

as friendship permitted, Bodil, however, remaining with Gustav. She was true to him after all.

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Thus the summer passed, in continued war and friction with the bailiff, to whom, however, they dared do nothing when it came to the point. Then the disease struck inwards, and they set upon one another. "It must come out somewhere," said Lasse, who did not like this state of things, and vowed he would leave as soon as anything else offered, even if they had to run away from wages and clothes and everything.

"They're discontented with their wages, their working-hours are too long, and the food isn't good enough; they pitch it about and waste it until it makes one ill to see them, for anyhow it's God's gift, even if it might be better. And Erik's at the bottom of it all! He's for ever boasting and bragging and stirring up the others the whole day long. But as soon as the bailiff is over him, he daren't do anything any more than the others; so they all creep into their holes. Father Lasse is not such a cowardly wind-bag as any of them, old though he is.

"I suppose a good conscience is the best support. If you have it and have done your duty, you can look both the bailiff and the farmer—and God the Father, too—in the face. For you must always remember, laddie, not to set yourself up against those that are placed over you. Some of us have to be servants and others masters; how would everything go on if we who work didn't do our duty? You can't expect the gentlefolk to scrape up the dung in the cow-stable."

All this Lasse expounded after they had gone to bed, but Pelle had something better to do than to listen to it. He was sound asleep and dreaming that he was Erik himself, and was thrashing the bailiff with a big stick.

XIV

IN Pelle's time, pickled herring was the Bornholmer's most important article of food. It was the regular breakfast dish in all classes of society, and in the lower classes it predominated at the supper-table too—and sometimes appeared at dinner in a slightly altered form. "It's a bad place for food," people would say derisively of such-and-such a farm. "You only get herring there twenty-one times a week."

When the elder was in flower, well-regulated people brought out their salt-boxes, according to old custom, and began to look out to sea; the herring is fattest then. From the sloping land, which nearly everywhere has a glimpse of the sea, people gazed out in the early summer mornings for the homeward-coming boats. The weather and the way the boats lay in the water were omens regarding the winter food. Then the report would come wandering up over the island, of large hauls and good bargains. The farmers drove to the town or the fishing-village with their largest waggons, and the herring-man worked his way up through the country from cottage to cottage with his horse, which was such a wretched animal that any one would have been legally justified in putting a bullet through its head.

In the morning, when Pelle opened the stable doors to the field, the mist lay in every hollow like a pale grey lake, and on the high land, where the smoke rose briskly

from houses and farms, he saw men and women coming round the gable-ends, half-dressed, or in shirt or chemise only, gazing out to sea. He himself ran round the out-houses and peered out towards the sea which lay as white as silver and took its colours from the day. The red sails were hanging motionless, and looked like splashes of blood in the brightness of day; the boats lay deep in the water, and were slowly making their way homewards in response to the beat of the oars, dragging themselves along like cows that are near their time for bearing.

But all this had nothing to do with him and his. Stone Farm, like the poor of the parish, did not buy its herring until after the autumn, when it was as dry as sticks and cost almost nothing. At that time of year, herring was generally plentiful, and was sold for from twopence to twopence-halfpenny the fourscore as long as the demand continued. After that it was sold by the cartload as food for the pigs, or went on to the dungheap.

One Sunday morning late in the autumn, a messenger came running from the town to Stone Farm to say that now herring was to be had. The bailiff came down into the servants' room while they were at breakfast, and gave orders that all the working-teams were to be harnessed. "Then you'll have to come too!" said Karl Johan to the two quarry drivers, who were married and lived up near the quarry, but came down for meals.

"No, our horses shan't come out of the stable for that!" said the drivers. "They and we drive only stone and nothing else." They sat for a little while and indulged in sarcasms at the expense of certain people who had not even Sunday at their own disposal, and one of them, as he stretched himself in a particularly irritating way, said: "Well, I think I'll go home and have a nap. It's nice to be one's own master once a week, at any rate." So

they went home to wife and children, and kept Sunday holiday.

