



A Story from the Sand-Dunes

Hans Christian Andersen

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Advanced
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This is a story from the sand-dunes or sand-hills of Jutland; though it does not begin in Jutland, the northern peninsula, but far away in the south, in Spain. The ocean is the high road between the nations—transport thyself thither in thought to sunny Spain. There it is warm and beautiful, there the fiery pomegranate blossoms flourish among the dark laurels; from the mountains a cool refreshing wind blows down, upon, and over the orange gardens, over the gorgeous Moorish halls with their golden cupolas and coloured walls: through the streets go children in procession, with candles and with waving flags, and over them, lofty and clear, rises the sky with its gleaming stars. There is a sound of song and of castagnettes, and youths and maidens join in the dance under the blooming acacias, while the mendicant sits upon the hewn marble stone, refreshing himself with the juicy melon, and dreamily enjoying life. The whole is like a glorious dream. And there was a newly married couple who completely gave themselves up to its charm; moreover, they possessed the good things of this life, health and cheerfulness of soul, riches and honour.

“We are as happy as it is possible to be,” exclaimed the young couple, from the depths of their hearts They had indeed but one step more to mount in the ladder of happiness, in the hope that God would give them a child; a son like them in form and in spirit.

The happy child would be welcomed with rejoicing, would be tended with all care and love, and enjoy every advantage that wealth and ease possessed by an influential family could give.

And the days went by like a glad festival.

“Life is a gracious gift of Providence, an almost inappreciable gift!” said the young wife, “and yet they tell us that fulness of joy is found only in the future life, for ever and ever. I cannot compass the thought.”

“And perhaps the thought arises from the arrogance of men,” said the husband. “It seems a great pride to believe that we shall live for ever, that we shall be as gods. Were these not the words of the serpent, the origin of falsehood?”

“Surely you do not doubt the future life?” exclaimed the young wife; and it seemed as if one of the first shadows flitted over the sunny heaven of her thoughts.

“Faith promises it, and the priests tells us so!” replied the man; “but amid all my happiness, I feel that it is arrogance to demand a continued happiness, another life after this. Has not so much been given us in this state of existence, that we ought to be, that we must be, contented with it?”

“Yes, it has been given to us,” said the young wife, “but to how many thousands is not this life one scene of hard trial? How many have been thrown into this world, as if only to suffer poverty and shame and sickness and misfortune? If there were no life after this, everything on earth would be too unequally distributed, and the Almighty would not be justice itself.”

“Yonder beggar,” replied the man, “has his joys which seem to him great, and which rejoice him as much as the king is rejoiced in the splendour of his palace. And then, do you not think that the beast of burden, which suffers blows and hunger, and works itself to death, suffers from its heavy fate? The dumb beast might likewise demand a future life, and declare the decree unjust that does not admit it into a higher place of creation.”

“He has said, ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions,’” replied the young wife: “heaven is immeasurable, as the love of our Maker is immeasurable. Even the dumb beast is His creature; and I firmly believe that no life will be lost, but that each will receive that amount of happiness which he can enjoy, and which is sufficient for him.”

“This world is sufficient for me!” said the man, and he threw his arms round his beautiful, amiable wife, and then smoked his cigarette on the open balcony, where the cool air was filled with the fragrance of oranges and

pinks. The sound of music and the clatter of castagnettes came up from the road, the stars gleamed above, and two eyes full of affection, the eyes of his wife, looked on him with the undying glance of love.

“Such a moment,” he said, “makes it worth while to be born, to fall, and to disappear!” and he smiled. The young wife raised her hand in mild reproach, and the shadow passed away from her world, and they were happy—quite happy.

Everything seemed to work together for them. They advanced in honour, in prosperity, and in joy. There was a change, indeed, but only a change of place; not in enjoyment of life and of happiness. The young man was sent by his sovereign as ambassador to the court of Russia. This was an honourable office, and his birth and his acquirements gave him a title to be thus honoured. He possessed a great fortune, and his wife had brought him wealth equal to his own, for she was the daughter of a rich and respected merchant. One of this merchant’s largest and finest ships was to be dispatched during that year to Stockholm, and it was arranged that the dear young people, the daughter and the son-in-law, should travel in it to St. Petersburg. And all the arrangements on board were princely—rich carpets for the feet, and silk and luxury on all sides.

In an old heroic song, “The King’s Son of England,” it says, “Moreover, he sailed in a gallant ship, and the anchor was gilded with ruddy gold, and each rope was woven through with silk,” And this ship involuntarily rose in the mind of him who saw the vessel from Spain, for here was the same pomp, and the same parting thought naturally arose—the thought:

“God grant that we all in joy
Once more may meet again.”

And the wind blew fairly seaward from the Spanish shore, and the parting was to be but a brief one, for in a few weeks the voyagers would reach their destination; but when they came out upon the high seas, the wind sank, the sea became calm and shining, the stars of heaven gleamed brightly, and they were festive evenings that were spent in the sumptuous cabin.

At length the voyagers began to wish for wind, for a favouring breeze; but the breeze would not blow, or, if it did arise, it was contrary. Thus weeks passed away, two full months; and then at last the fair wind blew—it blew from the south-west. The ship sailed on the high seas between Scotland and Jutland, and the wind increased just as in the old song of “The King’s Son of England.”

“And it blew a storm, and the rain came down,
And they found not land nor shelter,
And forth they threw their anchor of gold,
As the wind blew westward, toward Denmark.”

This all happened a long, long while ago. King Christian VII. then sat on the Danish throne, and he was still a young man. Much has happened since that time, much has changed or has been changed. Sea and moorland have been converted into green meadows, heath has become arable land, and in the shelter of the West Jute huts grow apple trees and rose bushes, though they certainly require to be sought for, as they bend beneath the sharp west wind. In Western Jutland one may go back in thought to the old times, farther back than the days when Christian VII. bore rule. As it did then, in Jutland, the brown heath now also extends for miles, with its “Hun’s Graves,” its aerial spectacles, and its crossing, sandy, uneven roads; westward, where large rivulets run into the bays, extend marshes and meadow land, girdled with lofty sand-hills, which, like a row of Alps, raise their peaked summits towards the sea, only broken by the high clayey ridges, from which the waves year by year bite out huge mouthfuls, so that the impending shores fall down as if by the shock of an earthquake. Thus it is there to-day, and thus it was many, many years ago, when the happy pair were sailing in the gorgeous ship.

It was in the last days of September, a Sunday, and sunny weather; the chiming of the church bells in the bay of Nissum was wafted along like a chain of sounds. The churches there are erected almost entirely of hewn boulder stones, each like a piece of rock; the North Sea might foam over them, and they would not be overthrown. Most of them are without steeples, and the bells are hung between two beams in the open air. The service was over, and the congregation thronged out into the churchyard, where then, as now, not a tree nor a bush was to be seen; not a single flower had been planted there, nor had a wreath been laid upon the graves. Rough mounds show where the dead had been buried, and rank grass, tossed by the wind, grows thickly over the whole churchyard. Here and there a grave had a monument to show, in the shape of a half-decayed block of wood rudely shaped into the form of a coffin, the said block having been brought from the forest of West

Jutland; but the forest of West Jutland is the wild sea itself, where the inhabitants find the hewn beams and planks and fragments which the breakers cast ashore. The wind and the sea fog soon destroy the wood. One of these blocks had been placed by loving hands on a child's grave, and one of the women, who had come out of the church, stepped towards it. She stood still in front of it, and let her glance rest on the discoloured memorial. A few moments afterwards her husband stepped up to her. Neither of them spoke a word, but he took her hand, and they wandered across the brown heath, over moor and meadow, towards the sand-hills; for a long time they thus walked silently side by side.

