping willow who refuses to see anything but the gloomy side of life. But that is not so, really! I suppose I am like all the other children of the muses. There are days when I live in the clouds, in a rosy world of bliss. But there are days when the same clouds gather dark and threateningly about my head, force me down, and come on me like a storm.

I have been out in the storm to-day. I was standing in the very center and looked through an open door into a well-known room.

Forgive me! I shall not put my pen to paper before the sun shines again!

Your Mother.

March 3, Midnight.

Dear Mother:

Your letter reached me this afternoon when I came home from the office. It is midnight now; a deep black night, without a star in the sky, and without a star in my heart.

Father's birthday! I have forgotten it! I have forgotten Father's birthday! The blood rushed to my head when I realized *you* had remembered it. I was ashamed of myself. I have cried. My brain is seething with a thousand thoughts, and I am writing now convulsively, quickly, to finish before my eyes close with fatigue.

Dirt and mud are on my shoes and legs. Just now have I seen it. There are black spots all over the many little rugs on the floor—black pools on the newly washed floor.

For hours I have been tramping through drizzling rain and mire on a monotonous, endless road, flanked by trees which were the only things to look at.

The fire is out. I feel cold. My cough has come back. I must change my shoes and stockings before I continue the letter, for I have promised Father to be careful.

Father!

How I *thought* of him while I walked on, mile

after mile! You and Father. Why, oh, why did you leave him! My heart is still crying. No, he has no one! Me? No! I do not even remember his birthday, while you do!—so many years after.

Why are all children so selfish? Why am I?

When I walked out there in the rain and thought of the disappointment he will be sure to feel, I suddenly threw all the blame on your shoulders. Why did you leave him? Why? What are those duties of which you are always speaking.

Now if you two lived together in Copenhagen and spoke about me, then neither of you would feel lonesome, and *I* would not suffer from remorse. You would have written "Remember Father's birthday next Saturday!" and I could have answered: "Of course! do you think I could forget Father's birthday that we three always celebrate together?"

It is altogether different now. It has never been the festivity that you spoke about. Not as far back as I can remember. The house filled with noisy guests, Father nervous and impatient, always with a speech about how silly it is to be happy because one is a year older, a little bitterness and irony in his voice; many toasts and hur-

rahs; a tired "thank heavens, it is over!" That is the kind of birthday *I* know.

And this time neither of us was there. My letter would have been like a ray of light in the day. I understand now why it is dreary and dark.

I did not write, and you *could* not. But why? That is the thought which has been racking my brain from the day when I got your first letter, and the thought which I cannot keep to myself any longer.

Why did you leave him? Why?

To-night, when the only way I could collect my thoughts was by walking and walking, I went a good long way down the lonely road before I turned back. I am not afraid of the darkness nor of the desolation of a country road. But I was tired, so tired! I could hardly keep my eyes open.

I would have liked to throw myself in a ditch and forget it all, but I felt that I had the courage at last to put the question to you. And with the rain whipping my face, I fought my way, step by step, and discovered I had miles to walk.

I rarely cry, but when I do, it is so violently that my eyes are swollen for days. Father says that no one can weep like me. To-night I have cried as I have never cried before. I shall not go

to the office to-morrow. My face is swollen and unrecognizable. My head feels as if sledge hammers were at work inside, and if I say that I feel sick, I am not telling a lie.

But I now have a responsible position. Strange! It dawns upon me that I *cannot* be sick. Who will "cover" the farmers' meeting at the high-school to-morrow? Who will do the proof-reading?

The sub-editor takes a train early in the morning to cover another meeting. I must take a powder, two powders, if necessary, but I just cannot be sick, and I cannot sleep late. I now have a responsible position!

Lonely? You are lonely; Father is lonely; but I am not. I know why. You two *have* lived your romance: You do not expect a new one; you know that nothing greater or bigger can follow. It is all past and gone. But *my* romance is just beginning.

There are people who cannot be alone with themselves. For those I have contempt.

Sunday is my best day, for then I can enjoy a good book, or write letters or else I wander along the solitary roads, occupied only with my own thoughts. Do you know the poetry of the road? I have learned to know it.

But when at last I go to dine at the boarding

house, I meet those unbearable clerks. Do not believe that I am contemptuous of the whole class, but these that I know flock together Sundays like scared sheep and cheerfully confess that "it is impossible to be all by yourself. Sunday is the worst day of the week. One must play cards the whole day long."

They do not realize that they reveal their own mental deficiency.

Yet, in spite of all my contempt, I feel sorry for them. They quarrel daily, so much that the fur flies, but on Sunday they cling to each other because they cannot be alone. They do not understand what it is to live.

Oh, that I could forget Father's birthday! I was too busy with my own introspections. Something is growing and seething within me. I cannot quite grasp it yet, but over here I have time to analyze even the vaguest and most obscure of my thoughts. I have rid myself of the habit of pushing them aside before I have reached a conclusion.

The other day I wrote a fairy tale for our children's column. The editor said, "You have a slight talent". It did not flatter me, but rather frightened me. A *slight* talent; is that not a curse? A *great* talent or nothing at all! I might become envious of the great and I have not yet

reached that stage. I think it is a most abominable trait.

But how is anyone to know if he has a talent? I have never had a desire for that, but the editor's remark gave birth to one.

Before you reached the altitude of the great, have you ever been attacked by the fear of a being a little talent—a mediocrity?

I tremble lest I should never become a personality, a somebody. Routine, experience, development. All that is gained through the years. But talent!

My friend in Switzerland, you know, always declared that all those who really had the power never doubted their abilities, but were sure of themselves. But I am filled with doubts and hopes at the same time and cannot be satisfied with the editor's consolation: that I will be a clever writer some day when I have mastered the technique.

It is not at all what I want. No articles or books, but a play—one play. And at the same time I feel small and unworthy. Possibly I look at myself with new and critical eyes, and I ask:

"What have you to tell the world that it does not already know? You, who are less than nineteen years old!"

A voice within me answers: "There is some-

thing," but I cannot say it aloud, not even to you, whom I love and have never seen.

If only you were here, you could tell me how to build a plot, you could warn me of the pitfalls, teach me the technique. My first attempts are hopeless. I feel it myself. The dialogue I can master; that is an inborn gift. But the dramatic construction and the theme! There is only one theme which is big enough for me, but I do not dare to tackle that before I feel that I can really work it out. It must be written not only with the brain, but with the heart. And as yet I do not dare to begin.

Oh, dear, will I dare sometime? Have I the ability? Or is the whole thing youthful lunacy? Why should I be able when so many others are not? But, on the other hand, why should others be able and not I?

Yes, that is the reason why I forgot Father's birthday, and that is the reason why I need solitude. So far, I have not been "taken up" by any of the "families." I suppose I frighten them with my talk, and I am glad that they leave me alone.

I live among people with whom I have nothing in common. When my work on the paper is finished and I close the door behind me, I feel like a tourist in a foreign country. I bury myself in

my thoughts, dream, my gorgeous dreams, fight my colossal fights—and forget Father's birthday.

Now the darkness is waning, and far in the west shimmers a paling star, the only one I can see. I must go out again in the damp night to mail this letter.

To-morrow? Yes, to-morrow perhaps, I would regret my words and burn them if this letter is still in my room.

But to-night I have courage.

Little Mother, I love you; you and Father. You two are not like the people I read about in the annals of divorce. You are both good. Good and wise. Why, then, can it not be,

"We three?"

Yours,

Vera.

London, March 7.

My dear, dear child:

When I opened your letter last night and looked at your agitated hand-writing, I understood at once: To-day it is you who are out in the tempest. To-day it is you who have lost your footing, and are carried away by a flood of agonizing thoughts: self-reproach, uncertainty and burning grief because you have brought disappointment upon another human being, a being you love—your father.

Dear, how often have I not been torn by the same struggle!

While reading, I was struck by the wealth of thought behind your words. It was as if we were drifting side by side down the same river. I was closer to you than ever before. I could take you in my arms and feel your warm heart beating against mine. I saw into your artist's soul, where a chaos of thoughts, which have not yet been molded, were waiting for their release. And I understood suddenly that you have a talent, a richness of emotion, which urges you on to greater deeds than to report meetings of farmers, or to

read proof on the second-rate outpourings of other people.

Still, do not regret going through the mill, for it is through labor and struggle that your will is steeled, and not through the futile life of a visionary.

For talent gets nowhere without strength of will to master its thoughts, and force their "Pegasus" to go where *they* want to go.

But solitude will help you more than anything else. The solitude of which you are not fully conscious as yet; which surrounds you and grants you the gift of its limitless wisdom.

It has taught you to sound the depths of your own mind. It has taught you to listen to sweet and simple harmonies. It has taught you the poetry of the road. It has taught you to feel compassion for those human beings (the poor clerks) whom you never noticed before. Now, suddenly, you understand that they are void of that inner harmony, that sensitiveness which sees a friend in solitude and not a ghost. And it taught you one more thing,—to ask questions.

When I received your first letter a burning fever surged through my soul. The blood rushed to my head. Heart and brain worked under high pressure. The dreams of the past were before me. My thoughts strayed on paths they

had not dared to walk for years. The letter I wrote you as an answer was the expression of this feverish condition of mind, for I yielded to my inner self as I do not remember ever having yielded before.

When your next letter came you told me about yourself, about your plans and your dreams and about your and Father's life together. Not by a word did you evince any interest in me or in the past.

Suddenly I saw that my first excitement was the result of a morbid condition. My temperature cooled. The dreams disappeared and yielded their place to calm reflections.

Who were you? What did you want of me? What feelings had dictated your first letter to me? A need,—a longing, or the bewilderment of a moment of mental and spiritual chaos? Or did it arise from curiosity or just plain boredom? Did you mean more to me than a perfect stranger would? What point of view did you have? What influence had moved you, Father's clear sense of justice or did you gauge everything by Grandmother's and Auntie's dwarfed measures?

How would you receive the confession I must make sooner or later if we two were ever to be more to each other than just indifferent humans

who met by accident and passed on their way without feeling much of a loss?

You dared not question. I dared not speak, for I did not know the one who was to be my confessor.

When one has kept silent for a number of years until one becomes a stranger even to onesself, there is only one thing which can lure the clear spring of confidence forth from the frozen ground, and that is the warm sympathy of another human heart.

But you did not ask questions. Oh, of course, about little, indifferent matters,—if I had known Grandfather, if I had visited him and if Father could plow a furrow straighter than anyone else.

And I answered you as I was bound to answer, letting the memories carry me away now and then to tell you of a few more things than you asked for. I advised you about your plans and your work but only in the manner of any other sincere and candid friend.

In this letter, for the first time, you come to me with a question dictated by a genuine and burning desire to know: What has parted these two human beings of whose love I am the issue? What are the forces that have made them go their different ways so far from each other that I, who love them both, and whom they both love more

than anything on earth, cannot reach out to give them my hands at the same time?

And you shall have the answer. Not all at once in this letter, but bit by bit with all the little side issues, the links in the chain which forge together the destinies of mankind.

It can touch us so tenderly and softly that it feels like a caress, but it can also tighten around us so that we scream in anguish. I have felt that and I thought then that the best thing I could do was to tear it apart brutally lest I should be utterly destroyed and lose my identity.

At the end of your letter you ask me:

"Why could it not always be, 'We three'?" Yes it could be, my dear little girl, and while it was, there was no discord in our home; only tenderness and love and friendship. A day arrived when it became "We five," and from that day on the peace was ended.

And now I presume you understand what elements I was referring to in my last letter when I wrote that they destroyed the harmony and created dissension.

I know that you, with youthful assurance, will exclaim: "Why did father not put those two out of the house when he saw how much was destroyed for us?"

That is how I reasoned when I was too young

to have learned to take other people's feelings into consideration.

I could, perhaps, have cajoled and coaxed until I had my way, but I was too sensitive, too proud to be diplomatic on that point. That is why I met force with force and broke the chain inside which I felt I no longer belonged. I ought to have stayed with the ship, stayed with you, protected you and given you all I had to give, even though I suffered under it. But I thought only of myself,—and I went.

Afterwards, when I had burned my bridges behind me I began to understand what I had left behind on the other shore. Only then I understood that I had deeply wounded myself, that I was the one who was punished because I had dared to rend asunder the fine heart strings which bind mother and child together. Heart strings, so tender, so fragile, that they quiver in the slightest breeze, and yet so strong that they withstand the hardest blows, and only can be torn apart by the callous hand of the egoist.

In those days I thought I had the *right* to live my own life and defend my own poor little vanity. Now I know it was my *duty* to have stayed with my child, that her life was my life and that I should have taken pride in sticking to my task.

The sense of duty of which I spoke and which I called false—I believe I still call it so, unfortunately—was your father's unshaken sense of duty toward his mother and sister.

I have told you that the relation between your grandmother and grandfather was not a happy one, but I do not think I have let you know that your grandmother suffered the worst ignominy a wife can suffer,—to see another woman come between her and her husband.

Perhaps it was partly her own fault. I cannot help thinking it was, but it is natural that she was miserable about it. However, your father was still more distressed: he could not tolerate to see his mother so publicly disgraced, and he placed himself on her side, stood between her and the gossiping world, and took her with knightly grace under his protection.

No wonder then, when the only thing left of an unhappy marriage (her home) was taken away from her that he felt he was in honor bound to offer his own. But I shall later tell you the whole thing from the beginning, so you can understand how conditions over which we have no power can alter our destinies.

You will understand how the mould of a human being's inner life can be recast by the conditions under which they live, and how two per-

sons, both fairly upright and just, can reach a point of divergence when one or the other must succumb.

You wrote in your letter—"You and Father are lonely because you have lived your romance and do not expect anything new."

Yes, if the romance of life is only the love between man and woman, then it is over and done.

But there are other romances, other fairy tales, and they reveal themselves over and over again in new forms as long as life lasts.

For me such a new one was unfolded the day you came to me, for I understood without your realizing it that it was your father who had sent you to me.

He has taught you by his own example to be lenient toward your mother, to take her as she is and to love her in spite of everything.

Father is right again. It is his views that are bringing you and me together again.

You must never forget Father's birthday again. I shall remind you of it. I will soon write you again.

Au revoir,

Mother.

March 12th.

Dear Mother:

To-day is Sunday, slightly freezing, but the sky is clear. I sit here on a milestone writing, proud of my long walk. I will cheat this time and take the train home, but I have to wait a *whole hour* and the stove in the waiting-room is red-hot. I prefer the fresh air.

You occupy my thoughts on my long walks,—you and Father. To think it was Grandmother and Aunt Edith who ousted you. I cannot understand it. I have been thinking and thinking, I have turned and turned it, tried to look at the case from all angles, and yet, I do not grasp it.

Grandmother and Aunt Edith!

I am reading Herman Bang these days.

From every page resignation stares me in the face: children's resignation toward their parents, woman's resignation toward the unfaithful husband, old people's resignation toward injustice, poverty, humiliation.

Were people really like that in those days? Were you all to sigh and think that things were such and could not be helped? And you,—did

you not dare to cope with Grandmother and Aunt Edith before you went away?

I know what you will answer. You would not submit and that is why you left. But why did you not demand of Father that they go, and why did he not understand that that was the only just solution of the problem?

Do not be wretched on my account. I feel as you do, that each has a right to his own life. It is only strange that your happiness should be found away from your home. Don't you think you would have had a fuller life if Father and I had been part of it, or is your art sufficient to you?

Yes,—Art—

You write that I possess talent. How do you know? So far I have only written about myself and I am afraid I have given you a false picture. I have only spoken of my good points and have been silent about the bad ones. I have not told you that I can be wicked. Sometimes I feel a satisfaction in being malignant, in wounding people's feelings; and I do not feel any remorse afterward.

I can also be my own worst enemy. On my little solitary walks I will compose a poem, or sit a whole week working away on a novelette and when it is good, or as good as I can make it, I

throw it in the fire and laugh at myself while the flames devour many hours' labor in one minute.

"Ten years from now," I say to myself, "you will have found a hundred flaws, anyway!"

He who demands much of life gets much. I demand a good deal more than my share. That is why I cannot be content with a little talent. If I am praised and if I feel a little progress I hear within myself a voice singing, "More! More! More!" And I set to my task with renewed vigor.

Father writes me and warns me not to work *too* much. But I cannot help myself,—it is in my nature to go at top speed. I lock myself in my room and work hours at a stretch. Afterwards I could sleep for twenty-four hours straight if I were permitted. For I do not know how to nibble at life.

Oh, why can't we live a hundred years in one! I have buried myself in a small town and I enjoy its pleasures and sorrows but it cannot satisfy me. I wish I could simultaneously be with Father in Copenhagen and with you in London. I am curious to know how it feels to die and at the same time regret that I cannot be both alive and dead all at once. The thought that things go on after I am dead can put me out of mood for

days. Oh dear, why *must* one be contented with just a little bite of the infinite existence? I believe it is excess energy. Sometimes it threatens to rend me to pieces and I am compelled to sing at the top of my voice in order to have an outlet for my potent vitality.

And they tell me that I have tuberculosis and am "delicate." Good heavens, what does it mean to be strong then!

Father ought to see me now. I have rosy cheeks, and the more I work the stronger I grow.

I am getting cold now. My fingers are frozen stiff. My teeth are chattering. I *must* stop. The train is starting.

There went a page of my letter down the road —I caught it before it came to the pool—excuse pencil and illegible writing. It is not an easy job on a milestone.

With my love,

Your Vera,

Aboard train.

P. S.—I have not told you of the new arrival in town. He also eats at the boarding house and yesterday we went to the theatre together. That is very indecent according to our standards here but he is so amusing and the only one with whom I can talk. His name is Andersen and he is a civil engineer.

P. S., P. S.—I received a letter from Father yesterday. He does not refer to the forgotten birthday by a single word. But I have already righted my wrong. Our letters must have crossed.

London, March 16.

Dear Vera:

Thanks for your letter written on a milestone and with frozen fingers. I had quite a time read-it but I managed. Still I would prefer that you choose another desk in slightly more sheltered surroundings. I am convinced that it is not good for your health to sit on a cold stone a whole hour.

Think of the anxiety I would feel if you became ill and could not write to me at all. How would I be able to endure the days waiting for your letters? Now when we have found each other and are beginning to understand each other I cannot do without the happiness your letters bring me. The thought that you may be ill and that I have not the right to be with you and nurse you fills me with terror. Promise me that you will never be careless again.

You have read Herman Bang, and you ask "Were people ever really like that, in those days?" People, my dear girl, were then just as they are to-day. Some are strong, some are weak. Some possess will-power and resistance, others are vacillating and yielding. The strong

conquer the earth. The weaklings are trod upon. There are poets who, overflowing with spiritual and physical health, delight in singing of the fairest and most beautiful things in existence. There are others whose hearts are like an open wound, ever bleeding for the weak, the failures, the old and the distressed. I suppose they feel it their duty to paint the plight of these unfortunates in order to teach the strong to be considerate, to understand, to shield and to help.

When I was your age I also felt that the language contained no poorer word than resignation. Now I hardly know anything worse than an old person who does not know how to submit to it. You ask many questions and the whole tone of your letter makes me nervous and restless for I hardly know how to answer you.

I had made up my mind to tell you gently and quietly of all the circumstances connected with my life in such a manner that you would easily understand. It has taken me years to reach the conclusion that past incidents (events over which we have no control) may have a bearing upon our life which totally changes its direction.

