

Lucky Peer

Hans Christian Anderson

In the most fashionable street in the city stood a fine old house; the wall around it had bits of glass worked into it, so that when the sun or the moon shone it looked as if it were covered with diamonds. That was a sign of wealth, and there was great wealth inside. It was said that the merchant was a man rich enough to put two barrels of gold into his best parlor and could even put a barrel of gold pieces, as a savings bank against the future, outside the door of the room where his little son was born.

When the baby arrived in the rich house, there was great joy from the cellar up to the garret; and up there, there was still greater joy an hour or two later. The warehouseman and his wife lived in the garret, and there, too, at the same time, a little son arrived, given by our Lord, brought by the stork, and exhibited by the mother. And there, too, was a barrel outside the door, quite accidentally; but it was not a barrel of gold - it was a barrel of sweepings.

The rich merchant was a very kind, fine man. His wife, delicate and always dressed in clothes of high quality, was pious and, besides, was kind and good to the poor. Everybody rejoiced with these two people on now having a little son who would grow up and be rich and happy, like his father. When the little boy was baptized he was called Felix, which in Latin means "lucky," and this he was, and his parents were even more so.

The warehouseman, a fellow who was really good to the core, and his wife, and honest and industrious woman, were well liked by all who knew them. How lucky they were to have their little boy; he was called Peer.

The boy on the first floor and the boy in the garret each received the same amount of kisses from his parents and just as much sunshine from our Lord; but still they were placed a little differently - one downstairs, and one up. Peer sat the highest, way up in the garret, and he had his own mother for a nurse; little Felix had a stranger for his nurse, but she was good and honest - that was written in her service book. The rich child had a pretty baby carriage, which was pushed about by his elegantly dressed nurse; the child from the garret was carried in the arms of his own mother, both when she was in her Sunday clothes and when she had her everyday things on, and he was just as happy.

Both children soon began to observe things; they were growing, and both could show with their hands how tall they were, and say single words in their mother tongue. They were equally handsome, petted, and equally fond of sweets. As they grew up, they both got an equal amount of pleasure out of the merchant's horses and carriages. Felix was allowed to sit by the coachman, along with his nurse, and look at the horses; he would fancy himself driving. Peer was allowed to sit at the garret window and look down into the yard when the master and mistress went out to drive; and when they had left, he would place two chairs, one in front of the other, up there in the room, and so he would drive himself; he was the real coachman - that was a little more than fancying himself to be the coachman.

They got along splendidly, these two; yet it was not until they were two years old that they spoke to each other. Felix was always elegantly dressed in silk and velvet, with bare knees, after the English style. "The poor child will freeze!" said the family in the garret. Peer had trousers that came down to his ankles, but one day his clothes were torn right across his knees, so that he got as much of a draft and was just as much undressed as the merchant's delicate little boy. Felix came along with his mother and was about to go out through the gate when Peer came along with his and wanted to go in.

"Give little Peer your hand," said the merchant's wife. "You two should talk to each other."

And one said, "Peer!" and the other said, "Felix!" Yes, and that was all they said at that time.

The rich lady coddled her boy, but there was one who coddled Peer just as much, and that was his grandmother. She was weak-sighted, and yet she saw much, more in little Peer than his father or mother could see; yes, more than any person could.

"The sweet child," she said, "is surely going to get on in the world. He was born with a gold apple in his hand; I can see it even with my poor sight. Why, there is the shining apple!" And she kissed the child's little hand. His parents could see nothing, and neither could Peer; but as he grew to have more understanding, he liked to believe it.

"That is such a story, such a fairy tale, that Grandmother tells!" said the parents.

Yes, Grandmother could tell stories, and Peer was never tired of hearing always the same ones. She taught him a psalm and the Lord's Prayer as well, and he could say it, not as gabble but as words that meant something; she explained every single sentence in it to him. He gave particular thought to what Grandmother said about the words, "Give us this day our daily bread" ; he was to understand that it was necessary for one to get wheat bread, for another to get black bread; one must have a great house when he had many people in his employ; another, in small circumstances, could live quite as happily in a little room in the garret. "So each person has what he calls 'daily bread.' "

Peer, of course, had his good daily bread - and the most delightful days, too, but they were not to last forever. The sad years of war began; the young men were to go away, and the older men as well. Peer's father was among those who were called in; and soon afterward it was heard that he had been one of the first to fall in battle against the superior enemy.

There was bitter grief in the little room in the garret. The mother cried; the grandmother and little Peer cried; and every time one of the neighbors came up to see them, they talked about "Pappa," and then they cried all together. The window, meanwhile, was given permission to stay in her garret flat, rentfree, during the first year, and afterward she was to pay only a small rent. The grandmother stayed with the mother, who supported herself by washing for several "single, elegant gentlemen," as she called them. Peer had neither sorrow nor want. He had plenty of food and drink, and Grandmother told him stories, such strange and wonderful ones about the wide world, that he asked her, one day, if the two of them might not go to foreign lands some Sunday and return home as prince and princess, wearing gold crowns.

"I am too old for that," said Grandmother, "and you must first learn a good many things and become big and strong; but you must always be a good and affectionate child - as you are now."

Peer rode around the room on hobbyhorses; he had two such horses. But the merchant's son had a real live horse; it was so small that it might well have been called a baby horse, which, in fact, Peer called it, and it never could become any bigger. Felix rode it in the yard; yes, and he even rode it outside the gate, when his father and a riding master from the king's stable were with him. For the first half-hour, Peer had not liked his horses and hadn't ridden them, for they were not real; and then he had asked his mother why he could not have a real horse like little Felix had, and his mother had said, "Felix lives down on the first floor, close by the stables, but you live high up under the roof. One cannot have horses up in the garret except like those you have. You should ride on them."

And so now Peer rode - first to the chest of drawers, the great mountain with its many treasures; both Peter's Sunday clothes and his mother's were there, and there were the shining silver dollars that she laid aside for rent; then he rode to the stove, which he called the black bear; it slept all summer long, but when winter came it had to be useful, to warm the room and cook the meals.

Peer had a godfather who usually came there every Sunday during the winter and got a good warm meal. Things had gone wrong for him, said the mother and the grandmother. He had begun as a coachman. He had been drinking and had fallen asleep at his post, and that neither a soldier nor a coachman should do. He then had become a cabman and driven a cab, or sometimes a carriage, and often for very elegant people. But now he drove a garbage wagon and went from door to door, swinging his rattle, "snurre-rurre-ud!" and from all the houses came the servantgirls and housewives with their buckets full, and turned these into the wagon; rubbish and junk, ashes and sweepings, were all thrown in.

One day Peer came down from the garret after his mother had gone to town. He stood at the open gate, and there outside was Godfather with his wagon. "Would you like to take a drive?" he asked. Yes, Peer was willing to indeed, but only as far as the corner. His eyes shone as he sat on the seat with Godfather and was allowed to hold the whip. Peer drove with real live horses, drove right to the corner. Then his mother came along; she looked rather dubious, for it was not very nice to see her own little son riding on a garbage wagon. She told him to get down at once. Still, she thanked Godfather; but at home she forbade Peer to drive with him again.

One day he again went down to the gate. There was no Godfather there to tempt him with a drive, but there were other temptations. Three or four small street urchins were down in the gutter, poking about to see what they could find that had been lost or had hidden itself there. Frequently they had found a button or a copper coin, but frequently, too, they had cut themselves on a broken bottle, or pricked themselves with a pin, which just now was the case. Peer simply had to join them, and when he got down among the gutter stones he found a silver coin.

Another day he was again down digging with the other boys; they only got dirty fingers; he found a gold ring, and then, with sparkling eyes, showed off his lucky find; whereupon the others threw dirt at him and called him Lucky Peer. They wouldn't permit him to be with them any more when they poked in the gutter.

Back of the merchant's yard there was some low ground that was to be filled up for building lots; gravel and ashes were carted and dumped out there, great heaps of it. Godfather helped deliver it in his wagon, but Peer was not allowed to drive with him. The street urchins dug in the heaps, dug with a stick and with their bare hands; they always found one thing or another that seemed worth picking up.

Then little Peer came along. They saw him and cried, "Get away from here, Lucky Peer! And when, despite this, he came closer, they threw lumps of dirt at him. One of these struck against his wooden shoe and crumbled to pieces. Something shining rolled out, and Peer picked it up; it was a little heart made of amber. He ran home with it. The other boys did not notice that even when they threw dirt at him he was a child of luck.

The silver coin he had found was put away in his savings bank. The ring and the amber heart were shown to the merchant's wife downstairs, because the mother wanted to know if they were lost articles that should be returned to the police.

How the eyes of the merchant's wife shone on seeing the ring! It was her own engagement ring, one that she had lost three years before! That's how long it had lain in the gutter. Peer was well rewarded, and the money rattled in his little box. The amber heart was a cheap thing, the lady said; Peer might just as well keep that. At night the amber heart lay on the bureau, and the grandmother lay in bed.

"My, what is it that burns so!" she said. "It looks as if a small candle is lighted there." She got up to see, and it was the little heart of amber - yes, Grandmother, with her weak sight, frequently saw more than anyone else could see. She had her own thoughts about it. The next morning she took a narrow, strong ribbon, drew it through the opening at the top of the heart, and put it around her little grandson's neck.

"You must never take it off, except to put a new ribbon into it, and you must not show it to the other boys, either, for then they would take it from you, and you would get a stomach-ache!" That was the only painful sickness little Peer had known so far. There was a strange power, too, in that heart. Grandmother showed him that when she rubbed it with her hand, and a little straw was put next to it, the straw seemed to be alive and was drawn to the heart of amber and would not let go.

II

The merchant's son had a private tutor who taught him his lessons and who took walks with him, too. Peer was also to have an education, so he went to public school with a great number of other boys. They played together, and that was much more fun than going along with a tutor. Peer would not have changed places with him.

He was a lucky Peer, but Godfather was also a lucky peer, although his name was not Peer. He won a prize in the lottery, of two hundred dollars, on a ticket he shared with eleven others. He immediately bought some better clothes, and he looked very well in them. Luck never comes alone; it always has company, and so it did this time. Godfather gave up the garbage wagon and joined the theater.

"What's that!" said Grandmother. "Is he going into the theater? As what?"

As a machinist. That was an advancement. He became quite another person; and he enjoyed the plays very much, although he always saw them from the top or from the side. Most wonderful was the ballet, but that gave him the hardest work, and there was always danger of fire. They danced both in heaven and on earth. That was something for little Peer to see; and one evening when there was to be a dress rehearsal of a new ballet, in which everyone was dressed and made up as on the opening night when people pay to see all the magnificence, he had permission to bring Peer with him and put him in a place where he could see the whole show.

It was a Biblical ballet - Samson. The Philistines danced about him, and he tumbled the whole house down over them and himself; but there were both fire engines and firemen on hand in case of any accident.

Peer had never seen a stage play, not to mention a ballet. He put on his Sunday clothes and went with Godfather to the theater. It was just like a great drying loft, with many curtains and screens, big openings in the floor, lamps, and lights. There were so many tricky nooks and corners everywhere, from which people appeared, just as in a great church with its gallery pews. Peer was seated down where the floor slanted steeply and was told to stay there until it was all finished and he was sent for. He had three sandwiches in his pocket, so that he need not starve.

Soon it grew lighter and lighter; then up in front, just as if straight out of the earth, there came a number of musicians with both flutes and violins. In the seats next to Peer sat people dressed in street clothes; but there also appeared knights with gold helmets, beautiful maidens in gauze and flowers, even angels all in white, with wings on their backs. They seated themselves upstairs and downstairs, on the floor and in the balcony seats, to watch what was going on. They were all members of the ballet, but Peer did not know that. He thought they belonged in the fairy tales his grandmother had told him about. There then appeared a woman, and she was the most beautiful of all, with a gold helmet and spear; she seemed to be above all the others, and sat between an angel and a troll. Ah, how much there was to see! And yet the ballet had not even begun.

Suddenly everything became quiet. A man dressed in black moved a little fairy wand over all the musicians, and then they began to play; the music made a whistling sound through the theater, and the whole wall in front began to rise. One looked into a flower garden, where the sun shone and all the people danced and leaped. Such a wonderful sight Peer had never imagined. There were soldiers marching, and there was war, and there was a

banquet, and there were the mighty Samson and his lover. But she was as wicked as she was beautiful; she betrayed him. The Philistines plucked his eyes out; he was forced to grind in the mill and to be mocked and insulted in the great banquet hall; but then he took hold of the heavy stone pillars that held up the roof and shook them and the whole house; it fell, and there burst forth wonderful flames of red and green fire.

Peer could have sat there his whole life long and looked on, even if the sandwiches were all eaten - and they were all eaten.

Now here was something to tell about, when he got home. It was impossible to get him to go to bed. He stood on one leg and laid the other on the table - that was what Samson's lover and all the other ladies had done. He made a treadmill out of Grandmother's chair and upset two chairs and a pillow over himself to show how the banquet hall had come down. He showed this - yes, and he even presented it with the music that belonged to it; there was no talking in the ballet. He sang high and low, with words and without words, and it was quite incoherent. It was like a whole opera. The most noticeable thing of all, meanwhile, was his beautiful, bell-clear voice, but no one spoke of that.

Peer previously had wanted to be a grocer's boy, to be in charge of prunes and powdered sugar. Now he found there was something much more wonderful, and that was to get into the Samson story and dance in the ballet. A great many poor children had taken that road, said the grandmother, and had become had taken that road, said the grandmother, and had become fine and honored people; yet no little girl of her family would ever be permitted to do so; but a boy - well, he stood more firmly. Peer had not seen a single one of the little girls fall down before the whole house fell, and then they all fell together, he said.

III

Peer wanted to, and felt he must, be a ballet dancer.

"He gives me no rest!" said his mother. At last, his grandmother promised to take him to the ballet master, who was a fine gentleman and had his own house, like the merchant. Would Peer ever be that rich? Nothing is impossible for our Lord. Peer had been born with a gold apple; luck had been laid in his hands - perhaps it was also in his legs.

Peer went to the ballet master and knew him at once; it was Samson himself. His eyes had not suffered at all at the hands of the Philistines. That was only acting in the play, he was told. And Samson looked kindly and pleasantly at him, and told him to stand up straight, look right at him, and show him his ankle. Peer showed his whole foot and leg, too.

"So he got a place in the ballet," said Grandmother.

This was easily arranged with the ballet master; but before that, his mother and grandmother had spoken with several understanding people - first with the merchant's wife, who thought it a good career for a handsome, honest boy like Peer, but without any future. Then they had spoken with Miss Frandsen; she knew all about the ballet, and at one time, in Grandmother's younger days, she had been the most beautiful danseuse at the theater; she had danced goddesses and princesses, had been cheered and applauded wherever she had gone; but then she had grown older - we all do - and so no longer had she been given principal parts; she'd had to dance behind the younger ones; and when finally her dancing days had come to an end, she had become a wardrobe woman and dressed the others as goddesses and princesses.

