

FAIRY TALES OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

A STORY FROM THE SAND-HILLS

Hans Christian Andersen

Andersen, Hans Christian (1805-1875) - A Danish writer who is remembered as one of the world's greatest story-tellers. Although most of his poems, novels, and dramas have been forgotten, his Fairy Tales, (compiled 1835- 1872), have gained him lasting fame. A Story from the Sand-hills - One of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales. Jurgen, the son of the sole survivor of a Spanish shipwreck near the sand- hills on the coast of Jutland, is raised by a poor fisherman and his wife.

A STORY FROM THE SAND-HILLS

THIS story is from the sand-dunes or sand-hills of Jutland, but it does not begin there in the North, but far away in the South, in Spain. The wide sea is the highroad from nation to nation; journey in thought; then, to sunny Spain. It is warm and beautiful there; the fiery pomegranate flowers peep from among dark laurels; a cool refreshing breeze from the mountains blows over the orange gardens, over the Moorish halls with their golden cupolas and coloured walls. Children go through the streets in procession with candles and waving banners, and the sky, lofty and clear with its glittering stars, rises above them. Sounds of singing and castanets can be heard, and youths and maidens dance upon the flowering acacia trees, while even the beggar sits upon a block of marble, refreshing himself with a juicy melon, and dreamily enjoying life. It all seems like a beautiful dream.

Here dwelt a newly married couple who completely gave themselves up to the charm of life; indeed they possessed every good thing they could desire- health and happiness, riches and honour.

We are as happy as human beings can be," said the young couple from the depths of their hearts. They had indeed only one step higher to mount on the ladder of happiness- they hoped that God would give them a child, a son like them in form and spirit. The happy little one was to be welcomed with rejoicing, to be cared for with love and tenderness, and enjoy every advantage of wealth and luxury that a rich and influential family can give. So the days went by like a joyous festival.

“Life is a gracious gift from God, almost too great a gift for us to appreciate!” said the young wife. “Yet they say that fulness of joy for ever and ever can only be found in the future life. I cannot realise it!” “The thought arises, perhaps, 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 not these the words of the serpent, the father of lies?” “Surely you do not doubt the existence of a future life?” exclaimed the young wife. It seemed as if one of the first shadows passed over her sunny thoughts.

“Faith realises it, and the priests tell us so,” replied her husband; “but amid all my happiness I feel that it is arrogant to demand a continuation of it- another life after this. Has not so much been given us in this world that we ought to be, we must be, contented with it?” “Yes, it has been given to us,” said the young wife, “but this life is nothing more than one long scene of trial and hardship to many thousands. How many have been cast into this world only to endure poverty, shame, illness, and misfortune? If there were no future life, everything here would be too unequally divided, and God would not be the personification of justice.” “The beggar there,” said her husband, “has joys of his own which seem to him great, and cause him as much pleasure as a king would find in the magnificence 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 just as much from its miserable fate? The dumb creature might demand a future life also, and declare the law unjust that excludes it from the advantages of the higher creation.” “Christ said: ‘In my father’s house are many mansions,’” she answered.

“Heaven is as boundless as the love of our Creator; the dumb animal is also His creature, and I firmly believe that no life will be lost, but each will receive as much happiness as he can enjoy, which will be sufficient for him.” “This world is sufficient for me,” said the husband, throwing his arm round his beautiful, sweet-tempered wife. He sat by her side on the open balcony, smoking a cigarette in the cool air, which was loaded with the sweet scent of carnations and orange blossoms. Sounds of music and the clatter of castanets came from the road beneath, the stars shone above them, and two eyes full of affection- those of his wife- looked upon him with the expression of undying love. “Such a moment,” he said, “makes it worth while to be born, to die, and to be annihilated!” He smiled- the young wife raised her hand in gentle reproof, and

the shadow passed away from her mind, and they were happy- quite happy.

Everything seemed to work together for their good. They advanced in honour, in prosperity, and in happiness. A change came certainly, but it was only a change of place and not of circumstances.

The young man was sent by his Sovereign as ambassador to the Russian Court. This was an office of high dignity, but his birth and his acquirements entitled him to the honour. He possessed a large 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 sent that year to Stockholm, and it was arranged that the dear young couple, the daughter and the son-in-law, should travel in it to St. Petersburg. All the arrangements on board were princely and silk and luxury on every side.

In an old war song, called "The King of England's Son," it says:

"Farewell, he said, and sailed away.

And many recollect that day.

The ropes were of silk, the anchor of gold, And everywhere riches and wealth untold."

These words would aptly describe the vessel from Spain, for here was the same luxury, and the same parting thought naturally arose:

"God grant that we once more may meet In sweet unclouded peace and joy."

There was a favourable wind blowing as they left the Spanish coast, and it would be but a short journey, for they hoped to reach their destination in a few weeks; but when they came out upon the wide ocean the wind dropped, the sea became smooth and shining, and the stars shone brightly. Many festive evenings were spent on board. At last the travellers began to wish for wind, for a favourable breeze; but their wish was useless- not a breath of air stirred, or if it did arise it was contrary. Weeks passed by in this way, two whole months, and then at length a fair wind blew from the south-west. The ship sailed on the high seas between Scotland and Jutland; then the wind increased, just as it did in the old song of "The King of England's Son."

“Mid storm and wind, and pelting hail, Their efforts were of no avail.

The golden anchor forth they threw; Towards Denmark the west wind blew.”

This all happened a long time ago; King Christian VII, who sat on the Danish throne, was still a young man. Much has happened since then, much has altered or been changed. Sea and moorland have been turned into green meadows, stretches of heather have become arable land, and in the shelter of the peasant's cottages, apple-trees and rose-bushes grow, though they certainly require much care, as the sharp west wind blows upon them. In West Jutland one may go back in thought to old times, farther back than the days when Christian VII ruled. The purple heather still extends for miles, with its barrows and aerial spectacles, intersected with sandy uneven roads, just as it did then; towards the west, where broad streams run into the bays, are marshes and meadows encircled by lofty, sandy hills, which, like a chain of Alps, raise their pointed summits near the sea; they are only broken by high ridges of clay, from which the sea, year by year, bites out great mouthfuls, so that the overhanging banks fall down as if by the shock of an earthquake. Thus it is there today and thus it was long ago, when the happy pair were sailing in the beautiful ship.

It was a Sunday, towards the end of September; the sun was shining, and the chiming of the church bells in the Bay of Nisum was carried along by the breeze like a chain of sounds. The churches there are almost entirely built of hewn blocks of stone, each like a piece of rock. The North Sea might foam over them and they would not be disturbed. Nearly all of them are without steeples, and the bells are hung outside between two beams. The service was over, and the congregation passed out into the churchyard, where not a tree or bush was to be seen; no flowers were planted there, and they had not placed a single wreath upon any of the graves. It is just the same now. Rough mounds show where the dead have been buried, and rank grass, tossed by the wind, grows thickly over the whole churchyard; here and there a grave has a sort of monument, a block of half-decayed wood, rudely cut in the shape of a coffin; the blocks are brought from the forest of West Jutland, but the forest is the sea itself, and the inhabitants find beams, and planks, and fragments which the waves have cast upon the beach.