"That was a good sermon today," the man said at length. "If we had not God to look to, we should have nothing!"

"Yes," observed the woman, "He sends joy and sorrow, and He has a right to send them. Tomorrow our little boy would have been five years old, if we had been allowed to keep him."

"You will gain nothing by fretting, wife," said the man. "The boy is well provided for. He is there whither we pray to go."

And they said nothing more, but went forward to their house among the sand-hills. Suddenly, in front of one of the houses where the sea grass did not keep the sand down with its twining roots, there arose what appeared to be a column of smoke rising into the air. A gust of wind swept in among the hills, whirling the particles of sand high in the air. Another, and the strings of fish hung up to dry flapped and beat violently against the wall of the hut; and then all was still again, and the sun shone down hotly.

Man and wife stepped into the house. They had soon taken off their Sunday clothes, and emerging again, they hurried away over the dunes, which stood there like huge waves of sand suddenly arrested in their course, while the sandweeds and the dunegrass with its bluish stalks spread a changing colour over them. A few neighbours came up, and helped one another to draw the boats higher up on the sand. The wind now blew more sharply than before; it was cutting and cold: and when they went back over the sand-hills, sand and little pointed stones blew into their faces. The waves reared themselves up with their white crowns of foam, and the wind cut off their crests, flinging the foam far around.

The evening came on. In the air was a swelling roar, moaning and complaining like a troop of despairing

spirits, that sounded above the hoarse rolling of the sea; for the fisher's little hut was on the very margin. The sand rattled against the window panes, and every now and then came a violent gust of wind, that shook the house to its foundations. It was dark, but towards midnight the moon would rise.

The air became clearer, but the storm swept in all its gigantic force over the perturbed sea. The fisher people had long gone to bed, but in such weather there was no chance of closing an eye. Presently there was a knocking at the window, and the door was opened, and a voice said:

“There's a great ship fast stranded on the outermost reef.”

In a moment the fish people had sprung from their couch, and hastily arrayed themselves.

The moon had risen, it was light enough to make the surrounding objects visible, to those who could open their eyes for the blinding clouds of sand. The violence of the wind was terrible; and only by creeping forward between the gusts was it possible to pass among the sand-hills; and now the salt spray flew up from the sea like down, while the ocean foamed like a roaring cataract towards the beach. It required a practised eye to descry the vessel out in the offing. The vessel was a noble brig. The billows now lifted it over the reef, three or four cables' lengths out of the usual channel. It drove towards the land, struck against the second reef, and remained fixed.

To render assistance was impossible; the sea rolled fairly in upon the vessel, making a clean breach over her. Those on shore fancied they heard the cries of help from on board, and could plainly descry the busy useless efforts made by the stranded crew. Now a wave came rolling onward, falling like a rock upon the bowsprit, and tearing it from the brig. The stern was lifted high above the flood. Two people were seen to embrace and plunge together into the sea; in a moment more, and one of the largest waves that rolled towards the sand-hills threw a body upon the shore. It was a woman, and appeared quite dead, said the sailors; but some women thought they discerned signs of life in her, and the stranger was carried across the sand-hills into the fisherman's hut. How beautiful and fair she was! certainly she must be a great lady.

They laid her upon the humble bed that boasted not a yard of linen; but there was a woollen coverlet, and that would keep the occupant warm.

Life returned to her, but she was delirious, and knew nothing of what had happened, or where she was; and it

was better so, for everything she loved and valued lay buried in the sea. It was with her ship as with the vessel in the song of "The King's Son of England."

"Alas, it was a grief to see

How the gallant ship sank speedily."

Portions of wreck and fragments of wood drifted ashore, and they were all that remained of what had been the ship. The wind still drove howling over the coast. For a few moments the strange lady seemed to rest; but she awoke in pain, and cries of anguish and fear came from her lips. She opened her wonderfully beautiful eyes, and spoke a few words, but none understood her.

And behold, as a reward for the pain and sorrow she had undergone, she held in her arms a new-born child, the child that was to have rested upon a gorgeous couch, surrounded by silken curtains, in the sumptuous home. It was to have been welcomed with joy to a life rich in all the goods of the earth; and now Providence had caused it to be born in this humble retreat, and not even a kiss did it receive from its mother.

The fisher's wife laid the child upon the mother's bosom, and it rested on a heart that beat no more, for she was dead. The child who was to be nursed by wealth and fortune, was cast into the world, washed by the sea among the sand-hills, to partake the fate and heavy days of the poor. And here again comes into our mind the old song of the English king's son, in which mention is made of the customs prevalent at that time, when knights and squires plundered those who had been saved from shipwreck.

The ship had been stranded some distance south of Nissum Bay. The hard, inhuman days in which, as we have stated, the inhabitants of the Jutland shores did evil to the shipwrecked, were long past. Affection and sympathy and self-sacrifice for the unfortunate were to be found, as they are to be found in our own time, in many a brilliant example. The dying mother and the unfortunate child would have found succour and help wherever the wind blew them; but nowhere could they have found more earnest care than in the hut of the poor fisherwife; who had stood but yesterday, with a heavy heart, beside the grave which covered her child, which would have been five years old that day, if God had spared it to her.

No one knew who the dead stranger was, or could even form a conjecture. The pieces of wreck said nothing on the subject.

Into the rich house in Spain no tidings penetrated of the fate of the daughter and the son-in-law. They had not arrived at their destined post, and violent storms had raged during the past weeks. At last the verdict was given, "Foundered at sea—all lost."

But in the sand-hills near Hunsby, in the fisherman's hut, lived a little scion of the rich Spanish family.

Where Heaven sends food for two, a third can manage to make a meal, and in the depths of the sea is many a dish of fish for the hungry.

And they called the boy Jürgen.

"It must certainly be a Jewish child," the people said, "it looks so swarthy."

"It might be an Italian or a Spaniard," observed the clergyman.

But to the fisherwoman these three nations seemed all the same, and she consoled herself with the idea that the child was baptized as a Christian.

The boy thrived. The noble blood in his veins was warm, and he became strong on his homely fare. He grew apace in the humble house, and the Danish dialect spoken by the West Jutes became his language. The pomegranate seed from Spanish soil became a hardy plant on the coast of West Jutland. Such may be a man's fate! To this home he clung with the roots of his whole being. He was to have experience of cold and hunger, and the misfortunes and hardships that surrounded the humble; but he tasted also of the poor man's joys.

