

**ГАНС
ХРИСТИАН
АНДЕРСЕН**

THE TRUE STORY OF MY
LIFE: A SKETCH

Ганс Христиан Андерсен
The True Story of
My Life: A Sketch

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H. C. Andersen
The True Story of
My Life: A Sketch

THE TRUE STORY OF MY LIFE:

A SKETCH

By Hans Christian Andersen

Translated By Mary Howitt

To MESSRS. MUNROE AND CO.

Gentlemen,—I take this opportunity of forwarding to you, the *proof sheets* of the unpublished Life of Hans Christian Andersen—translated from a copy transmitted to me for that purpose, by the Author. It is as well to state that this is the Author's Edition, he being participant in the

proceeds of this work.

I remain, gentlemen,

Yours truly,

MARY HOWITT.

LONDON, June 29, 1847.

TO

JENNY LIND

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OF

THE TRUE STORY OF HER FRIEND'S LIFE

IS INSCRIBED

**IN ADMIRATION OF HER
BEAUTIFUL TALENTS**

AND STILL MORE BEAUTIFUL LIFE,

PREFACE

No literary labor is more delightful to me than translating the beautiful thoughts and fancies of Hans Christian Andersen. My heart is in the work, and I feel as if my spirit were kindred to his; just as our Saxon English seems to me eminently fitted to give the simple, pure, and noble sentiments of the Danish mind.

This True Story of his Life will not be found the least interesting of his writings; indeed, to me it seems one of the most so. It furnishes the key, as it were, to all the rest; and the treasures which it unlocks will be found to be possessed of additional value when viewed through the medium of this introduction. It is gratifying for me to be able to state that the original Author has a personal interest in this English version of his "Life," as I have arranged with my publishers to pay Mr. Andersen a certain sum on the publication of this translation, and the same on all future editions.

M. H.

The Elms, Clapton, June 26.

THE TRUE STORY OF MY LIFE

CHAPTER I

My life is a lovely story, happy and full of incident. If, when I was a boy, and went forth into the world poor and friendless, a good fairy had met me and said, "Choose now thy own course through life, and the object for which thou wilt strive, and then, according to the development of thy mind, and as reason requires, I will guide and defend thee to its attainment," my fate could not, even then, have been directed more happily, more prudently, or better. The history of my life will say to the world what it says to me—There is a loving God, who directs all things for the best.

My native land, Denmark, is a poetical land, full of popular traditions, old songs, and an eventful history, which has become bound up with that of Sweden and Norway. The Danish islands are possessed of beautiful beech woods, and corn and clover fields: they resemble gardens on a great scale. Upon one of these green islands, Funen, stands Odense, the place of my birth. Odense is called after the pagan god Odin, who, as tradition states, lived here: this place is the capital of the province, and lies twenty-two Danish miles from Copenhagen.

In the year 1805 there lived here, in a small mean room,

a young married couple, who were extremely attached to each other; he was a shoemaker, scarcely twenty-two years old, a man of a richly gifted and truly poetical mind. His wife, a few years older than himself, was ignorant of life and of the world, but possessed a heart full of love. The young man had himself made his shoemaking bench, and the bedstead with which he began housekeeping; this bedstead he had made out of the wooden frame which had borne only a short time before the coffin of the deceased Count Trampe, as he lay in state, and the remnants of the black cloth on the wood work kept the fact still in remembrance.

Instead of a noble corpse, surrounded by crape and wax-lights, here lay, on the second of April, 1805, a living and weeping child,—that was myself, Hans Christian Andersen. During the first day of my existence my father is said to have sate by the bed and read aloud in Holberg, but I cried all the time. "Wilt thou go to sleep, or listen quietly?" it is reported that my father asked in joke; but I still cried on; and even in the church, when I was taken to be baptized, I cried so loudly that the preacher, who was a passionate man, said, "The young one screams like a cat!" which words my mother never forgot. A poor emigrant, Gomar, who stood as godfather, consoled her in the mean time by saying that the louder I cried as a child, all the more beautifully should I sing when I grew older.

Our little room, which was almost filled with the shoemaker's bench, the bed, and my crib, was the abode of my childhood; the

walls, however, were covered with pictures, and over the work-bench was a cupboard containing books and songs; the little kitchen was full of shining plates and metal pans, and by means of a ladder it was possible to go out on the roof, where, in the gutters between and the neighbor's house, there stood a great chest filled with soil, my mother's sole garden, and where she grew her vegetables. In my story of the Snow Queen that garden still blooms.

I was the only child, and was extremely spoiled, but I continually heard from my mother how very much happier I was than she had been, and that I was brought up like a nobleman's child. She, as a child, had been driven out by her parents to beg, and once when she was not able to do it, she had sate for a whole day under a bridge and wept. I have drawn her character in two different aspects, in old Dominica, in the Improvisatore, and in the mother of Christian, in Only a Fiddler.

My father gratified me in all my wishes. I possessed his whole heart; he lived for me. On Sundays, he made me perspective glasses, theatres, and pictures which could be changed; he read to me from Holberg's plays and the Arabian Tales; it was only in such moments as these that I can remember to have seen him really cheerful, for he never felt himself happy in his life and as a handicrafts-man. His parents had been country people in good circumstances, but upon whom many misfortunes had fallen; the cattle had died; the farm house had been burned down; and lastly, the husband had lost his reason. On this the wife had removed

with him to Odense, and there put her son, whose mind was full of intelligence, apprentice to a shoemaker; it could not be otherwise, although it was his ardent wish to be able to attend the Grammar School, where he might have learned Latin. A few well-to-do citizens had at one time spoken of this, of clubbing together a sufficient sum to pay for his board and education, and thus giving him a start in life; but it never went beyond words. My poor father saw his dearest wish unfulfilled; and he never lost the remembrance of it. I recollect that once, as a child, I saw tears in his eyes, and it was when a youth from the Grammar School came to our house to be measured for a new pair of boots, and showed us his books and told us what he learned.

"That was the path upon which I ought to have gone!" said my father, kissed me passionately, and was silent the whole evening.

He very seldom associated with his equals. He went out into the woods on Sundays, when he took me with him; he did not talk much when he was out, but would sit silently, sunk in deep thought, whilst I ran about and strung strawberries on a straw, or bound garlands. Only twice in the year, and that in the month of May, when the woods were arrayed in their earliest green, did my mother go with us, and then she wore a cotton gown, which she put on only on these occasions, and when she partook of the Lord's Supper, and which, as long as I can remember, was her holiday gown. She always took home with her from the wood a great many fresh beech boughs, which were then planted behind the polished stone. Later in the year sprigs of St. John's

wort were stuck into the chinks of the beams, and we considered their growth as omens whether our lives would be long or short. Green branches and pictures ornamented our little room, which my mother always kept neat and clean; she took great pride in always having the bed-linen and the curtains very white.

The mother of my father came daily to our house, were it only for a moment, in order to see her little grandson. I was her joy and her delight. She was a quiet and most amiable old woman, with mild blue eyes and a fine figure, which life had severely tried. From having been the wife of a countryman in easy circumstances she had now fallen into great poverty, and dwelt with her feeble-minded husband in a little house, which was the last, poor remains of their property. I never saw her shed a tear. But it made all the deeper impression upon me when she quietly sighed, and told me about her own mother's mother, how she had been a rich, noble lady in the city of Cassel, and that she had married a "comedy-player," that was as she expressed it, and run away from parents and home, for all of which her posterity had now to do penance. I never can recollect that I heard her mention the family name of her grandmother; but her own maiden name was Nommesen. She was employed to take care of the garden belonging to a lunatic asylum, and every Sunday evening she brought us some flowers, which they gave her permission to take home with her. These flowers adorned my mother's cupboard; but still they were mine, and to me it was allowed to put them in the glass of water. How great was

this pleasure! She brought them all to me; she loved me with her whole soul. I knew it, and I understood it.

She burned, twice in the year, the green rubbish of the garden; on such occasions she took me with her to the asylum, and I lay upon the great heaps of green leaves and pea-straw. I had many flowers to play with, and—which was a circumstance upon which I set great importance— I had here better food to eat than I could expect at home.

