

# *The Lucky Peer - Parts VI and*

## *IX*

Hans Christian Andersen  
DanishNordicScandinavian

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*Intermediate*  
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Now get that comedy out of your head!" said Herr Gabriel the next morning, "and let us squeeze in some science."

Peer had come near to thinking like young Madsen: "that one was giving up his fresh youth when he was shut up and set down with a book in his hand;" but when he sat at his book there shone from it so many noble and good thoughts that Peer found himself quite absorbed in it. He heard 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 when a young man held horses at the door of the theatre, where afterward he was the mightiest man in poetic art of all countries and all time. He heard of the singing contest at Wartburg, where the poets vied 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 had in his old age written one of his best tragedies and won the prize of victory over all the others. In this honor and fortune his heart broke with joy. Ah! how blessed to die in the midst of his joy of victory! What could be more fortunate! Thoughts and dreamings filled the soul of our little friend, but he had no one to whom he could tell them. They would not be intelligible to young Madsen or to Primus, nor to Madame Gabriel either: she was either all good humor, or the sorrowing mother, sitting dissolved in tears. Her two small girls

looked with astonishment at her, nor could Peer either discover why she was so overwhelmed with sorrow and grief.

“The poor children” said she then, “a mother is ever thinking of their future. The boys can take care of themselves. Cæsar falls, but he gets up again; the two older ones splash in the water-bowl; they want to be in the navy and make good matches. But my two little girls! what will their future be? They will reach the age when the heart feels, and then know I w’ell that the one they each get attached to will not be at all after Gabriel’s mind; he will give them one they cannot endure, and then will they be so unhappy. That is what I think of as a mother, and that is my sorrow and my grief. You poor children! you to become so unhappy!” She wept.

The little girls looked at her; Peer looked at her with a sympathetic look. He could not think of anything to answer, and so he took himself back to his little room, sat down at the old piano, and forth came tones and fantasies which streamed through his heart.

In the early morning he went with a clear brain to his studies and performed the part assigned to him. He was a conscientious, right-minded fellow; in his diary he recorded what each day he had read and studied, how late he had sat up playing at the piano—always mutely, so as not to waken Madame Gabriel. It never read in his diary, except on Sunday, the day of rest: “Thought of Juliet,” “Was at the Apothecary’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. You will be *reject*.”

“Scoundrel!” said young Madsen to himself; Primus, the dean’s son, suffered from lethargy. “It is a disease,” said the dean’s wife, and he was not to be treated with severity. The deanery was only two miles distant; wealth and fine society were there.

“He will die a bishop!” said Madame Gabriel. “He has good *conjugations* at the court, and the deaness is a lady of noble birth. She knows all about Haaltry—that means coats-of-arms.”

It was Whitsuntide. A year had gone by since Peer came to Herr Gabriel’s house. He had acquired an education, but his voice had not returned; would it ever come?

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

It was a substantial place, the deanery,—whitewashed and without any manure-heaps in the yard; with a dove-cote painted green, about which twined an ivy vine. The Deanness was a corpulent woman—*glaukopis athene*. Herr Gabriel called her the blue-eyed, not the ox-eyed, as Juno was called, thought Peer. There was a certain remarkable mildness about her, an endeavor to have an invalid took; she certainly had Primus's sickness. She was dressed in a corn-colored silk, wore great curls, caught up on the right by a large medallion portrait of her great-grandmother, a general's wife, and on the left by an equally large bunch of grapes of white porcelain.

The Dean had a ruddy, well-conditioned countenance, with shining white teeth, well suited to biting into a roast fillet. His conversation was always garnished with anecdotes. He could discourse with everybody, but no one had ever succeeded in carrying on a conversation with him.

The councillor, too, was here, and among the strangers from the manors was Felix, the merchant's son; he had been confirmed, and was now a young gentleman very elegant in clothes and manners; he was a millionaire, they said. Madame Gabriel had not courage to speak to him.

Peer was overjoyed at seeing Felix, who came forward most cordially to meet him, and said that he brought greetings from his parents, who read all the letters which Peer wrote home to his mother and grandmother.

The dancing began. The Apothecary's daughter was to dance the first dance with the councillor; that was the promise she had made at home to her mother and the councillor himself. The second dance was promised to Peer; but Felix came and took her out, only vouchsafing a good-natured nod.

"You promised that I should have one dance; the young lady will only give permission when you promise."