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 walked up to it; she stood there, her eyes resting on the weather-

beaten memorial, and a few moments afterwards her husband joined her. They were both silent, but he took her hand, and they walked together across the purple heath, over moor and meadow towards the sandhills. For a long time they went on without speaking.

“It was a good sermon to-day,” the man said at last. “If we had not God to trust in, we should have nothing.” “Yes,” replied the woman, “He sends joy and sorrow, and He has a right to send them. To-morrow our little son would have been five years old if we had been permitted to keep him.” “It is no use fretting, wife,” said the man. “The boy is well provided for. He is where we hope and pray to go to.” They said nothing more, but went out towards their houses among the sandhills. All at once, in front of one of the houses where the sea grass did not keep the sand down with its twining roots, what seemed to be a column of smoke rose up. A gust of wind rushed between the hills, hurling the particles of sand high into the air; another gust, and the strings of fish hung up to dry flapped and beat violently against the walls of the cottage; then everything was quiet once more, and the sun shone with renewed heat.

The man and his wife went into the cottage. They had soon taken off their Sunday clothes and come out again, hurrying over the dunes which stood there like great waves of sand suddenly arrested in their course, while the sandweeds and dune grass with its bluish stalks spread a changing colour over them. A few neighbours also came out, and helped each other to draw the boats higher up on the beach. The wind now blew more keenly, it was chilly and cold, and when they went back over the sand-hills, sand and little sharp stones blew into their faces.

The waves rose high, crested with white foam, and the wind cut off their crests, scattering the foam far and wide.

Evening came; there was a swelling roar in the air, a wailing or moaning like the voices of despairing spirits, that sounded above the thunder of the waves. The fisherman’s little cottage was on the very margin, and the sand rattled against the window panes; every now and then a violent gust of wind shook the house to its foundation. It was dark, but about midnight the moon would rise. Later on the air became clearer, but the storm swept over the perturbed sea with undiminished fury; the fisher folks had long since gone to bed, but in such weather there was no chance of closing an eye. Presently there was a tapping at the window; the door was opened, and a voice said:

“There’s a large ship stranded on the farthest reef.” In a moment the fisher people sprung from their beds and hastily dressed themselves. The moon had risen, and it was light enough to make the surrounding objects visible to those who could open their eyes in the blinding clouds of sand; the violence of the wind was terrible, and it was only possible to pass among the sand-hills if one crept forward between the gusts; the salt spray flew up from the sea like down, and the ocean foamed like a roaring cataract towards the beach.

Only a practised eye could discern the vessel out in the offing; she was a fine brig, and the waves now lifted her over the reef, three or four cables’ length out of the usual channel. She drove towards the shore, struck on the second reef, and remained fixed.

It was impossible to render assistance; the sea rushed in upon the vessel, making a clean breach over her. Those on shore thought they heard cries for help from those on board, and could plainly distinguish the busy but useless efforts made by the stranded sailors. Now a wave came rolling onward. It fell with enormous force on the bowsprit, tearing it from the vessel, and the stern was lifted high above the water. Two people were seen to embrace and plunge together into the sea, and the next moment one of the largest waves that rolled towards the sandhills threw a body on the beach. It was a woman; the sailors said that she was quite dead, but the women thought they saw signs of life in her, so the stranger was carried across the sand-hills to the fisherman’s cottage. How beautiful and fair she was! She must be a great lady, they said.

They laid her upon the humble bed; there was not a yard of linen on it, only a woollen coverlet to 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. The same thing happened to her ship as to the one spoken of in the song about “The King of England’s Son.”

“Alas! how terrible to see The gallant bark sink rapidly.” Fragments of the wreck and pieces of wood were washed ashore; they were all that remained of the vessel. The wind still blew violently on the coast.

For a few moments the strange lady seemed to rest; but she awoke in pain, and uttered cries of anguish and fear. She opened her wonderfully beautiful eyes, and spoke a few words, but nobody understood her.- And lo! as a reward for the sorrow and suffering she had undergone, she held in her arms a new-born babe.

The child that was to have rested upon a magnificent couch, draped with silken curtains, in a luxurious home; it was to have been welcomed with joy to a life rich in all the good things of this world; and now Heaven had ordained that it should be born in this humble retreat, that it should not even receive a kiss from its mother, for when the fisherman's wife laid the child upon the mother's bosom, it rested on a heart that beat no more- she was dead.

The child that was to have been reared amid wealth and luxury was cast into the world, washed by the sea among the sand-hills to share the fate and hardships of the poor.

Here we are reminded again of the song about "The King of England's Son," for in it mention is made of the custom prevalent at the time, when knights and squires plundered those who had been saved from shipwreck. The ship had stranded some distance south of Nissum Bay, and the cruel, inhuman days, when, as we have just said, the inhabitants of Jutland treated the shipwrecked people so crudely were past, long ago. Affectionate sympathy and self-sacrifice for the unfortunate existed then, just as it does in our own time in many a bright example.

The dying mother and the unfortunate child would have found kindness and help wherever they had been cast by the winds, but nowhere would it have been more sincere than in the cottage of the poor fisherman's wife, who had stood, only the day before, beside her child's grave, who would have been five years old that day if God had spared it to her.

No one knew who the dead stranger was, they could not even form a conjecture; the fragments of wreckage gave no clue to the matter.

No tidings reached Spain of the fate of the daughter and son-in-law. They did not arrive at their destination, and violent storms had raged during the past weeks.

At last the verdict was given: "Foundered at sea- all lost." But in the fisherman's cottage among the sand-hills near Hunsby, there lived a little scion of the rich Spanish family.

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

They called the boy Jurgen.

"It must certainly be a Jewish child, its skin is so dark," the people said.

“It might be an Italian or a Spaniard,” remarked the clergyman.

But to the fisherman’s wife these nations seemed all the same, and she consoled herself with the thought 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 cottage, and the Danish dialect spoken by the West Jutes became his language. The pomegranate seed from Spain became a hardy plant on the coast of West Jutland. Thus may circumstances alter the course of a man’s life! To this home he clung with deep-rooted affection; he was to experience cold and hunger, and the misfortunes and hardships that surround the poor; but he also tasted of their joys.