All such patients as were harmless were permitted to go freely about the court; they often came to us in the garden, and with curiosity and terror I listened to them and followed them about; nay, I even ventured so far as to go with the attendants to those who were raving mad. A long passage led to their cells. On one occasion, when the attendants were out of the way, I lay down upon the floor, and peeped through the crack of the door into one of these cells. I saw within a lady almost naked, lying on her straw bed; her hair hung down over her shoulders, and she sang with a very beautiful voice. All at once she sprang up, and threw herself against the door where I lay; the little valve through which she received her food burst open; she stared down upon me, and stretched out her long arm towards me. I screamed for terror—I felt the tips of her fingers touching my clothes—I was half dead when the attendant came; and even in later years that sight and that feeling remained within my soul.

Close beside the place where the leaves were burned, the poor old women had their spinning-room. I often went in there, and

was very soon a favorite. When with these people, I found myself possessed of an eloquence which filled them with astonishment. I had accidentally heard about the internal mechanism of the human frame, of course without understanding anything about it; but all these mysteries were very captivating to me; and with chalk, therefore, I drew a quantity of flourishes on the door, which were to represent the intestines; and my description of the heart and the lungs made the deepest impression. I passed for a remarkably wise child, that would not live long; and they rewarded my eloquence by telling me tales in return; and thus a world as rich as that of the thousand and one nights was revealed to me. The stories told by these old ladies, and the insane figures which I saw around me in the asylum, operated in the meantime so powerfully upon me, that when it grew dark I scarcely dared to go out of the house. I was therefore permitted, generally at sunset, to lay me down in my parents' bed with its long flowered curtains, because the press-bed in which I slept could not conveniently be put down so early in the evening on account of the room it occupied in our small dwelling; and here, in the paternal bed, lay I in a waking dream, as if the actual world did not concern me. I was very much afraid of my weak-minded grandfather. Only once had he ever spoken to me, and then he had made use of the formal pronoun "you." He employed himself in cutting out of wood strange figures, men with beasts' heads, and beasts with wings; these he packed in a basket and carried them out into the country, where he was everywhere well received by the peasant

women, because he gave to them and their children these strange toys. One day, when he was returning to Odense, I heard the boys in the street shouting after him; I hid myself behind a flight of steps in terror, for I knew that I was of his flesh and blood.

Every circumstance around me tended to excite my imagination. Odense itself, in those days in which there was not a single steamboat in existence, and when intercourse with other places was much more rare than now, was a totally different city to what it is in our day; a person might have fancied himself living hundreds of years ago, because so many customs prevailed then which belonged to an earlier age. The guilds walked in procession through the town with their harlequin before them with mace and bells; on Shrove Tuesday the butchers led the fattest ox through the streets adorned with garlands, whilst a boy in a white shirt and with great wings on his shoulders rode upon it; the sailors paraded through the city with music and all their flags flying, and then two of the boldest among them stood and wrestled upon a plank placed between two boats, and the one who was not thrown into the water was the victor.

That, however, which more particularly stamped itself upon my memory, and became refreshed by after often-repeated relations, was, the abode of the Spaniards in Funen in 1808. It is true that at that time I was but three years old; still I nevertheless perfectly remember the brown foreign men who made disturbances in the streets, and the cannon which were fired. I saw the people lying on straw in a half-tumbledown

church, which was near the asylum. One day, a Spanish soldier took me in his arms and pressed a silver image, which he wore upon his breast, to my lips. I remember that my mother was angry at it, because, she said, there was something papistical about it; but the image, and the strange man, who danced me about, kissed me and wept, pleased me: certainly he had children at home in Spain. I saw one of his comrades led to execution; he had killed a Frenchman. Many years afterwards this little circumstance occasioned me to write my little poem, "The Soldier," which Chamisso translated into German, and which afterwards was included in the illustrated people's books of soldier-songs. [Footnote: This same little song, sent to me by the author, was translated by me and published in the 19th No. of Howitt's Journal.—M. H.] I very seldom played with other boys; even at school I took little interest in their games, but remained sitting within doors. At home I had playthings enough, which my father made for me. My greatest delight was in making clothes for my dolls, or in stretching out one of my mother's aprons between the wall and two sticks before a currant-bush which I had planted in the yard, and thus to gaze in between the sun-illuminated leaves. I was a singularly dreamy child, and so constantly went about with my eyes shut, as at last to give the impression of having weak sight, although the sense of sight was especially cultivated by me.

Sometimes, during the harvest, my mother went into the field to glean. I accompanied her, and we went, like Ruth in the Bible, to glean in the rich fields of Boaz. One day we went to a place,

the bailiff of which was well known for being a man of a rude and savage disposition. We saw him coming with a huge whip in his hand, and my mother and all the others ran away. I had wooden shoes on my bare feet, and in my haste I lost these, and then the thorns pricked me so that I could not run, and thus I was left behind and alone. The man came up and lifted his whip to strike me, when I looked him in the face and involuntarily exclaimed,—

"How dare you strike me, when God can see it?"

The strong, stern man looked at me, and at once became mild; he patted me on my cheeks, asked me my name, and gave me money.

When I brought this to my mother and showed it her, she said to the others, "He is a strange child, my Hans Christian; everybody is kind to him: this bad fellow even has given him money."

I grew up pious and superstitious. I had no idea of want or need; to be sure my parents had only sufficient to live from day to day, but I at least had plenty of every thing; an old woman altered my father's clothes for me. Now and then I went with my parents to the theatre, where the first representations which I saw were in German. "Das Donauweibchen" was the favorite piece of the whole city; there, however, I saw, for the first time, Holberg's Village Politicians treated as an opera.

The first impression which a theatre and the crowd assembled there made upon me was, at all events, no sign of any thing

poetical slumbering in me; for my first exclamation on seeing so many people, was, "Now, if we only had as many casks of butter as there are people here, then I would eat lots of butter!" The theatre, however, soon became my favorite place, but, as I could only very seldom go there, I acquired the friendship of the man who carried out the playbills, and he gave me one every day. With this I seated myself in a corner and imagined an entire play, according to the name of the piece and the characters in it. That was my first, unconscious poetising.

My father's favorite reading was plays and stories, although he also read works of history and the Scriptures. He pondered in silent thought afterwards upon that which he had read, but my mother did not understand him when he talked with her about them, and therefore he grew more and more silent. One day, he closed the Bible with the words, "Christ was a man like us, but an extraordinary man!" These words horrified my mother, and she burst into tears. In my distress I prayed to God that he would forgive this fearful blasphemy in my father. "There is no other devil than that which we have in our own hearts," I heard my father say one day and I made myself miserable about him and his soul; I was therefore entirely of the opinion of my mother and the neighbours, when my father, one morning, found three scratches on his arm, probably occasioned by a nail, that the devil had been to visit him in the night, in order to prove to him that he really existed. My father's rambles in the wood became more frequent; he had no rest. The events of the war in Germany,

which he read in the newspapers with eager curiosity, occupied him completely. Napoleon was his hero: his rise from obscurity was the most beautiful example to him. At that time Denmark was in league with France; nothing was talked of but war; my father entered the service as a soldier, in hope of returning home a lieutenant. My mother wept. The neighbours shrugged their shoulders, and said that it was folly to go out to be shot when there was no occasion for it.

The morning on which the corps were to march I heard my father singing and talking merrily, but his heart was deeply agitated; I observed that by the passionate manner in which he kissed me when he took his leave. I lay sick of the measles and alone in the room, when the drums beat and my mother accompanied my father, weeping, to the city gate. As soon as they were gone my old grandmother came in; she looked at me with her mild eyes and said, it would be a good thing if I died; but that God's will was always the best.

That was the first day of real sorrow which I remember.

The regiment advanced no farther than Holstein, peace was concluded, and the voluntary soldier returned to his work-stool. Everything fell into its old course. I played again with my dolls, acted comedies, and always in German, because I had only seen them in this language; but my German was a sort of gibberish which I made up, and in which there occurred only one real German word, and that was "*Besen*," a word which I had picked up out of the various dialects which my father brought home from

Holstein.

"Thou hast indeed some benefit from my travels," said he in joke. "God knows whether thou wilt get as far; but that must be thy care. Think about it, Hans Christian!" But it was my mother's intention that as long as she had any voice in the matter, I should remain at home, and not lose my health as he had done.

That was the case with him; his health had suffered. One morning he woke in a state of the wildest excitement, and talked only of campaigns and Napoleon. He fancied that he had received orders from him to take the command. My mother immediately sent me, not to the physician, but to a so-called wise woman some miles from Odense. I went to her. She questioned me, measured my arm with a woollen thread, made extraordinary signs, and at last laid a green twig upon my breast. It was, she said, a piece of the same kind of tree upon which the Saviour was crucified.

"Go now," said she, "by the river side towards home. If your father will die this time, then you will meet his ghost."