For a little while the men went about complaining; that was the regular thing. In itself they had no objection to make to the expedition, for it would naturally be something of a festivity. There were taverns enough in the town, and they would take care to arrange about that herring so that they did not get home much before evening. If the worst came to the worst, Erik could damage his cart in driving, and then they would be obliged to stay in town while it was being mended.

They stood out in the stable, and turned their purses inside out—big, solid, leather purses with steel locks that could only be opened by pressure on a secret mechanism; but they were empty.

"The deuce!" said Mons, peering disappointedly into his purse. "Not so much as the smell of a one-öre! There must be a leak!" He examined the seams, held it close up to his eyes, and at last put his ear to it. "Upon my word, I seem to hear a two-krone talking to itself. It must be witchcraft!" He sighed and put his purse into his pocket.

"You, you poor devil!" said Anders. "Have you ever spoken to a two-krone? No, I'm the man for you!" He hauled out a large purse. "I've still got the ten-krone that the bailiff cheated me out of on May Day, but I haven't the heart to use it; I'm going to keep it until I grow old." He put his hand into the empty purse and pretended to take something out and show it. The others laughed and joked, and all were in good spirits with the thought of the trip to town.

"But Erik's sure to have some money at the bottom of his chest!" said one. "He works for good wages and has a rich aunt down below."

"No, indeed!" whined Erik. "Why, I have to pay for half a score of young brats who can't father themselves upon any one else. But Karl Johan must get it, or what's the good of being head man?"

"That's no use," said Karl Johan doubtfully. "If I ask the bailiff for an advance now when we're going to town, he'll say 'no' straight out. I wonder whether the girls haven't wages lying by."

They were just coming up from the cow-stable with their milk-pails.

"I say, girls!" Erik called out to them. "Can't one of you lend us ten kronas? She shall have twins for it next Easter; the sow farrows then anyhow."

"You're a nice one to make promises!" said Bengta, standing still, and they all set down their milk-pails and talked it over. "I wonder whether Bodil hasn't?" said Karna. "No," answered Maria, "for she sent the ten kronas she had by her to her mother the other day."

Mons dashed his cap on to the floor and gave a leap. "I'll go up to the Old Gentleman himself," he said.

"Then you'll come head first down the stairs, you may be sure!"

"The deuce I will, with my old mother lying seriously ill in the town, without a copper to pay for doctor or medicine! I'm as good a child as Bodil, I hope." He turned and went towards the stone steps, and the others stood and watched him from the stable-door, until the bailiff came and they had to busy themselves with the carts. Gustav walked about in his Sunday clothes with a bundle under his arm, and looked on.

"Why don't you get to work?" asked the bailiff. "Get your horses put in."

"You said yourself I might be free to-day," said Gustav, making a grimace. He was going out with Bodil.

"Ah, so I did! But that'll be one cart less. You must have a holiday another day instead."

"I can't do that."

"What the de— And why not, may I ask?"

"Well, because you gave me a holiday to-day."

"Yes; but, confound it, man, when I now tell you you can take another day instead!"

"No, I can't do that."

"But why not, man? Is there anything pressing you want to do?"

"No, but I've been given a holiday to-day." It looked as if Gustav were grinning slyly, but it was only that he was turning the quid in his mouth. The bailiff stamped with anger.

"But I can go altogether if you don't care to see me," said Gustav, gently.

The bailiff did not hear, but turned quickly. Experience had taught him to be deaf to that kind of offer in the busy season. He looked up at his window as if he had suddenly thought of something, and sprang up the stairs. They could manage him when they touched upon that theme, but his turn came in the winter, and then they had to keep silence and put up with things, so as to keep a roof over their heads during the slack time.

Gustav went on strutting about with his bundle, without putting his hand to anything. The others laughed at him encouragingly.

The bailiff came down again and went up to him. "Then put in the horses before you go," he said shortly, "and I'll drive yours."

An angry growl passed from man to man. "We're to have the dog with us!" they said in undertones to one another, and then, so that the bailiff should hear: "Where's the dog? We're to have the dog with us."

