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**BEQUEST OF
JULIUS EMIL OLSON
1898-1944
PROFESSOR OF SCANDINAVIAN
1884-1890**

To Julius E. Olson
From

J. A. Peterson
The Author

SOLSTAD

THE OLD AND THE NEW

A STORY BY ✓
JAMES A. PETERSON

Author of
Hjalmar, or the Immigrant's Son



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CHAPTER I

THE BABE FROM THE SEA

AT the mouth of a large river on the southeast coast of Norway lay a small town. It had a deep, well protected harbor, in which usually swung at anchor several large sea-going vessels. Up in the hills and on the mountain sides were large forests of fir, spruce and pine. In the spring, logs from these forests were floated down the river with the high water to the little seaport town and sawed into lumber for export.

It was in the summer of 1829. For several days the sky had been dark and lowering. The older inhabitants predicted a terrible storm. On the seventeenth day of June a strong wind began blowing from the sea. It kept on with increasing violence all night and the whole of the following day. It reached its height on the second night, when several old buildings were blown down.

The people stayed in their houses. None of them dared to venture out, except in cases of the direst necessity. Nobody could remember that anything like it had ever occurred before.

On the third morning the storm began to abate; before noon the sun was shining and the atmosphere assumed a normal appearance. The people, who had been thus imprisoned in their houses for two nights and a day, began to survey their surroundings

to find out what damage had been done and, if possible, to help those in distress.

Along the shore on the northern side of the harbor was a wide sand beach. Beyond this was a glen that extended from the seashore toward the hills in the background. In this glen, some distance from the sea, stood a farmhouse in the midst of large oak trees. From these oak trees the farm took its name—"Egeland," which means "Oakland."

The sand beach, already mentioned, extended a little ways into the glen. On this beach stood a small dwelling with only two rooms. One room was used as kitchen, dining-room and living-room; the other was a small chamber. The door of the little dwelling was painted red and was the only part of the house that showed any paint. The cottage was built from wreckage that had floated in from the sea. The two windows that it contained had once upon a time belonged to the cabin on the deck of a freighter. On one side of the little house was a large chimney that had been built from cobblestones, pieces of old brick and chunks of slag. Inside, the house looked clean and tidy; the wide boards of the pine floor showed the effects of frequent scrubbing.

In this cottage lived Hans Olson, Bertha, his wife, and their twelve-year old son, Jacob, an only child. Hans Olson was known thru the town and surrounding country as Hans Fisker, which, translated into English, means Hans the fisherman. His wife, naturally enough, was called Bertha Fisker, and their son, Jacob Fisker. Hans did not own the land upon which his little home was built; it

was claimed by the peasant who owned Egeland. For the ground rent Hans paid him every year forty pounds of fish.

When the great storm broke, Hans and Jacob were on the sea fishing. Almost every craft outside of the little harbor was battered to pieces and sunk. Hans and Jacob never returned to their home. They perished in the storm.

While the inhabitants of the little town were exploring the damage wrought by the hurricane, they found on the beach near Hans Fisker's cottage a life-boat, on the bow of which was painted the name, "Arne." In the boat lay, unconscious and apparently lifeless, a baby boy about a year old. The baby was picked up and carried to town and placed in the care of the government physician. After strenuous efforts on his part the baby showed signs of life, and in the course of a couple of days completely recovered.

"It is a pretty baby," said some of the women who came to see the only life, so far as they knew, that had been saved from the sea and the wreck of the storm.

There was scarcely a family in the little town that was not mourning the death of a member. Bertha Fisker was left all alone in the little cottage on the beach. She was a woman of deep religious thought and feeling. She belonged to a sect within the State Church that had brought about a reaction in the religious life of the small community. The spiritual advisers of the people were public officials; the clergymen of the State Church had allied them-

selves with the government class. These stewards of the holy mysteries of the Church did not hesitate to use the same political tactics in promoting their own interests that had been at all times so successfully employed by the class to which they were allied. The Church in many instances had become simply a secular institution. The public conscience had been deadened to such an extent that the worship in the churches was an empty formula.

Against this stultification of the Christian Church had arisen several very able evangelical lay preachers, foremost among whom was Hans Nielsen Hauge. They were not allowed, of course, to preach in the regular churches, but held revivals in private houses and in other places where people gathered.

Bertha Fisker had taken great interest in these evangelical meetings. She never failed, however, to attend services in the State Church. When her husband and only son had perished she was left all alone, without means. But with an unbounded faith in the power and willingness of her Maker to care for and support her, she continued to live in her little cottage, which she refused to leave. Whatever calamity befell her, she felt confident that it was for her own good. If she thought that God punished her, she felt that it was the punishment of a kind and merciful father, and that unless He loved her He would not punish her. She prayed incessantly for wisdom and courage to bear the great sorrow that had been laid on her.

She was one of the party that found the baby boy in the boat that had drifted ashore near her

little cottage. She felt sure that this boy had been sent to her by Providence to take the place of her Jacob and her Hans. When she heard that he had recovered, she went to the overseer of the poor—for to him the baby had been entrusted—to ask if she might be allowed to take him to her own home and bring him up as her own child. The poor department of the little town consulted together a long time before they granted her request. Finally, however, it was agreed that for his bringing-up she should receive from the public treasury one mark a month, which amounted to three specie dollars during the year.

The day after receiving her charge, Bertha took the little boy with her to the parish priest. She told him that on the following Sunday she would present the boy at the parish church for baptism.

“What are you going to name him?” asked the pastor.

“His name shall be Arne,” said Bertha, “because that was the name of the boat in which he was found.”

“Will he have any surname?” asked the pastor.

“Yes,” said Bertha. “He shall be called Arne Egeland, because that is the name of the farm where the boat was beached, and I want him baptized in both names so the world will call him Arne Egeland.”

“Where will you get your sponsors for the boy?” asked the pastor.

“My neighbor, the carpenter, Ole Lerdal, will be one. The poor commissioner, Thomas Selvig,

will be the other, and I myself will be the third," answered Bertha. "I will be his godmother."

The following Sunday the boy was baptized as agreed, and thereafter was known as Arne Ege-land.

CHAPTER II

A FIGHT FOR EXISTENCE

SOON Bertha Fisker realized that she had assumed a heavy burden. She had now nobody to rely on for support. She had to support herself and also provide for little Arne. To care for and to rear this dear little boy was a precious privilege, for, as she thought, he had been given to her by her Maker as a priceless gift. She had determined to keep her little home as it had been kept before. She made a contract with the owner of the ground that, instead of paying him forty pounds of fish a year for ground rent, she should work for him three days each spring. In order to obtain food and clothing for herself and child she worked wherever she could get employment. Sometimes it was washing, cleaning or ironing. Sometimes it was work out in the fields, but she always took Arne with her. In this way she got along well and Arne grew both in stature and in understanding. Bertha was always cheerful. Whenever misfortune overtook her, she felt that God was interested in her, and for that reason was correcting her. She never lost sight of the fact that she was an instrumentality that God had created to bring her share of light into the world. True, she was poor; but she always said, "If I cannot make a large light, I'll make a small light and work to make it grow larger."

One day she was employed to clean the city jail, and, as usual, little Arne was with her. He was now big enough to walk and talk with his god-mother. In the jail was only one prisoner, a young woman, the wife of a cottager. Her name was Maren Bakken.

"Have you done wrong that you're here?" said Bertha to her.

"Oh, I suppose I have," replied Maren. "My husband and I live in a little cottage up on the Flatstad farm. My husband has been working for Mr. Flatstad. We get a very small piece of ground with the cottage. We can barely keep one cow and a sheep on it. You know that the wool from one sheep doesn't go very far in clothing a family of four. But that was all we could keep, so we had to get along with it. One day last fall a sheep that belonged to Mr. Flatstad jumped over the fence and was grazing in the pasture with our sheep. Oh, you can't imagine how much I wanted that sheep. We needed the wool so badly to keep us warm in the winter. I did not think Mr. Flatstad would know what had become of his sheep, so one night Mr. Bakken and I went out and killed it. After we had skinned it I cut the wool off and hung the hide upstairs over the kitchen. I never dreamed that anybody could identify a sheep skin after the wool had been shorn off. The meat we salted in a jar and put it down in our little cellar."

"But didn't you know," said Bertha, "that God said, 'Thou shalt not steal'?"

"Oh, yes, I knew all about that, but I didn't think

that God intended that we and our little ones should freeze in the winter time when Mr. Flatstad had so many."

"Oh," said Bertha. "Why did you not rely on God to keep you warm? When you decided to steal you were relying on the devil, and the devil, you know, always brings ruin to those who rely on him."

"Oh, yes, I know it now," said Maren, "and I am so sorry that I acted so foolishly and, as you say, relied on the devil."

"But," responded Bertha, "are you sorry you got into trouble or are you sorry because you violated one of God's commandments?"

At this talk from Bertha, Maren burst into tears.

"But go on with your story," said Bertha. "Let's hear how it all happened."

Continuing between her sobs and groans, Maren said: "Soon after we had taken the sheep the reeve came to our house, found the sheepskin in our loft and the mutton in the jar down cellar. He wanted to arrest both of us, but after a consultation between my husband and myself we decided that I should shoulder the blame for the theft and plead guilty, so that my husband could keep on working for the support of the children. The judge gave me six months in jail, and I have four months left to serve."

Again she burst into tears.

"I feel so sorry for my two little children. The boy is six and the girl is three. I know that I am a bad sinner, but I feel that God will forgive me, for He knows I wouldn't have taken the sheep if

the little ones had not needed it to shield them from the cold."

"What did the judge say when he sentenced you?" asked Bertha.

"He said I was a very wicked woman and that it was very sad that I had two little children, for, in all probability, they will grow up to be thieves and highwaymen, just like their mother."

"I shall go and see our pastor," said Bertha, "and try to get you out, and I hope that after this when you are in need you will rely on God to save and protect you and not on the devil."

The next morning Bertha called on the parish priest, who was a tall, fine-looking man. He had beautiful curly hair and a black mustache. His face indicated that he was conscious of his position, not only in the church, but also in the community where he lived. He greeted Bertha formally, with a mechanical smile, and showed her only such other consideration as he thought his office demanded. While Bertha was laying Maren Bakken's case before him he was drumming the table with his fingers and occasionally stroked his mustache with his left hand. When Bertha had finished, he said slowly:

"Bertha Olson, I am much surprised that you, a Christian woman and a member of our Holy Mother, the Church, should come to me and ask me to intercede for a self-confessed criminal of the most degraded kind. Why, Mr. Flatstad is one of the staunchest pillars of our church—undoubtedly a kind and indulgent landlord and employer of Mr. Bakken."

"I came to you because I am a member of our Holy Mother, the Church, and because I am one of your parishioners. Yes, to you, who are the steward of its holy mysteries. If the Church is a holy mother, as you say, why should it not act as a holy mother towards this poor woman, Maren Bakken?"

"You must remember, my dear Bertha, that the Church cannot set itself up against the administration of the law of the land. This woman has pleaded guilty to a heinous offense. In what way could the government stop sheep stealing if we should let a criminal like Maren Bakken go unpunished? It is the function of our government to maintain law and order and punish crime."

"Is it not a Christian government we have, then?" asked Bertha. "Are not all the people of this country supposed to be Christians? Do you not remember that He whom you claim to serve said, 'Ye have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' Is the government trying to force people to be good by imprisonment and punishment? Is it not the duty of a Christian community to search out the wrongdoers and by goodness and genuine interest attempt to make them good and to get them to turn away from their evil ways? Did not our Lord say, 'I came to call sinners, not the righteous to repentance?' It is the sick that need the physician, not those that are whole. Isn't Maren Bakken's soul worth more in the eyes of God than Mr. Flatstad's sheep? You think it

is more important to save the sheep in your congregation than to save souls. Maren Bakken needs spiritual assistance. She is spiritually sick; you must go and see her and comfort her in her distress."

This last speech made the pastor a little uneasy. After looking out of the window for some time, as if meditating, he turned around and said, "Maren Bakken is a sinner. She had better stay in jail four months longer, so she will have ample time to consider and repent of her wicked life. If I should visit her in jail it might look as tho I was condoning her offense. I think, Bertha, you'd better leave Maren to her fate."

"You know," broke in Bertha, "our Lord associated a great deal with publicans and sinners. It seems to me that nowadays pastors never associate with publicans and sinners, but they seem to take delight in hobnobbing with the scribes and Pharisees. Oh, there must be a new awakening—people must live more the life of the Savior," said Bertha, as she rose to go. "Preaching from the pulpit does very little good. People's lives should preach sermons every day. Their money, their property should be preaching continually. I guess in our day sheep are of more consequence than human souls."

After saying goodbye to the parson she walked down to her little home, leading Arne by the hand.

"Oh, what a change has come over Christianity!" she muttered. "How that beautiful Sermon on the Mount has been twisted and turned. But the Lord will come back," she said to little Arne, as they

walked along. "He will not leave His people to suffer injury and violence all the time."

After Bertha left the parson, he was much agitated by the flings at him that she had made. He continued to walk back and forth on the floor of his study for a long time.

"Oh, those Readers," he said. For that was the name of the group to which Bertha belonged. They were called this because they held meetings in the houses around in the parish where portions of the Scriptures and sermons were read. They were a source of continual annoyance to the clergymen of the State Church. While the Readers were laying stress on the life that the people should lead, the clergymen in the pulpits were emphasizing the importance of the orthodox and true doctrines that the people should learn and believe in.

CHAPTER III

BERTHA LAYS DOWN HER BURDEN

WITH the passing years Arne grew vigorous both in mind and body. He was larger than most boys of his age. He had a round, plump face, dark blue eyes, blond hair and a high forehead, which gave him the appearance of possessing intelligence far beyond his years. Bertha had taught him to read. He had committed to memory the catechism and had made some progress in Bible reading. Bertha was growing old, and it was with some difficulty that provision was made for the little family.

One day, after she had returned home from a hard day's labor, she lay down on the bed while Arne was getting supper for the two. Arne had passed his eleventh birthday.

After partaking of the simple repast that little Arne had prepared, Bertha returned to the bed and asked Arne to pull his chair near to her, as she had something she wanted him to know.

"I am getting old," said Bertha, "and some day in the near future I shall be called away by the Savior. I shall go to my husband, Hans, and little Jacob, for they are waiting for me on the other side. Last night I had such a beautiful dream! I thought I was standing in front of our little house looking up in the sky seaward, and then I saw little Jacob

sitting on a cloud beckoning to me. He looked so happy and so sweet. He did not have on his old clothes. He had on a beautiful robe of white that seemed to shine. Then I thought he floated down, down towards me, until he stood on the sand on the beach right in front of me. He stretched out his little arms and said, 'Oh, mama, I wish so much that you were in heaven with pa and me. We are waiting for you all the time, and I know that soon you will come.' So saying, he walked up to me. I stooped down and he kissed me. Then I awoke.

"I know, Arne, that this dream means that I shall soon go hence and leave you all alone in the world. But before I go I want to tell you something that you must know. I am not your mother, Arne, I am your godmother. You came to me after the terrible storm in which my blessed husband and son perished. I took you because I knew you came to me from God. So far as anybody knows here, we are all ignorant as to who are your father and mother. For all I know they may be still alive. You will soon be twelve years old. When you are thirteen you must go to the minister, wherever you may be, and begin to learn what is necessary to know for a Christian child, so you can be confirmed and become a member of God's Church here on earth. I have taught you all I could, and there will not be much lacking in Christian knowledge."

While Bertha was saying this, the tears rolled down Arne's cheeks. He began to sob and laid his aching head in Bertha's hand.

"Oh, mama," he cried, "if your little Jacob is in

heaven, he doesn't need you nearly as much as I do! You must stay with me until I get big enough to go out and work and earn my own livelihood."

But Bertha raised his head from the bed and told him to sit up straight.

"I am old," she continued, "and my life course is nearly run. When I am gone, God will be your father and mother. He will be much better than an earthly father and mother could be to you. Only love Him, Arne, and do not offend Him. Just do what He tells you to do, and He will send His angels to guard over you and protect you."

"But how do I know what He wants me to do?" said little Arne.

"He has told you that in the Holy Bible. If you want to love God and if you want to please Him, then love everything that you come in contact with. Be kind to every living thing from mankind, the highest of God's creatures here on earth, down to the lowest of living things. For God is love and, if you want to be like God, you must be love. Your life must go out in sacrifice and service to everything that is about you. If you do that, you need no earthly father or mother."

The next morning after this talk Bertha went to her work as usual, but from that time on Arne thought he could see that she was growing weaker day by day; that her interest in the things that belong to this world was gradually waning. She kept talking to him more and more of her departure.

One day Arne said, "Where shall I go then, mama, when you go? I will have nobody to care

for me. I cannot live in our little house any longer. What shall I do, mama?"

"Take no thought of that," answered Bertha. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Have I not told you that God will take care of you?"

This was hard for Arne to understand, but he did not dare to ask her any more questions.

In the spring of the following year Bertha took to her bed. When she was missed at the weekly gatherings of the Readers, it was soon discovered that she was seriously ill. A large number of her religious friends came to see her. To all her callers she said that she was about to be called hence; that her work on earth was over; that she was going to Hans and Jacob. The doctor came. He could find no physical ailment in Bertha's case. She had simply made up her mind that her end was at hand. Nothing that the doctor said had any appreciable effect on her.

One evening, when she and Arne were alone, she asked him to come over to the bed and sit where she could hold his hand for, said she, "I have something important to tell you before I leave. I have not much left of worldly goods," she continued, "but whatever I have shall belong to you, Arne. In the little box in the large clothes chest you will find ten specie dollars. That is all the money that I possess. You must give two marks to Ole Lerdal, our neighbor. You must get him to make the coffin for me. Three marks you give to the pastor for officiating at my funeral. Half a dollar you must give to the sexton for digging my

grave. Another half dollar you give to the Readers to be distributed among the poor of this village. What is left I want you to take and put in your pocket when I am dead. Five of these dollars you must not use for yourself, unless you need it more than anybody you know of. These five dollars I want you to dispose of for me in such a way that they will preach a sermon of love and forgiveness. You know, Arne, that money is a powerful thing—a great instrumentality placed in the hand of man by his Maker. Money can be used for good as well as evil purposes. Every person in the world should by his life be continually preaching love, sacrifice and service. All his money and all his property should preach to the world from this same text. So, Arne, put those five dollars where they will preach the gospel of human brotherhood and fellowship. Three marks more to pay for a wagon to take my body to the churchyard. And now, Arne, before I go I want to lay my hands on your head and give you my blessing. May the God of mercy, the God of love, always inspire you with His boundless goodness, and may He guide you, keep you and preserve you so that in the end you will meet me and Hans and Jacob.”

As she said this, she fell backward on the bed and died.

That night Arne slept on the floor. The next morning he went to see her friends among the Readers. They all came over, took charge of her body and prepared it for burial. The funeral was set for Wednesday morning at ten o'clock. Little Arne

had everything in readiness. He opened the chest and found the ten dollars, just as Bertha had told him. On Tuesday he called on the pastor, gave him three marks and asked him if he would be present at his mother's funeral on the following day. After slipping the coin into his pocket he looked at Arne and told him that on that afternoon he was going to meet some friends up in the mountains where they expected to go on a bear hunt. Wednesday evening he was going to a banquet in the adjoining parish at Knute Solstad's place, and it would be impossible for him to be at Bertha's funeral.

"But," said he, "after the public worship next Sunday I will read the commitment service over Bertha's grave."

It pained Arne to learn that the pastor would not be present at his godmother's funeral, but he said nothing and went home.

All his godmother's friends had left and he found himself alone with his dead godmother. He sat down for a while and wondered what he should do when the funeral was over. His belongings were not many. He had owned only two things in his whole life. One was a sheath knife with a carved handle that had belonged to Jacob. The other was a little sled that had been made by Ole Lerdal and given him by his godmother on his tenth birthday. He thought so much of his little sled. The runners on it were so smooth and hard that he could pass all the other boys when he was coasting on the hill that sloped down to the beach.

"I wonder," thought Arne, "if I can keep that sled. I wonder if I can take it with me where I am going."

He sat and mused on tomorrow, for that would be the most important day of his short life. When his godmother had been buried, where should he go? It was all a blank to Arne. Just then he remembered that she had told him that God would take care of him. He stayed around the little house all afternoon, for something seemed to tell him that soon he would have to leave it and perhaps never see it again.

When darkness came he fell asleep on the floor. In his sleep he thought his godmother got up out of bed, came over and stroked his cheek with her hand, and he felt so happy; but when he awoke he found it was only a dream, for his godmother was dead. Her body was still lying on her bed. Soon the people came. They sang the hymns. One of the Readers made a talk, and another prayed. They carried her out. Soon they were at the churchyard. Again they sang a hymn. Again someone spoke and someone prayed. Then came the rattling of the dirt and stones on his godmother's coffin. The men filled up the grave, and nothing more was visible of Bertha Olson. She had gone from this earth, never again to return.

CHAPTER IV

NEW SURROUNDINGS

ARNE was awakened the morning after the funeral by a sharp rap at the door. After slipping on an old pair of pants he opened the door. There stood a tall, well dressed man, with large eyes, a short chin beard and a stubby mustache. He greeted Arne with a most pleasant smile—something to which Arne was not accustomed.

“Good morning, my little boy,” said the visitor, in a soft, mellow voice. “I am calling rather early this morning. I just heard yesterday afternoon that your godmother was buried in our churchyard. I assumed at once, of course,” he continued, as he patted Arne on the head, “that you were too young to be left alone in the world without someone to look after you. I am the commissioner of the poor department of our city, and I came down here to take charge of you and to see if I could get you a suitable home. My name is Thomas Selvig.”

Arne was very much discomfited by the very pleasant manner of the visitor, for he had never heard anybody talk so pleasantly as Mr. Selvig.

“Have you any relatives?” asked Mr. Selvig.

“The only person in the world that took any interest in me,” said Arne, “was my godmother. So far as I know, I have no relatives.”

After surveying the contents of the little house,

Selvig said, "The furniture and clothes that Bertha left will go to Mr. Egeland, for he claims that she owed him for rent at the time of her death."

"Her clothes," broke in Arne, "were not worth much; but those that she left I gave to the Readers, for my godmother told me she wanted what was after her to preach to the poor, and I thought the best way to carry out her wishes was to give her clothes to the poor."

A scowl came over Selvig's face. "Why, my little boy," he said, "you had no right to give those clothes away."

"I did not give them away," said Arne. "My godmother told me what to do and I simply did what she told me."

Arne was not a little surprised at the change he had noticed in Mr. Selvig. In place of smiles and kindliness, he now saw a stern face.

"You see," said Mr. Selvig, "you are poor and a recipient of public charity; therefore, you have no right to give anything away."

This talk wounded Arne's feelings very much. Mr. Selvig proceeded to make an inventory of the things he found in the house, and as he was doing this, he kept piling the furniture, bed-clothes, and other things in a heap on the floor. Arne's little sled stood up against the wall by the front door and, as Selvig picked it up to put it in the pile, Arne shouted, "That's my sled, and Mr. Egeland shall not have that for his rent!"

So saying, he seized the sled, placed it on the floor and lay down on it with his face to the floor.

"My godmother gave me this sled on my tenth birthday, and I will not let go of it!" said Arne.

Selvig then began to coax and told Arne he must be a good boy and do as he was told, but Arne was immovable. It was the only plaything that he had ever had or ever expected to have. He bit his teeth and held on to the sled with grim determination. Selvig paid no more attention to him but after he had piled up all of Bertha's belongings he took little Arne by the hand and said, "Come now, we'll go."

Arne went, but with the other hand he pulled along after him his little sled. As they were walking along the street, Arne asked, "Where am I going?"

"You're going to stay at my place tonight. I think I have found a home for you, and tomorrow your new master will come and get you."

After eating a hearty dinner, Arne lay down in a little room assigned to him and went to sleep. Somebody woke him up for supper; after supper he went back to bed, where he slept till long after the sun was up the following morning.

CHAPTER V

ARNE'S NEW HOME

When Arne had dressed and had come downstairs, Mr. Selvig met him and took him into a small room where he was to eat breakfast all by himself. Arne noticed that his little sled was gone and asked the poor commissioner what had become of it.

"There's no use to worry about your sled now," said Selvig. "There's no snow on the ground, and you can't use it. Next winter will be time enough to worry about your sled."

"But," answered Arne, "I want to take it with me to my new home and then, it was from my god-mother on my birthday."

"Oh, I want my sled!" he cried, putting his head down on the table and crying. "I can't eat anything until I get my sled."

He sobbed and moaned, his tears meanwhile falling on the table. Selvig went up to him, raised his head up and addressed him as follows:

"Now, you little scamp, sit up, wipe away your tears and eat your breakfast. The trouble with you poor people is that you never appreciate when the government is good to you. You must realize, Arne, that you haven't got anything. When the city has to feed you and take care of you, you are a pauper. You own nothing. You have no right to call anything your own."

"Here, Betsey," he said to the kitchen girl, "bring in some bread and milk for this young fellow."

But Arne cried thru his tears. "I don't want any breakfast. I want my sled." And again he was moaning and sobbing with his face resting on his arms on the table.

"Very well, young man," said Selvig, as he walked up and grabbed him roughly by the arm and led him out of the house. "The charity of the good people of this town shall not go begging. You can sit here," he said, pointing to a bench on the back porch, "until your new master comes."

So saying, he left Arne sitting on the bench as he went back into the house.

Before a great while a man drove up to Selvig's house. On seeing him, Selvig came out the front door and greeted him.

"Good morning, Mr. Solstad," said he, as he lifted his hat and bowed deeply.

Knute Solstad lived about fifteen miles up in the valley. He was a well-to-do farmer and came from the oldest family in the valley. He was below the average in height, rather broad shouldered, and not a little stocky in appearance. In age we would take him to be not far from forty. As was customary with the peasantry at that time, his face was covered with a full beard and mustache. His eyes had little expression in them. His face was shallow, with a small nose. His neck was prominent and appeared to be bent backward. His walk and movements were slow and somewhat ponder-

ous. There was nothing about him that would attract particular attention. He wore a suit of dark gray homespun and a dark hat with a narrow brim.

After shaking hands with Mr. Selvig he said, "Where is the young lad?"

"The young lad," said Selvig, "is back of the house, but before you get him you must sign the binding-out contract. Come in."

So saying, Selvig opened the door and the two men went inside. Seated at a small table, Selvig drew from his pocket a long, closely written document, laid it in front of Mr. Solstad and asked if he wished to read the contract before signing it.

"Oh, no," said Solstad. "I suppose it is in the form of the ordinary binding-out contract."

"I'll not pay him a cent," he continued, "until after he is sixteen years old."

"You are to keep the boy until he is twenty," said Selvig; "and until he is sixteen years old, all you have to pay is the money required for the pastor when he is confirmed."

"That's all right," said Solstad, as he bent his heavy neck and nodded. "But how much am I to give him after that?"

"Besides his clothes and his keeping, you are to pay him two specie dollars a year," replied Selvig. "And from eighteen until he is twenty years you must pay him four dollars a year."

"All right," said Solstad. "I'll agree to that."

So saying, he took the pen and signed his name;

and Selvig, as poor commissioner, representing Arne, also signed the contract.

"The contract," said Selvig, "will remain in my archives as a part of the records of my office. Either party may have access to it on request."

Shortly little Arne was brought in and turned over to his new master. Knute looked the boy over, but said nothing. Soon they were on their way up the road to Solstad.

For three or four miles the two drove on in silence. Arne was wondering all the time how far they were going and what kind of a place he was going to.

"How far are we going?" he asked, looking up into Solstad's face.

Solstad acted as tho he were irritated at this question from the boy. Without looking at Arne and, striking one of the horses with the whip, he answered in a low, coarse voice, rather abruptly, "Ten miles farther."

"And how many miles have we gone?" asked Arne.

"Five," was the curt answer.

After this Arne did not essay to talk anymore to his glum master, but amused himself by watching the landscape, particularly the angles and curves of the river. About twilight they drove thru the large gate at Solstad. As Knute pulled up the horses and stopped in the yard back of the house, he shouted for one of the servant girls, who came out.

"Take this boy, give him his supper, and show him where he is to sleep," said he.

Arne had no baggage of any kind, so the servant girl took him by the hand and led him into a small cottage-like building on the back lawn.

"Here you can sleep," said she, pointing to a small bunk in the corner of the room. "Two of the hired men will occupy the large bed. You can occupy the single bed."

Solstad was one of the oldest farms in the parish. It was claimed by some that away back in Norwegian history, when the parish had been a little kingdom, the king's palace had been at Solstad. As far back as the memory of man could go, the ancestors of the present owner had lived and died there, the estate having been handed down in an unbroken chain from father to son. The farm occupied the east side of the valley and sloped toward the river on the west. At some distance from the river a layer of rock jutted out. On top, the rock was level, with an abrupt wall towards the stream. On this level, protruding rock were built the farm houses, which consisted of a large dwelling, built of logs hewn square and dovetailed at the corners. In the center was a large living-room, with an open fireplace in the back, facing the front door. In the rear were two large rooms, a dining-room and a kitchen. Upstairs were the sleeping rooms. By its appearance one would judge that the building had been erected in the eighteenth century. Back of the house, on the ledge overlooking the valley, stood the large barn. Then there were the cow stables, the horse stables and the family store house.

In the summer time, on account of its elevated

position, the sun penetrated every nook and crevice of Solstad, and it was for this reason that it bore its present name. The barn, the stables and the other houses were built in a quadrangle, enclosing a large lawn in the center.

* * *

The day after Arne's arrival he was tending a flock of sheep down in the valley at some little distance from the house. It was beautiful in the valley. The grass looked green and the sun was warm. He was sitting on a large stone making little whistles from a green branch of a willow tree. He had thrown away most of them because he did not fancy their tone. He had picked out two, however, that he considered good. With a whistle in his mouth he was trying to imitate the songs of the birds that were jumping from branch to branch in the trees about him.

Presently he saw a little girl walking down the lane towards him. So far he had not seen any members of the family, except Knute, and wondered who the girl could be. Her head was bare, with beautiful golden curls tied back by a red ribbon, with a bow on top of her head. She wore a dark red dress and had on high laced shoes made from bright black leather. She had large, dark blue eyes and fresh red cheeks.

As the little girl came nearer, Arne took the whistle out of his mouth and stared at his little visitor. He had never seen such a beautiful girl before.

After surveying Arne from head to foot she said, in a childish voice:

"Are you the boy that papa brought home yesterday?"

"Yes," answered Arne. "I came here with Mr. Solstad last evening."

"And where did you live before?" she asked.

"I lived down on the strand in the city with my godmother, Bertha Fisker," answered Arne.

After some hesitation the visitor again asked, "What is your name?"

"Arne," answered the boy.

"And your other name?"

"Egeland. What is your name?"

"Gunhild."

"And your second name?"

"Solstad. Gunhild Solstad," slowly repeated the little girl.

By this time Arne had resumed whittling on the willow stick.

"Do you want a whistle?" he asked, holding in his hand one of his whistles.

She took it and began to blow it.

"That sounds like bird song," she said. "I think if I practiced a little I could imitate a thrush. But can you make a whistle that will make a noise like the cuckoo?" she continued.

"Yes, I can," said Arne, "but I must have a larger willow stick to make such a whistle."

"When the cuckoo calls over in the hills yonder we know spring is coming. Papa says that the cuckoo calls at Solstad earlier than in any other part of the valley, because Solstad has so much sunshine."

As Gunhild was saying this she stepped in a puddle of water and spattered mud on her beautiful shoes. She began to cry and moan.

"But what are you crying for?" asked he.

"My mama will scold me now," she answered, "because I spoiled my new shoes."

"I wouldn't cry for that," said Arne. "Sit down on this stone."

So saying he pulled up a hand full of grass and wiped the mud off her shoes. Then he polished them with the sleeve of his jacket. While this was going on a smile on Gunhild's face was beaming thru the tears in her eyes.

"Oh, thank you very much," said Gunhild. "But you soiled the sleeve of your jacket. Won't you get a scolding for that?"

"I have no mama and papa to scold me," said he.

At this Gunhild looked at him inquiringly with her large, round blue eyes.

"Are they dead?" she asked.

"So far as I know they are," he answered. "I never saw them. I lived with my godmother on the strand in the little town until she died, and then I came up here."

"Have you nobody, then, in the world to care for you?" asked she.

"No," said Arne, "but my godmother told me before she died that God would be my mama and papa and care for me."

Just then one of the kitchen girls blew a loud blast on a long wooden horn, calling everybody to

dinner. All went to the house, excepting Arne. He had to stay and watch the sheep. One of the kitchen girls brought him his lunch. Only at night, after the sheep had been safely secured in the pen, could Arne go.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT THE SAETER

IN addition to the land down in the valley Solstad had large stretches of timber and pasture lands up in the mountains. In the summer time two of the hired girls took the cattle, sheep and goats up into the highlands, where they had a dairy. Here they tended the livestock all summer and prepared butter and cheese for the market and the family supply. This mountain dairy was called a saeter. It was not uncommon for the young daughters in the family to spend the summer doing this kind of work in the highlands. In the winter time the men cut logs, hauled them to the streams, and in the spring floated them down the main river in the valley and marketed them in the seaport town. The proceeds from the logs and the dairy were the main source of income to the owner of Solstad.

It was two years after the arrival of Arne that Gunhild was to spend her first summer at the saeter. Arne was fourteen years old. He was at the Solstad saeter to assist the girls in shepherding the sheep and goats. One evening, after the milking had been done and the milk strained, the girls and Arne went out on a raft to fish in the little mountain lake nearby. Arne paddled the raft out to the fishing ground, where the girls threw their hooks and lines into the water. They could watch the perch nibbling at the

bait thru the openings in the raft. While Gunhild was in the act of landing a large perch her hat blew off. She swung out her left arm to catch it, lost her balance, and plunged head foremost into the water. The girls on the raft began to scream. Quick as a flash Arne, bare footed, with only a pair of light, homespun linen pants, dived into the water after Gunhild. The girls awaited his return with breathless anxiety. They realized that Gunhild could not swim and that the sole heir of Solstad was in danger of losing her life. Sooner than it takes to tell it, Arne rose to the surface with Gunhild in his left arm. He reached the raft and, with the assistance of the two girls, threw Gunhild into the arms of one of them. After a few seconds she gasped for breath and opened her eyes. The first thing she said was, "What happened to me?" The girls told her all about it, while Arne was wringing the water out of his clothes. Gunhild said she remembered that she had a perch on her hook and that her hat blew off, but that was about all she knew.

"If Arne hadn't been here," said one of the girls, "you would now have been at the bottom of the tarn."

Gunhild looked at Arne and said, "Thank you, Arne. I shall remember this act of yours as long as I live, and I don't expect ever to be able to show my gratitude to you for saving my life."

Gunhild then asked that they take her ashore. She said she did not care for any further experiences of that kind. After changing her clothes she be-

came frightened at what had happened and cried herself to sleep that night. The next morning she insisted on going back home, and it was arranged that Arne should accompany her.

"I am sure," said Gunhild, when they were on their way to Solstad, "that father and mother will appreciate what you did last night in saving me from death in the tarn."

"I think your mother will," said Arne, "but so far your father has never appreciated anything that I have done."

"I think he does," came the answer. "My father is real good, Arne, but I don't think you understand him."

When they came back home Gunhild told her mother of the accident the day before. Ingeborg, for that was her mother's name, became excited. She threw her arms around Gunhild and exclaimed:

"Oh, Gunhild, Gunhild, had you drowned in the lake I should have lost everything that is dear to me here on earth."

Then she turned to Arne and said, "Arne, you are a brave boy and you shall not be without compensation for this deed. This evening you shall dine at our table."

At this Arne smiled and remarked that it was a great pleasure to him to be able to save Gunhild from the water and to present her well and happy to her father and mother.

That evening after Knute Solstad had come home and had heard about the occurrence he patted Gunhild on the head.

"The saeter is no place for a girl of your age, and you shall not be allowed to go there any more until you are grown."

When Arne came in to eat dinner with them, Solstad, in a very undemonstrative manner, thanked him for saving Gunhild's life. That evening Arne lived high. He had cream pudding, eggs, wheat-bread and cloudberry sauce.

At the table Gunhild told her father of her experiences at the saeter and that she enjoyed the mountain air and the work very much. Solstad said nothing and after the meal was over Arne retired to his little bunk.

The rest of the summer Arne spent in the mountains with the goats and sheep.

CHAPTER VII

NORA OF THE MILL

SOME ten years before the happening of the events narrated in the last chapter, a stranger had come down the valley, had stopped at Solstad for a little while and then had continued her journey toward the south. She was a tall woman, with long, black hair, which sometimes hung loosely over her shoulders and at other times was braided into a single braid that hung down over her back. She had large black eyes which, when she became excited, gleamed with a peculiar, penetrating light. Her features were regular, her form willowy and slight. One did not have to draw on his imagination to conclude that in her younger days she had been an attractive woman. As she walked along the country road, her step was quick and rather graceful. She carried on her back a willow basket, woven to fit her body below the shoulders. The basket hung by two woolen straps, one over each shoulder. These were woven from colored yarn. In the basket she carried a supply of yarn of different colors, together with a supply of stockings. As she walked along the country road she was always knitting. The ball of yarn that supplied her knitting was in the basket on her back. As the yarn disappeared into her stocking, she occasionally pulled it with her right hand out of the basket.

When the yarn, loosened in this way, was knit up, she made another pull with her right hand.