Childhood has bright days for every one, and the memory of them shines through the whole after-life. The boy had many sources of pleasure and enjoyment; the coast for miles and miles was full of playthings, for it was a mosaic of pebbles, some red as coral or yellow as amber, and others again white and rounded like birds’ eggs and smoothed and prepared by the sea. Even the bleached fishes’ skeletons, the water plants dried by the wind, and seaweed, white and shining long linen-like bands waving between the stones- all these seemed made to give pleasure and occupation for the boy’s thoughts, and he had an intelligent mind; many great talents lay dormant in him. How readily he remembered stories and songs that he heard, and how dexterous he was with his fingers! With stones and mussel-shells he could put together pictures and ships with which one could decorate the room; and he could make wonderful things from a stick, his foster-mother said, although he was still so young and little. He had a sweet voice, and every melody seemed to flow naturally from his lips. And in his heart were hidden chords, which might have sounded far out into the world if he had been placed anywhere else than in the fisherman’s hut by the North Sea.

One day another ship was wrecked on the coast, and among other things a chest filled with valuable flower bulbs was washed ashore. Some were put into saucepans and cooked, for they were thought to be fit to eat, and others lay and shrivelled in the sand- they did not accomplish their purpose, or unfold their magnificent colours. Would Jurgen fare better? The flower bulbs had soon played their part, but he had years of apprenticeship before him. Neither he nor his friends noticed in what a monotonous, uniform way one day followed another, for there was always plenty to do and see. The

ocean itself was a great lesson-book, and it unfolded a new leaf each day of calm or storm- the crested wave or the smooth surface.

The visits to the church were festive occasions, but among the fisherman's house one was especially looked forward to; this was, in fact, the visit of the brother of Jurgen's foster-mother, the eel-breeder from Fjaltring, near Bovbjerg.

He came twice a year in a cart, painted red with blue and white tulips upon it, and full of eels; it was covered and locked like a box, two dun oxen drew it, and Jurgen was allowed to guide them.

The eel-breeder was a witty fellow, a merry guest, and brought a measure of brandy with him. They all received a small glassful or a cupful if there were not enough glasses; even Jurgen had about a thimbleful, that he might digest the fat eel, as the eel-breeder said; he always told one story over and over again, and if his hearers laughed he would immediately repeat it to them. Jurgen while still a boy, and also when he was older, used phrases from the eel-breeder's story on various occasions, so it will be as well for us to listen to it. It runs thus:

"The eels went into the bay, and the young ones begged leave to go a little farther out. 'Don't go too far,' said their mother; '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 mother, and these wept and said, 'We only went a little way out, and the ugly eel-spearer came immediately and stabbed five of our sisters to death.' 'They'll come back again,' said the mother eel. 'Oh, no,' exclaimed the daughters, 'for he skinned them, cut them in two, and fried them.' 'Oh, they'll come back again,' the mother eel persisted. 'No,' replied the daughters, 'for he ate them up.' 'They'll come back again,' repeated the mother eel. 'But he drank brandy after them,' said 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 the proper thing to drink brandy after eating eels." This story was the tinsel thread, the most humorous recollection of Jurgen's life. He also wanted to go a little way farther out and up the bay- that is to say, out into the world in a ship- but his mother said, like the eel-breeder, "There are so many bad people- eel spearkers!" He wished to go a little way past the sand-hills, out into the dunes, and at last he did: four happy days, the brightest of his childhood, fell to his lot, and the whole beauty and splendour of Jutland, all the happiness and sunshine of his home, were concentrated in these. He went to a festival, but it was a burial feast.

A rich relation of the fisherman's family had died; the farm was situated far eastward in the country and a little towards the north. Jurgen's foster parents went there, and he also went with them from the dunes, over heath and moor, where the Skjaerumaa takes its course through green meadows and contains many eels; mother eels live there with their daughters, who are caught and eaten up by wicked people. But do not men sometimes act quite as cruelly towards their own fellow-men? Was not the knight Sir Bugge murdered by wicked people? And though he was well spoken of, did he not also wish to kill the architect who built the castle for him, with its thick walls and tower, at the point where the Skjaerumaa falls into the bay? Jurgen and his parents now stood there; the wall and the ramparts still remained, and red crumbling fragments lay scattered around. Here it was that Sir Bugge, after the architect had left him, said to one of his men, "Go after him and say, 'Master, the tower shakes.' If he turns round, kill him and take away the money I paid him, but if he does not turn round let him go in peace." The man did as he was told; the architect did not turn round, but called back "The tower does not shake in the least, but one day a man will come from the west in a blue cloak- he will cause it to shake!" And so indeed it happened a hundred years later, for the North Sea broke in and cast down the tower; but Predbjorn Gyldenstjerne, the man who then possessed the castle, built a new castle higher up at the end of the meadow, and that one is standing to this day, and is called NorreVosborg.

Jurgen and his foster parents went past this castle. They had told him its story during the long winter evenings, and now he saw the stately edifice, with its double moat, and trees and bushes; the wall, covered with ferns, rose within the moat, but the lofty lime-trees were the most beautiful of all; they grew up to the highest windows, and the air was full of their sweet fragrance. In a north-west corner of the garden stood a great bush full of blossom, like winter snow amid the summer's green; it was a juniper bush, the first that Jurgen had ever seen in bloom.

He never forgot it, nor the lime-trees; the child's soul treasured up these memories of beauty and fragrance to gladden the old man.

From Norre-Vosborg, where the juniper blossomed, the journey became more pleasant, for they met some other people who were also going to the funeral 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, they thought, was better than walking. So they continued their journey across the rugged heath. The oxen which drew the waggon stopped every now and then, where a

patch of fresh grass appeared amid the heather. The sun shone with considerable heat, and it was wonderful to behold how in the far distance something like smoke seemed to be rising; yet this smoke was clearer than the air; 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 Jurgen’s imagination. He felt as if they were now about to enter fairyland, though everything was still real. How quiet it was! The heath stretched far and wide around them like a beautiful carpet. The heather was in blossom, and the juniper-bushes and fresh oak saplings rose like bouquets from the earth. An inviting place for a frolic, if it had not been for the number of poisonous adders of which the travellers spoke; they also mentioned that the place had formerly been infested with wolves, and that the district was still called Wolfsborg for this reason. The old man who was driving the oxen told them that in the lifetime of his father the horses had many a hard battle with the wild beasts that were now exterminated. One morning, when he himself had gone out to bring in the horses, he found one of them standing with its forefeet on a wolf it had killed, but the savage animal had torn and lacerated the brave horse’s legs.

The journey over the heath and the deep sand was only too quickly at an end.

They stopped before the house of mourning, where they found plenty of guests within and without. Waggon after waggon stood side by side, while the horses and oxen had been turned out to graze on the scanty pasture. Great sand-hills like those at home by the North Sea rose behind the house and extended far and wide.

How had they come here, so many miles inland? They were as large and high as those on the coast, and the wind had carried them there; there was also a legend attached to them.

Psalms were sung, and a few of the old people shed tears; with this exception, the guests were cheerful enough, it seemed to Jurgen, and there was plenty to eat and drink. There were eels of the fattest, requiring brandy to bury them, as the eelbreeder said; and certainly they did not forget to carry out his maxim here.

