

counting the steps, I suppose?" said Karl Johan, admonishingly. Oh yes, they were all counting to themselves.

It was clear weather, and the island lay spread out beneath them in all its luxuriance. The very first thing the men wanted to do was to try what it was like to spit down; but the girls were giddy and kept together in a cluster in the middle of the platform. The churches were counted under Karl Johan's able guidance, and all the well-known places pointed out. "There's Stone Farm too," said Anders, pointing to something far off towards the sea. It was not Stone Farm, but Karl Johan could say to a nicety behind which hill it ought to lie, and then they recognised the quarries.

Lasse took no part in this. He stood quite still, gazing at the blue line of the Swedish coast that stood out far away upon the shining water. The sight of his native land made him feel weak and old; he would probably never go home again, although he would have dearly liked to see Bengta's grave once more. Ah yes, and the best that could happen to one would be to be allowed to rest by her side, when everything else was ended. At this moment he regretted that he had gone into exile in his old age. He wondered what Kungstorp looked like now, whether the new people kept the land cultivated at all. And all the old acquaintances—how were they getting on? His old-man's reminiscences came over him so strongly that for a time he forgot Madam Olsen and everything about her. He allowed himself to be lulled by past memories, and wept in his heart like a little child. Ah! it was dreary to live away from one's native place and everything in one's old age; but if it only brought a blessing on the laddie in some way or other, it was all as it should be.

"I suppose that's the King's Copenhagen* we see over there?" asked Anders.

"It's Sweden," said Lasse, quietly.

"Sweden, is it? But it lay on that side last year, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, of course! What else should the world go round for?" exclaimed Mons.

Anders was just about to take this in all good faith, when he caught a grimace that Mons made to the others. "Oh, you clever monkey!" he cried, and sprang at Mons, who dashed down the stone stairs; and the sound of their footsteps came up in a hollow rumble as out of a huge cask. The girls stood leaning against one another, rocking gently and gazing silently at the shining water that lay far away round the island. The giddiness had made them languid.

"Why, your eyes are quite dreamy!" said Karl Johan, trying to take them all into his embrace. "Aren't you coming down with us?"

They were all fairly tired now. No one said anything, for of course Karl Johan was leading; but the girls showed an inclination to sit down.

"Now there's only the Echo Valley left," he said encouragingly, "and that's on our way back. We must do that, for it's well worth it. You'll hear an echo there that hasn't its equal anywhere."

They went slowly, for their feet were tender with the leather boots and much aimless walking; but when they had come down the steep cliff into the valley and had drunk from the spring, they brightened up. Karl Johan stationed himself with legs astride, and called across to

* Country-people speak of Copenhagen as "the King's Copenhagen."

the cliff: "What's Karl Johan's greatest treat?" And the echo answered straight away: "Eat!" It was exceedingly funny, and they all had to try it, each with his or her name—even Pelle. When that was exhausted, Mons made up a question which made the echo give a rude answer.

"You mustn't teach it anything like that," said Lasse. "Just suppose some fine ladies were to come here, and he started calling that out after them?" They almost killed themselves with laughing at the old man's joke, and he was so delighted at the applause that he went on repeating it to himself on the way back. Ha, ha! he wasn't quite fit for the scrap-heap yet.

When they got back to the cart they were ravenously hungry and settled down to another meal. "You must have something to keep you up when you're wandering about like this," said Mons.

"Now then," said Karl Johan, when they had finished, "every one may do what they like; but at nine sharp we meet here again and drive home."

Up on the open ground, Lasse gave Pelle a secret nudge and they began to do business with a cake-seller until the others had got well ahead. "It's not nice being third wheel in a carriage," said Lasse. "We two'll go about by ourselves for a little now."

Lasse was craning his neck. "Are you looking for any one?" asked Pelle.

"No, no one in particular; but I was wondering where all these people come from. There are people from all over the country, but I haven't seen any one from the village yet."

"Don't you think Madam Olsen'll be here to-day?"

"Can't say," said Lasse, "but it would be nice to see

her, and there's something I want to say to her too. Your eyes are young; you must keep a look-out."

Pelle was given fifty öre to spend on whatever he liked. Round the ground sat the poor women of the Heath at little stalls, from which they sold coloured sugar-sticks, gingerbread and two-öre cigars. In the meantime he went from woman to woman, and bought of each for one or two öre.

Away under the trees stood blind Höyer, who had come straight from Copenhagen with new ballads. There was a crowd round him. He played the tune upon his concertina, his little withered wife sang to it, and the whole crowd sang carefully with her. Those who had learnt the tunes went away singing, and others pushed forward into their place and put down their five-öre piece.