As she walked along the road, she was generally heard talking to herself. At times she sang a ditty and again she would repeat stanzas of poetry. She visited the homes of the farmers and offered her wares for sale, which consisted principally of stockings.

Sometimes she visited the town down by the sea. There was a certain air of mystery about her that none of the people with whom she came in contact was able to fathom. Some said that she was a witch who had some connection with the spirit world; she could stop the floods in the valley in the springtime, and control the winds and the storms that came down from the mountains or that blew from the sea. One thing was certain; she had the power of healing. In Norway, at that time, there was a superstition among the common folk that there were certain supernatural beings that lived in the hills, on the banks of the rivers and sometimes in the peasants' cow stables. If the peasant treated them well, which consisted in giving them food and drink on certain occasions, especially Christmas Eve, they would bring luck to the stable and increase the herd. These beings were called "Nisses." They were quite similar in their appearance, make-up and disposition to the Scotch brownies.

It was rumored in the valley that this strange woman had power over the nisses. If the peasant did not treat the nisse well he would bring bad luck to his stable. Sometimes he would strangle the

best cow in the barn. At other times he might prevent in various ways the increase of the herd.

It was thought that this woman could drive the bad nisse out of the peasant's stable. On other occasions she could appease his wrath. Of course, these acts were usually done for a small compensation; sometimes for a meal of victuals, sometimes for lodging over night. That she had the power of healing had been demonstrated beyond doubt on several occasions. There were certain maladies that she could always cure. Nobody doubted that she could cure sprains of any part of the body. She could also stop the flow of blood.

Nobody knew the woman's real name. Everybody, however, called her Nora of the Mill. When she first appeared in the valley she had no fixed place of abode, but usually stopped wherever night overtook her.

Up the valley a few miles above Solstad, on a waterfall in the river, the farmers had built a small mill and had utilized the water power to operate it. The building was small, like most of the mills in the country districts of Norway at that time. It was about twelve by fifteen feet.

One spring, as the snow was melting in the mountains and the river was rising, the logs that had been hewn during the winter and hauled on to the frozen river, together with flakes of ice, caused a jam a little ways above the mill. The piling up of the logs, together with the ice, threatened to wash away the little mill. Should the log jam continue to hold the water for some time, the breaking of the

jam would flood the valley and cause heavy damage to the abutting land owners.

On the second day of the jam people began to gather from the adjacent district for the purpose, if possible, of breaking the jam and liberating the water so that the damage would be minimized. The jam was formed by the wedging in of the logs between two cliffs where the river was narrow. After some consideration, it was decided by the crowd that somebody should be lowered by a rope so that he could chop off the key log and release the jam. The reeve of the parish called for someone to do this hazardous work, which might mean death to the volunteer. There was a long, breathless suspense. Finally a young man, Ike Nykos, offered himself for the service. A shout of approval rose from the crowd.

After having slipped a rope around his waist and having given him an ax, the reeve and two other men were about to let him down from the cliff when a tall, slender woman was seen to ascend the cliff on the opposite bank. On her head she wore a green kerchief, tied under her chin. On her back she carried a basket. As she reached the summit she straightened herself out as her clothes were whipped around her spare body by the breeze. She faced the crowd on the opposite bank with a gesture of her hand, and shouted to the reeve to halt. Everybody's eyes were riveted on this strange figure on the opposite bank.

"Nora!" cried the assembled peasants.

Ike Nykos remained standing on the top of the

cliff, watching the feminine figure before him. After gesturing with her arm and motioning to the crowd to keep quiet, she put her right hand over her left shoulder and pulled a red kerchief from the basket on her back. Then, throwing her right hand back of her head, she brought forward the red kerchief with a quick jerk. The piece of red cloth dropped from her hand to the shaking logs that were holding back the water of the stream. Then came a crash like rolling thunder. The log jam had broken. Ice, broken pieces of timber, stones, trees and debris, rushed wildly down the gully with the foaming water.

A hush had fallen over the gathering. Men looked at the roaring torrent and then at one another, as if to ask, "Was this the work of the devil or was it the interference of the Almighty?"

Some said that Nora was a witch; others, that she was in league with the devil. The knowing ones, however, scoffed at this talk and, with a wink of one eye, contended that there was nothing remarkable about it, for Nora undoubtedly saw the jam breaking before she threw the red kerchief.

That afternoon the farmers returned to their homes; but whenever two or three of them were together they would discuss the remarkable occurrence they had seen that day. No matter how it was done, Nora received considerable attention.

When the mass of water, logs and ice reached the little mill it veered to the other side of the valley and left the mill on dry land. The stream had dug for itself a new channel and the mill had become worthless.

Some time after that Nora moved into the abandoned mill. She fixed it up with some odd pieces of furniture and made it her home. None disputed her right to these premises, which may have been for more than one reason. Some felt grateful to her for saving the parish from a great flood, which certainly would have come had not the big jam been broken. Others feared to meddle with her because they thought she possessed supernatural powers. From that time on, thru the length and breadth of the parish, she was known as Nora of the Mill.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEALER

IT was haying time at Solstad. All day Knute and his men had been hauling hay into the barn. Ingeborg and Gunhild had the evening meal ready and were waiting for Knute to come to supper. It was now some time after the usual supper hour, still nobody came. Gunhild ran to the window to watch for her father. Soon she called to her mother that the men were carrying somebody on an improvised stretcher.

"Somebody must be hurt," answered Ingeborg, as she ran to the window and looked down toward the meadow.

"I am afraid it is father," said Gunhild, "because I see all four men, but not father. It must be he that is lying on the stretcher."

This worried Ingeborg, so she ran out thru the front door and Gunhild followed. When they met the men they found that Knute Solstad had fallen from the hay wagon and sprained his ankle. As they bore him into the house he complained very much of being in pain. After supper he was put to bed but was unable to sleep. Ingeborg tried all the household remedies that she had heard of, but to no purpose. It was fifteen miles to the nearest doctor, and they did not think it wise as yet to go that distance. All that night Gunhild and Inge-

borg spelled each other in taking care of Mr. Solstad. During the following day there was little improvement. The ankle had swollen to double its normal size; still the patient had had neither sleep nor alleviation from pain.

On the evening of the second day, as Arne was carrying in wood for the kitchen, he said to Gunhild that he was sure that Nora could relieve Mr. Solstad from his pain. Gunhild whispered it to her mother. She did not dare tell her father, for she knew the suggestion would make him very angry. Neither did Ingeborg mention Nora to her husband for the same reason. As darkness came on Knute became very restless. While he had partaken of sufficient food during the day, the loss of sleep the night before had made him nervous and irritable.

Finally Ingeborg ventured to say, "Don't you think, Knute, that if Nora were here she might stop the pain in your ankle?"

At this Knute raised himself up in bed, looked angrily at his wife and in a whining voice said, "Are you getting crazy too, Ingeborg? You want that devilish witch to come in here and practice her black arts on me? I would rather have the devil himself come than that rake of a woman who pawns herself off as having knowledge beyond human ken. The devil is a gentleman compared to this charlatan and mountebank."

After saying this, he fell on his back and groaned pitifully. After some consideration Ingeborg went into the kitchen and told Gunhild to call Arne. Ingeborg met him in the kitchen door, took him out-

side and whispered, "Arne, are you afraid of the dark?"

Arne shook his head.

"Are you afraid of Nora?"

"No, I am not. She is always very kind to me when I see her."

"Then," continued Ingeborg, "will you run up to the mill and ask Nora to come down? Tell her that Knute Solstad has sprained his ankle and is in very great pain and that I should appreciate it very much if she would come down and heal him."

"All right," said Arne. "I'll be back in less than an hour."

So saying, he pulled his little cap tight around his head and, with a spring like a young colt, was soon down on the road on his way to the old mill. Ingeborg told Gunhild to watch for Nora and Arne, so that Nora would not come into the bedroom where Knute was. Gunhild met them and took them into the hired men's quarters and notified Ingeborg that Nora had come. It was now ten o'clock in the evening. Knute was still awake, groaning with pain. Ingeborg came out into the men's quarters, greeted Nora kindly and told Gunhild to go to the bedside of her father, while she spent a few minutes with Nora.

After explaining to her the nature of her husband's injury she very quietly suggested that inasmuch as Knute did not have faith in her power to cure him, it would be better for her not to talk much to him, but just to stop the pain and put him to sleep, if she could. In a few minutes Ingeborg took her into Knute's room.

"Nora of the Mill was going by this way," she said, "and I took her in to see you. Maybe she might suggest some remedy for the pain in your ankle."

Knute turned his head, stared wildly at Nora, but said nothing. In the meantime Ingeborg had uncovered the injured ankle so Nora could see it.

"I am sure that you don't believe that I can do anything to help you," said Nora, looking squarely at Knute.

Knute said nothing, but turned his head toward the wall and groaned.

"You are so headstrong and prejudiced," she continued, "that nobody can talk to you and reason with you, but some day a change will come over you."

As she said this she raised her finger in a threatening manner towards the patient.

"You don't believe in anybody but your priest and your doctor. You think they have all the knowledge of religion and medicine and what they do not know is not worth knowing."

After making this remark Nora gave a derisive laugh, which seemed to torture the man in the bed, for he twisted his head from one side to the other as tho in pain.

"You don't like Nora of the Mill. You think she is a witch and an agent of the devil, but if so, I am going to show you tonight that I can do good. I can help you. I can relieve your pain. Yes, I can cure you, but when Nora is gone you will again curse her. You will call her a woman of evil. You may curse me, you may deride me, you may ridicule

me, Knute Solstad, but the day will come when Nora shall be vindicated, not only in your sight, but in the sight of God and this whole parish."

When she had said this, she laid her hand on the swollen ankle. Then, bending over it, she stood as if she were concentrating her whole power on his throbbing body. Rising to an erect position she said:

*"Three times nine,
Goats and swine,
Seven times three,
Now all you devils flee."*

As she spoke the last line, she threw both her hands up in the air, with a shrill laugh that penetrated the whole house. Then she turned on her heel, said goodby and vanished thru the open door into the dark night.

Ingeborg heaved a sigh as tho relieved when the door closed behind Nora. Arne and Gunhild came into the sick man's room. They stood by the door. Ingeborg went over to the bed, but Knute had fallen asleep. Gunhild and Arne were sent to bed and Ingeborg stayed in the chamber with her husband.

Knute slept until morning. When he awoke he felt all right. The pain was gone and, to his great surprise, he could walk without difficulty. Ingeborg was happy. Knute said nothing, nor did anybody dare mention to him the name of Nora. The news, however, spread to the neighbors. The parish priest heard of it, and so did the doctor, but nobody spoke of it to Knute Solstad.

CHAPTER IX

PROGRESS

ARNE'S life at Solstad had been somewhat uneventful, yet in a great many ways interesting. He slept and ate with the hired men, who lived in a little building that stood near the Solstad residence. There were three men besides Arne. They all slept in a large room on the second floor. Arne had a little bed by himself. In the summer time he worked in the fields and occasionally made trips to the dairy in the highlands. In the winter time he helped to take care of the livestock. During the last winter he had helped the men in the woods upon the mountains to cut logs and haul them to the banks of the streams, to be floated down the valley to the little seaport town.

Arne and Gunhild were the only two young people on the farm. They saw a good deal of each other, especially in the summer time when they were at the mountain dairy. Gunhild greatly admired Arne for his ability to climb the mountains, swim and dive in the tarn and bring home to the dairy wild game, which he shot in the wild country of the highlands, for at the dairy they always had a gun with plenty of ammunition.

In the spring Arne always found the first ripe strawberries, which he invariably carried to Gunhild. Nobody could hunt up the wide stretches of cloud-

berries as Arne could. He always took Gunhild there when he had found them, for he knew that she was fond of this delicious wild fruit.

One day Arne had been swimming in the mountain tarn. He was sitting on the bank watching the little fishes struggle for small pieces of pork which he threw into the water. He was only half dressed. The upper part of his body was bare. He was barefooted and had on only a pair of pants. As he was sitting amusing himself in this way, he heard steps back of him and, looking around, he saw standing before him Nora of the Mill.

"Well, Arne, my boy," she said, as she patted him on the head. "Have you had a swim?"

"Yes, the water is very warm and nice," he answered, as he pulled his linen shirt over his head and tucked it under his waist-band.

"And how are you getting along at Solstad?" asked Nora.

"Pretty well," answered Arne. "I don't see very much of Knute Solstad, but I am very fond of Gunhild. I think she is such a beautiful girl and so kind and considerate. I don't believe there is a nicer little girl in the whole world."

At this Nora laughed. "Yes," she said, as she nodded her head, "Gunhild is a fine little girl. And how do you like Ingeborg?"

"I don't see much of her," said Arne. "She is so quiet, unassuming and gentle."

"Next fall," said Arne, "Gunhild and I are going to begin to read with the minister. Ingeborg Solstad says that if we are good and pass the examina-

tion we will be confirmed in the church next summer. But I am not afraid of the minister. I learned my catechism from my godmother. Not only my catechism, but also Bible history."

"You'll have quite a ways to go," said Nora after a pause, "for you will have to go down to the minister's house."

"Oh, yes, we are going to drive in the cariole. I shall sit behind and drive the horse, and Gunhild can occupy the seat in front. Won't that be lots of fun?" said Arne as he looked up into Nora's face.

All at once Nora became serious.

"Yes, Arne," she said, "you are a very bright boy and I have watched your conduct since you came to Solstad, and I have found that you are both industrious and reliable. If you will continue as you have begun, some day you will be somebody."

This seemed to puzzle Arne, so he said, "What do you mean by that, 'to be somebody'?"

"Why, Arne, you will not always be a little errand boy, as you are now. Some day you will have a farm of your own and you will associate with such men as the priest of the parish, Captain Wessel, the judge, the reeve and the doctor."

Arne heaved a sigh. "I have always been so unlucky," he said. "First I lost my father and mother, then I lost my godmother. I never had any chance to go to school. My godmother taught me to read. I hope I won't always be so unlucky."

While Arne was saying this, Nora took from her pocket a long silver chain, fastened together at the two ends with a silver heart.

"See here, Arne," she said. "I'll make you a present of this silver chain and heart."

So saying, she took off his cap and hung the chain around his neck and put the silver heart on his breast.

"This little chain and heart will always make you lucky so long as you keep it around your neck; but if you lose it, you will be less lucky than you were before."

As Nora spoke the last words, Arne saw a strange light come into her eyes. He had never seen such an expression before in a human face. There was something so mysterious and uncanny about it that he became frightened and had difficulty in keeping the tears from coming into his eyes. Just as he was about to say something, Nora pressed a kiss on his forehead, and instantly disappeared in the underbrush. For a moment Arne sat bewildered. What a strange visit this mysterious woman had paid him, he thought. She spoke so kindly to him, he could not believe that she had anything to do with the devil, as Knute Solstad said. After admiring for a while the pretty chain and heart, he tucked it under his shirt and went back to the dairy.

CHAPTER X

COMPANIONSHIP

ARNE was now in his fifteenth year, and it had been decided by the authorities at Solstad that he and Gunhild, who was a year younger, should join the confirmation class of the parish and be confirmed in the church the following spring or summer, if their understanding of the religious doctrines came up to the requirements of the parish priest. This confirmation class met bi-weekly, either in the church or at the rectory. The parish church and the rectory were four miles down the valley from Solstad, so the two candidates for confirmation had to drive when attending the meetings of the class. Arne and Gunhild drove in a cariole. Arne sat on the high back seat and Gunhild occupied a low seat at the front. Only one horse was needed to pull the load.

The road was a picturesque one. It wound around the hills and cliffs. Sometimes it lay along the bank of the large river that flowed along the bottom of the valley; sometimes it ran under an overhanging cliff, and sometimes along the edge of a steep precipice.

Arne was an expert driver, and Gunhild had no fear so long as he had the lines. As the two young people drove back and forth from Solstad to the church, they chatted and talked almost

incessantly, sometimes about the new friends they had made, some of whom lived in the remote parts of the valley; sometimes about the parish priest and their lessons.

Not far from the church lived Captain Wessel, who held the rank of captain in the military department of the government and whose duty it was to drill the young men during the summer months and fit them for military duty. The captain stood well in the social circles of the community and associated frequently with the parish priest, Knute Solstad, and other prominent men of the valley. The captain had a son who had entered the confirmation class with Gunhild and Arne. Carl was a well built boy of a lively disposition, clever in his speech, and good looking.

The custom in the parish was that the boy and girl who had the best record in the class should stand at the head on confirmation day. This principle, however, was not always strictly lived up to. It devolved upon the clergyman in charge to select the two who were to head the class. Instead of selecting them on the ground of merit, it was whispered about that the places of honor were given to children with prominent parents, or on account of personal friendship. It was generally conceded by those who talked on this subject that Gunhild Solstad, on account of her father's prominence, her personal beauty and her standing in the class, would be entitled to first place among the girls. With regard to the boy, there were different opinions. Some predicted that on account of the prominence

of Captain Wessel and his close friendship with the parish priest, Carl Wessel would be chosen. Others prophesied that Arne Egeland would be selected. So far as knowledge of the catechism and Bible history went, Arne easily ranked number one. But there were those who shook their heads at this, with a wise expression, and said that Carl Wessel would be the choice.

One day, while the children were playing together, Carl Wessel persisted in teasing Gunhild. He was continually running after her and pulling her blond hair, which had been braided into two braids, tied at the ends with ribbons, and was hanging over her shoulders. She finally appealed to Arne for assistance. Arne walked up to Carl and asked him to leave her alone. Carl got angry at this, caught hold of Arne and attempted to throw him to the ground. Arne, however, was not slow in hurling Carl on his back. Just then the parish priest stepped out, caught hold of Arne and led him into the church. Gunhild and some of the other girls followed. In the church the pastor began to scold Arne and was very severe in his talk. After he had finished, Arne politely told him that Carl had attacked him because he would not allow him to tease Gunhild. The parson did not seem to pay much attention to this explanation until Gunhild said that Arne had told the truth and that she wished he would call in Carl and scold him.

After this Carl became very unpopular in the class, so unpopular, in fact, that nearly every member openly opposed his selection as head of the class on confirmation day.

Winter had passed and it was summer. The children were to meet for the last time before confirmation. On that day the boy and the girl would be chosen to lead the class on the following Sunday. To their great surprise, the children found that the dean was there to catechise them, instead of the rector, and that he would select the two leaders. From ten o'clock in the morning until one the class was plied with questions by the dean. Gunhild fared well in this final examination. Carl flunked utterly, but Arne distinguished himself.

At the close of the catechising the dean announced that Gunhild Solstad would stand at the head of the girls and that Arne Egeland would be first among the boys.

CHAPTER XI

A NEW TURN IN EVENTS

THINGS went on much the same at Solstad after the events related in the last chapter. Arne was now seventeen years old and had become Knute Solstad's trusted servant. Whenever the owner of Solstad was away from home, he left Arne at the head of affairs on the farm. On Sunday Arne drove the horses when the family went to church. Ingeborg had become very fond of him, as he was always willing to help about the house when the other hired men had retired to their own quarters. Gunhild and Arne saw much of each other. She looked up to him almost as to an older brother. During the preceding year Gunhild had stayed in the little town on the seacoast, where she had gone to school. She had taken lessons in writing, grammar and arithmetic.

In the fall of the year we are now considering, Knute Solstad had sent out invitations to his friends to join in a hunting party which he proposed to take up into the mountains, and which was to end in a dinner at Solstad. Among those invited were the parish priest, Captain Wessel, the reeve, and some professional men and merchants of the seaport town.

One evening late in October preparations were made on a big scale for the dinner. The hunters

arrived at dusk. The tables were all set and the party, with whetted appetites, were soon seated. Wine, aquavit and beer flowed freely. Gunhild helped in the kitchen to prepare the different dishes which were carried into the banquet hall by the maids. Arne was in the stable brushing and polishing the horses after their long trip over the hills from the mountains. Every once in a while he would stop and pet them. He talked to them as tho they were human beings. After he had cleaned them, he led them out of the stable to water them at the well. He filled the large trough with several buckets that he hoisted from the well. Soon he put his arms around the neck of the beautiful bay horse, petted it affectionately, pressed his cheek against the animal's neck and said, "What is the matter, Fleetfoot? Aren't you thirsty, then? See how Sorrel drinks. Won't you drink just a little water? Is Fleetfoot tired, then? Come, pretty Fleetfoot, drink some water, or Sorrel will drink it all."

So saying, he lifted two more buckets out of the well and poured them into the watering trough.

"See here, Fleetfoot, drink just a little. That's a good little horse."

As he said this he affectionately hugged Fleetfoot, who seemed to enjoy it, for she laid her head close up to Arne's cheek in a most affectionate manner. Just then he heard footsteps. He let go of Fleetfoot's neck, looked around, and there stood Gunhild with a large platter heaping full of the most delicious things to eat.

"Why, Arne," said Gunhild, "you talk to those

horses as if they were real persons and understood what you said to them."

"They do understand me," replied Arne. "Don't you know, Gunhild, that those horses even know my footsteps when I come into the stable? Fleet-foot knows almost as much as some people, and then she's so very kind and affectionate."

"But put up the horses," said Gunhild, "and come and eat your supper. I have something awful I want to tell you."

In almost no time the horses were returned to the stable and Arne was back by Gunhild's side.

"Let us go and sit on this old bench," she said.

The bench stood on a smooth, level rock that jutted out from the side of the hill. It was a part of the shelf in the side hill on which the buildings at Solstad had been erected. The moon was almost full as it rose above the horizon. The river hurried along a short distance from them, down in the valley. As the rays of the moon hit the water it looked like molten silver dancing and murmuring over the rocks and pebbles.

"Isn't this beautiful!" exclaimed Arne, as he took the large platter containing his supper out of Gunhild's hands.

"Now, what was the awful thing you were going to tell me?" he continued as he put the platter on the bench and helped himself to a piece of the roast goose.

"If you will stop eating I'll tell you," said Gunhild.

"Hunger can always wait on beauty," replied

Arne, as he turned around and looked Gunhild in the face. "Here I am, ready to listen to anything you want to say."

Gunhild smoothed the wrinkles out of her apron and began with some diffidence.

"Why, Arne, I heard the men at the dinner-table inside say some awful things and I wanted to tell you at the first opportunity. You know that Dr. Nelson from town. I think he was half drunk. He got up and proposed a toast to the future owners of Solstad, and who do you suppose they were? He said he proposed a toast to Carl Wessel and Gunhild Solstad, its future owners. Then they all stood up, clinked glasses with one another and drank, and then my father and Captain Wessel clinked glasses together and drank again. The rest of the company cheered and laughed. Oh, Arne, how terrible I felt! I stood in the little vestibule between the kitchen and dining-room and heard and saw it all. But none at the table saw me."

As she finished, Gunhild buried her face in her hands and began to sob. Arne sat for a while without saying a word. Then he put his hand under Gunhild's forehead and raised her head. In the moonlight he saw the tears trickling down her cheeks. Never had Arne seen such a beautiful face. As she opened her eyes he wiped away her tears with his kerchief.

"Now, Gunhild, look at the moon. See how mild and smiling her face is! Be cheerful. What do you care what a bunch of half drunken men said about you and Carl Wessel? That will never hap-

pen. Have confidence in yourself and in your future."

"But, oh," said Gunhild, "I can't bear even to think of Carl Wessel. He was always so distasteful to me. At school I shrank from his touch as from the nettletalk. Wherever he touched me he seemed to burn me. Oh, Arne, never, never, never will I have anything to do with Carl Wessel, God helping me! But I must go," she said, "my mother doesn't know where I am."

So saying, she was gone in an instant and left Arne alone to eat his bountiful supper.

CHAPTER XII

THE COTTAGER

OLE NELSON lived in a little cottage that belonged to Solstad. He had a small piece of ground on which he kept a cow, a pig and two sheep. As rental he worked for Knute Solstad three days in seeding time and three days in harvest time. The rest of the year he worked part of the time at Solstad and the rest of the time for other farmers in the neighborhood. He had two daughters, Inga, the older, and Ragnild. Inga was one year younger than Gunhild, and Ragnild had just passed her twelfth birthday. Gunhild and Inga were together a great deal.

One evening in the fall time, about a year after the occurrence related in the last chapter, Arne accompanied Gunhild on a visit to the Nelson cottage. On their way home they talked seriously of the future. Arne told her that lately he had gotten a strong desire to leave his native land and go to America.

"But it costs money to go to America," said Gunhild.

"That's true," responded Arne, "but Captain Swanbeck, who remembers me from the time I was a little boy in town, has told me that whenever I want to emigrate to America he will take me on his ship as cabin boy, so I can work my way to New York."

"But," stammered Gunhild, "what could you do in America? The newspapers say there are mostly Indians and robbers in America. Why should you leave this beautiful country, where you have been born and raised?"

"I have no relatives here, as you know; nobody dependent on me and nobody who especially cares for me."

As he said the last words, he thought he could feel a tremor go thru Gunhild's arm, for they were walking arm in arm down the little path that led to Solstad.

"You know," continued Arne, "that I have no father and mother. I may have relatives, but I don't know who they are."

For a while Gunhild was silent as they walked along. Arne thought that her hold on his arm was tightening. Then, with a look on her face as tho she was resigned to the thought that Arne would soon leave for America, she said:

"Oh, Arne, it'll be very lonesome at Solstad when you are gone!"

After another few moments of silence Arne released Gunhild's arm, stood in front of her, laid his two hands on her shoulders and, looking into her eyes, said:

"Gunhild, you are the only one in Norway I care anything about. If it wasn't for you, I would leave Solstad tomorrow morning."

Taking Gunhild's hand in his he continued: "You are the only person, excepting my godmother, that

has been kind to me. You have been so very kind that I shall never forget you."

As he said this, he pressed her hand to his lips.

"From the time I first saw you a strange hope entered my breast that some day you would be mine. That hope has grown stronger with the advancing years. Answer me, Gunhild, will you be mine?"

Gunhild's head dropped until her forehead rested on Arne's shoulder. He raised her head and kissed her on the forehead.

At last she spoke: "You know, Arne, that I am the only child in our family. You also know the great pride my father has, not only in Solstad, but in the line of ancestors that have lived on the place. He looks to me to perpetuate our family and to keep up the glory of the old home. If I am to marry you, Arne, it must be with my father's consent."

"But that can never be," said Arne, as he shook his head, "for your father has set his heart on the Captain's son for his son-in-law."

At this Gunhild shook her head.

"That can never be, for I shall never marry Carl Wessel. I want you, Arne, to ask my father for my hand in marriage and, if my father consents, everything will go well with you and me."

At this she kissed Arne's hand.

"But," said he, "your father will never consent. He looks upon me as a poor waif and not worthy to sit in the seat of honor at Solstad."

"But you must," said Gunhild, "otherwise you and I can't be married."

Arne again took Gunhild's arm and they resumed

their walk down the path. After a while Arne began, "Now, if I should ask your father and if he should refuse, would you go with me to America?"

This was a poser for Gunhild. How could she leave her father and mother? She did not even dare to think of it, and yet she had already betrayed a deep affection for Arne.

"I don't want you to ask me such questions!" she said. "Let us cross that stream when we come to it."

By this time they were home. Gunhild bade Arne goodnight and turned into the house.

To Arne it seemed as tho he had been suddenly ushered into a new world with strange surroundings. Strange thoughts were crowding themselves into his brain. He could not go to sleep. Before Gunhild had seemed to him a higher being. Now she seemed a real person. He could touch her and talk to her as he could to other people. He wondered how he had gotten the courage to talk to her as he did that evening. When he awoke in the morning he remembered a peculiar dream that he had in the night. He thought he saw Nora of the Mill bending over him, talking to him in her earnest manner, gesturing as she always did; but he could not recall what she said.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REFUSAL

FOR weeks Arne revolved in his mind what Gunhild told him the night he took her home from the cottager. He felt that it would be useless for him to ask Knute Solstad for Gunhild's hand in marriage, for the owner of Solstad put too high an estimate on the man who would be accepted as a proper suitor. He must be a man of standing in the community, a man whose ancestors had a name. In other words, he must come from good stock. Arne dreaded to ask this from his master, for, thought he, "He looks upon me as so far below himself and his family that he would consider it a favor to me even to listen to my proposal."

Altho Arne was poor, without either standing or pedigree, he had a certain pride that it was difficult for him to overcome. While Knute Solstad had treated him well—he had even, at times, invited him to eat with the family—yet he always impressed upon Arne that he was a waif, a poor boy, and that he ought to be thankful that Knute Solstad had taken compassion upon him, given him a place to work and an opportunity to be raised in a civilized manner. But when Arne considered Gunhild's position, he resolved to go boldly into the house and make the proposal to his master in the presence of Gunhild and Ingeborg. The opportunity came one Sunday

afternoon. Arne walked into the sitting-room and told Knute Solstad that he had an important matter to lay before him. Knute laid a long pipe that he was smoking on the mantelpiece, turned around and said:

“My boy, what is it?”

Arne was fumbling his cap and looking down at the floor for a few seconds. Then, straightening himself up, he looked coolly and directly at his master.

“For some time,” he began, “I have felt a strong affection for Gunhild. I love her more than I ever expect to love anyone else and I know that Gunhild loves me. But our love for each other must have your approval. Do you consent to our engagement?”

From the moment Knute Solstad began to realize the purport of Arne’s proposal until the end of his speech, the color came and went in his face. His hands began to tremble; the fire came into his eyes. He leaned forward and stared wildly at Arne. Then, suddenly rising from his chair and gesturing with his hands, he cried in a voice that indicated he had lost control of himself:

“Arne, have you gone crazy? You—that I took out of the poorhouse, have clothed and fed these many years, are presuming to wed the heir of Solstad!”

It was noticeable that this talk had angered Arne and he broke in: “I have earned by hard labor every stitch of clothing and every morsel of food you have given me. I don’t stand before you as a

beggar. So far as you're concerned, you have given me nothing!"

As Arne was saying this, Gunhild had moved over to him and pulled at his jacket to get him to sit down.

"No, Arne," Knute continued, shaking his head, "if it has come to this, you must leave Solstad this very night. I don't propose to harbor such ingratitude under my roof any longer. Pack up your belongings and go. No man shall marry Gunhild Solstad until he is able to count out in gold coin on this table the price of this farm."

This speech he emphasized by pounding the table with his right hand. By this time Arne had recovered his poise.

"What is the price of Solstad?" he asked. "If you're going to sell your daughter for gold, how much will it take to buy her?"

Meanwhile the door had opened and Nora of the Mill had stepped inside. The last comer seemed to increase Solstad's anger, for he fairly shouted, in answer to Arne's question:

"Twelve thousand dollars in gold."

During this dialog between Solstad and Arne, Ingeborg had burst into tears and had buried her face in her handkerchief. Gunhild had stepped up to her father and had tried to make him sit down in his chair.

Knute Solstad walked rapidly to the front door, looked at Arne and pointed to the door.

"Be gone and never dare to darken my door again!" he exclaimed.

Arne turned on his heel and walked towards the door. Before going, however, he turned around and said goodby to Ingeborg and Gunhild. To Knute he said: "I am going; but remember, I shall come back and claim your daughter."

Just then Nora of the Mill uttered these words of warning to Knute Solstad:

"When he goes the light will go out of your home. Many a day and many a night you will regret the words you have spoken today. Aye, they shall come back to you a thousand times. You'll dream of it at night; you'll worry about it in the day time. I prophesy, Arne Egeland will return, and when he does, Gunhild Solstad will be his bride. Mark you well what Nora of the Mill has said!"

Saying this, with a wave of her hand, she vanished thru the door.

Arne packed up his few belongings in a bundle and was about to leave Solstad when the door opened and Gunhild came out.

"I'll meet you at the turnstile," he said, "at eight o'clock tonight."

"Eight o'clock sharp at the turnstile," he repeated, and then walked leisurely down the road.

That evening Gunhild told her mother that she wished to call at Inga's house; Inga, having obtained employment in the town with the family of Captain Swanbeck, was going to leave home that week. The turnstile referred to by Arne was in front of Ole Nelson's cottage, in the fence between the cottager's lot and Solstad. The evening was passed off pleasantly by the young people. Inga and Ragnild were

much surprised to learn that Arne was on his way to town to sail for America. It was late in the evening when Gunhild got up to go. Arne accompanied her home. At first Gunhild was silent; Arne did most of the talking. Finally Arne said, "Gunhild, will you wait for me till I come back from America?"

Gunhild began to sob.

"Come now," said he, "don't let our parting moments be spoiled by tears!"

"I feel so terribly sad," stammered Gunhild, "I am so sorry my father acted as he did this afternoon. But he is getting old, Arne. He doesn't see things as you and I do. I hope you didn't get angry at him. Poor father! He has always been so kind and good to me. Please don't hate him for what he said and did this afternoon."

"I shall think nothing about it," said Arne. "I knew your father would act the way he did. I think I know him better than you do. But let bygones be bygones. It's all over now. I am glad I can go to America, and if you will only wait for me, Gunhild, I'll come back and get you, and then we'll get married, sail across the Atlantic and build a beautiful home in that great country where all are equal. Say, Gunhild, will you wait for me?"

She looked up into Arne's face, which seemed to beam with the light of the future. He grasped her, pressed her to his bosom and covered her face with kisses.

"Oh, Gunhild, say the word! It'll make me so happy, for the thought of you will lead me on to fortune and success."

Arne's good cheer seemed to be infectious, for Gunhild had to smile thru her tears.

"Arne, I will wait for you."

"There, there, I knew you would!" said he, again pressing her closely to his breast. Soon they reached Gunhild's home. The parting moment had come.

"Where will you stay tonight?" she asked.

"I stay at the Nelson cottage," he answered.

"Shall I not hear from you while you are gone?" asked Gunhild.

"I don't know," said Arne. "You know, I never had the good fortune to learn to write. But in America I will try to learn. I shall stay in New York for a while, then I'll work westward, where I'll try to get some land and build a home and then I will come and get you."

Before leaving Arne that night, Gunhild slipped two silver dollars into his hand. "Take them," said she, "You may need them on the road."

"Thank you," said Arne. "Nora of the Mill gave me three silver dollars out on your father's lawn this afternoon after your father had showed me the door. Besides what I have got myself, that will keep me until I get work in New York."

The two then said good night and Arne walked back to the Nelson cottage.

Early the next morning he started for town. Most of the way he walked; for a short distance he rode with a farmer who overtook him. Arne met Captain Swanbeck down at the wharf, where he was busy loading his vessel.

"When do you sail for America, captain?" asked Arne.

"In three days," answered the captain. "We are now loading the Sea Gull with a cargo for ballast, and we sail for New York with a load of passengers next Thursday."

"Can you take me along?" asked Arne. "I have no money to pay passage with, but if you have any work for me I shall be glad to work my way to New York."

"We can take you," said the captain. "And you'd better begin right away. Take off your coat and help us load these provisions."

Arne did not have to be asked twice. For some years he had been looking forward to the time when he could sail for America.

That evening he renewed his acquaintanceship with some old friends that he had known when he made his home with Bertha Fisker. Ole Lerdal, the carpenter, was dead, but Thomas Selvig, the poor commissioner, was still living.

The next day he called at Captain Swanbeck's house, where he found Inga Nelson. Inga introduced him to her friend, Finn Sandvik, a sailor, who was going to sail with the captain on the following Thursday on the Sea Gull.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VOYAGE

IT was late in the afternoon when the Sea Gull lifted her anchor, hoisted her sails and started on her voyage to New York. All day Arne had been busy assigning passengers to their berths and helping them to stow away their baggage and provisions. There were in all forty-one souls, including children. Arne was personally acquainted with a large number of them, as most of them were neighbors and members of the church that he had attended. They were all going to New York, then west in the United States to get land and build their own homes. Arne slept on a bunk in the captain's room and ate with the crew. After supper, when everybody had gone to bed, excepting the sailors on duty, Arne was pacing the upper deck. He was too much wrought up to retire. The events of the last few days had crowded themselves into his life so suddenly that this was the first opportunity he had had of going over by himself what had happened. He stopped walking, leaned against the rail of the boat and looked towards the shore. The vessel was passing the southernmost point of land in Norway. Soon his native land would be out of sight. The shoreline looked like a dark streak on the horizon. He fully realized that he might never again see his native country.

"There is only one thing that will bring me back," said he to himself. "I must come and get Gunhild."

Then he thought of all the uncertainties of life that lay before him. If he should fail to make good in America, what then? He did not dare to dwell on the answer to that question. Arne was full of hope. He was determined to succeed.

"Perhaps my father and mother are living somewhere in Norway. Who knows? Shall I ever find out who they are, or who they were? I am not sorry to leave my native land. While Knute Solstad gave me a good home, he was a disagreeable master. I never received any signs of approval of my work from him. I leave with no regrets. In place of regrets, I am filled with hope. If I reach America safely, some day I'll be a man among men!"

He turned around, walked up to the bow of the boat, folded his arms and looked out over the sea. The surface of the water was calm, excepting for a heavy undertow. The Sea Gull had a fair side wind that shot her forward over the heaving waters like a duck. For a long time he watched the rise and fall of the waves as the ship was speeding forward.

"That's a good representation of what my future will be," he said. "Like the Sea Gull, I shall go forward, tho tossed and jolted by the waves on the sea of life. But one thing I'll be—free as the ocean."

The next day he met Finn Sandvik. Finn had been a sailor for several years on a British boat and talked English fairly well.

"Where are you going, Arne, from New York?"