Matters were not improved by Mons coming down the steps with a beautifully pious expression, and holding a ten-krone note over his chest. "It's all one now," said Erik; "for we've got to have the dog with us!" Mons' face underwent a sudden change, and he began to swear. They pulled the carts about without getting anything done, and their eyes gleamed with anger.

The bailiff came out upon the steps with his overcoat on. "Look sharp about getting the horses in!" he thundered.

The men of Stone Farm were just as strict about their order of precedence as the real inhabitants of the island, and it was just as complicated. The head man sat at the top of the table and helped himself first, he went first in mowing and reaping, and had the first girl to lay the load when the hay was taken in; he was the first man up, and went first when they set out for the fields, and no one might throw down his tools until he had done so. After him came the second man, the third, and so on, and lastly the day-labourers. When no great personal preference interfered, the head man was as a matter of course the sweetheart of the head girl, and so on downwards; and if one of them left, his successor took over the relation: it was a question of equilibrium. In this, however, the order of precedence was often broken, but never in the matter of the horses. Gustav's horses were the poorest, and no power in the world would have induced the head man or Erik to drive them, let alone the farmer himself.

The bailiff knew it, and saw how the men were enjoying themselves when Gustav's nags were put in. He concealed his irritation, but when they exultantly placed Gustav's cart hindmost in the row, it was too much for him, and he ordered it to be driven in front of the others.

"My horses aren't accustomed to go behind the tail-puller's!" said Karl Johan, throwing down his reins. It was the nickname for the last in the row. The others stood trying not to smile, and the bailiff was almost boiling over.

"If you're so bent upon being first, be it by all means," he said quietly. "I can very well drive behind you."

"No, my horses come after the head man's, not after the tail-puller's," said Erik.

This was really a term of abuse in the way in which they used it, one after the other, with covert glances. If he was going to put up with this from the whole row, his position on the farm would be untenable.

"Yes, and mine go behind Erik's," began Anders now, "not after—after Gustav's," he corrected himself quickly, for the bailiff had fixed his eyes upon him and taken a step forward to knock him down.

The bailiff stood silent for a moment, as if listening, the muscles of his arms quivering. Then he sprang into the cart.

"You're all out of your senses to-day," he said. "But now I'm going to drive first, and the man who dares to say a word against it shall have one between the eyes that will send him five days into next week!" So saying he swung out of the row, and Erik's horses, which wanted to turn, received a cut from his whip that made them rear. Erik stormed at them.

The men went about crestfallen, and gave the bailiff time to get well ahead. "Well, I suppose we'd better see about starting now," said Karl Johan at length, as he got into his waggon. The bailiff was already some way ahead; Gustav's nags were doing their very best to-day, and seemed to like being in front. But Karl Johan's horses were displeased, and hurried on; they did not approve of the new arrangement.

At the village shop they made a halt, and consoled themselves a little. When they started again, Karl Johan's horses were refractory, and had to be quieted.

The report of the catch had spread through the country, and carts from other farms caught them up or crossed them on their way to the fishing-villages. Those who lived nearer the town were already on their way home with swaying loads. "Shall we meet in the town for a drink?" cried one man to Karl Johan as he passed. "I'm coming in for another load."

"No, we're driving for the master to-day!" answered Karl Johan, pointing to the bailiff in front.

"Yes, I see him. He's driving a fine pair to-day! I thought it was King Lazarus!"

An acquaintance of Karl Johan's came towards them with a swaying load of herring. He was the only man on one of the small farms. "So you've been to the town too for winter food," said Karl Johan, reining in his horse.

"Yes, for the pigs!" answered the other. "It was laid in for the rest of us at the end of the summer. This isn't food for men!" And he took up a herring between his fingers, and pretended to break it in two.

"No, I suppose not for such fine gentlemen," answered Karl Johan, snappishly. "Of course, you're in such a high station that you eat at the same table as your master and mistress, I've heard."

"Yes, that's the regular custom at our place," answered the other. "We know nothing about masters and dogs." And he drove on. The words rankled with Karl Johan, he could not help drawing comparisons.