My anxiety and distress may be imagined,—I, who was so full of superstition, and whose imagination was so easily excited.

"And thou hast not met anything, hast thou?" inquired my mother when I got home. I assured her, with beating heart, that I had not.

My father died the third day after that. His corpse lay on the bed: I therefore slept with my mother. A cricket chirped the whole night through.

"He is dead," said my mother, addressing it; "thou needest not

call him. The ice maiden has fetched him."

I understood what she meant. I recollected that, in the winter before, when our window panes were frozen, my father pointed to them and showed us a figure as that of a maiden with outstretched arms. "She is come to fetch me," said he, in jest. And now, when he lay dead on the bed, my mother remembered this, and it occupied my thoughts also.

He was buried in St. Knud's churchyard, by the door on the left hand side coming from the altar. My grandmother planted roses upon his grave. There are now in the selfsame place two strangers' graves, and the grass grows green upon them also.

After my father's death I was entirely left to myself. My mother went out washing. I sate alone at home with my little theatre, made dolls' clothes and read plays. It has been told me that I was always clean and nicely dressed. I had grown tall; my hair was long, bright, and almost yellow, and I always went bare-headed. There dwelt in our neighborhood the widow of a clergyman, Madame Bunkeflod, with the sister of her deceased husband. This lady opened to me her door, and hers was the first house belonging to the educated class into which I was kindly received. The deceased clergyman had written poems, and had gained a reputation in Danish literature. His spinning songs were at that time in the mouths of the people. In my vignettes to the Danish poets I thus sang of him whom my contemporaries had forgotten:—

Spindles rattle, wheels turn round,
Spinning-songs depart;
Songs which youth sings soon become
Music of the heart.

Here it was that I heard for the first time the word *poet* spoken, and that with so much reverence, as proved it to be something sacred. It is true that my father had read Holberg's play to me; but here it was not of these that they spoke, but of verses and poetry. "My brother the poet," said Bunkeflod's sister, and her eyes sparkled as she said it. From her I learned that it was a something glorious, a something fortunate, to be a poet. Here, too, for the first time, I read Shakspeare, in a bad translation, to be sure; but the bold descriptions, the heroic incidents, witches, and ghosts were exactly to my taste. I immediately acted Shakspeare's plays on my little puppet theatre. I saw Hamlet's ghost, and lived upon the heath with Lear. The more persons died in a play, the more interesting I thought it. At this time I wrote my first piece: it was nothing less than a tragedy, wherein, as a matter of course, everybody died. The subject of it I borrowed from an old song about Pyramus and Thisbe; but I had increased the incidents through a hermit and his son, who both loved Thisbe, and who both killed themselves when she died. Many speeches of the hermit were passages from the Bible, taken out of the little catechism, especially from our duty to our neighbors. To the piece I gave the title "Abor and Elvira."

"It ought to be called 'Perch (Aborre) and Stockfish,'" said

one of our neighbors wittily to me, as I came with it to her after having read it with great satisfaction and joy to all the people in our street. This entirely depressed me, because I felt that she was turning both me and my poem to ridicule. With a troubled heart I told it to my mother.

"She only said so," replied my mother, "because her son had not done it." I was comforted, and began a new piece, in which a king and queen were among the dramatis personae. I thought it was not quite right that these dignified personages, as in Shakspeare, should speak like other men and women. I asked my mother and different people how a king ought properly to speak, but no one knew exactly. They said that it was so many years since a king had been in Odense, but that he certainly spoke in a foreign language. I procured myself, therefore, a sort of lexicon, in which were German, French, and English words with Danish meanings, and this helped me. I took a word out of each language, and inserted them into the speeches of my king and queen. It was a regular Babel-like language, which I considered only suitable for such elevated personages.

I desired now that everybody should hear my piece. It was a real felicity to me to read it aloud, and it never occurred to me that others should not have the same pleasure in listening to it.

The son of one of our neighbors worked in a cloth manufactory, and every week brought home a sum of money. I was at a loose end, people said, and got nothing. I was also now to go to the manufactory, "not for the sake of the money," my

mother said, "but that she might know where I was, and what I was doing."

My old grandmother took me to the place, therefore, and was very much affected, because, said she, she had not expected to live to see the time when I should consort with the poor ragged lads that worked there.

Many of the journeymen who were employed in the manufactory were Germans; they sang and were merry fellows, and many a coarse joke of theirs filled the place with loud laughter. I heard them, and I there learned that, to the innocent ears of a child, the impure remains very unintelligible. It took no hold upon my heart. I was possessed at that time of a remarkably beautiful and high soprano voice, and I knew it; because when I sang in my parents' little garden, the people in the street stood and listened, and the fine folks in the garden of the states-councillor, which adjoined ours, listened at the fence. When, therefore, the people at the manufactory asked me whether I could sing, I immediately began, and all the looms stood still: all the journeymen listened to me. I had to sing again and again, whilst the other boys had my work given them to do. I now told them that I also could act plays, and that I knew whole scenes of Holberg and Shakspeare. Everybody liked me; and in this way, the first days in the manufactory passed on very merrily. One day, however, when I was in my best singing vein, and everybody spoke of the extraordinary brilliancy of my voice, one of the journeymen said that I was a girl, and not a boy. He seized hold

of me. I cried and screamed. The other journeymen thought it very amusing, and held me fast by my arms and legs. I screamed aloud, and was as much ashamed as a girl; and then, darting from them, rushed home to my mother, who immediately promised me that I should never go there again.

I again visited Madame Bunkeflod, for whose birthday I invented and made a white silk pincushion. I also made an acquaintance with another old clergyman's widow in the neighborhood. She permitted me to read aloud to her the works which she had from the circulating library. One of them began with these words: "It was a tempestuous night; the rain beat against the window-panes."

"That is an extraordinary book," said the old lady; and I quite innocently asked her how she knew that it was. "I can tell from the beginning," said she, "that it will turn out extraordinary."

I regarded her penetration with a sort of reverence.

Once in the harvest time my mother took me with her many miles from Odense to a nobleman's seat in the neighborhood of Bogense, her native place. The lady who lived there, and with whose parents my mother had lived, had said that some time she might come and see her. That was a great journey for me: we went most of the way on foot, and required, I believe, two days for the journey. The country here made such a strong impression upon me, that my most earnest wish was to remain in it, and become a countryman. It was just in the hop-picking season; my mother and I sat in the barn with a great many country people

round a great binn, and helped to pick the hops. They told tales as they sat at their work, and every one related what wonderful things he had seen or experienced. One afternoon I heard an old man among them say that God knew every thing, both what had happened and what would happen. That idea occupied my whole mind, and towards evening, as I went alone from the court, where there was a deep pond, and stood upon some stones which were just within the water, the thought passed through my head, whether God actually knew everything which was to happen there. Yes, he has now determined that I should live and be so many years old, thought I; but, if I now were to jump into the water here and drown myself, then it would not be as he wished; and all at once I was firmly and resolutely determined to drown myself. I ran to where the water was deepest, and then a new thought passed through my soul. "It is the devil who wishes to have power over me!" I uttered a loud cry, and, running away from the place as if I were pursued, fell weeping into my mother's arms. But neither she nor any one else could wring from me what was amiss with me.

"He has certainly seen a ghost," said one of the women; and I almost believed so myself.

My mother married a second time, a young handicraftsman; but his family, who also belonged to the handicraft class, thought that he had married below himself, and neither my mother nor myself were permitted to visit them. My step-father was a young, grave man, who would have nothing to do with my education.

I spent my time, therefore, over my peep show and my puppet theatre, and my greatest happiness consisted in collecting bright colored pieces of cloth and silk, which I cut out myself and sewed. My mother regarded it as good exercise preparatory to my becoming a tailor, and took up the idea that I certainly was born for it. I, on the contrary, said that I would go to the theatre and be an actor, a wish which my mother most sedulously opposed, because she knew of no other theatre than those of the strolling players and the rope-dancers. No, a tailor I must and should be. The only thing which in some measure reconciled me to this prospect was, that I should then get so many fragments to make up for my theatre.

My passion for reading, the many dramatic scenes which I knew by heart, and my remarkably fine voice, had turned upon me in some sort the attention of several of the more influential families of Odense. I was sent for to their houses, and the peculiar characteristics of my mind excited their interest. Among others who noticed me was the Colonel Hoegh-Guldberg, who with his family showed me the kindest sympathy; so much so, indeed, that he introduced me to the present king, then Prince Christian.