"So it goes!" said Miss Frandsen. "The theater road is a delightful one to travel, but it is full of thorns. Jealousy grows there! Jealousy!"

That was a word Peer did not understand at all; but he came to understand it in time.

"No force or power can keep him from the ballet," said his mother.

"A pious Christian child, that he is," said Grandmother.

"And well brought up," said Miss Frandsen. "Well formed and moral! That I was in my heyday."

And so Peer went to the dancing school and got some summer clothes and thin-soled dancing shoes to make himself lighter. All the older girl dancers kissed him and said that he was a boy good enough to eat.

He had to stand up, stick his legs out, and hold on to a post so as not to fall, while he leaned to kick, first with his right leg, then with his left. It was not nearly so difficult for him as it was for most of the others. The ballet master patted him and said that he would soon be in the ballet; he was to play the child of a king who was carried on shields and wore a gold crown. This was practiced at the dancing school and rehearsed at the theater itself.

The mother and grandmother had to see little Peer in all his glory, and when they saw this, they both cried, although it was such a happy occasion. Peer, in all his pomp and glory, did not see them at all; but he did see the merchant's family, who sat in the loge nearest the stage. Little Felix was with them, in his best clothes. He wore buttoned gloves, just like a grown-up gentleman, and although he could see perfectly well, he looked through an opera glass the whole evening, just like a grown-up gentleman. He looked at Peer, and Peer looked at him; Peer was a king's child with a crown of gold. This evening brought the two children into closer relationship with one another.

A few days later, when they met each other at home in the yard, Felix went up to Peer and told him he had seen him when he was a prince. He knew very well that he was not a prince any longer, but then he had worn a prince's clothes and a gold crown. "I shall wear them again on Sunday," said Peer.

Felix did not see him Sunday, but he thought about it the whole evening. He would have liked very much to have been in Peer's place; he had not heard Miss Frandsen's warning that the road of the theater was a thorny one and that jealousy grew along it; nor did Peer know this yet, but he would very soon learn it.

His young companions, the dancing children, were not at all so good as they ought to be, although they often played angels and had wings on them. There was a little girl, Malle Knallerup, who always - when she was dressed as a page, and Peer was a page - stepped maliciously on the side of his foot, so as to dirty his stockings. There was a wicked boy who always was sticking pins in his back; and one day he ate Peer's sandwiches - by mistake; but that was impossible, for Peer had meat balls on his sandwiches, and the other boy had only bread without butter; he could not have made a mistake.

It would be impossible to recite all the annoyances that Peer endured in two years, and the worst was yet to come.

There was a ballet performed called The Vampire. In it the smallest dancing children were dressed as bats, wore gray, knitted tights that fitted snugly to their bodies; black gauze wings were stretched from their shoulders. They were to run on tiptoe, as if they were light enough to fly, and then they were to whirl around on the floor. Peer could do this especially well; but his trousers and jacket, all of one piece, were old and worn and could not stand the strain. So just as he whirled around before the eyes of all the people, there was a rip right down his back, straight from his neck down to where the legs are fastened in, and all of his short, white shirt could be seen. All the people laughed. Peer felt it and knew what had happened; he whirled and whirled, but it grew worse and worse. People laughed louder and louder; the other vampires laughed with them, and whirled into him, and all the more dreadfully when the people clapped and shouted, "Bravo!"

"That is for the ripped vampire!" said the dancing children. And from then on they always called him Rippy.

Peer cried. Miss Frandsen comforted him. "It is only jealousy," she said; and now Peer knew what jealousy was.

Besides the dancing school, they had a regular school at the theater where the children were taught arithmetic and writing, history and geography - yes, and they even had a teacher in religion, for it is not enough to know how to dance; there is something more important in the world than wearing out dancing shoes. Here, too, Peer was quick, the very quickest of all, and got plenty of good marks; but his fellow students still called him Rippy. They were only teasing him; but at last he could not stand it any longer, and he swung and hit one of the boys, so that he was black and blue under the left eye and had to have grease paint on it in the evening when he appeared in the ballet. Peer got a scolding from the dancing master, and a worse one from the sweeping woman, for it was her son he had "given a sweeping."

IV

A good many thoughts went through little Peer's head. And one Sunday, when he was dressed in his best clothes, he went out without saying a word about it to his mother or his grandmother, not even to Miss Frandsen, who always gave him good advice; he went straight to the orchestra conductor; he thought this man was the most important one there was outside the ballet. Cheerfully he stepped in and said, "I am at the dancing school, but there is so much jealousy there, and so I would rather be a player or a singer, if you would help me, please."

"Have you a voice?" asked the conductor, and looked quite pleasantly at him. "Seems to me I know you. Where have I seen you before? Wasn't it you who was ripped down the back?" And now he laughed. But Peer grew red; he was surely no longer Lucky Peer, as his grandmother had called him. He looked down at his feet and wished he were far away.

"Sing me a song!" said the conductor. "Come now, cheer up, my boy!" and he tapped him under the chin, and Peer looked up into his kind eyes and sang a song, "Mercy for Me," which he had heard at the theater, in the opera *Robert le Diable*.

"That is a difficult song, but you did it pretty well," said the conductor. "You have an excellent voice - as long as it doesn't rip in the back!" and he laughed and called his wife. She also had to hear Peer sing, and she nodded her head and said something in a foreign tongue. Just at that moment the singing master of the theater came in; it was really to him Peer should have gone if he wanted to be a singer; now the singing master came to him, quite accidentally, as it were; he also heard him sing "Mercy for Me," but he did not laugh, and he did not look so kindly at him as the conductor and his wife; still it was decided that Peer should have singing lessons.

"Now he is on the right track," said Miss Frandsen. "One gets much farther with a voice than with legs. If I had had a voice, I would have been a great songstress and would perhaps have been a baroness by now."

"Or a bookbinder's wife," said Mother. "Had you become rich, you surely would have taken the bookbinder."

We do not understand that hint, but Miss Frandsen did.

Peer had to sing for her and sing for the merchant's family, when they heard of his new career. He was called in one evening when they had company downstairs, and he sang several songs, among them "Mercy for Me." All the company clapped their hands, and Felix did, too; he had heard him sing before; in the stable Peer had sung the entire ballet of Samson, and that was the most delightful of all.

"One cannot sing a ballet," said the lady.

"Yes, Peer can," said Felix, and so they asked him to do it. He sang, and he talked; he drummed and he hummed; it was child's play, but fragments of well-known melodies came forth which really illustrated what the ballet was about. All the company found it very entertaining; they laughed and praised it, one louder than another. The merchant's wife gave Peer a huge piece of cake and a silver dollar.

How lucky the boy felt, until he discovered a gentleman who stood somewhat in the background, and who looked sternly at him. There was something harsh and severe in the man's black eyes; he did not laugh; he did not speak a single friendly word; this gentleman was the singing master from the theater.

Next forenoon, Peer went to him, and he stood there quite as severe-looking as before.

"What was the matter with you yesterday!" he said. "Could you not understand that they were making a fool of you? Never do that again, and don't you go running about and singing at doors, either inside or outside. Now you can go. I won't give you any singing lesson today."

When Peer left, he was dreadfully downcast; he had fallen out of the master's good graces. On the contrary, the master was really more satisfied with him than ever before. In all the absurdity which he had seen him perform, there was really some meaning, something quite unusual. The boy had an ear for music, and a voice as clear as a bell and of great compass; if it continued like that, then the little fellow's fortune was made.

Now began the singing lessons. Peer was industrious and Peer was clever. How much there was to learn, how much to know! The mother toiled and slaved to make an honest living, so that her son might be well dressed and neat and not look too shabby among the people to whom he now was invited. He was always singing and jubilant; they had no need at all of a canary bird, the mother said. Every Sunday he had to sing a psalm with his grandmother. It was delightful to hear his fresh voice lift itself up with hers. "It is much more beautiful than to hear him sing wildly!" That's what she called his singing when, like a little bird, his voice jubilantly gave forth with tones that seemed to come of themselves and make such music as they pleased. What tones there were in his little throat, what wonderful sounds in his little breast! Indeed, he could imitate a whole orchestra. There were both flute and bassoon in his

voice, and there were violin and bugle. He sang as the birds sing; but man's voice is much more charming, even a little man's, when he can sing like Peer.

But in the winter, just as he was to go to the pastor to be prepared for confirmation, he caught cold; the little bird in his breast said, pip! The voice was ripped like the vampire's backpiece.

"It is no great misfortune, after all, " thought Mother and Grandmother. "Now he doesn't go singing, tra-la, so he can think more seriously about his religion."

His voice was changing, the singing master said. Peer must not sing at all now. How long would it be? A year, perhaps two; perhaps the voice would never come again. that was a great grief.

"Think only of your confirmation now," said Mother and Grandmother. "Practice your music," said the singing master, "but keep your mouth shut."

He thought of his religion, and he studied his music; it sang and

resounded within him. He wrote entire melodies down in notes, songs without words. Finally he wrote the words, too.

"You are a poet, too, little Peer," said the merchant's wife, to whom he carried his text and

music. The merchant received a piece of music dedicated to him, a piece without words. Felix got one, too; and, yes, Miss Frandsen also did, and that went into her scrapbook, in which were verses and music by two who were once young lieutenants but now were old majors on half pay; the book had been given by "a friend," who had bound it himself.

And Peer was confirmed at Easter. Felix presented him with a silver watch. It was the first watch Peer had owned; he felt that this made him a man, for now he did not have to ask others what time it was. Felix came up to the garret, congratulated him, and handed him the watch; he himself was not to be confirmed until the autumn. They took each other by the hand, these two children of the house, both the same age, born the same day and in the same house. And Felix ate a piece of the cake that had been baked in the garret for the occasion of the confirmation.

"It is a happy day with solemn thoughts," said Grandmother.

"Yes, very solemn!" said Mother. "If only Father had lived to see Peer today!"

The following Sunday all three of them went to Communion. When they came home from church they found a message from the singing master, asking Peer to come to see him; and Peer went. Some good news awaited him, and yet it was serious, too. While he must give up singing for a year, and his voice must lie fallow like a field, as a peasant might say, during that time he was to further his education, not in the capital, where every evening he would be running to the theater, from which he could not keep away, but he was to go one hundred and twenty miles from home, to board with a schoolmaster who boarded a couple of other young men. There he was to learn language and science, which someday would be useful to him. The charge for a year's course was three hundred dollars, and that was paid by a "benefactor who does not wish his name to be known."

"It is the merchant," said Mother and Grandmother.

The day of departure came. A good many tears were shed, and kisses and blessings given; and then Peer rode the hundred and twenty miles on the railway, out into the wide world. It was Whitsuntide. The sun shone, and the woods were fresh and green; the train went rushing through them; new fields and villages were continually coming into view; country

manors peeped out; the cattle stood in the pastures. Now they passed a station, then another, and market town after market town. At each stopping place there was a crowd of people, welcoming or saying good-by; there was noisy talking, outside and in the carriages. Where Peer sat there was a lot of entertainment and chattering by a widow dressed in black. She talked about his grave, his coffin, and his corpse - meaning her child's. It had been such a poor little thing that there could have been no happiness for it had it lived. It had been a great relief for her and the little lamb when it had fallen asleep.

"I spared no expense on flowers on that occasion!" she said; "and you must remember that it died at a very expensive time, when the flowers had to be cut from potted plants! Every Sunday I went to my grave and laid a wreath on it with great white silk bows; the silk bows were immediately stolen by some little girls and used for dancing bows; they were so tempting! One Sunday I went there, and I knew that my grave was on the left of the main path, but when I got there, there was my grave on the right. 'How is this?' says I to the gravedigger. 'Isn't my grave on the left?'

" 'No, it isn't any longer!' the gravedigger answered. 'Madam's grave lies there all right, but the mound has been moved over to the right; that place belongs to another man's grave.'

" 'But I want my corpse in my grave,' says I, 'and I have a perfect right to say so. Shall I go and decorate a false mound, when my corpse lies without any sign on the other side? Indeed I won't!'

" 'Then Madam must talk to the dean.'

"He is such a good man, that dean! He gave me permission to have my corpse on the right. It would cost five dollars. I gave that with a kiss of my hand and walked back to my old grave. 'Can I now be very sure that it is my own coffin and my corpse that is moved?'

" 'That Madam can!' And so I gave each of the men a coin for the moving. But now, since it had cost so much, I thought I should spend something to make it beautiful, and so I ordered a monument with an inscription. But - will you believe it - when I got it, there was a gilded butterfly painted at the top. 'Why, that means Frivolity,' said I. 'I won't have that on my grave.'

" 'It is not Frivolity, Madam; it is Immortality.'

" 'I never heard that,' said I. Now, have any of you here in the carriage ever heard of a butterfly as a sign for anything but Frivolity? I kept quiet. I don't like long conversations. I composed myself, and put the monument away in my pantry. There it stood till my lodger came home. He

is a student and has so many, many books. He assured me that it really stood for Immortality, and so the monument was placed on the grave."

And during all the chatter, Peer arrived at the station of the town where he was to live, and become just as wise as the student, and have just as many books.

V

Herr Gabriel, the honorable man of learning with whom Peer was to live as a boarding scholar, was at the railway station, to call for him. Herr Gabriel was a man as thin as a skeleton, with great, shiny eyes that stuck out so very far that one was almost afraid that when he sneezed they would pop out of his head entirely. He was accompanied by three of his own little boys; one of them stumbled over his own legs, and the other two stepped all over Peer's feet in their eagerness to get a close view of him. Two larger boys were with them, the older about fourteen years, fair-skinned, freckled, and full of pimples.

"Young Madsen, who will be a student in about three years, if he studies! Primus, son of a dean." That was the younger, who looked like a head of wheat. "Both are boarders, studying with me," said Herr Gabriel. "Our small stuff," he called his own boys.

"Trine, bring the newcomer's trunk on your wheelbarrow. The table is set for you at home."

"Stuffed turkey!" said the other two young gentlemen boarders.

"Stuffed turkey!" said the "small stuff"; and again one of them fell over his own legs.

"Caesar, look after your feet!" exclaimed Herr Gabriel.

And they walked into town and then out of it. There stood a great half-tumbled-down timber house, with a jasmine-covered summerhouse, facing the road. Here Madam Gabriel waited with more "small stuff," two little girls.

"The new pupil," said Herr Gabriel.

"A most hearty welcome!" said Madam Gabriel, a youthful, well-fed woman, red and white, with spit curls and a lot of pomade on her hair.

"Good heavens, how grown-up you are!" she said to Peer. "Why, you are a fully developed gentleman already. I thought that you were like Primus or young Madsen. Angel Gabriel, it's a good thing the inner door is nailed. You know what I think." "Nonsense!" said Herr Gabriel. And they stepped into the room. There

was a novel on the table, lying open, and a sandwich on it. One might have thought that it had been placed there as a bookmark - it lay across the open page.