Childhood has sunny heights for all, whose memory gleams through the whole after life. The boy had many opportunities for pleasure and play. The whole coast, for miles and miles, was full of playthings; for it was a mosaic of pebbles, red as coral, yellow as amber, and others again white and rounded like birds' eggs; and all smoothed and prepared by the sea. Even the bleached fish skeletons, the water plants dried by the wind, seaweed, white, gleaming, and long linen-like bands, waving among the stones, all these seemed made to give pleasure and amusement to the eye and the thoughts; and the boy had an intelligent mind—many and great

faculties lay dormant in him. How readily he retained in his mind the stories and songs he heard, and how neat-handed he was! With stones and mussel shells he put together pictures and ships with which one could decorate the room; and he could cut out his thoughts wonderfully on a stick, his foster-mother said, though the boy was still so young and little! His voice sounded sweetly; every melody flowed at once from his lips. Many chords were attained in his heart which might have sounded out into the world, if he had been placed elsewhere than in the fisherman's hut by the North Sea.

One day another ship was stranded there. Among other things, a chest of rare flower bulbs floated ashore. Some were put into the cooking pots, for they were thought to be eatable, and others lay and shrivelled in the sand, but they did not accomplish their purpose, or unfold the richness of colour whose germ was within them. Would it be better with Jürgen? The flower bulbs had soon played their part, but he had still years of apprenticeship before him.

Neither he nor his friends remarked in what a solitary and uniform way one day succeeded another; for there was plenty to do and to see. The sea itself was a great lesson book, unfolding a new leaf every day, such as calm and storm, breakers and waifs. The visits to the church were festal visits. But among the festal visits in the fisherman's house, one was particularly distinguished. It was repeated twice in the year, and was, in fact, the visit of the brother of Jürgen's foster-mother, the eel breeder from Zjaltring, upon the neighbourhood of the "Bow Hill." He used to come in a cart painted red, and filled with eels. The cart was covered and locked like a box, and painted all over with blue and white tulips. It was drawn by two dun oxen, and Jürgen was allowed to guide them.

The eel breeder was a witty fellow, a merry guest, and brought a measure of brandy with him. Every one received a small glassful, or a cupful when there was a scarcity of glasses: even Jürgen had as much as a large thimbleful, that he might digest the fat eel, the eel breeder said, who always told the same story over again, and when his hearers laughed he immediately told it over again to the same audience. As, during his childhood, and even later, Jürgen used many expressions from this story of the eel breeder's, and made use of it in various ways, it is as well that we should listen to it too. Here it is:

"The eels went into the bay; and the mother-eel said to her daughters, who begged leave to go a little way up the bay, 'Don't go too far: the ugly eel spearer might come and snap you all up.' But they went too far; and of eight

daughters only three came back to the eel-mother, and these wept and said, 'We only went a little way before the door, and the ugly eel spearer came directly, and stabbed five of our party to death.' 'They'll come again,' said the mother-eel. 'Oh no,' exclaimed the daughters, 'for he skinned them, and cut them in two, and fried them.' 'Oh, they'll come again,' the mother-eel persisted. 'No,' replied the daughters, 'for he ate them up.' 'They'll come again,' repeated the mother-eel. 'But he drank brandy after them,' continued the daughters. 'Ah, then they'll never come back,' said the mother, and she burst out crying, 'It's the brandy that buries the eels.'

"And therefore," said the eel breeder, in conclusion, "it is always right to take brandy after eating eels."

the eel breeder's visit.

And this story was the tinsel thread, the most humorous recollection of Jürgen's life. He likewise wanted to go a little way outside the door, and up the bay—that is to say, out into the world in a ship; and his mother said, like the eel breeder, "There are so many bad people—eel spearkers!" But he wished to go a little way past the sand-hills, a little way into the dunes, and he succeeded in doing so. Four merry days, the happiest of his childhood, unrolled themselves, and the whole beauty and splendour of Jutland, all the joy and sunshine of his home, was concentrated in these. He was to go to a festival—though it was certainly a burial feast.

A wealthy relative of the fisherman's family had died. The farm lay deep in the country, eastward, and a point towards the north, as the saying is. Jürgen's foster-parents were to go, and he was to accompany them from the dunes, across heath and moor. They came to the green meadows where the river Skjærn rolls its course, the river of many eels, where mother-eels dwell with their daughters, who are caught and eaten up by wicked people. But men were said sometimes to have acted no better towards their own fellow men; for had not the knight, Sir Bugge, been murdered by wicked people? and though he was well spoken of, had he not wanted to kill the architect, as the legend tells us, who had built for him the castle, with the thick walls and tower, where Jürgen and his parents now stood, and where the river falls into the bay? The wall on the ramparts still remained, and red crumbling fragments lay strewn around. Here it was that Sir Bugge, after the architect had left him, said to one of his men, "Go thou after him, and say, 'Master, the tower shakes.' If he turns round, you are to kill him, and take from him the money I paid him; but if he does not turn round, let him depart in peace." The man obeyed, and the architect never turned round, but called back, "The tower does not shake in the least, but one day there will come a man from the west, in a blue cloak, who will cause it to shake!" And indeed so it chanced, a hundred years later; for the North Sea broke in, and the tower was cast down, but the

man who then possessed the castle, Prebjörn Gyldenstjerne, built a new castle higher up, at the end of the meadow, and that stands to this day, and is called Nörre Vosborg.

Past this castle went Jürgen and his foster-parents. They had told him its story during the long winter evenings, and now he saw the lordly castle, with its double moat, and trees, and bushes; the wall, covered with ferns, rose within the moat; but most beautiful of all were the lofty lime trees, which grew up to the highest windows, and filled the air with sweet fragrance. In a corner of the garden towards the north-west stood a great bush full of blossom like winter snow amid the summer's green: it was a juniper bush, the first that Jürgen had seen thus in bloom. He never forgot it, nor the lime tree: the child's soul treasured up these remembrances of beauty and fragrance to gladden the old man.

From Nörre Vosborg, where the juniper blossomed, the way went more easily; for they encountered other guests who were also bound for the burial, and were riding in waggons. Our travellers had to sit all together on a little box at the back of the waggon, but even this was preferable to walking, they thought. So they pursued their journey in the waggon across the rugged heath. The oxen which drew the vehicle slipped every now and then, where a patch of fresh grass appeared amid the heather. The sun shone warm, and it was wonderful to behold how in the far distance something like smoke seemed to be rising; and yet this smoke was clearer than the mist; it was transparent, and looked like rays of light rolling and dancing afar over the heath.

"That is Lokeman driving his sheep," said some one; and this was enough to excite the fancy of Jürgen. It seemed to him as if they were now going to enter fairyland, though everything was still real.

How quiet it was! Far and wide the heath extended around them like a beautiful carpet. The heather bloomed; the juniper bushes and the fresh oak saplings stood up like nosegays from the earth. An inviting place for a frolic, if it were not for the number of poisonous adders of which the travellers spoke, as they did also of the wolves which formerly infested the place, from which circumstance the region was still called the Wolfsborg region. The old man who guided the oxen related how, in the lifetime of his father, the horses had to sustain many a hard fight with the wild beasts that were now extinct; and how he himself, when he went out one morning to bring in the horses, had found one of them standing with its fore-feet on a wolf it had killed, after the savage beast had torn and lacerated the legs of the brave horse.

The journey over the heath and the deep sand was only too quickly accomplished. They stopped before the

house of mourning, where they found plenty of guests within and without. Waggon after waggon stood ranged in a row, and horses and oxen went out to crop the scanty pasture. Great sand-hills, like those at home in the North Sea, rose behind the house, and extended far and wide. How had they come here, miles into the interior of the land, and as large and high as those on the coast? The wind had lifted and carried them hither, and to them also a history was attached.