Jurgen went in and out the house; and on the third day he felt as much at home as he did in the fisherman’s cottage among the sand-hills, where he had passed his early days. Here on the heath were riches unknown to him until now; for flowers, blackberries, and bilberries were to be found in profusion, so large and sweet that when they were crushed beneath the tread of passers-by the

heather was stained with their red juice. Here was a barrow and yonder another.

Then columns of smoke rose into the still air; it was a heath fire, they told him how brightly it blazed in the dark evening!

The fourth day came, and the funeral festivities were at an end; they were to go back from the land-dunes to the sand-dunes.

“Ours are better,” said the old fisherman, Jurgen’s foster-father; “these have no strength.” And they spoke of the way in which the sand-dunes had come inland, and it seemed very easy to understand. This is how they explained it:

A dead body had been found on the coast, and the peasants buried it in the churchyard. From that time the sand began to fly about and the sea broke in with violence. A wise man in the district advised them to open the grave and see if the buried man was not lying sucking his thumb, for if so he must be a sailor, and the sea would not rest until it had got him back. 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 to it; and the oxen ran off with the sailor over heath and moor to the ocean, as if they had been stung by an adder. Then the sand ceased to fly inland, but the hills that had been piled up still remained.

All this Jurgen listened to and treasured up in his memory of the happiest days of his childhood- the days of the burial feast.

How delightful it was to see fresh places and to mix with strangers! And he was to go still farther, for he was not yet fourteen years old when he went out in a ship to see the world. He encountered bad weather, heavy seas, unkindness, and hard men- such were his experiences, for he became ship-boy. Cold nights, bad living, and blows had to be endured; then he felt his noble Spanish blood boil within him, and bitter, angry, words rose to his lips, but he gulped them down; it was better, although he felt as the eel must feel when it is skinned, cut up, and put into the frying-pan.

“I shall get over it,” 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 joy and prosperity, but he knew nothing of his home or his relations, and his relations knew just as little about him.

The poor ship boy was not permitted 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 sent to carry them on board.

Jurgen stood there in his shabby clothes which looked as if they had been washed in the ditch and dried in the chimney; he, who had always dwelt among the sand-hills, now saw a great city for the first time. How lofty the houses seemed, and what a number of people there were in the streets! some pushing this way, some that- a perfect maelstrom of citizens and peasants, monks and soldiersthe jingling of bells on the trappings of asses and mules, the chiming of church bells, calling, shouting, hammering and knocking- all going on at once. Every trade was located in the basement of the houses or in the side thoroughfares; and the sun shone with such heat, and the air was so close, that one seemed to be in an oven full of beetles, cockchafers, bees and flies, all humming and buzzing together. Jurgen scarcely knew where he was or which way he went. Then he saw just in front of him the great doorway of a cathedral; the lights were gleaming in the dark aisles, and the fragrance of incense was wafted towards him. Even the poorest beggar ventured up the steps into the sanctuary. Jurgen followed the sailor he was with into the church, and stood in the sacred edifice. Coloured pictures gleamed from their golden background, and on the altar stood the figure of the Virgin with the child Jesus, surrounded by lights and flowers; priests in festive robes were chanting, and choir boys in dazzling attire swung silver censers. What splendour and magnificence he saw there! It streamed in upon his soul and overpowered him: the church and the faith of his parents surrounded him, and touched a chord in his heart that caused his eyes to overflow with tears.

They went from the church to the market-place. Here a quantity of provisions were given him to carry. The way to the harbour was long; and weary and overcome with various emotions, he rested for a few moments before a splendid house, with marble pillars, statues, and broad steps. Here he rested his burden against the wall. Then a porter in livery came out, lifted up a silver-headed cane, and drove him away- him, the grandson of that house. But no one knew that, and he just as little as any one. Then he went on board again, and once more encountered rough words and blows, much work and little sleep- such was his experience of life. They say it is good to suffer in one's young days, if age brings something to make up for it.

His period of service on board the ship came to an end, and the vessel lay once more at Ringkjøbing in Jutland. He came ashore, and went home to the sanddunes near Hunsby; but his foster-mother had died during his absence.

A hard winter followed this summer. Snow-storms swept over land and sea, and there was difficulty in getting from one place to another. How unequally things are distributed in this world! Here there was bitter cold and snow-storms, while in Spain there was burning sunshine and oppressive heat. Yet, when a clear frosty day came, and Jurgen saw the swans flying in numbers from the sea towards the land, across to Norre-Vosborg, it seemed to him that people could breathe more freely here; the summer also in this part of the world was splendid.

In imagination he saw the heath blossom and become purple with rich juicy berries, and the elder-bushes and lime-trees at Norre Vosborg in flower. He made up his mind to go there again.

Spring came, and the fishing began. Jurgen was now an active helper in this, for he had grown during the last year, and was quick at work. He was full of life, and knew how to swim, to tread water, and to turn over and tumble in the strong tide. They often warned him to beware of the sharks, which seize the best swimmer, draw him down, and devour him; but such was not to be Jurgen's fate.

At a neighbour's house in the dunes there was a boy named Martin, with whom Jurgen was on very friendly terms, and they both took service in the same ship to Norway, and also went together to Holland. They never had a quarrel, but a person can be easily excited to quarrel when he is naturally hot tempered, for he often shows it in many ways; and this is just what Jurgen did one day when they fell out about the merest trifle. They were sitting behind the cabin door, eating from a delft plate, which they had placed between them. Jurgen held his pocketknife in his hand and raised it towards Martin, and at the same time became ashy pale, and his eyes had an ugly look. Martin only said, "Ah! ah! you are one of that sort, are you? Fond of using the knife!" The words were scarcely spoken, when Jurgen's hand sank down. He did not answer a syllable, but went on eating, and afterwards returned to his work. When they were resting again he walked up to Martin and said:

"Hit me in the face! I deserve it. But sometimes I feel as if I had a pot in me that boils over."

"There, let the thing rest," replied Martin.

And after that they were almost better friends than ever; when afterwards they returned to the dunes and began telling their adventures, this was told among the rest. Martin said that Jurgen was certainly passionate, but a good fellow after all.

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

In Norway the peasants go into the mountains and take the cattle there to find pasture. On the west coast of Jutland huts have been erected among the sandhills; they are built of pieces of wreck, and thatched with turf and heather; there are sleeping places round the walls, and here the fishermen live and sleep during the early spring. Every fisherman has a female helper, or manager as she is called, who baits his hooks, prepares warm beer for him when he comes ashore, and gets the dinner cooked and ready for him by the time he comes back to the hut tired and hungry. Besides this the managers bring up the fish from the boats, cut them open, prepare them, and have generally a great deal to do.

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

One of the girls, whose name was Else, had known Jurgen from childhood; they were glad to see each other, and were of the same opinion on many points, but in appearance they were entirely opposite; for he was dark, and she was pale, and fair, and had flaxen hair, and eyes as blue as the sea in sunshine.