But your questions force themselves upon me. You want to know at once, without a subterfuge, and I feel compelled to answer you, but how?

You asked me why I left Father? And why could it not always be "we three."

I left him because I would not live in my own home under conditions which corrupted my character and which I felt were demoralizing.

And then you ask: "Did you not try to cope with Grandmother and Aunt Edith before you went away?"

Yes, unfortunately. But the struggle was neither very beautiful nor very honorable. I would not give you a home where two influences fought for supremacy and where bitter words and low chicaneries were part of a daily routine. I was in despair and bewildered. I felt that you might some day look upon me as a cold-hearted, evil and sophisticated woman if I flung down my gauntlet, or as a dull submissive clod if I didn't.

I did not want to appear to you in either character. I wished only to be the person I was before those others arrived.

Oh, those days! Do you remember? No, of course you don't remember me, not the least trait even. But I recall it all, our happy jabberings when I gave you a bath and put you to bed—the meals with Father and myself across from each other and you between us in your high baby chair. Or the early mornings when you were put into Mother's bed and you sat and looked with big

wondering eyes at us teasing each other while dressing.

If you could remember all that, if you had been big enough to comprehend the harmony of your home, created out of our profound love for each other, I wonder if you could not realize that it became unendurable afterward.

But you do not recall anything at all and you must therefore question.

"Why did you not demand of father that they must go! Did he not realize that himself?"

My dear little girl I could explain it all to you with one word if you knew more of life. But I fear that that word has never had any particular meaning for you, and you will therefore not be able to understand that it can play a part in the love-life of two people. It is the petty word,—money.

"Has father not always had money enough?" you will ask, surprised.

No, little girl. There was a time when money played a big part in our lives. It was when we were very young. Father had to build up his business and yet we wanted to make a home for ourselves.

We got round our difficulties rather easily, thanks to Grandfather's generosity. Your father went to him and laid his plans before him, and

the two men had a long talk together in Grandfather's office, while I sat in the garden, agog with excitement. Our future happiness was at stake.

When Father came out to me the matter was settled. He had received the money he needed, but he was not as madly joyous as I had expected him to be. He walked slowly and the expression of his face was serious and thoughtful.

Your grandfather had told him a secret.

In a fit of despair and depression he had been unable to withstand the temptation to confide in another man and he had spoken to his son as a friend and comrade.

Your father knew—for that matter we all knew,—that your grandfather had had a liaison with a young peasant-girl who used to be their housekeeper and this was one of the reasons for Father's unusual deference toward his mother. But he did not know until then about the child, a son, whom your grandfather brought up in the city.

The elderly man had said with tears in his eyes: "I love that boy as I love you and I feel it as my right and duty to share my estate between you. The money I give you now you need never pay back,—it is your inheritance, but you must

promise me to respect my provisions in regard to the other one."

It is a terrible ordeal for me to have to recount all these old and wretched affairs to you but it is unavoidable in order to make you understand your father's action later on and do him justice.

If I have been slow in telling you about these things it is only because I wanted to tell the truth about the others in as lenient a manner as possible. I wanted to put forth all the exonerating circumstances in each case. If we two had lived our lives together and you had come to me for explanation I suppose I could have told you about it in such a way that it would not have hurt your illusions. I wonder if that is possible now?

Your grandparents were not particularly different from other people, neither better nor worse, but they were not suited for each other. Their characters and basic principles were totally out of harmony.

Your grandfather was a robust, plain nature, and at bottom an extremely honest man. Your grandmother was domineering, without the capacities necessary to rule. She was spoiled in her home, accustomed to having her way and utterly without desire to be of value to any other person.

Your grandfather had been brought up in a

home where the women went about their work quietly and gently, feeling it their natural destiny to create a peaceful and comfortable home for the man.

Your grandmother had no trace of such a feeling. *She* wanted to be the central point around which everything else revolved. As she changed the rooms to suit her own taste without taking grandfather's comfort into consideration, so she gradually subverted all the other traditions of the old home. And when grandfather did not find the sympathy and care to which he was accustomed from his mother's days, he looked for it elsewhere.

After our wedding we often visited the estate. We spent our vacations and our holidays there.

I was not always anxious to go, but father consoled me with the fact that we would never stay very long. And when we returned we always found our own little nest more beautiful and cozy than ever. Your father readily agreed that Grandmother was partly to blame but he had the deepest compassion for her.

Solitary and without a single friend she went about the estate—proud and unapproachable. Your father was the only one who gave her any affection. All the others were rather afraid of her, even though they felt a certain respect for

her because of the proud manner with which she took her defeat. She would not hear of divorce. Was *she* to leave her home in order that a peasant girl should take possession of what belonged to her—her position, her name and her son's name? Never! That was the way she reasoned. She stayed on, ruling her small world, and defied the gossip.

And your grandfather let her do as she pleased. He tolerated her moods and gratified her wishes. It was all he could do for her.

But his real home was with "the other one." Often he stayed away for days and she knew where he was,—we all knew.

I remember the first time he stayed away after all this had dawned upon me.

I came down to dinner rather anxious to see how she would take Grandfather's absence. She did not betray with the slightest expression that she was aware of it. His place at the table was set for him as usual but she never looked once in that direction and did not mention his name. When, three days later, he sat in his place she asked no questions, nor did she speak to him. He sat there at his own table an invisible shadow. He must have felt the icy coldness which emanated from her, into the very marrow of his

bones, and which made the meal a sinister and dismal function for us all.

Three years after your birth, Grandfather died, and we went over there for the funeral, and that was the last time we ever visited the old home which had been in the family for generations.

And then the will was to be executed and the estate divided.

There was nothing to divide. Your father had received a small fortune in cash and an equally large sum had been settled upon the other son. The rest had been spent. Following his principle, "I ought to use it now or the other one will," Grandfather had expended his money in a most preposterous manner. The mill had ground all its grain, it was empty.

When it dawned upon Grandmother how contemptibly Grandfather had acted behind her back by giving everything away without leaving her a cent, she became frantic with anger and despair.

It was hard to look upon for all of us, but worst for your father. He felt that he no longer had any right to the money he had received. He would have paid every penny back if it had been possible but it was tied up in his business and to withdraw it would have meant ruin for all of

us. I remember the summer night father and I talked over what should be done,—if there was any way out. We found only one.

Your father was terribly distressed. He mourned for his father who had always been a good friend to him and he felt sorry for his mother and still more so for his sister. He could not understand his father on that point. It was as if the latter had completely forgotten that he had a daughter. Or had he no idea how matters stood? Had he not understood that everything was gone?

I had always pitied Aunt Edith the most. She is really not unpleasant, only completely under Grandmother's influence,—her echo. It was the mother's pride to bring her up as a society butterfly. She was never permitted to soil her hands with any kind of work. She had her own saddle-horse, her own little automobile, her own rooms.

Too superior to do anything and a little too plain and unintelligent to become such a lady of the world, as her mother planned, she stood now helplessly facing dire need. She had never been permitted to live her own life, never to think her own thoughts. As Grandmother's shadow, she had lived side by side with her, bound by invisible cords which pulled her back with the

slightest tug, if indeed she would dare wander away.

That night we decided that we would share our home with Aunt Edith and Grandmother, until better times would come.

How could Father act differently since he had received that money which he felt in justice belonged to his mother? How could I, who witnessed his despair, who loved him and respected his opinions, do otherwise? Was it not my duty to take a part of the burden upon my shoulders? Besides, Father comforted me; Grandmother was not really bad, it was the conditions under which she had lived that had embittered her. She loved your father and perhaps,—perhaps, she would be another person altogether than the one we had known these last few years,—now that she was taken care of by loving hands and in happy surroundings.

When the light summer night turned into day and the sun rose, we looked upon the future with confidence.

Father took me into his arms and pressed me to his heart and thanked me because I stood by him in this crisis, and we promised each other to try and make Grandmother's last days as beautiful and easy as possible.

Shortly after, the estate was sold. The small

sum left after all debts were paid helped to buy the villa in Charlottenlund. Grandmother and Aunt Edith were to live in the upper story and to eat at our table.

We moved in three months after, and my martyrdom began. It lasted for two years until I rebelled, hurt and exhausted.

It is morning now and I am deadly tired. It has cost me unheard of strength to concentrate my mind and make this résumé. I do not possess your skill in writing.

There are so many other things that I would like to explain to you but to-day I cannot go any further. They must wait.

If art is sufficient unto me? Do I believe that my life would have been richer?

I do not know—not to-night at any rate, whether or not life is fuller lived in peaceful contentment and happiness, or if one's soul and spirit are not enriched through suffering and adversity.

To-night all I can feel is that I am so very poor, so tired and so griefworn, I long for you so much that I have a pain in my heart. I am wretched because the heavy task of telling you about your family's blunders and mistakes has fallen on my shoulders, and I am frightened about how you will take it. But it has to be told

and what I have unfolded to-day we two cannot ignore. We must run through the whole gamut, every stone must be turned, every knoll leveled. The straight and narrow path of truth is the only real way we can walk together.

Good-night, my beloved child—

Mother.

March 20th.

Dear Mother:

Your letter has filled me with terror. What are you saying! Grandfather and Grandmother do not differ so much from other people! You write this in order to comfort me. What a comfort! Are all people like that? Most of them you think. All grown-ups. Oh Mother, not you and Father. No, no, it is impossible. But you have frightened me. *If* that is true don't tell me any more. I want to be blind and deaf. I want to know nothing, nothing.

You speak about those things as if they were the most natural thing in the world, but it is not so. It *cannot* be. Mother, it is impossible.

Write to me that Grandfather was an exception, that you said the other things simply to cheer me up. I beg of you to write it to me, I am so deeply depressed.

I do not think at all. I *cannot*. I have not found time enough yet, and I dare not.

Father admits that Grandmother was partly to blame. Yes, but did he not also feel that Grandfather's liaison was a great shame, a terrible injustice toward her?

If you say anything else you lie. But you are jealous of Grandmother because she has taken your place and that is why you speak so badly about her throughout your letter.

Everything else she does becomes a reproach in your eyes. She is domineering without the power to rule; she is without desire to be of use to others, you say, and that is not so. She *wants* to be but she does not know how.

How *could* they do it—both of them? I never want to see that house. Father writes that he is coming over here with his automobile to take me to see the place. But I *will* not go there now. I want to forget them both. I *hate* them.

But why did she marry him and bury herself out in the country when she did not love him? She *must* have loved him in her way but he did not understand it.

And the peasant girl probably forced herself into his good graces with Grandmother too proud to do anything about it.

Ugh! how well I know the type. Don't you think we have had housekeepers who have tried to make a conquest of Father? Do you think that *he* was happy? But do you think he used *that* for an excuse? He became furious. One languishing glance was enough for him to dismiss

anyone. Then they became abusive. That is their reaction. I know it, I know it. It seems to me that I suddenly know many things I did not know before, much more than you wrote about. Oh, it is terrible. If I could only weep, but I cannot even think. If I could only write and rave. And of what use is that? The thoughts crowd in upon me just the same, and I am forced to get at the bottom of them. That is how I am. I cannot shut them out. They will come up. I have not the power to fight them.

Grandmother should have gone away. It was she who was made to suffer. He had the other one for consolation. But perhaps she hoped that he would come back to her some day.

And you take the wrong view of it all,—*everything*.

As for instance you say that Grandmother was hard and cold when Grandfather returned from city trips. Did you expect her to dance around or fall on his neck with joy? Quarrelling would not have helped. She kept silent and was cold and distant. Perhaps she hoped it would awaken his conscience.

Grandfather must have been a great egotist. How could he do it? And everybody knew it and gossiped about it and pitied Grandmother.

And yet he kept it up. What a wretch he must have been.

They shall not succeed in fooling me any longer, all those who tell me he was so fine. I won't permit anyone to say a good word in his favor again. I will tell them. Yes, I will tell them I know everything and they will be silent and embarrassed.

But are you all unconsciously plotting together? A kind of mutual assurance company, perhaps? It is evidently necessary to keep the children in ignorance of their parents' sins, or else the children might bring up their parents, not vice versa.

Now I understand better why they are all so resigned. They are accustomed to thinking that people are like that, while we who have never learned resignation live in a world of unrealities *you others* have made for us.

There must be exceptions and I am going to find them. But the exceptions are few because the plotters try to convince them that to be an exception is to be ridiculous. Now when I begin to think everything lies before me like an open book,—everything.

That is all,—

Vera.

*Telegram*

March 21.

Burn the letter unopened. A new one following. Vera.

March 21.

Dear Mother:

My last letter,—it was no letter. Just an impetuous and wild flare-up, which I now regret. That is why you must not read it. You tore the bandage from my eyes as I asked you to, and I let my fury out on you because you gratified my wish.

I was hurt, frightened, raging. You spoke so indifferently about things which were crimes in my eyes. My thoughts ran wild. I had exposed myself to her. To her I had written about all the things that are sacred to me. And she is like that! She has not understood me. Perhaps she has smiled when she read my letters. She and I have nothing in common. And I felt ashamed of myself because I had deceived Father.

One last time I would read your letters and then never again.

But from every page your love and affection stared me in the face,—and I *could* not lose you.

Mother dear, it was wicked of me to act the way I did. I am so afraid now you might have opened my first letter. If you have, you will understand that in my despair in hearing the truth about the people I have learned to admire, I strike you, who told it to me, because I have no one else to strike. And yet my anger should have turned against those who gave me a false picture of life.

I write very well, my editor says. Now I laugh at myself. What do I write about? What do I know? What have I to tell the world? I, who as yet feed upon my childhood dreams.

Labor of duty it is; reports of what other people say and think; what others do and are going to do—but nothing personal, nothing felt. There is room for feeling only in the charity columns when asking for contributions, and I have nothing to do with those.

I think of my friend in Switzerland. She was right. I *could* be a journalist. I am one now, but I am not satisfied. I do not feel the desire for adventure and excitement, nor the craving for work at high speed, nor the hunting of victims to be interviewed. I want to sit still and

contemplate my stuff. I want to put something of myself into it, but that I must not do.

"Impersonal, impersonal," preaches the editor. "We are not interested in *you*. We want facts."

And I have learned to write about facts while my heart cries out for things outside of them.

I understand now that I cannot give more—I, who dare not know the truth, who nevertheless ask for it and at the same time stop up my ears.

Dear Mother, I see myself in an entirely new light now. I tremble over my own ignorance. I no longer wish to force my personality into the limelight. I will hide myself behind facts until I understand, until I am educated in life's school and have grown away from my false world.

I can wait. I know full well there will come a day when I will be able to *give* more to life than mere reports and news; to give something of my inmost self.

You have opened my eyes and I thank you for that.

I long to learn more from you.

Your Vera.

London, March 23.

Beloved child:

I came to the theatre last night inwardly torn, —beside myself with despair.

I came from a sick-bed. No, from a death-bed for I was certain when I left the sick-room that it was only a question of hours or perhaps minutes.

It was a young girl, a faithful friend,—the only one at the theatre I have really liked. She has been through so much. Her fate closely resembles mine, but she belonged to the weak in spirit and body who, when they are stricken, fall by the wayside and bleed to death.

I have been with her constantly for three days and nights except for the hours I had to go to the theatre.

When I left her last night I felt that I did not need to go back. The hand-clasp she gave me when I left was the last. Her pathetic, grateful look which followed me to the door, I carried with me as a souvenir of an innocent, unselfish, loving soul who had been crushed to death.

I had stayed with her to the last possible mo-

ment. I should have liked to linger until it was all over, but my duty called me. The public, who wants to be amused, brooks no excuse. I had to go.

I reached the theatre just in time and passed the doorman as the orchestra started to play. I have to be on the stage in the middle of the first act and I only had fifteen minutes in which to make up. In passing, I glanced at the shelf where the mail lies and saw under the letter S the well-known lilac envelope.

A ray of light shot through the darkness of my soul.

The Lord be praised that *I* had carried on until happiness again knocked at my door.

*Your* letters are to me as bread to the hungry, as a cooling drink to the thirsty.

I snatched the letter and flew to my dressing-room. My maid was there impatiently waiting. She started at once to unfasten my dress and to ask questions. I did not answer. All my thoughts circled around the letter. I tore the envelope, seated myself at my dressing-table and while she dressed my hair my eyes traveled hastily across the pages.

"Don't tell me any more,—you lie—You are jealous—You look at everything in the wrong light."

Your grief, your despair, spoke to me from every line, and I was the cause of it. My eyes became blurred. Darkness fell around me and through it I glimpsed far, far away the ghostly, white face of my poor friend.

"Madam, Madam you must pull yourself together!"

My maid was leaning over me. "Here's the gown, hurry,—a little more rouge on the cheeks, —and your lips,—they are white. Madam has not slept enough!"

She did not let go my hand until we stood in the wings and heard my cue. Like an automaton I went through the part I had played so often, and while I stepped about on the stage, walking and standing where I was supposed to walk and stand, forcing myself to find the right tones and inflections, I gradually became master of myself.

My nerves, torn to pieces by long days and nights of agonized watching, became calmer. Again I began to think clearly.

And now I sit in my dressing-room between the acts and write.

Your letter, which reached me at a moment when I was depressed and upset, pained me beyond words.

Your rebellious language revealed to me that you are just as impatient, just as frightfully

irritable, as I was once when, rather than wait, I tore the foundation from under my feet.

For a single minute I wished that you never had written to me, that things were exactly as they were before I received your first letter.

I shall not hide from you that the whole tone of your letter hurt me. You even hinted that you thought I spoke disparagingly of the others because I still was angry with them or perhaps in order to place myself in a better light. No, my child. I am not afraid to tell the truth about myself also, and you shall hear it if you have the patience to listen.

There is only one thing for which I tremble and that is that we shall meet one day and grasp each other's hand under false pretenses; that we will meet and later on feel compelled to acknowledge that we have been mistaken in each other.

You write in your last letter that you can be cruel, that you find pleasure and satisfaction in hurting people, and that you have no bad conscience afterwards. I am well acquainted with that form of cruelty and it does not sink so very deep. It is a shell beneath which one hides a too sensitive nature. Do not try to tell me that you also are devoid of a sense of justice, that you will not, when you are over your anger, give those whom you wronged full satisfaction, for

in that case I must keep silent and will not give you any more information.

I was forced to tell you something about your grandparents which you would not like, and you were offended because I, of all people, should tell you. But it was necessary in order for you to understand the things that happened later on.

I also know how it feels to arm one's self with hard-heartedness. I did it then, I do it again to-night. I did not permit myself to acknowledge being beaten when everything fell in ruins around me, and life gave me such deep wounds that they never will heal. If I had done that I would long ago have been lying there, where my poor friend will find her last resting place in a few days.

Nor will I permit myself, now, to be beaten by my own daughter's injustice.

You have asked. I have answered. Is it my fault that the answer was not what you expected?

You don't want to be told anything else. Very well. I shall be silent, but what I have written I cannot retract nor soften.

They are calling me. It is work that helped me through a crisis to-night and once before. It will succor me again in the coming gray and dreary days.

I send you my love,

Your Mother.

Midnight, March 23rd.

Dear, dear:

I am at home. Your telegram was here when I came. I have it in my hand and I am so happy I must cry.

*"Burn the letter at once."*

Dear it is already read. Your telegram came too late.

When I left the theatre to-night I had my letter to you in my pocket. The door-man, who stood holding the heavy iron door open for me, stopped me and asked if I had received the telegram.