Psalms were sung, and a few of the old people shed tears; beyond this, the guests were cheerful enough, as it appeared to Jürgen, and there was plenty to eat and drink. Eels there were of the fattest, upon which brandy should be poured to bury them, as the eel breeder said; and certainly his maxim was here carried out.

Jürgen went to and fro in the house. On the third day he felt quite at home, like as in the fisherman's hut on the sand-hills where he had passed his early days. Here on the heath there was certainly an unheard-of wealth, for the flowers and blackberries and bilberries were to be found in plenty, so large and sweet, that when they were crushed beneath the tread of the passers by, the heath was coloured with their red juice.

Here was a Hun's Grave, and yonder another. Columns of smoke rose into the still air; it was a heath-fire, he was told, that shone so splendidly in the dark evening.

Now came the fourth day, and the funeral festivities were to conclude, and they were to go back from the land-dunes to the sand-dunes.

"Ours are the best," said the old fisherman, Jürgen's foster-father; "these have no strength."

And they spoke of the way in which the sand-dunes had come into the country, and it seemed all very intelligible. This was the explanation they gave:

A corpse had been found on the coast, and the peasants had buried it in the churchyard; and from that time the sand began to fly, and the sea broke in violently. A wise man in the parish advised them to open the grave and to look if the buried man was not lying sucking his thumb; for if so, he was a man of the sea, and the sea would not rest until it had got him back. So the grave was opened, and he really was found with his thumb in his mouth. So they laid him upon a cart and harnessed two oxen before it; and as if stung by an adder, the oxen ran away with the man of the sea over heath and moorland to the ocean; and then the sand ceased flying inland, but the hills that had been heaped up still remained there. All this Jürgen heard and treasured in his memory

from the happiest days of his childhood, the days of the burial feast. How glorious it was to get out into strange regions, and to see strange people! And he was to go farther still. He was not yet fourteen years old when he went out in a ship to see what the world could show him: bad weather, heavy seas, malice, and hard men—these were his experiences, for he became a ship boy. There were cold nights, and bad living, and blows to be endured; then he felt as if his noble Spanish blood boiled within him, and bitter wicked words seethed up to his lips; but it was better to gulp them down, though he felt as the eel must feel when it is flayed and cut up, and put into the frying-pan.

“I shall come again!” said a voice within him. He saw the Spanish coast, the native land of his parents. He even saw the town where they had lived in happiness and prosperity; but he knew nothing of his home or race, and his race knew just as little about him.

The poor ship boy was not allowed to land; but on the last day of their stay he managed to get ashore. There were several purchases to be made, and he was to carry them on board.

There stood Jürgen in his shabby clothes, which looked as if they had been washed in the ditch and dried in the chimney: for the first time he, the inhabitant of the dunes, saw a great city. How lofty the houses seemed, and how full of people were the streets! some pushing this way, some that—a perfect maelstrom of citizens and peasants, monks and soldiers—a calling and shouting, and jingling of bell-harnessed asses and mules, and the church bells chiming between song and sound, hammering and knocking, all going on at once. Every handicraft had its home in the basements of the houses or in the lanes; and the sun shone so hotly, and the air was so close, that one seemed to be in an oven full of beetles, cockchafers, bees, and flies, all humming and murmuring together. Jürgen hardly knew where he was or which way he went. Then he saw just in front of him the mighty portal of the cathedral; the lights were gleaming in the dark aisles, and a fragrance of incense was wafted towards him. Even the poorest beggar ventured up the steps into the temple. The sailor with whom Jürgen went took his way through the church; and Jürgen stood in the sanctuary. Coloured pictures gleamed from their golden ground. On the altar stood the figure of the Virgin with the child Jesus, surrounded by lights and flowers; priests in festive garb were chanting, and choir boys, beautifully attired, swung the silver censer. What splendour, what magnificence did he see here! It streamed through his soul and overpowered him; the church and the faith of his parents surrounded him, and touched a chord in his soul, so that the tears overflowed his eyes.

From the church they went to the market-place. Here a quantity of provisions were given him to carry. The way to the harbour was long, and, tired and overpowered by various emotions, he rested for a few moments before a splendid house, with marble pillars, statues, and broad staircases. Here he rested his burden against the wall. Then a liveried porter came out, lifted up a silver-headed cane, and drove him away—him, the grandson of the house. But no one there knew that, and he just as little as any one. And afterwards he went on board again, and there were hard words and cuffs, little sleep and much work; such were his experiences. They say that it is well to suffer in youth, if age brings something to make up for it.

His time of servitude on shipboard had expired, and the vessel lay once more at Ringkjöbing, in Jutland: he came ashore and went home to the sand-dunes by Hunsby; but his foster-mother had died while he was away on his voyage.

A hard winter followed that summer. Snowstorms swept over land and sea, and there was a difficulty in

getting about. How variously things were distributed in the world! here biting cold and snowstorms, while in the Spanish land there was burning sunshine and oppressive heat. And yet, when here at home there came a clear frosty day, and Jürgen saw the swans flying in numbers from the sea towards the land, and across to Vosborg, it appeared to him that people could breathe most freely here; and here too was a splendid summer! In imagination he saw the heath bloom and grow purple with rich juicy berries, and saw the elder trees and the lime trees at Vosborg in blossom. He determined to go there once more.

Spring came on, and the fishery began. Jürgen was an active assistant in this; he had grown in the last year, and was quick at work. He was full of life, he understood how to swim, to tread water, to turn over and tumble in the flood. They often warned him to beware of the troops of dogfish, which could seize the best swimmer, and draw him down, and devour him; but such was not Jürgen's fate.

At the neighbour's on the dune was a boy named Martin, with whom Jürgen was very friendly, and the two took service in the same ship to Norway, and also went together to Holland; and they had never had any quarrel; but a quarrel can easily come, for when a person is hot by nature, he often uses strong gestures, and that is what Jürgen did one day on board when they had a quarrel about nothing at all. They were sitting behind the cabin door, eating out of a delf plate which they had placed between them. Jürgen held his pocket-knife in his hand, and lifted it against Martin, and at the same time became ashy pale in the face, and his eyes had an ugly look. Martin only said,

"Ah! ha! you 're one of that sort, who are fond of using the knife!"

Hardly were the words spoken, when Jürgen's hand sank down. He answered not a syllable, but went on eating, and afterwards walked away to his work. When they were resting again, he stepped up to Martin, and said,

"You may hit me in the face! I have deserved it. But I feel as if I had a pot in me that boiled over."

"There let the thing rest," replied Martin; and after that they were almost doubly as good friends as before; and when afterwards they got back to the dunes and began telling their adventures, this was told among the rest; and Martin said that Jürgen was certainly passionate, but a good fellow for all that.

They were both young and strong, well-grown and stalwart; but Jürgen was the cleverer of the two.

In Norway the peasants go into the mountains, and lead out the cattle there to pasture. On the west coast of Jutland, huts have been erected among the sand-hills; they are built of pieces of wreck, and roofed with turf and heather. There are sleeping-places around the walls, and here the fisher people live and sleep during the early spring. Every fisherman has his female helper, his manager, as she is called, whose business consists in baiting the hooks, preparing the warm beer for the fishermen when they come ashore, and getting their dinners cooked when they come back into the hut tired and hungry. Moreover, the managers bring up the fish from the boat, cut them open, prepare them, and have generally a great deal to do.