I grew rapidly, and was a tall lad, of whom my mother said that she could not let him any longer go about without any object in life. I was sent, therefore, to the charity school, but learned only religion, writing, and arithmetic, and the last badly enough; I could also scarcely spell a word correctly. On the master's birthday I always wove him a garland and wrote him a poem;

he received them half with smiles and half as a joke; the last time, however, he scolded me. The street lads had also heard from their parents of my peculiar turn of mind, and that I was in the habit of going to the houses of the gentry. I was therefore one day pursued by a wild crowd of them, who shouted after me derisively, "There runs the play-writer!" I hid myself at home in a corner, wept, and prayed to God.

My mother said that I must be confirmed, in order that I might be apprenticed to the tailor trade, and thus do something rational. She loved me with her whole heart, but she did not understand my impulses and my endeavors, nor indeed at that time did I myself. The people about her always spoke against my odd ways, and turned me to ridicule.

We belonged to the parish of St. Knud, and the candidates for confirmation could either enter their names with the prevost or the chaplain. The children of the so-called superior families and the scholars of the grammar school went to the first, and the children of the poor to the second. I, however, announced myself as a candidate to the prevost, who was obliged to receive me, although he discovered vanity in my placing myself among his catechists, where, although taking the lowest place, I was still above those who were under the care of the chaplain. I would, however, hope that it was not alone vanity which impelled me. I had a sort of fear of the poor boys, who had laughed at me, and I always felt as it were an inward drawing towards the scholars of the grammar school, whom I regarded as far better than other

boys. When I saw them playing in the church-yard, I would stand outside the railings, and wish that I were but among the fortunate ones,—not for the sake of play, but for the sake of the many books they had, and for what they might be able to become in the world. With the prevost, therefore, I should be able to come together with them, and be as they were; but I do not remember a single one of them now, so little intercourse would they hold with me. I had daily the feeling of having thrust myself in where people thought that I did not belong. One young girl, however, there was, and one who was considered too of the highest rank, whom I shall afterwards have to mention; she always looked gently and kindly at me, and even once gave me a rose. I returned home full of happiness, because there was one being who did not overlook and repel me.

An old female tailor altered my deceased father's great coat into a confirmation suit for me; never before had I worn so good a coat. I had also for the first time in my life a pair of boots. My delight was extremely great; my only fear was that everybody would not see them, and therefore I drew them up over my trousers, and thus marched through the church. The boots creaked, and that inwardly pleased me, for thus the congregation would hear that they were new. My whole devotion was disturbed; I was aware of it, and it caused me a horrible pang of conscience that my thoughts should be as much with my new boots as with God. I prayed him earnestly from my heart to forgive me, and then again I thought about my new boots.

During the last year I had saved together a little sum of money. When I counted it over I found it to be thirteen rix dollars banco (about thirty shillings) I was quite overjoyed at the possession of so much wealth, and as my mother now most resolutely required that I should be apprenticed to a tailor, I prayed and besought her that I might make a journey to Copenhagen, that I might see the greatest city in the world. "What wilt thou do there?" asked my mother.

"I will become famous," returned I, and I then told her all that I had read about extraordinary men. "People have," said I, "at first an immense deal of adversity to go through, and then they will be famous."

It was a wholly unintelligible impulse that guided me. I wept, I prayed, and at last my mother consented, after having first sent for a so-called wise woman out of the hospital, that she might read my future fortune by the coffee-grounds and cards.

"Your son will become a great man," said the old woman, "and in honor of him, Odense will one day be illuminated."

My mother wept when she heard that, and I obtained permission to travel. All the neighbors told my mother that it was a dreadful thing to let me, at only fourteen years of age, go to Copenhagen, which was such a long way off, and such a great and intricate city, and where I knew nobody.

"Yes," replied my mother, "but he lets me have no peace; I have therefore given my consent, but I am sure that he will go no further than Nyborg; when he gets sight of the rough sea, he will

be frightened and turn back again."

During the summer before my confirmation, a part of the singers and performers of the Theatre Royal had been in Odense, and had given a series of operas and tragedies there. The whole city was taken with them. I, who was on good terms with the man who delivered the play-bills, saw the performances behind the scenes, and had even acted a part as page, shepherd, etc., and had spoken a few words. My zeal was so great on such occasions, that I stood there fully appalled when the actors arrived to dress. By these means their attention was turned to me; my childlike manners and my enthusiasm amused them; they talked kindly with me, and I looked up to them as to earthly divinities. Everything which I had formerly heard about my musical voice, and my recitation of poetry, became intelligible to me. It was the theatre for which I was born: it was there that I should become a famous man, and for that reason Copenhagen was the goal of my endeavors. I heard a deal said about the large theatre in Copenhagen, and that there was to be soon what was called the ballet, a something which surpassed both the opera and the play; more especially did I hear the solo-dancer, Madame Schall, spoken of as the first of all. She therefore appeared to me as the queen of everything, and in my imagination I regarded her as the one who would be able to do everything for me, if I could only obtain her support. Filled with these thoughts, I went to the old printer Iversen, one of the most respectable citizens of Odense, and who, as I heard, had had considerable intercourse

with the actors when they were in the town. He, I thought, must of necessity be acquainted with the famous dancer; him I would request to give me a letter of introduction to her, and then I would commit the rest to God.

The old man saw me for the first time, and heard my petition with much kindness; but he dissuaded me most earnestly from it, and said that I might learn a trade.

"That would actually be a great sin," returned I.

He was startled at the manner in which I said that, and it prepossessed him in my favor; he confessed that he was not personally acquainted with the dancer, but still that he would give me a letter to her. I received one from him, and now believed the goal to be nearly won.

My mother packed up my clothes in a small bundle, and made a bargain with the driver of a post carriage to take me back with him to Copenhagen for three rix dollars banco. The afternoon on which we were to set out came, and my mother accompanied me to the city gate. Here stood my old grandmother; in the last few years her beautiful hair had become grey; she fell upon my neck and wept, without being able to speak a word. I was myself deeply affected. And thus we parted. I saw her no more; she died in the following year.

I do not even know her grave; she sleeps in the poor-house burial-ground.

The postilion blew his horn; it was a glorious sunny afternoon, and the sunshine soon entered into my gay child-like mind. I

delighted in every novel object which met my eye, and I was journeying towards the goal of my soul's desires. When, however, I arrived at Nyborg on the great Belt, and was borne in the ship away from my native island, I then truly felt how alone and forlorn I was, and that I had no one else except God in heaven to depend upon.

As soon as I set foot on Zealand, I stepped behind a shed, which stood on the shore, and falling upon my knees, besought of God to help and guide me aright; I felt myself comforted by so doing, and I firmly trusted in God and my own good fortune. The whole day and the following night I travelled through cities and villages; I stood solitarily by the carriage, and ate my bread while it was repacked.—I thought I was far away in the wide world.

CHAPTER II

On Monday morning, September 5th, 1819, I saw from the heights of Frederiksburg, Copenhagen, for the first time. At this place I alighted from the carriage, and with my little bundle in my hand, entered the city through the castle garden, the long alley and the suburb.

The evening before my arrival had been made memorable by the breaking out of the so-called Jews quarrel, which spread through many European countries. The whole city was in commotion [Footnote: This remarkable disturbance makes a fine incident in Anderson's romance of "Only a Fiddler."—M. H.]; every body was in the streets; the noise and tumult of Copenhagen far exceeded, therefore, any idea which my imagination had formed of this, at that time, to me great city.

With scarcely ten dollars in my pocket, I turned into a small public-house. My first ramble was to the theatre. I went round it many times; I looked up to its walls, and regarded them almost as a home. One of the bill-sellers, who wandered about here each day, observed me, and asked me if I would have a bill. I was so wholly ignorant of the world, that I thought the man wished to give me one; I therefore accepted his offer with thankfulness. He fancied I was making fun of him and was angry; so that I was frightened, and hastened from the place which was to me the dearest in the city. Little did I then imagine that ten years

afterwards my first dramatic piece would be represented there, and that in this manner I should make my appearance before the Danish public. On the following day I dressed myself in my confirmation suit, nor were the boots forgotten, although, this time, they were worn, naturally, under my trousers; and thus, in my best attire, with a hat on, which fell half over my eyes, I hastened to present my letter of introduction to the dancer, Madame Schall. Before I rung at the bell, I fell on my knees before the door and prayed God that I here might find help and support. A maid-servant came down the steps with her basket in her hand; she smiled kindly at me, gave me a skilling (Danish), and tripped on. Astonished, I looked at her and the money. I had on my confirmation suit, and thought I must look very smart. How then could she think that I wanted to beg? I called after her.