"Now I must be the housewife!" And with all five of her children, and the two boarders, she showed Peer through the kitchen, and the hallway, and into a little room, the windows of

which looked out on the garden; that was to be his study and bedroom; it was next to Madam Gabriel's room, where she slept with all the five children; the connecting door, for decency's sake, and to prevent gossip "which spares nobody," had been nailed up by Herr Gabriel that very day, at Madam's express request.

"Here you can live just as if you were at your parents'. We have a theater, too, in the town. The pharmacist is the director of a private company, and we have traveling players. But now you are going to have your turkey." And so she showed Peer into the dining room, where the wash was drying on a line.

"That doesn't do any harm," she said. "It is only cleanliness, and that you are surely accustomed to."

So Peer sat down to eat the roast turkey while the children of the house, but not the two boarders, who had withdrawn, gave a dramatic show for the entertainment of themselves and the stranger. There had lately been a traveling company of actors in town, which had played Schiller's *The Robbers*. The two oldest boys had been immensely taken with it. And they now performed the whole play at home - all the parts, notwithstanding that they remembered only these words: "Dreams come from the stomach." But they were spoken by all the characters in different tones of voice. There stood Amelia, with heavenly eyes and a dreamy look. "Dreams come from the stomach!" she said, and covered her face with both her hands. Carl Moor came forward with a heroic stride and manly voice, "Dreams come from the stomach," and at that the whole flock of children, boys and girls, rushed in; they were all robbers, and murdered one another, crying out, "Dreams come from the stomach."

That was Schiller's *The Robbers*. This performance and stuffed turkey were Peer's first introduction into Herr Gabriel's house. He then went to his little chamber, where through the window, into which the sun shone warmly, he could see the garden. He sat down and looked out. Herr Gabriel was walking there, absorbed in reading a book. He came closer and looked in; his eyes seemed fixed upon Peer, who bowed respectfully. Herr Gabriel opened his mouth as wide as he would, stuck out his tongue, and let it wag from one side to the other right in the face of the astonished Peer, who could not understand why he was treated in

such a manner. Whereupon Herr Gabriel left, but then turned back to the window and again stuck his tongue out of his mouth.

Why did he do that? He was not thinking of Peer, or that the panes of glass were transparent from the outside; he saw only the reflection of himself in them, and he wanted to look at his tongue, as he had a stomach-ache, but Peer did not know all this.

Early in the evening Herr Gabriel went into his room, and Peer sat in his. Much later in the evening he heard quarreling - female quarreling - in Madam Gabriel's bedroom.

"I am going up to Gabriel and tell him what rascals you are!"

"We will also go to Gabriel and tell him what Madam is!"

"I shall have a fit!" she cried.

"Who wants to see a woman in a fit! Four skillings!"

Then Madam's voice sank deeper, but was distinctly heard. "What will the young man in there think of our house when he hears all this vulgarity!" At that the quarrel subsided, but then again rose louder and louder.

"Period! Finis," cried Madam. "Go and make the punch; it's better to agree than to quarrel!"

And then it was still. The door opened, and the girls left, and then Madam knocked on the

door to Peer's room.

"Young man, now you have some idea of what it is to be a housewife. You should thank heaven that you don't have to bother with girls. I want to have peace, so I give them punch. I would gladly give you a glass - one sleeps so well after it - but no one dares go through the hallway door after ten o'clock; my Gabriel will not permit it. But you shall have some punch, nevertheless. There is a big hole in the door, stopped up with putty; I will push the putty out and put a funnel through the hole; you hold your waterglass under it, and I shall pour you some punch. Keep it a secret, even from my Gabriel. You must not worry him with household affairs."

And so Peer got his punch, and there was peace in Madam Gabriel's room, peace and quiet in the whole house. Peer went to bed, thought of his mother and grandmother, said his evening prayer, and fell asleep. What one dreams the first night one sleeps in a strange house has special significance, Grandmother had said. Peer dreamed that he took the amber heart, which he still constantly wore, laid it in a flowerpot, and it grew into a great tree, up through the ceiling and the roof; it bore thousands of hearts of silver and gold, so heavy that the flowerpot broke, and it was no longer an amber heart - it had become mold, earth to earth - gone, gone forever! Then Peer awoke; he still had the amber heart, and it was warm, warm against his own warm heart.

VI

Early in the morning the first study hours began at Herr Gabriel's. They studied French. At lunch the only ones present were the boarders, the children, and Madam. She drank her second cup of coffee here; her first she always took in bed. "It is so healthy when one is liable to spasms." She asked Peer what he had studied that day.

"French," he answered.

"It is an expensive language!" she said. "It is the language of diplomats and one used by distinguished people. I did not study it in my childhood, but when one is married to a learned man one gains from his knowledge, as one gains from his mother's milk. Thus, I have all the necessary words. I am quite sure I would know how to express myself in whatever company I happened to be."

Madam had acquired a foreign name by her marriage with a learned man. She had been baptized Mette after a rich aunt, whose heir she was to have been. She had got the name, but not the inheritance. Herr Gabriel rebaptized Mette as Meta, the Latin word for measure. At the time of her wedding, all her clothes, woolen and linen, were marked with the letters M. G., Meta Gabriel; but young Madsen, who was a witty boy, interpreted the letters M. G. to be a mark meaning "most good," and he added a big question mark in ink, on the tablecloths, the towels, and the sheets.

"Don't you like Madam?" asked Peer, when young Madsen made him privately acquainted with this joke. "She is so kind, and Herr Gabriel is so learned."

"She is a bag of lies!" said young Madsen; "and Herr Gabriel is a scoundrel. If I were only a corporal, and he a recruit, oh, how I would discipline him!" And a bloodthirsty expression came to young Madsen's face; his lips grew narrower than usual, and his whole face seemed one great freckle.

There were terrible words to hear, and they gave Peer a shock; yet young Madsen had the clearest right to think that way. It was a cruel thing on the part of parents and teachers that a fellow had to waste his best time, delightful youth, on learning grammar, names, and dates, which nobody cares anything about, instead of enjoying his liberty relaxing, and wandering about with a gun over his shoulder like a good hunter. "No, one has to be shut in and sit on a bench and look sleepily at a book; Herr Gabriel wants that. And then one is called lazy and gets the mark 'passable'; yes, one's parents get letters about it; that's why

Herr Gabriel is a scoundrel."

"He gives lickings, too," added little Primus, who agreed with young Madsen. This was not very pleasant for Peer to hear. But Peer got no lickings; he was too grown-up, as Madam had said. He was not called lazy, either, for that he was not. He had his lessons alone. He was soon well ahead of Madsen and Primus.

"He has ability!" said Herr Gabriel.

"And one can see that he has been to dancing school!" said Madam.

"We must have him in our dramatic club," said the pharmacist, who lived more for the town's private theater than for his pharmacy. Malicious people applied to him the old stale joke that he must have been bitten by a mad actor, for he was completely insane about the theater.

"The young student was born for a lover," said the pharmacist. "In a couple of years he could be Romeo; and I believe that if he were well made up, and we put a little mustache on him, he could very well appear this winter."

The pharmacist's daughter - "great dramatic talent," said the father; "true beauty," said the mother - was to be Juliet; Madam Gabriel had to be the nurse, and the pharmacist, who was both director and stage manager, would take the role of the apothecary, which was small but of great importance. Everything depended on Herr Gabriel's permission for Peer to play Romeo. This had to be worked through Madam Gabriel; one had to know how to win her over - and this the pharmacist knew.

"You were born to be the nurse," he said, and thought that he was flattering her exceedingly. "That is actually the most important part in the play," he continued. "It is the comedy role; without it, the play would be too sad to sit through. No one but you, Madam Gabriel, has the quickness and life that should sparkle here."

All very true, she agreed, but her husband would surely never permit the young student to contribute whatever time would be required to play the part of Romeo. She promised, however, to "pump" him, as she called it. The pharmacist immediately began to study his part, and especially to think about his make-up. He wanted to look almost like a skeleton, a poor, miserable fellow, and yet a clever man - a rather difficult problem. But Madam Gabriel had a much harder one in "pumping" her husband to give his permission. He could not, he said, answer for it to Peer's guardians, who paid for his schooling and board, if he permitted the young man to play in tragedy. We cannot conceal the fact, however, that Peer had the greatest desire to do it. "But it won't work," he said.

"It's working," said Madam; "only let me keep on pumping." She would have given him punch, but Herr Gabriel did not like to drink it. Married people are often different; this is said without any offense to Madam.

"One glass and no more," she thought. "It elevates the mind and makes one happy, and that's what we ought to be - it is our Lord's will with us."

Peer was to be Romeo; that was pumped through by Madam. The rehearsals were held at the pharmacist's. They had chocolate and "genii" - that is to say, small biscuits. These were sold at the bakery, twelve for a penny, and they were so exceedingly small, and there were so many, that it was considered witty to call them genii.

"It is an easy matter to make fun," said Herr Gabriel, although he himself often gave nicknames to one thing and another. He called the pharmacist's house "Noah's ark, with its clean and unclean beasts," and that was only because of the affection which was shown by that family toward their pet animals. The young lady had her own cat, Graciosa, which was pretty and soft-skinned; it would lie in the window, in her lap, on her sewing work, or run over the table spread for dinner. The wife had a poultry yard, a duck yard, a

parrot, and canary birds - and Polly could outcry them all together. Two dogs, Flick and Flock, walked about in the living room; they were by no means perfume bottles, and they lay on the sofa and on the family bed.

The rehearsal began, and it was only interrupted a moment by the dogs slobbering over Madam Gabriel's new gown, but that was out of pure friendship and it did not spot it. The cat also caused a slight disturbance; it insisted on giving its paw to Juliet and sitting on her head and wagging its tail. Juliet's tender speeches were divided equally between cat and Romeo. Every word that Peer had to say was exactly what he wished to say to the pharmacist's daughter. How lovely and charming she was, a child of nature, who, as Madam Gabriel expressed it, was perfect for the role. Peer began to fall in love with her.

There surely was instinct or something even higher in the cat. It perched on Peer's shoulders as if to symbolize the sympathy between Romeo and Juliet. With each successive rehearsal Peer's fervor became stronger, more apparent; the cat became more confidential, the parrot and the canary birds noisier; Flick and Flock ran in and out. The evening of the performance came, and Peer was a perfect Romeo; he kissed Juliet right on her mouth.

"Perfectly natural!" said Madam Gabriel.

"Disgraceful!" said the Councilor, Herr Svendsen, the richest citizen and fattest man in the town. The perspiration poured from him; it was warm in the house, and warm within him as well. Peer found no favor in his eyes. "Such a puppy!" he said; "a puppy so long that one could break him in half and make two puppies of him."

Great applause - and one enemy! That was having good luck. Yes, Peer was a Lucky Peer. Tired and overcome by the exertions of the evening and the flattery shown him, he went home to his little room. It was past midnight; Madam Gabriel knocked on the wall.

"Romeo! I have some punch for you!"

And the funnel was put through the hole in the door, and Peer Romeo held his glass under.

"Good night, Madam Gabriel."

But Peer could not sleep. Everything he had said, and particularly what Juliet had said, buzzed through his head, and when he finally fell asleep he dreamed of a wedding - a wedding with Miss Frandsen! What strange things one can dream!

VII

"Now get that play-acting out of your head," said Herr Gabriel the next morning, "and let's get busy with some science."

Peer had come near to thinking like young Madsen, that a fellow was wasting his delightful youth being shut in and sitting with a book in his hand. But when he sat with his book, there shone from it so many noble and good thoughts that Peer found himself quite absorbed in it. He learned of the world's great men and their achievements; so many had been the children of poor people: Themistocles, the hero, son of a potter; Shakespeare, a poor weaver's boy, who as a young man held horses outside the door of the theater, where later he was the mightiest man in poetic art of all countries and all time. He learned of the singing contest at Wartburg, where the poets competed to see who would produce the most beautiful poem - a contest like the old trial of the Grecian poets at the great public feasts. Herr Gabriel talked of these with especial delight. Sophocles in his old age had written one of his best tragedies and won the award over all the others. In this honor and fortune his heart broke with joy. Oh, how blessed to die in the midst of one's joy of victory! What could be more fortunate! Thoughts and dreams filled our little friend, but he had no one to whom he could tell them. They would not be understood by young Madsen

or by Primus - nor by Madam Gabriel, either she was either in a very good humor, or was the sorrowing mother, in which case she was dissolved in tears.

Her two little girls looked with astonishment at her. Neither they nor Peer could discover why she was so overwhelmed with sorrow and grief.

"The poor children!" she said. "A mother is always thinking of their future. The boys can take care of themselves. Caesar falls, but he gets up again; the two older ones splash in the water tub; they ought to be in the navy, and would surely marry well. But my two little girls! What will their future be? They will reach the age when the heart feels, and then I am sure that whoever each of them falls in love with will not be at all after Gabriel's liking; he will choose someone they'll despise, and that will make them so unhappy. As a mother, I have to think about these things, and that is my sorrow and grief. You poor children! You will be so unhappy!" She wept.

The little girls looked at her. Peer looked at her and felt rather sad; he could think of nothing to say, so he returned to his little room, sat down at the old piano, and tones and fantasies came forth as they streamed through his heart.

In the early morning he went to his studies with a clear mind and performed his duties, for someone was paying for his schooling. He was a conscientious, right-minded fellow. In his diary he recorded each day what he had read and studied, and how late he had sat up playing the piano - always mutely, so that he wouldn't awaken Madam Gabriel. It never said in his diary, except on Sunday, the day of rest, "Thought of Juliet," "Was at the pharmacist's," "Wrote a letter to Mother and Grandmother." Peer was still Romeo and a good son.

"Very industrious!" said Herr Gabriel. "Follow that example, young Madsen! Or you'll fail!"

"Scoundrel!" said young Madsen to himself.

Primus, the Dean's son, suffered from sleeping sickness. "It is a disease," said the Dean's wife; he was not to be treated with severity.

The deanery was only eight miles away; wealth and comfort were there.

"That man will die a bishop" said Madam Gabriel. "He has good connections at the court, and the Deaness is a lady of noble birth. She knows all about heraldry - that means coats of arms."

It was Whitsuntide. A year had passed since Peer came to Herr Gabriel's house. He had gained much knowledge, but his voice had not come back; would it ever come?

The Gabriel household was invited to the Dean's to a great dinner and a ball later in the evening. A good many guests came from the town and from the manor houses about. the pharmacist's family was invited; Romeo would see his Juliet, perhaps dance the first dance with her.