"What telegram?" I asked.

"The telegram from Denmark that came the day before yesterday. I sent it to your home so that you would receive it quicker. I did not see you last night."

"I have not been home for three days."

"But I hope——"

I did not stop to hear any more. I ran to my car and ordered the chauffeur to drive—home, —as quickly as he could.

"It is a rainy night, Madam," said the chauffeur, closing the door.

A misty rain came down and a heavy fog lay over the city. It seemed to me the car was crawling. It took an eternity to reach my house. I was terrified. What had happened? Was the telegram from you or from——

I ran through the garden, rushed through the hall into the living-room and found the telegram on my desk.

It was from you—and you regret.

Do not be sorry that I read the letter. It is of no consequence,—now when I know that you did not mean all the severe things you said. It was as I thought, only an expression of your outraged feelings.

Or am I wrong? I await your next letter with impatience.

Last night I wrote a letter as an answer to your first. I took it out and read it through and now I am in doubt whether or not to send it.

I think I will wait,—at any rate until I have had the letter you promised me.

I feel suddenly the effect of the lack of sleep. The words dance before my eyes. . . .

The telephone just rang. My dear little friend died a few moments after I left her. They did not want to send that message to me at the theatre.

Well, then, I can sleep peacefully knowing that at least she does not need me any longer.

I will put your telegram under my pillow,—it will give me beautiful dreams.

Good-night, my child.

Mother.

London, March 26.

Dear Vera:

Thanks for your beautiful, clever and sensible letter which reached me last night.

But first and foremost thanks for your love which dictated it.

While I sat reading it, it struck me how much more confident, individual, calm and lucid it was compared with your first letters.

It is quite amazing to realize how you have developed during the short time you have been away from home and have stood on your own feet.

When I first wrote to you it was as a mother to her child. I feel to-day that I must change the tone entirely and write as friend to friend. The first step one must take to gain a knowledge of life is to admit how little one really knows. If one has reached that conclusion he will begin to investigate and inquire into the whys and wherefores of life within and around us, until one day he stands fully equipped for the struggle.

But while mobilizing one's forces one may still be in doubt as to what path to take in life.

You (just as I was) are aware of this doubt. A burning desire to help others fills your soul. You want to give away the last shred of your heart but you are not sure upon which altar to sacrifice it. The path leading to our goal is never straight. So many things make us tarry on the way. There is so much that calls to us and makes us linger. Duty, love, sorrow and joy. They all steal a little of our time but one cannot avoid those things which are part and parcel of existence, and we should not worry over the time it takes. For we grow and develop while we proceed on our way.

Some day I shall tell you how it came about that I went on the stage, but not to-day because of something in your letter—a misunderstanding of which you are guilty and which I did not take time to correct in my anger the other night.

You seem to feel that I have thrown the whole blame upon Grandmother's shoulders, that I think she is altogether cruel and cold. And you defend her with these words: "She *wants* to do good but does not know how."

That is it. She belongs to those unfortunate beings who lack that fine sensibility called tact, which makes it possible to live among people without coming into conflict with them. There are times when one should talk; there are times

when one should keep silent. There are moments when a clasp of the hand reveals a world of mutual understanding and moments when a flood of comforting words only intensifies one's grief.

Grandmother possessed that deplorable quality of always choosing the wrong words. She possessed it to such a degree that I almost pitied her.

Perhaps many others would have passed lightly over it, or not have felt the dozens of little needle-pricks she daily gave her family; but I, with every nerve strung to its highest pitch, felt every quiver of her bad humor, and the sting of her words penetrated to my heart and stayed there.

And then at last I turned the tables on her and it was I who did the hurting. I felt it as a still more intense pain which made me wild, raging, hysterical.

Hidden beneath the irritable wording of your letter was some of that same nervous sensibility. That is why I understand it and easily forgive it.

We are friends now. You can again ask questions and I can answer them. I shall not be lenient towards myself, shall not hide anything. You shall know me completely as I am. That is why I am no longer in doubt whether I ought to send you my first letter.

Perhaps its tone is not as sweet and tender as

you might expect from your mother, but after all it was not those feelings you appealed to in your letter. My love you can never doubt.

And you must tell me more about yourself and the life you are leading. Your amusing, courageous letters make me very glad and make me think of my own happy youth.

A thousand greetings and love

From

Mother.

March 30.

Dear Mother!

You do not blame me. You do not accuse me. You are only unhappy. And you cannot be broken by your grief over me or the death of your friend.

I had hoped that you were like that. I know now that I was not mistaken, and I am glad that you read my first drastic letter and sent your answer, which shows that you are a mother, that you possess the love which may be wounded but does not reciprocate in kind.

If you had sent a harsh answer it would have broken all bonds between us. I would have realized my guilt, but my defiance and obstinacy would have carried the day,—my pride, my rage.

But I soften beneath your calm, sweet and profound understanding of life and humanity. Your touching sorrow over my letter makes me reproach and condemn myself. I feel that I become a better person through reading your and Father's letters, for you are both bigger and deeper and more merciful than I, and I need that influence. Harshness in others incites greater harshness in me; evil, greater evil.

Sometimes I could cry over myself because the pin-pricks I receive bring out my worst qualities. But you and Father awaken in me a desire to do good, to sacrifice and to help.

My character and my individuality are not firmly moulded as yet. I sometimes have a feeling of discomfort because I realize that I am not the same person to all people.

It takes a few seconds to discover what the person I speak to perceives in me and from that moment I am exactly what he thinks I am.

If I am treated as a lady of the world I *am* a lady of the world. I am a child still when I meet Father's old friends who consider me "the little girl." The clerks, who have a belligerent attitude encounter in me just as fanatic a person as they consider me, and the Field-mouse, who to begin with thought I was naïve and stupid, actually forced me to ask questions that were naïve and stupid.

But when Father has guests at home, and men from all walks of life are present, I have observed that particularly those like to talk with me as a contemporary whose knowledge and cleverness far surpass mine. At once new thoughts spring into my mind, I hear myself argue seriously and profoundly, hear myself dally with problems hitherto foreign to me, and

feel that their confidence in me gives me self-assurance and wisdom.

Father cannot deny himself the pleasure of telling me afterward that this or that person has praised my intelligence. And in spite of that I continue to ask silly questions of the Field-mouse and to fight my petty battles with the clerks.

But when I write I am wholly myself. With a pen in my hand and the leisure to meditate I do not permit myself to be swayed by any outside influence.

I often wish that I could hide myself on a desert island where I had no one to speak to and no one to tempt me to respond to their individual perceptions of me.

Still is it not exactly that resiliency of mine that makes it possible for me to write? It makes me understand people, however dissimilar they are.

I fall easily into my rôle, because,—well, I suppose mainly to hide my inner self within a shell which to others appears to be the kernel. While thus hidden I have the opportunity to make my observations.

You know that I am a journalist, that I am accustomed to being among people and to being considered grown-up, rather early in life. That

is perhaps why you did not think that realities would find me so unprepared for the truth about Grandfather and Grandmother,—and it was like a blow in the face.

Most children have mothers with whom they can talk, which I never had. I could have gained my knowledge from the obscene talk of servant-girls or from schoolmates who put their heads together during recess and curiously whispered about certain people's dissolute lives, taken from books or from talk overheard in the servants' quarters.

I might then have known that you were right when you said that Grandfather and Grandmother were not very different from other people. But I did not want to listen either to the servants or my schoolmates because when they spoke about such things their faces took on an expression I loathed and because they put a sinister meaning into the most innocent remark.

The only question which interested me was how people had children and the school answered me before it had become a problem. I always left the room at the first indication of whispering and after awhile they would warn me with, "We are going to tell a naughty story, Vera. You had better go."

You were not the first to open my eyes. The

Field-mouse was in the very midst of an attempt. I fought against it and clung to my stand to the last straw, when your letter came as a bombshell and incited my furious answer.

He is always running after women and he hides behind the same words you used in your letter: "I am not much different from other men! No better nor worse."

Why did he make me his confidante? Probably because he realized that the townspeople would talk about him anyway, which they had already done by the way. He entertained me with tales of his affairs when he met me "by chance" on my long walks. He did not do it in a vulgar manner but tried to defend himself by throwing an interesting halo around these girls of the street, who were for him "studies!"

He told of the lonely man who associated with them because of his need for companionship and not because of any carnal desire; and he put the blame on our shoulders whose social etiquette forbids us to speak to unknown persons without a proper introduction.

Bye and bye I wormed his whole history out of him. I discovered his craving for conquest, born of his petty vanity, his egotism that made him a seducer not content with the girls of the street. For he also spoke of "broken hearts" in all the

towns to which his business had taken him, and he showed me costly rings given to him by his admirers, whom he called "simps."

I told him that he had acted like a cad and should not boast of his experiences. I attacked him constantly but he kept it up. Did he feel a kind of satisfaction in opening my eyes to things I knew nothing about? Or was it because there was no one else to talk to, as he said?

At any rate our discussions continued whenever we were alone in the office and your letter corroborates his assertion, "he was not very different from other people," my own family included. And yet, is there not a difference? Who had the most plausible excuse? The young lonesome man or the husband whose wife failed to make him happy? The former forgot his responsibility toward his victim, the latter his duty toward his wife.

Let me tell you how I feel about it. There are excuses, many excuses for them both. In time, when I learn how much evil there is in this world and how many excuses there are I will forget to be shocked. I will take the same attitude of compassion as I take toward the clerks; but I will never, never mistake right for wrong.

Perhaps love to me means so much more than it does to other people: perhaps that is why I

cannot understand that anyone can be contented with a girl of the street, or a liaison. I could never be contented with so little. I hope because I demand a great deal of life, also of love, that I will, some day, have a great deal.

I have never kissed a man. If I told that to the Field-mouse he would call it mistaken middle-class virtue or a lack of sex. It is nothing of the sort however. It is simply that I think people who give way to a moment's impulse, a fleeting infatuation, dole themselves out in little pieces and can never experience a grand passion.

You see it is not prudishness which dictates my action, but sheer egotism. I know I shall meet the world's most wonderful man and I can afford to wait. I know I shall experience a grand passion and I will keep myself in leash until that day arrives. Not for my sake but for his. I crave nothing in return,—nothing but love, and I shall be the happiest soul in the world.

But my dreams and my longings I keep within myself. I shall not expose them to the Field-mouse or any other person. You are the only one who shall know, because your letters have warmed my heart and have taught me to admire your character. I know I can safely trust you with my inmost thoughts and know you will un-

derstand me as much as you did when I threw stones at you, all unwarranted.

I am your friend now, you write, not just your child. I am, however, a very young and inexperienced friend who is eager for your friendship and advice.

You want to hear some of the jolly things going on here. Well, what would you think of a ball in the "Social Club." It is the best ball I have ever been to. Andersen, who is a member, took me there.

First of all, picture to yourself the "Mechanics Association" and a tiresome but select concert which is the excuse for the ball. Then glance at the audience in which there are five women to one man. Keep your eyes on the mothers who still fuss over their daughters' dance frocks, and look at the gleaming stockings in all the colors of the rainbow,—a pair of black ones showing here and there.

After the concert there is a rush for the tables in the restaurant. My landlady asks me sympathetically if it is not disconcerting for me and Andersen to look out upon such a sea of faces. The restaurant contains fifteen tables, all told, and the faces I saw were the faces I see every day in Broad Street when the town goes home to dinner.

The music starts. The artists who manage the music—or mismanage it—are my shoemaker, a plasterer, and a bricklayer. We two unfortunates do not know that it is not the proper thing to dance the first dance, so we make a rush for the floor and begin to dance the newest steps, still unknown here. The musicians become so flustered they almost forget to play. The onlookers become still more scandalized when we sit down and talk together. It is not done here. It is a severe breach of local etiquette.

The proper thing to do is as follows:

Gentlemen to the right, ladies to the left. The music starts. The men race across the floor. The best-looking girls are quickly taken, and the fellows who don't get the ones they had their eyes on, shake their heads and return to the gentlemen's side. When the music starts the women's faces light up. Their voices take on an artificial tone. They take little mincing steps, their heads roughishly to one side, while humming a tune. When the onslaught begins, each tries to catch someone's eye and practically hypnotizes him into dancing with her. By and by when the lucky ones have been picked out, the rest sink into a state of stolid indifference and glance guiltily at their mothers. Like a heavy border of beef they sit on the balcony and from there

issues a constant barrage of criticism of those who make the greatest hit.

I need not tell you that the women are much nicer looking than the men and that these latter, as soon as the dance is over, lead their partners back to the vacancy left by them in the ranks. In order to find them more easily they drop them at precisely the same spot each time. If it should happen that a girl, as for instance myself, in her innocence, continues the conversation after the dance, the border of beef stretches its neck and suspects an engagement.

I danced with a bashful young man who stood nervously by afterwards and did not know what to do with himself. I thought of course that he was shy on conversation and started the ball rolling. Suddenly and without warning he made a deep bow and scooted across the floor in wild flight, back to the men's side.

The border of beef heaved a sigh of relief.

Well, that is one side of the social life of the small town. To-morrow I am going to dine at the house of a prominent doctor. That will be my first appearance in local "society." Father wrote and asked him to have a look at my lungs. There was, of course, nothing the matter with them, but it was thoughtful of him. The doctor and I had a little talk together and as a sequence

the next day I received an invitation to dinner from his better half.

I am dying to get a glimpse of the home life here.

My best love and a thousand thanks for your very long letter.

You know now that I am not afraid to hear more, and believe that, even if we disagree at times, our disagreements shall never part us.

Your Vera.

London, April 7.

Dear, dear Vera:

I remember—I remember. How could I ever forget the most beautiful day of my life, the 10th of April, the day you were born.

I awoke when somebody called me as from far, far away. I wanted to open my eyes but my eyelids were as heavy as lead. I wanted to lift my head but a heavy hand seemed to press against my brow forcing my head back on the pillow.

Bye and bye I became conscious of whispering, anxious voices. Again I heard, this time clearly, someone calling my name.

Another effort to open my eyes and I succeeded. I felt as if all the world's happiness rushed to my heart and threatened to burst it at that moment. Tears coursed down my cheeks. I did not know why I was crying. I felt very strong and dreadfully weak,—sweetly sorrowful and violently happy, all at the same time, I stretched my arms for a little white bundle they offered me and pressed it to my heart.

It was you, Vera, my beloved child. Father was bending over me, and, deeply touched, con-

tinued to stroke my hair, which felt damp and clammy on my brow.

"Was it hard to go through, little May?" he whispered.

I took his hand and kissed it, pressed it and laid it against my cheek. I could not speak but my eyes traveled from him to you and from you to him expressing all the deep love that was filling my heart.

"Thank you, dearest little May," father whispered, and kissed the little silky black head that nestled at my bosom,—"and I congratulate you."

"I congratulate *you,*" I whispered back.

"Congratulations,—congratulations!—" said the doctor and the nurse, and Aunt Edith who was visiting. The servants stood in the door and nodded, "Congratulations, Madam."

Heaped upon my bed was a perfect deluge of roses and Father placed an old ring set with one large diamond, upon my finger. It was an heirloom which had been in the family for generations.

It has never been off my finger from the day you were born. I had looked at it often, thinking it did not bring one very much good luck. But to-night as I look at it for the last time, reflecting

the light in its finely cut facets, it sparkles in a quite jolly way to me as if saying:

"It will come. Your happiness is on the way. I shall carry it to you!"

Now I am sending this old ring to you on your birthday, Vera. The promise of future blessedness it brought to me on the day you were born still lingers and glows in its depths. Perhaps this promise will be fulfilled when you put it on your hand. Perhaps,—perhaps it will bring you to me again, as it seems to say to-night. I am strangely happy and serene to-day: more than I have been for many years. All the gladness which has come into my life—my ambitions realized, a kindness shown me—success after long struggle, has been saddened by the dreary background of my life without you and Father. There is always need to share joys with some beloved or sympathetic person, or the joy is lost, and its place is filled with a longing for a real friend in whom to confide.

To-day I am joyous,—really joyous, for your letter has lifted a burden from my shoulders. I have, however, sometimes been alarmed at the danger lurking in your want of a mother to guide your thoughts. I see now that your wholesome nature and your inborn common sense have helped you over these reefs.

Your self-assurance and your self-criticism, both unusually well-developed, will guard you against too many disappointments and your fairness, inherited from your father, will keep you from inflicting unnecessary sorrows upon others.

Everything you tell me about the town and its balls and social activities awakens jolly memories from the days when I was a small-town girl. You may hardly believe it, but I have also awaited the boy's onrush with beating heart, and felt a burning shame if left over. It is amusing to think of now. One looks back at herself almost as a dear little friend for whom she has compassion—yet whom she cannot help finding slightly ridiculous.

I don't like the Field-mouse and thank heaven you don't either. Another day I will come back to your letter and try to explain those things which are puzzling you.

But not to-day. Your birthday must not be clouded by any dark thoughts from the past. It must be clear and beautiful as the day when you were born.

Only loving thoughts and the best of wishes for your future shall this letter bring to you from

Your Mother.

April 12.

Dear Mother,

You remembered it. Oh, if you but knew how fearful I was lest you should forget it,—as *I* forgot Father's birthday.

Your ring is on my finger. I have looked upon it for hours, thinking all the while that just so have you sat and dreamed over it—inexpressibly happy when you two were together and later on through many bitter hours when you were alone. Bitter because he who gave you the ring could not come to you and guard you and help you through the hard hours of struggle and doubt.

My little mother, perhaps after all the ring will bring you the happiness you renounced then. I believe it: I seem to know it. I am so wonderfully glad.

Father has been here to visit me. He came on my birthday. As I sat in the office, buried among letters and packages, trying to discover his handwriting in the pile, I heard an automobile approach, the sound of a horn I knew and the door flew open.

It was Father. I laughed, I cried! I disappeared into the telephone booth to hide my emotions. I had not expected him and did not know how old he had become.

The white strands of hair at his temples have multiplied, the grandfather wrinkles are spreading out. Mother dear, how he must love me, if our short separation has aged him so. Or is it *you* he longs for now in his solitude?

You left him, but I won't. Not now, not in such a way. But must I go back, must I give up all my dreams, all my hopes?

I cannot make a choice. If he demanded that I return I know I would stay, but he demands nothing. He wishes only that I shall be happy—that is why I *must* help him now.

We have talked together not as father and daughter but as friends. For the first time in his life he spoke about his business, divulged all his plans, all his dreams of the future.

All at once his face took on a serious expression. The smile and the youthfulness in his eyes disappeared and his voice became hard and cold.

"But what do I work for? What is the use? Who shares my success with me?"

"I do, little father,—I do!"

"You!" I felt as if he looked at me without

seeing. "You are like your mother, little Vera. That is the best thing I can say about you, but she—she also left me."

Suddenly he began to speak about *you,*—in a hurried, strained, feverish manner. He loves you still, I felt it in every word, every sentence.

"You must never think harshly about your mother. Life to her did not mean just duty and still more duty. It meant more, something higher, nobler, but I did not understand it then."

A tear dropped down on the white tablecloth and then I could not hold my question in check.

"Why did you part? Why did you two make each other unhappy?"

Then he remembered where he was and with whom he spoke.