"Keep it, keep it!" said she to me, in return, and was gone.

At length I was admitted to the dancer; she looked at me in great amazement, and then heard what I had to say. She had not the slightest knowledge of him from whom the letter came, and my whole appearance and behavior seemed very strange to her. I confessed to her my heartfelt inclination for the theatre; and upon her asking me what characters I thought I could represent, I replied, Cinderella. This piece had been performed in Odense by the royal company, and the principal characters had so greatly taken my fancy, that I could play the part perfectly from memory. In the mean time I asked her permission to take off my boots, otherwise I was not light enough for this character; and then

taking up my broad hat for a tambourine, I began to dance and sing,—

"Here below, nor rank nor riches,
Are exempt from pain and woe."

My strange gestures and my great activity caused the lady to think me out of my mind, and she lost no time in getting rid of me.

From her I went to the manager of the theatre, to ask for an engagement. He looked at me, and said that I was "too thin for the theatre."

"Oh," replied I, "if you will only engage me with one hundred rix dollars banco salary, then I shall soon get fat!" The manager bade me gravely go my way, adding, that they only engaged people of education.

I stood there deeply wounded. I knew no one in all Copenhagen who could give me either counsel or consolation. I thought of death as being the only thing, and the best thing for me; but even then my thoughts rose upwards to God, and with all the undoubting confidence of a child in his father, they riveted themselves upon Him. I wept bitterly, and then I said to myself, "When everything happens really miserably, then he sends help. I have always read so. People must first of all suffer a great deal before they can bring anything to accomplishment."

I now went and bought myself a gallery-ticket for the opera

of Paul and Virginia. The separation of the lovers affected me to such a degree, that I burst into violent weeping. A few women, who sat near me, consoled me by saying that it was only a play, and nothing to trouble oneself about; and then they gave me a sausage sandwich. I had the greatest confidence in everybody, and therefore I told them, with the utmost openness, that I did not really weep about Paul and Virginia, but because I regarded the theatre as my Virginia, and that if I must be separated from it, I should be just as wretched as Paul. They looked at me, and seemed not to understand my meaning. I then told them why I had come to Copenhagen, and how forlorn I was there. One of the women, therefore, gave me more, bread and butter, with fruit and cakes.

On the following morning I paid my bill, and to my infinite trouble I saw that my whole wealth consisted in one rix dollar banco. It was necessary, therefore, either that I should find some vessel to take me home, or put myself to work with some handicraftsman. I considered that the last was the wiser of the two, because, if I returned to Odense, I must there also put myself to work of a similar kind; besides which, I knew very well that the people there would laugh at me if I came back again. It was to me a matter of indifference what handicraft trade I learned,—I only should make use of it to keep life within me in Copenhagen. I bought a newspaper, therefore. I found among the advertisements that a cabinet maker was in want of an apprentice. The man received me kindly, but said that before I was bound to him he

must have an attestation, and my baptismal register from Odense; and that till these came I could remove to his house, and try how the business pleased me. At six o'clock the next morning I went to the workshop: several journeymen were there, and two or three apprentices; but the master was not come. They fell into merry and idle discourse. I was as bashful as a girl, and as they soon perceived this, I was unmercifully rallied upon it. Later in the day the rude jests of the young fellows went so far, that, in remembrance of the scene at the manufactory, I took the resolute determination not to remain a single day longer in the workshop. I went down to the master, therefore, and told him that I could not stand it; he tried to console me, but in vain: I was too much affected, and hastened away.

I now went through the streets; nobody knew me; I was quite forlorn. I then bethought myself of having read in a newspaper in Odense the name of an Italian, Siboni, who was the director of the Academy of Music in Copenhagen. Everybody had praised my voice; perhaps he would assist me for its sake; if not, then that very evening I must seek out the master of some vessel who would take me home again. At the thoughts of the journey home I became still more violently excited, and in this state of suffering I hastened to Siboni's house.

It happened that very day that he had a large party to dinner; our celebrated composer Weyse was there, the poet Baggesen, and other guests. The housekeeper opened the door to me, and to her I not only related my wish to be engaged as a singer, but

also the whole history of my life. She listened to me with the greatest sympathy, and then she left me. I waited a long time, and she must have been repeating to the company the greater part of what I had said, for, in a while, the door opened, and all the guests came out and looked at me. They would have me to sing, and Siboni heard me attentively. I gave some scenes out of Holberg, and repeated a few poems; and then, all at once, the sense of my unhappy condition so overcame me that I burst into tears; the whole company applauded.

"I prophesy," said Baggesen, "that one day something will come out of him; but do not be vain when, some day, the whole public shall applaud thee!" and then he added something about pure, true nature, and that this is too often destroyed by years and by intercourse with mankind. I did not understand it all.

Siboni promised to cultivate my voice, and that I therefore should succeed as singer at the Theatre Royal. It made me very happy; I laughed and wept; and as the housekeeper led me out and saw the excitement under which I labored, she stroked my cheeks, and said that on the following day I should go to Professor Weyse, who meant to do something for me, and upon whom I could depend.

I went to Weyse, who himself had risen from poverty; he had deeply felt and fully comprehended my unhappy situation, and had raised by a subscription seventy rix dollars banco for me. I then wrote my first letter to my mother, a letter full of rejoicing, for the good fortune of the whole world seemed poured upon

me. My mother in her joy showed my letter to all her friends; many heard of it with astonishment; others laughed at it, for what was to be the end of it? In order to understand Siboni it was necessary for me to learn something of German. A woman of Copenhagen, with whom I travelled from Odense to this city, and who gladly, according to her means, would have supported me, obtained, through one of her acquaintance, a language-master, who gratuitously gave me some German lessons, and thus I learned a few phrases in that language. Siboni received me into his house, and gave me food and instruction; but half a year afterwards my voice broke, or was injured, in consequence of my being compelled to wear bad shoes through the winter, and having besides no warm under-clothing. There was no longer any prospect that I should become a fine singer. Siboni told me that candidly, and counselled me to go to Odense, and there learn a trade.

I, who in the rich colors of fancy had described to my mother the happiness which I actually felt, must now return home and become an object of derision! Agonized with this thought, I stood as if crushed to the earth. Yet, precisely amid this apparently great un-happiness lay the stepping-stones of a better fortune.

As I found myself again abandoned, and was pondering by myself upon what was best for me next to do, it occurred to me that the Poet Guldberg, a brother of the Colonel of that name in Odense, who had shown me so much kindness, lived in Copenhagen. He lived at that time near the new church-

yard outside the city, of which he has so beautifully sung in his poems. I wrote to him, and related to him everything; afterwards I went to him myself, and found him surrounded with books and tobacco pipes. The strong, warm-hearted man received me kindly; and as he saw by my letter how incorrectly I wrote, he promised to give me instruction in the Danish tongue; he examined me a little in German, and thought that it would be well if he could improve me in this respect also. More than this, he made me a present of the profits of a little work which he had just then published; it became known, and I believe they exceeded one hundred rix dollars banco; the excellent Weyse and others also supported me.

It was too expensive for me to lodge at a public house; I was therefore obliged to seek for private lodgings. My ignorance of the world led me to a widow who lived in one of the most disreputable streets of Copenhagen; she was inclined to receive me into her house, and I never suspected what kind of world it was which moved around me. She was a stern, but active dame; she described to me the other people of the city in such horrible colors as made me suppose that I was in the only safe haven there. I was to pay twenty rix dollars monthly for one room, which was nothing but an empty store-room, without window and light, but I had permission to sit in her parlor. I was to make trial of it at first for two days, meantime on the following day she told me that I could decide to stay or immediately go. I, who so easily attach myself to people, already liked her, and felt myself at home with

her; but more than sixteen dollars per month Weyse had told me I must not pay, and this was the sum which I had received from him and Guldberg, so that no surplus remained to me for my other expenses. This troubled me very much; when she was gone out of the room, I seated myself on the sofa, and contemplated the portrait of her deceased husband.