"I am going to stay there," said Arne. "I shall have to get work and make some money. Ultimately I intend to go west."

"If you would like," said Finn, "I will teach you some English that will come handy when you get to New York. English is not a difficult language to learn for a Norwegian, yet it will be well for you to know at least enough to be able to ask for work."

"I thank you very much," replied Arne, "and shall be glad to take advantage of your kindness."

"If you will meet me this evening at the captain's quarters, we'll begin."

Arne and Finn were together a good deal during the voyage, and before the *Sea Gull* had reached New York, Arne had learned to say a great many words in English.

The voyage was a lucky one, notwithstanding considerable rough weather which they encountered. They reached New York in the latter part of July. Arne helped to load the boat for the return voyage; five days after their arrival in port, he said goodbye to the captain and the crew.

CHAPTER XV

NEW YORK

FOR the first time in his life Arne was to see a large city. He walked leisurely up Broadway with his little bundle of clothing under his arm. Everything he looked at seemed different from anything he had ever seen before. The buildings, the large trucks and wagons, seemed so massive and ponderous. Then the great crowds of people that were surging up and down this wonderful thoroughfare—al tho the people were talking and shouting, he could not understand a word of what they said. He thought if he could only see one face that he knew, what a comfort it would be to him!

“Well,” thought Arne, “maybe after I have been here a while I shall know some faces in New York city. I guess the way to do is to find work, and maybe after a while I shall like it here.”

So he began to ask for work wherever he thought there was any likelihood of getting something to do; but without success. He continued in this way until it began to get dark and the crowds on the streets grew smaller. Then he began to feel hungry. He hadn't had a bite to eat since he left the ship that morning. He saw many restaurants and saw people eating their supper. “But,” thought he, “I haven't much money. I must be economical. I will go into

some store, buy some food, and satisfy my hunger in that way."

Soon he came to a park where he saw people sitting on benches, painted green.

"Here," he said, "will be a nice place to eat my lunch." So he went to a small grocery store, bought some cheese and a loaf of bread and sat down on one of the green benches in the park to enjoy his supper. After sitting down he noticed across the driveway, only a few feet away, a boy facing him on one of the benches. There was something about the young lad that interested Arne. He had dark brown hair, light blue eyes, and his face was covered with large freckles. On the whole he was rather neat looking, notwithstanding his pants were threadbare at the knees and frayed at the bottom. His shoes, tho old and badly worn, showed signs of having lately been polished.

Arne pulled the loaf of bread out of the wrapper and with his sheath knife, which he carried in his pocket, began to cut off several slices. This performance was viewed with great interest by the young man on the opposite bench. Arne then took out his little chunk of cheese, cut off several pieces and laid them on top of the bread he had cut. This seemed to interest the boy with the freckles still more, for he leaned forward, and fastened his eyes on the bread and cheese. Arne halted for a moment in the preparation of his evening meal and looked steadily at the stranger who was watching him. He began to wonder if the young lad was really hungry.

"If he is hungry," thought he, "there is enough here for both of us."

So Arne took one of the slices of bread that he had covered with the thin pieces of cheese and thrust it over toward the stranger. The young man's face lit up with a very pleasant smile as he stretched out his hand and grasped the proffered food.

"Thank you," he said, as he touched his old slouch hat with his left hand.

Arne soon prepared another slice for himself, and there the two boys sat facing each other on the two benches, munching as hard as they could. After a while Arne beckoned to the boy and he came across the path and seated himself beside him.

"What is your name?" asked the stranger, looking up into Arne's face.

"Arne Egeland."

"My name is Terence O'Malley," said the stranger.

Arne stretched out his right hand. Terence grasped it and they were strangers no longer. Arne told Terence that he had been trying all day to get work, but that he had been unsuccessful. At this Terence laughed, shook his head and said that he had not gotten work either.

A man came by and lit the lamps in the park; still the boys sat and, oh, how hard they tried to talk to each other! And they succeeded to a remarkable extent. Terence got Arne to understand that he had been in New York only two days; that he was a poor immigrant boy from Ireland; that he had spent all the money he had during the last two days, and would have to get work on the morrow or starve. At this Arne laughed and said he

would have to get work too, for his money would not last many days.

The boys sat until the clock in the tower struck twelve. They both had the best reason in the world for staying out late because neither had any place to go. They no longer heard the numerous footsteps on the pavement. The noises in the great metropolis had died down. The boys concluded to go to sleep on the benches and go out together in the morning to make further attempts at getting work.

The sun woke Arne and Terence the following day. There were left a few slices of bread and some cheese, which they ate for their breakfast. The boys continued their journey along Broadway in search of work, Terence acting as spokesman, on account of his familiarity with the English language. But they were unsuccessful. They finally struck out from Broadway and walked a couple of miles towards the outskirts of the town. Here they came to a large livery barn. The proprietor, after finding out that Arne was a farmer boy from Norway and that Terence was a country lad from Ireland, hired them to work in his stable. Their wages were to be thirty dollars a month. A room with bed was given them on the second floor of the barn. They ate at a boarding house in the neighborhood, where they paid two dollars a week for their board, leaving to each a little over twenty dollars a month.

The boys got along well together. Arne was so thankful that he had come to America. There was a certain kind of freedom and equality in America

that he had never felt in Norway, and when he compared the wages that he was getting now with the wages that Knute Solstad gave him he wondered that he had stayed at Solstad so many years.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW BERTHA FISHER'S MONEY PREACHED

AFTER a few months Arne could talk quite a little English. Since he left the Sea Gull he had not met any one that could talk his native tongue. Terence and he had become very intimate friends and enjoyed each other's company a great deal. Neither of them had any relatives in the city, or acquaintances except such as they had made with the people whom they had met in their place of employment. Their social engagements, therefore, were few. But they could always have a good time together. Arne was endeavoring to learn to read English and had already made some progress.

In the livery barn where they worked were kept several very fine riding horses, which were let for hire to some of the patrons of the barn. On one side of the barn near the street the proprietor had a piece of green lawn, along which was placed a row of hitching posts. To these hitching posts were usually tied the riding horses when called for at the barn. These hitching posts were accessible from the street, and quite often people not connected with the barn would tie their horses there. Arne and Terence had been instructed by the proprietor not to allow any outsiders to use the posts.

One day a boy who drove by with a delivery wagon attempted to tie his horse to one of the posts.

Terence O'Malley saw him and began remonstrating with him, telling him that the owner of the barn had told him not to allow anyone who was not a customer of the barn to use the posts. The delivery boy was quite insolent and intimated that he would tie his horses there if he chose to do so. At this talk Terence threw himself between the horse and the hitching post so as to compel obedience to his master's orders. The young man with the delivery wagon made a rush for Terence, threw him to the ground and started to thrash him with his fist. Just then Arne came out, grabbed the young intruder by the coat collar, pulled him off of Terence and threw him on his back. At this point a policeman arrived and took Arne and the young driver into custody in spite of the vigorous protests on the part of Terence. It was not long before Arne and the young driver were on their way in a patrol wagon to the city lockup.

While Arne felt humiliated at being under arrest and driving thru the streets as a law breaker, he was cheerful. He felt that he had done nothing wrong and knew that he would soon be vindicated. In jail that night he slept very little. He saw humanity in its most degraded form. Some swore, some cried, others shrieked. There were drunkards, tramps and criminals of all grades and descriptions. Both young and old had been gathered in from all parts of the large city.

Arne patiently waited until morning. He knew that Terence would acquaint his employer with the real facts in the case and that they would be down

to explain matters to the court when his hearing came. After breakfasting they were herded into a pen in a large room, where the police magistrate was holding court. Among the throng of bystanders that had gathered, Arne soon recognized his employer and Terence. As Arne was called before the bar his master stepped up and stood beside him; on the other side stood Sam Addick.

"You are charged with assault and battery," read the clerk. "Are you guilty?"

Just then the proprietor of the livery barn shouted to the court: "Your Honor, he is not guilty and I demand a trial for Arne Egeland. He is a good boy and works for me."

The magistrate called on the policeman who had made the arrest and asked him to tell what charge he had against Arne. The policeman said that, as he was walking along the street, he saw the defendant throw another man on the ground forcibly and that he had arrested both the young men. Arne, Terence and the proprietor of the barn all testified. Then Sam Addick testified. After the evidence was all in the judge decided that Sam Addick was the aggressor, found him guilty of disorderly conduct, sentenced him to pay a fine of five dollars and, in case the fine was not paid, to serve fifteen days in the county jail. When this sentence had been pronounced, Terence and Arne looked at each other and smiled.

Sam Addick, however, remained standing in front of the judge, looking down at the floor. It seemed as tho he was just beginning to realize the terrible

consequences of the sentence that had been passed upon him. He raised his head and attempted to say something to the court, but the bailiff took him by the arm and hustled him back and pushed him into the pen where the criminals were herded.

Just then a woman with a baby in her arms walked slowly up to the bar. It seemed as tho she were aware that she was treading on forbidden ground. Her face was pinched and thin. Holding her baby in one arm, with the other she tucked her disheveled hair back from her forehead under an old shawl, which covered her head and the upper part of her body. A hush fell over the court-room. The judge leaned forward on the bench and in a brusque and formal manner said, "Madam, what are you here for?"

The woman, in a trembling voice, yet so distinct that it could be heard all over the court room, answered: "I am the mother, sir, of Sam Addick. I am a widow. He is my only support. He cannot pay the fine, for he hasn't the money. If he goes to jail, my little one and I will starve."

The judge ordered the clerk to call the next case and the bailiff led the woman out of the court room. The sight of this poor woman had interested Arne. His thoughts at once moved back to his godmother, Bertha Fisker. "What would Bertha Fisker do, if she were here?" came into Arne's mind. While he felt that Sam Addick should be punished, yet the treatment of this poor woman by the judge seemed cold and merciless. It reminded him of the parish priest in Norway, when Bertha Fisker had interceded with him for Maren Bakken. He had

Bertha Fisker's five dollar gold piece in his pocket. He thought he could feel it burn against his body, and could hear Bertha Fisker say to him, "Arne, let my money preach."

He hurried out of the court room and found the poor woman sitting on a step in the stairway, sobbing and groaning most pitifully. Arne went up to her, laid his hand on her shoulder and said, "You wait here, I'll go in and get your son and bring him out."

After giving the clerk his five dollars in payment of Sam Addick's fine, the bailiff got him from the prisoner's pen and turned him over to Arne, who immediately took him out to his mother. Sam Addick and his mother were much surprised at Arne's conduct. They were so astonished that they could hardly believe their senses. Finally, after thanking him, Sam gave Arne his hand and told him that on the first day of the following month when he got his pay he would repay him.

This whole scene had made a wonderful impression on Arne's employer and Terence O'Malley. As they walked up the street the former said:

"My boy, that was a great deed you did today. I pitied the poor woman from the bottom of my heart, when she stood up and talked to the judge. By your promptness you remedied the situation and I walked away feeling happy. Some day, Arne, you will get your reward for this act. Maybe not from Sam Addick or his mother, but I feel inclined to say that a good and noble deed like this will be rewarded in some way."

CHAPTER XVII

ADVANCEMENT

ARNE and Terence had now worked together for a year. At the end of that time Arne was employed as a coachman in a private family near the outskirts of the city. He wore a uniform and a high hat.

A short time after he had become well settled in his new position he went down to Castle Garden in hopes that he might meet Captain Swanbeck who, he knew, was sure to bring another load of passengers from Norway. If Finn Sandvik was still in his employ he might be able to hear from Gunhild. But he saw no Norwegian flag flying from any mast in the harbor that day. He inquired at the harbor office if the Sea Gull had been there that summer, but nobody seemed to know anything about the Sea Gull or Captain Swanbeck.

In the course of time Terence O'Malley got a position in a private barn and he and Arne were often together. In his new position Arne got better wages. He boarded at the place where he worked and received a wage of fifty dollars a month. His friend Terence also received higher wages.

* * *

Over a year had passed since Arne and Terence had first met. Up to this time Arne had received no word from Solstad. He had not even met any-

one from his native land. He was beginning to get uneasy. He longed for some word from Gunhild.

One day in the middle of the summer, while down by Castle Garden, he observed a sailing vessel moving slowly in from the sea. Soon he thought he saw the Norwegian flag. His heart leaped with joy when he recognized the Sea Gull. The vessel anchored some distance out in the harbor. He knew it would take two or three days for the passengers and crew to come ashore. He was certain that Captain Swanbeck had brought another shipload of emigrants to America.

The following day Arne returned and met Captain Swanbeck on the wharf. He walked briskly up to the captain and put his hand on his shoulder.

"And here you are again," said Arne, as the captain turned around.

For a few moments Captain Swanbeck looked at him without saying a word. The coachman's uniform that Arne wore seemed to puzzle him. Soon however, he reached out his hand and exclaimed, "Why, Arne Egeland, how do you do? I did not at first recognize Knute Solstad's hired man in such fine clothes. Tell me, what are you doing here?"

After telling the captain how he had fared, that he was getting good wages and laying up some money, he asked if Finn Sandvik was on board. The captain said he was, and that if he would come down again the next day he could meet him, because at that time they would be unloading a part of their cargo. Before they parted, however, Arne asked if he had heard anything from Solstad. The cap-

tain answered that he had seen Knute Solstad several times that spring and that Gunhild had called at his house while he was at home. "But Finn can tell you more about that than I can," said the captain.

The next day Arne met Finn on the wharf. That evening Finn went with Arne and stayed all night. Arne asked him when they left home.

"We left the tenth of May," said he. "We have another shipload of emigrants."

"Where are they bound for?"

"Most of them for Wisconsin, I think."

"Are there any from our parish?"

"Yes, Svend Rosvold and his family, Rasmus Bo and the Ronnings."

"Have they left the ship yet?"

"No, they are held in quarantine until next Monday."

"And how is Inga?" queried Arne.

"Inga is still working for Captain Swanbeck. I suppose," continued Finn, "that you are interested in hearing about Gunhild Solstad."

At this Arne blushed a little, but said, "Yes, how is she?"

"She is looking fine. She and Inga are often together. The talk around the parish is that Carl Wessel is courting her and is looked upon with favor by Knute Solstad and his wife. The report goes, however, that Gunhild does not care for him. But you know, Arne, she is an only child; her father is well-to-do and she will probably be influenced greatly by his wishes. When you left Norway it

was whispered about among the knowing ones that Gunhild was very partial to you and that she is waiting for you to come back from America. Now, Arne," continued Finn, leaning forward and becoming very confidential, "if you want to send a message by me to Gunhild I will take it and tell it to Inga, for I am sure she will get it to Gunhild on the quiet, so that neither the old folks at Solstad nor anybody else will know anything about it."

This talk by Finn seemed to interest Arne very much. For a time he said nothing. Again Finn leaned forward and said in an undertone, "What shall I tell her from you?"

"You tell her," said Arne, "that I am very well satisfied with America. I have learned to speak English quite well. I feel more at home here than I did with Knute Solstad. Tell her that America is a fine country and has some very nice people. Everybody has been kind to me since I came to New York. I feel more like a free man here than I did in my homeland. There is abroad in this land a spirit of freedom and equality that I never felt in Norway. I am getting fifty dollars a month in wages, together with my board and lodging, and have already several hundred dollars in the bank. You tell her that I am longing for the day when I shall sail back to Norway to claim her as my bride. Before that, however, I intend to go west to buy some land and provide a home for her. Tell her that I think as much of her now as I did when I left her father's place."

At this talk Finn laughed. "I think, Arne, that

she will wait for you, for if I am not mistaken she is as true as steel to you. Inga has told me all about the scrap you had with Knute Solstad before you left. I know when I bring her this message that Gunhild will be happy."

The next morning Finn was early on his way back to the Sea Gull. It had been a very pleasant occasion for Arne. Finn had brought him good news. Arne's visit with Finn was the happiest time he had had since his arrival in New York. Before the departure of the Sea Gull on her return trip, Arne had sent by his friend a gold ring for Gunhild.

The following summer Arne watched for the reappearance of the Sea Gull in New York harbor, but did not see her.

Another year had dragged by. Terence and Arne were now beginning to discuss their trip into the western country. In the summer of 1848 the two boys determined to leave New York city for the west. Each of them had in the neighborhood of five hundred dollars in the bank. This amount of cash, if they should be able to work their way without paying passage, would be enough to buy land and begin life as western frontiersmen.

On the first of July they boarded a boat for Albany. From there they expected to go west on the Erie canal.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE ROAD

ARNE and Terence's trip from New York to Albany on the Hudson river was uneventful. From Albany to Buffalo on a canal boat they knew would be slow traveling and would take them more than two weeks. At Albany, however, they were fortunate enough to get their passage and board for helping the captain in handling freight and guiding the boat. They arrived at Buffalo the latter part of July and decided to stay there until they could get a steamboat for Milwaukee or Chicago. While there Terence O'Malley bought a newspaper that told of the discovery of gold in California. The two boys became very much interested and excited when they read that the gold was being washed out of the sand along the creeks and rivers. Instead of going to Milwaukee, they shipped for Cleveland, Ohio, with the intention of traveling from there to the Ohio river on the Ohio canal and eventually reaching St. Louis, Missouri, by the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

In a few days they were able to ship from Buffalo to Cleveland on a steamboat. On arriving at Cleveland they learned more about the discovery of gold in California. They traveled from Cleveland to the Ohio river on a canal boat, and not long afterwards found themselves in Cincinnati. At this point

they were again fortunate enough to get employment on a flat boat to St. Louis, where they arrived about the middle of October.

St. Louis, at this time, was a rendezvous for gold diggers bound for California. Arne and Terence made up their minds they would have to spend the winter in St. Louis and start out on an overland journey from that point to California early in the spring. They both worked that winter as freight handlers on the river docks.

Early in March they joined a company that was taking the overland journey to California. The company consisted of twenty men. They had fourteen yokes of oxen and wagons carrying their provisions and water supply. Each man was armed with a rifle and a supply of ammunition, for they expected trouble from the bands of Indians that were roving over the western plains. Arne and Terence each put up one hundred and fifty dollars to become members of the company.

The expedition started from St. Louis on the tenth day of March, 1849. Most of the company were young men of about the age of Arne and Terence. The mode of traveling was very slow. Every now and then the oxen's feet became sore, which obliged the company to stay in their camp for one or more days. Arne and Terence had their own tent and slept together.

The caravan, as it may be called, scarcely averaged ten miles a day during the first month. In the evening the oxen were unyoked and the wagons placed in a quadrangle or circle, which

formed a corral inside of which the oxen were kept. When not in fear of Indians the men pitched their tents outside of the corral.

Two men were on picket duty every night. An old Indian scout by the name of Tony Bellows had been unanimously elected commander of the expedition. He was over six feet tall, straight and brawny. He had lived on the plains and in the woods the greater part of his life. His experience on the frontier had made him alive to every possible danger.

When in the desert, where the Indians were numerous, they pitched their tents inside of the corral. In the wagons they had provender for the oxen, a large amount of food supplies and firewood. In addition to this they had large casques containing fresh water, which were refilled from time to time from springs or fresh water courses that they found on their march.

Tony Bellows was a shrewd and careful leader. He had charge of a small supply of liquor, which was the only liquor allowed in the company. This was kept for use in case of emergency or sickness.

The route from St. Louis was northwest along the Missouri river. The caravan's first objective was the Platte river, which they intended to follow thru Nebraska as far as it was practicable. In about three weeks they reached Independence, Missouri. From here they went north along the Missouri river until they reached the territory of Nebraska. After a few days' travel to the north of Independence, they reached a stream where there

was no bridge and no ferry. The stream was quite large and filled to the top of the banks with the spring freshet. The water was muddy and the banks were soft.

The caravan stopped; a council of war was held and the question of how to get across the river was discussed at length. Finally Arne and a young lad from New England volunteered to swim out into the stream and, by diving down where the water was deep to make as good soundings as possible. The boys in this way soon learned that there was only one place in the river where the water was quite deep. It was accordingly decided that an attempt should be made to ford the river with the oxen and wagons. Shovels were gotten out, and in the course of a couple of hours an approach had been constructed to the water's edge. Some of the men swam across and prepared a landing on the opposite bank. Tony Bellows climbed on to the back of one of the oxen and urged them into the water. The men that did not ride on the backs of the oxen stayed in the wagons and attempted to save the stuff.

Everything went well until Bellow's team reached the deep place in the river. Here the oxen were swept off their feet by the swift current. Tony succeeded, with great difficulty, in steering them towards the opposite bank, as the oxen, when they reached the deep water attempted to turn around and go back to where they started. At this point it seemed as tho the whole caravan would be washed down stream, but Bellows finally succeeded in reach-

ing the opposite bank in safety. When on the other side of the river he jumped off his oxen and ran back to the bank. There he stood, tall and muscular, waving his broad brimmed hat and cheering the boys as they were struggling against the rapid current of the stream. At five o'clock that evening all were safe on the west bank of the river.

When the caravan struck the Platte river they followed the stream towards the west. Soon they encountered other gold-seekers. An almost endless stream of fortune hunters had already preceded them to California. The trail, however, did not become distinct until they reached the western part of Nebraska. When that point was reached, there seemed to be an almost continuous string of ox-drawn wagons. In the case of the group whose fortunes we are following, they had several spare oxen that followed behind the wagons. These animals were taken along to be killed for food, if necessary, or to take the place of the draught animals that might give out.

The western plains at that time were infested with large herds of buffaloes. Tony Bellows was always watching out for these herds. He told the boys that when one of these herds started to run in a certain direction it was certain death to anyone who might get in their way. One day Tony saw a cloud of dust to the right on the sky-line of the prairie. He got two of the boys to run in that direction to ascertain what way the herd was traveling, and if it were traveling rapidly.

The herd seemed to be approaching. Soon the

men heard a noise like distant thunder, and had they not seen the dust they might have suspected that the noise was caused by an earthquake. As the buffaloes came closer and in full view, it was evident they were heading towards the east. The herd was very large, containing at least a thousand head. They came within a half mile of the caravan. Everybody breathed easier when they had gone by.

In the central and eastern part of Nebraska buffalo grass was plentiful and furnished sufficient provender for the cattle. After crossing the south branch of the Platte and following the north branch, the grass became more scant, the ground more dry and sandy. Soon they were in the land of the sage bush and the cactus. Frequent stops became necessary for rest and recuperation for the animals. Thus far they had not seen any Indians. The large caravan with a number of well armed men had no charm for them.

One day, while the caravan was resting, Arne and Terence walked out on the prairie a few miles from the camp to hunt antelopes. They were getting tired of salt pork and fish. Terence, with his rifle, got a young buck and was tying it up so that they could carry it into camp. Just then two small ponies came trotting up to them. Arne reached out his hand and began to pet one of them. Both seemed to be tame and docile.

"Let us get on their backs and ride them in to camp," said Arne.

"Maybe they belong to somebody," said Terence.

"I don't think so," answered Arne. "I think they have strayed away from a herd of wild horses."

After petting them for a while the boys got on their backs and started towards the camp. Immediately they heard the crack of a rifle behind them. The ball struck Arne in the calf of his leg and knocked him off the pony. Terence immediately jumped off the pony he was riding, ran up to Arne, who was lying on the ground, and asked him how badly he was hurt. Arne was bleeding profusely, but he said to Terence, "I don't think it's dangerous."

Terence tied his handkerchief around the bleeding leg and in that way succeeded in stopping the flow of blood. While doing this, a group of six Indians had emerged from the sagebrush and were riding in a circle around them. One of them had a rifle, and was shooting at Arne and Terence as often as he could load his gun. He never stopped his horse, but loaded and shot while his horse was running. The other Indians followed him on horseback with yells and war whoops.

The pony that Terence had been riding ran away towards the Indians, but Arne's pony stayed with them. Terence fired two shots at the Indian who had the rifle, but did not hit him. Finally Arne reached for his gun, drew a bead on the Indian and dropped him out of the saddle. At this the other Indians became frightened, picked up their fallen comrade and disappeared.

Arne and Terence made their way back to camp; Arne riding the pony, Terence leading him. There they discovered what nobody knew before, that there was a doctor in the camp. Joe Rankin, one of

the party, when he heard that Arne had been wounded, produced a medicine case and dressed Arne's wound, telling him that it was not dangerous and would soon heal.

The next morning before camp was broken three Indians appeared and asked for the pony, claiming that it was their property. Only one of them could talk a little English. Arne turned the pony over to them, but asked them how much they would take for it. The Indian, who acted as spokesman, shook his head. Arne then showed him a five dollar gold piece and offered it to him. This seemed to please the owner of the pony, for he immediately turned the pony over and took the money. When they were about to leave Arne asked them if the Indian whom he shot the previous day had died. In answer the Indian shook his head.

"Where did I hit him?" asked Arne.

The Indian pointed to his left hip.

"Will he recover?" continued Arne.

Whereupon the Indian nodded his head and laughed.

Arne tied the colt behind one of the wagons and in this way they traveled for some time. As the party approached the western boundary of Nebraska it became more and more difficult to get water for the animals as well as the men. Sometimes they would encounter a sand storm that lasted several days, during which the sky looked yellow like brass. The drivers had to tie handkerchiefs over their faces to keep the sand out of their eyes. At one place all the oxen started on a stampede for the

river, paid no attention to drivers or wagons, but rushed madly on in one drove. Fortunately they stopped on the riverbank and the drivers came up, seized them and got them under control. After this experience the oxen had to be led with ropes.

From Nebraska the caravan crossed into Wyoming. Here the whole company was put on rations.

Early one morning when Arne awoke he looked towards the west. The dust had settled during the night. The sun was shining, the air was clear. In the distance, for the first time he saw the Rocky Mountains. There they lay, peak after peak, covered with snow, portions of which glistened like crystal in the morning sun. The mountains held his gaze. He could not take his eyes off. In the distance they looked like great giants rising out of the plain. He woke up his partner. Terence leaned forward on the ground, for that was where they both slept. He looked steadily toward the west.

"What a magnificent sight!" said he. "How quiet those monster peaks seem to be. They look as tho they had been sleeping and dreaming from eternity. Maybe they are sitting on a treasure. Who knows?"

Now and then their snow covered sides would become dotted with black spots.

"What are those black spots that we see?" asked Terence.

"They are the shadows of clouds that are passing over them," replied Arne.

"I bet there is gold in those mountains," said Terence.

"That may be so," answered Arne, "but I fear that nobody will ever find it."

At Fort Laramie they entered the mountains. There was no difficulty in finding the way, for gold hunters in such numbers had preceded them that the trail was now a well beaten road. After traveling for some distance thru the mountains, their drinking water gave out and they were reduced to the extremity of squeezing water out of moss.

While going thru the mountains some of the men were taken sick with mountain fever. This malady was one of the worst difficulties gold hunters had to contend with. Tony Bellows, the old scout and leader of the caravan, was stricken. For several days he battled fiercely, but finally the strong man of the expedition was overcome by the disease and died.

Everybody in the company felt that the death of Tony Bellows was the worst set-back they had had since leaving St. Louis. The second day after his death their beloved leader was buried at the foot of a huge mountain. Up to this time nobody knew that there was in the company a minister of the gospel. Sam Campbell appeared at the grave with a prayer book and read the commitment service over the dead leader. When the brief services were concluded, the wagons moved on and left Tony Bellows in his grave overlooking the gold hunters' trail.

As they journeyed thru the mountains they found the trail strewn with the skeletons of men, oxen and horses, abandoned wagons and other wreckage of travel—silent witnesses of the disasters that had

overtaken some of the gold-seekers that had preceded them.

One day they came upon a man, pale and sick, lying by the side of the road. He implored the passers-by to give him a ride, but nobody gave heed to his request. When Arne and Terence saw him they spoke to him. He told them that he was a member of a company like theirs who were on their way to California, and that he had been taken sick with the fever. That was about all he could remember. He supposed that the rest of the company had thought him dead and had thrown his body on the side of the road. A short time before their arrival he had regained consciousness.

He appeared to be a German, for he spoke English with a German accent. His name was Herman Heller. Before he got sick he had some money in his pocket, but now it was all gone. He pulled off his vest while talking and asked Arne to loan him his knife. He ripped up the lining and pulled out a hundred dollars in bills.

"You see I have money," said he. "If you will let me ride on that pony you have tied behind your wagon I will pay for my board. I will buy the pony," he added, "if you want to sell him."

"All right," said Arne. "You can have him for five dollars. That is the price I paid."

The boys gave him hard tack and water, for that was all the food they had, and then lifted him on the pony. The oxen walked slowly and the sick man got along well. After the death of Bellows everybody in the company seemed to get careless,

and nobody was selected to stay on guard during the night. Arne and Terence, however, were careful. During the night one of them was always awake.

The party soon reached Idaho and started southwest for Nevada. When they reached the edge of the Black Rock desert, which lay between them and the eastern boundary of California, they had only one of the oxen left. Here Terence and Arne parted company with the rest of the expedition. Herman Heller, the sick German, had completely recovered and started half a day before them to cross the desert. With a few hard-tack, a small piece of fried meat and a sack of dried apples Arne and Terence started early the next morning across the desert on foot.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FINAL EFFORT

EACH of the two gold-seekers had a heavy load to carry on the journey they had undertaken. Each had a gun, a satchel containing clothes, food, ammunition, and a canteen filled with water. In addition to this Arne had tied the sack of dried apples to his back. Terence had a compass which was hung by a small chain around his neck.

The sun was pouring almost tropical heat on the sandy plain. As it advanced toward the zenith the air and the sand grew hotter. They could see nothing but sky and sand; not a tree nor a bush—there was not even a cactus or a sage bush. The trail was strewn with the white bones of dead animals and fallen fortune hunters. Occasionally a gust of wind would sweep by them, filling their eyes and their nostrils with sand and yellow dust. In spite of all this the boys pressed onward. Not even a flock of birds did they see. When the sandstorm became severe they had to lie down and cover their faces until it was over.

When the sun was near the meridian Terence said, "How far do you think we have walked since this morning?"

"I should think nearly twenty miles," answered Arne, as he shifted the position of the sack of dried apples on his back.

"I don't believe I can go any farther," said Terence. "I'm all played out."

He threw his satchel on the ground and sat down on it and took a drink of hot water from his canteen.

"You must not talk that way, or we'll never get to California," replied Arne.

Terence, however, was discouraged.

"It is now nearly fall," said he, "and yet we have not reached the promised land. I am becoming convinced that this gold hunting is not what it's cracked up to be. I believe, if you and I had stayed in New York and held our positions, we would have been better off. Our money is nearly all gone and all we've got out of it so far is a lot of suffering and hope."

"Tut, tut," said Arne, "you mustn't talk that way. When you've put your hand to the plow, don't look back. If we keep up our present pace, before it is dark we shall be in California. You have enough energy in you, if you only knew it, to travel a hundred miles yet without playing out."

"Give me some of those dried apples," said Terence.

Arne put the sack on the ground and opened it up. Soon each one was munching dried apples.

"Those are fine," said Arne. "They draw the water into your mouth. I believe they are better for us than the warm water in our canteens."

After eating a good supply from the sack, each put a couple of handfuls in his pocket. They also ate some meat and hard tack, after which Arne

slung the sack over his shoulders, took Terence by the hand and started westward over the trail. In the afternoon their journey became more laborious. The wind was stronger and the heat more intense. More and more frequently they sat and rested on their satchels, munched dried apples and drank from their canteens. The sun was nearing the western horizon. It would soon be dark.

"Shall we ever get out of this sand?" asked Terence, as he strained his eyes wistfully toward the west.

"See that flock of birds?" said Arne. "That means we're near vegetation."

"Oh, how I wish I could see some green grass," interjected Terence, "and drink from a spring of cold water! Do you remember that spring we struck in northern Missouri? That was the finest water I ever drank. Whenever I'm thirsty I think of that spring. Let's lie down. I can't go any farther."

"Keep up your courage," said Arne, as he grabbed Terence's satchel and carried both satchels in one hand. "Now you run ahead and I'll follow with the luggage."

Poor Terence, he could hardly drag his feet thru the sand any longer!

"We dare not camp here," said Arne, "for if we lie down on the sand we'll be covered up before morning."

"Oh, my God!" said Terence, "I'm tired out."

"So am I," responded Arne, "but a man can

travel many miles after he is tired out, if he only thinks so."

For some time the two boys dragged their weary limbs along the trail over the dreary desert.

"My feet are so sore," said Terence, "that I know my stockings are soaked with blood."

"So are mine," said Arne, "but we can get out of this desert if we only think so, altho our feet are soaked in blood."

On they went. The sun had gone down. The breezes became cooler, the dew was falling, the sand was not so hot.

"Oh, there are the stars," said Arne. "They have always been my friends. When I am alone I feel as tho the stars were watching me. Look up, Terence!"

As Arne spoke he was looking up at the stars above him.

No answer came from Terence. He had fallen down. He was sobbing.

"Oh, Terence," shouted Arne, "wake up, stop your crying."

"I never shall see my mother again," sobbed Terence.

Arne put the two satchels on the ground and leaned Terence up against them.

"Let us chew some dried apples," said he as he handed a couple of pieces to Terence. Terence began munching them.

"But, Arne," said he, "I can't go any farther. Give me some hard tack out of your satchel, some meat and some more dried apples."

Arne sat down beside him and the boys ate their supper, Terence in the meantime groaning and complaining about his feet. As the evening advanced the breeze became cooler and more refreshing.

"I can't go any farther tonight," said Terence. "I am so fearful that we'll never get to California, Arne. I feel sick. I don't believe that I'll be able to continue the journey tomorrow morning."

"Don't talk about tomorrow," said Arne. "Let's talk about tonight. Let tomorrow take care of itself. You go to sleep and I'll keep awake; the stars shall be my company."

While the two boys were talking Terence fell asleep. In the solitude of the desert Arne was alone. During the afternoon he had exerted himself to the utmost. Not only because he wanted to get out of the desert, but also for the moral effect it would have on Terence. His face was burned and blistered, his hands and arms were aching from the load he had carried, his limbs were stiff and sore with fatigue, his feet were raw and bleeding. He realized that their situation was serious.

Never before on his long trip across the continent had he felt so despondent. Now there was danger that both he and Terence would perish in the desert. They had a little food left and some dried apples, but the water in their canteens was nearly gone. Arne had drunk sparingly from his, but had encouraged Terence on the journey to drink all the water he wanted, for he was in constant fear that Terence would completely collapse. Arne was large and powerful. There hardly seemed any

limit to his power of endurance. Terence was two years younger and, while he was strong and wiry, he could not compare with Arne in strength. The two boys loved each other as tho they were brothers. Arne knew that the distance across the desert on the gold-seekers' beaten trail was not greater than forty miles and felt that they must have traveled nearly that distance. The wind had gone down, the sky was clear and the stars were blinking over his head.

"Oh, well," thought Arne, as he stretched himself out on the sand. "We'll be all right tomorrow. I'll not worry about it."

All kinds of thoughts were racing thru his mind. For a while his thoughts dwelt on the magnitude of this new country. Would this great country be inhabited some day? Would the great plains that he had seen be plowed? Those thoughts almost bewildered him. Then he thought of Norway, his native land. His life at Solstad came back to him.

Soon the moon came up, round, bright and smiling, just as it had looked that night when he and Gunhild had sat together and when she had told him that her father wanted her to marry Carl Wessel. He saw her beautiful face in the moonlight. He wondered if Gunhild could see the same moon that he was looking at.

"Oh, how beautiful the moon is!" he said. "It smiles on me here just as it did in the happy days when Gunhild and I were together."

How still the night was! How he wished he could hear some noises—the barking of a dog or

the rattle of a wagon, but he heard nothing. There was not even any wind rustling or piling up the sand, as it did on their journey that day. And so Arne sat, but he didn't go to sleep. He watched thru the long quiet night while Terence was sleeping the sleep of the weary. How he looked for the sun on the eastern horizon! Never before in his whole life had he yearned so to see the sun. Again he looked; this time he thought the stars were getting dimmer towards the east and the sky a little paler. Soon the rays of light were shooting upwards in the eastern sky. Then a bright ray shone in his face across the desert. The sun was coming. He sat up, turned around, and looked westward. As the shadows were shifting he thought he saw something. He leaned forward and strained his eyes. There was a dark streak along the horizon. What was it? As the sun chased away the twilight the streak looked green. They were safe!

Arne jumped to his feet and shouted, "Terence, wake up! We are safe. I see the green grass and the green trees of California!"

Terence opened his eyes, tried to raise himself up on his hands, but fell back again on the sand.

"I can't move," he said. "My whole body feels stiff and sore."

"I'll fix you up," said Arne, and began to rub Terence's arms and body with all his might.

"I want you to see the green grass and the green trees," said Arne, as he raised him up and told him to look.

"I'm so glad," said Terence. "Now I believe we can make it."

"Of course, we can," said Arne, as he kept on rubbing. "Take a drink from your canteen."

After considerable rubbing Terence found he could stand up and walk around.

"Here," said Arne, "is a piece of meat and a hard tack. We have some left yet."

"Didn't you sleep any last night?" asked Terence.

"Not a wink," replied Arne, "but, oh, how I waited for the sun!"

"How far do you think it is over to that green grass?" asked Terence.

"Oh, a little over a mile," said Arne.

Terence laughed, "Remember," said he, "that appearances are deceptive in this country."

"Take your gun and I'll take your grip, and let's be moving."

At first the boys made slow progress, but after limbering up they felt better and made good time. They had to walk not one, but three miles, before they reached the green grass.

"How pretty that green grass looks!" said Terence. "I never thought so much of green grass before."