They had caught up the bailiff, and now the horses became unruly. They kept trying to pass and took every unlooked-for opportunity of pushing on, so that Karl

Johan nearly drove his team into the back of the bailiff's cart. At last he grew tired of holding them in, and gave them the rein, when they pushed out over the border of the ditch and on in front of Gustav's team, danced about a little on the high-road, and then became quiet. Now it was Erik's horses that were mad.

At the farm all the labourers' wives had been called in for the afternoon, the young cattle were in the enclosure, and Pelle ran from cottage to cottage with the message. He was to help the women together with Lasse, and was delighted with this break in the daily routine; it was a whole holiday for him.

At dinner-time the men came home with their heavy loads of herring, which were turned out upon the stone paving round the pump in the upper yard. There had been no opportunity for them to enjoy themselves in the town, and they were in a bad temper. Only Mons, the ape, went about grinning all over his face. He had been up to his sick mother with the money for the doctor and medicine, and came back at the last minute with a bundle under his arm in the best of spirits. "That was a medicine!" he said over and over again, smacking his lips, "a mighty strong medicine."

He had had a hard time with the bailiff before he got leave to go on his errand. The bailiff was a suspicious man, but it was difficult to hold out against Mons' trembling voice when he urged that it would be too hard on a poor man to deny him the right to help his sick mother. "Besides, she lives close by here, and perhaps I shall never see her again in this life," said Mons, mournfully. "And then there's the money that the master advanced me for it. Shall I go and throw it away on drink, while she's lying there without enough to buy bread with?"

"Well, how was your mother?" asked the bailiff, when Mons came hurrying up at the last moment.

"Oh, she can't last much longer!" said Mons, with a quiver in his voice. But he was beaming all over his face.

The others threw him angry glances while they unloaded the herring. They would have liked to thrash him for his infernal good luck. But they recovered when they got into their room and he undid the bundle. "That's to you all from my sick mother!" he said, and drew forth a keg of spirits. "And I was to give you her best respects, and thank you for being so good to her little son."

"Where did you go?" asked Erik.

"I sat in the tavern on the harbour hill all the time, so as to keep an eye on you; I couldn't resist looking at you, you looked so delightfully thirsty. I wonder you didn't lie down flat and drink out of the sea, every man Jack of you!"

In the afternoon the cottagers' wives and the farm-girls sat round the great heaps of herring out by the pump, and cleaned the fish. Lasse and Pelle pumped water to rinse them in, and cleaned out the big salt-barrels that the men rolled up from the cellar; and two of the elder women were entrusted with the task of mixing. The bailiff walked up and down by the front steps and smoked his pipe.

As a general rule, the herring-pickling came under the category of pleasant work, but to-day there was dissatisfaction all along the line. The women chattered freely as they worked, but their talk was not quite innocuous—it was all carefully aimed; the men had made them malicious. When they laughed, there was the sound of a hidden meaning in their laughter. The men had to be called out and given orders about every single thing that had to be done; they went about it sullenly, and then

at once withdrew to their rooms. But when there they were all the gayer, and sang and enjoyed themselves.

"They're doing themselves proud in there," said Lasse, with a sigh to Pelle. "They've got a whole keg of spirits that Mons had hidden in his herring. They say it's so extra uncommon good." Lasse had not tasted it himself.

The two kept out of the wrangling; they felt themselves too weak. The girls had not had the courage to refuse the extra Sunday work, but they were not afraid to pass little remarks, and tittered at nothing, to make the bailiff think it was at him. They kept on asking in a loud voice what the time was, or stopped working to listen to the ever-increasing gaiety in the men's rooms. Now and then a man was thrown out from there into the yard, and shuffled in again, shamefaced and grinning.

One by one the men came sauntering out. They had their caps on the back of their heads now, and their gaze was fixed. They took up a position in the lower yard, and hung over the fence, looking at the girls, every now and then bursting into a laugh and stopping suddenly, with a frightened glance at the bailiff.