I was so wholly a child, that as the tears rolled down my own cheeks, I wetted the eyes of the portrait with my tears, in order that the dead man might feel how troubled I was, and influence the heart of his wife. She must have seen that nothing more was to be drained out of me, for when she returned to the room she said that she would receive me into her house for the sixteen rix dollars. I thanked God and the dead man. I found myself in the midst of the mysteries of Copenhagen, but I did not understand how to interpret them. There was in the house in which I lived a friendly young lady, who lived alone, and often wept; every evening her old father came and paid her a visit. I opened the door to him frequently; he wore a plain sort of coat, had his throat very much tied up, and his hat pulled over his eyes. He always drank his tea with her, and nobody dared to be present, because he was not fond of company: she never seemed very glad at his coming. [Footnote: This character will be recognised in Steffen Margaret, in *Only a Fiddler*.—M. H.] Many years afterwards, when I had reached another step on the ladder of life, when the refined world of fashionable life was opened before me, I saw one evening, in the midst of a brilliantly lighted hall, a polite old gentleman

covered with orders—that was the old father in the shabby coat, he whom I had let in. He had little idea that I had opened the door to him when he played his part as guest, but I, on my side, then had also no thought but for my own comedy-playing; that is to say, I was at that time so much of a child that I played with my puppet-theatre and made my dolls' clothes; and in order that I might obtain gaily-colored fragments for this purpose, I used to go to the shops and ask for patterns of various kinds of stuffs and ribbons. I myself did not possess a single farthing; my landlady received all the money each month in advance; only now and then, when I did any errands for her, she gave me something, and that went in the purchase of paper or for old play-books. I was now very happy, and was doubly so because Professor Guldberg had induced Lindgron, the first comic actor at the theatre, to give me instruction. He gave me several parts in Holberg to learn, such as Hendrik, and the Silly Boy, for which I had shown some talent. My desire, however, was to play the Correggio. I obtained permission to learn this piece in my own way, although Lindgron asked, with comic gravity, whether I expected to resemble the great painter? I, however, repeated to him the soliloquy in the picture gallery with so much feeling, that the old man clapped me on the shoulder and said, "Feeling you have; but you must not be an actor, though God knows what else. Speak to Guldberg about your learning Latin: that always opens the way for a student."

I a student! That was a thought which had never come before into my head. The theatre lay nearer to me, and was dearer too;

but Latin I had also always wished to learn. But before I spoke on the subject to Guldberg, I mentioned it to the lady who gave me gratuitous instruction in German; but she told me that Latin was the most expensive language in the world, and that it was not possible to gain free instruction in it. Guldberg, however, managed it so that one of his friends, out of kindness, gave me two lessons a week.

The dancer, Dahlen, whose wife at that time was one of the first artistes on the Danish boards, opened his house to me. I passed many an evening there, and the gentle, warm-hearted lady was kind to me. The husband took me with him to the dancing-school, and that was to me one step nearer to the theatre. There stood I for whole mornings, with a long staff, and stretched my legs; but notwithstanding all my good-will, it was Dahlen's opinion that I should never get beyond a figurante. One advantage, however, I had gained; I might in an evening make my appearance behind the scenes of the theatre; nay, even sit upon the farthest bench in the box of the figurantes. It seemed to me as if I had got my foot just within the theatre, although I had never yet been upon the stage itself.

One night the little opera of the Two Little Savoyards was given; in the market scene every one, even the mechanists, might go up to help in filling the stage; I heard them say so, and rousing myself a little, I went happily up with the others. I was in my ordinary dress; the confirmation coat, which still held together, although, with regard to brushing and repairs, it lookedebut

miserably, and the great hat which fell down over my face. I was very conscious of the ill condition of my attire, and would have been glad to have concealed it; but, through the endeavor to do so, my movements became still more angular. I did not dare to hold myself upright, because, by so doing, I exhibited all the more plainly the shortness of my waistcoat, which I had outgrown. I had the feeling very plainly that people would make themselves merry about me; yet, at this moment, I felt nothing but the happiness of stepping for the first time before the foot-lamps. My heart beat; I stepped forward; there came up one of the singers, who at that time was much thought of, but now is forgotten; he took me by the hand, and jeeringly wished me happiness on my debut. "Allow me to introduce you to the Danish public," said he, and drew me forward to the lamps. The people would laugh at me—I felt it; the tears rolled down my cheeks; I tore myself loose, and left the stage full of anguish.

Shortly after this, Dahlen arranged a ballet of *Armida*, in which I received a little part: I was a spirit. In this ballet I became acquainted with the lady of Professor Heiberg, the wife of the poet, and now a highly esteemed actress on the Danish stage; she, then a little girl, had also a part in it, and our names stood printed in the bill. That was a moment in my life, when my name was printed! I fancied I could see it a nimbus of immortality. I was continually looking at the printed paper. I carried the programme of the ballet with me at night to bed, lay and read my name by candle light—in short, I was happy.

I had now been two years in Copenhagen. The sum of money which had been collected for me was expended, but I was ashamed of making known my wants and my necessities. I had removed to the house of a woman whose husband, when living, was master of a trading-vessel, and there I had only lodging and breakfast. Those were heavy, dark days for me.

The lady believed that I went out to dine with various families, whilst I only ate a little bread on one of the benches in the royal garden. Very rarely did I venture into some of the lowest eating-houses, and choose there the least expensive dish. I was, in truth, very forlorn; but I did not feel the whole weight of my condition. Every person who spoke to me kindly I took for a faithful friend. God was with me in my little room; and many a night, when I have said my evening prayer, I asked of Him, like a child, "Will things soon be better with me?" I had the notion, that as it went with me on New Year's Day, so would it go with me through the whole year; and my highest wishes were to obtain a part in a play.

It was now New Year's Day. The theatre was closed, and only a half-blind porter sat at the entrance to the stage, on which there was not a soul. I stole past him with beating heart, got between the movable scenes and the curtain, and advanced to the open part of the stage. Here I fell down upon my knees, but not a single verse for declamation could I recall to my memory. I then said aloud the Lord's Prayer, and went out with the persuasion, that because I had spoken from the stage on New Year's Day, I should in the course of the year succeed in speaking still more, as well

as in having a part assigned to me.

During the two years of my residence in Copenhagen I had never been out into the open country. Once only had I been in the park, and there I had been deeply engrossed by studying the diversions of the people and their gay tumult. In the spring of the third year, I went out for the first time amid the verdure of a spring morning. It was into the garden of the Fredericksberg, the summer residence of Frederick VI. I stood still suddenly under the first large budding beech tree. The sun made the leaves transparent—there was a fragrance, a freshness—the birds sang. I was overcome by it—I shouted aloud for joy, threw my arms around the tree and kissed it.

"Is he mad?" said a man close behind me. It was one of the servants of the castle. I ran away, shocked at what I had heard, and then went thoughtfully and calmly back to the city.

My voice had, in the mean time, in part regained its richness. The singing master of the choir-school heard it, offered me a place in the school, thinking that, by singing with the choir, I should acquire greater freedom in the exercise of my powers on the stage. I thought that I could see by this means a new way opened for me. I went from the dancing-school into the singing-school, and entered the choir, now as a shepherd, and now as a warrior. The theatre was my world. I had permission to go in the pit, and thus it fared ill with my Latin. I heard many people say that there was no Latin required for singing in the choir, and that without the knowledge of this language it was possible to

become a great actor. I thought there was good sense in that, and very often, either with or without reason, excused myself from my Latin evening lesson. Guldberg became aware of this, and for the first time I received a reprimand which almost crushed me to the earth. I fancy that no criminal could suffer more by hearing the sentence of death pronounced upon him. My distress of mind must have expressed itself in my countenance, for he said "Do not act any more comedy." But it was no comedy to me.

I was now to learn Latin no longer. I felt my dependence upon the kindness of others in such a degree as I had never done before. Occasionally I had had gloomy and earnest thoughts in looking forward to my future, because I was in want of the very necessities of life; at other times I had the perfect thoughtlessness of a child.

The widow of the celebrated Danish statesman, Christian Colbjørnsen, and her daughter, were the first ladies of high rank who cordially befriended the poor lad; who listened to me with sympathy, and saw me frequently. Mrs. von Colbjørnsen resided, during the summer, at Bakkehus, where also lived the poet Rahbek and his interesting wife. Rahbek never spoke to me; but his lively and kind-hearted wife often amused herself with me. I had at that time again begun to write a tragedy, which I read aloud to her. Immediately on hearing the first scenes, she exclaimed, "But you have actually taken whole passages out of Oehlenschläger and Ingemann."

"Yes, but they are so beautiful!" replied I in my simplicity,

and read on.

One day, when I was going from her to Mrs. von Colbjørnsen, she gave me a handful of roses, and said, "Will you take them up to her? It will certainly give her pleasure to receive them from the hand of a poet." These words were said half in jest; but it was the first time that anybody had connected my name with that of poet. It went through me, body and soul, and tears filled my eyes. I know that, from this very moment, my mind was awoke to writing and poetry. Formerly it had been merely an amusement by way of variety from my puppet-theatre.