Jürgen, his father, and several other fishermen and their managers inhabited the same hut; Martin lived in the next one.

One of the girls, Else by name, had known Jürgen from childhood: they were glad to see each other, and in many things were of the same mind; but in outward appearance they were entirely opposite; for he was brown, whereas she was pale and had flaxen hair, and eyes as blue as the sea in sunshine.

One day as they were walking together, and Jürgen held her hand in his very firmly and warmly, she said to him,

“Jürgen, I have something weighing upon my heart! Let me be your manager, for you are like a brother to me, whereas Martin, who has engaged me—he and I are lovers—but you need not tell that to the rest.”

And it seemed to Jürgen as if the loose sand were giving way under his feet. He spoke not a word, but only nodded his head, which signified “yes.” More was not required; but suddenly he felt in his heart that he detested Martin; and the longer he considered of this—for he had never thought of Else in this way before—the more did it become clear to him that Martin had stolen from him the only being he loved; and now it was all at once plain to him, that Else was the being in question.

When the sea is somewhat disturbed, and the fishermen come home in their great boat, it is a sight to behold how they cross the reefs. One of the men stands upright in the bow of the boat, and the others watch him, sitting with the oars in their hands. Outside the reef they appear to be rowing not towards the land, but

backing out to sea, till the man standing in the boat gives them the sign that the great wave is coming which is to float them across the reef; and accordingly the boat is lifted—lifted high in the air, so that its keel is seen from the shore; and in the next minute the whole boat is hidden from the eye; neither mast nor keel nor people can be seen, as though the sea had devoured them; but in a few moments they emerge like a great sea animal climbing up the waves, and the oars move as if the creature had legs. The second and the third reef are passed in the same manner; and now the fishermen jump into the water; every wave helps them, and pushes the boat well forward, till at length they have drawn it beyond the range of the breakers.

A wrong order given in front of the reef—the slightest hesitation—and the boat must founder.

“Then it would be all over with me, and Martin too!” This thought struck Jürgen while they were out at sea, where his foster-father had been taken alarmingly ill. The fever had seized him. They were only a few oars’ strokes from the reef, and Jürgen sprang from his seat, and stood up in the bow.

“Father—let me come!” he said; and his eye glanced towards Martin, and across the waves: but while every oar bent with the exertions of the rowers, as the great wave came towering towards them, he beheld the pale face of his father, and dare not obey the evil impulse that had seized him. The boat came safely across the reef to land, but the evil thought remained in his blood, and roused up every little fibre of bitterness which had remained in his memory since he and Martin had been comrades. But he could not weave the fibres together, nor did he endeavour to do so. He felt that Martin had despoiled him, and this was enough to make him detest his former friend. Several of the fishermen noticed this, but not Martin, who continued obliging and talkative—the latter a little too much.

Jürgen’s adopted father had to keep his bed, which became his deathbed, for in the next week he died; and now Jürgen was installed as heir in the little house behind the sand-hills. It was but a little house, certainly, but still it was something, and Martin had nothing of the kind.

“You will not take sea service again, Jürgen?” observed one of the old fishermen. “You will always stay with us, now.”

But this was not Jürgen’s intention, for he was just thinking of looking about him a little in the world. The eel breeder of Zjaltring had an uncle in Alt-Skage, who was a fisherman, but at the same time a prosperous

merchant, who had ships upon the sea; he was said to be a good old man, and it would not be amiss to enter his service. Alt-Skage lies in the extreme north of Jutland, as far removed from the Hunsby dunes as one can travel in that country; and this is just what pleased Jürgen, for he did not want to remain till the wedding of Martin and Else, which was to be celebrated in a few weeks.

else affirms her preference for martin.

The old fisherman asserted that it was foolish now to quit the neighbourhood; for that Jürgen had a home, and Else would probably be inclined to take him rather than Martin.

Jürgen answered so much at random, that it was not easy to understand what he meant; but the old man brought Else to him, and she said, "You have a home now; that ought to be well considered."

And Jürgen thought of many things.

The sea has heavy waves, but there are heavier waves in the human heart. Many thoughts, strong and weak, thronged through Jürgen's brain; and he said to Else,

"If Martin had a house like mine, whom would you rather have?"

"But Martin has no house, and cannot get one."

"But let us suppose he had one."

"Why then I would certainly take Martin, for that's what my heart tells me; but one can't live upon that."

And Jürgen thought of these things all night through. Something was working within him, he could not understand what it was, but he had a thought that was stronger than his love for Else; and so he went to Martin, and what he said and did there was well considered. He let the house to Martin on the most liberal terms, saying that he wished to go to sea again, because it pleased him to do so. And Else kissed him on the mouth when she heard that, for she loved Martin best.

In the early morning Jürgen purposed to start. On the evening before his departure, when it was already growing late, he felt a wish to visit Martin once more; he started, and among the dunes the old fisher met him, who was angry at his going. The old man made jokes about Martin, and declared there must be some magic

about that fellow, “of whom all the girls were so fond.” Jürgen paid no heed to this speech, but said farewell to the old man, and went on towards the house where Martin dwelt. He heard loud talking within. Martin was not alone, and this made Jürgen waver in his determination, for he did not wish to encounter Else; and on second consideration, he thought it better not to hear Martin thank him again, and therefore turned back.

On the following morning, before break of day, he fastened his knapsack, took his wooden provision box in his hand, and went away among the sand-hills towards the coast path. The way was easier to traverse than the heavy sand road, and moreover shorter; for he intended to go in the first instance to Zjaltring, by Bowberg, where the eel breeder lived, to whom he had promised a visit.

The sea lay pure and blue before him, and mussel shells and sea pebbles, the playthings of his youth, crunched under his feet. While he was thus marching on, his nose suddenly began to bleed: it was a trifling incident, but little things can have great significances. A few large drops of blood fell upon one of his sleeves. He wiped them off and stopped the bleeding, and it seemed to him as if this had cleared and lightened his brain. In the sand the sea-eringa was blooming here and there. He broke off a stalk and stuck it in his hat; he determined to be merry and of good cheer, for he was going into the wide world—“a little way outside the door, in front of the hay,” as the young eels had said. “Beware of bad people, who will catch you and flay you, cut you in two, and put you in the frying-pan!” he repeated in his mind, and smiled, for he thought he should find his way through the world—good courage is a strong weapon!

The sun already stood high when he approached the narrow entrance to Nissum Bay. He looked back, and saw a couple of horsemen galloping a long distance behind him, and they were accompanied by other people. But this concerned him nothing.

The ferry was on the opposite side of the bay. Jürgen called to the ferryman; and when the latter came over with the boat, Jürgen stepped in; but before they had gone half-way across, the men whom he had seen riding so hastily behind him, hailed the ferryman, and summoned him to return in the name of the law. Jürgen did not understand the reason of this, but he thought it would be best to turn back, and therefore himself took an oar and returned. The moment the boat touched the shore, the men sprang on board, and, before he was aware, they had bound his hands with a rope.

“Thy wicked deed will cost thee thy life,” they said. “It is well that we caught thee.”