When on the grass the boys threw themselves down on the ground. How different it was from the blistering sand. They found that a short distance from where they were sitting, down in a valley, was a little creek. After slaking their thirst with the fresh water and resting for some time Ter-

ence said, "I'm feeling very much better than I did out in the desert."

"So am I," answered Arne. "Let's fill our canteens with cold water and start down the trail. I'm sure we'll be able to buy some food when we get into the country a little ways."

They found the trail still leading westward. It was beaten down by the number of travelers that had passed over it. When it was noon they ate the remnant of their provisions.

"What shall we have for our supper?" asked Terence.

"I'm not worrying about that," replied Arne. "We'll soon strike some mining camps."

CHAPTER XX

LOOKING FOR GOLD

THE boys continued their march westward on the trail all that afternoon. They encountered several wagons loaded with people, but the travelers were not as numerous as they had been farther east. They noticed several trails or tracks, branching off the main trail, as they walked along.

"I believe we're in the gold country," said Arne. "This looks like a well beaten path. Let's follow this towards the south. I am sure, if we do, we'll soon strike some camps."

The boys had not gone very far on this road before they came to a log cabin. Terence rapped at the door, but no one answered. So the boys sat down on the ground in front of the cabin with the hope that they might be able to buy food, from somebody going by. They had sat but a short time when Herman Heller came up, riding on his pony.

"Hello there!" cried Terence. "Where have you been?"

"I have been down to buy some provisions," was the answer. "There's a mining camp about ten miles down the road."

"Have you some for us?" asked Arne. "We haven't a thing to eat."

"I think there will be enough for all of us," said Heller, as he jumped off the pony and tied it to one

of the logs that jutted out from a corner of the hut.

"I stopped here last night," he continued, "but in the middle of the night I was awakened by a noise outside and I found that somebody was trying to steal my pony. When I got outside, however, the scamps took to their heels. So I had to stay awake the rest of the night."

The boys went into the deserted cabin, where they found a crude fireplace and some benches where Arne thought they could sleep. Terence gathered some sticks and the evening meal was soon prepared. Terence and Arne decided to sleep on the benches inside, but Heller insisted that he would stay outside with his pony.

A little after midnight Heller woke up the two boys and told them to get their guns. There were two fellows crawling up towards the cabin and he thought they meant robbery. Before Arne and Terence went outside Heller told them where the robbers were lying. The boys cocked their guns and drew a bead on the robbers.

"Hold up your hands or we'll fire!" cried Arne.

There was a rustling in the grass and soon they heard them running down the trail.

"If it hadn't been for your pony," said Terence to Heller, "we probably would have been robbed and maybe killed."

"One good turn deserves another," said Heller. "I shall never forget what you two boys did for me when you picked me up on the road half dead."

The next morning all three ate a good breakfast.

Terence and Arne's hopes were high. They both felt stronger and more hopeful. In the forenoon of the following day they fell in with a Norwegian sailor who was on his way to Georgetown, a mining camp, farther south.

"I have several claims staked out at that point," said he, "and I know there is gold there. Come along with me and I'll give you a place to stay and your board."

The boys thought this was a good offer and rode down with their new friend who had a team of horses and a wagon.

CHAPTER XXI

WAITING

TWO years had passed at Solstad since Arne had left for America. During the winter months Gunhild had been in the little town where she had taken lessons in music and embroidery. She was well acquainted with Captain Swanbeck's family and often called there. On such occasions she always managed to get a chat with Inga, who was employed as a domestic in the family. Every summer the captain made a voyage to New York with emigrants. Finn Sandvik was still sailing on the *Sea Gull*. Each fall, when he returned from his trip to America, Inga asked him if he had seen or heard from Arne while in New York. But Finn brought no news. Nora of the Mill, as she passed down the valley, generally stopped at the Solstad home and always managed to see Gunhild alone. She always told Gunhild not to worry, but to be patient. Some day she would hear from Arne and then she would be happy.

It was the third spring after Arne had left that Gunhild and Ingeborg were working in the kitchen. Gunhild's mother had taken down all the silverware and the glassware.

"You clean those carafes carefully," said Ingeborg to the maid, "and Gunhild and I will polish

the silver. Here is some sand that you can put inside the bottles that will clean them."

"You are so very particular, mother," said Gunhild. "I never knew of anybody so particular as you are about having things clean."

"That may be," replied Ingeborg, "but when I am gone and you are lady of the house I want you to have things at Solstad just as neat and clean as your mother had them."

"Oh, that may never be," answered Gunhild. "I sometimes think that I shall not live at Solstad all my life."

At this remark Ingeborg threw a glance at Gunhild over her spectacles as if she wondered whether Gunhild really meant what she said.

"Are you going to leave your father and mother then?" inquired Ingeborg.

"Maybe not," replied Gunhild. "I may never get married. I suppose in order to be lady of the house I must be married."

"It seems strange to me that a young girl like you, Gunhild, should talk that way. You know you are our only child and our only hope for the future. You know your father takes such pride in this place and in the fact that so far back as anybody can remember his ancestors have lived here, and he feels it is his duty not to make a break in that chain of heredity, with all its story and legend that is so dear to him."

Just then Ingeborg picked up some large silver spoons and, after examining them critically, said: "Gunhild, you must make the silverware shine. You

know we're going to have very fine people here tomorrow for dinner, and I want everything to look spick and span."

"Oh, I don't care anything about that company," remarked Gunhild. "I wish I could be away from home tomorrow when they're here. Do you think it is interesting for a young girl to sit and listen to the stories that Captain Wessel tells of the time he has with some of the poor country boys that he is trying to make over into soldiers? And of drinking bouts when he goes to Christiania when parliament's in session? Oh no, mother, I don't like this Captain Wessel. He looks to me like a clown with his high boots, his sword and his cocked hat."

"He certainly has a nice young son," interjected Ingeborg. "I think he is such a fine young man. He is straight and prim, just like his father."

"Yes," retorted Gunhild, "and he is just as uninteresting as his father."

"But, you know, Gunhild," said Ingeborg, looking at her sharply, "that your father thinks that Carl Wessel is a very fine young man. I know he expects that he will be a suitor for your hand some day. Now, you know, Gunhild, that your father's word has always been law at Solstad and I hope that his word and his will will not be questioned by his own child."

For a few moments Gunhild was silent. She kept on rubbing and polishing the spoons for some time; finally she turned around and looked her mother squarely in the face and said deliberately, "Mother, would you marry a man you did not like, in whom

you had no confidence, whose very presence was distasteful to you?"

"Why, Gunhild, are you talking that way about Carl Wessel?"

"I am not specially talking about anybody. I am only asking you what you would do under such circumstances."

"Do you think, my child, that your father would want you to marry a man of that character?"

Again Gunhild was silent. Finally she threw the silver spoon and the polishing rag on the table. "That is just the way I feel toward Carl Wessel," she said.

"But, Gunhild," quickly retorted Ingeborg, "you are mistaken. Carl Wessel is not that kind of a fellow. I look upon him as one of the model young men of the parish."

"It makes little difference how you look upon him, mother, I can't look upon him in any other way than I have told you."

Just then there was a rap at the door. The maid came back from the sitting-room and announced that Nora of the Mill wanted to see Gunhild.

Gunhild found Nora sitting near the door in the large sitting-room.

"How do you do, Nora?" said Gunhild. "I am so glad to see you. Have you seen Inga lately?"

"I came from town today," replied Nora, with a mysterious look on her face. "I have something important to tell you, my child. Follow me out in the vestibule."

Gunhild thought Nora acted strangely. There

was such a peculiar expression on her face. With an aroused curiosity Gunhild followed her, but Nora did not stop in the vestibule. She went out on the lawn. Then, turning around, she leaned forward and said in a low tone of voice, "Gunhild, we have heard from Arne."

Gunhild's face lighted up. "Finn Sándvik saw him last spring in New York."

"And did he send any message to me?" asked Gunhild.

"He did," answered Nora, as she nodded her head. "Inga will be home tomorrow and she wants to see you at her house tomorrow evening."

"Is Arne well?" asked Gunhild.

"He is," said Nora. Acting as tho she was afraid that some one might overhear their talk, she slung the basket over her shoulders and started to go. "I'll see you again," she said, as she hurried out towards the road.

For a few minutes Gunhild stood and watched her as she walked briskly down the road. "People may whisper bad things about Nora of the Mill," thought Gunhild, "but she has always been kind to me." She went back into the kitchen and continued working with her mother. Her thoughts, however, were far away from her work. She was thinking of Arne in New York.

"What did Nora want?" asked Ingeborg.

"She brought word from Inga," answered Gunhild. "Inga is coming home tomorrow and wants me to come and see her tomorrow evening. May I go?"

"Our company are expected to be here in the evening tomorrow," responded Ingeborg, "and I assume you will be at home to help entertain them."

"I thought they would be here for dinner and I would be with them until after supper. I presume it will be all right for me to go after supper. I may not have a chance to see Inga again for some time."

"Oh, I suppose if you want to go," said Ingeborg, "you will have to go."

The next day was Sunday. Captain Wessel, his wife and Carl rode home with the Solstads from church. In the afternoon the company were all seated in a little arbor that stood on the Solstad lawn. Carl was telling Gunhild that he intended to matriculate in the fall at the government agricultural school and that he intended to be a farmer.

"I should think," said Gunhild, "if you want to be a farmer you would go to America. My teacher in town told me that America had the finest agricultural land in the world."

"I have no desire to go to that country," said Carl. "America is filling up with the scum of the world. There is no honor in being a farmer in America. Any lowbred fellow, however ignorant, can be a farmer there. I would not care to mix with that kind of people and have my children become natives of such a country."

This conversation had attracted the attention of Knute Solstad.

"I think measures ought to be taken in Norway to prevent our young people from emigrating to such a country. When you see anything in the

papers from America it is usually stories of robbers and thieves and Indian massacres."

"I agree with you," said Captain Wessel. "It is already beginning to deplete the young men in the parish that are fit for military duty."

"Yes," responded Solstad, "it is also raising the wages of our farm labor here."

"Something ought to be done," said the captain. "By the way," he continued; "have you ever heard anything from Arne, who left your employment a few years ago for America?"

Knute Solstad shook his head. "No," he said, "and I probably never shall. Arne was a head-strong young fellow and did not know enough to keep his place. When he worked for me he thought he was too good to be my hired man."

"That is just the trouble with our young people," cried the captain. "The old methods are too slow for them."

"Somebody will soon take the conceit out of Arne in America," interjected Solstad. "My opinion is that he will not last long in New York city."

At this the captain and Carl laughed heartily. After supper Gunhild excused herself and walked down the path to see Inga.

CHAPTER XXII

A MESSAGE

INGA was delighted to see Gunhild. As she greeted her, she leaned forward and whispered in her ear, "I have fine news for you, Gunhild. Let's go to my room and I'll tell you all."

Soon the two girls were seated on the bed in Inga's room. Gunhild was excited.

"When did the Sea Gull come back?" she asked.

"It came back last week," answered Inga, "and Finn brought a message to you from Arne."

"Did Finn see him?"

"Yes, he stayed all night with him in his room."

"Tell me all about it," said Gunhild, a little nervous.

"Finn met him one day on the wharf in New York. He hardly knew him; Arne was so tall and straight and well dressed that he hardly recognized in him Knute Solstad's former hired man."

"What's he doing?" queried Gunhild.

"He wears a long coat, Finn told me, with brass buttons and a high hat. He gets fifty dollars a month."

"Fifty dollars a month!" shouted Gunhild. "You must be mistaken, Inga. I never heard of anybody making fifty dollars a month."

"No, I'm not mistaken," insisted Inga, "and he gets his room and board thrown in."

"Can it be possible?" interjected Gunhild.

"Yes, it's true," said Inga, as she nodded her head, "and he told Finn that he had several hundred dollars in the bank."

"Isn't that fine!" said Gunhild as she clapped her hands.

"He has a friend there," continued Inga, "whose name is—let me see—Terence. I don't remember his last name. Arne and Terence are planning to go west soon and buy land from the government."

At this Gunhild became still more interested.

"But what is the message he sent?" asked Gunhild.

"Finn wrote it down," said Inga as she fumbled in her pocket. "Shall I read it?"

"Yes, go on and read it," said Gunhild.

"I am very well satisfied with America. I have learned to speak English quite well. I feel more at home here than I did with Knute Solstad. America is a fine country. Everybody has been kind to me since I came to New York. I feel more like a free man here than I did in my homeland. There is abroad in this land a spirit of freedom and equality that I never felt in Norway. I have a position as coachman for a wealthy man and am getting fifty dollars a month in wages, together with my board and lodging, and have already several hundred dollars in the bank. I am longing for the day when I shall sail back to Norway and claim you as my bride. Before that, however, I intend to go west, buy land and provide a home for us. I think as

much of you now as I did when I left your father's place."

"But that's not all," said Inga as she pulled out of her pocket a tiny box. "Look at this!" she cried, as she held the gold ring up to the light. "He sent this, too, by Finn. This is your engagement ring. Isn't it beautiful?" said Inga. "It's solid gold."

Gunhild took it and slipped it on her finger.

"I believe it fits," said Inga. "How did he know the size of your finger?"

"Oh, I guess he knew," said Gunhild with a smile.

Gunhild reached out her hand and said, "May I have that writing?"

"You certainly may," said Inga, "for no one is better entitled to it than you."

"Finn is also thinking of going west to get some land," said Inga.

"And then I suppose you two will be married," responded Gunhild.

"Oh, I suppose so," said Inga as she clasped her hands back of her head. "But isn't that good news I brought you?"

"Yes, that's very good news," said Gunhild. "I wonder when I'll hear from him again."

"Oh, I wager it'll not be long before Arne will be back to claim you," said Inga.

The two girls visited together far into the night and, when Gunhild returned to her home, the Wes-sels were gone and her father and mother had retired. This was the happiest day she had had since Arne left. Before she went to sleep she read and re-read the message that Inga had given her. Then

she tucked it under her pillow and read it again when she woke up the next morning. The gold ring she hid in her bureau drawer. She did not dare to wear it. The message and present from Arne must be kept a secret.

CHAPTER XXIII

SUSPICIONS

THE Sunday evening after the Wessels had gone Knute Solstad asked Ingeborg what had become of Gunhild.

"Oh," answered Ingeborg, "Nora of the Mill called here Saturday with a message from Inga that she was at home and wished Gunhild to call on her the following Sunday."

Knute Solstad looked suspiciously at Ingeborg and said: "I wonder how long we shall be pestered by that fiendish woman—that old witch who meddles with everybody's affairs in the whole parish. She seems to have acquired complete control over Gunhild. It is very humiliating that my daughter should follow the beck and call of such an irresponsible and degraded character. So you knew that our daughter had planned to leave our company in response to a message from Nora of the Mill?" he queried.

Ingeborg realized that Knute was angry and she hesitated in answering his question.

"Speak out," said Knute with a determined gesture of his head.

"Why, I knew," stammered Ingeborg, "what Nora had told her, but I didn't think she would leave until after our guests were gone."

In the meantime Knute had begun pacing the floor. "That's the reward we get," he muttered, "for all the kindness and indulgence we have lavished upon Gunhild. She does not appear to care a fig for the wishes of her father. She knows how much I think of Captain Wessel and his son, and yet she took occasion, when they were our guests, to humiliate me by leaving the house."

"I don't think she cares for Carl Wessel," said Ingeborg. "You know, Knute, that girls are not now what they used to be. When I was young I liked the people that my father and mother liked."

At this remark Knute stopped, ran his fingers thru his hair, then, with a powerful gesture of his right hand, almost shouted: "My daughter shall marry Carl Wessel. It is my duty as the owner of Solstad and a descendant of one of the most honorable families in the parish to see that the honor of that family and the glory of Solstad is maintained. Solstad has always been famous for its hospitality among the great men who have visited our valley. The word of the owner of Solstad has always been law here and it shall continue to be so as long as I live. Gunhild must not set herself up against her father. Carl Wessel will be a worthy successor to the noble men who have preceded us and he shall have Gunhild."

As he ended his speech he stamped the floor violently with his foot, then added, "And now, Ingeborg, I have something to say to you. I don't want you to allow Nora of the Mill to come inside this house, for I am convinced there is some devilish

intrigue going on between that woman and my daughter."

During this talk Ingeborg had sat silent, only now and then smoothing out the wrinkles of her dress with her hands. Then, looking up at Knute she said in a pleading tone of voice: "You know she is the only child we have and please don't be so harsh with her. Don't treat your child as tho she had nothing to say about her own future. You know Gunhild has always been a very dutiful and obedient girl. If she doesn't want Carl Wessel there are other young men just as good who would gladly take the hand of Knute Solstad's daughter."

At this remark Knute became furious. "Are you in league with Nora of the Mill too?" he shouted. "Have I everybody against me here? Isn't it my duty to see to it that my daughter marries well?"

Knute looked at the clock. "It's now after ten o'clock. I want to have a talk with Gunhild this very night."

After he had been raving around for some time, Ingeborg succeeded in getting her husband to go to bed, for she was afraid to have Gunhild meet her father while in this angry mood. She hoped that before morning he would forget all about it.

The next day Knute asked Gunhild why she had left the company the evening before. Gunhild very pleasantly told her father that she knew Inga was at home and that she was very anxious to see her before she went back to the city. She also asked her father if she could not go up to the summer dairy in the mountains and come back with the girls

when they brought the cows back. This request was gladly granted, to the great satisfaction of Ingeborg.

CHAPTER XXIV

CARL GOES A COURTING

CAPTAIN WESSEL'S house faced the main highway that ran by Solstad down to the little seaport town. He had a small plot of ground and kept a cow and a horse. The horse was a riding horse which the captain rode on state occasions. He also hitched him to the cariole when he drove to town or to church. He kept two servants, a housemaid and a man who took care of the horse and cow and cultivated the plot of ground. In social circles the captain ranked very high, usually next to the parish priest, for the military in those days were greatly respected and honored. The house in which the captain lived, altho not pretentious, was so well kept that it had something of a stately appearance, as it stood in on the lawn among the evergreen trees and flower beds.

Carl, his son, was a talkative and lively young man. He was good-looking, about the average in height, with a plump face and a stout build. Among the young people with whom he had intercourse in the parish he was not popular. He was rather flip-pant in his manner, carrying it sometimes to such an extent that he became the source of laughter and merriment on the part of his companions. Then he had a way of showing a feeling of superiority which was very distasteful to the Norwegian peasantry.

It was early in the fall one Saturday in September that Carl was busy most of the day dolling up, evidently, for some special occasion.

"Where is Carl going?" said the maid to Annette, Carl's mother. "Is he going to a wedding?"

"I don't know," she replied. "You had better ask him."

Carl having overheard the conversation, answered, "I am going a courting."

"And where can that be?" said the maid to Annette.

"I am going to Knute Solstad's place to court Gunhild," answered Carl.

The man servant came in and asked Carl what he could do to help him.

"You must go out in the stable," remarked Carl, "and polish up Sable. First rub him and polish him till he shines, then polish the saddle, and be sure to put shoeblacking on his hoofs, then polish them until they shine like ebony."

After Carl was dressed he certainly made a fine appearance. He wore a red woolen cap with tassel and green border, that fitted closely about his head, a red vest with bright brass buttons, and embroidered with bright yellow silk thread. He had on a white wool jacket, with green border and brass buttons, knee breeches of dark brown woolen cloth; long, white stockings and black leather shoes, with buckles. His stockings were held up by long knitted garters that were wound closely about the stockings and the lower part of the breeches, and tied so that the tassels hung on the outside of the leg. The garters were red, yellow and green.

Soon the servant brought out Sable, who looked beautiful, with bridle trimmed with silver studs.

As Carl was about to leave, the captain came in. "Aren't you a little early?" he asked. "They won't be thru with their supper at Solstad by the time you get there."

"Maybe so," said Carl as he pulled down his vest with one hand and adjusted his collar with the other.

"Tell the groom," said Carl, with an important air to the maid, "that I'll be out in half an hour."

"Have you your watch and chain?" asked the captain.

"No, I came near forgetting that," said Carl as he ran upstairs.

"You'll have no difficulty with Knute Solstad," said the captain, "for he and I have many a time talked about your engagement to Gunhild. Ingeborg, however, is not quite so frank about it, altho I don't think she will interpose any objections. But Gunhild," continued the captain, "is not so easy to manage. You remember last summer when we were guests at the Solstad home she left the house while we were all there. No other girl in this parish would have turned her back on a young man like Carl."

"Oh, well," said Carl. "I think she is still thinking of Arne, but I'll take those thoughts out of her head before I get thru with her."

The captain and Annette followed Carl into the yard.

"Wait a minute," said Annette, "till I get the brush. You have some dust on your coat sleeve, Carl."

After brushing him off carefully, she continued, "Now you're fit to go anywhere, even to the king's palace."

Carl was about to put his foot into the stirrup and mount Sable when the captain cried, "Have you the wine bottle?"

"No, I forgot that, too," said Carl.

The captain rushed back into the house and soon returned with the bottle.

"This is the best imported champagne," he said, as he handed the bottle to Carl. "I got it myself. It is from Frankenstein's cellar in Christiania. Knute Solstad knows good champagne," said the captain as he nodded his head and smiled.

Carl put the bottle in his pocket and mounted Sable, who was pawing the ground with his front foot and champing his bit.

"Wait a minute," cried the captain as he gestured to Carl with his right hand. "Remember this," he continued, "Be bold, don't allow yourself to be subdued by that girl. Remember that you have good backing and that Knute Solstad is with you and his word has always been and will be law so far as Gunhild is concerned."

At this Carl smiled patronizingly and said, "You leave that to me, father."

He dashed the rowels in his horse and was soon on the highway leading to the Solstad farm.

"Look at him," cried the captain to Annette as Sable curved his neck. "Isn't he a fine cavalier?"

"No girl in my day would say no to such a suitor," remarked Annette.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WOOING

IT was still daylight when Carl rode thru the Solstad gate and up to the main entrance of the house. The family were all in the big sitting-room. Knute Solstad was looking out the front window as tho he was expecting somebody. It is not unlikely that Knute had had a hint from the captain that Carl was due there that evening to make his proposal of marriage to Gunhild. As Carl rode up to the door, Knute went out and greeted him with a low bow. Carl dismounted and held out his hand.

"You are welcome," said Knute. "How did you leave your father and mother?"

"They are both well," answered Carl.

Knute led the horse by the bridle towards the barn and shouted for the man to come and take care of it. After this was over they both went into the house. As Carl greeted Gunhild he said in as pleasant a way as he could, "How is Gunhild, the rose of Solstad?"

Notwithstanding this attempt to draw some remark from Gunhild, she made no reply, but rose modestly, shook hands with him, and resumed her seat.

For some time the little group talked and gossiped. Carl appeared to be in a happy mood and

did most of the talking. Gunhild was quiet and only talked when somebody spoke to her.

"Are you going to the city next fall?" asked Carl, addressing his remark to Gunhild.

"I think I shall," replied Gunhild, "but not until later in the fall. I must help mother finish up the fall work before I go."

"Why don't you let the maid do that?" asked Carl.

"Everybody must work at Solstad," said Ingeborg, "or the work would not be done."

"It seems to me," said Knute, "that the more work we do the more there is to be done."

For the first time Gunhild essayed to ask Carl a question, and it is safe to assume that she did it because she thought it might embarrass him.

"And what are you doing nowadays?" said she to Carl.

For a moment he did not know what to answer. "Oh, I have been helping our man," said Carl.

As the evening wore on Carl became quite nervous. He made several attempts to interest Gunhild, but with very little success. Knute and Ingeborg, on the other hand, seemed much interested and took a lively part in the conversation. Finally Carl took the bottle of champagne from his pocket and placed it on the table.

"Come," said he, "let's make merry together. Bring some glasses."

Ingeborg requested Gunhild to bring the wine glasses. Gunhild brought three and placed them on the table near the bottle.

"Where is your glass?" said Carl. "We must all have a sip of this excellent wine. It's champagne. Come, come, bring your glass!"

Gunhild shook her head and resumed her seat. Ingeborg, however, went to the sideboard, brought out a glass for Gunhild and put it on the table. Carl filled the four glasses, passed one to Knute, one to Ingeborg, took the remaining two glasses and walked over to where Gunhild was sitting.

"Here," he said as he reached her a glass, "you've been so quiet this evening. If you drink this I am sure it will make you more talkative and better company for the rest of us."

But Gunhild motioned with her hand as if to push the glass away.

"I don't drink anything strong," she said. "You'd better drink it yourself."

"I'm sure you never learned that here at Solstad," replied Carl, "for, if anybody in this parish has the reputation of keeping good wine in his cellar, it's Knute Solstad."

"I have never touched a drop of it," said Gunhild, "and I'm not going to do it now." So saying she folded her arms and turned in her seat away from Carl.

"Don't urge her if she doesn't want it," said Ingeborg.

Carl walked back to the table, raised his glass to his mouth and said, as he looked at Knute: "Here's happiness and prosperity to Solstad."

Knute responded by lifting up his glass, and both men drank.

"Let's have another," said Carl, as he handed the glass intended for Gunhild to Knute and filled one for himself. Then it was Knute's turn.

"Here is fame and power to the gallant cavalier, the son of Captain Wessel, my old friend," said he.

At this Carl laughed heartily, and both men drank. Now Knute became quite talkative, and among other things told how two years ago last spring he had driven the insolent Arne Egeland from the house.

"Did you drive him away?" asked Carl. "I always thought he ran away."

"Yes, I drove him out," replied Knute, as he pounded the table.

At this remark Gunhild turned around, looked at her father and said, "You did not think he was so insolent when he saved your only child from a watery grave in the mountain tarn."

"Oh, tut, tut," said Knute. "Arne couldn't save anybody but himself."

Again Gunhild was silent. Ingeborg arose and said, "Come, Knute, let's retire and leave the young people to themselves."

As Knute passed Gunhild's chair, he leaned over and whispered in her ear, "Now, Gunhild, be a dutiful child."

"I've always tried to be that," said Gunhild out loud.

During the evening Gunhild had been sitting on a long bench in front of the fireplace. After the old people had gone, Carl sat down beside her and

reached for her hand. She removed it quickly beyond his reach.

"I have something important to tell you to-night," stammered Carl.

"If you have something important to tell me," said Gunhild, "I wish you would sit in that chair on the other side of the fireplace. I can assure you my hearing is very good."

Without knowing exactly what he was doing or why he did it, Carl sat down in the chair pointed out by Gunhild. After the old people had gone, Carl seemed to have lost considerable of his vivaciousness.

"You know," he began in a rather faltering tone of voice, "ever since I was a small boy you have known me."

"Yes," broke in Gunhild, "and I never liked you."

This broadside rather unnerved Carl, but just then he remembered his father had told him that he must be bold and not allow Gunhild to subdue him, so he began again, "But, but," stammered he, "I always liked you."

"That's news to me," responded Gunhild. "I always thought you were the meanest boy in school."

Again Carl's head dropped as if to parry this second assault. Again he began, "I—I—love you now!" he stammered.

Just then the big clock, that had stood in the sitting-room at Solstad ever since clocks were first made, began to strike long and loud until it had struck ten. Gunhild looked up to the old clock's

face, yawned, and with a cool and unconcerned air, said to Carl, "It's getting late."

"But," stammered he, "I love you."

"Yes, I've heard that," said Gunhild.

At this Carl became desperate. He rose from his seat and started towards Gunhild.

"If you want to talk to me, keep your seat," she said, as she motioned with her hand and tried to conceal a smile that was creeping over her face. Carl obeyed and sank back in his chair.

"I want you to love me," stammered he.

"Let's talk about something else," said Gunhild.

"If you didn't have this champagne in your head you wouldn't be so silly."

"That is good champagne," said Carl, gaining a little better control of himself.

"Yes," she retorted, "I think it was too good for you."

"But I came here tonight," he said in a faltering voice, "to ask for your hand in marriage."

"Oh, I think you had better put that off until some other time when you haven't so much champagne in your head. That's quite a serious proposition for you to make," she continued, "and a man ought to have full control of his senses when he makes that kind of a proposition."

Again Carl rose and started towards Gunhild.

"No, no," she said, as she motioned with her hand, "stay where you are!"

Again Carl fell back in his chair.

"You'd better go home now," said Gunhild, as she arose. "I am sleepy and I want to go to bed."

Again Carl was disarmed. "She is a veritable witch," thought he. "I don't see how a young man is going to handle that kind of a girl."

"Mother and I," continued Gunhild, "are going to put up the loom tomorrow. We're going to weave. We are beginning early this year, so as to get it done before the Christmas work begins."

She handed Carl his cap, which he kept fumbling as if he wanted to say something. She understood the situation, reached out her hand, and said, "Good-night, Carl."

Again Carl submitted to the inevitable. He said good-night, pulled the cap over his head and walked out the front door.

CHAPTER XXVI

TEARS A REFUGE IN DISTRESS

THE next morning, when Gunhild awoke, it was late; so late, in fact, that her father had already left the house.

"Did you have an enjoyable evening?" asked Ingeborg as Gunhild came into the dining room.

"Oh, as enjoyable as one could expect with a stick like Carl," she answered.

Everybody in the house knew, of course, that Carl had come yesterday for no other purpose but courtship. Gunhild seemed to divine that her mother was curious to know the result of his visit, but on that point she was mum. When her father came in, she was very pleasant, but said nothing about Carl's visit. After a few days both of Gunhild's parents became very anxious to know what answer she had made to Carl's proposal, for they both were certain that this was the purpose of his visit.

One day Knute Solstad met the captain on the road. After greetings had been exchanged the captain stopped to talk. When they had discussed the news of the neighborhood for some time Captain Wessel said, "What did you do to Carl at your house last Saturday evening?"

"He was well treated," said Knute, "so far as I know."

"I am afraid Carl will not be so anxious to visit

your house after this. That daughter of yours is not easy to approach for a young man on the question of marriage," said the captain as he looked at Knute and smiled.

All at once Knute became interested. "Did Carl propose to her?" queried Knute.

"He told me he did," answered the captain.

"And did my daughter say no?" again queried Knute.

"Not exactly," answered the captain. "I understand she put Carl off on some pretext or other. I think the girl is still in love with that Arne you had."

At the mention of Arne's name the color came into Knute's face. "I know now that I didn't get rid of that fellow any too soon. Think of the ingratitude that hound showed me and my family! I think I'll bring this matter to a head," he continued. "If she didn't say no, but simply put him off, I think I will hurry her up a little. I think I'll go to the parish priest and ask him to publish the bans for the marriage in church next Sunday."

After some thought the captain looked up and said: "You were always a wise one, Knute, and I think you have hit upon a proper remedy, but don't say anything to that daughter of yours. If you can get the parish priest to publish the bans next Sunday, before anyone knows anything about it, I think it will work out all right, for Gunhild won't dare to set herself up against her father before the whole parish and our beloved pastor," he continued, as he brandished his clenched fist in the air.

"But be sure to tell nobody," insisted Knute. "Not even Carl or your wife."

"I will keep still on that matter," said the captain, nodding his head.

The next day Knute took it up with Ingeborg.

"Do you know what answer Gunhild made to Carl's proposal last Saturday evening?" asked he.

Ingeborg shook her head and said she did not know.

"Well, I know," said Knute. "I met Captain Wessel on the road yesterday. He told me that while Gunhild did not say no, she put Carl off on some pretext, which I have forgotten."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Ingeborg. "You know you can't force your daughter to marry someone she doesn't want."

"I know that," said Knute, "but young girls are sometimes very silly and coquettish. I'm going to see the parish priest this week and ask him to publish the bans for the marriage of Carl Wessel and Gunhild."

As he was talking, an expression of horror came over Ingeborg's face. "You must never do that," said she, "or you'll make your family laughing stock for the whole community."

"No danger of that," said Knute, "for if she makes no objection or protest she has consented, and everything will be all right."

"But," retorted Ingeborg, "suppose she should refuse to marry him? That would necessarily bring great shame and humiliation to both families. No,

no, Knute," she added, "that kind of coercion will not go in our day and age."

"It shall go," said Knute, "for I am told that it is whispered around in the parish that Gunhild will not marry Carl because she is waiting for Arne to come back from America. But I'll show that young lad, if he ever comes back, that my word is law in my own house."

"You know, Knute," retorted Ingeborg, "that she is the hope of our old age. We must hold ourselves to her. We must live with her. Would you like to have your daughter in her innermost soul curse you because you compelled her to marry a man that is distasteful to her? Oh, Knute, I would rather that she should remain single all her life than to bring about by our obstinacy such unbearable conditions. You know that the Holy Book says that a woman shall leave her father and mother and cleave unto her husband. I am satisfied from the talks that I have had with her that she would remain single rather than marry somebody that she does not want. Remember that the marriage contract is a holy and consecrated pact, instituted by God Himself."

"Be done with your sermonizing," broke in Knute. "I don't care to listen to such twaddle. That kind of stuff may be all right for a minister to preach from the pulpit and for old women to talk about over their coffee cups, but we men of the world know that marriage is largely a business contract. When Soren Olson last year married the Krogstad widow nobody could see anything holy or sacred about it. It was purely a business venture on the

part of Soren; and the widow, being a little along in years, undoubtedly thought that Soren was the best fellow she could get. Nobody could see any ordination by God in that marriage. You women are too sentimental. It takes something besides love and affection to make a marriage contract successful. I am going down to see the parson tonight."

"Are you going to tell him the real situation?" asked Ingeborg.

"Don't ask such silly questions," said Knute. "The parson doesn't have to know all about the courtship of a couple he is to marry. He knows me well enough to know that Knute Solstad's word is good, and you know when I say the word it will be done."

That same afternoon Knute Solstad drove down the road to the parsonage. The parson was in his study. As Knute entered, the parson bowed deeply. "I can assure you I feel highly honored," said he, "and how do you do?"

"Quite well, thank you," answered Knute. "And how is the reverend gentleman?"

"By God's grace we are all well at our house," said the parson. "And how are Mrs. Solstad and Gunhild?"

"Very well, sir," responded Knute.

"And what errand brings you here at this time of the day?" continued the parson.

"When we are born, when we are married and when we die, we must come to you," said Knute with a smile.

"I hope nobody has died at Solstad," rejoined the parson.

"No, it's neither a funeral nor a baptism," said Knute, "so you can probably guess what my errand is."

"Oh, a wedding, then," said the parson as he stroked his mustache.

"You guessed it," nodded Knute, with a smile.

"Is it Gunhild?" queried the parson.

"You guessed right again," said Knute, with a nod of the head.

"Is the happy man Carl Wessel?" asked the parson, with same interest.

"Right again," nodded Knute.

The pastor arose, walked over to where Knute was sitting, stretched out his hand and said, "I want to congratulate you on the splendid choice of a husband your daughter has made."

At this Knute's mouth twitched a little, but he soon regained his usual composure.

"I look upon Carl Wessel," continued the parson, "as the model young man of my parish. I have watched him grow to manhood from a little boy. He is so clean and conscientious and manly. And then, think of the family behind him! Captain Wessel has always been highly esteemed by his colleagues in the army as well as by the country people in this neighborhood. Oh, of course, there has been some criticism of the captain by the ignorant peasant boys that he has to drill into soldiers. You know they say the captain is so strict, so tyrannical and so arbitrary. But you and I know, Knute, that

a man in his position must be stern and relentless in his punishment of the disobedient. I know of no man in this whole country that so well typifies the dignity and the majesty of the state as Captain Wessel, and then we must not forget the great honor and standing it will confer upon your daughter and upon your whole family to be connected in marriage with such an illustrious soldier as Captain Wessel. I suppose, then, you will want me to publish the bans in the church next Sunday?"

"I most certainly do," said Knute, "and we will set the date of the marriage ceremony here in the church for the morning of the tenth of October."

After looking into his diary the pastor said, "I have nothing else on that date, so it will be satisfactory so far as I am concerned. I suppose there will be great feasting at the wedding on that day."

At this Knute smiled and said, "Oh, yes, we will do our best. Gunhild is our only child. Of course, we want you and your whole family to come to the wedding."

"That will be a great pleasure," replied the parson, "and I can assure you that I shall consider it a great honor to be present on such an occasion."

On his way home Knute became a little uneasy, for he could not help thinking about what Ingeborg had said. Should Gunhild object, he thought, it certainly would be a great humiliation to him.

"Have you done it, Knute?" asked Ingeborg, as he came into the house.

Knute nodded his head without saying a word. Ingeborg said nothing more, but looked gloomy.

On the next Sunday the Solstad family rode to church as usual. The Solstad pew was near the front of the church under the pulpit. Captain Wessel and his family occupied the pew across the aisle. The two families were in their pews at the opening of the service.

Before going into the pulpit the pastor stepped forward in front of the altar. Looking first at Gunhild Solstad, then at Carl Wessel, he began:

“On the tenth day of October next at ten o'clock in the morning, God willing, I propose to join into the estate of holy matrimony Carl Wessel, son of Captain Abner Wessel and Annette Wessel, and Gunhild Solstad, daughter of Knute Solstad and Ingeborg Solstad. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together let him now speak or else hereafter forever hold his peace.”

Gunhild sat erect as a statue, looking directly at the pastor as he was making this astonishing announcement. Carl Wessel looked toward the Solstad pew, but was unable to catch Gunhild's eye. Gunhild, however, realized that she was the target of the glances cast at her from every corner of the church by the curious worshippers. Knute Solstad turned his head and looked at his daughter, but she showed no signs of emotion. It was apparent that Knute was anxious to know how Gunhild accepted the situation, but nothing in Gunhild's face gave him the slightest cue. The only thing noticeable was that the color had come into her face.