Lasse and Pelle stood on the edge of the crowd listening. There was no use in paying money before you knew what you would get for it; and anyhow the songs would be all over the island by to-morrow, and going gratis from mouth to mouth. "A Man of Eighty—a new and pleasant ballad about how things go when a decrepit old man takes a young wife!" shouted Höyer in a hoarse voice, before the song began. Lasse didn't care very much about that ballad; but then came a terribly sad one about the sailor George Semon, who took a most tender farewell of his sweetheart—

"And said, When here I once more stand,
We to the church will go hand in hand."

But he never did come back, for the storm was over them for forty-five days, provisions ran short, and the girl's lover went mad. He drew his knife upon the captain, and demanded to be taken home to his bride; and the captain shot him down. Then the others threw themselves

upon the corpse, carried it to the galley, and made soup of it.

"The girl still waits for her own true love,
Away from the shore she will not move.
Poor maid, she's hoping she still may wed,
And does not know that her lad is dead."

"That's beautiful," said Lasse, rummaging in his purse for a five-öre. "You must try to learn that; you've got an ear for that sort of thing." They pushed through the crowd right up to the musician, and began cautiously to sing too, while the girls all round were sniffing.

They wandered up and down among the trees, Lasse rather fidgety. There was a whole street of dancing-booths, tents with conjurers and panorama-men, and drinking-booths. The criers were perspiring, the refreshment sellers were walking up and down in front of their tents like greedy beasts of prey. Things had not got into full swing yet, for most of the people were still out and about seeing the sights, or amusing themselves in all seemliness, exerting themselves in trials of strength or slipping in and out of the conjurers' tents. There was not a man unaccompanied by a woman. Many a one came to a stand at the refreshment-tents, but the woman pulled him past; then he would yawn and allow himself to be dragged up into a round-about or a magic-lantern tent where the most beautiful pictures were shown of the way that cancer and other horrible things made havoc in people's insides.

"These are just the things for the women," said Lasse, breathing forth a sigh at haphazard after Madam Olsen.

On a horse on Madvig's roundabout sat Gustav with his arm round Bodil's waist. "Hey, old man!" he cried as they whizzed past, and flapped Lasse on the ear with

his cap, which had the white side out. They were as radiant as the day and the sun, those two.

Pelle wanted to have a turn on a roundabout. "Then blest if I won't have something too, that'll make things go round!" said Lasse, and went in and had a "cuckoo"—coffee with brandy in it. "There are some people," he said when he came out again, "that can go from one tavern to another without its making any difference in their purse. It would be nice to try—only for a year. Hush!" Over by Max Alexander's "Green House" stood Karna, quite alone and looking about her wistfully. Lasse drew Pelle round in a wide circle.

"There's Madam Olsen with a strange man!" said Pelle suddenly.

Lasse started. "Where?" Yes, there she stood, and had a man with her! And talking so busily! They went past her without stopping; she could choose for herself then.

"Hi, can't you wait a little!" cried Madam Olsen, running after them so that her petticoats crackled round her. She was round and smiling as usual, and many layers of good home-woven material stood out about her; there was no scrimping anywhere.

They went on together, talking on indifferent matters and now and then exchanging glances about the boy who was in their way. They had to walk so sedately without venturing to touch one another. He did not like any nonsense.

It was black with people now up at the pavilion, and one could hardly move a step without meeting acquaintances. "It's even worse than a swarm of bees," said Lasse. "It's not worth trying to get in there." At one place the movement was outwards, and by following it they found themselves in a valley, where a man stood

shouting and beating his fists upon a platform. It was a missionary meeting. The audience lay encamped in small groups, up the slopes, and a man in long black clothes went quietly from group to group, selling leaflets. His face was white, and he had a very long, thin red beard.

"Do you see that man?" whispered Lasse, giving Pelle a nudge. "Upon my word if it isn't Long Ole—and with a glove on his injured hand. It was him that had to take the sin upon him for Per Olsen's false swearing!" explained Lasse, turning to Madam Olsen. "He was standing at the machine at the time when Per Olsen ought to have paid the penalty with his three fingers, and so his went instead. He may be glad of the mistake after all, for they say he's risen to great things among the prayer-meeting folks. And his complexion's as fine as a young lady's—something different to what it was when he was carting manure at Stone Farm! It'll be fun to say good-day to him again."

Lasse was quite proud of having served together with this man, and stationed himself in front of the others, intending to make an impression upon his lady friend by saying a hearty: "Good-day, Ole!" Long Ole was at the next group, and now he came on to them and was going to hold out his tracts, when a glance at Lasse made him drop both hand and eyes; and with a deep sigh he passed on with bowed head to the next group.