He was accused of nothing less than murder. Martin had been found dead, with a knife thrust through his neck. One of the fishermen had (late on the previous evening) met Jürgen going towards Martin’s house; and this was not the first time Jürgen had raised his knife against Martin—so they knew that he was the murderer. The town in which the prison was built was a long way off, and the wind was contrary for going there; but not half an hour would be required to get across the bay, and a quarter of an hour would bring them from thence to Nörre Vosborg, a great castle with walls and ditches. One of Jürgen’s captors was a fisherman, a brother of the keeper of the castle; and he declared it might be managed that Jürgen should for the present be put into the dungeon at Vosborg, where Long Martha the gipsy had been shut up till her execution.

No attention was paid to the defence made by Jürgen; the few drops of blood upon his shirt-sleeve bore heavy witness against him. But Jürgen was conscious of innocence; and as there was no chance of immediately righting himself, he submitted to his fate.

The party landed just at the spot where Sir Bugge’s castle had stood and where Jürgen had walked with his foster-parents after the burial feast, during the four happiest days of his childhood. He was led by the old path over the meadow to Vosborg; and again the elder blossomed and the lofty lindens smelt sweet, and it seemed but yesterday that he had left the spot.

In the two wings of the castle a staircase leads down to a spot below the entrance, and from thence there is access to a low vaulted cellar. Here Long Martha had been imprisoned, and hence she had been led away to the scaffold. She had eaten the hearts of five children, and had been under the delusion that if she could obtain two more, she would be able to fly and to make herself invisible. In the midst of the cellar roof was a little narrow air-hole, but no window. The blooming lindens could not waft a breath of comforting fragrance into that abode, where all was dark and mouldy. Only a rough bench stood in the prison; but “a good conscience is a soft pillow,” and consequently Jürgen could sleep well.

The thick oaken door was locked, and secured on the outside by an iron bar; but the goblin of superstition can creep through a keyhole into the baron’s castle just as into the fisherman’s hut; and wherefore should he not creep in here, where Jürgen sat thinking of Long Martha and her evil deeds? Her last thought on the night

before her execution had filled this space; and all the magic came into Jürgen's mind which tradition asserted to have been practised there in the old times, when Sir Schwanwedel dwelt there. All this passed through Jürgen's mind, and made him shudder; but a sunbeam—a refreshing thought from without—penetrated his heart even here; it was the remembrance of the blooming elder and the fragrant lime trees.

He was not left there long. They carried him off to the town of Ringkjöbing, where his imprisonment was just as hard.

Those times were not like ours. Hard measure was dealt out to the “common” people; and it was just after the days when farms were converted into knights' estates, on which occasions coachmen and servants were often made magistrates, and had it in their power to sentence a poor man, for a small offence, to lose his property and to corporal punishment. Judges of this kind were still to be found; and in Jutland, far from the capital and from the enlightened well-meaning head of the government, the law was still sometimes very loosely administered; and the smallest grievance that Jürgen had to expect was that his case would be protracted.

Cold and cheerless was his abode—and when would this state of things end? He had innocently sunk into misfortune and sorrow—that was his fate. He had leisure now to ponder on the difference of fortune on earth, and to wonder why this fate had been allotted to him; and he felt sure that the question would be answered in the next life—the existence that awaits us when this is over. This faith had grown strong in him in the poor fisherman's hut; that which had never shone into his father's mind, in all the richness and sunshine of Spain, was vouchsafed as a light of comfort in his poverty and distress—a sign of mercy from God that never deceives.

The spring storms began to blow. The rolling and moaning of the North Sea could be heard for miles inland when the wind was lulled; for then it sounded like the rushing of a thousand waggons over a hard road with a mine beneath. Jürgen, in his prison, heard these sounds, and it was a relief to him. No melody could have appealed so directly to his heart as did these sounds of the sea—the rolling sea, the boundless sea, on which a man can be borne across the world before the wind, carrying his own house with him wherever he is driven, just as the snail carries its home even into a strange land.

How he listened to the deep moaning, and how the thought arose in him—"Free! free! How happy to be free, even without shoes and in ragged clothes!" Sometimes, when such thoughts crossed his mind, the fiery nature rose within him, and he beat the wall with his clenched fists.

Weeks, months, a whole year had gone by, when a vagabond—Niels, the thief, called also the horse couper—was arrested; and now the better times came, and it was seen what wrong Jürgen had endured.

In the neighbourhood of Ringkjöbing, at a beer-house, Niels, the thief, had met Martin on the afternoon before Jürgen's departure from home and before the murder. A few glasses were drunk—not enough to cloud any one's brain, but yet enough to loosen Martin's tongue; and he began to boast, and to say that he had obtained a house, and intended to marry; and when Niels asked where he intended to get the money, Martin shook his pocket proudly, and said,

"The money is there, where it ought to be."

This boast cost him his life; for when he went home, Niels went after him, and thrust a knife through his throat, to rob the murdered man of the expected gold, which did not exist.

This was circumstantially explained; but for us it is enough to know that Jürgen was set at liberty. But what amends did he get for having been imprisoned a whole year, and shut out from all communion with men? They told him he was fortunate in being proved innocent, and that he might go. The burgomaster gave him two dollars for travelling expenses, and many citizens offered him provisions and beer—there were still good men, not all "grind and flay." But the best of all was, that the merchant Brönne of Skjagen, the same into whose service Jürgen intended to go a year since, was just at that time on business in the town of Ringkjöbing. Brönne heard the whole story; and the man had a good heart, and understood what Jürgen must have felt and suffered. He therefore made up his mind to make it up to the poor lad, and convince him that there were still kind folks in the world.

So Jürgen went forth from the prison as if to Paradise, to find freedom, affection, and trust. He was to travel this road now; for no goblet of life is all bitterness: no good man would pour out such measure to his fellow man, and how should He do it, who is love itself?

“Let all that be buried and forgotten,” said Brönne the merchant. “Let us draw a thick line through last year; and we will even burn the calendar. And in two days we’ll start for dear, friendly, peaceful Skjagen. They call Skjagen an out-of-the-way corner; but it’s a good warm chimney-corner, and its windows open towards every part of the world.”

That was a journey!—it was like taking fresh breath—out of the cold dungeon air into the warm sunshine! The heath stood blooming in its greatest pride, and the herd-boy sat on the Hun’s Grave and blew his pipe, which he had carved for himself out of the sheep’s bone. Fata Morgana, the beautiful aërial phenomenon of the desert, showed itself with hanging gardens and swaying forests, and the wonderful cloud phenomenon, called here the “Lokeman driving his flock,” was seen likewise.

Up through the land of the Wendels, up towards Skjagen, they went, from whence the men with the long beards (the Longobardi, or Lombards) had emigrated in the days when, in the reign of King Snio, all the children and the old people were to have been killed, till the noble Dame Gambaruk proposed that the young people had better emigrate. All this was known to Jürgen—thus much knowledge he had; and even if he did not know the land of the Lombards beyond the high Alps, he had an idea how it must be there, for in his boyhood he had been in the south, in Spain. He thought of the southern fruits piled up there; of the red pomegranate blossoms; of the humming, murmuring, and toiling in the great beehive of a city he had seen; but, after all, home is best; and Jürgen’s home was Denmark.

Jürgen’s better fortune.