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

"Will you 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. “It is not friendly. We two old friends from the town! You say that you are so very glad to see me. Then you must allow me the pleasure of taking the lady to supper!” and he put his arm round Peer and laid his forehead jestingly against his. “Granted! isn’t it? granted!”

“No!” said Peer, his eyes sparkling with anger.

Felix gayly raised his arms and set his elbows akimbo, looking like a frog ready to spring:—

“You have perfect right, young gentleman! 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 not long after, when Peer stood in a corner and arranged his neck-tie, Felix came, put his arm round his neck, and with the most coaxing look, said:—

“Be splendid! my mother and your mother and old grandmother—they will all say that it is just like you. I am off to-morrow, and I shall be horribly bored if I do not take the young lady to supper. My own friend! my only friend!”

At that Peer, as his only friend, could not hold out; he himself carried Felix to the young beauty.

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

She talked about the young merchant, the rich man’s son, who was really Peer’s friend she had heard him say: “Your health, my friend.” “Mother and grandmother.” There was something so “*negligent*” and *gallant* in him, she said; “one saw at once that he was the son of rich people, or else a count’s child. That the rest of us can’t claim. One must be able to bow!”

Peer said nothing. He was depressed all day. In the evening, at bed-time, when lying in bed sleep was chased away, and he said to himself: “How they bow and smirk!” That had he done, the rich young fellow; “because one is born poor, he is placed under the favor and condescension of these richly-horn people. Are you then better than we? And why were you created better than we?”

There was something vicious rearing up in him ; *something wrong*; something which his grandmother would be grieved at. “Poor grandmother! Thou also hast been appointed to poverty. God has known how to do that!” and he felt anger in his heart, and yet at the same time an apprehension that he was sinning in thought and word

against the good God. He grieved to think he had lost his child's mind, and yet he possessed it just by this grief, whole and rich in nature. Happy Peer!

A week after there came a letter from grandmother. She wrote, as she could, great letters and small letters mixed up, all her heart's love in things small and great that concerned Peer:—

“MY OWN SWEET, BLESSED BOY:—I think of thee, I long for thee, and that too does thy mother. She gets along very well with her washing. And the merchant's Felix was in to see us yesterday, with a greeting from thee. You had been at the Dean's ball, and thou wert so honorable; that wilt thou always be, and rejoice the heart of thy old grandmother and thy hard-working mother. She has something to tell you about Miss Frandsen.”

And then followed a postscript from Peer's mother.

“Miss Frandsen is married, the old thing. The bookbinder Court is become court bookbinder, in accordance with his petition, with a great sign, ‘Court Bookbinder Court!’ And she has become Madame Court. it is an old love that does not rust, my sweet boy.

“THY MOTHER.”

“Second Postscript. Grandmother has knit you six pair of woollen socks, which you will get by the first opportunity. I have laid with them a pork-pie, your favorite dish. I know that you never get it at Herr Gabriel's, since the lady is so afraid of what—I don't know exactly how to spell ‘trichines.’ You must not believe that, but only eat.

“THY OWN MOTHER.”

Peer read the letter and read himself happy. Felix was so good; what wrong had he done him! They had separated at the Dean's without saying good-bye to each other.

“Felix is better than I,” said Peer.

VII.

In a quiet life one day glides 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—Madame called it obstinacy—insisted that he should not again go on the stage.

Peer himself received from the singing-master, who monthly paid the stipend for his instruction and support,

a serious admonition not to think of comedy-playing so long as he was placed there; and he obeyed, but his thoughts traveled often to the theatre at the capital. They had but a fancied life there, on the stage where he was to have stood as a great singer; now his voice was gone, nor did it come back, and often was he sorely oppressed thereat. Who could comfort him? neither Herr Gabriel nor Madame; 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 charming green forest, where the sun shone in through the boughs, and where all the ground beneath the trees was covered with anemones and cowslips. Then the cuckoo began—“Cuckoo!” How many years shall I live? asked Peer, for that people always ask the cuckoo the first time in the year that they hear its note, and the cuckoo answered: “Cuckoo!” but uttered no more and was silent.

“Shall I only live a single year?” asked Peer; “truly that is too little, Be so good as to cuckoo if it is so!” Then began the bird—“Cuckoo! cuckoo!” Aye! it went on without end, and as it went Peer cuckooed with it, and that as lively as if he too were a cuckoo; but his note was stronger and clearer; all the little birds warbled, and Peer sang after them, but far more beautifully; he had all the clear voice of his childhood, and carolled in song. He was so glad at heart, and then he awoke, but with the assurance that the sounding-board still was 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 days and weeks and months passed; he perceived not that his voice came again.