The deanery was a well-kept place, whitewashed, and without any manure heaps in the yard, and it had a dovecot painted green, around which twined an ivy vine. The Deaness was a tall, corpulent woman; "Athene, Glaucopis," Herr Gabriel called her; "the blue-eyed," not "the ox-eyed," as Juno was called, thought Peer. There was a certain distinguished kindness about her, and an effort to have an invalid look; she probably had sleeping sickness just like Primus. She was in a light-blue silk dress and wore great curls; the one on the right side was fastened with a large medallion portrait of her great-grandmother, a general's wife, and the one on the left with an equally large bunch of grapes made of white porcelain.

The Dean had a ruddy, plump face, with shining white teeth, well suited to biting into a roast fillet. His conversation always consisted of anecdotes. He could converse with everybody, but no ever succeeded in carrying on a conversation with him.

The Councilor, too, was there, and among the strangers from the manors was Felix, the merchant's son; he had been confirmed and was now a most elegant young gentleman, both in clothes and manners; he was a millionaire, they said. Madam Gabriel did not have courage enough to speak to him.

Peer was overjoyed at seeing Felix, who came to him in a very genial manner and said that he had brought greetings from his parents, who read all the letters Peer wrote home to his mother and grandmother.

The dancing began. The pharmacist's daughter was to dance the first dance with the Councilor; that was a promise she had made at home to her mother and to the Councilor. The second dance had been promised to Peer; but Felix came and took her with a good-natured nod.

"Permit me to have this one dance; the young lady will give her permission only if you say so."

Peer kept a polite face; he said nothing, and Felix danced with the pharmacist's daughter, the most beautiful girl at the ball. He also danced the next dance with her.

"You will grant me the supper dance?" asked Peer, with a pale face.

"Yes, the supper dance," she answered with her most charming smile.

"You surely will not take my partner from me?" said Felix, who stood close by. "That's not being very friendly. We two old friends from town! You say that you are so glad to see me. Then you must allow me the pleasure of taking the lady to supper!" And he put his arm around Peer and laid his forehead jestingly against him. "Granted, isn't it? Granted!"

"No!" said Peer, his eyes sparkling with anger.

Felix gaily raised his arms and set his elbows akimbo, as if he were trying to look like a frog ready to leap. "You are perfectly right, young man! I would say the same if the supper dance were promised me, sir!" He drew back with a graceful bow to the young lady.

But shortly after, when Peer stood in a corner and adjusted his necktie, Felix returned, put his arms around his neck, and, with the most coaxing look, said, "Be bighearted! My mother and your mother and old grandmother will all say that is just like you. I am leaving tomorrow, and I will be terribly bored if I do not take the young lady to supper. My own friend, my only friend!"

Peer, as his only friend, could not resist that; he personally led Felix to the young beauty.

It was bright morning of the next day when the guests drove away from the Dean's. The Gabriel household was in one carriage, and the whole family went to sleep, except Peer and Madam.

She talked about the young merchant, the rich man's son, who was really Peer's friend; she had heard him say, Skaal, my friend! To Mother and Grandmother!" There was something so "uninhibited, gallant in him," she said; "one saw at once that he is the son of rich people, or a count's child. That, the rest of us can't acquire. One must bow to that!"

Peer said nothing. He was depressed all day. At night, when bedtime had come and he lay in bed, sleep was chased away, and he said to himself, "One has to bow; one has to please!" That's what he had done; he had obeyed the rich young fellow; "because one is born poor, he is placed under obligation and subjection to these richly born people. Are they then better than we? And why were they created better than we?"

There was something vicious rearing up in him, something that his grandmother would be grieved at. He thought of her. "Poor Grandmother! You have also known what poverty is. Why has God permitted that?" And he felt anger in his heart, and yet at the same time he was conscious of having sinned in thoughts and words against the good God. He was

grieved to think he had lost his child's mind; and his faith returned, as wholesome and rich as before. Happy Peer!

A week later a letter came from Grandmother. She wrote in the only way she could, mixing up big letters and small letters, but all her heart's love was in everything, big and small, that concerned Peer:

My own sweet, blessed boy:

I am thinking of you; I am longing for you, and so is your mother. She is getting along well; she takes washing. And the merchant's Felix came up to see us yesterday, with a greeting from you. You had both been at the Dean's ball, and you had been such a gentleman; but that you will always be, and make your old grandmother and your hardworking mother happy. She has something to tell you about Miss Frandsen.

And then followed a postscript from Peer's mother:

Miss Frandsen is going to be married, the old thing. The bookbinder, Herr Hof, has been appointed court bookbinder, in accordance with his petition. He has a great new sign, "Court Bookbinder Hof." And she will become Madam Hof. It is an old love that does not rust, my sweet boy.

YOUR MOTHER

Second Postscript: Grandmother has knitted you six pairs of woolen socks; you will get them at the first opportunity. I am also sending you a pork pie, your favorite dish. I know that you never get pork at Herr Gabriel's, since his wife is so afraid of what I have difficulty in spelling - "trichines." You must not believe in these, but just go ahead and eat.

YOUR OWN MOTHER

Peer read the letter, and it made him happy. Felix was so good; what a great injustice he had done him! They had separated at the Dean's without saying good-by to each other.

"Felix is better than I," said Peer.

VIII

In a quiet life, one day slips into the next, and month quickly follows month. Peer was already in the second year of his stay at Herr Gabriel's, who with great earnestness and determination, though Madam called it obstinacy, insisted that he should not again on the stage.

Peer received from the singing master, who monthly paid the stipend for his instruction and support, a serious reminder not to think of the stage as long as he was placed there. And he obeyed; but his thoughts frequently traveled to the theater at the capital - they carried him, as if by magic, onto the stage there, where he was to have appeared as a great singer. Now his voice was gone, and it did not return, which often deeply grieved him. Who could comfort him? Neither Herr Gabriel nor Madam, but our Lord surely could. Consolation comes to us in many ways. Peer found it in sleep; he was indeed a Lucky Peer.

One night he dreamed that it was Whitsunday, and he was out in the beautiful green forest, where the sun shone through the branches and where all the ground was covered with anemones and primrose. Then the cuckoo began, "Cuckoo!" "How many years shall I live?" asked Peer, for one always asks the cuckoo that, the first time in the year one hears it cuckoo; and the cuckoo answered, "Cuckoo!" but no more; it was silent.

"Shall I live only one more year?" asked Peer. "That is really too little. Be so good as to cuckoo again!" Then the bird began again, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Yes, and it went on without stopping, and Peer cuckooed with it, as realistically as if he, too, were a cuckoo; but his notes were stronger and clearer. All the songbirds joined in the warbling. Peer sang their

songs, but far more beautifully. He had all the clear voice of his childhood, and rejoiced in song; he was so happy at heart. And then he awoke, but with the assurance that the "soundboard" was still in him, that his voice still lived and, some bright Whitsun morning, would burst forth in all its freshness; and so he slept, happy in this assurance.

But in none of the following days, weeks, or months did he have any feeling of his voice returning.

Every bit of news he could get of the theater at the capital was a true feast for his soul; it was spiritual bread to him. Crumbs are also bread, and he received crumbs thankfully - the smallest bits of news.

There was a flax dealer's family living near the Gabriels'. The mother, a highly respectable housewife, lively and laughing, but without any acquaintance or knowledge of the theater, had been at the capital for the first time and was delighted with everything there, even with the people, who had laughed at all she had said, she assured - and that was very likely.

"Were you at the theater also?" asked Peer.

"That I was," replied the flax dealer's wife. "How I steamed! You should have seen me sit and steam in that heat!"

"But what did you see? What play?"

"I will tell you that," she said. "I shall give you the whole play. I was there twice. The first evening it was a talking play. Out came the princess - 'Ahbe, dahbe! Abe, dabe!' - how she could talk! Next came a man - 'Ahbe, dahbe! Abe, dabe!' And then down fell Madam. Now they began again. The prince - 'Ahbe, dahbe! Abe, dabe!' Then down fell Madam. She fell down five times that evening. The second time I was there, it was all singing - 'Ahbe, dahbe! Abe, dabe!' And then down fell Madam again. It so happened that a countrywoman was sitting next to me; she had never been in the theater, and thought the show was all over; but I, who now knew all about it, said that when I was there last, Madam fell down five times. The singing evening she only did it three times. Yes, there you have both the plays, as true to life as I saw them."

Was it tragedy she had seen, since she said that Madam always fell down? Then it dawned on Peer what she meant. The great theater curtain that fell between the acts had a large female figure painted on it, a Muse with the comic and the tragic masks. This was the Madam who fell down. That had been the real comedy; what they had said and sung had been only "Ahbe, dahbe! Abe, dabe!" to the flax dealer's wife; but it had been a great pleasure, and so it had been to Peer, too, and not less to Madam Gabriel, who had heard this recital of the plays. She had sat with an expression of astonishment and a consciousness of mental superiority, for the pharmacist had said that she, as the nurse, had "carried" Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. "Down fell the Madam," as explained by Peer, afterward became a witty byword in the house every time a child, a cup, or one or another piece of furniture fell on the floor in the house.

"That is the way proverbs and familiar sayings are created," said Herr Gabriel, who carried everything into the sphere of learning.

New Year's Eve, at the stroke of twelve, the Gabriels and their boarders stood, each with a glass of punch, the only one Herr Gabriel drank the whole year, because punch is bad for a weak stomach. They drank a toast, "Skaal," to the new year, and counted the strokes of the clock, "One, two - " to the twelfth stroke. "Down fell the Madam!" they said.

The new year rolled up and rolled along. By Whitsuntide, Peer had been two years in the house.

IX

Two years were gone, but the voice had not returned. How would the future be for our

young friend?

He could always be a teacher in a school, opined Herr Gabriel; there was a livelihood in that, though nothing to be married on; however, that hadn't entered Peer's mind, no matter how large a place in his heart the pharmacist's daughter had.

"Be a teacher!" said Madam Gabriel; "a schoolmaster! Then you'll be the most boring individual on earth, just like my Gabriel. No, you were born for the theater. Be the greatest actor in the world; that is something more than being a teacher."

An actor! Yes, that was the goal.

He mentioned this in a letter to the singing master; he told of his longing and his hope. He longed most eagerly for the great city, where his mother and grandmother lived; he had not seen them for two long years. The distance was only one hundred and twenty miles; by fast train, he could be there in six hours. Why had they not seen one another? That is easily explained. On his departure, Peer had given his promise to stay where he was being sent and not to think of a visit. His mother was busy enough with her washing and ironing; yet she had often thought of making the great journey, even if it would cost a good deal of money, but this never materialized. Grandmother had a horror of railways; to travel by rail was to tempt the Lord. Nothing could induce her to travel by steam; she was an old woman, and she was not going to travel until she traveled up to our Lord.

That she said in May, but in June the old woman would travel, and all alone, the one hundred and twenty long miles, to the strange town, to strange people, and all to get to Peer. It would be a big occasion, yet the most dismal one that could occur to Mother and Grandmother.

The cuckoo had said "Cuckoo!" without end when Peer had asked it the second time, "How many years shall I live?" His health and spirits were good, and the future looked bright. He had received a delightful letter from his fatherly friend, the singing master. Peer was to go home, and they would see what could be done for him - what course he should take now that his voice was still gone.

"Appear as Romeo!" said Madam Gabriel. "Now you are old enough for the lover's part and have some flesh on your bones. You don't need to use make-up."

"Be Romeo!" said the pharmacist and the pharmacist's daughter.

Many thoughts went through his head and heart. But "Nobody knows what tomorrow will bring."

He sat down in the garden that stretched out to the meadow. It was evening, and there was moonlight. His cheeks burned; his blood was on

fire; the air brought a delightful coolness. Over the moor hung a mist that rose and sank and made him think of the dance of the elfin maidens. Then into his mind came the old ballad about Knight Olaf, who rode out to ask the guests to his wedding, but was stopped by the elfin maidens, who drew him into their dance and play and thereby caused his death. It was a piece of folklore, an old poem. The moonlight and the mist over the moor formed pictures of it this evening.

Peer was soon in a state of half dreaming, looking out upon it all. The bushes seemed to have shapes of both humans and beasts; they stood motionless, while the mist rose like a great waving veil. Peer had seen something like this in a ballet at the theater, when elfin maidens were represented whirling and waying with veils of gauze; but here it was far more charming and more wonderful. A stage as large as this, no theater could have; none had so clear an air, so shining a moonlight.

Right in front in the mist, there distinctly appeared a female shape; the one became three, and the three became many; hand in hand they danced; they were floating girls. The air

bore them along to the hedge where Peer stood. They nodded to him; they spoke; it was like the sound of silver bells. They danced into the garden about him; they enclosed him in their circle. Without thought, he danced with them, but not their dance. He whirled about, as in the unforgettable vampire dance, but he didn't think of that; he really didn't think at all; he was completely overwhelmed by all the magnificent beauty he saw about him.

The moor was a sea, so deep and dark blue, with water lilies that were bright with all conceivable colors. Dancing over the waves, they carried him upon their veil to the opposite shore, where the old viking burial mound had thrown aside its grassy turf and risen into a castle of clouds, but the clouds were of marble. Flowering trees of gold and costly stones twined about the mighty blocks of marble; each flower was a brilliantly colored bird that sang with a human voice. It was like a choir of thousands and thousands of happy children. Was it heaven, or was it Elfin Hill?

The castle walls moved; they glided toward each other. They closed about him. He was inside, and the world of man was outside. He then felt anguish, a strange fear, as never before. There was no exit to be found, but from the floor way up to the roof, and from all the walls, there smiled at him lovely young girls; they were so lifelike to look at, and yet he thought: Are they but paintings? He wanted to speak to them, but his tongue found no words; his speech was completely gone; not a sound came from his lips. Then he threw himself upon the earth, more miserable than he had ever been.

One of the elfin maidens approached him; surely she meant well, for she had taken the shape he would most like to see; she looked like the

pharmacist's daughter; he was almost ready to believe that it was she, but soon he saw that she was hollow in back and had only a beautiful front - open in the back, with nothing at all inside.

"One hour here is a hundred years outside," she said. "You have already been here a whole hour. Everyone you know and love outside these walls is dead. Stay with us! Yes, stay you must, or the walls will squeeze you until the blood flows from your brow!

And the walls trembled, and the air became like that of a glowing bake oven. He found his voice.

"O Lord, O Lord, have You forsaken me?" he cried from the depths of his soul.

Then Grandmother stood beside him. She took him in her arms; she kissed his brow; she kissed his mouth.

"My own sweet little one!" she said. "Our Lord will not forsake you; He forsakes none of us, not even the greatest sinner. God be praised and honored for all eternity!"

And she brought forth her psalmbook, the same one from which she and Peer had sung on many a Sunday. How her voice rang! How full were her tones! All the elfin maidens laid their heads down for a well-needed rest. Peer sang with Grandmother, as before he had sung every Sunday; how strange and powerful, yet how soft, his voice was all at once! The walls of the castle moved; they became clouds and mist. Grandmother walked with him out of the hill into the tall grass, where the glowworms gleamed and the moon shone. But his feet were so tired now he could not move them; he sank down on the turf; it was the softest bed; there he rested well and awoke to the sound of a psalm.