"Did you see how he turned his eyes up?" said Lasse, derisively. "When beggars come to court, they don't know how to behave! He'd got a watch in his pocket, too, and long clothes; and before he hadn't even a shirt to his body. And an ungodly devil he was too! But the old gentleman looks after his own, as the saying is; I expect it's him that helped him on by changing places

at the machine. The way they've cheated the Almighty's enough to make Him weep!"

Madam Olsen tried to hush Lasse, but the "cuckoo" rose within him together with his wrath, and he continued: "So *he's* above recognising decent people who get what they have in an honourable way, and not by lying and humbug. They do say he makes love to all the farmers' wives wherever he goes; but there was a time when he had to put up with the Sow."

People began to look at them, and Madam Olsen took Lasse firmly by the arm and drew him away.

The sun was now low in the sky. Up on the open ground, the crowds tramped round and round as if in a tread-mill. Now and then a drunken man reeled along, making a broad path for himself through the crush. The noise came seething up from the tents—barrel-organs each grinding out a different tune, criers, the bands of the various dancing-booths, and the measured tread of a schottische or polka. The women wandered up and down in clusters, casting long looks into the refreshment-tents where their men were sitting; and some of them stopped at the tent-door and made coaxing signs to some one inside.

Under the trees stood a drunken man, pawing at a tree-trunk, and beside him stood a girl, crying with her black damask apron to her eyes. Pelle watched them for a long time. The man's clothes were disordered, and he lurched against the girl with a foolish grin when she, in the midst of her tears, tried to put them straight. When Pelle turned away, Lasse and Madam Olsen had disappeared in the crowd.

They must have gone on a little, and he went down to the very end of the street. Then he turned despondingly and went up, burrowing this way and that in the stream

of people, with eyes everywhere. "Haven't you seen Father Lasse?" he asked pitifully, when he met any one he knew.

In the thickest of the crush, a tall man was moving along, holding forth blissfully at the top of his voice. He was a head taller than anybody else, and very broad; but he beamed with good-nature, and wanted to embrace everybody. People ran screaming out of his way, so that a broad path was left wherever he went. Pelle kept behind him, and thus succeeded in getting through the thickest crowds, where policemen and rangers were stationed with thick cudgels. Their eyes and ears were on the watch, but they did not interfere in anything. It was said that they had handcuffs in their pockets.

Pelle had reached the road in his despairing search. Cart after cart was carefully working its way out through the gloom under the trees, then rolling out into the dazzling evening light, and on to the high-road with much cracking of whips. They were the prayer-meeting people driving home.

He happened to think of the time, and asked a man what it was. Nine! Pelle had to run so as not to be too late in getting to the cart. In the cart sat Karl Johan and Fair Maria eating. "Get up and have something to eat!" they said, and as Pelle was ravenous, he forgot everything while he ate. But then Karl Johan asked about Lasse, and his torment returned.

Karl Johan was cross; not one had returned to the cart, although it was the time agreed upon. "You'd better keep close to us now," he said as they went up, "or you might get killed."

Up at the edge of the wood they met Gustav running. "Have none of you seen Bodil?" he asked gasping. His clothes were torn and there was blood on the front

of his shirt. He ran on groaning, and disappeared under the trees. It was quite dark there, but the open ground lay in a strange light that came from nowhere, but seemed to have been left behind by the day as it fled. Faces out there showed up, some in ghostly pallor, some black like holes in the light, until they suddenly burst forth, crimson with blood-red flame.

The people wandered about in confused groups, shouting and screaming at the top of their voices. Two men came along with arms twined affectionately round one another's necks, and the next moment lay rolling on the ground in a fight. Others joined the fray and took sides without troubling to discover what it was all about, and the contest became one large struggling heap. Then the police came up, and hit about them with their sticks; and those who did not run away were handcuffed and thrown into an empty stable.

Pelle was quite upset, and kept close to Karl Johan; he jumped every time a band approached, and kept on saying in a whimpering tone: "Where's Father Lasse? Let's go and find him."

"Oh, hold your tongue!" exclaimed the head man, who was standing and trying to catch sight of his fellow-servants. He was angry at this untrustworthiness. "Don't stand there crying! You'd do much more good if you ran down to the cart and see whether any one's come."

Pelle had to go, little though he cared to venture in under the trees. The branches hung silently listening, but the noise from the open ground came down in bursts, and in the darkness under the bushes living things rustled about and spoke in voices of joy or sorrow. A sudden scream rang through the wood, and made his knees knock together.