Every bit of intelligence which he could get of the theatre at the capital was a true feast for his soul; it was meat and drink to him. Crumbs are really bread, and he received crumbs thankfully—the poorest little story. There was a flax-dealer’s family living near the Gabriels. The mother, an estimable mistress of her household, brisk and laughing, but without any acquaintance or knowledge of the theatre, had been at the capital for the first time, and was enraptured with everything there, even with the people; they had laughed at everything she had said, she assured them—and that was very likely.

“Were you at the theatre also?” asked Peer.

“That I was,” replied the flax-dealer’s wife. “How I steamed! You ought to have seen me sit and steam in that hot place!”

“But what did they do? What piece did they play?”

“That will I tell you,” said she. “I shall give you the whole comedy. I was there twice. The first evening it was a talking piece. Out came she, the princess: ‘Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!’ how she could talk. Next came the people: ‘Abbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!’ and then down came Madame. Now they began again. The prince, he: ‘Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!’ then down came Madame. She fell down five times that evening. The second time I was there, it was all singing ‘Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!’ and then down came Madame. There was a country-woman sitting by my side; she had never been in the theatre, and supposed that it was all over; but I, who now knew all about it, said that when I was there last, Madame was down five times. The singing evening she only did it three times. There I there you have both the comedies, as true to life as I saw them.”

If it was tragedy she saw, Madame always came down. Then it flashed over Peer’s mind what she meant. At the great theatre there was painted upon the curtain which fell between the acts a great female figure, a Muse with the comic and the tragic mask. This was Madame who “came” down. That had been the real comedy; what they said and sang had been to the flax-dealer’s wife only “Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!” but it had been a great pleasure, and so had it been also to Peer, and not less to Madame Gabriel, who heard this recital of the pieces. She sat with an expression of astonishment and a consciousness of mental superiority, for had she not, as Nurse, been Shakspeare’s “Romeo and Juliet,” as the Apothecary said?

“Then down comes Madame,” explained by Peer, became afterward a witty by-word in the house every time a child, a cup, or one or another piece of furniture fell upon the floor in the house.

“That is the way proverbs and familiar sayings arise!” said Herr Gabriel, who appropriated everything to scientific use.

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 makes one’s stomach ache. They drank a health to the new year, and counted the strokes of the clock, “one, two,” till the twelfth stroke. “Down comes Madame!” said they.

The new year rolled up and on. At Whitsuntide Peer had been two years in the house.

VIII.

Two years were gone, but the voice had not come back. How would the future be for our little friend? He could always be a tutor in a school—that was in Herr Gabriel's mind—there was a livelihood in that, though nothing to be married on; nor was Peer's mind quite made up as to how large a share of his heart the apothecary's daughter had.

“Be a tutor!” said Madame Gabriel; “a schoolmaster! then be the veriest humdrum on earth, just like my Gabriel. No, you are born for the theatre. Be the greatest actor in the world that is something else than being a tutor.”

An actor! ay, that was the goal.

He gave vent to his feelings in a letter to the singing-master; he told of his longing and his hope. Most earnestly did he long for the great city where his mother and grandmother lived, whom he had not seen for two years. The distance was only thirty miles; in six hours, by the quick train, that could be passed. Why had they not seen one another? That is easily explained. Peer had, on leaving, been made to give his promise to stay where he should be placed, and not to think of a visit. His mother was busy enough with her washing and ironing. Yet, for all that, she thought a good many times of making the great journey, though it would cost a deal of money, but she never did. Grandmother had a horror of railways; she thought to go by them was to fly in the face of Providence. Nothing could induce her to travel by steam; she was, too, an old woman, and she would take no journey until she took her last one up to our Lord.

That she said in May, but in June the old thing did travel, and quite alone, too, the thirty long miles, to the strange town, to strange people, and all to go to Peer. It was a great occasion, the most sorrowful one that could occur to mother and grandmother.

The cuckoo had said “cuckoo!” without end when Peer the second time asked it, “How many years shall I live?” His health and spirits were good: the future shone brightly. 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 pursue if his voice was really gone.

“Appear as Romeo!” said Madame Gabriel; “you are old enough now for the lover's part, and have got some color in your cheeks; you don't need to paint.”