Grandmother sat beside him, sat by his bed in the little chamber in Herr Gabriel's house. The fever was over; health and life had returned. He had been deathly ill. They had found him in a faint on that evening down in the garden; a violent fever had followed. The doctor had thought that he would not get up from it, but would die, and they had written to his mother about it. She and Grandmother had wanted to, and felt they must, go to him; both had not been able to leave, and so the old grandmother had gone, and gone by the railway. "That I would only do for Peer," she said. "I did it in God's name; otherwise I would

have had to believe that I flew with the evil ones on a broomstick on Midsummer Eve!"

X

The journey home was made with a glad and light heart. Grandmother deeply thanked our Lord that Peer was to outlive her. She had delightful traveling companions in the railway carriage - the pharmacist and his daughter; they talked about Peer, and loved Peer as if they were of the same family. He was to become a great actor, said the pharmacist. His voice had now returned, too, and there was a fortune in such a throat as his.

What a pleasure it was to the grandmother to hear such words! She lived on them; she believed them thoroughly. And then they arrived at the station in the capital, where the mother met her.

"God be praised for the railway!" said Grandmother, "and be praised, too, that I quite forgot I was on it! I owe that to these splendid people." And she pressed the hands of the pharmacist and his daughter. "The railway is a blessed discovery when one is through with it! One is in God's hands!"

And then she talked of her sweet boy, who was out of all danger, and who lived with well-to-do people, who kept two servant girls and a manservant. Peer was like a son in the house, and on the same footing with two children of distinguished families, one of whom was a dean's son. The grandmother had lodged at the post inn; it was terribly expensive, but then she had been invited to Madam Gabriel's; there she had stayed five days, and they were simply wonderful people, particularly the wife; she had urged her to drink punch, splendidly made but strong.

With God's help, Peer would be strong enough to come home to the capital in a month.

"He must have become very elegant and spoiled," said the mother.

"He will not feel at home here in the garret. I am very happy that the singing master has invited him to stay with him. and yet," cried the mother, "it is awfully sad that one should be so poor that one's child cannot live in his own home!"

"Don't say those words to Peer!" said Grandmother. "You don't understand him as I do." "But he must have food and drink, no matter how fine he has grown, and he shall not go hungry so long as I can move my hands. Madam Hof has told me that he can eat his dinner twice a week with her, now that she is well off. She has known both prosperity and hard times. She has told me herself that one evening, in the box at the theater where the old danseuses have a place, she felt sick. The whole day long she had only had water and a caraway-seed bun, and she was ill from hunger, and very faint. 'Water! water!' cried the others. 'No! Some food!' she begged. 'Food!' She needed something nourishing, and had not the least need of water. Now she has her own larder and a wellspread table."

Peer was still one hundred and twenty miles away, but happy in the thought that he would soon be in the city, and at the theater, with all his dear old friends, whom now he would know how to value. Happiness sang and resounded within him and all about him; there was sunshine everywhere, in this happy time of youth, the time of hope and expectation. Every day he grew stronger; his good spirits and his color returned. But Madam Gabriel became very moved as the time for departure drew near.

"You are on your way to greatness; and there will be many temptations, for you are handsome - that you have become in our house. You are natural, just as I, and that will help when temptations come. One must not be too sensitive or unruly - sensitive like Queen Dagmar, who on Sunday laced her silk sleeves and then had pangs of conscience over such a minor thing; it should take more than that to affect one. I would never have grieved as Lucretia did. What did she stab herself for? She was pure and honest; she knew that, and everybody in the town knew that. What could she do about the misfortune which I won't talk about but which you at your age understand perfectly well? So she gave

out a shriek and the dagger! That wasn't necessary at all. I would not have done it, and neither would you; we are both natural people; one should be natural at all times, and that you will continue to be in your artistic career. How happy I shall be to read about you in the papers! Perhaps sometime you will come to our little town and appear as Romeo, but I shall not be the nurse then. I shall sit in the parquet and enjoy myself."

Madam had a lot of washing and ironing done the week he went away, so Peer could go home with a clean wardrobe, as he had had on his arrival there. She drew a new, strong ribbon through his amber heart; that was the only thing she wanted as a "remembrance souvenir," but she did not get it.

From Herr Gabriel he received a French lexicon, the one he had used during his school hours, and it had marginal notes in Herr Gabriel's own hand. Madam Gabriel gave him roses and quaking grass. The roses would wither, but the grass would keep all winter if it wasn't put into the water but was kept in a dry place. And she wrote a quotation from Goethe on a kind of album leaf: Umgang mit Frauen ist das Element guter Sitten. She gave a translation of it: "Companionship with women is the foundation of good manners. Goethe."

"He was a great man!" she said. "If he had only not written Faust, for I don't understand it. Gabriel says so, too."

Young Madsen presented Peer with a not badly done drawing he had made of Herr Gabriel hanging from the gallows, with a birch rod in his hand, and the inscription, "A great actor's first conductor on the road of science." Primus, the Dean's son, gave him a new pair of slippers, which the Deaness herself had made, but so large that Primus could not fill them for a year or two yet. Upon the soles was written in ink, "A reminder of a sorrowing friend. Primus."

Herr Gabriel's entire household accompanied Peer to the train.

"It shall not be said that you left us sans adieu!" said Madam, and she kissed him at the railway station.

"I am not bashful!" she said. "When one does not do a thing secretly, one can do anything!"

The signal whistle blew - young Madsen and Primus shouted hurrahs; the "small stuff" joined in with them; Madam dried her eyes and waved with her pocket handkerchief; Herr Gabriel said only the word, "Vale!"

The villages and stations flew by. Were the people in them as happy as Peer? He thought of that, praised his good fortune, and thought of the invisible golden apple that Grandmother had seen lying in his hand When he was a child. He thought of his lucky find in the gutter and, above all, of his new-found voice and of the knowledge he had now acquired. He had become altogether another person. He sang inwardly with happiness; it took great self-control for him to keep from singing aloud in the car.

Now the towers of the city appeared, and the buildings began to show themselves. The train reached the station. There stood Mother and Grandmother, and someone with them, Madam Hof, well bound, Court Bookbinder Hof's wife, born Frandsen. Neither in want nor in prosperity did she forget her friends. She had to kiss him as his mother and his grandmother did.

"Hof could not come with me," she said; "he is home at work, binding a set of collected works for the King's private library. You have your good luck, and I have mine. I have my Hof and my own fireside corner with a rocking chair. Twice a week you are to eat with us. You will see my life at home; it is a complete ballet!"

Mother and Grandmother hardly had an opportunity to talk to Peer, but they looked at him,

and their eyes shone with delight. Then he had to take a cab to get to his new home at the singing master's. They laughed and they cried.

"What a wonderful man he is!" said Grandmother.

"He still has such a kind face, just as when he went away," said Mother; "and that he will keep in the theater."

The cab stopped at the singing master's door, but the master was out; his old servant opened the door and showed Peer up to his room, where there were portraits of composers on the walls and a white plaster bust stood gleaming on the stove. The old man, a little dull, but trustworthiness itself, showed him the drawers in the bureau and hooks for him to hang his clothes on, and said he was very willing to shine his boots. Then the singing master arrived and welcomed Peer with a hearty handshake.

"This is the apartment!" he said. "Make yourself at home. You may use my piano in the living room. Tomorrow we will hear how your voice is. This is our castle warden, our housekeeper." And he nodded to the old servant. "All is in order. Carl Maria von Weber, on the stove there, has been whitened in honor of your coming; he was terribly dirty. But it isn't Weber that's up there, after all; it is Mozart. Where did he come from?"

"It is the old Weber," said the servant; "I carried him myself to the plasterer, and I brought him home again this morning."

"But this is a bust of Mozart, and not a bust of Weber."

"Pardon me, sir," said the servant; "it is the old Weber, who has been cleaned. The master does not recognize him now that he has been whitened." The plasterer could verify that.

But at the plasterer's he got the answer that Weber had been broken to pieces, and so he had given him Mozart instead; it was all the same on a stove.

The first day Peer was not to sing or play, but when our young friend came into the parlor, where the piano stood, and the opera Joseph lay open upon it, he sang "My Fourteenth Spring," and sang with a voice that was as clear as a bell. There was something so sincere about it, so innocent, and yet so strong and full. The singing master's eyes were wet with tears. "That's the way it should be," he said, "and it will be even better. Now we shall close the piano. You need to rest."

"But I have promised my mother and grandmother to visit them

tonight." And he hurried away. The setting sun shone over the home of his childhood; the bits of glass in the wall sparkled; it was like a diamond castle. Mother and Grandmother were waiting for him in the garret, a good many steps up, but he flew up, three stairs at a time, reached the door, and was received with kisses and embraces.

It was clean and tidy there in the little room. There stood the stove, the old bear, and the chest of drawers with the hidden treasure from his hobby-horse days; on the walls hung the three familiar pictures, the King's portrait, a picture of our Lord, and Father's silhouette, cut out of black paper. It was an excellent side view of him, said Mother, but it would have been more like him if the paper had been white and red, for that he was. A wonderful man! And Peer was the very picture of him.

There was much to talk about, much to tell. They were to have a headcheese, and Madam Hof had promised to visit them later in the evening.

"But how is it that those two old people, Hof and Miss Frandsen, ever thought of getting married?" asked Peer.

"It has been in their thoughts these many years," said Mother. "You know, of course, that he was married. Well, he did it, they say, to irritate Miss Frandsen, who looked down on him when she was in her high and mighty state. His wife was wealthy, but she was very

old, but lively, and on crutches! She could not die; he was waiting for it. It would not have surprised me if, like the man in the story, he had every Sunday put the old lady out in the open air, so our Lord could see her and remember to send for her."

"Miss Frandsen sat quietly by and waited," said Grandmother. "I never believed she would attain this. But last year Madam Hof died, and so Frandsen came to be the wife in the house."

At that moment in came Madam Hof.

"We were talking about you," said Grandmother; "we were talking about your patience and reward."

"Yes," said Madam Hof. "It did not come in my youth, but one is always young enough, when one's health is good, says my Hof. He has the most charming flashes of wit. We were old, fine works, he says, both in one volume, and with a gilt top. I am so happy with my Hof and my corner by the fireside. A porcelain stove! There a fire is started in the evening, and it keeps warm all the next day. It is such a joy. It is as in the ballet of Circe's island. Do you remember me as Circe?"

"Yes, you were charming!" said Grandmother. "But how a person can change!" That was not at all said impolitely, and was not so taken. Then came the headcheese and the tea.

The next morning Peer paid a visit to the merchant's. The lady met him, pressed his hand, and asked him to take a seat by her. During their conversation he expressed his great gratitude; he knew that the merchant was his secret benefactor. The lady did not know it. "But it is like my husband," she said. "It is not worth talking about."

The merchant was almost angry when Peer mentioned this. "You are on the wrong track altogether," he said, as he closed the conversation and walked away.

Felix was a student and was to have a diplomatic career.

"My husband calls it madness," said the lady. "I have no opinion. Providence takes care of such things."

Felix did not show himself, for he was taking a lesson at his fencing master's.

At home Peer told how he had thanked the merchant, but that he would not receive this thanks.

"Who told you that he was, what you call him, your benefactor?" asked the singing master.

"My mother and my grandmother did," answered Peer.

"Well, then it must be he."

"You know about it?" said Peer.

"I know, but you will not find out from me. And from now on, we shall sing an hour here at home every morning."

XI

Once a week there was quartet music. Ears, soul, and thought were filled with the grand musical poems of Beethoven and Mozart. It had been a long time since Peer had heard good and well-played music. It was as if a kiss of fire traveled down his spine and shot through all his nerves. His eyes filled with tears. Every musical evening here at home was a festive evening to him, which made a deeper impression upon him than any opera at the theater, where something always disturbs one or imperfections are revealed. Sometimes the words do not come out right; they are so smoothed down in the singing that they are as intelligible to a Chinese as to a Greenlander; and sometimes the effect is weakened by

faults in dramatic expression, and by a full voice sinking in places to the power of a music box or drawling out false tones. Lack of truthfulness in stage settings and costumes also is to be observed. All this was absent from the quartet. The music poems rose in all their grandeur; costly hangings decorated the walls in the concert room; here he was in the world of music, which its masters had created.

One evening, Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony was given by a great orchestra in the big public music hall. It was the andante movement, "the scene by the brook," that particularly, and with a strange power, stirred and excited our young friend. It carried him into the living, fresh woods; the lark and the nightingale rejoiced, and the cuckoo sang there. What beauty of nature; what a well spring of refreshment there was! From this hour he knew within himself that it was the picturesque music, in which nature was reflected and the emotions of human hearts were set forth, that struck deepest into his soul. Beethoven and Haydn became his favorite composers.

He often spoke with the singing master about this, and with each conversation the two became closer friends. How rich in knowledge this man was, as inexhaustible as Mimir's well. Peer listened to him; just as eagerly as he had to Grandmother's fairy tales and stories as a little boy, he now listened to those of the world of music, and came to know what the forest and the sea told, what sounds in the old giant mounds, what every bird sings with its bill, and what the flower silently exhales in fragrance.

The hour devoted to his singing lesson every morning was an hour of true delight for master and pupil; every little song was sung with freshness, expression, and simplicity; most charmingly did he sing the Schubert series of Travel Songs. Both the melodies and the words were heard to their full advantage; they blended together; they exalted and illumined one another, as is fitting. Peer was undeniably a dramatic singer. His ability showed progress each month, each week, day by day.

Our young friend grew in a wholesome, happy way, knowing no want or sorrow. His was a rich and wonderful life, with a future full of blessings before him. His trust in mankind was never deceived; he had a child's soul and a man's endurance, and everywhere he was received with gentle eyes and a kind welcome. Day by day the relations between him and the singing master grew more heartfelt and confidential; the two were like an elder and a younger brother, and the younger had all the fervor and warmth of a young heart, which was understood and returned in full measure by the elder.

The singing master's personality was characterized by a southern ardor, and one saw at once that this man could hate vehemently or love passionately, and, fortunately, this last governed in him. He was, moreover, so situated by a fortune his father had left him that he did not need to work, unless it interested and pleased him to do so. Secretly he did a great deal of good in a sensible way, but didn't want people to thank him or to talk about it.

"If I have done anything," he said, "it was because I could and should have done it. It was my duty."

His old servant, "our warden," as he called him in jest, talked only with half a voice when he gave expression to his opinion about the master of the house. "I know what he has given away and done during years and days, and yet I don't know the half! The King ought to give him a star to wear on his breast. But he would not wear it; he would be furious, if I know him, should he be honored for his kind deeds. He is happy, more so than the rest of us, in whatever faith he has. He is just like a man out of the Bible."