On the lawn outside of the church, after the service, congratulations were showered on both families. Gunhild, however, showed no signs either of approval or disapproval. When Carl came up to greet her she turned away and walked over toward her father's conveyance. Some of the bystanders noticed this, and soon there was wagging of tongues. The parishioners divided into little knots and groups, talked in an undertone and in whispers. It was also evident that Knute Solstad was very uneasy. He motioned to his driver to start the horses and soon they were on their way home. Knute looked at Gunhild several times as they were driving home, but she said nothing. All that afternoon and evening neither the father nor the mother got any information as to what Gunhild would do. The bans would be published two more Sundays before the wedding.

That night, when Gunhild went to her room, she was sick at heart. She was glad that at last she was alone where no one could disturb her thoughts. She threw herself on her bed and buried her face in the pillow; then the tears flowed copiously. With Gunhild, as with womankind in general, tears were her refuge in distress. Those tears had been pent up all that afternoon and evening, and now for the first time they had an opportunity to flow. What should she do? Where should she go? Should she be driven by her father into the arms of a man she hated? Why should her father rob her of that right, most sacred to those of her sex, to choose her own life-companion?

After a long time she succeeded in composing herself. She opened her eyes and saw the moon, round and full, smiling on her thru the window. Her thoughts immediately flew back to the time when she and Arne had sat together that evening when she got the first intimation that her father had selected Carl Wessel for her husband. As if controlled by some power she knew nothing about, she fell on her knees before the open window and found herself looking at the moon.

Her first impulse was to send up a prayer to God for help. She prayed that He send a message to Arne that she was in great distress. She prayed for help to do the right thing; to be dutiful to her parents, but at the same time to be true to herself and honorable in her dealings with the world, especially with Arne. She prayed for strength to be true to the man she loved, to whom she had given her hand and her word. And she prayed Him to send her someone to counsel with and to lift from her the awful burden that was upon her.

Gunhild arose from her knees. She felt better; it seemed to her that already she was stronger to meet her trouble. After going to bed she tossed about, but finally fell asleep. When she got downstairs the next morning she found that her father and mother were preparing to go to the city. There were no signs that she had been weeping the night before. She followed them out to the carriage and wished them a good time.

CHAPTER XXVII

GUNHILD'S VISIT TO NORA OF THE MILL

AFTER her parents had gone Gunhild tried to think of somebody she could counsel with about her trouble. She could not talk with Inga, for she had gone back to the city. After going over the situation for some time she concluded that she would visit Nora of the Mill. She knew that her father and mother would not return from town until late that evening.

First, she called in the two maids and told them to be sure not to tell her father and mother that she had been away from home that day. Then she asked Hans, one of their hired men, to harness Fleetfoot and take her up to Nora of the Mill. Soon little Fleetfoot was pawing the ground in front of the door. Gunhild never saw this little horse without thinking of Arne and how dearly he had loved her, and how he had often put his arms around her neck and hugged her, as tho she had been a person. As if by some uncontrollable force, she put her arms around Fleetfoot's neck and hugged her just as Arne had done.

"Is Fleetfoot lonesome then?" said Gunhild. "Doesn't anybody caress her any more?"

Fleetfoot leaned her head up against Gunhild as if she appreciated her affection. Soon they were on the road up the valley. Gunhild asked Hans not

to tell anybody that he had taken her to Nora of the Mill that day. She also asked him to come back and get her at five o'clock in the afternoon.

The old mill, where Nora lived, was shunned by most people in the neighborhood. It was said that she possessed and controlled occult powers; that by their means she could punish her enemies and help her friends. That she could do things which the ordinary person could not do, was admitted by all.

A little path led from the highway thru a thicket, then wound around some big boulders and down a steep bank into the old bed of the river. Upon an old foundation built from large and small stones stood the old mill. Gunhild felt a little nervous as she ascended the stone steps and rapped on the door. As Nora saw Gunhild on the steps she bowed with a pleasant smile, reached out her hand and said, "Gunhild Solstad, you're welcome. I have been thinking of you a great deal lately, and I am so glad you came to see me. Take off your cape and bonnet and have a seat. You must have felt awful in church last Sunday when the pastor published the bans for your marriage to Carl Wessel! I can appreciate your feelings, my child. You don't have to tell me how you felt."

"So you heard about it," said Gunhild.

"Oh, yes, I heard of it the next day. I met Nils Solem on the road Monday morning. He told me all about it. He intimated that there was something wrong. People shook their heads gravely, he said, and felt sorry for you. You know, Carl Wessel hasn't a very good reputation among his neighbors.

People seem to think that he's not what a young man of his standing and bringing-up should be. Did he ever propose marriage to you?"

"Oh, yes," answered Gunhild. "He came one night last week to our house, togged out in his Sunday clothes and, after opening a bottle of champagne and drinking it with my father and mother, he told me how much he loved me and asked me to marry him."

"And what did you say?" asked Nora eagerly.

"I told him I didn't like him a bit and that he had better not put such a question to me with all that champagne in his head. I finally gave him his cap and told him to go home."

"Good, my child!" nodded Nora with a look of satisfaction on her face. "Carl is a bad boy and will soon come to grief. I know all about him; more than his father and mother know."

"But what shall I do?" asked Gunhild. "My father has set his heart on our marriage without my consent. Oh, Nora, I've come to you for advice. What shall I do?"

"Do nothing," said Nora. "Everything is going to come out all right."

"But what shall I say to my father?"

"Say nothing," said Nora. "Keep still."

"But my father and mother are in the city today to buy my clothes for the wedding."

"Simply say nothing, but refuse to have any clothes made for the wedding."

"But, oh, what will my father say? He has al-

ways been so kind to me, and I love my father and mother both so dearly."

"I realize," said Nora, "that you have been placed in a very delicate position; but remember, if you take one false step you are gone. You have come to me for advice and consolation. You need it, and I shall give it to you."

"But how do you know it will come out all right?" asked Gunhild.

"How do I know?" began Nora. "I will tell you later, but first let me tell you what you must do. Don't discuss this matter in any way either with your father or mother or anybody else. Be pleasant and kind to everybody. Stay away from church the next two Sundays when the bans will again be published."

"But how do you know that everything will be all right?" asked Gunhild with an inquisitive air. "Unless I protest, it will be taken that I have consented and I will never, never, never consent!" said Gunhild, shaking her head.

"It makes no difference," said Nora, "whether you consent or not; the marriage will not take place. Remember that there is a power higher than Knute Solstad that controls the world."

"But how do you know?" queried Gunhild, with an earnest look. "You must satisfy me that you know."

Nora leaned back in her chair, heaved a sigh and began in a low tone of voice. "I am accused of being a witch. I am accused of being in league with evil spirits. I am accused of witchcraft." As she

said this she shook her head. "But it's all false. I do the things I do because I have greater knowledge than most people. Some day, Gunhild, you will know who I am, but for the present let me be Nora of the Mill to you."

She arose from her chair and said, "Come, Gunhild, follow me."

She took Gunhild to a little door in the back of the room, opened it, walked up a little narrow stairway until they both stood on a little platform near the top of the small structure. "Here's where I spend my nights," she said. She opened a little door that led to the attic of the old mill. She took out an instrument which she told Gunhild was an astrolabe. "With this instrument," she continued, "I study the altitude, the declination and the orbits of the stars, the planets, the sun and the moon. And here," she said, as she drew back a small curtain, "is my library."

Gunhild saw a large number of old, musty, leather bound volumes.

"This book," she said, as she drew out the largest one, "is written by Tycho Brahe. I get a great deal of information from it, for Brahe was a great astrologer."

"But I thought that Tycho Brahe was an astronomer?"

"Oh, yes," said Nora, "that's what he is called now, but he was really an astrologer. But come downstairs again," continued Nora. "I have something of particular interest to you that I want you to see."

When they had returned downstairs, Nora took from a small drawer several charts or drawings.

"Here, you see, is Carl Wessel's horoscope. This circle that you see here is the orbit of Neptune. This circle represents the orbit of Mars. Here is the orbit of the earth and this of the moon. A conjunction of Neptune and Mars within the next two weeks is inevitable. That will put the powers of evil on this earth in motion. It is the time when evil spirits put evil thoughts into the minds of men. The powers of hell will be unleashed." As she said this, Nora, arose from her chair and made circles with her hands above her head. A mystic expression came over her face. "Aye, aye," she said, "the fountains of wrath will boil and bubble. I know the time, and I can see the place where Carl Wessel will be led to his doom, where his evil thoughts and criminal inclinations will be gratified. I have carefully calculated the time when these untoward events will come to pass." Then stooping down and gesturing to Gunhild with her index finger she shouted, "On the third day of October next Carl Wessel will fall, and so terrible will be his fall that the marriage between you and him will be called off. It will not occur." As she spoke the last word she stamped the floor with her foot.

"Here," she continued, "is your horoscope, and there is Arne's. In these two horoscopes the aspects are favorable. Your aspects and Arne's are the trine and the sextile. They are both benefic.

As Nora finished this talk Gunhild heaved a sigh. "Oh, I do hope you're right," she said, "but I know

I shall worry very much until this affair is settled."

"If Knute Solstad were the ruler of this earth," said Nora, "you might have misgivings. There is a greater power that shapes all our destinies, and human efforts are futile in attempting in any way to change or interfere with the will of that power. Remember also that God is love—that He is just but merciful; that He has numbered the hairs of your head; that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His will."

After dinner the two women continued their conversation. Nora warned Gunhild not to talk too much about the affair. At five o'clock Hans arrived with Fleetfoot. Gunhild said good-bye to Nora, thanked her heartily for the good advice she had received, and assured her that she would follow it.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HUNT FOR GOLD

ARNE and Terence stayed two months at Georgetown with their newly found friend. He furnished them with complete outfits for digging gold. They worked and prospected far and wide, but with no success. The boys became discouraged, packed up their belongings one morning and started on foot for Sacramento. The distance was about eighty miles, and on the fifth day they arrived at their destination. Arne suggested to Terence that they stay for a while in order to find out at what places they were most likely to find gold. They had not been there very long before an epidemic of Asiatic cholera broke out in the surrounding mining camps. Soon the situation became very alarming. Every day men were dying by the hundreds. Some of the strong miners would go to bed at night in perfect health; the next morning they would be stiff in death.

Arne and Terence concluded that they would go by boat to San Francisco the following day and then ship by steamboat to Oregon. That night, however, Terence was stricken with the dreaded disease. Arne worked with him all night. He rubbed him and tried to alleviate his pain in every conceivable way. In the morning Arne said to Terence, "How do you feel?"

"It doesn't make much difference how I feel," answered Terence, "I suppose, like most of them, I'm going to die."

"You shall not die," said Arne. "Do you feel worse or better?"

"I am not feeling any worse," he answered.

"If you're not any worse," replied Arne, "you'll get over it."

And to the delight of the boys, Terence recovered.

As soon as Terence was able to travel they boarded a boat for San Francisco, where they took passage to Oregon. Here they stayed the remainder of the winter. They hired out to cut logs in the woods and floated them down a small stream to a saw mill. They got a dollar a log for their work and made very good money. Some days each made as high as fifteen dollars.

The following spring rumors came to them that gold had been discovered in large quantities at Yerka, in northern California. The two boys joined a company which was traveling from Salem to Yerka. They arrived there the latter part of April and found that a large mining camp had sprung up. The boys staked out some claims in the mountains and began washing gold, with good results. The distance from their claims to the small river, where they washed the gold, was so great that after some consideration it was decided to dig a trench that would carry a large portion of the water from the river over their claims. This work occupied their time over a month; but it produced good results.

Every day's washing added considerable gold dust to their rapidly increasing wealth.

Yerka was nothing but a large camp of gold diggers. Saloons ran wide open twenty-four hours every day. Gambling was common all over the camp. Among those who had come to California from the east were a number of reckless and criminally inclined fellows, and it was not long before murders, assaults and burglaries were almost daily occurrences. However, in this vast crowd of adventurers were a large number of men of good character, education and integrity, who took the law into their own hands and organized a vigilance committee, which summarily punished the wrong-doers.

Arne and Terence had pitched their tent on their claims, which were some distance from the town. They so managed that both never slept at the same time, one was always awake. They had no trouble.

In the fall of the year in which they had arrived, a company of eight men was formed, of which Arne and Terence were members. This company proposed to go to another point farther east and prospect for a better yield of gold. They bought a horse and wagon, piled in their mining outfits and started eastward. After driving for about twenty miles they struck a beautiful mountain stream that came out of a deep gorge and flowed down the valley. As it emerged from the gorge it fell over a steep precipice, forming a beautiful waterfall. Down in the valley the river flowed over a wide sand bed. This was found on investigation to be saturated with gold dust that, in all probability

had been washed down for ages from the mountain gorge. But the water in the river was so deep and the current so swift that it was impossible to get to the sand, excepting on the edges of the stream.

They went down the valley for some distance and found that this condition obtained for at least half a mile. They soon realized that they had struck a bonanza.

In the group was a civil engineer from Boston, Massachusetts. He proposed a plan of diverting the course of the stream by means of a wingdam and by digging out another channel for the water. At first the crowd demurred. Some of them thought it would take too long and might be a failure. But after long and vigorous discussion work was begun by all on the engineer's plan. The engineer estimated that it would take them two months to complete the work.

Before the work was begun claims for the eight men were staked out in the bed of the stream. At the end of two months the work was completed and the old bed of the river became almost dry. Enough water was left in the bed thru the wingdam for washing purposes. The claims of Terence and Arne joined, so they worked them together. The gold was so plentiful that it fairly glittered in the sand. Some days Arne and Terence would gather in a thousand dollars worth of gold dust. They washed all winter. No gamblers or saloons were allowed in this little camp. They had been free from the annoyances that had been so common at Yerka. Two more men had come into the valley since they

left Yerka and had been taken in as members of the company.

One of the men with the horse and wagon brought food from Yerka to the camp once a week.

* * *

It was in the month of April. Arne was sitting by a large fire in front of his tent. Terence was sleeping inside. It would soon be midnight, when the moon would rise. Arne put some more wood on the fire and seated himself on a log near the door of the tent. He was beginning to get tired of the gold camps. He longed once more to be back in a settled community. As he was watching the fire he began musing on the life in the mining camps. His thoughts wandered from one subject to another. He had acquired enough gold already to buy Solstad two or three times. "Didn't he have enough?" he thought. "What a strange thing, after all, this gold is—this glittering metal that nature has strewn among the sand and the gravel! How men will fight to get it! How they will hazard their health, their future, yes, even their lives, to get this strange metal! Old men are here, with wives and children at home, putting everything in jeopardy to get gold. Why are men so crazy after gold? Oh, it's the power it gives them. A man with money has power over his fellow men. He knows that gold will make them do his bidding. But," continued he, "with that power comes the temptation to be arrogant, tyrannical, yes, even despotic. Knute Solstad is what he is because he is well-to-do. If Knute Solstad had been poor, he would not have attempted

to dictate to Gunhild whom she should marry. If Knute Solstad had not been rich, he would not have showed me the door. It seems to be sweet to some men to have others obey them. Is it natural for men to be proud and to have a desire to lord it over others? Is that the old Adam in mankind? In our catechism we were taught that in Baptism the old Adam was buried; but, after all, when we join the Christian Church we are enabled to overcome the old Adam. We get assistance, but we must do it ourselves. Poor Gunhild! She wanted the liberty to select her own help mate; but Knute, sitting in the seat of honor at Solstad, denied her that privilege. A good many of the poor people are good because they dare not be bad. Some of them cannot afford to be bad. If all the people in the world who own property could be induced to be kind, loving and sympathetic with their neighbors, what a good world we'd have!

"Now I understand what Bertha Fisker meant when she said your property must preach. Oh yes," he mused, "if we could get all the property in the world to be good and to preach, as Bertha Fisker said, then we would be all right. I loved Gunhild because she loved me. She could have had the best and richest young man in that parish, if she had wanted him. Gunhild's love for me was pure. It had no elements of selfishness in it. Her love was as pure as the water in the mountain tarn. I have wealth enough now to ransom her two or three times over. In May we will leave this place with all its sin, wickedness and crime. We have been compelled

to witness and to associate with that criminal crowd of law breakers in order to get gold. I wonder if that isn't always so. In order to get gold you must be next door to burglars, highwaymen and gamblers."

He turned around and looked at the dipper, for he had no watch. "It's past twelve o'clock," he muttered. "It's now Terence's turn to watch and my turn to sleep."

Just then he heard footsteps. Two men jumped out of the darkness towards him, one on each side of him. They had handkerchiefs over their faces. They were armed with pistols which they pointed at him, one from each side.

"Throw up your hands or you're dead!" shouted one of them.

While these words were uttered Arne saw Terence's gun-barrel pointed out thru the door of the tent at one of the men. In loud, coarse tones came from the inside of the tent: "Drop your guns or you're dead." At this unexpected turn of events one of the men, who was tall and slim, took to his heels and soon disappeared in the darkness. The other man was somewhat shorter, but stout and heavy set. Taking advantage of the confusion, Arne quick as a flash, knocked the pistol from his hand and grappled with him. Soon Arne was lying on top of the intruder with one knee on his chest. Arne immediately tore the disguise from his face. The robber began to plead for his life and turned his face towards the light. Arne released his hold

on the arms of the prostrate man, for the highwayman was none other than Carl Wessel.

"Carl Wessel," shouted Arne, "have you come to this? Has my old schoolmate turned highwayman?"

At first Carl did not recognize Arne. Arne took him by the arms and raised him up, but held him fast as he was talking to him.

"Is it Arne Egeland?" stammered Carl. "If you turn me over to the vigilance committee I shall be shot tomorrow. Oh, Arne, for old times' sake, help me. Let me go so I can escape death."

"When did you come to California?" asked Arne.

"I came to San Francisco two weeks ago in a Norwegian sailing vessel that came around the Horn."

"And the first thing you did when you came to this country was to turn highwayman. This country deals summarily with fellows of your kind, and I really ought to turn you over to the vigilance committee; but on account of our long-time acquaintance I shall be merciful to you. I'll let you go on condition that you go back to San Francisco by the shortest route. This mining country is no place for you, Carl. If you stay here the Vigilantes will get you, and then it will be all over with you."

Arne took the loaded pistol away from Carl, also all his ammunition and his knife.

"Now," said Arne, "you start for San Francisco this very minute, and if I hear of you stopping in any of the camps, I will turn you over to the authorities here, and you will get your just deserts."

Carl tremblingly thanked Arne for the mercy he had shown him and started over the trail toward the west. Terence soon returned to the tent, after attempting for some time to find the other robber. Terence became much interested when Arne told him that he had recognized the man he caught as an old schoolmate of his.

"You let him go, then?" said Terence.

"Yes, I took his pistol away from him, his ammunition and knife, and told him to go straight back to San Francisco."

Terence took his place by the fire and Arne went to bed.

Arne and Terence heard nothing more from Carl or his companion, so they concluded that he had taken Arne's advice and gone directly to San Francisco.

* * *

During their camp life in California Terence had taught Arne to write. He had been practicing penmanship off and on all winter, and by spring could write a fairly legible hand. One evening after the boys had had their supper, Arne thought he had progressed far enough to write a letter to Gunhild.

"I am going to write a letter tonight," said Arne, as he took a sheet of paper and a lead pencil, for they had neither pen nor ink.

"Who are you going to write to?" asked Terence.

"Oh, if you think a little you can easily guess," answered Arne.

Terence started to laugh.

"Oh, of course, you will write a letter to your Gunhild," said he.

Every time that Arne began a word he would swing his hand in a circle in the air, then finally drop down on the paper and write.

"That swinging of the hand doesn't do any good," said Terence. "I notice that poor writers always do that. Just put your pencil on the paper, stop that swinging of the hand and you'll see how much better it will go."

Soon Arne had written a letter; but, of course, it was in Norwegian, and Terence was unable to read it.

"Let me look at it," said Terence.

Arne passed it over to him. The only word in the whole letter that Terence understood was Gunhild.

"Why, Arne," said Terence, "you have written Gunhild with a small 'g.' That will never do."

Arne took the letter and looked at it.

"You must make a great big capital letter for Gunhild," said Terence. "The rule is," continued Terence, "that all names must begin with capital letters."

Arne took a new sheet of paper and wrote the letter over again, using capital letters as Terence had told him. The United States mail came as far as Yerka. At the next opportunity Arne sent the letter to Yerka to be mailed. He did not, however, address the letter to Gunhild, but put it inside of an envelope that was addressed to Inga.

The boys had now very nearly exhausted the sand on their claims in the old river bed, and on completion of this work had concluded to leave the mining camps and return to the east.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SILVER CHAIN AND HEART

ONE morning Arne told Terence that he was anxious to take a trip up along the ledge on the river above the falls. "For," said he, "there may be some good mining up in that gorge."

After walking on top of the ledge, climbing over rocks and other obstructions for about a mile, he came to a bend in the stream. Here the canyon was wider, for it was really a small canyon. The river had eaten under the rock on the opposite side and left a wide sandy bed at the bottom of the gully.

"I'm sure," thought Arne, "that down in that sand bed there is a lot of gold, if I can only get to it."

The ledge was almost perpendicular down to the old bed. It was nearly a hundred feet from where he was standing to the bottom. After surveying the situation for some time, however, he found a break in the ledge, where he thought he could go down. Several small trees had grown in the clefts of the rock. These, he calculated, would help him in his descent. In about an hour he succeeded in reaching the sand bed below.

Arne worked all day. The gold was very plentiful, and by evening he had accumulated a large amount of gold dust. He had great difficulty, however, in reaching the top of the ledge again, but by

the aid of the small trees he succeeded in swinging himself from ledge to ledge until he finally reached the top. When he arrived at camp Terence had supper ready.

As usual, Arne watched until midnight. While sitting in front of the fire, he unbuttoned his shirt and discovered that he had lost the silver chain and the silver heart that Nora of the Mill had given him while he was at Solstad. He became very much alarmed. He searched thru his clothes and his pockets, but the silver chain was gone. He remembered Nora's warning. "If you lose it you will be much more unlucky than you were before."

While he knew that a great many people believed that Nora had supernatural powers, Arne never believed it himself. He thought she had more knowledge than the other people in the parish; that was why she could do things that the others could not explain. Still the loss of the charm worried him greatly. He concluded that he must have lost it while climbing up the side of the canyon. At twelve o'clock, however, he went to sleep with the determination to find the charm the following day.

The next morning he said nothing about it to Terence, but insisted that he was going to continue his mining for gold in the gorge. That day he carried with him a lunch. At first he searched very carefully for the lost chain where he had climbed down the mountain side, but to no avail. When he reached the sand he searched all over, but was unable to find it. Towards evening he got very much discouraged. He was determined to find the chain and the

heart. He dug and he scraped with his pan in the sand, but to no purpose. Just as he was about to leave the place, however, he saw the end of the chain on top of the sand. He caught hold of the chain and dug around it. As he was digging with his hand, he felt something very solid about six inches below the surface. He became curious. He threw down his pan and dug with both hands. Soon he uncovered a large nugget of gold! It was imbedded in the sand like a piece of rock. It looked as bright as tho it had been polished in a jewelry shop, and it was so heavy! Arne was delighted. The silver chain had lain right on top of it.

"How strange," he thought, "that I should lose this silver chain, come back here today and find it lying on top of this valuable nugget, this great treasure! Probably the finest nugget of gold that has yet been found in California."

He put the nugget in the outside pocket of his coat and started to climb to the top of the cliff. As he swung himself from ledge to ledge the nugget in his pocket felt heavy.

"I always heard," thought he, "that much gold is a great burden to people."

Sometimes the heavy chunk in his pocket would strike against his body, as he struggled up the ledge. He remembered how the Lord had said that it was harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go thru a needle's eye. After several desperate efforts he finally succeeded in reaching the top of the gorge.

It was quite late that evening when Arne returned to camp. Terence was beginning to fear that something unfortunate had happened to him, so, when Arne appeared in the door, Terence shouted, "Why are you so late? I was beginning to think that maybe somebody had held you up."

"If they had," answered Arne, "they would have gotten a big swag, for I have more wealth in my pocket tonight than I have ever had before. Can you guess what I found?"

"Did you fill your bag with gold dust?" asked Terence.

"More than that," said Arne. "Guess again."

"Did you find a nugget of gold?" said Terence.

"You guessed it," answered Arne; and, so saying, took the nugget out of his pocket and laid it on the floor of the tent.

"Aha!" shouted Terence. "That's the finest piece of gold I have ever seen."

"I think," interjected Arne, "that it is the largest and purest chunk that has been found since the discovery of gold in this state."

After the boys had admired and examined the newly found fortune, they dug it down where they had put their other accumulations of gold.

"I think," said Arne, "that we have enough. I propose, Terence, that we pull up stakes within a few days and go back to civilization."

"It'll take us about two days more," said Terence, "to wash out the gold still left in our claims on the old river-bed. When we have finished that I am willing to go with you."

"But there is more gold up in the gorge where I've been," said Arne.

"Oh, well," said Terence, "let us finish washing out our claims, and then if we feel like it we'll go up in the gorge and wash."

"But," said Arne, "it's going to be a heavy burden for you and me to carry this gold dust with us."

"That confirms what my mother always used to say, that riches are a great burden to carry," remarked Terence.

CHAPTER XXX

THE THIRD OF OCTOBER

ON their drive to the city there had been very little talk between Knute Solstad and his wife. As they drove by the house of Captain Wessel, Ingeborg said, "I am feeling so badly, Knute, over the publishing of the bans for Gunhild's marriage. I feel so sorry for our daughter, for I know that she not only does not like Carl Wessel, but she even detests him."

"Why does she detest him?" asked Knute. "I can't understand why a young girl should hate such a fine looking fellow."

"Of course, you can't understand it," broke in Ingeborg. "You think that girls are the same now as they were when you were a young man." Ingeborg shook her head. "No, no, Knute, not only girls, but all womankind is different now. I can see it even in our housemaids. They don't like to take orders from me. They want to do the work in their own way. Why, Sophia one day said to me, 'Mrs. Solstad, you want the work done, don't you, and you want it done well. Can't I have the liberty of doing it in my own way?' People want liberty now. They don't want to be driven. They don't want to be ordered. No, they don't even want to be guided. The desire for liberty of action and conduct has grown very much since I was a young girl. Oh,

Knute, think what a good, obedient, loving child Gunhild has always been. She has clung to you, Knute. Yes, she has adored you, and how she has loved you! It undoubtedly hurts Gunhild to go against your wishes, but I am satisfied that she will, and if you're not careful, you may drive her away from our home."

Knute turned around and looked at Ingeborg and said, "Why, what do you mean? Gunhild leave home? Where would she go? Never!" said Knute, as he shook his head.

"Suppose Arne comes back," she said. "Suppose he has made money in America. I am afraid Gunhild will go with him."

"That's twaddle," said Knute. "Arne will not come back. He will never make any money in America. That fellow is too proud to get along with anybody."

"Yes," broke in Ingeborg, "he is like all the rest of the young people. He wants liberty of action."

"Are you not going to buy any wedding clothes for Gunhild today then?" asked Knute.

"No, I am not," said Ingeborg. "When Gunhild's wedding trousseau is bought, she shall go to town and buy it herself."

"I thought that was what we were going to town for today," answered Knute.

"You may have thought so," remarked Ingeborg, "but I did not."

When they reached the city they met a neighbor, Halvor Moen. He stopped and talked.

"I suppose," said Moen, "that you're already be-

ginning to prepare for the great wedding at your house?"

Knute Solstad showed plainly that he was not anxious to discuss that question, so he said, "Oh, yes, I suppose we must prepare for it."

"You need some help at Solstad since Arne left. I suppose your son-in-law will move to Solstad."

Ingeborg became quite uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken.

"We must go," said she, and bade good-bye to Mr. Moen without answering his question.

Sunday morning came and the family at Solstad prepared to go to church. Gunhild was in the kitchen all morning with the maids. Once Ingeborg came into the kitchen and said, "Gunhild, are you not getting ready for church?"

"No, mother, I'm not going to church this morning."

"What's the matter?" asked Ingeborg.

"I am not feeling very well," she answered, "so I'll stay at home today."

On the way to church Knute was quite uneasy. Several times he scolded the driver because he didn't drive fast enough. Again he was angry because the metal on the harnesses had not been polished. When he arrived at the church, he walked in without talking to anybody and took his seat at the end of the pew. The Wessel family was out in full force, including Carl. After service the captain seemed very solicitous about Gunhild. When told that Gunhild was indisposed he hoped it was nothing serious.

When the family returned from church Knute looked gloomy and somewhat disgruntled. At the dinner-table Gunhild was pleasant but asked no questions as to what happened in church that morning.

Monday forenoon Captain Wessel came up the road on his black charger, dressed in full uniform. He stopped at Solstad. As he walked up the steps to the front door the scabbard of his saber rattled loudly on the steps. Gunhild went to the door. Had she known who it was, she might not have gone. She was not a little surprised when she saw the captain standing before her in full military dress. His blue broadcloth coat was buttoned tightly around the waist, the golden epaulets on his shoulders fairly glistened in the sunlight. His spurs, tho only brass, shone like gold, for they had lately been polished.

When the captain saw Gunhild he bowed politely, as he lifted his plumed, two cornered military hat.

"Good morning, Miss Solstad," said he. "Your father, at church yesterday, said you were somewhat indisposed. I was riding by on official business and I am here to inquire how Miss Solstad's health is this morning."

"Thank you," said Gunhild. "I'm feeling quite well. Won't you come in?"

When the captain walked thru the door, the scabbard of his saber again rattled as it was dragged over the door-sill. In a few moments Ingeborg also appeared.

"I'm calling quite early this morning," said the

captain. "I was riding by on official business and, having heard from your husband yesterday that Gunhild was somewhat indisposed, I called to inquire about her health. My son Carl is in high spirits these days. I tell him that he has won the most beautiful girl in all Norway."

As he said this he looked at Gunhild, but Gunhild's face was set and as stolid as a statue.

"And is Carl well?" asked Ingeborg.

"Carl is very well," answered the captain. "He is a very healthy young man. In fact, he has never been sick. I tell him he is well because he is always happy and pleasant to everybody. I don't believe that boy ever had a mean thought in his head."

Again the captain looked at Gunhild.

"He has always been so kind to his father and mother. Everybody seems to like that boy. Yes, I might say, everybody seems to fall in love with him."

"And how is Annette?" asked Ingeborg.

"Quite well, thank you," said the captain. "By the way, have you made any arrangements to get music for the wedding?"

This question seemed to embarrass Ingeborg. She answered slowly, "No, not yet."

"I have a young man in my company who plays the fife most beautifully. With a violin it would make splendid dance music."

As he said this, he twisted his waxed mustache and looked steadily at Gunhild. It was evident that Ingeborg was getting more and more embarrassed.

"Thank you very much for your suggestion," said she, as she looked out of the window. "When we have decided what music to have we shall be glad to communicate with you."

After some more informal remarks the captain arose to say good-bye.

"Isn't Captain Wessel a fine man?" asked Ingeborg. "He seems to be so considerate of everybody. He always shows so much genuine refinement. I've been told that he comes from a family that has been illustrious in the military service of the country. Didn't he look handsome in his military uniform this morning?"

To these remarks Gunhild made no answer.

That afternoon Gunhild was busy on the back lawn, spreading out flax straw to be bleached. One bundle after another she rolled over the grass, spreading it out in a thin swath, so that the sun and rain would rot the wood and make it brittle. Solstad had many to care for, so that every winter a large amount of flax fiber had to be spun and woven into linen cloth. As Gunhild was busy with this work, Nora crossed the lawn from the highway.

"You're working hard today, my girl," said she, as she approached. "I suppose this flax fiber will go to make linen cloth for the new bride at Solstad next month." This sally was followed by an ironical chuckle.

"Maybe so," said Gunhild, "but I want nothing of it."

"Did you go to church last Sunday?" asked Nora.

"No, I did not," answered Gunhild, "but I am so

despondent. I dare not think of the future. I'm afraid there'll be some terrible commotion here at Solstad.

"Don't worry, my child," said Nora, looking grave. "Everything will come out all right. I know that Carl Wessel will have a fall."

"I hope it'll come soon," said Gunhild, "for I can't stand the strain much longer. Father hardly speaks to me. He is so cross and irritable that he has become almost unbearable. There's nothing but gloom wherever one looks."

Nora, raising her right hand, with her finger pointing to the sky said, "It will be worse. There will be more gloom at Solstad before Knute gets thru with this business. He will wish that he had never known Captain Wessel or his son."

"I can hardly believe that," said Gunhild, "for those two gentlemen stand very high here now."

"The forces of wrath are mustering. The day of doom will soon be here."

Just then Knute Solstad appeared walking toward Nora from the house.

"What errand are you on at Solstad today?" he shouted, as he came up.

"I am on no errand for anybody," quickly retorted Nora. "Has the ground at Solstad become so sacred that an old woman like Nora of the Mill is not allowed to speak with your daughter on the lawn?"

"Better would this parish be," exclaimed Knute, "if Nora of the Mill had never set foot in the val-

ley! Whose agent you are I know not. I know that you are not the agent of good, but of evil."

"Is that the reward you give Nora of the Mill for driving the pain out of your throbbing ankle a few years ago?"

"Oh, don't talk such bunkum," said Knute. "I know that it was nature that cured me and not you. I'm too old to be taken in by a sly old mountebank like you. When I want to see you, I'll send for you. I suppose you've been putting some poison into the mind of my daughter. You'd better go," added Knute, as he pointed to the highway. "You'd better follow the road. There's where you belong. Don't intrude yourself into the privacy of decent Christian people who fear God and hate the devil."

Then came in solemn tones from Nora: "Knute Solstad, you shall swallow every word that you have this day spoken to Nora of the Mill. I say to you that many a day in the near future you shall go among the people of this parish with your head bowed down in shame and humiliation. Your arrogance has called down upon you the judgment of divine justice. You shall not end your days at Solstad. You shall leave the home of your fathers and die a stranger in a strange land. Remember well that Nora of the Mill said this."

After saying this, she shifted the basket on her back and soon disappeared on the highway.

Turning to Gunhild, Knute in an angry manner said, "I don't want you to have anything more to do with this cursed vagabond. She spews out poison like a snake wherever she goes. She desecrates

every house she enters, with her black arts and hypocritical babbling. A daughter of one of the Solstads, as you are, should feel above associating with such trash as Nora of the Mill."

"I never saw anything bad about her," said Gunhild. "She has always been pleasant and kind to me. Of the things you accuse her I know nothing. I have never seen her do anything but good. When she talks to me, as she does when she goes by our house, I hope you will not forbid my being civil and courteous to her. You know, father, that I have always loved you dearly. You seem to be so cross and irritable of late. Come, forget your trouble—forget Nora of the Mill. If you don't like her, keep it to yourself. I like everybody because everybody I meet is good to me. Please, father, don't be angry with me, and I am sure we shall all feel better. Be nice and kind, as you used to be when I was a little girl. Do you remember how I used to go horse-back riding on your knee every evening? First we'd trot, then we'd gallop, and then I'd put my arms around your neck and laugh. Oh, what a good time we used to have when I was a little girl! Why shouldn't I talk to Nora of the Mill, if she likes to talk to me? Come, father," as she put her arms around his neck, "kiss me just as you used to do when I was small."

Knute kissed Gunhild and walked away, but there was a strange expression on his face. It was not the frank, open look of a loving parent. Perhaps it was a feeling of guilt, that he had been unkind to his only child.

"Tomorrow," said Gunhild to herself, "is the third day of October, and that is the day that Nora of the Mill has designated for Carl's fall. I wonder what will happen, if anything. Of course, I don't wish anything to happen to Carl. The only thing I can say of Carl is that I don't want to marry him. I don't think it would be right to him, to myself or to my parents for me to marry someone that I couldn't be happy with."

That night, before Gunhild went to sleep, she again read Arne's letter. She also put the gold ring on her finger and she wondered when she would hear from him again. Was he in the west building a home for her? It would be so nice to go with him to a new country, meet new people and make new friends. She took the ring off her finger, put it back in the little box and hid it again in her bureau drawer. The letter she put in her pillow, so her mother would not find it. She wondered if tomorrow would bring a change in the situation. She had fully made up her mind that she would not attend church the following Sunday.

The next morning she was helping her mother, who, with the two maids, was cleaning the house. Her mother became quite inquisitive. She told Gunhild that soon they would have to begin preparations for the wedding. Gunhild said nothing. She wanted so much to tell her mother then that there was no use in preparing for the wedding, that she had made up her mind that she would not marry Carl Wessel.

"What did Nora have to say yesterday?" asked

Ingeborg. "I saw you talking to her on the lawn."

"Oh, we didn't talk about anything of any importance."

"But I watched her thru the window," continued Ingeborg, "and she seemed to be very much in earnest."

"What do you think about Nora, mother?" asked Gunhild. "Do you think she's a witch or a bad person?"

"I don't believe in witchcraft," answered Ingeborg, "altho there are many people who do, nor do I believe that Nora of the Mill is a witch. She can do a great many things that other people can't do, but you must remember that she is very bright and has much more knowledge than the ordinary person. And I must say this for her, that the extraordinary things she does are for the benefit of others. There is one thing, however, about Nora that I wish to impress upon you. While she does not do things by supernatural power, she likes to impress upon people, especially the ignorant, that she has superhuman knowledge. She knows what people are saying about her in this regard, but she takes no pains to deny it, at least in public."