As they were walking together one day, Jurgen held her hand very firmly in his, and she said to him:

“Jurgen, I have something I want to say to you; let me be your manager, for you are like a brother to me; but Martin, whose housekeeper I am- he is my lover but you need not tell this to the others.” It seemed to Jurgen as if the loose sand was giving way under his feet. He did not speak a word, but nodded his head, and that meant “yes.” It was all that was necessary; but he suddenly felt in his heart that he hated Martin, and the more he thought the more he felt convinced that Martin had stolen away from him the only being he ever loved, and that this was Else: he had never thought of Else in this way before, but now it all became plain to him.

When the sea is rather rough, and the fishermen are coming home in their great boats, it is wonderful to see how they cross the reefs. One of them stands upright in the bow of the boat, and the others watch him sitting with the oars in their hands. Outside the reef it looks as if the boat was not approaching land but going back to sea; then the man who is standing up gives them the signal that the great wave is coming which is to float them across the reef. The boat is lifted high into the air, so that the keel is seen from the shore; the next moment nothing can be seen, mast, keel, and people

are all hidden- it seems 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 third reef are passed in the same manner; then the fishermen jump into the water and push the boat towards the shore- every wave helps them- and at length they have it drawn up, beyond the reach of the breakers.

A wrong order given in front of the reef- the slightest hesitation- and the boat would be lost, "Then it would be all over with me and Martin too!" This thought passed through Jurgen's mind one day while they were out at sea, where his foster-father had been taken suddenly ill. The fever had seized him.

They were only a few oars' strokes from the reef, and Jurgen sprang from his seat and stood up in the bow.

"Father-let me come!" he said, and he glanced at Martin and across the waves; every oar bent with the exertions of the rowers as the great wave came towards them, and he saw his father's pale face, and dared not obey the evil impulse that had shot through his brain. The boat came safely across the reef to land; but the evil thought remained in his heart, and roused up every little fibre of bitterness which he remembered between himself and Martin since they had known each other. But he could not weave the fibres together, nor did he endeavour to do so. He felt that Martin had robbed him, and this was enough to make him hate his former friend. Several of the fishermen saw this, but Martin did not- he remained as obliging and talkative as ever, in fact he talked rather too much.

Jurgen's foster-father took to his bed, and it became his death-bed, for he died a week afterwards; and now Jurgen was heir to the little house behind the sandhills. It was small, certainly, but still it was something, and Martin had nothing of the kind.

"You will not go to sea again, Jurgen, I suppose," observed one of the old fishermen. "You will always stay with us now." But this was not Jurgen's intention; he wanted to see something of the world.

The eel-breeder of Fjaltring had an uncle at Old Skjagen, who was a fisherman, but also a prosperous merchant with ships upon the sea; he was said to be a good old man, and it would not be a bad thing to enter his service. Old Skjagen lies in the extreme north of Jutland, as far away from the Hunsby dunes as one can travel in that country; and this is just what pleased Jurgen, for he did not

want to remain till the wedding of Martin and Else, which would take place in a week or two.

The old fisherman said it was foolish to go away, for now that Jurgen had a home Else would very likely be inclined to take him instead of Martin.

Jurgen gave such a vague answer that it was not easy to make out what he meant- the old man brought Else to him, and she said:

“You have a home now; you ought to think of that.” And Jurgen thought of many things.

The sea has heavy waves, but there are heavier waves in the human heart.

Many thoughts, strong and weak, rushed through Jurgen’s brain, and he said to Else:

“If Martin had a house like mine, which of us would you rather have?” “But Martin has no house and cannot get one.” “Suppose he had one?” “Well, then I would certainly take Martin, for that is what my heart tells me; but one cannot live upon love.” Jurgen turned these things over in his mind all night. Something was working within him, he hardly knew what it was, but it was even stronger than his love for Else; and so he went to Martin’s, and what he said and did there was well considered. He let the house to Martin on most liberal terms, saying that he wished to go to sea again, because he loved it. And Else kissed him when she heard of it, for she loved Martin best.

Jurgen proposed to start early in the morning, and on the evening before his departure, when it was already getting rather late, he felt a wish to visit Martin once more. He started, and among the dunes met the old fisherman, who was angry at his leaving the place. The old man made jokes about Martin, and declared there must be some magic about that fellow, of whom the girls were so fond.

Jurgen did not pay any attention to his remarks, but said good-bye to the old man and went on towards the house where Martin dwelt. He heard loud talking inside; Martin was not alone, and this made Jurgen waver in his determination, for he did not wish to see Else again. On second thoughts, he decided that it was better not to hear any more thanks from Martin, and so he turned back.

On the following morning, before the sun rose, he fastened his knapsack on his back, took his wooden provision box in his hand, and went away among the sand-hills towards the coast path. This way was more pleasant than the heavy sand road, and besides it

was shorter; and he intended to go first to Fjaltring, near Bovbjerg, where the eel-breeder lived, to whom he had promised a visit.

The sea lay before him, clear and blue, and the mussel shells and pebbles, the playthings of his childhood, crunched over his feet. While he thus walked on his nose suddenly began to bleed; it was a trifling occurrence, but trifles sometimes are of great importance. 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. The sea-cale bloomed here and there in the sand as he passed. He broke off a spray and stuck it in his hat; he determined to be merry and light-hearted, for he was going out into the wide world- "a little way out, beyond the bay," as the young eels had said. "Beware of bad people who will catch you, and skin you, 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 was high in the heavens 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 there were other people with them. But this did not concern him.

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

"This wicked deed will cost you your life," they said. "It is a good thing we have caught you." He was accused of nothing less than murder. Martin had been found dead, with his throat cut. One of the fishermen, late on the previous evening, had met Jurgen going towards Martin's house; this was not the first time Jurgen had raised his knife against Martin, so they felt sure that he was the murderer. The prison was in a town at a great distance, and the wind was contrary for going there by sea; but it would not take half an hour to get across the bay, and another quarter of an hour would bring them to Norre-Vosborg, the great castle with ramparts and moat. One of Jurgen's captors was a fisherman, a brother of the keeper of the castle, and he said it might be managed that Jurgen should be placed for the present in the dungeon at Vosborg, where

Long Martha the gipsy had been shut up till her execution. They paid no attention to Jurgen's defence; the few drops of blood on his shirt-sleeve bore heavy witness against him. But he was conscious of his innocence, and as there was no chance of clearing himself at present he submitted to his fate.