"Little girl, I tire you and I am tired myself. Forgive me if I have talked foolishly, but I have been so much by myself after you left that I have almost forgotten how it is to be with others. Promise me not to think too much about what I told you. I wouldn't like to have you think that Mother and I hated each other, or that we parted with harsh words. I do not believe we quarrelled once during our marriage. But there are sometimes things beyond our control, outside conditions, apparently indifferent, which may influence our lifes and reshape them. I see now that

the fault was mine. I should never have let it happen, but at that time I thought it was your mother who shirked her duty."

"Do not ask me again. Some time I will tell you everything but not to-night, not here."

His voice trembled when he took my head between his hands and kissed my brow.

"Good-night, little girl. Sleep well." That was the way he used to say good-night to you, wasn't it?

Oh, why did I not dare that evening to sit beside him on the sofa and whisper into his ear:

"Little Father, I know everything. I know my mother. We two are friends for life."

But I dared not. I hardly dared breathe because what he told me was said only because of his deep longing for you and because he wanted to talk to someone about you so as not always to be alone with his memories. I really don't think he realized he was talking to *me,* and if I had interrupted his rapid flow of words he might have withdrawn into his shell and I would never have heard another word about you.

That is why I sat silent and quiet and listened mournfully to a lonely old man's remembrances. How much he remembers! And such insignificant details one would think were forgotten long ago! The dress you wore, the last time you two

celebrated my birthday together. The expression of your face when one day you had forgotten he had a guest for dinner. The dance of joy you did for him in the living-room when he had successfully turned a deal, or he was out of sorts. How proud he used to be over your social successes or the host of admirers which surrounded you, and over whose heads you used to nod to him lovingly, a nod which said: "You and I,—we belong to each other. I love you."

He has gone, and I can put your ring back on my finger, without fearing that he might recognize it. He has returned to his solitude, while we two, in *our* separate loneliness, sit longing for him and each other.

How complicated life is! It is not only that we are living apart. There is so much besides that must be conquered before our yearning can be appeased. And in the meantime we must suffer. But I cannot sit passively by and see you two suffer, see you struggle separately through life when you ought to be side by side.

Good heavens! If you only parted because Grandmother and Aunt Edith spoiled your marriage then they cannot be an obstacle now since we are not now living together any longer. Mother, what is making it impossible for you

again to take your proper place? Father loves you, I feel that. Why are you two still hiding your yearning for each other?

Your

Vera.

London, April 16.

Beloved child!

Father has been with you, and talked to you about me and in such a way as to make it appear that it was not I who was wrong, who was unfaithful. I cannot understand it. Then there are still miracles in the world.

And what do you write me? Grandmother and Aunt Edith are not living with Father any longer? But then he has kept his promise to me, —in everything, in spite of my failing him.

Do you really believes he loves me still? Is it possible, or do you write it simply to make me glad or to try to reconcile us?

He has aged, so much so in these short months that your child-heart bled at the sight of him. And you are willing to sacrifice all your future, your artist's dreams.

No, no, that must not be. I will not hear of more sacrifice for my sake. For I know that it is for me that you want to give this up. It is my guilt you want to take upon your shoulders.

I left him. I whom he loved and who loved him. I was cruel but *you* cannot be.

You see now how petty I was. How egotistical. For he had made a promise to me and I would not wait.

Did he not say a word about why I left him? Was there no bitterness against me in his words? Did he not mention someone else, another man? For he must have believed there was another. I gave him to understand there was. Or did he always suspect the truth—that I only used it as a pretext, so that he should not reproach himself too bitterly? Has he always known that it was he and he only whom I loved,—loved so deeply that I could not bear to see our love ruined through any petty arguments in our daily life? Loved so deeply that I would rather suffer and yearn in exile than stand by him and let my dissatisfaction, my impatience and my rising nervous irritability throw a shadow across his life?

I left him, and you must believe me if I now swear to you that I went because I could not endure to lose his or your esteem day by day as I was losing my own toward myself.

I wanted to continue to be his love, his joy, his sun, as I had been the first years of our married life. I would not be the bitter malcontent fretful being who always met him with tearful eyes and silent reproaches as soon as he arrived home.

He promised me that everything would soon

be all right again. Time and again he begged me:

"Please be patient, May. I promise you as soon as I can afford to give Mother everything that I feel I owe her we shall again live alone together. And I will carry you in my arms and thank you every hour because you took all this upon yourself for my sake. I understand fully how difficult the situation is for you. You never hear me censure you, and I love you more than ever."

No, he never reproached me but I blamed myself because the knowledge of his love and confidence was not enough to warm my soul and make me insensible to all the world's pettiness.

I blamed myself because your plump warm arms around my neck could not guard me against the bitterness in my heart. I felt my own unworthiness and I suffered from it.

And I could not come and say to father:

"You must choose. Either they or I must leave our home." For I knew beforehand what he would do. But I also know that from the day I forced him to abandon what he felt was his duty I would lower his self-esteem and perhaps change his opinion of me. I could not demand such a sacrifice, for whichever way he would have chosen

would have brought him into conflict with something in his own nature.

I saw no other way out, than to use the knife myself, and do it in such a way as to save him from self-reproach.

I wish to make clear what I have already conceded, and that is that Grandmother wasn't really bad. Rather it was pettiness, discontent and suspicion which made up her characteristic traits. But I think I would have preferred to struggle against real cruelty, for then the battle would soon have been over.

Instead it lasted over two years until I felt I was on the point of suffocating beneath all the mire heaping up about me.

The conflict started the first evening when Grandmother and Aunt Edith came to us. The furniture had arrived two weeks in advance and Father and I took pleasure in putting the rooms in order before they arrived. We felt that Grandmother had gone through such a lot of unpleasantness in connection with the auction and the disintegration of the old home, that now we would build her a new home here on what was left of the one she had to give up. She had kept the living-room furniture, and we tried our best to make her room look like her old one. Of course it was not so large and roomy as the one

in the old manor house, but we thought we had succeeded in making the sunny balcony room cozy and attractive, and had filled it with flowers.

At last they arrived and Grandmother's first words when she stepped over the threshold were a criticism. Not a word of thanks, not the least appreciation of all the work we had done.

"Ugh! What a hole!" was her first remark and then she began to examine everything.

"Goodness me, May, don't you even remember there were two pleats on the curtains? That vase is not made for water."

And so forth and so on. The pillows were not correctly placed. That chair should stand at the window. Everything was wrong. She criticised in a petulant, harsh tone of voice, although these were all matters of small importance, easily adjusted.

I was sad and thoughtful when we went to bed that night, but Father comforted me.

"Wait until she sees everything by daylight, May, then she will be happy."

But she was not happy. The very next morning she extended her fault-finding to my special domain.

The arrangement of the house my management of it, the food,—nothing was as it ought to be. Her criticism was never open and above-

board, pointing to an error which really existed, but sneaked forward in the guise of an innocent question.

—"Don't you use—? No really,—Why I never saw that before——"

It was most irritating and afterward when a conflict arose she always said, surprised, at my loss of temper:

"Why, I haven't said a word!"

We let one of our maids go when Aunt Edith and Grandmother came and shared her household duties between us. One day we stood ironing the linen. There was a yellow curtain at the window which gave to the whole room a golden light. Probably she did not notice this but saw only that the linen was not as snowy-white as her own used to be when it was lying in the sunshine. She twisted and turned one piece after the other and at last she said with feigned ignorance and in an astonished voice:

"Do you color your cloth?"

She knew very well that no one in the world would think of coloring one's linen and sheets yellow. Her only purpose was to make me feel I lacked her efficiency as housekeeper. If she had said very frankly, "I don't think your clothes look very white,—have you a good laundress?" we could have talked it over peacefully. Instead

I became angry and, looking her straight in the eyes, I answered,—"No, do you?"

She turned her head away because she felt I had seen through her, and became irritable and personal to hide her embarrassment.

Our happy mornings, our laughter and song, withered beneath the little sarcastic sallies they inspired daily. She dared not come out in the open while Father was at home but answered questions as to whether or not we were disturbing her in the morning with a saccharine smile and these words:

"No, I am glad there are some people in this world who are carefree."

But as soon as he was out of the door her poisonous attacks began.

"It is no wonder we cannot get any work done when the morning has been spent in tomfoolery."

When Father came home my eyes were red and swollen, and I was unbalanced and irritable. Yet he never knew half of what I suffered, because she evaded issues and misrepresented the facts in order to appear entirely innocent. It was I who was too touchy and could not stand any criticism.

I could tell you of endless and apparently innocent occurrences. I am often astounded to find how clearly every one is burned into my con-

sciousness, but it only shows how much they got on my nerves.

One more little episode I must tell you. It happened one beautiful day in June just before our wedding anniversary and while Father was away traveling.

I took a long walk with you. Long, in comparison with your little legs. We had taken your ball with us and rolled it ahead of us, catching it again in a little race which you were always permitted to win. In this way you never tired of the walk. We came into a wood and I sat down on a bench while you continued to play.

I sat there, happy about you, the sunshine and everything. I thought of Father and all my troubles were forgotten for the moment. I composed a pretty little letter to him in my mind. I wanted to tell him how much I loved him and how happy I was at that moment. I wanted to cheer him and to promise him that I would be sensible—that I would endure. I wanted to tell him that never would the hope of a glorious future for us three die in my heart.

When I came home I let the maid take you and sat down at my desk at once so as to write while my high spirits lasted.

Then Grandmother opened the door.

"The silver, May,—wasn't that to be polished to-day?"

"Yes, yes. I'll be there right away."

"Perhaps I am supposed to do it all by myself?"

"I tell you I'll be with you in a minute."

"When I am all finished, I suppose."

I stayed where I was but I heard her open all the drawers in the dining-room and take out the silver—with an unnecessary amount of noise.

I tried to close my eyes in order to write what I had planned to write but I felt as if my hearing suddenly had become maddeningly acute. Through the closed door came the sound of the jingling of the silver, all the little harsh clicks when it was thrown on the table. Even her mumbling reached me and the deep, heavy sighs that accompanied her work.

Suddenly I threw the pen impatiently aside, went in to her and started to work.

In our fury we cleaned the silver in no time at all, but the letter I wrote to your father later on was a result of the rage I felt and not the declaration of love I had dreamed of sending him. Again a hole was shot through the wall soon destined to fall.

But the worst was still to come when a young Englishman, Mr. Briand, one of Fathers distant

relations, came to Denmark and was introduced into our home. He spoke Danish with great difficulty and it was natural that he and I were tempted now and then to speak our native tongue.

That was enough to arouse Grandmother's suspicion, kept sensitive through her own unhappy experience. She thought we gossiped about her and she believed we had a secret together. One day an infinitesimal occurrence gave new impetus to her suspicions. It was simply that something flew into my eye. It hurt me and Mr. Briand offered to remove it.

We were alone in the room standing at the bay window to get more light. In order to support my head Mr. Briand put his hand back of it. As we stood thus in this apparently very intimate situation Grandmother passed by the window to go into the garden. She glanced in. I saw she was startled and I knew at once what she thought. I could almost read it in her back when she turned and went away from the house.

The blood surged to my head. I was seized with a desire to run out to her, force her to turn around and listen to my explanation. But I could not do it without strengthening her suspicion.

There was never a word breathed about this

incident afterwards. Silently she bore her suspicion and silently I bore it,—always, always. I read it in her sarcastic smirk when she spoke about "this Englishman" and I read it in the compassionate voice with which she mentioned Father as "my poor boy" from then on. She never again came into the room when Mr. Briand was there and she took her meals in her own room when he came to dinner.

I read in Edith's face that Grandmother had told her what she had seen for she also became cool and reserved in her attitude toward Mr. Briand—and me. Her silence, and Grandmother's absence, created a strained atmosphere at our little dinner-parties. The forced liveliness with which I attempted to raise our spirits only made bad worse. I was too proud to justify myself in Father's eyes and explain the situation to him although I felt that gradually he also began to realize that something must have happened.

From then on the home became unendurable to me. I had no wish to remain any longer. All I wanted was to get away from it all.

They thought I had betrayed your father and that I had had a liaison with Mr. Briand. Very well. They could think what they pleased. I would not defend myself against a baseless accusation so horrid, so impossible, which had never

even entered my mind. Gradually, without quite being aware of what I did, I conceived the idea in my despair, to use Mr. Briand as a pretext to get away, and coolly laid my plans.

I suppose you think that all I have told you are things of little consequence, that all these trivial matters ought not to have destroyed the lives of three people. But great conflicts and situations often come of just such trifles. One solitary little mistake may create a terrible explosion. That happened to me.

This is a long letter: a long confession if you insist. Your letter touched all old chords until they vibrated. I am again in the throes of the witches' dance which carried me away in the past. But through the barbarous music breaks a soft and calm strain,—"Father loves me," and I love him. I wonder if this beautiful motif would have continued to be played through the years if I had stuck to my post and had endured and suffered with humility until I had become as low and wretched as they wanted to make me.

Write me a few loving words soon again if you can, for I am racked with doubt.

Was I utterly in the wrong? Was I?

Mother.

April 28th.

Dear Mother—

Write—write! I am waiting for more in a state of feverish excitement. For a whole week I have worked, locked in my room from the moment I left the office. Papers filled with plans and outlines and dialogues are spread over my table and in the bottom of a drawer I hide the first act of my play.

Don't think it is finished, don't think it is good. It is written in fever heat, in wild excitement. Written in a desire to act, to do something, in order to bring you two together again.

I have written with the fever glowing in my cheeks and in such an intense nervous state that I jumped from my chair and paced the floor to quiet down.

It is the play about Father and you. First Act: the pinpricks, the little innocent pin-pricks which to all outward appearance scarcely break the skin, though really they sink deep into the soul.

I have dared it. I have tried it. But have I succeeded? Perhaps. Perhaps not. It will have

to rest now for a while until I am calm again; until I can contemplate it coolly with the sober eyes of an audience.

Mother! Tell me honestly if it is insane? Technique and routine are not within my power. What do I know about the construction of a play? But I know Grandmother, I know Father,—and I know *you*,—or do I not know you yet?

Tell me everything. First and foremost tell me about yourself. I have never talked with you: don't know how you speak, but while I am writing it seems to me that in just such and such a manner you must speak and act.

I resemble you, father says. Perhaps that is why I put something of myself into the character of you, and I hope I handle it correctly.

It was your last letter that inspired me to try. I read it over. I closed my eyes, and saw the whole thing before me. Yes, yes! I understand. That is how things must have happened, for I know Grandmother! And that is exactly how she would have stepped into the room, stopping here and there to look around; and at last she would have said:

"Ugh, such a hole!"

Father would have tried to make a joke of it to conceal the meaning of her words, to soften

them. But the thrust had gone home, because you knew that you had honestly striven to kill your doubt and your uneasiness.

And you kept silent, swallowed your answer and smiled to Father. You two had talked over her coming and you had agreed solemnly to do your best; your very best to soften her through your kindness.

But gradually both of you became weary. Your restrained answers began to come slower and less gaily. You are on the point of breaking; they begin to realize your temperament and feel that you are about to fly into a passion and only curb it out of regard for Father. At last Grandmother retires with a petulant "good night" and the remark that she can "of course, get along without a pitcher of warm water, since we have to economize on servants." You sink exhausted down on the sofa while Father, softly whispering, cheers you up, and you promise to endure and not to give up.

But Mr. Briand! Did he love you? Were you aware of it, and did you make use of it? I lack knowledge from which to create his character. But first and foremost you must tell me about the breach between Father and you; about the last day you were together, and the words you had between you before you left.

I know I have no right to put these questions to you. Why should you reveal yourself completely to me?

But, Mother, I am a visionary, a hopeless dreamer, and just now I am dreaming one of my stupendous dreams, I dream of a play about you and Father, a play showing how both of you are imperceptibly carried toward the separation. You see the threatening danger confronting you but cannot stop the momentum. Slowly, without great conflicts or tempestuous scenes, you drift apart and the day arrives when you realize it is the end; that it was bound to come, though you loved each other and still do.

That is all.

But my dream is larger yet. I see *you* play the principal part in your English theater and I see Father and myself in a box as chance spectators. And then? Well, then I expect the great storm which must either part you two completely or bring you together again forever.

Mother dear, do not laugh at me. Do not call me a simpleton. I am just your lonesome child who suffers as much as you two by this separation. And I possess this generation's urge to act instead of resigning itself to the task of waiting.

I feel as if this week of day and night work

has made a different person of me. While I struggled with my materials, continually discouraged, I was kept going by the thought of victory and the goal that had to be reached. I do not yet dare to read what I have written. The fever is still in my body and I must wait until my mind is normal again.

Tell me truly and honestly if it is hopeless. Tell me if my hope to have it accepted by one of London's greatest theaters is a dream of youthful madness. Wouldn't *your* word have great weight if you should *want* to play the part?

I know very well that if the play is to be produced it must first go through the hands of an excellent translator. He must cut whatever *you* want cut, patch up and correct but not change the action,—the truth.

Oh, Mother dear, you write that I must not relinquish my hope of an artistic career for your sake and I won't do that for either your sake or father's. But if this dream of mine should but come true I will return home for my own sake and give up my hopes of becoming a journalist. For then it will mean nothing to me.

Do not be angry because I did not answer your letter sooner. I have drowned myself in this play, have lived in one burning ecstasy, closing my eyes and ears to everything else about me.

I have done my newspaper work mechanically, for my brain throbbed with the dialogue of my play. My weekly letter to Father became a postal card, and as for you,—I failed you completely. But I have no pang of conscience this time, as I am working for you two: for your future happiness.

I dare not think that perhaps your next letter will discourage me,—that your answer, gently but firmly, will advise me to give up my idea for one or many reasons. The plans for next season may be already made; you do not believe that I am up to my task; you do not want to play the part because you will not experience the same suffering once more,—or perhaps you think it will be impossible to make Father take a trip to London with me to attend a performance in which you are playing, now when I know you are my mother.

But I feel I can make him do that. In his inmost soul he is yearning to show me the mother he loves and adores. So if I ask him he will let me persuade him and be happy that I did.

Mother dear!

I am awaiting your answer with impatience. I shall not let you see my play before it is finished. Perhaps I was foolish even to mention it. But I am most *anxious* to hear your verdict.

I am longing, longing, longing to receive your positive yes or no.

Don't be magnanimous,—be truthful.

Your Vera.

London, May 2.

Dear, dear Friend:

At last your letter came. I have waited for it many days. I could not understand your silence or rather I thought I understood it too well. My letter, my open confession, naturally had made you suffer, had disappointed you and made you angry. Perhaps a touch of Grandmother's suspicion had entered your mind, perhaps you thought as she did, that there was something in it about this Englishman. Perhaps you were contemptuous of me and your silence was your verdict and your answer.

Then your letter arrived and as if lashed by a tempest your words were driven into my heart; turned my thoughts upside down: killed all my spineless reflections and awakened with a jolt my struggling emotions.

You want to act. You want to enter the arena. You want to help and you want to do it by writing a play. You want to infuse new life into our old thoughts, our dreams, our love, and want to exhibit it all in the sharp glows of the footlights.

You want to make us see each other as we

really are; want to show plainly our mistakes and our errors and force us to retrace our steps one by one down the road that parted us until we stand again united. You want us to stand hand in hand, torn and wounded from our lonely pilgrimage, with our young faith, our young love reborn in our hearts.

Dear, you are young and I am old, and I do not share your point of view.