"Do you think she is dependable?" asked Gunhild.

"So far as I know, she is," answered Ingeborg. "But why are you so anxious to find out my opinion of Nora? What is it you have talked to her about?"

"Oh, she told me some very queer things," answered Gunhild.

"Well, what did she tell you?" queried Ingeborg, looking sharply at Gunhild.

"Why, I can't tell you until tomorrow," said Gunhild, "for she told me not to tell anyone. But tomorrow I'll tell you."

Ingeborg tried hard to find out what Nora had said, but Gunhild remained obdurate.

That afternoon the reeve of the parish drove by Solstad. He soon returned with Carl Wessel. The captain followed close behind, riding on Sable.

"What is up?" said Gunhild to her mother. "The reeve has brought back Carl Wessel, and the captain is riding behind on his horse."

Gunhild and Ingeborg both went outside and looked down the road.

"There must be something wrong," said Gunhild, "for the reeve, the captain and Carl would not be riding up the road together."

Soon the hired man drove into the yard. He had just come back from the mill. He looked excited as he stepped down from the wagon. Gunhild, being curious, went out and asked him if he had met the reeve, Carl Wessel and the captain.

"What's been going on?" asked she.

"Haven't you heard the news?" said Hans.

"No," said Gunhild, with a shake of her head; "tell me."

"You know," said Hans, looking straight at Gunhild, "where the road curves around the Gaustad ridge?"

"Yes, I know where it is," said she.

"Yesterday afternoon," continued Hans, "while

Nels peddler was walking around that curve two men stole up behind him, knocked him down with a club and ran away with his pack."

"Did they kill him?" asked Gunhild.

"No," said Hans. "After a while he came to, but his pack was gone."

"And did they catch the robbers?" asked Gunhild.

"They say," continued Hans, "that one of them is Carl Wessel. When I met the reeve he had Carl in irons and the captain was following on his horse."

"Aren't you telling me a fib?" asked Gunhild.

"No, I'm not," said Hans. "There's much excitement over it up thru the valley."

For a moment Gunhild was silent, then, putting her hand on her forehead, talking slowly she said, "Nora's prophecy has come true."

Gunhild ran in and told her mother. Ingeborg threw up her hands and shouted, "It's false, it's false! Carl Wessel is innocent! I never shall believe that that young man is guilty of such a crime."

Gunhild, however, said nothing. She was thinking deeply about what Nora of the Mill had told her. When Knute heard the story he could hardly control himself. He cried, "It's a lie, it's a lie! Carl Wessel is innocent!"

Soon rumors spread over the whole parish. Most of the people who heard the story believed that Carl was guilty. Some shook their heads and said, "I feared all the time that it would finally come to this with Carl Wessel."

All kinds of stories were being told of things that he had done when he was a little boy. The sentiment in the community soon became intense against Carl. Even Knute Solstad and Ingeborg did not dare any longer to assert openly his innocence.

Carl was now in jail. The next Sunday the bans of his marriage were not published. There was great sadness in the home of the captain. On this Sunday morning Gunhild went to church with her parents, and now it was Carl that was absent. On the lawn in front of the church no congratulations or regrets were expressed by anybody to the Solstad family; altho, no doubt, there was a large number that would have congratulated Gunhild had they dared to do so.

On their way home the Solstads stopped and called at the captain's house. The captain and his wife looked downcast and sad. Both Knute and Ingeborg expressed their firm conviction that Carl was innocent.

"Who procured Carl's arrest?" asked Knute.

"Haven't you heard all about it?" said the captain.

"No," answered Knute, much interested.

"Why," began the captain, "it's Nora of the Mill. She is the one who induced Nels peddler to make complaint against Carl."

"Aha," said Knute, "now I see thru the whole infamous business. It's a frame-up by Nora!" he shouted. "It's that devilish sorceress that gads around our community and spies into every man's affairs. I have said it, and I say it again, that no

man is safe in these parts with that woman running loose."

"She is the one," said the captain, "that has brought humiliation and shame to our home."

"What does Nels peddler say?" asked Knute. "Does he claim that it was Carl that struck him?"

"He does," nodded the captain; "but you know that Nels peddler hasn't much backbone, and I am satisfied that Nora of the Mill has bewitched him and made him believe that it was Carl. So there you are. What are we going to do about it?"

Knute remained silent for a few moments, then raised his right hand and pointed his finger at the captain. "I know what I'll do," said Knute. "I'll put a flea in the ear of the judge, and I know that Judge Lund will administer justice without fear or favor. I never thought it would come to this in Norway, that decent Christian and honorable folks should be disgraced and humiliated by an ugly, old, malignant hag. She's the one who ought to be in jail, not Carl."

Gunhild expressed her sympathy to the captain and his wife and hoped that Carl might be vindicated.

Court would be held at Lysgaard, the home of the reeve, on the first Monday in November. Knute and the captain were often together planning Carl's defense. Knute had already seen the judge and had put the flea in his ear, as he said. He winked at the captain and told him that he knew the judge was all right. As yet there were no jury trials in Norway.

A lawyer from an adjoining town had been employed. The captain and Knute had taken him over the scene of the robbery. Knute had also given him an uncomplimentary sketch of Nora of the Mill and her doings in the parish. Knute and the captain were beginning to feel that they had Carl's defense well in hand. It was planned that the captain should come to Lysgaard in full military uniform.

"Show your colors," said Knute. "Show the court that Carl has splendid backing. I shall have another chance," intimated Knute, "to whisper something more into the judge's ear when I see him at Lysgaard."

As Lysgaard was farther up the valley, the judge would drive by Solstad on his way to hold court. It was arranged by Knute that the captain should ride with him, and that they should wait for the judge and follow him up the road.

Gunhild, of course, had heard about all these preparations. One day, while she was working out in the garden near the highway, Nora of the Mill came along, knitting, as usual.

"Good morning, Nora," said Gunhild, as she leaned over the fence and smiled.

"Good morning, my child," said Nora, as she approached Gunhild. Then, holding up her hand as if to enjoin caution, she said in an undertone: "It happened just as I said it would. Are you not happy now, Gunhild?"

"Oh, I can't say that I'm happy. Of course, I was glad that the wedding was called off, but I feel very sorry for Carl's mother and father. I'm sure they both believe that Carl is innocent."

"What does Knute Solstad say?" was the next question by Nora.

"Why, of course, father thinks, and so does mother, I'm sorry to say, that Carl is innocent. And do you know, Nora, that the captain blames you for Carl's arrest, and father agrees with him? The captain thinks the robbery is a frame-up by you, and that you bewitched poor Nels peddler and got him to believe that Carl was the one that struck him."

At this talk by Gunhild Nora laughed quite heartily.

"Oh, yes," she said, "the captain must necessarily spin up some kind of a yarn to make himself and his wife believe that Carl is innocent; but," said Nora, as she straightened herself up and looked at Gunhild, "I have the evidence against Carl and he will be convicted. I have not been idle since Carl's arrest. I have watched Knute Solstad and Captain Wessel. They may think that they are influential, but much influence as they have will not avail against the cold, naked facts that I will testify to at that trial."

"But," continued Gunhild, "my father has been to see the judge and has posted him up about this case."

"Good," said Nora. "I will post up the judge with my evidence at the trial. It will not lie in Judge Lund's power to acquit Carl Wessel."

When she had said this, she shifted the basket on her shoulders, said good-bye and walked down the road.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE TRIAL

CAPTAIN WESSEL was a man well-known in government circles. The news of the arrest of his son had brought numerous letters of condolence on the unfortunate occurrence. From far and wide people had gathered at Lysgaard to hear the trial. John Brodahl, attorney for the crown, was present to act as prosecuting attorney. Jens Egde appeared as attorney for the defendant. As the people gathered in the courtroom, Nora of the Mill and Nels peddler occupied seats inside of the court railing as witnesses for the crown. Captain Wessel was there in full dress uniform, with spurs and buttons brightly polished. Knute Solstad occupied a seat next to him on one of the benches. Knute wore his Sunday clothes.

When the bailiff or court crier opened the court everybody stood up. The judge took his seat on the bench and the clerk handed him the calendar of matters that were to come before him. After looking over the calendar for some time, the court announced that the first case to be tried was the King against Carl Wessel. The reeve immediately arose and soon returned with Carl in irons, and placed him in the prisoner's dock. With bowed head Carl proceeded in front of the reeve thru the gaping crowd. The captain and Knute Solstad went up and held a

whispered conversation with him. The court asked respective counsel if he were ready for trial. The attorney for the Crown announced that the King was ready. After some whispering the attorney for the defendant answered that the defendant was ready.

The first witness called was Nels peddler. Nels was a man in his fifties, of medium size, with a kindly face. When he had taken his seat on the witness stand, the court said, "What is your name?"

"Nels Bakke, but I am called Nels peddler," said the witness.

Nels then told the judge that he was a peddler by occupation; that he had been to the little seaport town and laid in a new stock of wares; that on the third day of October last he was on his way up the valley; that at the point on the valley road where it swings around the Gaustad ridge, about eight miles down the valley, two men, who were in hiding, ran up to him and one of them hit him over the head with a club and stunned him. When he came to, he found that his pack was gone. The only person he saw there at the time was Nora of the Mill.

"That woman sitting there," he continued, as he pointed to Nora.

"Did you recognize the two men?" asked the judge.

"Yes," answered Nels, "one of them was the defendant, who is in the prisoner's dock."

"Stand up," said the judge to Carl.

Carl arose, but looked neither at the witness nor at the judge.

"Is this the man?" asked the judge.

"Yes, it is," said Nels.

"How was he dressed?" continued the court.

"He had the same clothes on that he has now," answered the witness.

"Are you positive?" continued the judge. "Remember you're under oath."

"Yes, I am positive," said the witness.

"You testified that Nora of the Mill came to you. Did she tell you that she had seen this man strike you?"

"She did," said the witness as he nodded his head.

The court then turned to the attorney for the Crown and asked him if he wished to question the witness.

Attorney Brodahl arose and said, "Your Honor, the Crown is satisfied. We have no questions."

The attorney for the defendant then arose and asked the court if he would be permitted to examine the witness. The court said he would.

Mr. Egde began as follows: "Now, Mr. Bakke, I understand these men came upon you very suddenly, did they not?"

The witness answered, "Yes, sir," nodding his head.

"You did not have much time in which to identify them?"

"No sir, I did not."

"Are you positive as to the clothes the man had on?"

"Not very positive, but I think he had the same clothes on that he has now."

"Did he wear a hat or a cap?"

"As to that I could not tell."

"But you are positive that it was Carl Wessel?"

Nodding his head again he said, "Yes, sir."

"Had you known Carl Wessel before you saw him this time?"

"No, not that I can remember."

"That is all, your Honor," said Mr. Egde.

"There being no further examination," announced the judge, "the witness may be excused, with the understanding that he stay in the court room and await the further order of the court."

The attorney for the Crown announced that the next witness was Nora of the Mill. Nora rose and with a slow and deliberate step took her seat in the witness stand.

"What is your name?" asked the judge.

"Nora," answered the witness.

"Have you no other name besides Nora?" asked the judge.

"They call me Nora of the Mill," answered the witness.

"That's a nickname, isn't it?" said the court.

"You can call it that," said Nora. "That is the name I go by in this community."

"Were you present on the third day of last October when Nels peddler was assaulted and robbed?" asked the court.

"I was," said Nora.

"You may tell what you saw and heard at that time," said the judge.

Nora, turning around and looking squarely at

Carl, then at Knute Solstad and the captain, began: "I was on my way up the valley road on that day. I had been to the city and had purchased some wool and other materials. I had a heavy load to carry. As I came to the ridge you have mentioned that juts out towards the river I was tired. Your Honor will remember that on the right hand side of the road at this point is a large boulder about six paces from the road bed. I sat down to rest behind this large stone. I was knitting. I looked up and saw Nels peddler carrying a pack, coming up the hill on the highway. Just as he was opposite a clump of bushes, Carl Wessel, the defendant, and a companion, whom I did not recognize, sprang forward from the bushes, and one of them with a club hit the peddler on the head so he fell down and lay unconscious. The two young men then grabbed the pack and ran down the road. Your Honor will remember that there are no houses within a couple of miles of this place. I ran out to where the peddler was lying and raised up his head, but he was unconscious. I then started to pull him out of the road and succeeded in getting him off the wagon track. I took a bundle out of my basket and placed it under his head. I left him in this position and took a cup that I always carry in my basket, went down to the river on the left side of the road and brought back some water. Again I tried to raise him up and held the cup of water to his mouth, but still could see no signs of life. I then bathed his wrists and hands. Soon he began to gasp and opened his mouth. I raised him up and poured some water into his

mouth, which he swallowed. I then began to rub his hands and arms and soon he opened his eyes. After working over him ten or fifteen minutes he regained consciousness. The first thing he said was, 'Did you see the fellow hit me?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I saw it all.' 'Did you know the man?' he said. 'Yes,' I said, 'I know him. It was Carl Wessel, the son of Captain Wessel.'

At this point Nora stopped and looked at the judge. During her talk the judge had been writing in his minute book. When Nora stopped talking he looked at her and said, "Had you known Carl Wessel before this occurrence of which you have testified?"

"Yes," answered Nora. "I have known Carl Wessel ever since he was a little boy."

"How far were you from the clump of bushes where you say the two boys were hiding?"

"About a hundred yards," answered Nora.

"Was the clump of bushes, in which the boys hid, on the same side of the road that you were?"

"No," answered Nora, "it was about a hundred yards down the road on the other side, next to the river."

At this point the attorney for the defendant asked permission of the court to examine Nora. This the court permitted. But, notwithstanding a severe cross-examination by Mr. Egde, Nora stuck to her story.

After Nora was excused from the witness stand the judge ordered Carl to be sworn and to testify. Carl made a very poor witness. He denied the

testimony given by the peddler and also by Nora. This closed the testimony in the case and the court adjourned for dinner to reconvene at two o'clock.

The reeve invited Knute Solstad and Captain Wessel to his house. The judge and the clerk also took their dinner with the reeve. Most of the bystanders had brought their lunch and ate it on the lawn.

At the reconvening of the court Attorney Egde made an eloquent plea in behalf of Carl, charging that Nora of the Mill was the cause of Carl's arrest; that it was Nora who had made the peddler believe that it was the defendant who had robbed him, and that she was a person whose testimony could not be taken seriously by any court. Everybody in the court-room was now anxiously waiting for the decision. After summing up the testimony in the case, the judge said:

"I have weighed this testimony carefully, and I find that if I convict the defendant I must do so largely on the testimony of Nora of the Mill. This I am unwilling to do."

When the judge had spoken these words Nora arose in her seat among the spectators.

"Your Honor!" she cried. Every face in the room was turned toward her as she walked forward to the bar. "You may not consider of much consequence the testimony given by Nora of the Mill; but here," she said, as she pulled from under her arm a small black cap, "is testimony that your Honor cannot very well disregard. This cap," she continued, "I picked up on the road where Nels peddler lay on

the day of the robbery. Look at this," she said, as she turned the cap inside out and held it up for the inspection of the court. "Here is the name Carl Wessel."

At this performance by Nora some of the people almost gasped to catch their breath. The judge picked up the cap and asked Carl Wessel to stand up. The reeve put the cap on Carl's head and found that it fit him.

"Is this your cap?" asked the court.

Carl made no answer. Again the court put the question. Still no answer came from Carl.

"You may return the prisoner to the jail," said the judge. "I find you, Carl Wessel, guilty of robbery in the first degree. At five o'clock the prisoner will receive his sentence."

A heavy gloom had fallen over the features of Captain Wessel and Knute Solstad. Nora of the Mill looked defiant as she walked out of the courtroom.

That afternoon, before five o'clock, Knute Solstad and Captain Wessel were closeted for some time with Judge Lund. Some of the bystanders whispered that it was not certain yet that the captain's son would go to the penitentiary.

At five o'clock Hans Egde appeared before the bar of the court and asked that the passing of the sentence on Carl be deferred for one week. After some consideration the court granted the defendant's request, and the reeve took Carl back to jail. As this case was the most important matter to come

before the court at this session, most of the spectators returned to their homes.

There was great suspense at Solstad during that day. Ingeborg, who was very sympathetic with Carl's mother, was hoping that Carl would be acquitted. Gunhild, however, was neutral in the matter. She felt very sorrow for Carl's parents. The crisis arising from the publishing of the bans of her marriage, at least for a time, was passed, and she was confident that her father would not again attempt to have her marry Carl without her consent.

Gunhild was watching for her father's return. Late that evening, when Knute came in, Gunhild at once knew from his appearance that the case had gone against Carl. Ingeborg met him at the door and in an excited manner exclaimed, "What news do you bring from Lysgaard?"

Knute looked at Gunhild first, but she showed no sign of being interested.

"Why," said Knute, "Carl Wessel was convicted of robbing the peddler. Everything was going well until that cursed Nora produced Carl's cap and showed it to the court, after all the evidence was in. Notwithstanding the decision of the court," he continued, "I am as firm as ever in my conviction that it was a put up job by Nora."

"There must be a remedy for that kind of work," said Ingeborg. "Couldn't you and the captain stop such rank injustice?" she shouted.

"We did the best we could," said Knute with a scowl.

"What sentence did he get?" asked Ingeborg.

"Oh, we finally succeeded," replied Knute, "in getting a postponement of the sentence until next Monday. In the meantime we must all get busy to see that Carl does not go to the penitentiary."

During the week Knute Solstad and the captain were busy bringing influence to bear upon Judge Lund to deal leniently with Carl.

The following Monday morning the court-room at Lysgaard was again crowded with people. Carl was in the prisoner's dock. The judge said as Carl stood before him. "You have been convicted of robbery in the first degree. It is a sad thing for the court to pass judgment on you as punishment for this heinous offense. You are sentenced to confinement in the penitentiary at Christiania for the term of ten years."

The attorney for the defendant asked the court for a stay of judgment of thirty days. This was granted by the court, and Carl was taken back to jail.

When this news reached Solstad, Gunhild heaved a deep sigh and said to herself, "So at last I am rid of Carl Wessel."

* * *

The passing of sentence on Carl changed the scene from Lysgaard to the palace of the king. An effort at once was begun by the captain and his friends to get a pardon from the king for Carl. The captain, Knute Solstad, the reeve and the parish priest went to Christiania and interceded with the king for Carl. Letters from the captain's colleagues in the army went forward praying for leniency for the

captain's son. Before the end of the thirty days' stay Carl was released through a pardon. Among the knowing ones it was hinted that the pardon was granted by the king on the understanding that Carl should leave the country and should not return until after the term of his sentence had expired.

The captain and his wife were much aggrieved at the outcome of Carl's trial, and while they preferred that Carl should be deported rather than serve his term in the penitentiary, yet their sorrow was great.

Within two weeks after his release Carl was on board a Norwegian vessel bound for America.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOMeward BOUND

THE next morning after Arne had found the nugget of gold Terence said, "You never told me how you happened to find that nugget. I have been thinking that maybe we could go up in the gorge and find some more of them. Did you find it in the river, or was it imbedded in the sand?"

"Oh, I might as well tell you the whole story," said Arne. "It was a very remarkable occurrence. When I was a young lad working for Knute Solstad, I went in swimming one day in a mountain tarn, and as I was sitting on the bank of the tarn, half dressed, this Nora of the Mill that I have told you about, came up behind me and hung this silver chain and heart around my neck."

As he was saying this, he unbuttoned his shirt and showed the charm to Terence.

"She told me at the time that this charm would bring me good luck, but if I ever lost it I would be unluckier than I had ever been before. After returning to our tent the first day I went to wash gold in the gorge, I discovered that I had lost this charm. I became very much worried and, while I don't believe much in charms, yet the next day, when I went back, I hunted for it all over the places where I had been the day before, hoping, of course, to find it; but I was unsuccessful, until I was about to leave for

the tent; then I saw the end of this silver chain on top of the sand. I began digging and to my great surprise, found this chain and heart lying on top of the nugget of gold, that was down in the sand about six inches. Now, Terence, don't you think this was a remarkable happening?"

"It certainly was," said Terence, as he looked thoughtfully at Arne. "Maybe you had better be more careful with that charm in the future."

"I certainly shall be," said Arne. "I'll never part with it again, if I can help it."

* * *

The two boys had washed out all the sand in the claim on the river bottom. They had also gone up in the gorge where Arne had been and had added considerable to their fortunes. The time had flown into the month of May. Spring had come. The birds were warbling and the flowers were nodding in the sunlight. The slopes of the valley were green and the air was warm and balmy.

"Isn't California beautiful?" said Terence. "You and I came here to get gold, but we didn't expect to find such beautiful country. This little valley looks like a paradise to me. Had you anything as pretty as this in Norway?"

"We had some very beautiful scenery in Norway," said Arne. "Spring comes much later there, but when it comes, Terence, I think it is just as beautiful as it is here."

Soon after this the boys began to prepare for their homeward journey. They had a very large amount of gold. The gold dust they put in small

buckskin bags and sewed them on the inside of the lining of their clothes. It was agreed that Arne should carry the nugget of gold in his grip. So, one morning a little after the middle of May, the two young men started for Sacramento. They traveled in a primitive stage-coach. From Sacramento they went by boat to San Francisco. Here they had to wait a week for a boat that was to take them to Colon on the Isthmus of Panama.

One day, as Terence and Arne were on the street, they met Carl Wessel. As they stopped and talked to him Arne said, "Why, Carl, how you have changed!"

Carl's face looked red and swollen. He showed clearly the ravages of dissipation. Carl, of course, was a little diffident when he met Arne.

"Oh, I suppose I have changed," he said. "I have seen a good deal of the world since I left home."

"What are you doing?" asked Arne.

"I am working in that place over there," answered Carl, pointing to a building a few doors up the street.

"What!" said Arne. "Are you working in a saloon?"

"Yes, I am bartender," replied Carl.

After bidding good-bye to Carl, Terence said, "We'll probably never see that fellow again, Arne. It looks to me as if he is on the road to perdition."

"It's too bad," said Arne. "He comes from a good family."

When they arrived at Colon, they rode across the

Isthmus of Panama on mules. At Panama they were lucky to strike a boat that would sail in two days for New Orleans, where they arrived the middle of July. When they reached New Orleans they took a steamboat up the Mississippi river to St. Louis. On the whole trip the boys had slept together and were never apart.

At St. Louis they found that they could dispose of their gold for cash. They put up at a small hotel and during the evening put all their supply of gold and gold dust into a large buckskin bag. The following day they carried it to one of the banks in a large grip. A young man, with the assistance of Arne and Terence, poured all their gold holdings into a large scale. Arne and Terence were both watching to see that they got a square deal, and there was need of vigilance, for before it could be accurately determined how much the gold weighed, the fellow at the scales grabbed the scoop and was about to throw the dust into a bin that contained other gold belonging to the bank. But Arne grabbed him by the arm and said, "Not quite so fast, young man. Let's find out first how much our gold weighs."

The young man apologized for his hasty conduct and put the scoop back on the scales.

"If you had made sacrifices as we have to get that gold," said Arne, "you would be more careful about handling it."

It was found that there were eighty-six thousand dollars due Arne and Terence for their gold. Each of them put three thousand dollars in his pocket

and bought a draft on a New York bank for forty thousand dollars.

This was the first time that the boys knew the value of their gold. As they walked out of the bank Terence said, "What shall we do now? I propose that we go back to New York city."

But Arne shook his head. "No, no, Terence," said he. "You know we came west to get homes. I want a home of my own as soon as I can get one. Let's take a boat here and go north. There are a great many of my countrymen in Wisconsin. Let's get some land in this country. After that I'll go back to New York with you."

The next day the boys boarded a boat for St. Paul, Minnesota. On the voyage up the river they sat on the deck most of the time and watched the country. When they got beyond the mouth of the Missouri river the water became clear. The banks on either side were covered with beautiful hardwood trees. Soon the large bluffs began to raise their heads along the river banks.

"I like this country," said Terence. "It begins to remind me of the hills of Killarney."

"Yes," said Arne, "it begins to remind me of Norway."

In some places the river would be dotted with little islands covered with maples, oaks, elms and basswood. As the boat swung around, in among these islands, the boys were fascinated with the beauties of the great river. The next day Arne asked the captain what states they were going thru.

"On the right is Illinois, on the left is the territory of Iowa," said the captain.

"This looks to me like a fairyland," said Terence.

"Oh, Terence!" shouted Arne, "this beats anything I have ever seen. I want to live somewhere on the banks of this noble river."

"But you've not seen the finest part of it yet," said the captain. "Wait until we get farther north when we'll have Minnesota on one side and Wisconsin on the other."

By and by they entered the waters of Lake Pepin.

"It seems to me," said Terence, "that this river, instead of getting smaller as we travel northward to its source, is getting larger."

The captain laughed. "This is Lake Pepin," said he.

"How far does this boat go?" said Arne.

"St. Paul is the head of navigation," replied the captain.

That afternoon the boat stopped at a little town on the left bank of the river as they were going north.

"Is this Minnesota?" said Arne to the captain.

"Yes, this is Minnesota, and if you boys want some good land, you had better stop off here and you will find that on top of the bluff is the finest farming land in the world."

Terence and Arne decided to take the advice of the captain, landed and put up at a small hotel.

The following morning they made arrangements with a surveyor to take them into the country and locate them on land they could buy from the govern-

ment. The surveyor told them that he also had some nice land owned by private parties that he could sell them. He charged them twenty-five dollars, telling them that they would have to camp on the prairie over night.

Early one morning Arne and Terence started out with the surveyor. The conveyance consisted of two horses and a light wagon, in those days usually called a democrat wagon. They took with them a tent and provisions for three days. At first they wound around the bluffs that bordered on the river. Soon they reached the top and came out on the prairie.

"This reminds me of the great plains that we traveled on our route to California," said Terence.

Arne shaded his eyes with his hands and scanned the horizon to the south and west.

"In what direction are we going?" said he to the driver.

"We are going southwest," answered the driver.

"But I see no roads," said Arne.

"There are no roads," answered the driver.

"Most of this land belongs to the government and we can drive wherever we choose."

"Is no one living here?" queried Arne.

As the driver whipped up his horses he answered, "There are a few settlers down along the river, but hardly any on the prairie. The people who come here are afraid of the prairie. They think, inasmuch as trees don't grow here, the land is poor. Then they're afraid of storms. They seem to think

they must live behind trees or bluffs in order to be protected."

"That seems strange," said Arne. "I believe this is good land right on the prairie. It'll produce everything that grows in this climate."

"That's what I think," answered the driver; "but most of the settlers that come as far west as this are poor and have very little experience with land in general."

After driving all forenoon they stopped to eat their lunch. Arne took a spade and dug a hole in the ground.

"See here," said he to Terence. "Did you ever see nicer and richer soil than this?"

"I am sure it looks better than it did on the old farm where we lived in Ireland," answered Terence.

That night they put up their tent and slept on the ground. They got up early the following morning and drove a few miles farther. Here the driver stopped, hunted up some government stakes and showed them some land. Terence and Arne surveyed their surroundings. They were beautiful. About half a mile from where they were standing was a small river that flowed in a narrow valley about thirty or forty feet below the level of the prairie.

"I like this place," said Arne to Terence. "What do you think about it?"

"I agree with you," said Terence. "It suits me very well."

The driver then showed them where the section line ran.

"Here," he said, "is where the highway will be. Out west here the highway is usually run on the section line. How much land do you want?"

After conferring together Terence and Arne decided they wanted a section apiece, if they could get it.

"I think you can," said the driver. "Here are two sections that join. Each of you can buy a quarter from the government, and if you're married you can buy another quarter for your wife. One half of each of these sections is owned by private parties and you can buy that from them. I have authority to sell it. What you buy from the government will cost you a dollar and a quarter per acre. What you buy from me will cost you two dollars an acre."

The boys struck a bargain with the driver for the two sections and were told by him that they would have to go to the land office in St. Paul to get title to the land they bought from the government. Arne also selected next to his land a quarter section for Finn Sandvik.

"Do you intend to build houses and live here?" asked the driver.

"Yes," said Arne, "we'll be back about this time next summer."

The driver then offered to build houses for them while they were gone, for a reasonable sum. Before night the boys had selected sites for their homes and had agreed with the driver that he should build them and have them ready by the first of July the following year. Each house was to have three

rooms—two bedrooms and a large room that could be used for sitting-room, kitchen and dining-room. They also contracted with the driver to construct a dugout, which would be large enough for two horses and a cow.

After returning to the little river town, the boys took the next boat north to St. Paul. When they came to the land office they found that the land they had selected had already been surveyed and staked out by the government.

“But,” said the land commissioner, “no law has as yet been passed by congress to open up for sale any public lands in the territory of Minnesota. However, we are certain that such a law will be passed in the near future. We also know that the price of this land will be fixed at a dollar and a quarter per acre. Have you selected the land you want?” asked the commissioner.

Arne handed the commissioner a written description of the land they had selected, together with the names of the parties who wished to become the purchasers

“Do you intend to move on to this land and live on it?” asked the commissioner.

“I am on my way back to Norway,” said Arne. “I expect to be back here next spring with a wife and we expect to live on this land.”

The commissioner smiled.

“I hope you will be successful,” said he. “You can leave these descriptions with me, and the price of the land, and I will mail you the patents just as soon as congress shall pass the proper legislation. In

the meantime, I will give you a receipt for your money, with a description of the land. We have already sold a good deal of public land in that way."

A quarter section was bought in the name of Arne; another quarter section in the name of Gunhild Solstad. Terence bought a quarter section in his own name and another quarter in the name of his mother. Arne also bought a quarter section adjoining his land for Finn Sandvik.

After transacting this business they went on a sightseeing trip to Minneapolis. They saw the Falls of St. Anthony and Minnehaha, and other places of interest, then took a boat to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. From there they went by stage to Milwaukee.

It was late in October when they reached New York city. While working there before going to California, Arne and Terence had both declared their intention of becoming citizens of the United States. Before leaving for Europe they had become full United States citizens.

"When I go back to Norway," said Arne, "I want to go under the protection of the stars and stripes."

"So do I when I go back to old Ireland," declared Terence.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A LETTER FROM CALIFORNIA

AFTER the deportation of Carl Wessel things moved along quite smoothly at Solstad. For some time Knute was sullen and irritable. He felt keenly the humiliation and disgrace of the conviction of Carl. But gradually the relationship between Gunhild and her father became quite friendly. The supposed engagement between her and Carl was never mentioned by any of the family. The feeling, however, between Knute Solstad and Nora still existed. Occasionally, when Nora went by, Gunhild had short chats with her.

One evening, late in the fall, when Hans, the hired man, returned from the city he told Gunhild that Inga wished to see her, as she had an important message for her. At once Gunhild surmised that it was a message from Arne. As luck would have it, she knew her father had business in the city and would go there in a few days, so she bided her time and told her father that she was anxious to accompany him to the city, which request was readily granted.

When Gunhild called at Captain Swanbeck's house, after dinner, Inga took her to her room and said, "Gunhild, what do you think I have for you?"

"A message from Arne," said Gunhild.

"You are right," was the answer, as she took

from her trunk Arne's letter. "Do you know," said she, "that Arne has learned to write? I suppose he did not dare address the letter to you, so he addressed it to me. And do you know," continued Inga, "that the postmark on it is California?"

"California!" exclaimed Gunhild. "That is so very far away."

Gunhild wanted to read the letter very much, but inasmuch as it was a letter written to her by Arne himself, she thought she would wait and read it when she was alone. She thanked Inga very much for her kindness and then excused herself; she made up her mind that she would have no opportunity to read the letter until she reached home.

On the way home with her father she thought so much about Arne and the letter that she was a very poor traveling companion. Not until after supper, when all alone in her room, did Gunhild get an opportunity to read the message from Arne. Her heart beat stronger and stronger as she seated herself on the bed in her room. "It's a long letter," said she, as she unfolded it. It began:

"March 1st, 1851.

"My dearest Gunhild:—

"I know you will be surprised when you get this letter, for you did not know that I was learning to write. My companion, Terence O'Malley, whom I met in New York, showed me how to write the letters of the alphabet. After practicing a long time I concluded to write you a letter today. You will also be surprised to learn that I am in California. I suppose you received the message that I sent by

Finn Sandvik when I was in New York. A short time after that Terence and I thought we would go west and get land. We each had about five hundred dollars. When we got as far as Buffalo, New York, we heard of the discovery of gold in California. We changed our course then and went to St. Louis. The following spring we journeyed from St. Louis to California over the great plains of the West. I have many things to tell you, dear Gunhild, of this journey, but I must wait and tell you when I see you. We got into California that same fall and have been here ever since. Oh, Gunhild! We have found a great deal of gold. If I get it safely back I can buy Solstad three or four times over. Terence and I expect to leave here next May. On our way back we shall buy land in Wisconsin or Minnesota, where we shall build our homes. Then we shall go on to New York and leave there some time next winter. I shall be back in Norway to see you in the spring, probably the first part of April. Oh, Gunhild! I think of you very often. I hope you are well. I shall not have an opportunity to write you another letter, so until I see you, with ever so much love,

“I am yours always,

ARNE EGELAND.”

Gunhild was happy. She had not been so happy since Arne left. The letter had a peculiar effect on her. She felt as tho she was pushed forward into a new world. Her thoughts became so real that it seemed almost as tho she had begun her life with Arne in America. Oh, how she longed to tell her

mother! But she dared not, for fear that she would tell her father and she did not want to irritate him. She hoped by the time Arne returned her father would become more conciliatory toward him.

It was now the first of November. Six months more and Arne would be with her again. The news from him was so good that she longed to tell it to some one. Of course, she would tell it to Inga at the first opportunity; and then she must tell it to Nora, because Nora had been so good to her and seemed so much interested in Arne.

From this day on Gunhild was very happy. Her step was lighter, her laugh was heartier. The whole girl was different. Her mother noticed the change and became suspicious that Gunhild had received some good news. She also suspected that the news had come from Arne. One day, when they were alone, Ingeborg said, "Gunhild, you seem to be so very happy of late. Have you heard from Arne?"

"Mother, why do you ask me that question?"

"Because I know," said Ingeborg, "that nothing could have made such a change in you as news from him. If you have such news, you ought to tell your mother."

After some hesitation Gunhild answered, "You know, mother, that the mention of Arne's name makes my father angry. I don't want to irritate him any more than is necessary. If I tell you anything, you will repeat it to father and then he will get very much excited. That is the reason, mother, why I can't talk frankly to you of what I may have heard from Arne."

Ingeborg became much interested. "Gunhild, I think there is good reason for you to act as you do in this matter. As you know, I always liked Arne. I considered him the finest young man we ever had at Solstad. I will give you my word of honor, of a mother to her child, that I will never mention to my husband anything you may tell me about Arne Egeland."

For some time Gunhild was silent. She was debating in her mind what to do. Her mother had spoken frankly to her, and no one had as much right to know the relationship between herself and Arne as she.

Gunhild looked up and said, "Mother, I will confide in you. I have heard from Arne. I received a letter from him the day I was in the city. He mailed it to Inga, because he was afraid to send it to me at Solstad."

"Where is he?" queried Ingeborg.

"I think, by this time," answered Gunhild, "he is in New York city."

"How has he been getting on?" asked Ingeborg.

"Very well," said Gunhild. "He has been in California."

"I would like to hear this letter, Gunhild."

"Yes, mother," said Gunhild, "I'll go get it and read it to you."

Gunhild went to her room and came back with Arne's letter.

"And has Arne written the letter himself?" exclaimed Ingeborg.

"Yes, he has learned to write in America," answered Gunhild with a smile. "Shall I read the letter to you or do you want to read it yourself?"

"No, you read it," said Ingeborg.

After finishing the letter Gunhild looked up at her mother as tho she were interested to know what effect the letter had had, and then said, "Mother, isn't that good news?"

Ingeborg heaved a sigh and said, "Yes, Gunhild, it makes me both happy and sad. Happy to think that Arne has been so fortunate in California; sad because it means that you will leave your father and mother and go with him to America. The affair with Carl Wessel—I am glad it turned out as it did. Your father has always been very stubborn. The people in the neighborhood have always looked up to him. That fact has added to his stubbornness. With all his faults, he has a good heart. He has always been loyal and upright. If he did not think so much about his long line of honorable ancestors and the glory of Solstad and could get more of the spirit of the times in which he lives, he would be much better off. I'm afraid that the line of succession at Solstad will be broken. I am looking forward to the time when you and Arne will be gone and Knute and I shall be left alone in our home."

"But," interjected Gunhild, "why can't you and father sell Solstad and go with us to America?"

"You might as well banish that thought now," said Ingeborg, with a wave of her hand.

"But I think it's going to happen," replied Gun-

hild. "You remember that day when father met Nora of the Mill out on the lawn. She then prophesied to father that he would not end his days at Solstad, but would die in a strange land, among strangers."

At this Ingeborg looked askance at Gunhild, with an expression of surprise on her face.

"Do you believe," she said, "that Nora can foretell things?"

"I don't know," replied Gunhild. "She has told me some things that would happen in the future and her prophesy has always come true."

"Oh, we must all admit that Nora is quite wise. Do you like to go to America with Arne?" asked Ingeborg, as she looked at her daughter over her spectacles.

"Yes, I do," said Gunhild. "I have never been with anyone that has been so kind and considerate of me as Arne, and they say that America is a fine, healthy country to live in, so why shouldn't I like it? Of course, I feel dreadfully sad when I think of leaving you and father. What do you think father will say when Arne comes?"