“Be Romeo!” said the Apothecary and the Apothecary’s daughter.

Many thoughts went sounding through his head and heart. But



“Nobody knows what to-morrow shall be.”

He sat down below in the garden that stretched out to the meadow. It was evening and moonlight. His cheeks burned, his blood was on fire, the air brought a grateful coolness. There over the moor a mist hung that rose and sank and made him think of the dance of the Elfin maidens. There came into his mind the old saving of the 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 sport, and thereby came his death. It was a piece of folk lore, an old poem. The moonlight and the mist over the moor painted pictures for it this evening.

Peer sat and soon was in a half dreaming state, looking out upon it all. The bushes seemed to have shapes of human sort and half of beastly form. They stood motionless, while the mist rose like a great waving veil. Something like this had Peer seen in a ballet at the theatre, when Elfin maidens were represented, whirling and waving with veils of gauze; but here it was far more charming and more wonderful. So great a scene as this no theatre could show; none had so clear an air, so shining a moonlight.

Just in front, in the mist, appeared most distinctly a female shape, and it became three, and the three many; they danced hand in hand, floating girls. The air bore them along to the hedge where Peer stood. They nodded to him; they spake; it was like the cling! clang! of silver bells. They danced into the garden and about him; they enclosed him in their circle. Without thought he danced with them, but not their dance. He whirled about, as in the memorable vampire dance, but he thought not of that, he thought not at all of aught more, but was enveloped in the wondrous beauty he saw around 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 bore him upon their veil to the opposite shore, where the giant mound has thrown

aside its grassy sward and rose into a castle of clouds, but the clouds were of marble; flowering vines of gold and costly stones twined about the mighty blocks of marble; each flower was a radiant bud that sang with human voice. It was like a choir of thousands and thousands of happy children. Was it heaven, or was it the Elfin hill?

The castle walls stirred—they moved toward each other—they closed about him. He was within them and the world of men was without. Then felt he a pain, a strange yearning, as never before. No outlet could he find, but from the floor away up to the roof there smiled upon him sweet young girls; they were so loving as he looked upon them, and yet the thought came—are ye but paintings? He would speak with them, but his tongue found no words; his speech was gone; not a sound came from his lips. Then he threw himself upon the earth, with a misery he never before had known.

One of the Elfin maidens came to him; surely she meant well to him in her manner; she had taken the shape he would most like to see; it was the likeness of the Apothecary's daughter; he was almost ready to believe that it was she; but soon he saw that she was hollow in the back—a charming front view, but open behind and nothing at all inside.

“One hour here is a hundred years outside,” said she; “thou hast already been here a whole hour. All whom you know and love without these walls are dead. Stay with us! Yes, stay thou must, or the walls will hold thee in a vice till the blood spirts from thy fore head.”

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

“Lord, Lord, hast Thou 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!” said she, “our Lord doth not let thee go; He lets none of us go, not the greatest sinner. To God be praise and honor for evermore!”

And she took out her psalmbook, the same one from which she and Peer many a Sunday had sung. How her voice rang! how full her tones! all the Elfin maidens laid their heads down to the rest they longed for. Peer sang with Grandmother, as before he had sung each Sunday; how strong and mighty all at once was his voice! the walls of the castle trembled; they became clouds and mist; Grandmother went with him out of the hill into the high grass, where the glow-worms made light and the moon shone. But his feet were so weary he could not

move them; he sank down on the sward; it was the softest bed; there he rested 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; life and reason had returned. But he had been at the door of death. Down in the garden, that evening they had found him in a swoon; a violent fever followed. The doctor thought that he would not get up from it again, but must die, and so they had written thus to his mother. She and Grandmother felt that they must go to him; both could not leave, and so the old grandmother went, and went by the railway.

"It was for Peer only that I did it," said she. "I did it in God's name, or I must believe that I flew with the Evil One on a broomstick on Midsummer Eve."

IX.

The journey home was made with glad and light heart. Devoutly did grandmother thank our Lord that Peer was yet to outlive her. She had delightful neighbors in the railway carriage—the apothecary and his daughter. They talked about Peer: they loved him as if they belonged to his family. He was to become a great actor, said the apothecary; 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 so they came to the station at 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 excellent people;" and she pressed the hands of the apothecary and his daughter. "The railway is a blessed discovery when one is through with it. One is in God's hands."