The party landed just at the place where Sir Bugge's castle had stood, and where Jurgen had walked with his foster-parents after the burial feast, during the four happiest days of his childhood. He was led by the well-known path, over the meadow to Vosborg; once more the elders were in bloom and the lofty lime-trees gave forth sweet fragrance, and it seemed as if it were but yesterday that he had last seen the spot. In each of the two wings of the castle there was a staircase which led to a place below the entrance, from whence there is access to a low, vaulted cellar. In this dungeon Long Martha had been imprisoned, and from here she was led away to the scaffold. She had eaten the hearts of five children, and had imagined that if she could obtain two more she would be able to fly and make herself invisible. In the middle of the roof of the cellar there was a little narrow air-hole, but no window. The flowering lime trees could not breathe refreshing fragrance into that abode, where everything was dark and mouldy. There was only a rough bench in the cell; but a good conscience is a soft pillow, and therefore Jurgen 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 a baron's castle just as easily as it can into a fisherman's cottage, and why should he not creep in here, where Jurgen sat thinking of Long Martha and her wicked deeds? Her last thoughts on the night before her execution had filled this place, and the magic that tradition asserted to have been practised here, in Sir Svanwedel's time, came into Jurgen'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 flowering elder and the sweet smelling lime-trees.

He was not left there long. They took him away to the town of Ringjobing, where he was imprisoned with equal severity.

Those times were not like ours. The common people were treated harshly; and it was just after the days when farms were converted into knights' estates, when coachmen and servants were often made magistrates, and had power to sentence a poor man, for a small offence, to lose his property and to corporeal punishment.

Judges of this kind were still to be found; and in Jutland, so far from the capital, and from the enlightened, well-meaning, head of the Government, the law was still very loosely administered sometimes- the smallest grievance Jurgen could expect was that his case should be delayed.

His dwelling was cold and comfortless; and how long would he be obliged to bear all this? It seemed his fate to suffer misfortune and sorrow innocently. He now had plenty of time to reflect on the difference of fortune on earth, and to wonder why this fate had been allotted to him; yet he felt sure that all would be made clear in the next life, the existence that awaits us when this life is over. His faith had grown strong in the poor fisherman's cottage; the light which had never shone into his father's mind, in all the richness and sunshine of Spain, was sent to him to be his comfort in poverty and distress, a sign of that mercy of God which never fails.

The spring storms began to blow. The rolling and moaning of the North Sea could be heard for miles inland when the wind was blowing, and then it sounded like the rushing of a thousand waggons over a hard road with a mine underneath.

Jurgen heard these sounds in his prison, and it was a relief to him. No music could have touched 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 goes, just as the snail carries its home even into a strange country.

He listened eagerly to its deep murmur and then the thought arose- "Free! free! How happy to be free, even barefooted 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 Niels the thief, called also a horse-dealer, was arrested; and now better times came, and it was seen that Jurgen had been wrongly accused.

On the afternoon before Jurgen's departure from home, and before the murder, Niels the thief, had met Martin at a beer-house in the neighbourhood of Ringkjøbing. A few glasses were drunk, not enough to cloud the brain, but enough to loosen Martin's tongue. He began to boast and to say that he had obtained a house and intended to marry, and when Niels asked him where he was going to get the money, he slapped his pocket proudly and said:

"The money is here, where it ought to be." This boast cost him his life; for when he went home Niels followed him, and cut his throat,

intending to rob the murdered man of the gold, which did not exist.

All this was circumstantially explained; but it is enough for us to know that Jurgen was set free. But what compensation did he get for having been imprisoned a whole year, and shut out from all communication with his fellow creatures? 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 people; they were not all hard and pitiless. But the best thing of all was that the merchant Bronne, of Skjagen, into whose service Jurgen had proposed entering the year before, was just at that time on business in the town of Ringkjober. Bronne heard the whole story; he was kind-hearted, and understood what Jurgen must have felt and suffered. Therefore he 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 Jurgen went forth from prison as if to paradise, to find freedom, affection, and trust. He was to travel this path now, for no goblet of life is all bitterness; no good man would pour out such a draught for his fellow-man, and how should He do it, Who is love personified?

“Let everything be buried and forgotten,” said Bronne, the merchant. “Let us draw a thick line through last year: we will even burn the almanack. In two days we will start for dear, friendly, peaceful Skjagen. People call it an out-of-the-way corner; but it is a good warm chimney-corner, and its windows open toward every part of the world.” What a journey that was: It was like taking fresh breath out of the cold dungeon air into the warm sunshine. The heather bloomed in pride and beauty, and the shepherd-boy sat on a barrow and blew his pipe, which he had carved for himself out of a sheep bone. Fata Morgana, the beautiful aerial phenomenon of the wilderness, appeared with hanging gardens and waving forests, and the wonderful cloud called “Lokeman driving his sheep” also was seen.

Up towards Skjagen they went, through the land of the Wendels, whence the men with long beards (the Longobardi or Lombards) had emigrated in the reign of King Snio, when all the children and old people were to have been killed, till the noble Dame Gambaruk proposed that the young people should emigrate. Jurgen knew all this, he had some little knowledge; and although he did not know the land of the Lombards beyond the lofty Alps, he had an idea that it must be there, for in his boyhood he had been in the south,

in Spain. He thought of the plenteousness of the southern fruit, of the red pomegranate flowers, of the humming, buzzing, and toiling in the great beehive of a city he had seen; but home is the best place after all, and Jurgen's home was Denmark.

At last they arrived at "Vendilskaga," as Skjagen is called in old Norwegian and Icelandic writings. At that time Old Skjagen, with the eastern and western town, extended for miles, with sand hills and arable land as far as the lighthouse near "Grenen." Then, as now, the houses were strewn among the wind-raised sand-hills- a wilderness in which the wind sports with the sand, and where the voice of the sea-gull and wild swan strikes harshly on the ear.

In the south-west, a mile from "Grenen," lies Old Skjagen; merchant Bronne dwelt here, and this was also to be Jurgen's home for the future. The dwellinghouse was tarred, and all the small out-buildings had been put together from pieces of wreck. There was no fence, for indeed there was nothing to fence in except the long rows of fishes which were hung upon lines, one above the other, to dry in the wind. The entire coast was strewn with spoiled herrings, for there were so many of these fish that a net was scarcely thrown into the sea before it was filled. They were caught by carloads, and many of them were either thrown back into the sea or left to lie on the beach.

The old man's wife and daughter and his servants also came to meet him with great rejoicing. There was a great squeezing of hands, and talking and questioning. And the daughter, what a sweet face and bright eyes she had!

The inside of the house was comfortable and roomy. Fritters, that a king would have looked upon as a dainty dish, were placed on the table, and there was wine from the Skjagen vineyard- 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 Jurgen was, and how innocently he had suffered, they looked at him in a still more friendly way; and pretty Clara's eyes had a look of especial interest as she listened to his story. Jurgen found a happy home in Old Skjagen. It did his heart good, for it had been sorely tried. He had drunk the bitter goblet of love which softens or hardens the heart, according to circumstances. Jurgen's heart was still soft- it was young, and therefore it was a good thing that Miss Clara was going in three weeks' time to Christiansand in Norway, in her father's ship, to visit an aunt and to stay there the whole winter.