And to that the old fellow gave additional emphasis, as if Peer could have some doubt.

He felt and understood well that the singing master was a true Christian in good deeds, an example for everyone; yet the man never went to church, and when Peer one day mentioned that the following Sunday he was going with his mother and his grandmother to our "Lord's table" and asked if the singing master ever did the same, the answer was,

"No!" It seemed as if he wanted to say something more, as if, indeed, he had something to confide to Peer, but nothing was said.

One evening he read aloud from the newspaper about the beneficence of a couple of men, and that led him to speak of good deeds and their reward.

"When one does not think of it, it is sure to come. The reward for good deeds is like dates that are spoken of in the Talmud; they ripen late and then are sweet."

"Talmud?" asked Peer. "What sort of book is that?"

"A book," was the answer, "from which more than one seed of thought has been implanted in Christianity."

"Who wrote that book?"

"Wise men in the earliest times, wise men in various nations and religions. Here wisdom is preserved in a few words, as in Solomon's Proverbs. What kernels of truth! One reads here that men round about the whole earth, in all the centuries, have always been the same. 'Your friend has a friend, and your friend's friend has a friend; be discreet in what you say!' is found here. It is a piece of wisdom for all times. 'No one can jump over his own shadow!' is here, too, and, 'Wear shoes when you walk over thorns!' You ought to read this book. You will find in it the proof of culture more clearly than you find it in the layers of the earth. For me, as a Jew, it is, moreover, and inheritance from my fathers."

"Jew?" said Peer. "Are you a Jew?"

"Did you not know that? How strange that we two should not have spoken of it before today!"

Mother and Grandmother knew nothing about it, either; they had never thought anything about it, but always had known that the singing master was an honorable, wonderful man. It was through God's guidance that Peer had met him on his way; next to our Lord he owed him all his good fortune.

And now the mother divulged a secret that she had carried faithfully a few days only and that, under the pledge of secrecy, had been told her by the merchant's wife. The singing master must never know that this was revealed; it was he who had paid for Peer's support and education at Herr Gabriel's. From the evening when; at the merchant's house, he had heard Peer sing the ballet Samson, he alone had been his real friend and benefactor, but in secret.

XII

Madam Hof was expecting Peer at her house, and now he arrived there.

"Now you will meet my Hof," she said, "and you will meet my fireside corner. I never dreamed of this when I danced in Circe and The Rose Elf in Provence. Indeed, there are not many now who think of that ballet and of little Frandsen. Sic transit gloria in the moon! - that's what my Hof, who is a witty fellow, calls it in Latin, and he uses that phrase when I talk about my time of glory. He likes to poke fun at me, but he does it with a good heart."

The "fireside corner" was an inviting room with a low ceiling, a carpet on the floor, and portraits suitable for a bookbinder to have. There were pictures of Gutenberg, and of Franklin, of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Molière, and the two blind poets, Homer and Ossian. Lowest down hung one, enclosed in glass and a broad frame, of a danseuse, cut out of paper, with great gold spangles on a dress of gauze, the right leg lifted toward heaven, and with a verse written beneath:

*Who captures all hearts by her dancing?
Who wears her wreath of art entrancing?
Miss Emilie Frandsen!*

It was written by Hof, who wrote charming verse, especially comic verse. He had clipped the picture out himself and pasted and sewed it before he had married his first wife. For many years it had lain in a drawer; now it was displayed here in the poet picture gallery - "my fireside corner," as Madam Hof called her little room. Here Peer and Hof were introduced to each other.

"Isn't he a wonderful man?" she said to Peer. "To me he is just the most wonderful."

"Yes, on Sunday, when I am well bound in my new clothes," said Herr Hof.

"You are wonderful without any binding," she said, and then she tipped her head down as if she realized that she had spoken a little too childishly for one of her age.

"Old love does not rust," said Herr Hof. "An old house on fire burns down to the ground."

"It is as with the phoenix bird," said Madam Hof; "one rises up young again. Here is my paradise. I don't care to be any other place - except for an hour or so at your mother's and grandmother's."

"And at your sister's," said Herr Hof.

"No, Angel Hof; that is no longer a paradise. I must tell you, Peer, they live in small circumstances, and amid big complications. One doesn't know what he dares say in that house. One doesn't dare mention the word 'darky,' for the eldest daughter is engaged to one who has some Negro blood in him. One doesn't dare say 'hunchback,' for that one of the children is. One doesn't dare talk about 'deficit' - my brother-in-law has been involved in such a mishap. One doesn't even dare say that he has been driving in the wood; wood has an ugly sound, for Wood was the name of the fellow who broke his engagement with the youngest daughter. I don't like to go out and sit and keep my mouth shut. If I don't dare talk, I want to be in my own house and sit in my fireside corner. Were it not too sinful, as they say, I would gladly ask our Lord to let us live as long as my fireside corner holds out, for here one grows better. Here is my paradise, and this my Hof has given me."

"She has a gold mill in her mouth," he said.

"And you have gold grains in your heart," she said.

*Grind, grind what the bag will hold.
Emilie is as pure as gold!*

he said, as she tickled him under the chin.

"He wrote that verse at this very moment! It's good enough to be printed!"

"Yes, and handsomely bound!" he said.

That's how these two old folks amused each other.

A year passed before Peer began to study a role at the theater. He chose Joseph, but he exchanged it for the role of George Brown in the opera The White Lady. He quickly learned the words and music, and from Walter Scott's novel, which had furnished the material for the opera, he obtained a clear, full picture of the young, spirited officer who visits his native hills and comes to his ancestral castle without knowing it; an old song awakens recollections of his childhood; luck is with him, and he wins a castle and a wife.

What he read became like something he himself had lived - a chapter of his own life's story. The richly melodious music was entirely in keeping. A long, long time passed before the first rehearsals began. The singing master did not think that there was any hurry for him to make his appearance, but finally the day to start arrived. He was not merely a singer; he was an actor, and his whole personality was thrown into the role. The chorus and the orchestra applauded him loudly at the outset, and the opening night was looked forward to with the greatest expectation.

"One can be a great actor in a dressing gown at home," said a good-natured companion, "can be very great by daylight, but only so-so before the footlights in a packed house. Time will tell."

Peer had no fear, but had a burning desire for the eventful evening. The singing master, on the contrary, was extremely nervous. Peer's mother had not the courage to go to the theater; she would be ill with fear for her dear boy. Grandmother was sick and must stay at home, the doctor had said; but the faithful friend, Madam Hof, promised to bring news the very same evening of how it all went. She should and would be at the theater, even if she were dying.

How long that evening was! How the three or four hours stretched into eternity! Grandmother sang a psalm and prayed with Mother to the good God for their little Peer, that he might this evening also be Lucky Peer. The hands of the clock moved slowly.

"Now Peer is beginning," they said. "Now he is in the middle. Now he has finished." The mother and grandmother looked at each other, but they didn't say another word.

In the streets there was the rumbling of carriages; people were driving home from the theater. The two women looked down from the window; the people who were passing talked in loud voices; they had come from the theater; what they knew would bring either gladness or sadness up into the garret of the merchant's house.

At last someone came up the stairs. Madam Hof burst in, followed by her husband. She flung herself about the neck of the mother and grandmother, but didn't say a word. She wept and sobbed.

"Lord God!" said Mother and Grandmother. "How did everything go for Peer?"

"Let me weep!" said Madam Hof, who was so moved, so overcome. "I cannot bear it. Ah, you dear people, you cannot bear it, either!" And her tears streamed down.

"Have they hissed him off?" cried Mother.

"No, not that!" said Madam Hof. "They have - oh, that I should live to see it!"

Then both Mother and Grandmother wept.

"Be calm, Emilie," said Herr Hof. "Peer has conquered! He has triumphed! They clapped so much that the house nearly tumbled down! I can still feel it in my hands. It was one storm of applause from the first row to the gallery. The entire royal family clapped, too. Really, it was what one may call a redletter day in the annals of the theater. It was more than talent - it was genius"

"Yes, genius!" said Madam Hof; "those are my words. God bless you, Hof, because you said them for me! You good people, never would I have believed that one could both sing and act like that, though I have lived through a theater's whole history." She cried again; Mother and Grandmother laughed, while tears still ran down their cheeks.

"Now sleep well on that," said Herr Hof. "Come along, Emilie. Good night, good night!"

They left the garret room and two happy people there. These two were not alone long. The door opened, and Peer, who hadn't promised to come before the next forenoon, stood in the room. He well knew how the old people had followed him in their thoughts, how ignorant, too, they still must be of his success, and when driving by the house with the singing master, he had stopped outside; with the light still burning up in the garret, he had felt he must go to them.

"Splendid, glorious, superb! All went well!" he exclaimed jubilantly, and kissed his mother and his grandmother. The singing master nodded with a beaming face and pressed their hands.

"And now he must go home and have some rest," he said. And the late visit was over.

"Our Father in heaven, how gracious and good You are!" said these two poor women. They talked far into the night about Peer. Everywhere in the great city people talked about him - the young, handsome, wonderful singer. Lucky Peer had gone that far.

XIII

With great fanfare, the morning paper told of the debut as something out of the ordinary, the drama critic reserving his privilege of expressing his opinion in a following issue. The merchant invited Peer and the singing master to a grand dinner. It was an observance - a testimony of his and his wife's interest in the young man, who had been born in the house, in the same year and on the very same day as their own son.

The merchant made a beautiful speech and proposed a toast to the singing master, the man who had found and polished this "precious stone," a name one of the prominent papers had called Peer. Felix sat by his side and was the soul of gaiety and affection. After dinner he brought out his own cigars; they were better than the merchant's. "He can afford to get them," said the latter; "he has a rich father." Peer did not smoke - a great fault, but one which could be remedied easily enough.

"We must be friends," said Felix. "You have become the lion of the town! All the young ladies, and the old ones, too, for that matter, you have taken by storm. You are lucky with everything, I envy you, especially in that you can go in and out over there at the theater, among all the little girls."

To Peer that did not seem anything very worthy of envy.

He received a letter from Madam Gabriel. She was in a state of ecstasy over the splendid accounts in the papers of his debut and over what he would become as an artist. She and the girls had drunk a toast to him with punch. Herr Gabriel also had a share in his honor, and was quite sure that he, beyond most others, could pronounce foreign words correctly. The pharmacist ran about town and reminded everyone that it was at their little theater they had first seen and admired his talent, which now for the first time was recognized in the capital. "The pharmacist's daughter would surely be irritated," added Madam, "now that he could propose to baronesses and countesses." The pharmacist's daughter had been in too much of a hurry and given in too soon, for a month earlier she had become betrothed to the fat Councilor. The banns had been published, and they were to be married on the twentieth of the month.

It was just the twentieth of the month when Peer received this letter. He felt as if he had been pierced through the heart. At that moment it became clear to him that, during all the vacillation of his soul, she had been his steadfast thought. He cared more for her than anyone else in the world. Tears came into his eyes; he crumpled the letter in his hand. It was the first great grief of heart he had known since he had heard, with Mother and Grandmother, that his father had fallen in the war. He thought that all happiness was gone, that his future would be empty and sorrowful. The sunlight no longer beamed from his youthful face; the sunshine was put out in his heart.

"He doesn't look well," said Mother and Grandmother. "It is the hardwork at the theater."

They could both see that he was not the same as before, and the singing master saw it, too.

"What is the matter?" he said. "May I not know what troubles you?"

At that his cheeks turned red, his tears flowed afresh, and he told him about his sorrow, his loss.

"I loved her so deeply!" he said. "Only now, when it is too late, is it really clear to me!"

"Poor, grieved friend! I understand you so well. Weep freely, and as soon as you can, hold onto the thought that whatever happens in the world happens for the best. I, too, have

known and felt what you now are feeling. I, like you, once loved a girl; she was intelligent, pretty, and fascinating; she was to be my wife. I could offer her good circumstances, and she cared for me; but one condition had to be met before the marriage; her parents required it, and she required it: I must become a Christian!"

"And that you would not?"

"I could not. One cannot, with an honest conscience, jump from one religion to another without sinning either against the one he takes leave of or the one he steps into. "

"Have you no faith?" said Peer.

"I have the God of my fathers. He is a light for my feet and my understanding." They sat in silence for a while. Then the hands of the singing master touched the keys, and he played an old folk song. Neither of them sang

the words; perhaps each was deep in his own thoughts.

Madam Gabriel's letter was not read again. She never dreamed what sorrow it had brought.

A few days later a letter arrived from Herr Gabriel; he also wished to offer his congratulations and "a commission," which perhaps was the real reason for the letter. He asked Peer to buy a little porcelain figure, namely, Amor and Hymen, Love and Marriage. "It is all sold out here in town," he wrote, "but can easily be bought in the capital. The money is enclosed with this. Send the thing as quickly as possible; it is a wedding present for the Councilor, at whose marriage I was with my wife." Moreover, Peer was told: "Young Madsen never will become a student; he has left the house and has painted the walls with embarrassing remarks against the family. A bad subject, that young Madsen. Sunt pueri pueri, pueri puerilia tractant! i.e., 'Boys are boys, and boys do boyish things.' I translate it since you are not a Latin scholar." And with that Herr Gabriel's letter closed.

XIV

Frequently, when Peer sat at the piano, there sounded tones in it that stirred within his breast and head. The tones rose into melodies, which now and then carried words along with them; they could not be separated from the melodies. Thus several little poems that were rhythmic and full of feeling came into being. They were sung in a subdued voice. It was as if they, shy and afraid of being heard, were gliding along in loneliness.

*Everything passes, like the wind that blows;
There is nothing lasting here.
From your cheek will fade the rose,
As well as smile and tear.*

*Why be burdened with pain and grief?
Away with your trouble and sorrow,
For everything goes, fades like the leaf;
Time and man pass with the morrow.*

*All vanishes, everything goes,
Your youth, your hope, and your friend.
Everything passes, like the wind that blows,
Never to return, only to end!*

"Where did you get that song and melody?" asked the singing master, who by chance saw the words and music written down.

"It came of itself, that and all these. They will never fly farther into the world."

"A downcast spirit sets out flowers, too," said the singing master, "but a downcast spirit dares not give advice. Now we must set sail and steer toward your next debut. What do you say to Hamlet, the melancholy young Prince of Denmark?"

"I know Shakespeare's tragedy," said Peer, "but not yet Thomas' opera."

"The opera should be called Ophelia," said the singing master. In the tragedy, Shakespeare has made the Queen tell us of Ophelia's death, and this has become the high light in the musical rendering. One sees before his eyes, and feels in the tones, what before we could learn only from the narrative of the Queen.

*There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress . . .*

The opera brings all this before our eyes. We see Ophelia; she comes out playing, dancing, singing the old ballad about the mermaid who entices men down beneath the river, and while she sings and plucks the flowers the same tones are heard from the depths of the stream; they sound in the voices of the chorus alluringly from the deep water; she listens; she laughs; she draws near the brink; she holds onto the overhanging willow and stoops to pluck the white water lilies; gently she glides out onto them and, singing, reclines on their broad leaves; she swings with them and is carried by the stream out into the deep, where,

like the broken flower, she sinks in the moonlight, with the mermaid's melody welling forth about her.