Karna sat at the back of the cart asleep, and Bengta stood leaning against the front seat, weeping. "They've locked Anders up," she sobbed. "He got wild, so they put handcuffs on him and locked him up." She went back with Pelle.

Lasse was with Karl Johan and Fair Maria; he looked defiantly at Pelle, and in his half-closed eyes there was a little mutinous gleam.

"Then now there's only Mons and Lively Sara," said Karl Johan, as he ran his eye over them.

"But what about Anders?" sobbed Bengta. "You surely won't drive away without Anders?"

"There's nothing can be done about Anders!" said the head man. "He'll come of his own accord when once he's let out."

They found out on inquiry that Mons and Lively Sara were down in one of the dancing-booths, and accordingly went down there. "Now you stay here!" said Karl Johan sternly, and went in to take a survey of the dancers. In there blood burnt hot, and faces were like balls of fire that made red circles in the blue mist of perspiring heat and dust. Dump! dump! dump! The measure fell booming like heavy blows; and in the middle of the floor stood a man and wrung the moisture out of his jacket.

Out of one of the dancing-tents pushed a big fellow with two girls. He had an arm about the neck of each, and they linked arms behind his back. His cap was on the back of his head, and his riotous mood would have found expression in leaping, if he had not felt himself too pleasantly encumbered; so he opened his mouth wide, and shouted joyfully, so that it rang again: "Devil take me! Deuce take me! Seven hundred devils take me!" and disappeared under the trees with his girls.

"That was Per Olsen himself," said Lasse, looking

after him. "What a man to be sure! He certainly doesn't look as if he bore any debt of sin to the Almighty."

"His time may still come," was the opinion of Karl Johan.

Quite by chance they found Mons and Lively Sara sitting asleep in one another's arms upon a bench under the trees.

"Well, now, I suppose, we ought to be getting home?" said Karl Johan slowly. He had been doing right for so long that his throat was quite dry. "I suppose none of you'll stand a farewell glass?"

"I will!" said Mons, "if you'll go up to the pavilion with me to drink it." Mons had missed something by going to sleep, and had a desire to go once round the ground. Every time a yell reached them, he gave a leap as he walked beside Lively Sara, and answered with a long halloo. He tried to get away, but she clung to his arm; so he swung the heavy end of his loaded stick and shouted defiantly. Lasse kicked his old limbs and imitated Mons's shouts, for he too was for anything rather than going home; but Karl Johan was determined—they *were* to go now! And in this he was supported by Pelle and the women.

Out on the open ground a roar made them stop, and the women got each behind her man. A man came running bare-headed and with a large wound in his temple, from which the blood flowed down over his face and collar. His features were distorted with fear. Behind him came a second, also bare-headed, and with a drawn knife. A ranger tried to bar his way, but received a wound in his shoulder and fell, and the pursuer ran on. As he passed them, Mons uttered a short yell and sprang straight up into the air, bringing down his loaded stick upon the back of the man's neck. The man sank to the ground with a

grunt, and Mons slipped in among the groups of people and disappeared; and the others found him waiting for them at the edge of the wood. He did not answer any more yells.

Karl Johan had to lead the horses until they got out on to the road, and then they all got in. Behind them the noise had become lost, and only one long cry for help rang through the air and dropped again.

Down by a little lake, some forgotten girls had gathered on the grass and were playing by themselves. The white mist lay over the grass like a shining lake, and only the upper part of the girl's bodies rose above it. They were walking round in a ring, singing the mid-summer-night song. Pure and clear rose the merry song, and yet was so strangely sad to listen to, because they who sang it had been left in the lurch by sots and brawlers.

"We will dance upon hill and meadow,
We will wear out our shoes and stockings,
Heigh ho, my little sweetheart fair,
We shall dance till the sun has risen high.
Heigh ho, my queen!
Now we have danced upon the green."

The tones fell so gently upon the ear and mind, that memories and thoughts were purified of all that had been hideous, and the day itself could appear in its true colours as a joyful festival. For Lasse and Pelle, indeed, it had been a peerless day, making up for many years of neglect. The only pity was that it was over instead of about to begin.

The occupants of the cart were tired now, some nodding and all silent. Lasse sat working about in his pocket with one hand. He was trying to obtain an estimate of the money that remained. It was expensive to keep a sweetheart when you did not want to be outdone by younger

men in any way. Pelle was asleep, and was slipping farther and farther down until Bengta took his head on to her lap. She herself was weeping bitterly about Anders.

The daylight was growing rapidly brighter as they drove in to Stone Farm.