At Bakkehus lived also Professor Thiele, a young student at that time, but even then the editor of the Danish popular legends, and known to the public as the solver of Baggesen's riddle, and as the writer of beautiful poetry. He was possessed of sentiment, true inspiration, and heart. He had calmly and attentively watched the unfolding of my mind, until we now became friends. He was one of the few who, at that time, spoke the truth of me, when other people were making themselves merry at my expense, and having only eyes for that which was ludicrous in me. People had called me, in jest, the little orator, and, as such, I was an object of curiosity. They found amusement in me, and I mistook every smile for a smile of applause. One of my later friends has told me that it probably was about this period that he saw me for the first time. It was in the drawing-room of a rich tradesman, where people were making themselves very merry with me. They desired me to repeat one of my poems, and, as I did this with

great feeling, the merriment was changed into sympathy with me.

I heard it said every day, what a good thing it would be for me if I could study. People advised me to devote myself to science, but no one moved one step to enable me to do so; it was labor enough for me to keep body and soul together. It therefore occurred to me to write a tragedy, which I would offer to the Theatre Royal, and would then begin to study with the money which I should thus obtain. Whilst Guldberg instructed me in Danish, I had written a tragedy from a German story, called *The Chapel in the Wood*; yet as this was done merely as an exercise in the language, and, as he forbade me in the most decided manner to bring it out, I would not do so. I originated my own material, therefore; and within fourteen days I wrote my national tragedy called *the Robbers in Wissenberg* (the name of a little village in Funen.) There was scarcely a word in it correctly written, as I had no person to help me, because I meant it to be anonymous; there was, nevertheless, one person admitted into the secret, namely, the young lady whom I had met with in Odense, during my preparation for confirmation, the only one who at that time showed me kindness and good-will. It was through her that I was introduced to the Colbjørnsen family, and thus known and received in all those circles of which the one leads into the other. She paid some one to prepare a legible copy of my piece, and undertook to present it for perusal. After an interval of six weeks, I received it back, accompanied by a letter which said the people did not frequently wish to retain works which betrayed, in so

great a degree, a want of elementary knowledge.

It was just at the close of the theatrical season, in May, 1823, that I received a letter from the directors, by which I was dismissed from the singing and dancing school, the letter adding also, that my participation in the school-teaching could lead to no advantage for me, but that they wished some of my many friends would enable me to receive an education, without which, talent availed nothing. I felt myself again, as it were, cast out into the wide world without help and without support. It was absolutely necessary that I should write a piece for the theatre, and that *must* be accepted; there was no other salvation for me. I wrote, therefore, a tragedy founded on a passage in history, and I called it *Alfsol*. I was delighted with the first act, and with this I immediately went to the Danish translator of Shakspeare, Admiral Wulff, now deceased, who good-naturedly heard me read it. In after years I met with the most cordial reception in his family. At that time I also introduced myself to our celebrated physician Oersted, and his house has remained to me to this day an affectionate home, to which my heart has firmly attached itself, and where I find my oldest and most unchangeable friends.

A favorite preacher, the rural dean Gutfeldt, was living at that time, and he it was who exerted himself most earnestly for my tragedy, which was now finished; and having written a letter of recommendation, he sent it to the managers of the theatre. I was suspended between hope and fear. In the course of the summer I endured bitter want, but I told it to no one, else many a one,

whose sympathy I had experienced, would have helped me to the utmost of their means. A false shame prevented me from confessing what I endured. Still happiness filled my heart. I read then for the first time the works of Walter Scott. A new world was opened to me: I forgot the reality, and gave to the circulating library that which should have provided me with a dinner.

The present conference councillor, Collin, one of the most distinguished men of Denmark, who unites with the greatest ability the noblest and best heart, to whom I looked up with confidence in all things, who has been a second father to me, and in whose children I have found brothers and sisters;—this excellent man I saw now for the first time. He was at that time director of the Theatre Royal, and people universally told me that it would be the best thing for me if he would interest himself on my behalf: it was either Oersted or Gutfeldt who first mentioned me to him; and now for the first time I went to that house which was to become so dear to me. Before the ramparts of Copenhagen were extended, this house lay outside the gate, and served as a summer residence to the Spanish Ambassador; now, however, it stands, a crooked, angular frame-work building, in a respectable street; an old-fashioned wooden balcony leads to the entrance, and a great tree spreads its green branches over the court and its pointed gables. It was to become a paternal house to me. Who does not willingly linger over the description of home?

I discovered only the man of business in Collin; his conversation was grave and in few words. I went away, without

expecting any sympathy from this man; and yet it was precisely Collin who in all sincerity thought for my advantage, and who worked for it silently, as he had done for others, through the whole course of his active life. But at that time I did not understand the apparent calmness with which he listened, whilst his heart bled for the afflicted, and he always labored for them with zeal and success, and knew how to help them. He touched so lightly upon my tragedy, which had been sent to him, and on account of which many people had overwhelmed me with flattering speeches, that I regarded him rather as an enemy than a protector.

In a few day I was sent for by the directors of the theatre, when Rahbek gave me back my play as useless for the stage; adding, however, that there were so many grains of corn scattered in it, that it was hoped, that perhaps, by earnest study, after going to school and the previous knowledge of all that is requisite, I might, some time, be able to write a work which should be worthy of being acted on the Danish stage.

In order therefore to obtain the means for my support and the necessary instruction, Collin recommended me to King Frederick the Sixth, who granted to me a certain sum annually for some years; and, by means of Collin also, the directors of the high schools allowed me to receive free instruction in the grammar school at Slagelse, where just then a new, and, as was said, an active rector was appointed. I was almost dumb with astonishment: never had I thought that my life would take this

direction, although I had no correct idea of the path which I had now to tread. I was to go with the earliest mail to Slagelse, which lay twelve Danish miles from Copenhagen, to the place where also the poets Baggesen and Ingemann had gone to school. I was to receive money quarterly from Collin; I was to apply to him in all cases, and he it was who was to ascertain my industry and my progress.

I went to him the second time to express to him my thanks. Mildly and kindly he said to me, "Write to me without restraint about everything which you require, and tell me how it goes with you." From this hour I struck root in his heart; no father could have been more to me than he was, and is; none could have more heartily rejoiced in my happiness, and my after reception with the public; none have shared my sorrow more kindly; and I am proud to say that one of the most excellent men which Denmark possesses feels towards me as towards his own child. His beneficence was conferred without his making me feel it painful either by word or look. That was not the case with every one to whom, in this change of my fortunes, I had to offer my thanks; I was told to think of my inconceivable happiness and my poverty; in Collin's words was expressed the warm-heartedness of a father, and to him it was that properly I was indebted for everything.

The journey was hastily determined upon, and I had yet for myself some business to arrange. I had spoken to an acquaintance from Odense who had the management of a small printing

concern, for a widow, to get "Alfsal" printed, that I might, by the sale of the work, make a little money. Before, however, the piece was printed, it was necessary that I should obtain a certain number of subscribers; but these were not obtained, and the manuscript lay in the printing-office, which, at the time I went to fetch it away, was shut up. Some years afterwards, however, it suddenly made its appearance in print without my knowledge or my desire, in its unaltered shape, but without my name.

On a beautiful autumn day I set off with the mail from Copenhagen to begin my school-life in Slagelse. A young student, who a month before had passed his first examination, and now was travelling home to Jutland to exhibit himself there as a student, and to see once more his parents and his friends, sate at my side and exulted for joy over the new life which now lay before him; he assured me that he should be the most unhappy of human beings if he were in my place, and were again beginning to go to the grammar school. But I travelled with a good heart towards the little city of Zealand. My mother received a joyful letter from me. I only wished that my father and the old grandmother yet lived, and could hear that I now went to the grammar school.

CHAPTER III

When, late in the evening, I arrived at the inn in Slagelse, I asked the hostess if there were anything remarkable in the city.

"Yes," said she, "a new English fire-engine and Pastor Bastholm's library," and those probably were all the lions in the city. A few officers of the Lancers composed the fine-gentleman world. Everybody knew what was done in everybody's house, whether a scholar was elevated or degraded in his class, and the like. A private theatre, to which, at general rehearsal, the scholars of the grammar school and the maid-servants of the town had free entrance, furnished rich material for conversation. The place was remote from woods, and still farther from the coast; but the great post-road went through the city, and the post-horn resounded from the rolling carriage.