"Oh, I suppose Knute will be stubborn, as he has always been," said Ingeborg.

That fall, as usual, Gunhild and Ingeborg spun and wove linen and woolen cloth. For the first time in her married life, Ingeborg held a secret that she did not tell her husband. Knute no longer busied himself with selecting a husband for Gunhild. Carl Wessel's name was never mentioned at Solstad. He had quickly been forgotten. It may be that Knute

harbored a fear that some day Arne might come back. With all his talk and bluster about Arne, Knute knew that he was an efficient and reliable young man. But, if he should come back, Knute was too proud to be reconciled to him.

One day, as Nora of the Mill went by, she stopped at Solstad and had a talk with Gunhild. When Gunhild told her of Arne's success in the gold country, she was delighted. Gunhild had never seen her look so happy.

"You'll be married in the spring," said Nora.

Gunhild laughed, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AN AUCTION IN OLD KILLARNEY

ON Washington's birthday, February twenty-second, Arne and Terence took passage on a British ship for Queenstown. Terence had not heard from his home since he left New York for California. His mother, sister and brother were living on a rented farm among the hills of Killarney. He was happy with the thought that he would soon see his mother and the country where he was born and had spent his boyhood.

To Arne the future was somewhat uncertain. While he had heard indirectly from Gunhild, no word had come to him directly from her. That, of course, was not Gunhild's fault. No doubt she would have written, if she had thought that Arne could read her writing. But when Arne left Norway he could neither write nor read handwriting. He was a little puzzled as to how he should manage to see Gunhild. Should he go boldly up to Solstad, demand to see her and, if she were willing, take her back with him to America? After some consideration he finally concluded that he would pursue this course.

One day, while the two boys were sitting on the upper deck, Arne asked, "When shall we go back to America?"

"Right away," answered Terence. "I am going to take my mother and my sister with me."

"If that's the case," said Arne, "we had better agree on a certain time when we'll all meet at Liverpool and go back to New York together. It'll not take me long. There is only one person in all Norway that I am interested in, and that is Gunhild. If she consents to go with me, I think I can agree to be back in Liverpool within two weeks from the time I leave for Norway, and we'd better make this arrangement, that whoever arrives first shall wait until the other one comes. We'll meet down on the wharf, where the ships come in."

"I think that will be all right," answered Terence. "I'm sure I can be back in two weeks."

The boys arrived at Queenstown on the seventh day of April, and they agreed that they would meet again at Liverpool about the twenty-fifth of the month. Terence landed at Queenstown, while Arne continued on the vessel to Liverpool.

Terence was now anxious to get back to his old home as soon as possible. He took conveyance from Queenstown to the city of Cork. He took a stage coach from Cork to Killarney. From Killarney his old home was about six miles up in the hills. This distance he concluded to walk.

How the memories crowded in on him as he went up the old, familiar road! How different he felt when he walked down that road nearly six years ago to sail for America! How timid he was! How uncertain the future had looked to him!

Then he remembered how his mother had cried

the morning he left. Oh, how he hoped his mother would greet him now on his return! Then he was only a young lad, sixteen years old—just a boy; now he was twenty-two. He felt so different. He was now well-to-do. Yes, some people would call him rich. When he left home he was always afraid that someone might impose on him; yes, might even harm him. Now he was full of confidence. He had money in his pocket, he had more in the bank. He wasn't afraid of anybody.

"What power money has," said he, as he walked along the road. "Arne always said that money was a fine thing, if you could control your money and not allow your money to control you. I guess Arne was right."

When he had walked a couple of miles, he came to a large flat stone by the side of the road. Here he stopped and shook his head.

"Many a time, when I was a small boy, have I sat down on this stone and rested myself. Those were happy days, but those days couldn't always last. I had to go out in the world and make a place for myself. I went to America. It was Uncle Jim that put that idea into my head. Uncle Jim always felt so sorry that he hadn't gone to America when he was a young man."

Many a time had Uncle Jim stopped him on the road, caught him by the shoulder and, gesturing with his hand, had said, "Now, Terence, if you want to get ahead in the world, go to America, where there are no landlords, no dukes, and no kings."

"I hope Uncle Jim is still living. Won't he laugh when he finds out that his prophecy has come true; that I have made good in America? If I hadn't met Arne I wouldn't have got along so well. Then there was my Aunt Bridget. Every time I talked of going to America, the good old soul would cry, 'Oh, Terence, don't leave the land of your fathers. There is no place in the world where the grass is so green as it is in old Ireland. Where the lakes are so beautiful and the hillside so charming!' She meant well. Here's the old church, where we used to go to mass every Sunday. In the graveyard yonder my father is buried."

Soon Terence came in sight of the old home. He stopped. There was the old house. It looked older; the paint was all gone. There was a crowd in front of the house. People were gathering. What could it be? A funeral? Terence became nervous. He walked on. He had grown a beard since anyone in Killarney had seen him. They would not recognize him. He had on a dark gray suit, a wide brimmed western hat.

He met a man on the road; he knew him. It was Seamus O'Brien. Terence said good-morning. Seamus stopped.

"What are all the people doing up at Widow O'Malley's?" asked Terence.

"Are you a stranger here?" said Seamus.

"I am," replied Terence.

Seamus O'Brien eyed Terence from head to foot. He thought there was something strange about the appearance of this fellow. His shoes, his clothes,

his hat, looked so different from what was worn in Ireland.

"Where are you from?" said Seamus.

Terence hesitated for a few moments then said, "From Queenstown. But what are people congregating for at Widow O'Malley's?"

"It's an auction. The constable is selling her household goods. She has been unable to pay the rent."

"And how may that be?" asked Terence.

"Pat O'Malley, her son, is as fine a young man as ever wore boots, but last spring they had a terrible misfortune," continued Seamus, with a shake of his head. "And have you not heard of it? They lost three of their best cows. They all died in one week and now the poor widow is behind eight pounds in her rent and the constable this morning is auctioning off the household goods, but he'll nary get eight pounds for those goods."

"And how is Widow O'Malley?" asked Terence.

"The widow is quite chipper," replied Seamus. "But this trouble will ruin them."

Terence touched his hat to Seamus and walked on toward the house. The constable and his men were busy carrying out the furniture and arranging it in front of the house. Twenty-five or thirty prospective bidders were waiting for the sale to begin. Terence's brother, Patrick, was leaning up against the wall at the side of the house, watching the constable. Terence did not see his mother, or Kathleen, his sister. They were inside.

The constable offered for sale, first, a small

trundle bed. He cried, "What am I bid—what am I bid for Widow O'Malley's trundle bed?"

One man shouted a shilling.

By this time Terence was standing in front of the constable.

"A shilling," thought Terence. "Many a night have I slept soundly and safely in that little bed. A shilling for my little trundle bed!"

"I bid a pound," he shouted.

The constable looked surprised. After a few moments he cried, "A pound I'm bid—a pound I'm bid. Who'll raise the bid?"

By this time everybody was eyeing Terence. No one could make out who he was. He looked so strange. He wore different clothes.

"One pound I'm bid," said the constable. "Going for one pound. Who'll raise the bid? Going—going once, twice, third and last call. What is your name, Sir?" shouted the constable.

"That makes no difference," replied Terence, as he threw a gold sovereign on the constable's table. "Put it aside for me," he said, as he pointed to a vacant place near the house.

The next thing put on the block was an old cupboard.

"What am I bid for Widow O'Malley's cupboard?"

A little man in the crowd shouted two shillings.

"Oh, no," thought Terence, "that old cupboard is worth more than that. It made little difference how hungry I was, when I was a child, mother could

always hand me something from that old cupboard and, oh, how good it tasted!"

"I bid three pounds!" cried Terence.

Again there was commotion in the little group of bidders.

"Three pounds I'm bid," shouted the constable. "Who'll raise the bid?" The crowd smiled. "Going, going!" cried the constable. "Once, twice, third and last call—and sold."

Terence threw three gold sovereigns on the table. The dining-room table was next brought out.

"Widow O'Malley's furniture is selling high," said the constable. "Dennis O'Malley raised a family around this table. It's good and strong; while one of the legs is cracked, a tuppence will mend it. How much am I bid?"

"Three shillings," cried someone in the crowd.

"I remember well," thought Terence, "when I cracked that leg on this table and the spanking I got for it. But it shall never be sold for three shillings."

"I bid four pounds," he shouted.

The table was struck off to Terence, and when he had put four sovereigns on the auctioneer's table, the constable shouted, "We have enough. This pays the rent. The auction is now adjourned."

Patrick O'Malley, Terence's brother, had watched the proceedings. He was much astonished. He walked over to Terence, stretched out his hand and said, "Stranger, who are you? I am unable to explain your conduct, sir."

Terence grasped his hand, but said nothing and

walked into the house. News of the strange occurrence was brought in to Widow O'Malley, who was sitting in an old chair that had been left in the house. As Terence came in thru the door, she looked at him intently, then, rising from her chair, she cried, "It's Terence."

She could say no more. She broke down. Terence caught her in his arms, pressed her to his heart and said, "Yes, mother, it's Terence."

"God has answered my prayers," said Mrs. O'Malley. "He has brought my boy back safe. And was it you, Terence," she said, "that bought the furniture?"

"It was," replied Terence. "I couldn't endure to see the old furniture leave the house. Yes, rather than to see it go I would have bid a hundred pounds."

Then the mother held her head back and looked at Terence again. "How well you look—how clean and prosperous and, oh, how we needed you today! When I awoke this morning, I felt happy. I thought I would be sad, for we knew that everything that we owned would be sacrificed on the block, but something whispered to me—'Don't be sad, be happy!'"

Again she put her arms around Terence's neck and hugged him hard. "Where did you come from?"

"I walked from Killarney this morning," said Terence. "I landed at Queenstown, day before yesterday, and came by stage from the city of Cork." Then, turning to Pat, he said, "Brother Patrick,

can you hitch up the old horses, I want you to take me down to Killarney. We'll be back in a short time, mother," he said.

Kathleen had grown from a barefooted little girl into womanhood.

Soon the two boys returned from Killarney. They were to have a feast at Widow O'Malley's that day. Terence had provided the dinner. What a time they had! Terence told them all about his career in America.

That night, before they went to bed, Terence said, "Mother, I'm going to take you and Kathleen back to America with me. In the territory of Minnesota I have land enough to make twenty good sized farms in Ireland."

The next morning Mrs. O'Malley asked Terence how long he was going to stay.

"In about two weeks," replied Terence, "I must be in Liverpool. My partner, Arne, has gone to Norway to get his sweetheart and we're all to meet at Liverpool and from there sail to America."

"But are we going to leave Patrick alone then?" said Mrs. O'Malley.

"Yes," replied Terence, "I'll give him enough money to replace the three cows he lost last spring, and if he gets tired of staying here alone he can come too. There's plenty of land in Minnesota."

Kathleen was delighted with the idea of accompanying Terence. Mrs. O'Malley was happy, but had some misgivings about leaving her native country.

CHAPTER XXXV

TWELVE THOUSAND DOLLARS

IT was the tenth day of April, 1852, when Arne arrived in the little seaport town in Norway where he had lived as a young boy. He wore a dark gray suit and a broad brimmed, gray hat. His dress was American from head to foot. He was tall and straight. His complexion was bronzed from his outdoor life. He was no longer the slim, boyish fellow that had worked for Knute Solstad. He looked like a prosperous young man from the west. He walked with firmness and some dignity. Not until he had set foot on his native soil did Arne realize how he had changed since he took passage with Captain Swanbeck on the Sea Gull over five years ago.

Bertha Fisker's little cottage no longer stood on the strand. He had even some difficulty in locating the very spot where it was built. The Sea Gull was swinging at anchor in the harbor. He found that Finn Sandvik was at home. When Arne told him that he had bought one hundred and sixty acres of land for him in the territory of Minnesota, Finn was happy.

"When are you going back?" asked Finn.

"I'm going back in about ten days," said Arne.

"How about Gunhild?" said Finn.

"I think she'll go with me," said Arne.

It was Saturday. Arne concluded he would wait and drive up to Solstad the next day, after dinner.

When he called at Captain Swanbeck's house he found Finn Sandvik there, telling Inga the news. Finn told Arne that the Sea Gull would sail about the first of May and that Inga would leave with him for New York, where they would meet him and his friend from Ireland.

Some snow was still on the ground, altho it was beginning to melt.

Sunday afternoon Arne drove up the road to Solstad. He had confidence in Gunhild. He knew that Gunhild's word had been given him; he also knew that that word was good. On the road he overtook Nora of the Mill. She was trudging along the highway knitting, just as she did ten years ago. Arne stopped; Nora looked around.

"It's Arne Egeland," she cried. "God bless you! How glad I am to see you! Many a day and many a night have I thought of you and hoped that Providence would lead you back safely to your native country!"

Arne asked her to ride with him. So up the road they drove together toward Solstad.

"How is Gunhild?" asked Arne.

"Gunhild has been very happy," answered Nora, "since she received your letter. Thru all her trials and trouble she has been firm as the Gaustad Ridge."

"Has she had trouble?" asked Arne.

Nora looked at him. "Haven't you heard about it?" said she. Then she told him how Knute Sol-

stad had tried to force Gunhild to marry Carl Wes-
sel and of Carl's crime and deportation.

"Will she go with me to America?" asked Arne.

"She will," answered Nora with a nod of her
head, "for, Arne, Gunhild is the pure gold."

"How is Knute?" asked Arne.

"Just the same," said Nora with a shake of her
head. "He's just as stubborn as a mule."

"How do you suppose he'll treat me?" asked
Arne.

"Just as he always did," she answered. "Knute
Solstad is a slave of the past. He wants things to
remain just as they are. Knute, you know, has al-
ways been a big man in this parish, and he wants
things to stay as they are, so he can continue to be
the big man. Most men live in the future, but
Knute Solstad lives in the past. I'll not go in with
you," said Nora, as Arne drove in thru the gate
and tied his horse.

The Solstad family were all in the sitting-room,
just as they had been on the day when Arne was
driven away. There was no appreciable change.
Everything looked exactly the same.

Arne rapped. The door flew open. There stood
Gunhild, face to face with the man whose return
she had awaited for five long years.

When she saw him she forgot all restraint, ran
forward and cried, "Oh, Arne, so you have come
back at last! You are looking fine. You look so
strange. You have such beautiful clothes! Oh, how
well you look, Arne!"

He walked into the room, went up to Ingeborg

and greeted her. She arose and said she was glad to see him; that he looked very well. While this was going on Knute had turned his head toward the door. His eyes were fixed on Arne. He showed no emotion either in his face or in his conduct. When Arne walked up to him and held out his hand, Knute took it, shook it, and fell back in his chair.

Arne then walked up to the table that stood near the center of the room. Addressing his remarks to Knute he began:

"It is now over five years since I asked for your daughter, Gunhild, in marriage. You answered then that I could not have her until I was able to count out in gold on this table the price of Solstad. You remember that you fixed the price at twelve thousand dollars. I'm ready here today to fulfil that requirement."

Arne then lifted a buckskin bag from his outside pocket and emptied out the gold coin it contained on the table. As he was doing this, Gunhild walked over to him and took her place at his side.

"I want you to count this money," continued Arne, "and I ask Gunhild in your presence, and in the presence of her mother, if she is willing to become my wife."

Gunhild grasped Arne's hand and held it. Knute became much excited. Ingeborg went over to him, took him by the hand and told him to keep his seat. Knute kept turning his head, first to one side, then to the other, as tho in great pain. He looked pale and nervous. Finally he said:

"Arne, put the gold coin back in your bag. If Gunhild, my daughter, wants to go with you to America and live in a country that is populated with the scum of the earth, where criminals and scoundrels flourish, I'll interpose no objection."

Knute's reference to the population of America angered Arne; he raised his hand and said, "Knute Solstad, there are no better people in Europe than the Americans. They are kind, they are honest, and they are companionable."

With a look of disgust on his face, Knute waved his hand at Arne, as tho he wanted him to stop talking.

"I'll be back Thursday," said Arne to Gunhild, "and take you and your belongings to town, where we will board a ship for Liverpool."

As Arne was about to sit down, the door opened and Nora of the Mill walked in. She took her place at the table where Arne had been standing, and said:

"I have something of interest to say to you folks gathered here today. It is now twenty years since I came into this valley. While I have been among you, I have done nothing but kindness to those with whom I have come in contact. I have been called Nora of the Mill. I thought that name would be good enough for me. The time, however, has now come when I deem it my duty to disclose to you my real name. My name is Nora Danielson, widow of Arne Danielson, a fisherman, who for many years lived in the adjoining valley, in the city of Stavanger. My father was Dr. Frans Abel, the govern-

ment physician in that same district. I married Arne Danielson against my father's will and wish. As a consequence he disinherited me and left all his property to my brother, Erik Abel. After father's death, my brother gave me father's astrological library and instruments, for he was an astrologer as well as government physician; and, I think I may say in this connection, that no man stood higher in his profession as to learning, ability, and integrity than Dr. Frans Abel. As a result of my marriage to Arne Danielson a son was born."

Then, turning around and looking at Arne she said, "You, Arne, are that son and I am your mother." Taking a paper from her pocket she unfolded it and said, "This is your birth certificate. It is made out and signed in the handwriting of my father, Dr. Frans Abel. Here is what it says: 'Nora Danielson, wife of Arne Danielson, on the fifth day of June, 1828, gave birth to a boy. Weight ten pounds. Birth mark on the left shoulder-blade resembling a sprig of a fir tree.'"

Everybody in the room was listening with rapt attention.

"Arne," she said, "stand up, take off your coat, unbutton your shirt, take it off." As Arne exposed his bare back she said, "Gunhild, do you see the birth mark on his left shoulder? Doesn't it look like a sprig of a fir tree?"

Ingeborg also came up and looked at Arne's back. Knute Solstad had been sitting as tho he was not interested in what was going on. Nora continued:

"In the month of June, 1829, I accompanied my

husband, with Arne, then a baby a little over a year old, in our fishing smack, 'The Arne.' This boat had been built by my father-in-law when my husband was a small boy and was named in his honor, 'The Arne.' We were caught in the great storm which came upon us on the 17th day of June, 1829. Our frail boat was tossed and driven by the terrific wind and high seas until we struck the rocks on the coast. The fishing smack was being battered to pieces. My husband and the sailors lowered a lifeboat. I carried Arne on my arm down the ladder. As I handed him to a man in the boat a terrific sea struck us. The boat, with the baby and the man, disappeared. I found myself thrown upon the rocks and was rescued by a lifeboat from the shore.

"I never shall forget that fateful day, the 19th of June. The noise of the sea and the wind to this day sound in my ears. My husband and all on board the fishing smack went down. When I recovered, my heart was broken. In one day I had lost two persons dearest to me on earth; my husband, Arne Danielson, and my baby boy.

"I then took to the road. I have maintained myself, as you all know, by doing acts of kindness to my neighbors, and by selling the goods that I have knit. I have lived among you in this parish for nearly twenty years, and no man can say that I have wilfully wronged anybody.

"When Arne Egeland came to work for Knute Solstad, there was something that drew me to him. Something seemed to whisper in my ear, 'He is your baby boy.' One day, as I was walking over the

mountains, I came upon him at the summer dairy that belongs to the Solstad farm. He was sitting on the bank of the tarn. His back was bare. I saw the birthmark on his left shoulder blade."

Turning around to Arne, she said, "Then I knew you were my son; but I could not then disclose myself to you. I bided my time and, oh, Arne, how I yearned to press you to my breast! At that time I gave you a silver chain and heart. Have you got it?"

Arne put his hand down under his collar and showed her the chain.

"That silver chain and heart," she continued, "was a present to me from my father on the day of my baptism." As she said this, Nora stretched out both her hands to Arne and said, "Do you recognize your mother?"

The tears came into Arne's eyes as he arose and planted a kiss on her forehead. Gunhild also came over, took Nora's hand, then Arne's hand, and congratulated them both.

During the latter part of Nora's talk, Knute had apparently become much interested, for he seemed to listen attentively to what she said. Arne arose and said to Gunhild:

"There is a boat anchored in the harbor of our town that sails for Liverpool this week. I shall come and get you next Thursday morning; will you come with me?"

"I will," answered Gunhild in a loud tone of voice, so that it was distinctly heard all over the room.

Ingeborg broke down and began to moan and cry, but Knute sat immovable. Arne, then turning to Nora of the Mill, said, "Mother, I want you to go with us."

"I will," replied Nora. "God bless you, my son, Arne!"

Arne then went up to Gunhild and kissed her on the forehead in the presence of the whole company. To Ingeborg he said, "Don't weep. Some day you will follow us to America."

Knute shook hands with Arne, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OLD SCENES

ONE of the first things Arne did on his return to the little town was to look up Bertha Fisker's grave. It was marked by neither headstone nor footstone. It was in the corner of the graveyard, all by itself. Arne was not long in locating the exact spot where his godmother was buried.

"I owe a great deal to Bertha Fisker," said Arne to himself, as he stood with head uncovered before her grave. "She taught me how to live and how to deal with those about me in life. Her material wealth was small. Her vision was strong. Her heart was big. Her sympathies were with the oppressed. She taught me to love others in order that I myself might be loved."

He ordered set up over her grave a granite headstone, and wrote for it the following inscription:

"Here lies Bertha Fisker, poor in worldly wealth, but rich in sympathy and love, who lived not for self, but for those about her."

He looked up Finn and told him that he had been at Solstad's, and that Gunhild and Nora of the Mill would sail with him for America on the following Thursday. Finn said that he and Inga would sail on the Sea Gull. He had made arrangements with Captain Swanbeck for a discharge when he reached

New York, and asked Arne if he would wait for them there, so they could all go west together. He also told Arne that the Sea Gull would sail earlier that spring, probably early in April, instead of May.

"We'll wait for you," said Arne. "I'll watch for the Sea Gull at Castle Garden. You will probably get there the first part of June. We expect to leave Liverpool on a British ship, but in all probability, we won't reach New York until the latter part of May."

Arne also called on his old pastor, who had taught him his catechism and Bible history. The pastor was much interested to meet him and to learn about America and his experiences in California. After telling his old pastor that he had bought land in the territory of Minnesota and expected to leave soon for America with Gunhild Solstad and Nora of the Mill, he asked if he knew any young clergyman that would go with the party.

"I will pay his fare," said Arne, "and guarantee him a good living if he will go with us."

After musing for some time, the old man arose and said, "I think I have a man for you." Going into another room he soon returned with a young man.

"Arne Egeland," said he, "I have the pleasure of presenting to you the Reverend Soren Moe. Mr. Moe has just taken holy orders, but as yet has no cure. Before he entered the theological seminary he belonged to the Readers, and I assume that you have no objection to that."

Arne smiled and answered, "No, no, pastor, I much prefer such a minister."

Arne and Pastor Moe had a long talk. Arne had to explain to the young pastor all about America; that they would have to travel from New York to Minnesota, a distance of over twelve hundred miles; that he intended to build a church and buy a farm for the pastor. This pleased the young man very much, and it was agreed that Soren Moe should sail with them the following Thursday at Arne's expense.

* * *

It was Thursday morning. Gunhild was to leave her father and mother for America. She dreaded very much to part with her parents. Altho at times she thought her father had been harsh and unreasonable with her, yet, oh, how she hated to leave the old home! Every nook and corner of the old house were woven into her child life. Everything seemed so dear to her, now that she was going to leave.

Her mother was feeling dreadfully sad. She had cried and sobbed nearly all the time since Arne's return. Knute, however, talked little, altho his face looked set and more severe than usual.

All the week Gunhild had been packing. Her mother had given her the nicest and newest linen at Solstad. She had provided her with woolen blankets, feather quilts and everything necessary for housekeeping in America. Two large chests were required to hold Gunhild's luggage.

Early Thursday morning Arne arrived at Solstad. He called in and asked if Gunhild was ready.

Gunhild answered that everything was packed and she was ready to go. Then he drove up to Nora of the Mill. She was waiting for him. All her possessions, including her astrological library and instruments, were packed in a big chest. The old basket that she had carried thru the length and breadth of the valley was tied to the top of the chest.

Everything had been loaded at Solstad. Ingeborg was determined to go along to the seaport and see Arne and Gunhild safely on the ship. When the time for their departure came, Gunhild threw her arms around her father's neck and begged him to sell Solstad and come with them to America. Notwithstanding Gunhild's sobs and entreaties, Knute showed little emotion, but asked Gunhild to write upon their arrival in New York. Gunhild and Ingeborg drove with the hired man behind Fleetfoot and Sorrel.

"Do you think father will ever come to America?" said Gunhild to her mother.

"I don't know," she replied, "but I shall come if God permits me to live for some time."

At the wharf Ingeborg said, as she embraced Gunhild, "I must see you again before I die, and I shall use my best efforts to get my husband to go to America with me."

Arne comforted Ingeborg with the thought that he and Gunhild some day might come back for a visit to the old home.

While Ingeborg and Gunhild were talking, Arne went over and petted and caressed Fleetfoot and

Sorrel, who by their appearance showed that they had not forgotten their old friend.

As Ingeborg drove back to Solstad, a train of thoughts was rushing thru her mind. Never before had she realized how much Gunhild meant to her. For the first time she saw that Gunhild had been the joy of her life and the sunshine of her home. Her daughter's life seemed to unfold before her like a picture. She could see her as she carried her to the baptismal font in the old parish church. She could hear her merry laughter, as it rang thru the rooms and halls of the old homestead. How horrible the pretended courtship of Carl Wessel now looked to her! For the first time she realized the full extent of the stubbornness of Knute. What a faithful and sensible girl Gunhild had been thru it all! What a priceless jewel! And Arne, the quiet, unassuming, kind and considerate young man, just as affable and pleasant as when he tended the sheep and the goats down in the meadow.

"Yes," said Ingeborg to herself, "Arne and Gunhild are my children. Oh, how I love them both! How joyful it would have been if they both could have been with us at Solstad! But for the stubbornness of Knute that might have been."

When she came back home, her grief had subsided and anger had taken its place—anger at whom? Anger at herself to some extent; she could have protested more strongly against Knute's obstinacy. Had she taken sides with Gunhild, Knute might have given in. She could not help feeling angry at Knute.

"But," thought Ingeborg, "maybe it was best that Gunhild and Arne should go to America. Maybe it was Providence, after all, that shaped Gunhild's and Arne's destiny."

So, when Knute came into the house after she had returned, Ingeborg was thinking: should she scold him? No, she decided not to, she couldn't make him over.

"Knute is as he is," she thought. "Maybe some day he will see the light. It takes some people longer to see what their duty is. Maybe Knute's stubbornness is due to his early environment. Knute was always kind to me, and he was kind to Gunhild until he began to meddle with her suitors. Some day Knute will be good. Some day he will follow me to America."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE VOYAGE

THE return of Arne from America had gladdened the heart of Inga. She and Finn Sandvik had been busy planning how to join Arne and Gunhild in America. It was finally agreed that they should sail on the *Sea Gull* and that Finn should be released by Captain Swanbeck from further service when they reached New York.

Arriving at Liverpool, Gunhild, Arne and Nora found Terence and his mother and sister. A week later they all took passage on a British ship for New York. On their way over the Atlantic Arne tried hard to teach Gunhild some English. She and Kathleen O'Malley had already become good friends, but, alas! they were unable to talk unless Arne acted as interpreter.

One morning Gunhild asked Arne how far it was from New York to their home in Minnesota. When Arne told her it was over twelve hundred miles she could hardly realize the distance.

"Just think what a beautiful country we'll see!" said Arne.

"But it can't be prettier than Norway," said Gunhild.

"While Norway is very pretty," said Arne, "the country is so different in America. There are snow-capped mountains with waterfalls, just as in Nor-

way. Then we have the level wooded country, with large green hardwood trees, which are very beautiful, and the great plains that stretch over the west for thousands of miles. Our home will be near the eastern edge of those plains."

"But how is the climate?" queried Gunhild.

"Where we're going to live," replied Arne, "the climate is a good deal like that of our homeland."

"Shall we have any neighbors?" asked Gunhild.

"Oh, I think there will be plenty of neighbors when we get there," answered Arne. "The settlers were beginning to come in when we bought our land."

On the eighteenth day of June Arne and Terence, with their party, landed safely in New York. They did not expect the Sea Gull to arrive for some weeks. They put up at a small hotel near Castle Garden. Every day, however, Arne and Terence watched for the arrival of the ship. On the fourth day of July Finn and Inga arrived. Before proceeding farther on their journey, it was decided that Arne and Gunhild, and Finn and Inga were to be married at the seamen's chapel. The wedding ceremonies were performed by Pastor Moe. Terence, his mother and sister and Nora were present at the wedding.

Two days later the whole party started on their journey for the territory of Minnesota. They arrived in Milwaukee in the latter part of July. The passenger terminal there was crowded with immigrants on their way west. They found a large number that had arrived from Norway and not a few from Gunhild's old parish.

While there Gunhild noticed a woman in the Norwegian group who was lying on the floor sobbing; beside her were two small children. Gunhild went up and spoke to her. She asked why she was crying. The woman told her that she and her husband and their two children had come to Buffalo, New York, on a canal boat. That she and the children had boarded the steamboat at Buffalo, but for some reason her husband was left behind. She told Gunhild further that her husband had money, but she had none with which to proceed on her journey.

"Where are you bound for?" asked Gunhild.

"We are bound for La Crosse," answered the woman. "I have an uncle there by the name of Ole Boe, but I have no way of getting there," she said between her sobs.

Gunhild got Arne and told him of the woman. Arne went to her and said, "Are you going to La Crosse? If so, we are going thru that town. We are going by stage to Prairie du Chien and from there north by boat. Our boat will go thru La Crosse, so you can go with us."

"But I have no money," cried the woman.

"I will pay your way," said Arne. "Your husband will undoubtedly arrive on the next boat. I will leave word here with the man in charge of the terminal, so when your husband comes he will find out where you are. When he comes to La Crosse he can repay me."

Whereupon he handed the woman a slip of paper containing his address.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE DRIVE ACROSS WISCONSIN

OUR travelers were delayed in Milwaukee for several days. They had to wait for the overland stage between Milwaukee and Madison. While there several boatloads of immigrants, a large number of whom were Norwegians, landed from the steamboats. Gunhild and Arne met several old neighbors. Some were going to Wisconsin and others to Minnesota.

Finally one morning the whole company left Milwaukee for the west. Their baggage, including the large chests, were carried on top of the coach. Near Watertown, Wisconsin, where the road ran thru heavy timber, one of the coach horses injured its foot by stepping into a hole in a corduroy bridge. The horse bled profusely from the wound, and the driver was unable to proceed. The animal was unhitched from the coach and Arne and Terence helped the driver to care for it, but their efforts were of no avail.

During the long journey Nora of the Mill had talked little. On shipboard and most of the time while riding in the stagecoach, she had been busy with her knitting. When she heard there was something the matter with one of the horses, she got out of the coach and walked over to where the men were standing. She took the animal by the mane

and motioned to the men to get away. Arne whispered something in the ear of the driver and beckoned to Terence. After Nora had been with the horse alone a short time she called to the men. They came back and found that the horse was all right and that the flow of blood had been stopped. The driver in astonishment looked at Arne and asked, "Who is she?"

"She is my mother," replied Arne.

"But how did she stop the bleeding?" asked the driver.

"I don't know any more about it than you do," said Arne. "All I know is that she can do it."

Terence related to his mother and sister what Nora had done.

"She always did those things in Norway," said Arne, "and it seems as tho she can do them equally well in America."

At Madison they stopped over night and changed horses. Here they saw a large number of immigrants arriving from Chicago. Some had driven all the way with horse teams from Ohio and Indiana. Some looked thrifty, others looked poor. The road going west from Madison was dotted with teams. Some drove livestock, consisting of cattle and sheep. Some walked and others rode horseback. There was an almost continuous stream until they reached Prairie du Chien. At this point they were again delayed, for there was no boat going north. They waited five days.

The river looked beautiful. The bluffs on each side were covered with grass and shrubbery. When

they reached La Crosse the woman with the two children, whose husband had been left behind at Buffalo, landed. She was very appreciative of the kindness shown her by Arne and assured him that when her husband came he would hear from them.

Soon they reached the little river town in Minnesota, the end of their long journey.

"Mother, we're near home," said Arne, as he helped Gunhild off the boat.

"It doesn't seem like home to me yet," answered Gunhild, "but I hope when I see it I'll like it."

Terence and Arne immediately hunted up their friend, the surveyor.

"Have you built the houses on our land?" asked Arne.

"Sure I have," said the surveyor. "They were ready over a month ago, and they're as snug and cozy as any cottage you ever saw."

"And now," said Arne, "we're after two teams of horses. Can you get them for us?"

"It is rumored," said the surveyor, "that there's a boat-load of horses coming up the river in a few days."

"Good," said Terence, "for we can do but little farming without horses."

The two boys bought wagons and laid in a supply of provisions. Gunhild and Mrs. O'Malley selected the furniture and kitchen utensils. In five days after landing, the company was ready to start for their prairie home. Their friend, the surveyor, accompanied them thru the bluffs until they reached the prairie. He asked Arne and Terence if they

knew the direction they were to take and pointed the way. Terence had a small compass. After taking note of the direction indicated by the surveyor, Terence said they could find the place.

To Arne's great surprise, what had been the naked prairie was now dotted with small shacks or shanties as far as the eye could reach. Terence laughed and looked at Arne.

"It seems as tho we shall have plenty of neighbors."

"Yes, and I hope they are good people," replied Arne.

The prairie was a beautiful sight. Yellow, red and violet flowers were blooming wherever they looked. At noon they ate their lunch on the grass in the shade of the wagon and the horses, for the sun was hot. Gunhild and Inga had never seen so much level land before.

"Is all this level land we see good plow land?" said Inga to Finn.

"How is that?" asked Finn of Arne.

"The best land in the world," answered Arne.

"It must be very cold in the winter," remarked Gunhild, "for the wind must have a great sweep here."

"Oh, I guess it'll be cold enough," said Arne, "but we'll manage to keep warm."

"Where will you get your firewood?" asked Nora.

"You will soon see trees," said Arne, "that grow along the little river that flows near our home."

They stopped only a short time for lunch and soon were again urging the horses forward.

A little later our immigrants overtook a settler. He was driving a team of horses and a lumber wagon. On the seat with him were his wife and two children. The wagon was filled with furniture, trunks and provisions. He was driving up a slight incline when one of his horses balked. As Terence and Arne came up he was shouting at the balky horse and hitting him as hard as he could with his whip, but the horse would not move. Arne stopped and got off his load.

"You will not get that horse to pull the load if you treat him that way," said Arne. "This licking will do no good."

The man stopped. "He's balky," said he. "I bought those horses from the man that brought the boatload the other day."

"I bought mine there too," said Arne, "but they seem to go all right."

Then the man swore and started again to lick his balky horse.

"If you stop licking this horse," said Arne, "I think I can get him to go."

"All right," answered the man.

Arne unhitched the horse and began to pet him. The horse was hungry and began feeding on the grass. Then Arne hitched the horse to the wagon again. "Now," said he to the settler, "let's take off the heavy part of the load and put it on my wagon." He called for Terence and Finn to help.

"Now, you get on your seat," said Arne, "and start your team, but don't whip the horse, and we three men will push the wagon along for you. When

you get on top of the hill your horse will go all right."

And so it went. The horses, with the assistance of the three men, pulled the load to the top of the hill. After that the settler got along nicely with the balky horse.

"Kindness goes farther than force or cruelty, even with a horse," said Nora.

Soon the two wagons were again moving forward. The young people were determined to reach their homes before night. A short time before sunset Arne pointed to their houses, which looked like small boxes against the horizon. In a little while Terence pulled up his lines and stopped his team. A shout went up from the little group as they arrived in front of the two small buildings.

"Gunhild shall go in first," said Arne, "for if it had not been for her steadfastness and loyalty, we would not have been here today."

As Gunhild walked thru the door she turned around and said, "Arne, this is just as cute a little home as can be."

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE NEW HOME

THE horses were unhitched and tethered on the prairie. Gunhild and Nora swept the floors. Arne and Finn put the big chests on the ground and carried in the furniture. It was planned that Finn and Inga should stay with Arne and Gunhild until they could build a house. Nora, Gunhild and Inga slept in one room and Finn and Arne in the other. A bed was made for Mr. Moe on the sitting-room floor.

The next morning they were all up early. The first thing they were in need of was water. Nora took a pail and walked down to the river. When she returned Gunhild said, "Is this drinking water?"

"Yes," answered Nora. "At the bottom of the hill is a little spring. It is very fine water."

In two or three weeks the immigrants were settled in their new home. Arne and Finn had made several trips to the little river town and brought back lumber and other building material for Finn's house. Terence and Arne helped him build and before cold weather Finn and Inga had moved into their new house.

Arne and Terence had bought plows and harrows and each, before the frost came, had broken up a large field on the prairie. Here they would plant potatoes, corn and wheat in the spring.

They all realized that they must dig a well in order to get a supply of fresh water near their houses. One morning they started to dig. This went very well until they struck gravel; then the sides of the well began to cave in. They had erected a windlass, with rope and bucket, but they could dig no farther on account of the caving in of the gravel. While they were discussing this situation a neighbor, who lived about a mile farther south, came up. He was a New York Yankee.

"Are you trying to dig a well?" asked he.

"Yes," replied the boys, "but we can't go any farther. We have struck gravel and it's caving in on us."

The Yankee looked down into the hole.