The bailiff was walking up and down by the steps. He had laid aside his pipe and become calmer; and when the men came out, he was cracking a whip and exercising himself in self-restraint.

"If I liked I could bend him until both ends met!" he heard Erik say aloud in the middle of a conversation. The bailiff earnestly wished that Erik would make the attempt. His muscles were burning under this unsatisfied desire to let himself go; but his brain was revelling in visions of fights, he was grappling with the whole flock and going through all the details of the battle. He had gone through these battles so often, especially of late; he had thought out all the difficult situations, and there was not a place

in all Stone Farm in which the things that would serve as weapons were not known to him.

"What's the time?" asked one of the girls aloud for at least the twentieth time.

"A little longer than your chemise," answered Erik promptly.

The girls laughed. "Oh, nonsense! Tell us what it really is!" exclaimed another.

"A quarter to the miller's girl," answered Anders.

"Oh, what fools you are! Can't you answer properly? You, Karl Johan!"

"It's short!" said Karl Johan, gravely.

"No, seriously now, I'll tell you what it is," exclaimed Mons, innocently, drawing a great "turnip" out of his pocket. "It's—" he looked carefully at the watch, and moved his lips as if calculating. "The deuce!" he exclaimed, bringing down his hand in amazement on the fence. "Why, it's exactly the same time as it was this time yesterday."

The jest was an old one, but the women screamed with laughter; for Mons was the jester.

"Never mind about the time," said the bailiff, coming up. "But try and get through your work."

"No, time's for tailors and shoemakers, not for honest people!" said Anders in an undertone.

The bailiff turned upon him as quick as a cat, and Anders' arm darted up above his head bent as if to ward off a blow. The bailiff merely expectorated with a scornful smile, and began his pacing up and down afresh, and Anders stood there, red to the roots of his hair, and not knowing what to do with his eyes. He scratched the back of his head once or twice, but that could not explain away that strange movement of his arm. The others were laughing at him, so he hitched up his trousers and sauntered down

towards the men's rooms, while the women screamed with laughter, and the men laid their heads upon the fence and shook with merriment.

So the day passed, with endless ill-natured jesting and spitefulness. In the evening the men wandered out to indulge in horse-play on the high-road and annoy the passers-by. Lasse and Pelle were tired, and went early to bed.

"Thank God we've got through this day!" said Lasse, when he had got into bed. "It's been a regular bad day. It's a miracle that no blood's been shed; there was a time when the bailiff looked as if he might do anything. But Erik must know how far he can venture."

Next morning everything seemed to be forgotten. The men attended to the horses as usual, and at six o'clock went out into the field for a third mowing of clover. They looked blear-eyed, heavy and dull. The keg lay outside the stable-door empty; and as they went past they kicked it.

Pelle helped with the herring to-day too, but he no longer found it amusing. He was longing already to be out in the open with his cattle; and here he had to be at everybody's beck and call. As often as he dared, he made some pretext for going outside the farm, for that helped to make the time pass.

Later in the morning, while the men were mowing the thin clover, Erik flung down his scythe so that it rebounded with a ringing sound from the swaths. The others stopped their work.

"What's the matter with you, Erik?" asked Karl Johan. "Have you got a bee in your bonnet?"

Erik stood with his knife in his hand, feeling its edge, and neither heard nor saw. Then he turned up his face and frowned at the sky; his eyes seemed to have sunk into his head and become blind, and his lips stood out

thick. He muttered a few inarticulate sounds, and started up towards the farm.

The others stood still and followed him with staring eyes; then one after another they threw down their scythes and moved away, only Karl Johan remaining where he was.

Pelle had just come out to the enclosure to see that none of the young cattle had broken their way out. When he saw the men coming up towards the farm in a straggling file like a herd of cattle on the move, he suspected something was wrong and ran in.

"The men are coming up as fast as they can, father!" he whispered.

"They're surely not going to do it?" said Lasse, beginning to tremble.