In this great scene it is as if Hamlet, his mother, his uncle, and the dead, avenging king were created only to make the frame for this exquisite picture. We do not get Shakespeare's Hamlet, just as in the opera Faust we do not get Goethe's Faust. The speculative is no material for music. It is the love element in both these tragedies that elevates them to musical poems.

The opera of Hamlet was presented on the stage. The actress who had Ophelia's part was admirable, and the death scene was very effective, while Hamlet himself received sympathetic greatness on this evening, a fullness of character that grew with each scene in which he appeared. Furthermore, people were astonished at the extent of the singer's voice, at the freshness shown in the high as well as in the deep tones, and that he, with and equal brilliancy of power, could sing Hamlet and George Brown.

In most of the Italian operas the singing parts are each like a canvas on which the gifted singer or songstress puts his or her soul and genius, and with the varied, wavy colors creates the form the poem requires. How much more glorious they must be able to reveal themselves when the music is composed and carried out through thought centered upon the character; and this Gounod and Thomas have understood.

That evening at the theater, the character of Hamlet was given flesh and blood, and he raised himself into the position of the leading personage in the opera. Unforgettable was

the night scene on the ramparts, where Hamlet, for the first time, sees his father's ghost - the scene in the castle, before the stage that has been erected, where he flings out the words that are drops of poison - the terrible meeting with his mother, where the father's ghost stands with avengeful attitude before the son - and finally, what power in his voice, what tones, at Ophelia's death! She was the sympathetic lotus flower upon the deep, dark sea; its waves rolled with a mighty force into the soul of the spectators. That evening Hamlet became the leading figure. The triumph was complete. "From whom did that boy get it?" said the merchant's rich wife, as she thought of Peer's parents and his grandmother up in the garret. The father had been a warehouseman, good and honorable, and had fallen as a soldier on the field of honor - the mother, a washerwoman - but that does not give the son culture; he had grown up in a charity school - and how much knowledge could a provincial schoolmaster give him in a period of two years?

"It is genius!" said the merchant. "Genius - that is born of God's grace."

"Most certainly!" said his wife. And she folded her hands as she talked to Peer. "Do you really feel humble in your heart at what you have received? Heaven has been inconceivably gracious to you! Everything is given you. You do not know how gripping your Hamlet is! You simply cannot imagine it! I have heard that many great poets do not themselves know the glory of what they have given; the philosophers must reveal it to them. Where did you get your conception of Hamlet?"

"I have thought about the character, have read a great deal of what has been written about Shakespeare's work, and then on the stage I have tried to put life into the person and his surroundings. I give my share, and our Lord gives the rest."

"Our Lord!" she said with a half-reproving look. "Do not use that name in such a manner! He gave you ability, but you surely do not believe that He has anything to do with the theater and opera!"

"Yes, most certainly!" said Peer courageously. "He has a pulpit there, too, and most people listen more there than in church!"

She shook her head. "God is with us in everything good and beautiful, but let us be careful not to take His name in vain. It is a gift of grace for one to be a great artist, but it is still better to be a good Christian." Felix, she felt, would never have compared the theater and the church before her, and she was glad.

"Now you have fallen out with Mamma!" said Felix, laughing.

"That was so far from my thoughts!"

"Don't trouble yourself about it. You will get into her good graces again next Sunday when you go to church. Stand outside her pew, and look up to the right, for there, in the balcony pew, is a little face which is worth looking at - the window baroness' charming daughter. This is a well-meant bit of advice, and I'll give you some more. You cannot live where you are now. Move into a larger apartment - with a decent stairway! - or, if you won't leave the singing master, then let him live in better style. He has means enough, and you have a pretty good income. You must give a party, too, an evening supper. I could give it myself, and will do so, but you can invite a few of the little dancing girls. You're a lucky fellow! But I believe, heaven help me, that you don't yet understand how to be a young man!"

Peer did understand it exactly, in his own way. With his full, warm, young heart, he was in love with art; she was his bride; she returned his love and lifted him into gladness and sunshine. The depression that had

crushed him evaporated soon; gentle eyes looked upon him, and everyone met him in a friendly and cordial manner. The amber heart, which he still wore constantly on his breast, where Grandmother once had hung it, was certainly a talisman; yes, so he thought, for he was not quite free from superstition - a childlike faith, one may call it. Every nature that

has genius in it has something of this, and looks to and believes in its star. Grandmother had shown him the power that lay in the heart how it could draw things to itself. His dream had shown him a tree growing out of his amber heart, bursting through ceiling and roof, and bearing thousands of hearts of silver and gold; that surely meant that in the heart, in his own warm heart, lay the power of his art, whereby he had won and still would win thousands upon thousands of hearts.

Between him and Felix there was undoubtedly a kind of sympathy, different as they were from each other. Peer assumed that the difference between them lay in that Felix, as the rich man's son, had grown up amid temptations and desires and could afford to taste them.

He had, on the contrary, been more fortunately placed as a poor man's son.

Both of these two children of the house had since gained prominence. Felix would soon be a gentleman in waiting to the royal court, and that is the first step toward becoming a chamberlain; then one has a gold key behind. Peer, always lucky, already had the gold key of genius in his hand, though it was invisible - the key that opens all the treasures of the earth, and all hearts, too.

XV

It was still wintertime. The sleigh bells jingled, and the clouds carried snowflakes in them, but wherever a sunbeam burst through them, it announced that spring was near. In the young heart there was a fragrance and a song that flowed out in picturesque tones and found expression in words:

*The snow is still upon the earth;
O'er the lake, skaters race in mirth.
The trees are frost-rimmed, full of crows;
But tomorrow perhaps the winter goes.
The sun breaks through the sky of gray;
Spring is in town; it's like a summer day.
The willow's woolen gloves fall from the tree.
Strike up, musicians, for a merry spree!
Sing, little birds! All voices blend!
For now the winter has come to an end!*

*Oh, to be kissed by the warming sun!
Come, pluck violets and primrose - what fun!
It's as if the forest its breath were holding,
While in the night each leaf is unfolding.
The cuckoos sing; you know their song.
Hear them sing that your life will be long.
The world is young, so be young with the young!
With thankful heart and merry tongue,
Sing of spring! All voices blend!
For never does youth come to an end!*

*Never does youth come to an end!
Life on earth is a magic blend
Of sunshine and storm, joy and pain.
Within our hearts a world was lain;
It vanishes not like a shooting star,
For man is the image of God afar.
God and nature remain ever young.
Teach us, O Spring, the song you've long sung.*

*Every little bird sings; all voices blend -
For never does youth come to an end!*

"That is a complete musical painting," said the singing master, "and well adapted for chorus and orchestra. It is the best yet of your emotional compositions. You certainly must learn thorough bass, although it is not your destiny to be a composer."

Young music friends soon introduced the song at a great concert, where it attracted attention but aroused no expectations. Our young friend's career was open before him. His greatness and importance lay not only in the sympathetic tones of his voice, but in his remarkable dramatic talent as well; this he had shown as George Brown and as Hamlet. He very much preferred the regular opera to the light opera. It was contrary to his sound, natural sense to go from song to talk and back

to song.

"It is," he said, "as if one were going from marble steps onto wooden steps, sometimes even onto mere henroosts, and then back onto marble.

The whole poem should live and breathe in its passage through tones."

The music of the future, as the new movement in opera is called, and for which Wagner, in particular, is a banner-bearer, had a defender and admirer in our young friend. He found here characters so clearly drawn, passages so full of thought, and the entire action characterized by forward movement, without any standstill or frequent recurrence of melodies. "It is most unnatural to include those long arias."

"Yes," said the singing master. "But how they, in the works of most of the great masters, stand out as a most important part of the whole! That is as it should and must be. If the lyric has a home in any place, it is in the opera." And he mentioned in Don Giovanni, Don Ottavio's aria, "Tears, cease your flowing." "How much it is like a beautiful lake in the woods, by whose bank one rests and enjoys the music that streams through it! I bow to the ingenuity that lies in this new musical movement, but I do not dance with you before that golden calf. Either it is not your heart's real opinion that you express, or else it is not quite clear to you."

"I will appear in one of Wagner's operas," said our young friend. "If I cannot express my meaning in words, I will do so by my singing and acting!"

The choice made was Lohengrin, the young mysterious knight who, in the boat drawn by the swan, glides over the river Scheldt to fight for Elsa of Brabant. Who had ever sung and acted so well the first song of the meeting, the love song in the bridal chamber, and the song of farewell when the Holy Grail's white dove hovers about the young knight who came, conquered, and vanished? This evening was, if possible, another step forward in the artistic greatness and significance of our young friend; and to the singing master it was a step forward in the recognition of the music of the future.

"Under certain conditions," he said.

XVI

At the great yearly exhibition of paintings, Peer and Felix met one day, before the portrait of a pretty young lady, the daughter of the widow baroness, as the mother was generally called; the latter's salon was the rendezvous for the world of distinction and for everyone of importance in art and science. The young baroness was in her sixteenth year, an innocent, beautiful child. The picture was a good likeness and done with artistic skill.

"Step into the hall near by," said Felix. "There stands the young beauty herself with her mother."

They stood engrossed in viewing a painting of characterization. It represented a field

where two young married people were riding on the same horse, holding onto one another. The chief figure, however, was a young monk who was looking at the two happy travelers. There was a sorrowful, dreamy look on the young man's face; one could read his thoughts in it, the story of his life - an aim missed, great happiness lost! Happiness in human love he had not won.

The elder baroness saw Felix, who respectfully greeted her and the beautiful daughter, Peer showed the same customary politeness. The widow baroness knew him immediately from having seen him on the stage, and after speaking to Felix she said some friendly, obliging words to Peer as she pressed his hand.

"I and my daughter belong to your admirers."

How perfectly beautiful the young girl was at this moment! She looked with her gentle, clear eyes almost gratefully at him.

"I see in my house," said the widow baroness, "so many of the most distinguished artists. We common people stand in need of a spiritual airing. You will be heartily welcome. Our young diplomat," she pointed to Felix, "will bring you along the first time, and afterward I hope that you will find the way yourself."

She smiled at him. The young girl reached out her hand naturally and cordially, as if they had long known each other.

Late in the autumn, on a cold, sleety evening, the two young men went to the Baroness' home, the two born in the rich merchant's house. It was weather for driving and not walking, for the rich man's son and the first singer on the stage. Nevertheless, they walked, well wrapped up, with galoshes on their feet and Bedouin caps on their heads.

It was like entering a complete fairyland to come from the raw air into this home that displayed such luxury and good taste. In the vestibule, before the carpeted stairs, there was a great display of flowers among bushes and fan palms. A little fountain splashed water into a basin, which was surrounded by tall callas.

The great salon was magnificently lighted, and a large part of the company had already gathered. It soon became very crowded. People stepped on silk trains and laces, amid the humming, sonorous mosaic of conversation, which, on the whole, was the least worth while of all the

splendor there.

Had Peer been a vain fellow, which he was not, he could have imagined that it was a party for him, so cordial was the reception he received from the lady of the house and the beaming daughter. Young and elderly ladies, yes, and gentlemen, too, paid him many compliments.

There was music. A young author read a well-written poem. There was singing, and tactfulness was shown in that no one urged our young and honored singer to make the affair complete. The lady of the house was a most attentive hostess, brilliant and genial, in that elegant salon.

That was his introduction into the great world, and our young friend was soon also one of the select group in the choice family circle. The singing master shook his head and laughed.

"How young you are, dear friend," he said, "that it can please you to be with these people! In a way they are good enough, but they look down on us plain citizens. For some of them it is only a matter of vanity, an amusement, and for others a sort of sign of exclusive culture, when they receive into their circle artists and the lions of the day. These belong in the salon much as the flowers in a vase; they decorate and then they are thrown away."

"How harsh and unreasonable!" said Peer. "You do not know these people; you do not want to know them!"

"No," answered the singing master. "I don't feel at home among them, nor do you, either. That they all remember and know. They pat you and look at you just as they pat and look at a race horse that is expected to win a wager. You belong to another race than they. They will let you go when you are no longer in the fashion. Don't you understand that? You are not proud enough. You are vain, and you show that by seeking these people's company."

"How very differently you would talk and judge," said Peer, "if you knew the widow baroness and a few of my friends there."

"I shall not come to know them," said the singing master.

"When is the engagement to be announced?" asked Felix one day. "Is it the mother or the daughter?" And he laughed. "Don't take the daughter, for then you'll have all the young nobility against you, and I, too, shall be your enemy, and the deadliest one!"

"What do you mean?" asked Peer.

"You are indeed the favorite. You can go in and out at all hours. With the mother, you'd get money and belong to a good family."

"Stop your joking," said Peer. "There is nothing amusing to me in what you say."

"It is not supposed to be amusing," said Felix. "It is a most serious matter, for you surely wouldn't let her grace sit and weep and be a double widow!"

"Leave the Baroness out of this conversation," said Peer. "Make fun over me if you want to, but over me alone, and I will answer you!"

"No one will believe that it is a love match on your side," continued Felix. "She is a little outside of the line of beauty. True, one does not live on intellect alone!"

"I thought you had more refinement and good sense, " said Peer, "than to talk so disrespectfully of a lady you should esteem and whose house you visit, and I can't bear to listen to you any longer!"

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Felix. "Do you want to fight?"

"I know that you have learned that, and I have not, but I can learn!" And he left Felix.

A couple of days later the two children of the house met again, the son from the first floor and the son from the garret. Felix talked to Peer as if no break had come between them. He answered courteously, but curtly, too.

"What is the matter now!" said Felix. "We two were a little irritable recently, but one must have his little joke, which doesn't necessarily mean one is flippant. I don't like to bear a grudge, so let us forgive and forget."

"Can you forgive yourself the manner in which you spoke of a lady to whom we both owe great respect?"

"I spoke very frankly!" said Felix. "In high society one can also talk with a razor edge, but no one takes that very seriously; it is the salt for the tasteless, everyday fish dinner, as the poet calls it. We are all just a little spiteful. You can also let a drop fall, my friend, a little drop of innocence that smarts!"

Soon they were seen arm in arm again. Felix well knew that more than one pretty young lady who otherwise would have passed him by without looking at him now noticed him because he was walking with the "idol of the stage." The footlights always cast a glamour over the theater's hero and lover, and it still shines about him when he shows himself on the street, in daylight, though it is more or less extinguished then. Most of the artists of the

stage are like swans; one should see them in their element, not on the paving stones or the public promenade. There are exceptions, however, and to these belonged our young friend. His personality off the stage never disturbed the conception one had of him as George Brown, or Hamlet, or Lohengrin. To many a young heart these poetical and musical figures were the artist himself and rose to the exaltation of their ideal. He knew that this was the case and found a sort of pleasure in it. He was happy in his art and with the talents he possessed; still a shadow would come over the happy young face, and then from the piano would sound the melody to the words:

*All vanishes, everything goes,
Your youth, your hope, and your friend.
Everything passes, like the wind that blows,
Never to return, only to end!*

"How mournful!" said the widow baroness. "You have good fortune in full measure. I know no one who is as fortunate as you."