At length they reached “Wendelskajn,” as Skjagen is called in the old Norwegian and Icelandic writings. Then already Old Skjagen, with the western and eastern town, extended for miles, with sand-hills and arable land, as far as the lighthouse near the “Skjagenzweig.” Then, as now, the houses were strewn among the wind-raised sand-hills—a desert where the wind sports with the sand, and where the voices of the seamen and the wild swans strike harshly on the ear. In the south-west, a mile from the sea, lies Old Skjagen; and here dwelt merchant Brönne, and here Jürgen was henceforth to dwell. The great house was painted with tar; the smaller buildings had each an overturned boat for a roof; the pig-sty had been put together of pieces of wreck. There was no fence here, for indeed there was nothing to fence in; but long rows of fishes were hung upon lines, one above the other, to dry in the wind. The whole coast was strewn with spoilt herrings; for there were so many of

those fish, that a net was scarcely thrown into the sea before they were caught by cartloads; there were so many, that often they were thrown back into the sea, or left to lie on the shore.

The old man's wife and daughter, and his servants too, came rejoicingly to meet him. There was a great pressing of hands, and talking, and questioning. And the daughter, what a lovely face and bright eyes she had!

The interior of the house was roomy and comfortable. Fritters that a king would have looked upon as a dainty dish, were placed on the table; and there was wine from the vineyard of Skjagen—that is, the sea; for there the grapes come ashore ready pressed and prepared in barrels and in bottles.

When the mother and daughter heard who Jürgen was, and how innocently he had suffered, they looked at him in a still more friendly way; and the eyes of the charming Clara were the friendliest of all. Jürgen found a happy home in Old Skjagen. It did his heart good; and his heart had been sorely tried, and had drunk the bitter goblet of love, which softens or hardens according to circumstances. Jürgen's heart was still soft—it was young, and there was still room in it; and therefore it was well that Mistress Clara was going in three weeks in her father's ship to Christiansand, in Norway, to visit an aunt, and to stay there the whole winter.

On the Sunday before her departure they all went to church, to the holy Communion. The church was large and handsome, and had been built centuries before by Scotchmen and Hollanders; it lay at a little distance from the town. It was certainly somewhat ruinous, and the road to it was heavy, through the deep sand; but the people gladly went through the difficulties to get to the house of God, to sing psalms and hear the sermon. The sand had heaped itself up round the walls of the church; but the graves were kept free from it.

It was the largest church north of the Limfjord. The Virgin Mary, with the golden crown on her head and the child Jesus in her arms, stood life-like upon the altar; the holy Apostles had been carved in the choir; and on the wall hung portraits of the old burgomasters and councillors of Skjagen; the pulpit was of carved work. The sun shone brightly into the church, and its radiance fell on the polished brass chandelier, and on the little ship that hung from the vaulted roof.

Jürgen felt as if overcome by a holy, childlike feeling, like that which possessed him when, as a boy, he had stood in the splendid Spanish cathedral; but here the feeling was different, for he felt conscious of being one of the congregation.

After the sermon followed the holy Communion. He partook of the bread and wine, and it happened that he knelt beside Mistress Clara; but his thoughts were so fixed upon Heaven and the holy service, that he did not notice his neighbour until he rose from his knees, and then he saw tears rolling down her cheeks.

Two days later she left Skjagen and went to Norway. He stayed behind, and made himself useful in the house and in the business. He went out fishing, and at that time fish were more plentiful and larger than now. Every Sunday when he sat in the church, and his eye rested on the statue of the Virgin on the altar, his glance rested for a time on the spot where Mistress Clara had knelt beside him, and he thought of her, how hearty and kind she had been to him.

And so the autumn and the winter time passed away. There was wealth here, and a real family life; even down to the domestic animals, who were all well kept. The kitchen glittered with copper and tin and white plates, and from the roof hung hams and beef, and winter stores in plenty. All this is still to be seen in many rich farms of the west coast of Jutland: plenty to eat and drink, clean decorated rooms, clever heads, happy tempers, and hospitality prevail there as in an Arab tent.

Never since the famous burial feast had Jürgen spent such a happy time; and yet Mistress Clara was absent, except in the thoughts and memory of all.

In April a ship was to start for Norway, and Jürgen was to sail in it. He was full of life and spirits, and looked so stout and jovial that Dame Brønne declared it did her good to see him.

“And it’s a pleasure to see you too, old wife,” said the old merchant. “Jürgen has brought life into our winter evenings, and into you too, mother. You look younger this year, and you seem well and bonny. But then you were once the prettiest girl in Wiborg, and that’s saying a great deal, for I have always found the Wiborg girls the prettiest of any.”

Jürgen said nothing to this, but he thought of a certain maiden of Skjagen; and he sailed to visit that maiden,

for the ship steered to Christiansand, in Norway, and a favouring wind bore it rapidly to that town.

One morning merchant Brønne went out to the lighthouse that stands far away from Old Skjagen: the coal fire had long gone out, and the sun was already high when he mounted the tower. The sand-banks extend under the water a whole mile from the shore. Outside these banks many ships were seen that day; and with the help of his telescope the old man thought he descried his own vessel, the "Karen Brønne."

Yes, surely there she was; and the ship was sailing up with Jürgen and Clara on board. The church and the lighthouse appeared to them as a heron and a swan rising from the blue waters. Clara sat on deck, and saw the sand-hills gradually looming forth: if the wind held she might reach her home in about an hour—so near were they to home and its joys—so near were they to death and its terrors. For a plank in the ship gave way, and the water rushed in. The crew flew to the pumps, and attempted to stop the leak. A signal of distress was hoisted; but they were still a full mile from the shore. Fishing boats were in sight, but they were still far distant. The wind blew shoreward, and the tide was in their favour too; but all was insufficient, for the ship sank. Jürgen threw his right arm about Clara, and pressed her close to him.

With what a look she gazed in his face! As he threw himself in God's name into the water with her, she uttered a cry; but still she felt safe, certain that he would not let her sink.

And now, in the hour of terror and danger, Jürgen experienced what the old song told:

"And written it stood, how the brave king's son
Embraced the bride his valour had won."

How rejoiced he felt that he was a good swimmer! He worked his way onward with his feet and with one hand, while with the other he tightly held the young girl. He rested upon the waves, he trod the water, he practised all the arts he knew, so as to reserve strength enough to reach the shore. He heard how Clara uttered a sigh, and felt a convulsive shudder pass through her, and he pressed her to him closer than ever. Now and then a wave rolled over her; and he was still a few cables' lengths from the land, when help came in the shape of an approaching boat. But under the water—he could see it clearly—stood a white form gazing at him: a wave lifted him up, and the form approached him: he felt a shock, and it grew dark, and everything vanished from his gaze.

On the sand-reef lay the wreck of a ship, the sea washed over it; the white figure-head leant against an anchor, the sharp iron extended just to the surface. Jürgen had come in contact with this, and the tide had driven him against it with double force. He sank down fainting with his load; but the next wave lifted him and the young girl aloft again.

The fishermen grasped them, and lifted them into the boat. The blood streamed down over Jürgen's face; he seemed dead, but he still clutched the girl so tightly that they were obliged to loosen her by force from his grasp. And Clara lay pale and lifeless in the boat, that now made for the shore.

All means were tried to restore Clara to life; but she was dead! For some time he had been swimming onward with a corpse, and had exerted himself to exhaustion for one who was dead.