Can one forget in a second? Can the down-trodden flowers again raise their heads? Can the painful wounds that are burned into our flesh ever be healed? Will not the scars they have made remain as eternal memories of what we suffered?

I do not believe in miracles, but admit they may occur. One happened the day you came to me of your own volition, and I catch myself dreaming my old dream over again. A dream from which I have often awakened with a smile on my lips but which quickly changed into a wild sobbing when I faced the bitter reality. A dream of Father standing in my room looking at me with affectionate and serious eyes blinded by tears.

"May," he whispers and draws me to his heart, "I have done wrong. We both have. But now since we have understood it and have suffered

for it, we will both close our eyes on the past and we will try to heal each other's wounds with tenderness and love."

But a dream is a dream and life is much more complicated than any dream our imaginations can create, however beautiful and however bold.

I am getting lost in a maze of thoughts. I wonder if I am justified in killing your faith, your hope and your strong will with my pessimism. Have I not destroyed enough for you by opening your eyes? You are now facing the fulfillment of your artist's dream. You are seized with a new delirium of creativeness. Am I justified in tearing apart with a ruthless hand the light and airy filaments of your imagination with which you try to entwine our destinies.

No, you must continue, now you have started. Though you might not help Father and me, it will perhaps bring you happiness in some other way; become the foundation of your future. Be assured that I shall help you with all my strength. To be able to smooth your path for you would be a pleasure which I do not deserve.

And I *can* do it. My plans are already made. I know the man who, with me, shall translate and adapt it. He is a talented young author who has studied the Scandinavian languages for a long time. It has been his dream to create a rôle for

me. He has taste, tact and an unfailing *flair* for dramatic construction, and he will be both pleased and proud when I ask him to cooperate. His name and mine will be enough of a guaranty for the manager. Do not doubt that it shall succeed.

But now all at once it becomes necessary for you to know so much more.

In order to construct a plot it is not enough to know all the surface characteristics of the people you want to depict.

It is not enough to move one's figures about as chessmen facing each other in convenient situations. One must penetrate their world of thought, must get to the bottom of their emotional or spiritual life. One must reveal them and explain them so that the audience feels and understands that they act as they naturally must act following the law of their inner being. So many thoughts come and disappear in our brains, oftimes only as quick little sparks. Many of them never grow into words or actions, but however long or short their duration, they do set the wheels of the human mechanism in motion and help to determine our actions.

When I was very young I dreamed, like you, my immense dreams and thought my immense thoughts and they always revolved around the

theatre, the histrionic art, until your father came along and took possession of all my dreams and thoughts.

It was of no use that I fought, that I refused to sacrifice my art on the altar of love; I thought I could pay homage to both the high gods but your father told me to choose. I vacillated and fought with myself. But the last evening we were together, when I was frightened at the thought of separation and his sad eyes were silently upbraiding me, I yielded. There really was no choice to make. I could but follow the dictates of my heart and quietly I laid my hand in his.

I thought then that my desire for an artist's career was buried forever, but I was mistaken. Time and again it returned and I never wearied of building my castles in Spain, thinking of what might have been. Then the day arrived when happiness flew out of the window and the monotonous housework seemed uncongenial and dreary to me, when the song and the laughter died, leaving only dissatisfaction in their place. My old dreams returned; I lived again in a world rich with excitement, struggle and toil, rich with victories, triumphs and honors.

The memories of Father's and my travels awoke, telling of the days when we rushed from

country to country, when things happened and we saw and learned and observed. I longed for England, for London, for the pleasure of sitting in the dining-room of a big hotel, of being served by well-trained waiters. I longed to speed over the continent in luxurious trains and to speak of things above and beyond the bagatelles which were Grandmother's sole conversation.

I felt as if life were running away from me, that I was stuck in a blind alley, that my home was a prison and each day a fresh torture.

Then I rebelled. It was the day after Mr. Briand left for England and there was a dreadful scene between Grandmother and myself. The day was gloomy and gray. Your father, spurred on by my impatience, had speculated too heavily. His business could not carry the burden. He had told me about it in the morning and I understood that the result would mean more waiting for me. I thought of Mr. Briand who at this very moment was speeding on his way to England, which for me had become the promised land. I became thoughtful and moody.

Then suddenly grandmother said:

"You are not quite happy to-day, little May."

"No."

"Do you miss Mr. Briand so soon?"

"Yes."

"You ought to tell your husband."

"I am going to."

"Then it is true!" she exclaimed, triumphant.

"What?"

"Nothing,—nothing."

"Please speak straight from the shoulder."

"What should I say?"

"That you think I am a harlot."

"It would never occur to me to use such an expression." She walked toward the door. I saw that she was afraid.

"But it would occur to you to *think* it," I cried passionately to her.

"My thoughts are my own," she answered with her sweetest smile.

The blood rushed to my head. Everything went black before me. My rage overpowered me. Face to face with her boundless perfidy my self-control gave way. Tortured and desperate, I lost all hold of myself and without speaking, without realizing what I was doing, I grabbed the nearest thing to me, a valuable cut glass bowl, and flung it at her.

"My Lord!" she cried, frightened, and fled out of the door before it reached her.

Water, roses and broken glass lay strewn all over the floor and in the center of it all I stood,

broken-hearted and wringing my hands in despair.

Slowly I came to my senses. I loathed myself. So that was what had become of me: a hysterical, vulgar creature: a foolish woman who creates a scandal. A feeling of shame surged through my heart. I was overcome with despair. I would never see her again, never, never. Everything should be over now. I locked the door, threw myself on the sofa, my whole body shaken with sobs. . . . Slowly I became quiet and began to think.

No, not in such a mood, not in so irresponsible a fit of temper would I act. After what had happened I *could* not stay. It had to be said now, only not in bitterness, but calmly, coolly and firmly, so that they would understand, so that Father would understand I was in earnest.

I rose, cooled and powdered my face, tidied my hair, and forced myself to sit quietly down at my desk. I would write a letter.

Then the door opened and Father stood before me.

"May," he said, very quietly, "I know what has happened but not why. Won't you tell me?"

"Why don't you ask your mother?"

"She simply says there is not the slightest reason."

"Do you believe it?"

"No—she will have to leave now."

"Don't let her go," I answered as calmly as possible. "I will go."

"When *she* is in the wrong?"

"She was *right!*"

"In what way was she right, May?" He sat down next to me and took my hand. I did not answer.

"Just tell me one thing, May, is there another —another man you love?"

I looked away and kept quiet.

"Is it he who just went away?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You need not answer. I feel I have no right to keep you back. But the child, Vera, will you also take her away from me?"

"Vera will remain. It is only I who do not belong here any longer."

"When do you intend to leave?"

"As soon as possible."

"And you think you will be happy?"

"Yes," with a sigh of relief. "If I am free, I may be happy."

"You *are* free, May. I never meant to dominate your feelings. We won't speak of this to anyone. You are ill and have gone on a trip to recover. That subterfuge will make it possible

for you to return. Yes, you will always be expected, will always find a welcome. Vera and I will miss you very much."

"Thank you, Aage."

Three days later I went to England, and everybody thought I had followed Mr. Briand. But he knew nothing, had no suspicion of the quarrel his name had caused. He did not know until many months later that I was in London, and that I had left my home forever.

You ask if Mr. Briand loved me. Yes. But I did not know, did not offer him or his feelings the slightest thought. Not until years afterward when he was dead, killed in the war—and I happened to remember our parting, the subsequent meeting in London, and our last farewell before he went to the front, did it dawn upon me that he also had played a part in the tragedy of my life. And that not the least tragic.

Father took me to the train, arranged everything for me, gave me a bouquet of La France roses,—and for the last time held me close in his arms and whispered in my ear.

"Au revoir, May."

I will not recount the tale of my parting with you, for the bitter agony I suffered I have never conquered.

Fame,—excitement,—struggle,—laurels,—all

that came to me later in life, but happiness never returned to me. I gave that up forever the last night I stood at your bedside.

And now my child, write. For you know your mother. I have revealed myself to you as I actually am.

Write. Shape your future and build it up on the ruins of my past,—and do not let any thought of me or my longing for you hinder your work.

My best love,

Your Mother.

May 14.

Dear Mother:

*I* am young, *you* are old! You say that as an excuse because you are uncertain. But I am not so young as you think; not young enough to act in blind arrogance.

I am uncertain myself now—uncertain as I was at the bottom of my heart from the beginning, even while I worked in the midst of my creative fervor.

Our plot is too slight I think. A slender, pale little thread, which I would like to knit together with other threads or dye with the crimson fire of youth. But I master my desire and continue to work in the same vein in which I started.

I cannot visualize the character of Mr. Briand. I feel there is a break,—a contradiction between his words and acts in my presentation, and yet the second act ought to be his. Do you know the feeling of discouragement because you are not master of the task you have set for yourself? I have experienced it. I have sat glaring and glaring at a couple of written lines while despondency crept upon me. All of a sudden I felt

as if the words scoffed at, and ridiculed me. Then I took my pen, crossed out the words and I was not at peace until new lines took the place of the old ones.

You speak of my artist's dreams, which should materialize,—of my future, which you will not hamper. No, Mother. Do not look at it from that angle. For once my dreams of honors and fame do not urge me, only the dream of reuniting you two.

The days of miracles are past, you say, and you are right. One cannot forget all at once. If I knew that your and Father's hearts were completely closed to each other throughout all these years I would not dare to make the attempt. But even in your first letter you whisper softly of the love that lives, deep down in your heart, and when Father came over here and confided in me, I know he also had a faint hope.

The years have blotted out all the bad feelings between you, and in their place a thousand sweet memories reign. You both stand armed with forbearance, ready to grasp the opportunity when it comes. But fate needs a little push forward, and who should give it if not *I* who love you both.

Thank you, Mother, for your last letter in which you lift the veil for me entirely. I hope I will prove myself worthy of your confidence

and create the rôle for which you have given me the basis.

Do not mind if my spirit is very low to-day when doubt has the upper hand, for to-morrow faith will conquer. My life, at present, is just one eternal struggle, and the struggle is wasting me to a degree I never thought possible. I have became pale and suffer from insomnia. In the office I work miserably slowly and the editor asks me vainly every day if I haven't a new idea. I don't think about the paper at all from the moment I leave the office and sometimes I have a bad conscience on account of it.

My play is not written with the joy of creating which I expected would be part of the work. The desire is still there but in everlasting conflict with my material. And only my great dream and self-respect force me to go on.

If I stopped in the middle I would have contempt for myself. There would be moments when I would reproach myself for not keeping on and other moments when I would feel convinced that I had let my one great chance slip out of my hands.

A thousand thanks to you, Mother. I shall send you the manuscript soon and then I shall await your final verdict.

A thousand good wishes, Your Vera.

Next evening.

Dear Mother:

Evidently I only needed a little adversity in order to start work again with renewed vigor. I was greatly annoyed to-day, and as a consequence, I am burning with energy.

I had a quarrel with the staff in the business office, which, as I have told you, consists of one woman,—the worst old gossip in town.

She raised a terrible row this morning because during her absence I had received money for an advertisement. In measuring the space I had figured wrong to the extent of one-tenth part of an inch (a loss of eight cents to the paper) I threw the eight cents at her head but was afterward furious with myself for my lack of self-control. To be sure she has been tormenting me ever since I came here and has criticized everything, from my complexion to my clothes. Still I ought not to have lost my temper.

When the editor came into the office a few minutes later I found it hard to regain my composure. I was in a defiant mood also against him, though he had done me no harm. All at

once it dawned upon me that *that* was the way you had stood facing Father, outwardly calm and cool, but with a semi-conscious urge to wound and hurt because you were hurt yourself.

The instant I realized this I became so occupied in analyzing my feelings that I forgot to air them, and calmly sat down at my work. At least that is what the editor thought. I was merely drawing small figures on a blotter while the lines of my play were shaping themselves in my head.

In the afternoon when the editor and I were alone in the room I received the notice to leave, which had been hanging over my head for a long time. He said I had lost interest in my work and as a result there was not sufficient reason for my staying. Journalistic activities, as far as writing was concerned, were of less consequence than integrity and a wealth of new ideas. I possessed the ability but had lost interest and I ought not to keep a good man out of a job. My position with the paper had a number of times been the medium through which bright young men had risen to more important and leading journalistic posts.

I thought, but did not say, that for me too it had been the beginning of more important posts, perhaps of something still more important than

mere journalism. Yet the editor was right in his judgment of me and there was no occasion for me to promise to turn over a new leaf.

As far as I am concerned the part I have played here is finished. The 15th of June I make my exit from this charming little town. It is really charming, even if I *have* made fun of it at times. I have become acquainted with the home life here and in order to judge correctly one must see that. I have talked with several women here who, at any rate understand one art to perfection; viz., to be excellent housewives and hostesses. I have seen the jollity, the good nature and the spirit which makes every festivity in the home a real occasion. In short I have discovered that it is not in the theatre or at other public functions one feels the charm of provincial life, but in the home whose walls only a few chosen ones can penetrate.

That is the reason why I should like to stay a little longer for there is still a great deal to see and learn.

On the 1st of June I leave the paper; that gives me a fortnight to spend on my play before I leave for Copenhagen where Father expects me on the 15th.

He will receive me with open arms, dear old Father,—how much I love him all at once! He

will be very proud when I return for I have told him that I cannot get along without him.

But I suppose he will think I have given up my career and have had enough of serious work. Just like the editors and everyone else believe who do not know what you know.

To-night I have made great progress in my play. I have written the last scene in the last act and I feel it is a successful effort.

At last I feel I am able, and now I am determined, to go on, because I must show that I am capable, even though the paper cannot use me. My artist's dreams can never be shattered, for I can stand disappointments and I possess the qualities necessary to persist, even though I should fail this time. I am fighting for that dream to come true which will make us "we three," and to-day I have found the strength to continue my fight.

I have confidence in my work now, and that gives power.

Your Vera.

London, May 20.

Dear Vera:

I suddenly feel worried that I have done something wrong in letting you know of things that parents as a rule do not tell their children. It suddenly occurs to me how much it has taken hold of you, how incessantly it occupies your mind, and to such a degree that everything else seems of no consequence. I have begun to regret.

You are about to give up a work which, to begin with, gave you a great deal of pleasure. You relinquish it to follow an idea born of my confession, and you feel your mission is to bring Father and me together. You throw yourself into this new task with such abandon that you completely forget to consider your own health.

You are pale, you are sleepless, you work feverishly and you already feel that the struggle is wasting you away.

Child, supposing you should fall ill? Supposing the sickness you wrote about in your first letter again attacks you. Supposing you break down on the day your work is finished, what then? Do you think that we two for whom you

will have sacrificed yourself, could ever be able to carry the burden of this new sin against you?

You must be careful, my beloved little friend. You must promise never to work at night. You must promise me to take your walks and to remember your meals. I know it would be as impossible to ask you to stop your work now as it would be to ask you to stop a landslide. I realize that this work to you means life or death, and I shall live in fear and anxiety until the crisis has passed.

However I have the consolation of knowing that you are going home to your father. It will please *him* immensely, and as for me, I will be more at ease, knowing you are under his wing. He will look after you, watch every step you take and never cease his vigilance in regard to your health. It is a good thing that you have decided to go home for he will build up again what I, in my thoughtlessness, have torn down.

What can I do but try to lighten your labor by helping you as much as I can? You are at a standstill in regard to Mr. Briand, and I grant you that it is a difficult point to overcome.

He was in love with me and any unprejudiced observer could not have helped seeing it. Grandmother saw it, and Edith saw it, and Father went about fearing the truth.

Only I, who was completely occupied with myself, the daily quarrels, the fight for liberty, grief over my shipwrecked love, the dreams of my new future, did not see it. It did not even occur to me. Not until after his death did I understand what I had meant to him, what he had seen in me and what he had hoped and waited for until the end. And, grief-stricken, I let my thoughts turn back through the years and gather together all the beautiful memories of my faithful, unselfish friend.

My new knowledge intensified my sorrow over his death. I felt I was a bird of ill omen who only existed to bring pain and disappointment to all who loved me or linked their lives with mine.

It dawned upon me that it had not been by chance only that my eyes so often met his across the table. I understood now his tender thoughtfulness which so often had helped me through painful situations born of my irritability. I remembered the little favors and delicate attentions which he bestowed upon me daily. Time and again I dwelt upon the memory of the last evening before his departure from Copenhagen when, in so many words, he almost revealed his feelings, without my realizing their deep significance.

I remember, now, plainly that he told me that night he would not visit us again, because he could not meet my husband once more as an honest friend. He had done enough harm and feared that he could not always hold back what was in his heart. He was afraid to commit himself and was frightened lest his continuous stay would do more harm.

I thought he meant the situation created by Grandmother's suspicions, though I ought to have understood when he continued:

"If I only knew. If I only were absolutely certain!" he stopped nervously, as if deeply grieved, then suddenly he burst out—"May, do you love your husband—completely,—as you did when you first met him?"

"Yes," I answered, "that is the sad part of it. Otherwise it would be easy enough."

"Yes," he repeated gravely. "Otherwise it would be easy enough. But as it is—it is very difficult for me,—for all of us!"

"When you are gone," I answered, "perhaps everything will be all right again. If not I shall follow after you."

"Follow after me? May, will you come to me?"

"To London," I answered, "whether or not you are there."

"Yes, of course," he said very gently. "Good-bye, May. I hope you will again be happy here, so that you can stay with him,—whom you love."

When Father returned he was gone. I was depressed over the parting and had tears in my eyes when I brought Father Mr. Briand's farewell. And Father misunderstood as we all misunderstood each other,—and acted accordingly.

Three days after Mr. Briand's departure I also left for England. I did not let him know it. My future plans had nothing to do with him. The dream of a stage career occupied all my thoughts. I would show everybody that they had committed a crime against me when I was persuaded to give up my ambition in order to tie myself hand and foot to the dreary tasks of domesticity.

Work—work—work, something cried within me. I would show them what I was—what I could do. Father should some day read my name in print, and see it glow in an electric sign outside the theater.

My own name, — my maiden name, May Sanders, not the name with which he had tried to throttle the dreams of my career.

That should be my revenge, the only one that I thought of having. I would be great, mount the highest steps of the ladder of fame, so high that all human feelings: love, hate, joy and sor-

row, anger, disappointment, bitterness, no longer lived within me, or fought within me ready to engulf me. I would be master of my moods, train myself in the use of them, dive down into my memories and drag them forth, put them on or take them off, as I would a dress, so as to vary my art.

How did things happen?

No—not to-night—I cannot write any longer. All that I have told you seems too unreal to me now. I have given you more material to work with. I have given new momentum to your thoughts but I am deeply conscious of all the harm I *may* do.

Do not strain yourself writing to me if there is nothing special you want to know. Can you visualize Mr. Briand now? What occurred afterward is of no interest to your play. I shall not tire you by telling it.

On the 31st of May we close the season and I leave London. I shall let you know my address later.

Mother.

June 1st.

Dear Mother!

Don't worry about me. I know now at last what it is to live. You write that my newspaper work has become inconsequential and meaningless to me, and I read between the lines that you fear I shall be too deeply disappointed if my play should not come out successfully. Don't worry. I know very well it *might* be a failure. I include that in my calculations, but this defeat is not going to crush me. Instead it will arouse me to renewed efforts, to renewed energy.