On the Sunday before she went away they all went to church, to the Holy Communion. The church was large and handsome, and had been built centuries before by Scotchmen and Dutchmen; it stood some little way out of the town. It was rather ruinous certainly, and the road to it was heavy, through deep sand, but the people gladly surmounted these difficulties to get to the house of God, to sing psalms and to 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 Limfjorden. The Virgin Mary, with a golden crown on her head and the child Jesus in her arms, stood lifelike on the altar; the holy Apostles had been carved in the choir, and on the walls there were 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.

Jurgen felt overcome by a holy, childlike feeling, like that which possessed him, when, as a boy, he 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 Holy Communion. He partook of the bread and wine, and it so happened that he knelt by the side of Miss Clara; but his thoughts were so fixed upon heaven and the Holy Sacrament that he did not notice his neighbour until he rose from his knees, and then he saw tears rolling down her cheeks.

She left Skjagen and went to Norway two days later. He remained behind, and made himself useful on the farm and at the fishery. He went out fishing, and in those days fish were more plentiful and larger than they are now. The shoals of the mackerel glittered in the dark nights, and indicated where they were swimming; the gurnards snarled, and the crabs gave forth pitiful yells when they were chased, for fish are not so mute as people say.

Every Sunday Jurgen went to church; and when his eyes rested on the picture of the Virgin Mary over the altar as he sat there, they often glided away to the spot where they had knelt side by side.

Autumn came, and brought rain and snow with it; the water rose up right into the town of Skjagen, the sand could not suck it all in, one had to wade through it or go by boat. The storms threw vessel after vessel on the fatal reefs; there were snow-storm and sand-storms; the sand flew up to the houses, blocking the entrances, so that people had to creep up through the chimneys; that was

nothing at all remarkable here. It was pleasant and cheerful indoors, where peat fuel and fragments of wood from the wrecks blazed and crackled upon the hearth. Merchant Bronne read aloud, from an old chronicle, about Prince Hamlet of Denmark, who had come over from England, landed near Bovbjerg, and fought a battle; close by Ramme was his grave, only a few miles from the place where the eel-breeder lived; hundreds of barrow rose there from the heath, forming as it were an enormous churchyard. Merchant Bronne had himself been at Hamlet's grave; they spoke about old times, and about their neighbours, the English and the Scotch, and Jurgen sang the air of "The King of England's Son," and of his splendid ship and its outfit.

"In the hour of peril when most men fear, He clasped the bride that he held so dear, And proved himself the son of a King; Of his courage and valour let us sing."

This verse Jurgen sang with so much feeling that his eyes beamed, and they were black and sparkling since his infancy.

There was wealth, comfort, and happiness even among the domestic animals, for they were all well cared for, and well kept. The kitchen looked bright with its copper and tin utensils, and white plates, and from the rafters hung hams, beef, and winter stores in plenty. This can still be seen in many rich farms on the west coast of Jutland: plenty to eat and drink, clean, prettily decorated rooms, active minds, cheerful tempers, and hospitality can be found there, as in an Arab's tent.

Jurgen had never spent such a happy time since the famous burial feast, and yet Miss Clara was absent, except in the thoughts and memory of all.

In April a ship was to start for Norway, and Jurgen was to sail in it. He was full of life and spirits, and looked so sturdy and well that Dame Bronne said it did her good to see him.

"And it does one good to look at you also, old wife," said the merchant. "Jurgen has brought fresh life into our winter evenings, and into you too, mother. You look younger than ever this year, and seem well and cheerful. But then you were once the prettiest girl in Viborg, and that is saying a great deal, for I have always found the Viborg girls the prettiest of any." Jurgen said nothing, but he thought of a certain maiden of Skjagen, whom he was soon to visit. The ship set sail for Christiansand in Norway, and as the wind was favourable it soon arrived there.

One morning merchant Bronne went out to the lighthouse, which stands a little way out of Old Skjagen, not far from "Grenen." The

light was out, and the sun was already high in the heavens, when he mounted the tower. The sand-banks extend a whole mile from the shore, beneath the water, outside these banks; many ships could be seen that day, and with the aid of his telescope the old man thought he descried his own ship, the Karen Bronne. Yes! certainly, there she was, sailing homewards with Clara and Jurgen on board.

Clara sat on deck, and saw the sand-hills gradually appearing in the distance; the church and lighthouse looked like a heron and a swan rising from the blue waters. If the wind held good they might reach home in about an hour. So near they were to home and all its joys- so near to death and all its terrors! A plank in the ship gave way, and the water rushed in; the crew flew to the pumps, and did their best to stop the leak. A signal of distress was hoisted, but they were still fully a mile from the shore. Some fishing boats were in sight, but they were too far off to be of any use. The wind blew towards the land, the tide was in their favour, but it was all useless; the ship could not be saved.

Jurgen threw his right arm round Clara, and pressed her to him. With what a look she gazed up into his face, as with a prayer to God for help he breasted the waves, which rushed over the sinking ship! She uttered a cry, but she felt safe and certain that he would not leave her to sink. And in this hour of terror and danger Jurgen felt as the king's son did, as told in the old song:

“In the hour of peril when most men fear, He clasped the bride that he held so dear.”

How glad he felt that he was a good swimmer! He worked his way onward with his feet and one arm, while he held the young girl up firmly with the other.

He rested on the waves, he trod the water- in fact, did everything he could think of, in order not to fatigue himself, and to reserve strength enough to reach land.

He heard Clara sigh, and felt her shudder convulsively, and he pressed her more closely to him. Now and then a wave rolled over them, the current lifted them; the water, although deep, was so clear that for a moment he imagined he saw the shoals of mackerel glittering, or Leviathan himself ready to swallow them. Now the clouds cast a shadow over the water, then again came the playing sunbeams; flocks of loudly screaming birds passed over him, and the plump and lazy wild ducks which allow themselves to be drifted by the waves rose up terrified at the sight of the swimmer. He began to feel his strength decreasing, but he was only a few

cable lengths' distance from the shore, and help was coming, for a boat was approaching him. At this moment he distinctly saw a white staring figure under the water- a wave lifted him up, and he came nearer to the figure- he felt a violent shock, and everything became dark around him.

On the sand reef lay the wreck of a ship, which was covered with water at high tide; the white figure head rested against the anchor, the sharp iron edge of which rose just above the surface. Jurgen had come in contact with this; the tide had driven him against it with great force. He sank down stunned with the blow, but the next wave lifted him and the young girl up again. Some fishermen, coming with a boat, seized them and dragged them into it. The blood streamed down over Jurgen's face; he seemed dead, but still held the young girl so tightly that they were obliged to take her from him by force. She was pale and lifeless; they laid her in the boat, and rowed as quickly as possible to the shore. They tried every means to restore Clara to life, but it was all of no avail. Jurgen had been swimming for some distance with a corpse in his arms, and had exhausted his strength for one who was dead.