The bailiff was carrying things from his room down to the pony-carriage; he was going to drive to the town. He had his arms full when Erik appeared at the big, open gate below, with distorted face and a large, broad-bladed knife in his hand. "Where the devil is he?" he said aloud, and circled round once with bent head, like an angry bull, and then walked up through the fence straight towards the bailiff. The latter started when he saw him, and through the gate, the others coming up full speed behind him. He measured the distance to the steps, but changed his mind, and advanced towards Erik, keeping behind a waggon and watching every movement that Erik made, while he tried to find a weapon. Erik followed him round the waggon, grinding his teeth and turning his eyes obliquely up at his opponent.

The bailiff went round and round the waggon and made half movements; he could not decide what to do. But then the others came up and blocked his way. His face turned white with fear, and he tore a whiffletree from the waggon, which with a push he sent rolling into the thick of them,

so that they fell back in confusion. This made an open space between him and Erik, and Erik sprang quickly over the pole, with his knife ready to strike; but as he sprang, the whiffletree descended upon his head. The knife-thrust fell upon the bailiff's shoulder, but it was feeble, and the knife just grazed his side as Erik sank to the ground. The others stood staring in bewilderment.

"Carry him down to the mangling-cellar!" cried the bailiff in a commanding tone, and the men dropped their knives and obeyed.

The battle had stirred Pelle's blood into a tumult, and he was standing by the pump, jumping up and down. Lasse had to take a firm hold of him, for it looked as if he would throw himself into the fight. Then when the great strong Erik sank to the ground insensible from a blow on the head, he began to jump as if he had St. Vitus's Dance. He jumped into the air with drooping head, and let himself fall heavily, all the time uttering short, shrill bursts of laughter. Lasse spoke to him angrily, thinking it was unnecessarily foolish behaviour on his part; and then he picked him up and held him firmly in his hands, while the little fellow trembled all over his body in his efforts to free himself and go on with his jumping.

"What can be wrong with him?" said Lasse tearfully to the cottagers' wives. "Oh dear, what shall I do?" He carried him down to their room in a sad state of mind, because the moon was waning, and it would never pass off!

Down in the mangling-cellar they were busy with Erik, pouring brandy into his mouth and bathing his head with vinegar. Kongstrup was not at home, but the mistress herself was down there, wringing her hands and cursing Stone Farm—her own childhood's home! Stone Farm had become a hell with its murder and debauchery! she

said, without caring that they were all standing round her and heard every word.

The bailiff had driven quickly off in the pony-carriage to fetch a doctor and to report what he had done in defence of his life. The women stood round the pump and gossiped, while the men and girls wandered about in confusion; there was no one to issue orders. But then the mistress came out on to the steps and looked at them for a little, and they all found something to do. Hers were piercing eyes! The old women shook themselves and went back to their work. It reminded them so pleasantly of old times, when the master of the Stone Farm of their youth rushed up with anger in his eyes when they were idling.

Down in their room, Lasse sat watching Pelle, who lay talking and laughing in delirium, so that his father hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.

XV

"SHE must have had right on her side, for he never said a cross word when she started off with her complaints and reproaches, and them so loud that you could hear them right through the walls and down in the servants' room and all over the farm. But it was stupid of her all the same, for she only drove him distracted and sent him away. And how will it go with a farm in the long run, when the farmer spends all his time on the high-roads because he can't stay at home? It's a poor sort of affection that drives the man away from his home."

Lasse was standing in the stable on Sunday evening talking to the women about it while they milked. Pelle was there too, busy with his own affairs, but listening to what was said.

"But she wasn't altogether stupid either," said Thatcher Holm's wife. "For instance when she had Fair Maria in to do housemaid's work, so that he could have a pretty face to look at at home. She knew that if you have food at home you don't go out for it. But of course it all led to nothing when she couldn't leave off frightening him out of the house with her crying and her drinking."

"I'm sure he drinks too!" said Pelle, shortly.

"Yes, of course he gets drunk now and then," said Lasse in a reproving tone. "But he's a man, you see, and may have his reasons besides. But it's ill when a woman