Mother dear, I have discovered that adversity cannot cow me, and it is a wonderful feeling. I believe it is adversity I have needed hitherto, and which has keyed me up as a stimulant. For the first time I wrestle with fatigue, nervousness and pessimism, which challenge me hourly. But I come out the victor.

To-day—oh wonderful day!

For the first time in a long while I could lie in bed and hear the alarm clock ring without having to jump up. I could walk all morning through the heather, in the open, in the sunshine, and

with no other errand to the paper afterward than to get my last month's salary.

It seems to me as if to-day, all at once, Nature awakens to the call of spring,—or is it I who have been asleep! The spirit of life, its power and its joys, sings within me; I want to turn a summersault, though I am all out of breath from juggling with a few pillows. "Just Half an Hour's Snooze" has become white from touching the ceiling, and the rest of the pillows are also rather a little worse for wear. I danced the tango with a plush chair and afterwards I sat in the churchyard and played the flute, almost drowning out the church bells.

But to write! Impossible, dear! To-day there is only one thing that interests me,—the joy of being alive. When I feel like that it simply overwhelms any other feelings I may have.

Besides, I worked like a slave after receiving your letter. My interpretation of Mr. Briand was quite correct after all, though I had to rewrite your parting scene. The play is finished now. All it needs is a little filing off of its raw edges and to be typewritten. Then I will send it to you. (Don't forget to send me the address.)

I do hope I get through my raving to-day so that I shall be able to work to-morrow. But your

admonition in regard to my health is wasted on me. When I work I work. If I had to look at the clock every minute and then rush to the boarding-house for dinner, I would not know how to get into the mood of writing again.

No, dear Mother, you must not ask that of me. I have to give concentration to my work as completely and intensely as I concentrate to-day on my joyous mood.

I wish I could sing soprano and alto at the same time. It sounds funny as I have really tried and the result was something like yodeling.

It is strange to think that I could have been in Copenhagen by now if I had taken the early train. But I won't think of that. I knew there would be a grand reception upon my arrival and an everlasting round of welcome home parties. My play would have been forgotten.

No—I want to *enjoy* the solitude and I know an excellent method.

Sometimes when I have been homesick I have made believe that I was going away. I have walked about the streets saying good-bye to the town.

"Oh, dear!" I have thought, "now you are going back to Charlottenlund. You really have had a very nice time here. To-night is the last

night. It is very sad and you will surely miss this place often."

And when I told myself that it was *not* the last evening my spirits rose and I went home and wrote a long jolly letter to Father.

Believe me, he is glad that I am coming home. I have written him that my work here is not finished until the 15th of June. He thinks of course that I am talking about the paper.

If I only could go to the opera to-night and afterward meet a few people I liked in the Hotel D'Angleterre's palm-garden for a little dance. (The plush chair looks very indignant because I am not contented with it.) (I forgot the opera is closed for the season.)

Oh, how exciting. I thought someone was flashing an electric light in through the little window in the door, but it is the moon. It is asking me if I care to take a walk. Of course I will.

A thousand loving thoughts.

Vera.

London, June 4th.

Dear Vera:

Many, many thanks for your lovely joyous letter. I realize I could have saved myself the anxiety in regard to your health and spirits. What a letter! The writing seems to dance a fandango across the paper and every comma cries "Hurrah!" It is an elixir of life to a sluggish, despondent old heart like mine, which feels tempted to follow the wild tempo in a paroxysm of joy.

Your faith and your hope are contagious. Everything will come out all right. Vera will conquer. Who can resist the spring when it arrives in all its fulness.

There is something in your joy of freedom which touches a responsive chord in my heart. My vacation has started. The day before yesterday the door of the theatre closed behind me for the last time this season. To-day I had the maid pack my trunks and to-morrow I fling open the portals of nature's great open spaces.

I have feared this vacation. I had no notion of where to spend it. I feared to be alone with

my own thoughts. I feared that my longing for you would completely overwhelm me when I no longer had the stimulus of my work.

But at the eleventh hour I received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Duncan to come aboard their yacht and cruise along the British Isles away up to Edinburgh. I am simply delighted. Next to you, my beloved little girl, there is no one with whom I would rather be. Such jolly, wholehearted and charming people one rarely meets. Their affection for each other in spite of nine years of married life is as young and alive as in the very first days of their honeymoon.

One cannot but feel happy in their company. He shows his affection for her in a thousand little attentions which seem like caresses; and she, like a good comrade, is always at his side, sharing the strenuous life of his many outdoor sports. I am glad they are my friends. Their infectious high spirits in addition to the fresh sea air, the warm summer wind and the lovely sunshine will dispel all my gloomy thoughts. After the receipt of your letter I can again fully enjoy life.

I leave to-morrow. I thought I would send you a few lines to tell you what I have done for you. I have spoken to the producers, who are willing to conform to my wish and produce a piece written around me. Of course they could not give

me any binding promises before they had read the play. It must be in their hands by August 1st at the latest if it is to be produced next season.

Last night Mr. Williams called on me. Mr. Williams is the young author I have spoken to you about. I told him as much as it was possible for me to tell him about the play. For instance, that the principal part was written for me by my own daughter. But of course I did not tell him that it was written around my own life.

He was enthusiastic about co-operating. I showed him your picture and he looked at it a long time. At last he gave it back to me and said very frankly:

"She has your eyes, Mrs. Sanders. She is surely all right."

It would have been the best thing if you could have worked together on the translation, but that of course is out of the question. You will have to stay with your father now, and even though Mr. Williams wouldn't be afraid to cross the North Sea, yet you could not work together without arousing Father's curiosity. You will therefore have to wait until you come to London, some day. He sends you his best wishes and will keep himself in readiness to start right in when he gets the manuscript.

"Until you come to London some day—" The

thought of this makes me almost frantic with joy. Your letter and Mr. Williams's enthusiasm have convinced me that it will happen.

Send your manuscript care of General Delivery, Edinburgh. I will be there about the twentieth of June.

Auf Wiedersehen.

Mother.

June 14th.

Dear Mother!

At last I am finished, and awaiting the sentence. I wish you hadn't arranged a co-operation in advance, in case the play can't be used.

I have worked so hard on it lately that at present I am unable to judge at all. I know every line and word and I almost felt nauseated when I read it through. The feeling that comes over me now is not pride over my work but a sense of relief. I can once more live as a sensible being,—interest myself in trivial matters, waste my time if I please, lounge and loll around, celebrate and have a general good time,—and sleep until noon.

And yet I shall feel as if a dark cloud were hanging over me until I hear from you. I am not afraid of a refusal, but the uncertainty makes me nervous. It arouses my imagination, and I think of the hundred different ways you may answer me.

Mother dear! Now you are beginning to hope and that makes me still more nervous, for supposing I should disappoint you. My letter

and the play will await you at Edinburgh. I see you before me hale and hearty, lying in your deck chair, reading about your own past. Perhaps you will smile condescendingly: oh dear,—the little goose—she has got it all wrong. Or will you find in my play a woman who resembles you a little though perhaps not a complete picture of yourself.

Mother dear! I am so anxious to know! Remember me to Mr. Williams. I am sorry I cannot meet him before *that* evening, but I don't see how it can be otherwise,—and *that* evening *you* will be the whole theatre for me.

How I long to stand face to face with you. Sometimes I am almost frightened for I anticipate so much. You are almost superhuman in my dreams and the reality may fade beside it.

To-night I go back to Copenhagen. This time I have, fortunately, a sleeping compartment, and to-morrow morning I shall see dear Father's face smiling to me from the platform. (I hope Grandmother and Aunt Edith will be unable to come.)

But all the while I shall think of you, and my play, lying over there in Edinburgh, waiting for a yacht to sail into the harbor, and the world's most wonderful woman shall go ashore to fetch it and decide its destiny.

It sounds like a fairy-tale—will it be a reality?

Don't wait too long before you write.

Your Vera.

June 15.

Aboard the *Maud*.

Darling little girl:

I am sitting here in a beautifully furnished cabin writing to you. Mr. and Mrs. Duncan are enjoying their siesta under the sunsail on the deck, and I take this opportunity to be with you for an hour. It is difficult to find a little spare time for one's self when there are so many people together in a restricted space, but at last I have succeeded.

To-day you are going home, aren't you? You finally take leave of the small town which you have grown to like. For the last time you will nod to the faces in the windows when you walk through Broad Street to the station.

I am thinking of your work. Is it finished? Perhaps it is already on the way to Edinburgh, or did you not finish it in time?

My anxiety is almost unbearable. I am afraid my good friends will think I am not very pleased to be aboard the boat. I wonder how many times I have asked Mr. Duncan if he thought we could reach Edinburgh before the 20th? He laughs at

me and is devilish enough to insinuate that I have a rendezvous there. At present we are sailing for a good southern breeze, or whatever they call it,—they both almost choke with laughter when I try to use the sailors' slang! Mr. Duncan consoles me by saying that the boat has a motor we can use if the wind dies down; "he" will not have to wait in vain!

When I laughingly protest my innocence he declares that I am not so good an actress as he thought.

If they knew what a serious crisis I am going through they could not jest with me. But I can't talk about it to anyone before I have attained my object, my desire.

My object; my desire. What is it? Is it not too far off for me to reach, even in my thoughts? Can he find happiness at last who always seeks it? Is my happiness found at Father's side? I can not tell now. I will not know before I have read my sentence in his eyes.

When I went out into the world I was very sure that I journeyed toward happiness. I had painted this trip to London with a fairy-tale's weird coloring. How different it looked when I stood at Blackfriars Station, all alone in a crowd of people so dense I nearly lost my breath. Outside lay the city, foggy and slushy, hopelessly

grey and dreary. Not a soul took any notice of me; no one was there to meet me. I was so accustomed to being taken care of by Father when we traveled that I knew nothing of the many difficulties, and looked about for someone to help me.

Bristol! I used to stop there with father. I would take a taxi to the hotel and let the *Portier* of the hotel do the rest. I should rather have gone to any other place, but in my helplessness I did not know what else to do.

If anyone had noticed me they would not have recognized in the little, disheartened human being the self-possessed Mary Sanders of to-day who, in quite a different way, excites curiosity and attention. I sat at a table in the most hidden corner of the dining-room on the verge of crying, mad with longing, frightened by my solitude and tortured by memories.

I had only a little amount of money in cash, but I had a small inheritance from my father. He had an investment in English securities and could not be persuaded to put it into his business. It was my plan to sell these in the course of time. In a day or two I went into a small boarding-house and began to look for a lawyer who could advise me, but did not know where I could find one.

One day when I walked about with a perturbed air, unable to make up my mind in the long street where all English solicitors seemed to have crowded together, I suddenly stood face to face with Mr. Briand!

I have never before or since read so much in a human face as in that moment of meeting. Surprise, sorrow, distress and tenderness, fought for supremacy and his voice was almost inaudible when he at last pulled himself together sufficiently to talk.

"You here, May! When did you arrive? I am afraid something has happened. Is your husband,—?"

"I am here alone," I answered, with tears in my eyes.

"How could you!" he said quietly.

"I could not do otherwise."

"Where are you going? What are you doing in this street?"

I explained.

I need not tell you that he took me under his protection at once, that he helped me in every possible way.

He introduced me to all sorts of people who could be of value to me: people of the press and of the stage. When, later on, I had reached the first step of my career and had made my first

appearance in a small literary theatre, no one was happier than he.

It would be too long a story now to tell you of all the trials and tribulations that fell to my lot during my first appearance on the stage. He undoubtedly smoothed the way for me many times. There is only one thing I want you to know and that is that he never, never revealed his true feelings to me. He was my good friend and comrade. I felt safe in his company, and was.

"May," said he on the last evening before leaving for the front, "If I did not know that your career was safe; if I did not know that your standing is so high, that your star will rise higher and higher, I would be in the depths of despair over my leaving.

"If I ever return you shall find the same friend in me as you have always found. If I fall, will you think of me, now and then, when you are contented and happy?"

Our parting was beautiful, without tears or protestations. We smiled at each other to the last. I will remember as long as I live the cheerful smile he gave me when he waved to me from the automobile which was to take him to his regiment.

I cried when he had gone. For the second time

I experienced the sorrow of parting. For the second time I felt the pangs of loneliness, and when I heard of his death I felt my isolation so poignantly that not even my work interested me any longer.

The letter from you was the first ray of sunlight through the darkness. A new hope has come to life. I have a child who longs for me, who needs me, and who works for my happiness. And there is one more,—one more.

I finish this letter before I arrive in Edinburgh and before I have been to the post-office. If your play is there waiting for me I will wire you.

I hear Mrs. Duncan's step on the deck. I cannot be alone any longer, so farewell for this time.

Mother.

Charlottenlund, June 5, evening.

Dear Mother!

Well! There is something wrong with me. I have feared it but why write about it before one is certain?

This morning on my arrival I knew there was something the matter.

I read it in the three frightened faces and I heard it in the inflection of Grandmother's voice:

"My heavens, child, how you look!"

I am ill again, I must go away!

Please don't blame yourself, as Father did. I suffer by seeing him suffer and by hearing his endless: "Child, I can't forgive myself."

Immediately after lunch we went to see a specialist. There *was* a little the matter with my left lung.

"You must not take life so strenuously. You let your joys and your sorrows touch you too deeply. Besides, I believe you have worked too hard. Try to be a little more calm. Where do you want to go?"

I looked at Father, and sad-eyed, he returned my look. He can't let others run his business

again while he travels with me. Again we must part and just now when we had so looked forward to being together.

I must go to some mountain-place and Denmark has no mountains. The doctor proposed Davos but I prefer Engelberg. I can't bear to live among sick people. It will spoil my temper and my illness will frighten me. Besides I know the manager of the hotel in Titlis and if Father writes to his wife she is certain to take care of me. Heavens, I am, after all, grown-up now and a journalist, so I ought to be able to take care of myself.

Well, you can understand that the dinner party was not very lively. I tried to be in high spirits but the others did not think it was real and then of course it *became* forced.

Poor Father! He is sitting in his library writing to Switzerland, while I am sent to bed with half a pint of thick cream and a good book. But I will put on my kimono and sneak down to him for a minute. We need to have a good talk alone.

11 o'clock—night.

It got to be very late after all. When we started talking we could, of course, not stop again.

Father was not writing at all. He sat by the fireplace in the hall staring into the cold grey ashes. I discovered to my consternation that when he is all by himself, or thinks he is, new wrinkles show in his face and he looks much older.

"Coo—coo, coo—coo." I said quietly.

But when he looked up he did not smile at all. He looked at me as if he saw a ghost and when I asked if he was angry because I had come down, he passed his hand across his eyes and murmured: "I thought it was—someone else."

"You are almost grown-up,—a young lady, now," he said rising while I sat down near the fireplace. He scolded me on account of my bare legs and wrapped my feet in a blanket.

Oh! It is such a marvelous thing to have a gallant father! When we go to a café together the waiters sometimes address me as "Madame." It amuses father because he knows I like it.

We sat for a long time silent, but both of us were thinking of the same thing,—You.

"Do you know of whom you reminded me when you came down the stairs?" he asked at last.

I nodded for an answer.

"*Do* you know?"

"Yes. You thought of my mother. You always do when you are alone."

He looked astonished at me and I continued feverishly.

"I, too, am always thinking of her. All the beautiful things you have told me about her have made me miss her still more. I can't help thinking that she also longs for us."

"No, little Vera, she does not."

"Has she said that to you?"

"Not with words. I once had a friend. He is dead now. I thought they loved each other but from his death bed he sent me a letter about *her*."

" 'She did not love me,' he wrote, 'did not understand my love. Now when I am dying I want to say to you,—you happy man!' "

"But I don't understand. He wrote— 'happy man?' "

"Yes, because he believed—but he was wrong —a woman who loves her husband would not lead him to believe that—she loved another."

"But if she does it for his sake?"

He smiled bitterly.

"No, little Vera. A woman who loves knows there is nothing so cruel and crushing as to have one's love slighted."

"Yes, but don't you understand——" I stopped abruptly and blushed to the roots of my hair. I dared not speak. Not now. Not here.

Father looked eagerly at me.

"Understand what?"

"Nothing."

He drew a deep sigh: "I would like to understand!"

He spoke about Switzerland, about me, about the paper and his own business. But incessantly our thoughts revolved around the same thing—you. At last I managed to say:

"I would like to meet my mother."

"But your mother doesn't know you."

"That is just why. Oh, I wish I could sit in the theatre some evening when she plays. Sit there unknown among the multitude and think: that is my mother. All you people around me have not the same right to hear as I have. For she is *my* mother.

"We two could sit there together, hidden in a box. Afterwards we would not talk about it at all, only think about her and the fact that she had been so close to us."

"No, Vera. I do not dare to do it. You cannot stand so much excitement. You must not think about it. Be sensible, won't you!"

"Don't you understand that it is much more of a strain on me to nurse such a longing? And one day I will go there anyway,—alone—for I cannot help myself."

"But my child!"

He saw I was crying and in an instant he was at my side. He put me on his lap as he used to do when I was a little girl, and he cheered me in the same old way.

"My little baby-girl, don't cry. You must not feel so badly. I will come and take you away from Switzerland when you are well, and then we will go to London together. Poor little girl, you are so lonesome and I never knew it. And I have always thought you were in such good spirits. But now you must smile at me again. My own little courageous girl!"

He took me upstairs and tucked in the blankets around me. But he was hardly out of the room before I jumped up and went to my desk.

You must know all about it,—to-night. Perhaps these lines will reach you before you judge my play,—then you will not be too severe.

I entreat you, not for my own sake, but for the happiness of you two, *not* to reject it. If my work is too impossible put Mr. Williams to work on a new one.

Darling mother! In about a week's time I leave for Switzerland, to regain my health. But the mountains cannot cure me. Only you two can. Will you? That is what I am yearning to hear. Your own little girl, Vera.

*Telegram.*

Edinburgh, June 19.

Vera Dahl,
General Delivery,
Charlottenlund.

You have won. Manuscript sent to Mr. Williams. Letter follows.

Bristol Hotel, Edinburgh.
June 20.

Darling, darling child:

You have won—I have lost. My brain cannot hold any other thought at this moment.

I had a horrible dream last night, and spurred on by a presentiment of disaster I went again to the post-office. Your letter was there. I hurried back to the hotel in order to read it undisturbed. I dared not tear the envelope before I had locked the door. I trembled with fear from the moment I held it in my hand.

You are so calm and I am going to force myself to be the same. But I was chilled from head to foot from the very first moment.

You are ill and must go away from Father out into the world alone to regain your health. And here I am, doomed to inaction. Cannot, dare not, rush to your side. I am tempted to burn all my bridges behind me and come to you. I want to be with you. I have a right to be. No power on earth can keep me away.

I am wrong. There is a power, stronger than my wild yearning. My mad fear. It is your trembling little wish not to give up our plan, the plan you have made for Father's and my happiness. I am raging against myself. Am I forever the same hopeless egotist, who thinks of herself and her feelings only, while you,—you.

No—my child. Calm yourself. While I write, it slowly dawns upon me that I am doing exactly the wrong thing. You must not be daunted by my fear. I believe sincerely everything will be all right again, and "we three" will meet again. I *know* it—*now* I know it. What you need is not letters which frighten you but ease and peace and pleasure.

And I can give you one pleasure,—the one which you would rather have than anything else.

Your effort is successful: past all my expectations. You have already received my telegram so you know it is not just empty cheer or com-

passion for your illness that prompts me to say this.