Then she talked of her sweet boy, who was out of all danger and housed with people who were very well off and kept two girls and a man. Peer was like a son in the house, and on the same footing with two children of distinguished families: one of them was a Dean's son. The grandmother had lodged at the post-inn; it was dreadfully dear! but then she had been invited to Madam Gabriel's; there she had stayed five days; they were angelic people, especially the mistress; she had urged her to drink punch, excellently made, but rather strong.

In about a month would Peer, by God's help, be strong enough to come home to the capital.

"He has been flattered and has become very fine," said the mother. "He will not feel at home here in the garret."

I am very glad that the singing-master has invited him to stay with him. And yet," so mourned she, "it is horribly sad that one should be so poor that one's own bairn should not find it good enough for him in his own home."

"Don't say those words to Peer," said grandmother; "you don't see into him as I do."

"But he must have meat and drink, any way, no matter how fine he has grown; and he shall not want those so long as my hands can joggle in the wash-tub. Madam Court has told me that he can dine twice a week with her, now that she is well off. She knows what prosperity is, and what rough times are, too. Has she not herself told me that one evening, in the box at the theatre where the old *danseuses* have a place, she felt sick? The whole day long she had only had water and a caraway seed cake, and she was sick from hunger, and very faint. 'Water! water!' cried the other. 'No! some tarts!' she begged; 'tarts!' She needed something nourishing, and had not the least need of water. Now she has her own pantries and a well-spread table."

Thirty miles away Peer still sat, but happy in the thought that he would soon be in the city, at the theatre, with all his old, dear friends, whom now he rightly knew how to value. Within him there was music: without there was music too. All was sunshine—the glad time of youth, the time of hope and anticipation. Every day he grew stronger, got good spirits and color. But Madam Gabriel was much depressed as his time for departure drew near.

"You are going into great society, and into the midst of many temptations, for you are handsome—that you have become in our house. You have *naïveté*, just as I have, and that will get you into temptation. One must not be fastidious, and he must not be mangy; fastidious like the Queen Dagmar, who on Sunday tied her silk sleeves and then had her mind made up about such little things. More than that, I would never have taken on so as I Lucretia did. What did she stick herself for? She was pure and honest; everybody in the town knew that. What could she do about the misfortune which I won't talk about, but that you at your time of life understand perfectly well? So she gives a shriek and takes the dagger There was no use in that. I would not have done it nor you either; for we are both people of nature, and that people will be to the end of time, and that will you continue to be in your art career. How happy I shall be to read about you in the papers! Some time you will come to our little town and appear perhaps as Romeo, but I shall not be the nurse then. If shall sit in the parquet and enjoy myself."

Madam had a great washing and ironing done the week he went away, that Peer might go home with a whole,

clean wardrobe, as when he came. She drew a new, strong ribbon through his amber heart; that was the only thing she wanted for a “remembrance souvenir,” but she did not get it.

From Herr Gabriel he received a French lexicon, enriched with marginal notes by Herr Gabriel’s own hand. Madam Gabriel gave him roses and ribbon-grass. The roses would wither, but the grass would keep all winter if it did not get into the water but was kept in a dry place, and she wrote a quotation from Goethe as a kind of album-leaf: “Umgang mit Frauen ist das Element guter Sitten.” She gave it in translation: “Intercourse with women is the foundation of good manners. Goethe.”

“He was a great man!” said she, “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 which he had made of Herr Gabriel hanging from the gallows, with a ferule 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 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:—“Remember a sorrowing friend. Primus.”

All of Herr Gabriel’s household accompanied Peer to the train.

“They shall not say that you went off *sans adieu!*” said Madam, and she kissed him in the railway station.

“I am not concerned,” said she; “when one does not do a thing secretly, one can do anything!”

The signal-whistle let off steam; young Madsen and Primus shouted hurra! the “small playthings” joined in with them; Madam dried her eyes and wiped them 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 which 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 within for gladness; it was a great restraint for him to keep from singing aloud in the cars.

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 one other along with them, Madam Court, well bound,

Court bookbinder Court's lady, born Frandsen. Neither in want nor in prosperity did she forget her friends. She must needs kiss him as his mother and grandmother had done.

"Court could not come with me," said she; "he is hard at work binding a lot of books for the King's private library. You had your good luck, and I have mine. I have my Court and my own chimney corner, with a rocking-chair. Twice a week you are to dine with us. You shall see my life at home; it is a complete ballet!"