"Call no one fortunate before he is in his grave, the wise Solon said," he replied, and smiled through his seriousness. "It would be wrong, a sin, if I were not thankful and happy in my heart. I am that. I am thankful for what is entrusted to me, but I myself set a different value on this than others do. It is a beautiful piece of fireworks that soars forth and then goes out! So it is with the stage actor's work. The everlasting shining stars may be forgotten for the meteors of a moment, but when these are extinguished, there is no lasting trace of them other than what may be found in old records. A new generation does not know and cannot picture to itself those who delighted their grandfathers from the stage; the youth of today perhaps applauds the luster of brass as fervently and loudly as the old folks once did the luster of pure gold. Far more fortunately placed than the performing artist are the poet, the sculptor, the painter, and the composer. They often experience trying conditions in the struggle of life and miss the merited appreciation, while those who exhibit their works live in luxury and in arrogance born of idolatry.

"Let the mob stand and admire the bright-colored cloud and forget the sun; the cloud vanishes, but the sun shines and beams for new generations."

He sat at the piano and improvised with a richness of thought and a power such as he never before had shown. "Wonderfully beautiful!" broke in the widow baroness. "It was as if I heard the story of a whole lifetime. You gave your heart's song in the music."

"I thought of the Thousand and One Nights," said the young girl, "of the lamp of fortune, of Aladdin!" And she looked at him with innocent,

tearful eyes.

"Aladdin!" he repeated.

That evening was the turning point in his life. A new chapter surely began.

What happened to him during this fast-moving year? His fresh color left his cheeks, though his eyes shone far more clearly than before. He passed sleepless nights, but not in wild orgies, in revels and drinking, as so many artists. He became less talkative, but more cheerful.

"What is it that fills you so?" said his friend, the singing master. "You do not confide everything to me!"

"I think of how fortunate I am!" he replied. "I think of the poor boy! I think of - Aladdin!"

XVII

Measured by the expectations of a poor-born child, Peer now led a prosperous, pleasant life. He was so well of that, as Felix once had said, he could give a big party for his friends.

He thought of it, and thought of his two earliest friends, his mother and his Grandmother. For them and himself he provided a festival.

It was wonderful spring weather, and the two old people were going to drive with him out of town and see a little country place that the singing master had recently bought. As he was seating himself in the carriage, a woman came along humbly clad, about thirty years old; she had a note recommending her, signed by Madam Hof.

"Don't you know me?" she said. "Little Curlyhead, they used to call me. The curls are gone; there is so much that is gone; but there are still good people left. We two have appeared together in the ballet. You have become better off than I. You have become a great man. I am now separated from two husbands and no longer at the theater."

The note requested a sewing machine for her.

"In what ballet have we two performed together?" asked Peer.

"In the Tyrant of Padua," she replied. "We were both pages, in blue velvet and berets. Don't you remember little Malle Knallerup? I walked right behind you in the procession."

"And stepped on the side of my foot!" said Peer, laughing.

"Did I?" she said. "Then I took too long a step. But you have gone far ahead of me. You have understood how to use your head instead of your legs." And she looked coquettishly at him with her melancholy face, quite sure she had paid him a witty compliment. Peer was a generous fellow. She should have the sewing machine, he promised. Little Malle had indeed been one of those who in particular had driven him out of the ballet into a more fortunate career.

He was soon outside the merchant's house, and he then ascended the stairs to his mother's and his grandmother's. They were in their best clothes, and by chance they had a visit from Madam Hof, who was at once invited to drive with them; whereupon she had quite a struggle with herself, which ended in her sending a note to Herr Hof to inform him that she had accepted the invitation.

"Such fine greetings Peer gets!" she said.

"How stylishly we are driving!" said Mother.

"And in such a beautiful, comfortable carriage," said Grandmother.

Near the town, close to the royal park, stood a cozy little house, surrounded by vines and roses, hazels, and fruit trees. Here the carriage stopped. This was the country house. They were received by an old woman well acquainted with Mother and Grandmother; she had often helped them with their washing and ironing.

The garden was inspected, and the house was inspected. There was one particularly charming thing - a little glasshouse with beautiful flowers in it. It was connected with the sitting room; the sliding door between could be pushed right into the wall.

"That is just like a coulisse on the stage," said Madam Hof. "It moves by hand. And one can sit here just as in a bird cage, with chickweed all about. It is called a winter garden."

The bedroom was equally delightful in its way. There were long, heavy curtains at the windows, soft carpets, and two armchairs so comfortable that Mother and Grandmother must try them.

"One would get very lazy sitting in them," said Mother.

"One loses his weight," said Madam Hof. "Indeed, here you two music people can rest comfortably after your theatrical labors. I have also known what they are! Yes, believe me, I can still dream of doing high kicks, and Hof does high kicks by my side! Is it not charming - 'two souls and one thought'! "

"The air is fresher here, and there is more room, than in the two small rooms up in the garret," said Peer with beaming eyes.

"That there is," said Mother. "Still, home is nice, too. There you were born, my sweet boy, and there I lived with your father."

"It is better here," said Grandmother. "Here you have a whole mansion.

I do not begrudge you and that noble man, the singing master, this home of peace."

"Then I do not begrudge you this, Grandmother, and you, my dear blessed mother! You two shall always live here, and not, as in town, walk up so many steps and be in such narrow and small quarters. You shall have a servant to help you and shall see me as often as in town. Are you happy about it? Are you content with it?"

"What is all this the boy stands here and says!" said Mother.

"The house, the garden - it's all yours, Mother, and yours, Grandmother! To be able to give you this is what I have striven for. My friend the singing master has faithfully helped me with getting it ready."

"What is all this you are saying, child!" exclaimed the mother. "You want to give us a gentleman's mansion! You sweet boy! Yes, you would do it if you could!"

"I am serious," he said. "The house is yours and Grandmother's." He kissed them both, and they burst into tears. Madam Hof shed just as many. "It is the happiest moment of my life!" exclaimed Peer, as he embraced all three of them.

And now they had to see everything all over again, since it was their own. They now had that beautiful little glasshouse in which to put their five or six pot plants from the garret roof. Instead of a little cupboard, they had here a great roomy pantry, and the kitchen was a complete, warm little chamber. The chimney had an oven and cooking stove; it looked like a great, shining flatiron, said Mother.

"Now you have a fireside corner just like I have!" said Madam Hof. "This is magnificent! You have attained all that people can attain on this earth, and you, too, my own, popular friend!"

"Not all!" said Peer.

"The little wife will come along!" said Madam Hof. "I have her already for you! I feel sure I know who she is! But I shall keep my mouth shut. You wonderful man! Isn't all this like a ballet!" She laughed with tears in her eyes, and so did Mother and Grandmother.

XVIII

To write the text and music for an opera, and be the interpreter of his own work on the stage, was a great and happy aim. Our young friend had a talent in common with Wagner, in that he could construct the dramatic poem himself; but did he, like Wagner, have the fullness of musical emotion to create a musical work of any significance?

Courage and doubt alternated in him. He could not dismiss this persistent thought of his. For years and days it had shone in his mind as a picture of fancy; now it was a possibility, his life's goal. Many free fancies were welcomed at the piano as birds of passage from that Land of Perhaps. The little ballads and the characteristic spring song gave promise of the still undiscovered land of tone. The widow baroness saw in them the sign of promise, as Columbus saw it in the fresh green weed that the currents of the sea bore toward him before he saw the land itself on the horizon.

Land was there! The child of fortune should reach it. A word thrown out was the seed of thought. She, the young, pretty, innocent girl, had spoken the word - Aladdin. Our young friend was a child of fortune like Aladdin; it shone within him.

With understanding and delight he read and reread the beautiful Oriental story. Soon it took dramatic form; scene after scene grew into words and music, and the more it grew, the richer the music thoughts became. At the close of the work it was as if the well of tone were now for the first time pierced, and all the abundant fresh water streamed forth. He then recomposed his work, and in stronger form, after months, arose the opera Aladdin.

No one knew of this work; no one had heard as much as a single bar of it, not even the most sympathetic of all his friends, the singing master. No one at the theater, when in the evening the young singer entranced his public with his voice and his masterful acting, had any idea that the young man who seemed so to live and breathe in his role lived far more intensely - yes, and for hours afterward lost himself in a mighty work of music that poured from his own soul.

The singing master had not heard a bar of the opera Aladdin before it was put on his table for examination, complete in notes and text. What judgement would be passed? Assuredly a strong and just one. The young composer passed from highest hope to the thought that the whole thing was only a self-delusion.

Two days passed by, and not a word was exchanged about this important matter. Finally, the singing master stood before him with the score in his hands, which he now knew. There was a peculiar seriousness spread over his face that did not indicate his thoughts.

"I had not expected this," he said. "I had not believed it of you. Indeed, I do not yet have a clear judgement, so I dare not express it. Here and there are faults in the instrumentation, faults that can easily be

corrected. There are single things, bold and novel, that one must hear under proper conditions. As there is in Wagner a certain influence of Carl Maria von Weber, so there is noticeable in you a breath of Haydn. That which is new in what you have given is still rather remote to me, and you yourself are too near for me to be the right judge. I would rather not judge. I will embrace you!" he burst out, beaming with happiness. "How have you been able to do this!" And he embraced him in his arms. "Happy man!"

A rumor soon spread through the city, via the newspapers and gossip, about the new opera by the popular young singer.

"He's a poor tailor who cannot put together a child's coat out of the scraps left over on his board," said one and another.

"Write the text, compose it, and sing it himself!" was also said. "That is a three-storied genius. But he really was born still higher - in a garret!"

"There are two at it, he and the singing master," they said. "Now they'll begin to beat the signal drum of the partnership of mutual admiration!"

The opera was given out for study. Those who took part would not give any opinion. "It shall not be said that it is judged from the theater," they remarked; and almost everyone put on a serious face that did not show any expectation.

"There are a good many horns in the piece," said a young trumpeter. "If only he doesn't run a horn into himself!"

"It has genius; it is brilliant, full of melody and character!" That was also said.

"Tomorrow at this time," said Peer, "the scaffold will be raised. The judgement is, perhaps, already passed."

"Some say that it is a masterpiece," said the singing master, "others, that it is a mere patchwork."

"And where lies the truth?"

"Truth!" said the singing master. "Yes, tell me where. Look at that star up there. Tell me

exactly where its place is. Shut one eye. Do you see it? Now look at it with the other only. The star has shifted its place. When each eye in the same person sees so differently, how differently must the great multitude see!" "Happen what may," said our young friend, "I must know my place in the world, understand what I can and must create, or give up."

The evening came, the evening of decision. A popular artist was to be exalted to a higher place or humiliated in his gigantic, vain effort.

Success or failure! The matter concerned the whole city. People stood all night in the street before the ticket office, to obtain seats. The house was crammed full. The ladies came with great bouquets; would they be carried home again or thrown at the victor's feet?

The widow baroness and the young, beautiful daughter sat in a box above the orchestra. There was a stir in the audience, a murmuring, a movement, which stopped at once as the leader of the orchestra took his place and the overture began.

Who does not remember Hanselt's piece, "Si l'oiseau j'étais," which is like a twittering of birds? This was somewhat similar; there were jubilant, playing children, happy child voices mingling; the cuckoo cuckooed with them; the thrush sang. It was the play and jubilation of the innocent child mind - the mind of Aladdin. Then a thunderstorm rolled in; Noureddin displayed his power; a flash of deadly lightning split the mountain. Gentle, beckoning tones followed; a sound came from the enchanted grotto, where the lamp shone in the petrified cavern, while the wings of mighty spirits brooded over it. Now, in the tones of a French horn, sounded a psalm, which was as gentle and soft as if it were coming from the mouth of a child; a single horn was heard, and then another; more and more were blended in the same tones and rose in fullness and power, as if they were the trumpets of the judgment day. The lamp was in Aladdin's hand, and then there swelled forth a sea of melody and grandeur such as only the ruler of spirits and the masters of music can create.

The curtain rolled up in a storm of applause that sounded like a fanfare under the conductor's baton. A grown-up, handsome boy was playing; he was so big and yet so innocent; it was Aladdin, who leaped about among the other boys. Grandmother would at once have said, "That is Peer as he played and jumped about between the stove and the chest of drawers at home in the garret. He is not a year older in his soul!"

With what faith and sincerity he sang the prayer Noureddin bade him offer before he stepped down into the rocky cavern to obtain the lamp! Was it the pure, religious melody or the innocence with which he sang that enchanted all the listeners? The applause would not cease.

It would have been a profane thing to have repeated the song. It was demanded, but it was not given. The curtain fell; the first act was over.

Every critic was speechless; people were overcome with gladness and, in their appreciation, were certain of enjoying the rest of the evening.

A few chords sounded from the orchestra, and the curtain rose. The strains of music, as in Gluck's *Armida* and Mozart's *Magic Flute*, arrested the attention of everyone as the scene was disclosed, the scene in which Aladdin stood in the wonderful garden. Soft, subdued music sounded from flowers and stones, from springs and deep caverns, different melodies blending in one great harmony. An air of spirits was heard in the chorus; it was now far off, now near, swelling in might and then dying away. Arising from this harmony, and supported by it, was the

song monologue of Aladdin - what one indeed calls a great aria, but so entirely in keeping with character and situation that it was a necessary dramatic part of the whole. The resonant, sympathetic voice, the intense music of the heart, subdued all listeners and seized them with a rapture that could not rise higher when he reached for the lamp of

fortune that was embraced by the song of the spirits.

Bouquets rained down from all sides; a carpet of living flowers was spread out before his feet.

What a moment of life for the young artist - the highest, the greatest! A mightier one could never again be granted him, he felt. A wreath of laurel touched his breast and fell down in front of him. He had seen from whose hand it had come. He saw the young girl in the box nearest the stage, the young baroness, rising like a spirit of beauty, loudly rejoicing over his triumph.

A fire rushed through him; his heart swelled as never before; he bowed, took the wreath, pressed it against his heart, and at the same moment fell backward. Fainted? Dead? What was it? The curtain fell.

"Dead!" resounded through the house. Dead in the moment of triumph, like Sophocles at the Olympian games, like Thorvaldsen in the theater during Beethoven's symphony. An artery in his heart had burst, and as by a flash of lightning his days here were ended, ended without pain, ended in an earthly triumph, in the fulfillment of his mission on earth. Lucky Peer! More fortunate than millions!