I read your play yesterday immediately upon receiving it. Perhaps when all is said and done it is that more than your letter that has aroused my emotions.

I was so deeply touched after reading your play that I was unable to speak to anyone; so I stayed in my rooms at the hotel. I just had to be alone. I did not want to be seen in the condition in which I was, crying my heart out, trembling with excitement.

I *can* play that role. I can make a masterpiece of it, but only if you get well. Only if you are in the theatre that night with Father so that I feel I am playing to you two,—that it is to your hearts I am speaking.

That is why you must be well. Concentrate upon that.

I thank you with all my heart for the beauty you have managed to inject into the scenes between Father and me. I feel your lovely, touching, filial love behind every word. Every character is excellently drawn, and in the dialogue seems to lie your particular strength. But I suppose no author has his material better in hand than you. No one can have lived himself better into it.

Only Mr. Briand seems to lack something. He has not your sympathy as much as he deserves, but in this matter Mr. Williams can supplement you very well. It will also be an easy matter for him to modify in the translation a few irregularities of construction.

And Father will come. That is because he loves you, loves you as I love you. There is no doubt,—not the slightest, that happiness will come to all of us. Our love for you and our endless gratitude toward you, binds us inextricably together.

Do you hear me, my child? I have no doubt that you can be well. You will be for Father's and my sake, for you know that you are the rock upon which our happiness must be built. It will again be.

"We three."

My love and my gratitude, from

Mother.

P. S.—Mr. and Mrs. Duncan have gone to the Highlands. I stay here. I have lied, or rather I haven't. I have told them there is something the matter with my heart. I shall stay here in order to wait for letters from you.

Aboard the Ferry, June 22.

Dear Mother:

I received your telegram yesterday. I did not expect it so soon. I wonder what made me go to the postoffice to inquire. I suppose it was out of some nervous anxiety.

I have won, you say. Won! Oh, Mother dear, if only I were not so tired. I am not able to enjoy the victory.

My eyes are blurred with tears. The seagulls, following in the wake of the boat become great spots against the blue sky. I am crying, but I am crying for joy. Or is it sorrow which inspires my tears?

Perhaps neither. I believe it is because of my complete fatigue:—an unconquerable dullness and indifference that makes me want to lie down and sleep, sleep away from existence. For one night's sleep does not help me, I am just as tired when I awake in the morning as when I go to bed at night.

I cannot understand the excitement I continuously felt from the moment I began my task. Everything seems so inconsequential to me now. Victory or defeat, what do they mean, when I am so tired.

It seems strange to me that I ever loved to travel: that I ever could enjoy the speed, the life around me, the hustling and bustling.

For I hate it now.

Everyone stares at me with curious eyes. I wish they wouldn't. I can't bear it. There was one lady so anxious to get aboard that she gave me an awful push, and I felt I wanted to give the whole trip up and just sit down and cry. If a person just touches me in passing I get a nervous shock.

The customs officers will soon inspect everything, and I shall have to open and close my trunks, answer a hundred questions and so forth. And I am *so* tired.

No, Mother! I *cannot.*

I must stop writing and yet I would so love to thank you for the pleasure you want to give me. It is a shame that you are not going to get the joyous letter you surely anticipated. But I shan't send this letter off before I am thoroughly rested and see the bright side of things.

At present I am only tired—so dreadfully tired, and I know Father is heart-broken because I had to go away without him.

Poor Daddy.

He is also—tired.

Hotel Titlis, Engelberg.
June 24, evening.

Dear Mother:

I have just arrived. Mr. Williams stops at this hotel. Did you know that?

He sent his card in to me immediately upon my arrival. I was lying on the sofa to rest a little before dinner, which was to be served in my room.

What does he want? Am I to work again? I simply cannot any longer.

Those were the thoughts uppermost in my mind when I saw him step in the door, strong and healthy.

For a moment he stood speechlessly staring at me. "As young as that!" he exclaimed, and a moment after: "Now I think I understand. One cannot mistake these eyes."

"I hope you aren't sorry that I came here. I just had to consult you before I started. I must know everything so as not to destroy those spots which are frail and weak and which ought to be infused with new life. I felt that something very big, something unusual, was the inspiration for your work. That is why I came."

And I forgot my tiredness in order to tell him my history and yours. I forgot it was a perfect stranger to whom I was talking. Was I wrong? Should I have kept your secret? Now, when he has left and I have had time to reflect I fear that you will not approve of it.

But I do not repent of what I have done, because I feel that he understands.

He was quite moved when he spoke again. "How you have *lived* in your work! And you have not been able to stand the strain. You are ill now. You must rest and I shan't disturb you while you are here. That is not the reason I came. We can just have a little chat now and then if it is agreeable to you. When the dinner was finally served he stayed and talked to me. He had already had his and he left me as soon as I had finished because he saw that I was tired.

Mother dear, just the few words we spoke together about my work made it appear in a new light, a much greater light. I certainly think you have found the right man, and I believe he has the power to round out and deepen all that I have but merely outlined.

I should like to have had a longer talk with him—or to accompany him on his usual evening walks. But he insisted that I ought to rest after my journey, and though I feel some of my old

energy returning I had not the spunk to protest.

Perhaps he is right. Therefore I will say good-night and thanks for your long letter which was waiting for me when I arrived. Mr. Williams wants to be remembered to you. He also wants to tell you that he is going to see that I take proper care of myself.

Don't think I am sorry that he came. If only he won't bother me much.

Your Vera.

Hotel Royal, Edinburgh,
June 30.

Dear, dear Vera:

You must not lose your courage, even though you are tired and feel yourself weak and exhausted after many months of hard work. You must believe me if I tell you that this terrific depression is probably not caused by your illness alone. Such a break down is quite the usual sequence to any sustained mental effort. Any artist who has produced something real and fine has been through it time and again. I believe sincerely that you will eventually find yourself all right again when you have rested a few days, and can be out in the fresh and invigorating mountain air. You must not give up now when the future looms brightly for you,—for all of us.

I will tell you a secret that I think will please you and will give you new life again. A great resolution I have determined on after many inner conflicts.

Little Vera, if Father comes to me now, if your work makes him realize how much I have loved

him, how much I *do* love him still, and if his love for me has not altered, then I am ready to sacrifice everything for him: my name, my work, my art and my fame.

Sacrifice, I say! As if there could be any talk about sacrificing things which are of no value to me now. I do not wish myself back to work as I did on former vacations. I no longer yearn to have my soul clothed in strange garments and in other people's characters. I long only to follow the call of my heart, which urges me back to my husband and child.

I have had ample time to turn over in my mind the pros and cons of my future and I came to the conclusion that my duty lies with you two. Tenderness and love never spoke vainly to my heart, and you, my beloved little Vera, have whispered to it the tenderest words it has ever heard, kind words about him I never have forgotten and loving words from yourself.

There are only two things which frighten me. That Father, in spite of his love and his longing, cannot forget the crime I have committed toward you both, and that *you* might be disappointed the day we stand facing each other. You feel that yourself when you write: "You are almost superhuman in my dreams, and the reality may fade beside it."

And you call me "the world's most wonderful woman."

For my sake you throw yourself into an enervating piece of work that saps your strength; for me, who do not deserve a single thought from you. For the sake of my happiness you are willing to sacrifice your health, your very life, if necessary,—and what can I do in return?

You have, in your play, concealed my spiritual weakness under a cloak of love, and you have crowned my head with a halo which makes me a martyr.

A martyr! I who denied my faith and my love and sacrificed them on the altars of false gods!

Once perhaps you will see me as I appear to you in your thought. That will be the evening you watch me play for the first time. For that evening, I will wear the spiritual raiment your imagination has made for me, and the martyr's crown you have placed on my head will sparkle.

But afterward, when you meet me, griefworn and miserable as I really am, I wonder if you won't regret that you made me step into the light, the reality. I tremble at the thought, even, that I may read disappointment in your eyes.

I am very glad that Mr. Williams is with you now. At first, when I got his hastily scribbled note informing me that he had gone to Titlis in

order to work with you, I feared his enthusiasm might awaken your desire to work again.

But now since I have received your letter and see how sensible and understanding he is, I am only too happy he is near you.

The pleasure he takes in the work will strengthen your hope. He will see that you do not overdo, and will be at your service when you need him.

I hope his happy, healthy disposition will infect you and heighten your power of resistance. I cannot tell you how glad I am that he is sympathetic toward you.

Remember me to him and tell him I would like him to write me some time and tell me about you.

Mr. and Mrs. Duncan have sent me word that they are returning to Edinburgh about the middle of July. Afterward the three of us will proceed to Glasgow. Mr. Duncan is going to look at some plans and drawings for a new yacht at the ship-yards there. We two women are going to help decide on its interior decorations. We will stay there for a couple of days and will then return here to board the *Maud* for a cruise home.

Keep on sending your letters to this address. My first errand when I return here shall be to the post-office, and there, good news will await

me. I have not the slightest doubt about it. What does Father write?

Dear child, I count the days until the "big" night.

Your Mother.

Hotel Titlis, Engelberg.
July 6.

Dear Mother:

I'd like to send you one of Father's letters to show you how he has changed lately. He is so happy, so young, so full of hope! Or is he only writing me jolly letters in order to keep up my courage!

I don't believe so. I feel it is something else, something bigger that prompts it. The desire, the longing to show me my mother. He looks forward to it with as much pleasure as I.

He writes about you in all his letters. He wants to prepare me, he says. In his last letter he sent me a photograph of you two, taken on your wedding trip. How happy you both look, —and that is how it *must* be again. You are ready to sacrifice your art, you say. Mother dear, then everything will be all right,—if the sacrifice will not be too great.

My gloomy letter did not frighten you, thank heaven. I regretted almost immediately that I had ever sent it. I really should not put pen to paper in such a mood, for it does not benefit

either of us. Now I want to tell you how happy I am. How gloriously happy over my victory. It plucks up my courage to start again and makes me wish to regain my health.

The first couple of days I was here I did nothing but sleep, but now I am beginning to go out, —however only as much as Mr. Williams permits me. I tease him and call him my nurse-girl, but evidently that does not bother him. He says that he has promised you to look after me and he must keep that promise.

It is no easy matter for him, for I can't bear to be fussed over. I feel as if I want to do just the things I am forbidden to do. Yesterday I went out for a short climb up the mountain with two young men without asking his permission. He looked quite sour when I returned home, but I don't encourage the idea that he should presume to tell me what I should do and what I should not do. To be absolutely truthful, the reason I have decided to train my body is that I am envious of his capabilities in all kinds of sports, and the ease with which he jumps over fences and ditches.

Oh dear, to be able to endure strenuous exertion of any kind. To be able to work as he does, to think clearly and quickly, to read and write

such a lot and yet be perfectly healthy and happy, and still to find time to enjoy life.

I have erred in thinking only of my desire to be somebody at the expense of my bodily vigor.

The play is no longer mine but ours. He does all the work now and gradually, as he teaches me the art of construction and the technique, I realize how hopelessly ignorant I was when I started.

I have worked purely by instinct and he tells me he is astonished that I have done so well. I am almost ashamed to tell it, but there are situations in the play with such profoundly significant meanings that I hadn't grasped them until he interpreted them for me. I had aimed blindly and by accident had touched the mark.

When will he be finished? I do not know. If he asks questions of me it is sometimes when working over the first, sometimes over the second, or even the third act. His little rattling portable typewriter can be heard at six o'clock in the morning, I am told. It has already made an elderly man seek another room in the hotel.

I have not read the translation as yet. He tells me I must first of all try to forget about the play or I won't be able to judge it at all. Besides, he is far from the end of smoothing its rough edges.

I believe he is keeping you in touch with the progress of his work.

Has he written anything about me? I am afraid that at the bottom of his heart he doesn't like me, because I am moody at times. I notice that he changes his expression when I enter and is more stiff and formal with me than with other women.

It looks as if he were keeping himself in check so as not to tell me that he finds me unbearable. That is, at least, the feeling I have,—but of course I may be wrong.

I do hope he will be finished soon, for I am eaten up with impatience and longing for the day that is to be the turning-point in our lives.

Sometimes I wish I could wipe out the many, many days still left before the great moment is reached. But other times I would like to keep back the seconds because I am *afraid* to try the leap.

Oh, the day, the day we are to meet! It haunts my sleep at night, and occupies all my waking thoughts.

I think of all sorts of obstacles which may turn up at the last moment to destroy our plans. I fear that Father's business may make it impossible for him to come.

But this *must* not happen. "He who has the

courage to be a victor," Mr. Williams says, "will always win."

And have we not the courage?

Your Vera.

Hotel Royal, Edinburgh,
July 5.

Dearest Vera!

We arrived today from Glasgow and as I told you my first visit was to the post-office.

Your letter made me happy. Thank heaven, everything seems to be looking brighter. Your health has returned and with that your spirit and your courage.

There was also a letter to me from Mr. Williams. It was, certainly, as full of enthusiasm and hope as yours. He writes that the work intoxicates him. This play, he hopes, will mean the fulfillment of his life's dream. He is only sorry that the work does not leave him as much time as he would like in order to be with you more. But he expects to have his innings when the task is finished. He compliments me for having such a beautiful, talented and charming daughter, and tells me in a humorous vein of your amusing little moods. The young lady is certainly not boresome, he writes.

Strangely enough he has conceived exactly the same preposterous idea of you that you have

of him, to wit: that you don't really like him. It vexes me a little to think that you two excellent human beings seem to hide yourself away from each other. Is it the work that makes you nervous,—or what?

To be honest I am violently jealous of my good friend. He can be with you daily while I must wait patiently here and be satisfied to picture you from his account.

But of course it is thoroughly wrong of me to be envious of anyone now when every day brings me nearer to the great moment.

You write to me that Father is now completely changed, "so young, so full of hope." Yet he does not know all that we know, he does not share our big lovely secret. He does not know what his little girl has done for both of us. He has no notion of the great, the wonderful thing, does not know the fantastic ending of the fairy-tale.

Mr. Williams promises me that the play will be finished before August first. He is going to bring it himself and in my presence read it aloud before the management. I know full well that I shall suffer the stage fright in advance that evening from which I usually suffer on the opening nights. With every nerve in my body do I anticipate the reaction of the audience.

But whatever else the results of all these weeks will be, one thing is sure, that part will be my last, for I know it will be the very apex of my career. Never,—never can I reach higher than that evening, when I fling my last sacrifice upon the altar of art and burn at the stake my dreams of future plaudits.

We sail from here to-morrow evening. Unfortunately I cannot give you any address before we reach London. Mr. Duncan says that our destination is uncertain and that where we stop to take on provisions depends on the wind and the weather. But he has promised me that we shall be in London in plenty of time.

I would, under other circumstances, be rather sad leaving Edinburgh. I love this beautiful sunny town, with all its old historical sites, standing like the scenery left over from the great world events which have been staged here. I enjoy sitting and dreaming up there near the old fort, with the town and the river Forth far below me. I feel as if I were carried back into the distant past when I see the Highlanders in their picturesque uniforms go through their plastic drills, accompanied by the weird sound of the bagpipes. (I hope we can be here together some day.)

But as things are now I only long to go there

where the event shall take place,—London. There we shall meet at last and throw the dice.

A thousand greetings to you and Mr. Williams from

Your Mother.

Switzerland, July 30.

Dear Mother:

I never knew that a flaming fire could have such glowing embers, such fantastic colors and such flickering, crackling play as I saw yesterday. To see a piece of birchwood consumed by the flames is really an adventure. To sit gazing into the fire in a little log cabin, high on a cold mountain peak, is a real experience.

Mr. Williams read aloud—*his* play. For it is not mine any more. I could not have created anything as great and glorious as that— And there were only two logs of wood on the fire. We found them in the abandoned cabin and put a match to them in order to force the dampness out. They burned long,—very long. They fought to last long enough for the play to be read, and they did.

Mr. Williams,—no, Cecil, I mean. Now do you understand? The world's most wonderful man have you sent to me,—Mother dear, how blind I have been!

Happiness! I have called myself happy before, but I did not know what real happiness

was. My brain has been full of dreams for the future, or has been looking back upon many happy memories. But that is not happiness. It lies in the present and *that* I did not know. Just now have I learned not to rove restlessly about and push forward, but to stop—and enjoy. I have learned that there are moments so great that nothing in the past or in the future can overshadow them—that even the memories of such moments will pale beside the experience.

Mother dear, I am the happiest soul in the world—filled with a strange feeling which at the same time seems violently egotistical and supremely unselfish.

How very stupid I have been. I was in love without knowing it. Only when I heard that he also was in love did I realize the power of my own feelings,—which are a reflection of his love, a responsive echo. I am completely stunned—Why does he love me—why is he mad with happiness? Why?

I am proud and happy, but his love gives me a sense of responsibility,—a big and heavy responsibility. I am not the same person I was yesterday. I am changed as by a miracle.

Last night I saw such beauties in the flames as I never knew existed. To-day I discovered that I have gone through life like a person asleep.

Every impression stamps itself on my brain with double force, every feeling storms through me with greater strength. When I walk about in the open my eyes see values they have never noticed before. And music. Did I ever listen before? It seems that only now I hear.

He has gone. He will reach London at the same time as this letter. How I envy the travelers who occupy the same car, envy you who can speak to him, envy everybody who is near him, while I must wait—wait. And for the first time in my life I haven't patience to wait.

The managers might not have accepted my play, mother, but his they are bound to take. It is so thrillingly beautiful that I cannot understand how a human being can create anything so great or feel so deeply. I am almost ashamed now of my own attempt. My love has given me a yearning to sacrifice everything,—everything and anything but him. That is why there creeps a feeling of worry about Father into my happiness. When I leave him now won't he be all alone?—or would *you*—

Yes, I do not dare to give up the hope that *that* evening will be a great victory. I cannot let myself abandon hope—not now when this great joy has come to me. It would not be my

happiness alone that would be destroyed but also *his*.

Do you remember when I wrote to you in the beginning about pleasure? It was then always a feeling which made me dance and jump around to give expression to my joy of living.

Now it is different—something silent and quiet. It lives deep down in my heart, awakening within me all the finest emotions. I want to be kind, even to those who do not deserve it, because I believe they have never known true happiness themselves, or they could not help being kind.

But you, mother, you have drunk from the deep well of happiness or you could not give all that you give in your letters.

And still,—I cannot believe that others have loved as you and I have loved,—so deeply and so sincerely. No, it is impossible.

Your Vera.

London, August 2.

Dear, dear!

No, never—never was I so surprised, so unutterably glad.

All that I have gone through, all that I have suffered—my sorrow, my longing, everything has dwindled into a mere nothingness.

The deep feeling, the high exaltation, which spoke to me from every line in your letter warmed my old heart. My darling little girl has found the world's most wonderful man and I have sent him to her.

That I was permitted to be the tool of fate, that to *me* was given the opportunity to repay some of my endless debt to you, fills me with a boundless gratitude.

I feel now that my life has not been lived in vain, that my part has not been just to tear down and destroy. I have been permitted to create your happiness—to build up your future.

And to think that it was he, the man I myself had chosen for your collaborator, Cecil Williams, my dear young friend whose character I have learned to respect and whose cleverness and in-

telligence I admire. A man who is healthy and strong, clean-cut, kind and sympathetic, into whose care I dare entrust you without misgivings. It is a pleasure so great, so overpowering, that I am completely overcome with joy, and alternately laugh and cry.