Mother and grandmother hardly got a chance to talk to Peer, but they looked on him with eyes that shone with delight. Then he had to take a cab to drive to his new home at the singing-master's. They laughed and they cried.

"He is still so charming!" said grandmother.

"He has his own good face just as when he went away!" said mother; "and he will keep that when he is in the theatre."

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 chamber, where all about on the walls were portraits of composers, and on the stove a white plaster bust stood gleaming. The old man, a little dull, but trustworthiness itself, showed him the drawers in the bureau, and hooks for him to hang his clothes from, and said he was very willing to clean his boots when the singing-master came in and gave Peer a hearty shake of the hand in welcome.

"Here is every convenience!" said he; "make yourself quite at home you can use my piano in the room. Tomorrow we will hear how your voice gets on. This is our warden of the castle, our director of household affairs," 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 dreadfully grimy. But it is not Weber at all that is put up there, it is Mozart. How comes he there?"

"It is the old Weber," said the servant; "I took him myself to the plaster-man, and he has sent him home this morning."

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

“Pardon, sir,” said the servant; “it is the old Weber, who has become clean. The master does not recognize him again now that he has been whitened.”

He could learn how it was of the plaster-man, and then he got the answer that Weber had been broken in pieces, and so he had sent him Mozart instead, it was all the same thing on the stove.

The first day Peer was not to sing nor play, but when our young friend came into the parlor, where the piano stood, and the opera of Joseph lay open upon it, he sang “My Fourteenth Spring,” and sang with a voice that was clear as a bell. There was something so charming about it, so innocent, and yet so strong and full. The singing-master’s eyes were wet with tears.

“So shall it be, and better still!” exclaimed he. “Now we will shut the piano for the day; you will want to rest.”

“But I must go this evening to my mother and grandmother, for I have promised it;” 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 sat up there in the garret, a good many steps up, but he flew up three stairs at a time, and was at their door and received with kisses and embraces.

It was clean and tidy there in the little chamber. There stood the stove, the old bear, and the chest of drawers with the hidden treasure which he knew when he rode his hobbyhorse; on the walls hung the three familiar pictures the King’s portrait, a picture of Our Lord, and father’s silhouette, cut out in black paper. It was a good side view, said mother, but it would have been more like him if the paper had been white and red, for that he was an excellent man! and Peer was the very picture of him.

There was much to talk about, much to tell. They were to have a head-cheese, and Madam Court had promised to look in upon them in the evening.

“But how is it that those two old people, Court and Miss Frandsen, ever should have got married?” asked Peer.

“It has been in their thoughts these many years,” said mother. “You know he was married. Well, he did it, they say, to pique Miss Frandsen, who looked down on him when she was in her high and mighty state. He got a comfortable property with his wife, but she was dreadfully old; lively, and on crutches! She could not die; he waited for it. It would not have surprised me, if, like the man in the story, he had every Sunday put the old thing out in the open air, so that our Lord might see her and remember to send for her.”

“Miss Frandsen sat still and waited,” said grandmother. “I never believed she would get it. But last year Madam Court died, and so Frandsen came to be mistress in the house.”

At that moment in came Madam Court.

“We were talking about you,” said grandmother; “we were talking about your patience and reward.”

“Yes,” said Madam Court. “It did not come in my youth, but one is always young so long as one hasn’t a broken body, says my Court. He is a witty fellow. We are old, good works, he says, both in one volume, and that with gilt top. I am so happy with my Court and my chimney-corner. A porcelain stove! there the fire is made in the evening, and it keeps warm all the next day. It is such a luxury. It is as in the ballet of Circe’s Island. Do you remember me as Circe?”

“Yes, you were charming!” said grandmother. “But how people do change!” That was not at all said impolitely, and was not so taken. Then came the head-cheese and the tea.

The next morning Peer paid his visit at the merchant’s. The lady met him, pressed his hand, and bade him take a seat by her. In conversation with her 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,” said she. “It is not worth talking about.”

The merchant was nearly angry when Peer touched on this. “You are on the wrong track altogether,” said he, and abruptly closed the conversation. Felix was a student and was to go into diplomatic life.

“My husband calls it all folly,” said the lady. “I have no opinion. Providence disposes 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 his thanks.

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

“Mother and grandmother,” answered Peer.

“Oh, then it must be so.”

“You know about it?” said Peer.

“I know; but you will get nothing out of me. Now come, let us sing an hour here at home, this morning.”

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