I boarded with a respectable widow of the educated class, and had a little chamber looking out into the garden and field. My place in the school was in the lowest class, among little boys:— I knew indeed nothing at all.

I was actually like a wild bird which is confined in a cage; I had the greatest desire to learn, but for the moment I floundered about, as if I had been thrown into the sea; the one wave followed another; grammar, geography, mathematics—I felt myself overpowered by them, and feared that I should never be able to acquire all these. The rector, who took a peculiar delight

in turning everything to ridicule, did not, of course, make an exception in my case. To me he stood then as a divinity; I believed unconditionally every word which he spoke. One day, when I had replied incorrectly to his question, and he said that I was stupid, I mentioned it to Collin, and told him my anxiety, lest I did not deserve all that people had done for me; but he consoled me. Occasionally, however, on some subjects of instruction, I began to receive a good certificate, and the teachers were heartily kind to me; yet, notwithstanding that I advanced, I still lost confidence in myself more and more. On one of the first examinations, however, I obtained the praise of the rector. He wrote the same in my character-book; and, happy in this, I went a few days afterwards to Copenhagen. Guldberg, who saw the progress I had made, received me kindly, and commended my zeal; and his brother in Odense furnished me the next summer with the means of visiting the place of my birth, where I had not been since I left it to seek adventures. I crossed the Belt, and went on foot to Odense. When I came near enough to see the lofty old church tower, my heart was more and more affected; I felt deeply the care of God for me, and I burst into tears. My mother rejoiced over me. The families of Iversen and Guldberg received me cordially; and in the little streets I saw the people open their windows to look after me, for everybody knew how remarkably well things had fared with me; nay, I fancied I actually stood upon the pinnacle of fortune, when one of the principal citizens, who had built a high tower to his house, led me up there, and

I looked out thence over the city, and the surrounding country, and some old women in the hospital below, who had known me from childhood, pointed up to me.

As soon, however, as I returned to Slagelse, this halo of glory vanished, as well as every thought of it. I may freely confess that I was industrious, and I rose, as soon as it was possible, into a higher class; but in proportion as I rose did I feel the pressure upon me more strongly, and that my endeavors were not sufficiently productive. Many an evening, when sleep overcame me, did I wash my head with cold water, or run about the lonely little garden, till I was again wakeful, and could comprehend the book anew. The rector filled up a portion of his hours of teaching with jests, nicknames, and not the happiest of witticisms. I was as if paralyzed with anxiety when he entered the room, and from that cause my replies often expressed the opposite of that which I wished to say, and thereby my anxiety was all the more increased. What was to become of me?

In a moment of ill-humor I wrote a letter to the head master, who was one of those who was most cordially opposed to me. I said in this letter that I regarded myself as a person so little gifted by nature, that it was impossible for me to study, and that the people in Copenhagen threw away the money which they spent upon me: I besought him therefore to counsel me what I should do. The excellent man strengthened me with mild words, and wrote to me a most friendly and consolatory letter; he said that the rector meant kindly by me—that it was his custom and way

of acting—that I was making all the progress that people could expect from me, and that I need not doubt of my abilities. He told me that he himself was a peasant youth of three and twenty, older than I myself was, when he began his studies; the misfortune for me was, that I ought to have been treated differently to the other scholars, but that this could hardly be done in a school; but that things were progressing, and that I stood well both with the teachers and my fellow students.

Every Sunday we had to attend the church and hear an old preacher; the other scholars learned their lessons in history and mathematics while he preached; I learned my task in religion, and thought that, by so doing, it was less sinful. The general rehearsals at the private theatre were points of light in my school life; they took place in a back building, where the lowing of the cows might be heard; the street-decoration was a picture of the marketplace of the city, by which means the representation had something familiar about it; it amused the inhabitants to see their own houses.

On Sunday afternoons it was my delight to go to the castle of Antvorskov, at that time only half ruinous, and once a monastery, where I pursued the excavating of the ruined cellars, as if it had been a Pompeii. I also often rambled to the crucifix of St. Anders, which stands upon one of the heights of Slagelse, and which is one of the wooden crosses erected in the time of Catholicism in Denmark. St. Anders was a priest in Slagelse, and travelled to the Holy Land; on the last day he remained so long

praying on the holy grave, that the ship sailed away without him. Vexed at this circumstance, he walked along the shore, where a man met him riding on an ass, and took him up with him. Immediately he fell asleep, and when he awoke he heard the bells of Slagelse ringing. He lay upon the (Hvileh÷i) hill of rest, where the cross now stands. He was at home a year and a day before the ship returned, which had sailed away without him, and an angel had borne him home. The legend, and the place where he woke, were both favorites of mine. From this spot I could see the ocean and Funen. Here I could indulge my fancies; when at home, my sense of duty chained my thoughts only to my books.

The happiest time, however, was when, once on a Sunday, whilst the wood was green, I went to the city of Sor÷, two (Danish) miles from Slagelse, and which lies in the midst of woods, surrounded by lakes. Here is an academy for the nobility, founded by the poet Holberg. Everything lay in a conventual stillness. I visited here the poet Ingemann, who had just married, and who held a situation as teacher; he had already received me kindly in Copenhagen; but here his reception of me was still more kind. His life in this place seemed to me like a beautiful story; flowers and vines twined around his window; the rooms were adorned with the portraits of distinguished poets, and other pictures. We sailed upon the lake with an Aeolian harp made fast to the mast. Ingemann talked so cheerfully, and his excellent, amiable wife treated me as if she were an elder sister:—I loved these people. Our friendship has grown with years. I have been

from that time almost every summer a welcome guest there, and I have experienced that there are people in whose society one is made better, as it were; that which is bitter passes away, and the whole world appears in sunlight.

Among the pupils in the academy of nobles, there were two who made verses; they knew that I did the same, and they attached themselves to me. The one was Petit, who afterwards, certainly with the best intention, but not faithfully, translated several of my books; the other, the poet Karl Bagger, one of the most gifted of men who has come forward in Danish literature, but who has been unjustly judged. His poems are full of freshness and originality; his story, "The Life of my Brother," is a genial book, by the critique on which the Danish Monthly Review of Literature has proved that it does not understand how to give judgment. These two academicians were very different from me: life rushed rejoicingly through their veins; I was sensitive and childlike. In my character-book I always received, as regarded my conduct, "remarkably good." On one occasion, however, I only obtained the testimony of "very good;" and so anxious and childlike was I, that I wrote a letter to Collin on that account, and assured him in grave earnestness, that I was perfectly innocent, although I had only obtained a character of "very good."

The rector grew weary of his residence in Slagelse; he applied for the vacant post of rector in the grammar-school of Helsingør, and obtained it. He told me of it, and added kindly, that I might write to Collin and ask leave to accompany him thither; that

I might live in his house, and could even now remove to his family; I should then in half a year become a student, which could not be the case if I remained behind, and that then he would himself give me some private lessons in Latin and Greek. On this same occasion he wrote also to Collin; and this letter, which I afterwards saw, contained the greatest praise of my industry, of the progress I had made, and of my good abilities, which last I imagined that he thoroughly mistook, and for the want of which, I myself had so often wept. I had no conception that he judged of me so favorably; it would have strengthened and relieved me had I known it; whereas, on the contrary, his perpetual blame depressed me. I, of course, immediately received Collin's permission, and removed to the house of the rector. But that, alas! was an unfortunate house.

I accompanied him to Helsingør, one of the loveliest places in Denmark, close to the Sound, which is at this place not above a mile (Danish) broad, and which seems like a blue, swelling river between Denmark and Sweden. The ships of all nations sail past daily by hundreds; in winter the ice forms a firm bridge between the two countries, and when in spring this breaks up, it resembles a floating glacier. The scenery here made a lively impression upon me, but I dared only to cast stolen glances at it. When the school hours were over, the house door was commonly locked; I was obliged to remain in the heated school-room and learn my Latin, or else play with the children, or sit in my little room; I never went out to visit anybody. My life in this family

furnishes the most evil dreams to my remembrance. I was almost overcome by it, and my prayer to God every evening was, that he would remove this cup from me and let me die. I possessed not an atom of confidence in myself. I never mentioned in my letters how hard it went with me, because the rector found his pleasure in making a jest of me, and turning my feelings to ridicule. I never complained of any one, with the exception of myself. I knew that they would say in Copenhagen, "He has not the desire to do any thing; a fanciful being can do no good with realities."

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