I share your anxiety about Father. Does he know? Have you already written to him? Or will you wait until after he has met Cecil?

He will place no obstacles in the way of your happiness. Without self-pity, without reproach, he will see you go your own way, however much he may disapprove, if only it leads you into something good and beautiful.

Lonely he *must* not be. Could he only forgive and forget—would he only receive me as I am—old and tired from wrestling with life, I would use every hour I still have left to regain what I have forfeited. And I will never be too tired to show him how deeply I love and admire him.

Cecil just came. He is standing here in my room, tanned and beaming with happiness, and tells me quite cheerfully and undauntedly that he is going to take you from me, almost before I have a chance to see you.

He sent me word this morning that he would call for me for the reading of the play this afternoon. We are going to the manager's office

now and Cecil will telegraph you when we know the result.

I do not know if he wants to be remembered to you?

Yes—he says—of course, many many times—he is lonesome.

My congratulations, you two lovely young and brave children.

I pressed Cecil's hand while writing the above; that is why the words are crooked.

Well,—happiness rarely comes to us in a straight line.

But it comes. It comes to you and to him and to—well, to others, here and there, also, who do not deserve a visit from it.

In a few hours I will be with you again. Until then

Farewell.

Mother.

Morning, Aug. 3.

P. S.—When Cecil had finished his reading last evening there was a dead silence in the great office and it was some time before anyone spoke.

We sat in a semi-circle around the fireplace with Cecil closest to it. Only one lamp was lit which shed its light over him and the manuscript lying on his lap. The rest of the room was dark.

I could hardly see the managers leaning back in the deep armchairs. Both were thoughtful and obviously were deeply moved.

I, who sat there with the distressing feeling of having been spiritually unclothed, had pushed my chair back into the darkness. I wanted no one to see the tears rolling down my cheeks nor the agitation on my face.

Cecil closed his manuscript slowly and tried to catch my eye through the darkness.

I nodded to him. It was a silent thank you. I could not for the life of me have been the first to break the silence.

Presently Mr. Watt spoke:

"Well, what do you think, Mrs. Sanders? Would you take it upon yourself to study that part at once so that Mr. Williams' play can be the first novelty of the season?"

Do I need to tell you that I answered yes, at once?

"And then," continued Mr. Watt, "shall we not all thank Mr. Williams for the pleasure he has given us to-night by the reading of his work. I believe we have a play which will add new honors to our theatre."

What else happened, what was said about the play, its cast and so forth, Cecil probably wants to tell himself, and will much better than I can.

He also writes to-day. To-day! yes. We two have been sitting together here in my apartment all night. We discussed and laid plans for that evening, for the future, for Cecil's and your future and for Father's and mine.

The first of September will probably be a red-letter day for all of us which we will remember with tears and smiles. Let us hope it will be a day of complete happiness.

I am afraid you did not sleep well last night! Haven't you been visited by our thoughts? They have been with you all the time, with you and with Father at the same time. And now I must go to bed.

With a kiss to you, dear.

Mother.

Hotel Titlis, Aug. 10.

Dear Mother!

The first of September! What an eternity to wait—and yet. . . . It is inconceivable that we are to meet soon. You live in my dreams, but that you also live in a world of reality is difficult to understand.

I try to picture my mother as a living mother of flesh and bone and not only as a good fairy in the realm of imagination.

My conception of book characters always differs from the artist's illustrations, and I am invariably disappointed. But do you know why? The text never leaves a clear picture in my mind, because I envelope it in the filmy gauze of my imagination and completely ignore the details. In that case any picture whether of the mind or reality, must disappoint, because one is not prepared for it.

Do you understand my fears? Or can you not understand them? I also fear that *you* will be disappointed and that I shall read it in your face when we meet.

But no: I will not think that. For in my mo-

ments of most intense happiness there always comes the fear that something will happen to destroy it. For I do not deserve all this good luck.

I have demanded much of life. I have expected much, but now when I have gotten it, I cannot understand why it came.

I dare not believe that life lies before me as a bright and smooth play. I am afraid that sorrow will show its head the evening that we meet.

I have thought that I longed for you. Now I know it was not longing I felt, not the kind of longing as when Cecil left. My body is in Switzerland but my heart is in London. I understand now. Oh, how I understand how you two must have suffered! You have yearned all your life without any hope of satisfaction and without being able even to tell it to each other.

I receive letters every day, but what are letters? Just substitutes.

I am writing to Father now that he must come quickly.

He will be astonished when he learns how fate has entwined the threads of life. For I shall tell him that Cecil came to Switzerland to write a play for you—the subject, of course, I won't mention. And I will tell him that I promised to come to the opening. Then he will also come.

He will be anxious to see the man I have chosen and to see you.

I wish you could see how my stay here has improved me. I am as brown as a berry, but as thin as ever, thank the Lord. I follow blindly all the doctor's advice for I have promised Cecil I would, and I am anxious to get well for his sake.

I have thought about my illness seriously for the first time. There was a moment when I felt I had no right to marry. But I am so madly in love and the doctor has promised me that I would regain my complete health if only I would put my mind to it.

I am trying not to be nervous for that is most ravaging. I try hard not to think of *that* evening. It helps a great deal to think of Cecil and his faith in my recovery instead.

I do wish this long wait of uncertainty would be over, so that I could be perfectly happy. If only I could go to London to-day, I would be infected with *his* calm. There are four, now, you know for whom that play is the turning-point. I know it will be an artistic victory, but will you and I also win?

Your Vera.

London, Aug. 20.

Dearest Vera:

Please forgive my not writing for such a long time. But I am living in such a state of excitement that it's impossible for me to get my mind down to the writing of a letter. That ought, partly at least, to express my chaotic feelings.

But I hear that Cecil writes you daily all about the rehearsals and about me. About my changing moods, my faith in victory one day and my weariness, my fear and my agony, the next. *He* also brings me messages and greetings from you and keeps me up by his high spirits and indomitable faith in victory.

He is present at all rehearsals. He has taken over the staging of the piece and he leads my fellow-actors at the firing-line as a general does his soldiers. He inflames them, pushes them ahead, he tunes them up as if they were instruments. Though we still have many rehearsals coming there are a few scenes already so firmly adjusted that they must be considered finished.

Of course he does not interfere with my conception of my part. It does not ruffle him that

one day I appear tired and indisposed and the next day play my colleagues into bits in such a tempo as would destroy the framework of any play.

He feels perfectly sure of me he says. He had never expected me to rehearse this part in a calm, studied, thoughtful manner. But he knows that on the opening night it will be perfect, created by my agitation and nervousness in a moment of burning inspiration.

That evening. I do not dare think of it, dare not visualize it. I work feverishly and dare not be alone or at leisure for a moment.

We started the season the 15th with the old play from last year. It does not take as well as expected and there is no doubt any longer that the first of September is the day.

Cecil goes home with me every day after the rehearsal and takes dinner with me.

He tries to keep me from thinking of the things which I cannot bear to dwell upon, by talking of his joyous plans for the future. He tries in many ways to bolster up my spirit. And to-day he found the words to give me the courage I needed to carry this through.

As a rare exception I spoke to him about the play in connection with the part. Suddenly he said, deeply moved:

"There is one thing I would like to say, May Sanders. (He always calls me that. I wonder if I shall ever prevail upon him to call me by another name.) I would like you to know, if you haven't already noticed it through my treatment of your part in the play, that I feel *you were right* in doing what you did. I do not mean, however, that your husband was in the wrong. He had to follow his life's vein as you followed yours. But you carried the banner of love so high and so freely waving, that it has not received a single tear or spot during the battle. That is why it will carry you to victory!

*"You were right."*

I bowed my head and cried. His words were like a blessing. A peace that passeth all understanding filled my heart. It was as if I stood at the gate at last. My pilgrimage was at an end. I was cleansed of my guilt, my brow was clear.

Now I am ready for Father and I believe he will come. And he will come to understand through your and Cecil's play. He will also see with your eyes and feel with your love-intoxicated hearts that I was right.

Soon, soon, I shall see you, hold your hand, press you to my heart, behold the young love

in your eyes, feel that I have a daughter,—and then lose you again.

Lose—what am I saying? Shall I not always keep my daughter's love? And have I not —a son, now—who is on my side?

Soon—soon——

Mother.

*Telegram.*

Switzerland, Aug. 28.

Both coming morning 31st. Love Vera.

London, 31 August.

Welcome, a thousand times welcome— You— and Father.

Cecil has been with me until the moment he left to meet you, and he asked me if I wanted him to carry a message from me.

Why cannot I come myself to meet you at the station and take you in my arms? Oh, dear, the path between us is not cleared yet. Will it be to-morrow?

Where has all my strength and all my courage gone?

Restlessly I pace my rooms, cannot sit still two minutes at a time. I move my knick-knacks about with trembling hands, touch a chord on the piano, and move away from it again for the sound of it cuts into my soul.

*To-morrow night.*

Yes, Cecil has a box for you, but I don't want

to know which it is. If I should know it, if suddenly I saw you and Father there, beneath the same roof with me,—I would stop acting and just stare,—stare—draw you toward me in one long glance.

No—I dare not let my eyes rest on you, but I shall feel your presence with every quivering nerve, and I shall be conscious of every nuance of your changing moods.

And later—what then?

If you can, please send a few words with Cecil to-morrow.

Welcome—both of you.

Mother.

Hotel Cecil, Aug. 31.
Afternoon.

Mother.

You were not at the station this morning. I knew, of course, that you were not to be there, and yet I was disappointed. I looked for *the* one in the multitude. I thought perhaps you were watching our arrival from some hidden spot. But you were not there. No. No—of course you *could* not come.

But to-morrow, to-morrow!

I am going to see my mother——

I am rather in a solemn mood inspired by a holy, exalted emotion, that pushes all petty everyday things into the background and erases them.

I am going to see my mother——

If I knew to whom I should pray and give thanks, I would do it now.

When I stood on the station platform with your little unread note in my hand, the tears were coursing down my cheeks, and I did not try to keep them back. I knew you were so near me that I could reach you in a few minutes. But I was not permitted to see you and I felt this privation keenly.

For a moment all obstacles seemed so inconsequential to me. Cecil could take me to you,—he lives where you live; and Father—Why, I did not even think of him!

It was neither the thought of the harm I could do you by intruding upon your life at this moment, that kept me back, nor the thought of the play, which *must* succeed. It was the slight quiver around Father's mouth when Cecil kissed my hand: a quiver that roused my compassion and made me throw my arms around his neck and bury my head at his breast.

. . . Father is nervous. Father, who as a rule never loses his poise. He is pacing the floor of his room: I can hear his steps back and forth. We have talked about Cecil from the moment we met in Switzerland. I felt he was frightened at my choice though he did not say so.

"He knows your mother, you say. She has chosen him to write that rôle for her," he kept repeating.

It seemed to quiet him to know that you had chosen him.

And then he started again to question me.

Just a minute ago he came in to me to tell me that Cecil and he had immediately become friends. He does not know that Cecil knows you are my mother, and he tried to get Cecil to talk

about you and the play. Cecil only talked about you. And now,—when he has left,—Father walks restlessly about; back and forth, back and forth.

You do not want to know which box Cecil has, you write, for then you will forget your part.

Oh, mother dear, only when you forget the part will you *be* the part. I wish you could play for us three alone and not for the great filled auditorium.

Father just peeped in at my door to tell me he was going down to the reading room to look over the papers. You and I know he is looking over the theatre advertisements, don't we? And yet I must still keep him in the dark.

Poor little mother. To-day you are just a quivering bundle of nerves,—restless, impatient, with hope and doubt in your heart and in an eternal struggle with the part. You know that your little girl has come to London and you know that it is for her too you must fight to-morrow. You long for her so that you cannot think of anything else.

As for myself, I am perfectly cool and calm, but of course it is not I who shall carry the victory. Besides, I have Cecil again.

Oh, to see him stand on the station platform and look for me when the train rattled in. To read in his eyes what I wanted to read made the blood rush to my head. There was a golden haze before my eyes when he took my hand and kissed it fervently and tenderly.

We were not left alone until after we had arrived at the hotel, and then the time flew without our noticing it.

Now he is gone; but to-night we shall all dine together. Father insists that we retire early instead of going out to enjoy ourselves. I noticed how relieved he felt when he saw that I was not disappointed.

I wish I could sit by your bed and stroke your brow until you should fall asleep. I'll be with you in my thoughts and so will Father. I wonder if we won't all have a sleepless night.

Can you possibly realize that we three are in the same city? And yet it is just as impossible for us to get together as it was when we were living in three different countries, writing letters to each other.

Cecil is with you now. To-night he will come to me. When he leaves me later he will carry this note with him as a little "good-night" from me.

He and I are certain of victory, darling

mother. But *your* part of the struggle is the hardest and we admire you for your courage in taking it.

Your Vera.

September 1st, The Theatre.
2nd Act.

Little mother, darling little mother:

A reality more beautiful than the most beautiful dream. I love you, I love you!

The audience is on its feet with enthusiasm. The curtain rises and falls. But you don't come forward,—you don't come forward.

Have you completely broken down or are you just kept back by your agitation? If only I could rush behind the stage and press you close to me while I whispered my thanks.

But I dare not—not before it is all over.

Oh, dear, I wish they would stop their applause. They look so weird, sitting down there with sparkling eyes and half-open mouths. There ought to be silence—deep silence—as in a church. That would be the *greatest* homage.

Now they are stamping their feet,—all of them. Darling, darling mother, you have triumphed, triumphed. And Cecil and I share your triumph. What a dreadful moment when the orchestra started the overture and kept on,

kept on. It seemed as if the curtain would *never* rise. My throat was dry with fear. At last—now—now.

My hands grasped for Cecil's. He stroked my arm gently and looked deeply into my eyes. When I turned my eyes away from him I saw you, you only, on the big stage.

The slight quiver in your voice when you spoke the first words, moved me profoundly. It was as if you spoke to me—to me alone. For I knew that your voice was clouded from the thought that I saw you for the first time.

Then you calmed down and a breath of your calmness fell over the large auditorium. And you grew and grew and grew. There were others beside you on the stage. I didn't see them. When *you* went out I felt sad and lonely. The curtain fell. The audience returned to the world of reality. A sigh seemed to escape them. Then they applauded and stormed. I sat as if turned to stone while the curtain rose time and again, and the audience clamored for you, shouted for you. But you did not answer their call, you *could* not.

When a man gives of himself he always retains *something*. A woman can give everything. You have done that to-night, and I love you, love you, love you.

My teeth chatter in my mouth. I am cold from nervousness, white as a sheet, Cecil says. No, I will be calm, won't cry any longer, won't cry. The anxiety is over. We will triumph.

Father is gone. He has cried, I heard his sobs behind me. The light sound reached my ears and made me forget everything else. He suffers. He was deadly pale when he went out. Oh, it is terrible to hear a man cry. He asked Cecil for your address. Will he come, *will* he?

"Are you going?" I asked, frightened.

"Just for a minute. I will be back when the curtain rises. I need to be alone. Cecil will please look after you when the play is over. You will not see me."

I pressed his hand in silence. My little mother, my darling mother, how great you are. The miracle has happened, and it is you who have performed it.

Cecil said, deeply moved: "She can't endure such a strain, she will ruin herself!"

Now I fear that he is right, Mother. You *have* won, you need not wear yourself out. Do you hear me, Mother? Oh, to think that you are really *my* mother.

They don't applaud any more down there. The audience talks and laughs. The discuss and gesticulate and rattle their seats.

That they can do it! I cannot understand them.

Oh, that this should happen, that this should happen! All these years that I have had to live without you, to long for you, is nothing compared to this evening.

Cecil brings you this note. But when, mother, when will you see me?

Vera.

September 1st—night.

Thanks, darling child,—thanks!

How barren—how poor is the language of man. Here I am, with my heart full of love, gratitude, and the most intense happiness, and yet I cannot find words to express even a part of it.

Is it happiness that robs me of speech, or is it the silence enclosing me after the battle which makes it impossible for me to shout my victory to the heavens.

Yes, we have won, beloved little Vera. Father has been here. My age-long dream has become real. Father has been here in my room, has pressed me to his heart and whispered in my ear:

"May, I am at fault, we both are. But now when we have understood it, and now when we have suffered, we will close our eyes on the past and with untold kindness try to heal each others' wounds."

Silence fell between us, but in each others' eyes we read all the unspoken words, felt them in our hearts beating against each other in mute and wonderful bliss.

There was nothing to say, nothing to ask forgiveness for, nothing to promise. We both felt, as we stood there in a close embrace, drawn toward each other by our painful yearning, that now all promises and all forgivenesses were needless. We belonged to each other through the power of love, and would never, never, never part again.

That it should be you—the child—begotten in our first young love—who gave fate the last little push forward, is in itself a blessing on our new pact.

I can realize the excited state you have been in through all these hours while you waited for news of the crucial meeting between Father and me. It was a great consolation to me to know that Cecil was with you so you two could enjoy your triumph together.

I know that you have not been able to go to bed, but have been waiting, waiting until you heard Father's footsteps in the next room. Perhaps you have slipped in there and have made him tell you the great news. Perhaps you already know what happened from the moment you parted.

No, he could not tell you of the maddening fear I went through when I stood alone on the stage while the asbestos curtain slowly descended.

I felt that it was the wall separating my past and my future,—until I awoke in his arms to a reality a thousand times more beautiful than any dream.

What can *I* tell you? I, who went about as in a daze, and heard as in a dream the storm of congratulations that descended upon me.

I have no idea how I reached my dressing-room. I saw, of all the flowers, only one bouquet, —La France roses—my wedding bouquet.

With that pressed to my heart I went down to the waiting auto, having dressed with difficulty.

Everybody saw that I was dead tired after the performance. But no one knew that I had still to play the last act of the drama that they thought was finished. And I did not even know the end myself.

I knew from the loving, encouraging words you sent me during the intermission that Father would come. But when? How long would I have to wait? And how should I endure the suspense.

When my car drove up in front of the house I saw, as in a haze, the figure of a man leaning against the iron railing.

Father! I recognized him at the same instant. Silently I put out my hand—silently he took it;

and hand in hand we went together through the hall into the living-room.

Our eyes fell simultaneously upon your picture standing on my desk. We looked at each other. He opened his arms and I buried my head on his shoulder. Darkness enveloped me—the earth slipped away under my feet. But I felt myself held up in his strong arms, and I felt his mouth against my lips.

He is gone now. We have talked together, all through the night, but not of the past. Let the past bury its dead. It is the future that holds our happiness. And we spoke about you and Cecil, who had worked for our happiness and had found your own in the bargain.

When you two go on your honeymoon, then Father and I will go out into the world for the second time together.

He would not speak to-night about practical matters regarding the theatre and the management.

"Our little girl has lifted the biggest stone from our path. Shouldn't a big man like me then, be able to remove the rest with ease?"

"Our little girl."

When will you meet me, you ask in your note. As soon as this night is gone. As soon as these

few hours still left before daybreak, have vanished.

But I must sleep first. Sleep with the consciousness of the joy to-morrow will bring. And awake calm and strengthened with a smile and gratitude, because light again has conquered darkness.

To-morrow, to-morrow I shall at last embrace you. And my thanks and my love shall radiate from me and envelop you in an ocean of warmth and sunshine, which shall dispel all the dark shadows of the past.

Until to-morrow, my beloved little girl.

Mother.