Jürgen was still breathing. The fishermen carried him into the nearest house upon the sand-hills. A kind of surgeon who lived there, and was at the same time a smith and a general dealer, bound up Jürgen's wounds in a temporary way, till a physician could be got next day from the nearest town.

The brain of the sick man was affected. In delirium he uttered wild cries; but on the third day he lay quiet and exhausted on his couch, and his life seemed to hang by a thread, and the physician said it would be best if this string snapped.

"Let us pray that God may take him to Himself; he will never be a sane man again!"

But life would not depart from him—the thread would not snap; but the thread of memory broke: the thread of all his mental power had been cut through; and, what was most terrible, a body remained—a living healthy body—that wandered about like a spectre.

Jürgen remained in the house of the merchant Brönne.

"He contracted his illness in his endeavour to save our child," said the old man, "and now he is our son."

People called Jürgen imbecile; but that was not the right expression. He was like an instrument, in which the strings are loose and will sound no more; only at times for a few minutes they regained their power, and then they sounded anew: old melodies were heard, snatches of song; pictures unrolled themselves, and then

disappeared again in the mist, and once more he sat staring before him, without a thought. We may believe that he did not suffer, but his dark eyes lost their brightness, and looked only like black clouded glass.

“Poor imbecile Jürgen!” said the people.

He it was whose life was to have been so pleasant that it would be “presumption and pride” to expect or believe in a higher existence hereafter. All his great mental faculties had been lost; only hard days, pain, and disappointment had been his lot. He was like a rare plant torn from its native soil, and thrown upon the sand, to wither there. And was the image, fashioned in God’s likeness, to have no better destination? Was it to be merely the sport of chance? No. The all-loving God would certainly repay him in the life to come, for what he had suffered and lost here. “The Lord is good to all; and His mercy is over all His works.” These words from the Psalms of David, the old pious wife of the merchant repeated in patience and hope, and the prayer of her heart was that Jürgen might soon be summoned to enter into the life eternal.

In the churchyard where the sand blows across the walls, Clara lay buried. It seemed as if Jürgen knew nothing of this—it did not come within the compass of his thoughts, which comprised only fragments of a past time. Every Sunday he went with the old people to church, and sat silent there with vacant gaze. One day, while the Psalms were being sung, he uttered a deep sigh, and his eyes gleamed: they were fixed upon the altar, upon the place where he had knelt with his friend who was dead. He uttered her name, and became pale as death, and tears rolled over his cheeks.

They led him out of the church; and he said to the bystanders that he was well, and had never been ill: he, the heavily afflicted, the waif cast forth upon the world, remembered nothing of his sufferings. And the Lord our Creator is wise and full of loving-kindness—who can doubt it?

In Spain, where the warm breezes blow over the Moorish cupola, among the orange trees and laurels, where song and the sound of castagnettes are always heard, sat in the sumptuous house a childish old man, the richest merchant in the place, while children marched in procession through the streets, with waving flags and lighted tapers. How much of his wealth would the old man not have given to be able to press his children to his heart! his daughter, or her child, that had perhaps never seen the light in this world, far less a Paradise.

“Poor child!”

Yes, poor child—a child still, and yet more than thirty years old; for to that age Jürgen had attained in Old Skjagen.

The drifting sand had covered the graves in the churchyard quite up to the walls of the church; but yet the dead must be buried among their relations and loved ones who had gone before them. Merchant Brönne and his wife now rested here with their children, under the white sand.

It was spring-time, the season of storms. The sand-hills whirled up in clouds, and the sea ran high, and flocks of birds flew like clouds in the storms, shrieking across the dunes; and shipwreck followed shipwreck on the reefs of “Skjagenzweig” from towards the Hunsby dunes. One evening Jürgen was sitting alone in the room. Suddenly his mind seemed to become clearer, and a feeling of unrest came upon him, which in his younger years had often driven him forth upon the heath and the sand-hills.

“Home! home!” he exclaimed. No one heard him. He went out of the house towards the dunes. Sand and stones blew into his face and whirled around him. He went on farther and farther, towards the church: the sand lay high around the walls, half over the windows; but the heap had been shovelled away from the door, and the entrance was free and easy to open; and Jürgen went into the church.

The storm went howling over the town of Skjagen. Within the memory of man the sea had not run so high—a terrible tempest! but Jürgen was in the temple of God, and while black night reigned without, a light arose in his soul, a light that was never to be extinguished; he felt the heavy stone which seemed to weigh upon his head burst asunder. He thought he heard the sound of the organ, but it was the storm and the moaning of the sea. He sat down on one of the seats; and behold, the candles were lighted up one by one; a richness was displayed such as he had only seen in the church in Spain; and all the pictures of the old councillors were endued with life, and stepped forth from the walls against which they had stood for centuries, and seated themselves in the entrance of the church.

The gates and doors flew open, and in came all the dead people, festively clad, and sat down to the sound of beautiful music, and filled the seats in the church. Then the psalm tune rolled forth like a sounding sea; and his old foster-parents from the Hunsby dunes were here, and the old merchant Brönne and his wife; and at their

side, close to Jürgen, sat their friendly, lovely daughter Clara, who gave her hand to Jürgen, and they both went to the altar, where they had once knelt together, and the priest joined their hands and joined them together for life. Then the sound of music was heard again, wonderful, like a child's voice full of joy and expectation, and it swelled on to an organ's sound, to a tempest of full, noble sounds, lovely and elevating to hear, and yet strong enough to burst the stone tombs.

And the little ship that hung down from the roof of the choir came down, and became wonderfully large and beautiful, with silken sails and golden yards, "and every rope wrought through with silk," as the old song said. The married pair went on board, and the whole congregation with them, for there was room and joyfulness for all. And the walls and arches of the church bloomed like the juniper and the fragrant lime trees, and the leaves and branches waved and distributed coolness; then they bent and parted, and the ship sailed through the midst of them, through the sea, and through the air; and every church taper became a star, and the wind sang a psalm tune, and all sang with the wind:

"In love, to glory—no life shall be lost. Full of blessedness and joy. Hallelujah!"

And these words were the last that Jürgen spoke in this world. The thread snapped that bound the immortal soul, and nothing but a dead body lay in the dark church, around which the storm raged, covering it with loose sand.

The next morning was Sunday, and the congregation and their pastor went forth to the service. The road to church had been heavy; the sand made the way almost impassable; and now, when they at last reached their goal, a great hill of sand was piled up before the entrance, and the church itself was buried. The priest spoke a short prayer, and said that God had closed the door of this house, and the congregation must go and build a new one for Him elsewhere.

So they sang a psalm under the open sky, and went back to their homes.

Jürgen was nowhere to be found in the town of Skjagen, or in the dunes, however much they sought for him. It was thought that the waves, which had rolled far up on the sand, had swept him away.

His body lay buried in a great sepulchre, in the church itself. In the storm the Lord's hand had thrown a handful of earth on his grave; and the heavy mound of sand lay upon it, and lies there to this day.

The whirling sand had covered the high vaulted passages; whitethorn and wild rose trees grow over the church, over which the wanderer now walks; while the tower, standing forth like a gigantic tombstone over a grave, is to be seen for miles around: no king has a more splendid tombstone. No one disturbs the rest of the dead; no one knew of this, and we are the first who know of this grave—the storm sang the tale to me among the sand-hills.

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