Jurgen still breathed, so the fishermen carried him to the nearest house upon the sand-hills, where a smith and general dealer lived who knew something of surgery, and bound up Jurgen's wounds in a temporary way until a surgeon could be obtained from the nearest town the next day. The injured man's brain was affected, and in his delirium he uttered wild cries; but on the third day he lay quiet and weak upon his bed; his life seemed to hang by a thread, and the physician said it would be better for him if this thread broke. "Let us pray that God may take him," he said, "for he will never be the same man again." But life did not depart from him- the thread would not break, but the thread of memory was severed; the thread of his mind had been cut through, and what was still more grievous, a body remained- a living healthy body that wandered about like a troubled spirit.

Jurgen remained in merchant Bronne's house. "He was hurt while endeavouring to save our child," said the old man, "and now he is our son." People called Jurgen insane, but that was not exactly the correct term. He was like an instrument in which the strings are loose and will give no sound; only occasionally they regained their power for a few minutes, and then they sounded as they used to do.

He would sing snatches of songs or old melodies, pictures of the past would rise before him, and then disappear in the mist, as it were, but as a general rule he sat staring into vacancy, without a

thought. We may conjecture that he did not suffer, but his dark eyes lost their brightness, and looked like clouded glass.

“Poor mad Jurgen,” said the people. And this was the end of a life whose infancy was to have been surrounded with wealth and splendour had his parents lived! All his great mental abilities had been lost, nothing but hardship, sorrow, and disappointment had been his fate. He was like a rare plant, torn from its native soil, and tossed upon the beach to wither there. And was this one of God’s creatures, fashioned in His own likeness, to have no better fate? Was he to be only the plaything of fortune? No! the all-loving Creator 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.” The pious old wife of the merchant repeated these words from the Psalms of David in patience and hope, and the prayer of her heart was that Jurgen might soon be called away to enter into eternal life.

In the churchyard where the walls were surrounded with sand Clara lay buried. Jurgen did not seem to know this; it did not enter his mind, which could only retain fragments of the past. Every Sunday he went to church with the old people, and sat there silently, staring vacantly before him. One day, when the Psalms were being sung, he sighed deeply, and his eyes became bright; they were fixed upon a place near the altar where he had knelt with his friend who was dead. He murmured her name, and became deadly pale, and tears rolled down his cheeks. They led him out of church; he told those standing round him that he was well, and had never been ill; he, who had been so grievously afflicted, the outcast, thrown upon the world, could not remember his sufferings. The Lord our Creator is wise and full of loving kindness- who can doubt it? In Spain, where balmy breezes blow over the Moorish cupolas and gently stir the orange and myrtle groves, where singing and the sound of the castanets are always heard, the richest merchant in the place, a childless old man, sat in a luxurious house, while children marched in procession through the streets with waving flags and lighted tapers. If he had been able to press his children to his heart, his daughter, or her child, that had, perhaps never seen the light of day, far less the kingdom of heaven, how much of his wealth would he not have given! “Poor child!” Yes, poor child- a child still, yet more than thirty years old, for Jurgen had arrived at this age in Old Skjagen.

The shifting sands had covered the graves in the courtyard, quite up to the church walls, but still, the dead must be buried among their relatives and the dear ones who had gone before them.

Merchant Bronne and his wife now rested with their children under the white sand.

It was in the spring- the season of storms. The sand from the dunes was whirled up in clouds; the sea was rough, and flocks of birds flew like clouds in the storm, screaming across the sand-hills. Shipwreck followed upon shipwreck on the reefs between Old Skagen and the Hunsby dunes.

One evening Jurgen sat in his room alone: all at once his mind seemed to become clearer, and a restless feeling came over him, such as had often, in his younger days, driven him out to wander over the sand-hills or on the heath.

“Home, home!” he cried. No one heard him. He went out and walked towards the dunes. Sand and stones blew into his face, and whirled round him; he went in the direction of the church. The sand was banked up the walls, half covering the windows, but it had been cleared away in front of the door, and the entrance was free and easy to open, so Jurgen went into the church.

The storm raged over the town of Skjagen; there had not been such a terrible tempest within the memory of the inhabitants, nor such a rough sea. But Jurgen was in the temple of God, and while the darkness of night reigned outside, a light arose in his soul that was never to depart from it; the heavy weight that pressed on his brain burst asunder. He fancied he heard the organ, but it was only the storm and the moaning of the sea. He sat down on one of the seats, and lo! the candles were lighted one by one, and there was brightness and grandeur such as he had only seen in the Spanish cathedral. The portraits of the old citizens became alive, stepped down from the walls against which they had hung for centuries, and took seats near the church door. The gates flew open, and all the dead people from the churchyard came in, and filled the church, while beautiful music sounded. Then the melody of the psalm burst forth, like the sound of the waters, and Jurgen saw that his foster parents from the Hunsby dunes were there, also old merchant Bronne with his wife and their daughter Clara, who gave him her hand.

They both went up to the altar where they had knelt before, and the priest joined their hands and united them for life. Then music was heard again; it was wonderfully sweet, like a child’s voice, full of joy and expectation, swelling to the powerful tones of a full organ, sometimes soft and sweet, then like the sounds of a tempest, delightful and elevating to hear, yet strong enough to burst the stone tombs of the dead. Then the little ship that hung from the

roof of the choir was let down and looked wonderfully large and beautiful with its silken sails and rigging:

“The ropes were of silk, the anchor of gold, And everywhere riches and pomp untold,” - as the old song says.

The young couple went on board, accompanied by the whole congregation, for there was room and enjoyment for them all. Then the walls and arches of the church were covered with flowering junipers and lime trees breathing forth fragrance; the branches waved, creating a pleasant coolness; they bent and parted, and the ship sailed between them through the air and over the sea. Every candle in the church became a star, and the wind sang a hymn in which they all joined.

“Through love to glory, no life is lost, the future is full of blessings and happiness. Hallelujah!” These were the last words Jurgen uttered in this world, for the thread that bound his immortal soul was severed, and nothing but the dead body lay in the dark church, while the storm raged outside, covering it with loose sand.

The next day was Sunday, and the congregation and their pastor went to the church. The road had always been heavy, but now it was almost unfit for use, and when they at last arrived at the church, a great heap of sand lay piled up in front of them. The whole church was completely buried in sand. The clergyman offered a short prayer, and said that God had closed the door of His house here, and that the congregation must go and build a new one for Him somewhere else. So they sung a hymn in the open air, and went home again.

Jurgen could not be found anywhere in the town of Skjagen, nor on the dunes, though they searched for him everywhere. They came to the conclusion that one of the great waves, which had rolled far up on the beach, had carried him away; but his body lay buried in a great sepulchre- the church itself. The Lord had thrown down a covering for his grave during the storm, and the heavy mound of sand lies upon it to this day. The drifting sand had covered the vaulted roof of the church, the arched cloisters, and the stone aisles. The white thorn and the dog rose now blossom above the place where the church lies buried, but the spire, like an enormous monument over a grave, can be seen for miles round. No king has a more splendid memorial. Nothing disturbs the peaceful sleep of the dead. I was the first to hear this story, for the storm sung it to me among the sand-hills.

THE END