"You'll have to curb it," said he.

This was something new to both Arne and Terence.

"What's curbing?" asked Terence.

"You must drive to town and get some planks," said the Yankee. Then he showed them how to put in the curbing. "When you get the planks I'll come up and help you put them in."

The well was dug and curbed and gave forth pure fresh drinking water.

The men cut firewood down on the riverbank and hauled it up to the house.

One day that fall, when Arne came into the house, he told Gunhild that he had good news for her.

"What can that be," queried Gunhild. "Have you heard from home?"

"No," replied Arne. "I have met somebody from

our old home. Can you guess who it is? I met Hermo Halvorson. You know he married Karen Moen."

"And where did you meet them?"

"I drove by his place today. They live north of here about a mile."

"When did they come?"

"About a month ago, and they are already settled in their new home."

Gunhild ran over and told Inga that Karen Moen and Hermo Halvorson were living in the neighborhood. The next day Gunhild and Inga started out on foot to call on their old friends. On the way they passed three small houses, or dugouts, as they were then called. Soon they came to where their friend Karen lived, and what a time they had! Karen and her husband lived in a dugout on the prairie. They had a turf roof and only one room.

"We are very comfortable," said Karen. "We have been so busy since we came that we've not had time to get lonesome."

Then they told each other all about their journey, both on sea and land.

"It was so far," said Karen, "that I never thought we would reach the end of our traveling. Gunhild, how do you like this country?"

"I am delighted with it," replied Gunhild. "It is so beautiful out here on the prairie. Everything is so free and open. The air we breathe seems so pure, and everybody we meet is kind and helpful."

"Hermo tells me that you are living next door to an Irishman."

"Yes," said Gunhild, "you mean Terence O'Malley. He is Arne's great friend. You know, they have been together ever since Arne came to America. They couldn't think more of each other if they were brothers. And Kathleen, Terence's sister, is a very nice girl. She is teaching me to talk English. And just think, Karen, we can already visit together and have a real good time. Then, there is Terence's mother. She is the dearest old lady you ever saw. And how do you like it here?"

"Oh, we haven't had much time to think about it," answered Karen. "Hermo thinks the land is very rich and will produce good crops. When we came up the river somebody told Hermo that we can sell wheat next year, for there will be a buyer in the little river town."

"That's good news," said Gunhild. "Arne and Terence have plowed a big field and will sow it with wheat next spring. Did you know that we have a minister with us from Norway—Pastor Moe, who is going to preach to us on Sundays?"

"That will be fine," said Karen.

Inga and Gunhild invited Karen and Hermo to call on them.

On their way home the two girls gathered large bouquets of prairie flowers, which were still in blossom, altho it was late in the fall.

CHAPTER XL

THE FIRST DIVINE SERVICE

THE Reverend Soren Moe had begun to gather the scattered sheep into his fold. He had already located twenty Norwegian families in the settlement. Late in October he sent out word that divine services would be held at Arne Egeland's home on a certain Sunday morning at ten o'clock. Such a large crowd of people gathered that it was impossible for all of them to get into the house, so it was arranged that the service should be held out doors.

The sun was shining and the day was beautiful. What an occasion it was! What handshaking! There were five families from Arne's old parish in Norway. The rest had come from other parts of the homeland. Men, women and children sat on the ground. A small table had been arranged as an altar.

"The word of God," began the preacher, "comes to us today from the first verse of the fifth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. 'Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' The yoke of bondage, which the Apostle mentions in our text, is sin. He warns us all to stand fast that we do not become subject to sin. Sin takes away our power for good. Sin

514 shapes our conduct if we allow it to get possession of our hearts and minds. The intention of our Maker is that we should be free to do good. If we are under the bondage of sin, we shall be hampered in doing good and in living the lives our Maker intended us to live.

"Then there is political bondage. Unless we stand fast and guard continually against those who may desire to rob us of our political liberty, we may go under the yoke of political bondage. Christ made us free from the yoke of bondage that comes from sin. This country, to which we have come, has made us free from political bondage; but unless we stand fast and are vigilant, evil minded men may rob us of our political liberty.

"There is an old Roman saying to this effect, 'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.' And so it will always be. Our Savior made it possible for us to escape from the bondage of sin. The founders of this government have made it possible for us to maintain political freedom, but we must be vigilant and guard that freedom. No doubt God wishes us all well. If we are worthy, He will delight in blessing us with plenty and happiness. Let us pray that He will give us wisdom, not only to remain steadfast in our religious faith, but that we may also be able to maintain our political liberty. No generation in any age or in any country has been given the privilege that has been given to us. We take this land, as it were, from the hand of God. Nobody before us has either plowed it, planted it, or built on it. A beneficent government

has measured it and marked it out for us. Such an opportunity as this has never before been enjoyed by any people. We come here free from strife, jealousies or selfishness. There is enough for all. Let us hope and pray that it will always be thus in America. No one is going to make us any trouble unless we make it ourselves.

“With all these blessings and gifts there comes a heavy responsibility. This little parish which we may form out here on the prairie, may seem to us a very small group, when we think of the vastness of this republic; yet, if we succeed in preserving our religious faith and our political rights, we shall have done our part in sustaining and maintaining this great commonwealth. And finally, let us hope and pray that all the different nationalities and people that may build about us may do the same, so that there shall be brought forth a nation of God fearing men and women, whose influence may do good, not only here, but also to the whole world.”

After the sermon they sang the old familiar hymn:

“Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices.”

All joined in the singing and, as one man said, “God certainly heard that singing, for it was the loudest and best I ever heard.”

Some of the old people wept for joy. A woman remarked that during the services she had such a peculiar feeling; she thought she was so near God, and her heart was so receptive, that she was not conscious of ever before having had such a friendly feeling toward everybody about her.

Another said: "We must build a church. It may be all right to worship God outdoors when the weather is fine, but every Sunday will not be as this Sunday."

Arne told them that next spring he would donate eighty acres of land for a parsonage and for a site for the church, "And I will buy the lumber," said he, "if you will help haul it."

As the crowd gathered around him they shouted, "We will not only help you haul the lumber, but we will build the church and the parsonage as well."

* * *

One day that fall, Nora heard something calling outside. She went out. "Honk, honk, honk!" she heard above her head. She ran into the house and told Gunhild and Arne to come out. It was wild geese going south, just as they did in Norway.

"What remarkable birds they are!" said Arne. "They must be the same all over the world."

As they were watching them, the geese came down near the ground and alighted on the prairie. Arne rushed for his gun. "I know I can get one," said he.

"But you mustn't!" exclaimed Gunhild. "These beautiful birds remind me of my homeland, and why should you kill them?"

Soon the weather became cold; the water in the sloughs and lakes froze. The wild ducks flew from the north. Arne and Terence shot a good many of them. Prairie chickens also were plentiful.

Sometimes Gunhild was homesick. They had few neighbors, and those they had lived far away.

About a mile east from their place were a man and his wife from Vermont. His name was Tom Sander. He told Arne he had come from the Green Mountains. One day he stood in front of their house, leaning on a hoe.

"I'm hunting for herbs," said he to Arne. "Down east we don't feel safe unless we have in our shed some medicinal plants. I'm looking for henbane, smartweed and nettles. I have a cow and a horse in the barn, and, if they should get sick, I wouldn't know what to do."

"Are you a horse doctor, then?" asked Arne.

"Oh, yes," said he. "I know what to do when a horse or cow gets sick, if I have the herbs. But it's so hard to find them here on the prairie."

"I would like to get some pigs," said Arne. "Do you know where I could get them?"

The old Yankee, after clearing his throat, said, "There are some across the river over in Wisconsin. Sometime next spring I'm going there and I'll bring some young pigs back with me. Have you seen any woodchucks around here?"

"No, I don't think I have," replied Arne, "altho I must admit I don't know what a woodchuck is."

"Have you a gun?" asked the Yankee.

"I have," answered Arne. "But what do you want to do with the woodchuck?"

"I tan the skins and make whip lashes from them. If you come down my way, bring your gun with you and we may get a woodchuck or a coon. I am also looking for hickory trees. I could make ax helves, if I had hickory. Some day I'm going to

take a trip up this little stream to see what I can find."

"There aren't very many trees around here," said Arne.

"Up northwest of here a few miles," continued the Yankee, "there are lakes and I'm sure I'll find hickory there."

After a while he took his hoe and resumed his hunt for medicinal plants.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BLIZZARD

LATE that year Arne made a sleigh. He cut two crooked saplings for runners, and put the wagon box on, so they could all go sleighriding. They called on a great many people. Some they had known in the old country, others they had met for the first time in the settlement. They called on several Yankees. Tom Sander had succeeded in finding a number of medicinal plants, which he had dried in his dugout.

Arne and Terence had mowed grass off a slough down by the little stream. They had cured it and piled it into a haystack under the bluff.

One day early in January they had concluded to drive down and get some of this hay for their horses. The snow was not deep, not over four inches. The sun had been shining all morning and the weather was fine. At noon gray clouds began moving over the sky. They came from the northeast; they moved so fast that in the distance it looked as tho they were rubbing up against the prairie. The wind was rising; the sky assumed a leaden gray color.

After dinner Arne and Terence drove down to the haystack; it was less than a mile away. Before they had put a load of hay on the sleigh the snow was coming down so fast that they couldn't

see anywhere. At home Gunhild and Nora became alarmed. Never before had they seen such a snow-storm. The wind was blowing at a furious rate over the prairie. Great sheets of snow that were coming down were whirled and tossed, so that the outdoors looked like one immense snowdrift. Over and above it all howled the wind. Sometimes it would shriek, then drop down to a low moan. The house became cold. They shivered and bent over the stove.

"Oh, the boys will never come back!" moaned Gunhild. "They will never be able to find their way home in this storm."

Sometimes it seemed as tho a thousand unseen hands were piling the snow up against their little house, then scattering it again over the prairie. Pastor Moe was with them. He admonished them to be quiet and read the ninety-first Psalm. All afternoon the storm raged. Terence and Arne did not come.

"They'll get lost," said Gunhild, "and freeze to death in the snow. I never thought that little snow flakes could be so dangerous. They're so delicate and pretty; so soft and nice. In my homeland I was always happy when I saw those beautiful snow-flakes come down, but here in America they're terrible," she moaned.

"It's not the little snowflakes' fault," said Nora. "The snowflakes of themselves are perfectly harmless. It's only when something stirs them up that they become dangerous. They are urged on and driven over the prairie by the merciless force of

the wind. That is the trouble with the little snowflakes. They're just like people. Most people are gentle, good and harmless until some outside influence stirs them up; then, like the little snowflakes, they become wild and uncontrollable and do damage—sometimes grave damage to those with whom they come in contact."

Night came; no sign of Arne or Terence.

"Oh, Arne, Arne!" cried Gunhild. "Shall I lose you in this terrible storm? You, who have always been so dear and kind to me—shall your life be snuffed out now when I need you most?"

Gunhild could not go to sleep, altho she went to bed. Finally Nora said, as she was sitting on the bed with her. "Gunhild, listen to me. Arne and Terence are safe in the haystack. I know it," she continued.

"But how do you know it?" groaned Gunhild.

"Don't you remember," began Nora, with a serious expression on her face. "Don't you remember, when you came to me in the old mill in Norway and told me that your father was going to force you to marry Carl Wessel, you asked me then, as you ask me now, 'how do you know'? God has given me a peculiar power. I can see farther than most people. I know things that other people can't find out. Arne is as dear to me as he is to you. My thoughts follow him wherever he goes. This afternoon a short time after the storm began I knew that Arne and Terence were safe."

"But where are they?" groaned Gunhild.

"They're in the haystack," nodded Nora, with

a calm expression on her face. "When Arne was driven from Solstad and went to America, I knew it the moment he landed in New York. I knew it when he reached the green grass in California after his terrible experience in the desert. I knew it when he found the nugget of gold. Did I ever tell you anything that did not happen just as I told you?"

"No," said Gunhild. "But there is that dreadful uncertainty."

"There is no uncertainty about it," said Nora, as she gestured with her index finger. "Now lie down and be quiet, and I will sing you to sleep, as your mother used to do when you were a little girl."

Nora sang the little lullaby songs of long ago. She sang about the rabbit mowing the garden; the crow raking the hay; the magpie pulling the load and pussycat driving. She sang about the girls calling the cows, the goats and the sheep, and locking them up safely in the stable. Soon Gunhild slept.

The storm kept up its fury all night, and in the morning it continued with the same force and violence that it had shown the day before. At times immense piles of snow would blow up against the windows of the house and blot out for a moment the light. It seemed as tho the wind was in full command of both the earth and the air. It seemed to move about like an invisible specter, urging on the elements to greater fury.

The first thing Gunhild asked for when she awoke was Arne. "Has Arne come?" she shouted. "Oh, Arne, Arne, why don't you come back to me?"

The only answer she got was the shrieking and moaning of the storm. Nora was cool and composed. She assured Gunhild, as she had the day before, that Arne and Terence would come back when the fury of the storm had abated. A little before noon it became evident to all that the storm was beginning to subside. There were intervals when they could look out thru the window and see the prairie. Soon somebody rapped at the door. It was Kathleen. When Gunhild saw her she ran up to her, put her arms around her neck and kissed her.

"Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen, I'm so glad to see you. Have you any news from Arne and Terence?"

"No, I haven't," answered Kathleen, "but mother says she thinks they are safe in the haystack."

Soon the wind went down.

"Now they'll come," said Nora, as she took her place by the window.

Soon the other women joined her. Oh, how intently they watched the road down to the slough! Nora's eagle eye was the first to see them.

"There, there!" she shouted. "They're coming. Arne and Terence are sitting on the load."

When Gunhild and Kathleen saw them they could not restrain their feelings. Kathleen caught hold of Gunhild and they both danced for joy. By this time Mrs. O'Malley had joined them. Tears were in her eyes. She was so glad the great suspense was over. Arne caught Gunhild in his arms as he came into the house.

"We were comfortable all the time," said he.

"Terence and I were safe enough after we had crawled under the hay in the haystack. When we had our load on we started to come back, but the air was so full of snow that the horses couldn't find the road. We thought that we could let them go where they chose. We felt sure they would find the way back home, but after we left the haystack we found that they were traveling in a circle, for we came right back to the haystack again. We then concluded it was safest to tie the horses to the sleigh and cover them up with hay. The horses munched and chewed all thru the night. Terence and I were not only comfortable, but we slept a part of the time. I'm as hungry as a wolf, Gunhild; have you anything for us to eat? Of course, Terence and I were much worried over you folks at home, but we knew that outside of worrying for us you'd get along all right."

"Mother," said Terence, "what do you think of a snowstorm in America?"

"Oh, it was a terrible storm!" said Mrs. O'Malley. "However, if this prairie was covered as thickly with houses, barns and fences as Ireland is it wouldn't be so dangerous."

"Yes," remarked Arne, "when this country is settled and we get roads and fences, snowstorms here will not be any worse than some of the storms in the mountains of Norway." It is needless to say that the snowstorm had taught the newcomers a valuable lesson, and they all congratulated themselves that nothing more serious had resulted from it.

CHAPTER XLII

A LETTER FROM THE OLD HOME

EARLY one day in March Arne came into the house holding something in his hand behind his back. He looked at Gunhild and smiled.

"Can you guess what I have for you?" said he. She was unable to guess.

"I have a letter from home," said Arne, as he held the letter up to Gunhild. She grasped it and tore it open.

"It's a letter from mother!" she cried.

After reading it she said, "Shall I read it to you, Arne?"

"Yes," said he, "I would be glad to hear it."

"It's addressed to you too," said Gunhild.

"Dear Gunhild and Arne:—

"It is now five months since you left us, and, oh, how the time has dragged! We received the letter Gunhild wrote from New York and were so glad to learn that you had had a safe and lucky voyage. I have thought of you, Gunhild, nearly all the time since you left. Not a day has gone by that you have not been in my thoughts. Sometimes I think I see you sitting by the window sewing. Sometimes I see you out on the lawn. At other times it seems as tho I hear you laugh out in the kitchen with the maids. I never go by your room upstairs but that I think of you, and when I go inside and see your

little writing table and your bed, I break down and cry. I hope by this time you are settled in your new home in Minnesota.

“Oh, how I wish I could walk in some day on you and Arne! I would like to kiss you both, for you are both dearer to me now than you ever were before. A great change has come over your father since you left. He is not so stubborn as he used to be. You know, Gunhild, I think he was more anxious than I, if such a thing were possible, to hear from you and Arne. He drove to the post office at least twice a week for some time before your letter came, and altho the letter was addressed to me, he had opened and read it on the way home. He certainly is not so gruff in his manner as he used to be.

“The Wessels are much downcast over the absence of Carl. They have had only one letter from him since he left home, and then he asked his father to send him thirty dollars. I feel so sorry for Annette. She tells me that she thinks it was their fault that ‘little Carl’ went astray; she still calls him ‘little Carl’. She says he was spoiled because they humored him too much.

“You remember Hannah, our maid; she was with us ten years, and you will be surprised when I tell you that last month she was married. You know Hannah was not very good looking. She married a man who lives way up in the mountains on a little bit of a farm.

“Sam Olsen, who lived north of the church, died last week. He had been sick a long time.

"I know you wrote us a letter when you reached your home, but we have not received it yet.

"Your father came in now just as I am finishing this letter. He told me to send greetings to both of you.

"With the most kindly wishes for you both and with regards to Nora, I am,

"Your most affectionate mother,

INGEBORG."

As Gunhild finished the letter Arne laughed.

"I guess," said he, "that father Solstad feels more kindly toward us now than he ever did before."

"Oh, father was always good," said Gunhild. "I feel certain that he and mother some day will visit us, and, oh, Arne," she continued, with enthusiasm, "before they come we must fix up our place so it will look nice!"

"Oh, we'll do that," said he.

"But just think," said Gunhild, as she shook her head, "what a wreck Carl Wessel must be!"

Then Arne told her that Carl had tried to hold him up at the point of a gun when he was in California.

"Did he actually try to shoot you?" said Gunhild.

"That's what he did," said Arne, "and if it hadn't been for Terence he might have succeeded."

"And you never told me that before," said Gunhild.

"No, I felt sorry for his father and mother, and I didn't want the story to be circulated in Norway."

CHAPTER XLIII

YANKEE INGENUITY

ONE day Arne took his gun and walked down to Tom Sander's place. Tom was busy working. He had built a little workshop next to his dugout. Here he had a bench, with different kinds of tools, and was busy making cradles. There were hickory and ash logs that had been split up, ready to be made into cradles, rakes and bows for oxen.

"I see you have plenty of hickory and ash. Where did you find them?" asked Arne.

"I found them down around the bluffs of the Mississippi river."

Tom was one of those ingenious Yankees who could make anything that he had seen made from wood. He could use a drawknife, a plane and a whittling knife.

"What are you making?" asked Arne.

"Cradles," said Tom. "You've plowed about twenty acres of prairie for wheat, haven't you? How are you going to get it cut unless you have a cradle? There are no cradles sold anywhere around here. I have sent east for scythes for them. They'll be up by boat in the spring. You'll want two cradles for your wheat crop, and I'm going to have them ready for you. This ash log here is going to be made into rakes. If I had a forge and an anvil, I'd make some pitchforks for you."

Tom then showed him several ox yokes that he had made, and how he had bent the bows for the yokes.

"If you'll bring your team down early next spring and plow a ten-acre field for me, I'll give you two cradles."

"That I can do easily," said Arne, "but I have never seen a cradle before. I wouldn't know how to use it."

"When the wheat is ripe I'll show you how to swing it," said Tom. "You used sickles in Norway, but that's too slow for the Yankee."

Tom then showed him his cow, his two pigs and a half dozen chickens.

"Where did you get all this livestock?" asked Arne.

"I got them down by the river. There is an old York State Yankee down there, who has land in the valley between the bluffs. He has a little herd of cattle, some pigs and a lot of chickens."

"How can I find him?"

"Cy Billings is his name. Drive down along the river bank. He lives about two miles south of the little town."

Tom said he was going to take another trip down there and was going to bring back some material for baskets.

"Do you make baskets too?" said Arne.

"I make anything that can be made with an ax, a knife and a saw."

Tom Sander had in all probability started the

first industrial plant in the state of Minnesota. Its capacity was not great, yet the implements he made went far to supply the wants of the new settlement. The ingenuity of this man was undoubtedly the result of necessity. He had come from a race of men that from necessity became the fathers of our country's industries. This Yankee ingenuity was being felt already on the prairies of Minnesota.

Not long after Arne's visit to Tom Sander he drove down to the river town to pay a visit to Cy Billings. It was in the month of March. The ice in the Mississippi river had broken up. The stage of water was a little higher than usual. The road wound around the bluffs and around the sloughs. Long-legged snipes, that looked like birds on stilts, were boring in the mud with their bills. Trees, torn up by their roots, had been washed ashore by the flood, which was now beginning to subside.

The grass was shooting up on the low lands. Soon he heard the tinkling of cow bells. This must be the place, thought Arne. He drove up to a log-house behind one of the bluffs. It was not large. On one end was a chimney, built from cobble-stones and mud. In the yard in front of the house were chickens, geese and ducks. Near the door of the cottage lay a large Newfoundland dog, snoozing in the sun.

No human being was visible. Everything was quiet, excepting the cackling of the hens and the squawking of the ducks. The dog woke up, but made no disturbance. Arne tied his horses to a small tree, patted the dog on the head and walked

up to the door. He rapped. Soon a woman appeared.

Arne said, "Good morning. Cy Billings live here?"

"He does."

"Is he home?"

"Yes, sir, he is working out in the barn." As she said this, she pointed to a log barn of considerable size that stood farther in under the bluff.

The woman had on a blue jean skirt with several large patches. Notwithstanding that fact, she looked clean and tidy. She wore slippers which, to all appearances, were homemade. They had heavy wooden soles, on the top of which was nailed leather from old bootlegs.

Arne went to the barn, where he found Mr. Billings repairing an old wooden plow. He was covering the land-side and mold-board with old pieces of sheet iron.

"Good morning," said Arne.

The man turned around quickly as if greatly surprised.

"Good morning, sir," said he, as he looked Arne over carefully. "Where are you bound for?"

"I'm looking for a man who has pigs to sell."

"I have no pigs to sell, but I can sell you some young ones. Come around the barn and see them."

Here was a brood sow with eight little pigs.

"Can I have four of them?" said Arne.

"Yes, you can," said the man. "Where are you from?"

"I live west on the prairie about twenty miles."

"You must live near my friend, Tom Sander."

"He is my neighbor," said Arne. "Have you a cow you want to sell?"

"More than one," said Cy. "I have ten of them."

On the doors and walls of the barn were nailed a number of skins—muskrat, coon, woodchuck and one bear skin.

It was impossible to tell what kind of cloth was in Cy's pants; they had been patched so much and all the patches were of a different color.

Arne soon struck a bargain with Cy. He bought four young pigs, a cow, five hens and a rooster.

"There's not much sale for things here," said Cy. "Once in a while I sell a few pounds of butter to the captain of one of the boats that go by here. Sometimes I take eggs up to the little village, but I almost have to give them away to get rid of them. You see that big bearskin on the barn wall? I shot that critter early this spring. He had a den up in that bluff yonder. About two weeks ago he got out of his den. Gracious, but he was hungry. He came down here and tackled one of my pigs. I got my rifle out and landed him the first shot. Don't you want to buy some whip lashes? Here are some that I braided from woodchuck skins. They'll last," said Cy, as he showed them to Arne.

Arne bought half a dozen of them. The pigs he put in a gunny sack. The chickens he put in a basket and tied a blanket over the top. Before he left, Cy put some corn in the basket.

"That'll keep 'em quiet," said he.

"Is the cow with calf?" asked Arne.

"That she is. She'll come in about next Christmas. Are you a new settler?"

"I am," replied Arne. "I came last summer."

"Putting in any crops this year?"

"Twenty acres."

"Anybody up your way want any more livestock? I've got it for sale," said Cy.

"I think you'll have some customers," said Arne, as he started his team and drove up the road.

Arne brought home the livestock he had bought in good condition late that evening. He tied the cow in the stable where the horses were. The pigs he put in a large box until morning, when he gave two of them to Terence, telling him all his experiences with Cy Billings. He also gave Terence two of his hens.

"I could have had more," said Arne, "but I did not feel able to care for any more, for it was a long drive."

"I think I'll go down there, too," said Terence, "for my mother is very anxious to have a cow. She has cared for cows all her life, and she seems to think that a cow out on the prairie here would be company for her. I am sure that Kathleen would want some more chickens, for she is very fond of them."

CHAPTER XLIV

SPRINGTIME ON THE PRAIRIE

MARCH had come and gone. It was April. There was no more snow to be seen. The birds had come back from the south. The wild geese were calling from the sky on their journey toward the north. The ducks were swimming in the sloughs along the little stream. The snow during the winter had packed the dry brown grass down into the ground. The prairie was beginning to turn green. The trees along the little stream were budding.

"I want to plant something," said Gunhild to Kathleen. "Let us go and see if we can find some wild flower bushes. If I knew where there were some young trees, I would dig them up and plant them on the lawn in front of our house."

On the way down the slope to the slough Gunhild saw a mullen, tall and slim, yellow and dry.

"What is this? Look here, there were flowers on this plant last year!"

"Yes," said Kathleen, "but that plant is dead now; it will never bear flowers again. Look at the seeds in the top of it. The wind must blow those seeds out and scatter them, and sometime this summer they will grow into plants. This one is dead."

When they came to the river the cowslips were blooming out on the small bogs in the stream, and

the violets—the ground was blue with them! There were pasque flowers and the blood root. The girls picked them and made nosegays, but they couldn't get the cowslips, for they were out in the water. As they walked thru the rushes a bird flew up, a large bird with brown and light feathers.

"That's a prairie chicken," said Kathleen. "I'll bet she has a nest here. Don't let's go near it. My mother always told me if you look into a bird's nest the bird will not come back."

"That is true," said Gunhild, "if you breathe on the eggs; but if you hold your breath while you look at the nest, the bird will come back."

Kathleen bent over and held her breath as she looked down into the nest. "There are two beautiful eggs. Just look at the tiny brown spots on them. Aren't they cute?"

Gunhild held her breath and looked into the nest also.

"I wish I had a hoe," said Kathleen. "I'd dig up some of those young maples and elms. You wait for me and I'll run up to the house and get one."

The girls dug up a number of small maples, elms and cottonwoods. Then they sat down on a nice dry spot and rested.

"I want some of those cowslips," said Gunhild. "I'm going to pull off my shoes and stockings and wade out to one of those little bogs."

"So will I," said Kathleen.

Soon the two girls were wading out in the water, and picked their aprons full of cowslips.

"I think this little river is so different from the rivers in Norway," said Gunhild. "There they were turbulent. They dashed down over the rocks and swirled around the gorges in the valley. The water was so restless, it was never quiet. It would swish around the stones, gurgle under the logs, always going so fast. This stream seems so quiet and peaceful. Nothing to disturb it. It wanders along its course as tho it had plenty of time, and as tho it loved to linger and water the flowers and trees on its banks."

"It's just like the prairie," said Kathleen. "You know the prairie seems so quiet and peaceful. I feel as tho I could lie down anywhere on it and go to sleep. Everything seems to be so orderly here. On the prairie you don't hear the rustling of the wind in the trees and the squeaking of the dead branches when it blows hard."

"May be we shall grow to like the prairie," said Gunhild. "The prairie is a stranger to me yet. It's like meeting a person you're not well acquainted with. I'm sure when we know it better we shall see beautiful things that we don't see now."

"I think the rain showers on the prairie are so interesting," said Kathleen. "You can see them so far off. It looks as tho the rain cloud were a large sponge, and that somebody were squeezing the water out of it and moving it around just as tho it were a sprinkling can."

"I didn't see very many birds here last fall," said Gunhild, "but it seems to me now there are many more. You know the other morning Arne saw two

robins in front of our house, but no magpies. Around our home in Norway they were very plentiful. The magpie likes to stay around dwellings. Maybe when this country is settled the magpie will come. I'll show you a game that we used to play when we were little, in Norway. You know the violet grows in a hook. You take a violet and I'll take one and we'll hook them together. Then pull, and we'll see who has the strongest violet. The one that wins will get married first."

"But you are married," said Kathleen, with a laugh.

"If I win," said Gunhild, "it means that you will be an old maid."

"Oh, then I won't play," said Kathleen.

"Well, let's say, then, if you win you'll get married soon. If I win it means you'll have to wait a long time for a sweetheart."

Kathleen won the game, for she had a big, stout violet that broke all the violets Gunhild had in her lap.

The girls carried their trees and bushes home. On their way back, on the slopes of the hill, they found several wild rosebushes. All that afternoon they were planting.

* * *

That spring Arne and Terence plowed ten acres for Tom Sander. They planted potatoes on their own land and sowed wheat and a piece of oats for the horses. They also reserved a part of the plowed ground for corn, but neither of them knew the time or the manner of planting this crop.

"Tom Sander knows," said Terence. "We'll ask him."

Tom Sander told them that they must not plant any corn until the buds on the hickory trees were as large as squirrel's ears.

"That is what we went by down east," said he, "and I think the rule will hold good here."

Soon the grass came and the prairie was decorated with innumerable little flowers of different colors. Gunhild thought that it looked like an immense quilt that covered the earth as far as she could see.

That spring Nora took to the road again with her basket. She traveled far and wide with her knitting, as she had done in Norway. Wherever there lived a Norwegian family she stopped and chatted and told the news of the settlement. Those from her old settlement in Norway called her Nora of the Mill. This name spread until almost everybody knew her by that name.

Arne bought eighty acres of land and gave it to the church, as he had promised the previous summer. A bee was held, and soon the lumber was on the ground for a church and a parsonage. The people worked with a will, and before long the two buildings took shape. While in Norway Arne had bought two brass candlesticks with the five dollars that Bertha Fisker had left him. Sam Addick had repaid him the money he had loaned him to keep him out of jail, when he was in New York.

"Bertha Fisker always said she wanted to make a light. Now," said Arne, "her five dollars will

hold two lights on the altar. I know that this would please my godmother, could she see it. Who knows, maybe she does see it?"

Terence also made a trip down the river and bought livestock from Cy Billings. He bought a cow, some pigs and chickens.

CHAPTER XLV

INDICATIONS

TWO years had passed since Gunhild and Arne left for America. Often since their departure had Ingeborg, and perhaps Knute, felt lonesome. The activities at Solstad had lessened. Social doings had been few. No longer did the chief men of the parish gather there around the banquet table. When Knute appeared in public, he looked less cheerful than usual. Farming operations were carried on as before.

They talked often of Gunhild and Arne. Knute no longer became irritated at the mention of Arne's name. There were no more tirades against Nora of the Mill.

It was in the summer time. Ingeborg was waiting anxiously for a letter from Gunhild. She felt that a letter from her was due now. Hans, their old and trusted hired man, was in town that day. Ingeborg had been watching for his return all afternoon. Hans was late. Supper had been served, yet he did not come.

A long time after, Hans drove into the yard. Ingeborg was soon beside him.

"Have you any mail?" she asked.

"Yes, there's a letter from Gunhild."

Ingeborg took it and hastened back into the house.

"Knute!" she shouted, "here's a letter from Gunhild. Come, let's read it together."

"I'm ready," said Knute with a smile on his face.

Ingeborg opened the envelope and read. The letter was dated March 1st.

"Dear Father and Mother:—

"Thank you very much for the very interesting letter that I received from you about a week ago. Ever since reading it I have felt a strong desire to write you.

"I am well and am getting along nicely. I have great news for you. A month ago we got a little baby boy at our house. Oh, how I wish you could see him! He is just as cute as he can be. He is quite large and looks healthy and happy. He cries very little. Last Sunday we took him to church and had him baptized. We named him after father, Knute Solstad. Arne and Finn were godfathers and Inga godmother. Nora is very much attached to him. When he's awake she wants to hold him all the time. I think he looks like you, father.

"We got a good crop of wheat last fall. We got thirty bushels to the acre. We had twenty acres. Arne has bought another team of horses. He has also built a new stable and a large barn. Our corn crop was very good. This summer Arne intends to plow up many more acres. He also talks of building a new house. I tell him not to build until we can have a real nice one as large as my old home in Norway.

"We had a lot of cold weather last winter. The

snow in some places was between two and three feet deep. I think it is colder here than in Norway, but the days are brighter and much more cheerful. There seems to be more sunlight than at home. Then, too, the days are not so short in midwinter.

"Arne and Terence are now hauling their wheat to market. The sleighing is good. They can haul much larger loads in the winter time than in summer. They are getting a dollar a bushel for their wheat now. Next year Arne says he's going to plant more corn. It is so hard to get help to harvest the wheat crop, because that gets ripe all at once.

"There is getting to be a large number of neighbors here from our old parish in Norway. Two new families moved in late last fall, Hans Kleven and family and Thor Bergdahl. They stopped for a while in Wisconsin, but last fall they came here and bought land. It seems so much like home among all the old neighbors. The country is getting to look beautiful. Most everybody is planting orchards, shade trees and shrubbery. The roads have all been laid out, and it looks ever so much better than it did when we came.

"The new church is up and also the parsonage. Pastor Moe is doing very well. The people all like him. He has moved into the parsonage and lives there alone. There is, however, a rumor that he is going to be married next fall.

"At times I get very lonesome for you and father. I can hardly bear to think that you are living so far away from me.

"While I am writing, Nora is holding little

Knute. You ought to see him. He is the sweetest little baby you ever saw. Oh, how I wish you could come and see us! Tell father that I am sure he would like it here in Minnesota, because he has so many old friends here. Swen Oyen comes in to see us every time he comes to church, and he always asks about father. He says he knows that Knute Solstad would like America. Arne has bought a hundred and sixty acres of land right next to our place. 'That shall be for grandfather Solstad,' he says, 'for I know he will come to Minnesota some day.'

"I must close, with ever so much love to you and father and the hope that you will soon come to see us. Little Knute sends a kiss.

"Your affectionate children,
GUNHILD AND ARNE."

After Ingeborg got thru reading the letter Knute got up and went out. "What did he go out for so quick?" thought Ingeborg. She had not even a moment to talk to him about the letter. She surmised that Knute went out to wipe the tears from his eyes, so that she should not see his weakness.

"Oh, that Knute, that Knute!" said Ingeborg to herself. "How stubborn he has been all his life! He always seemed to think that it was weakness for him to show any signs of emotion. But he's going to come to it after a while. Solstad some day will be sold. Lately Knute has taken a great deal of interest in America. He brought home a book on America the other day and, oh, my, how inter-

ested he seems to be in it! It'll come my way some time."

After a while Knute came back.

"How did you like that letter from Gunhild?" asked Ingeborg.

"It was very interesting," said Knute curtly and nodded his head.

"That great line of ancestry that you've been bragging so about seems to have taken root in America."

This fling seemed to irritate Knute a little.

"It's too bad," said he, "that little Knute should not have been born in Solstad."

"That might have been," responded Ingeborg, "if you had not been so stubborn. It is your fault, Knute, that you and I are living here alone in this large house as tho we were serving a prison term. Think what a fine son-in-law Arne Egeland is! A man of whom anybody can feel proud."

"Oh, well," said Knute with a scowl on his face, "let bygones be bygones. Don't open old sores in that way."

But Ingeborg looked steadfastly at Knute and said: "When I think back on your conduct, Knute, sometimes it makes me very angry. Often I've been tempted to scold you, but I thought I'd let your own conduct in the past be your accuser. If there is not a power within yourself that will right the wrong that you did not only to me, but to Gunhild and Arne, then no scolding of mine will do it."

Again Knute became nervous and, without saying a word, left the house. For some time after that

Ingeborg thought that Knute was more considerate of her than he had ever been before. He seemed to be so anxious to please her in every way. He never contradicted her, nor found fault with anything that she did.

"There is some change going on in Knute," Ingeborg would say to herself. "As I told him, he is beginning to see his own faults. I hope to God he'll see his faults in the past and make amends for them. Some day I will take a stand. I'll tell him that I want him to sell Solstad, and when I take that stand, I'll never give up until Solstad is sold. I know when Solstad is sold, Knute will go to America, because he is unable to bear the shock that somebody besides himself shall sit in the seat of honor at Solstad."

Knute had often thought of Gunhild since she left with Arne. At times he was not certain but that he had been unkind to her. The more he thought of the past, the more he felt that Gunhild had been right all the time in refusing to marry Carl Wessel. But he would not admit it openly; in fact, he was afraid that Ingeborg might find out that he was weakening on this point. Since Gunhild's last letter he had become much more interested in America.

That Gunhild and Arne should name their first born after him had touched a tender spot in his heart. Then, too, all his old friends were gone. Captain Wessel was getting old and was losing interest in things. Some of his old friends in town had died. There was nothing to cheer him up in

the old home any more, either. Why should he be cutting timber and selling it? What should he do with his money? He had enough.

After a while the Solstad farm got to be a burden to him. But how should he break the news to Ingeborg? It wouldn't do to tell her that, as a result of her anxiety to sell Solstad and go to America, he had yielded. He wanted Ingeborg to believe that he thought his word was still law. He could make up with Arne because he was such a good natured, whole-souled fellow. But there was Nora of the Mill. He dreaded to think of the flings and jibes she would delight in hurling at him should he go to America.

There was one good friend he had, and he was an old friend—Attorney Blom. He might go and consult with him. He knew a good deal about America too. One day while in town Knute called on the attorney at his office.

“What are you after?” said Blom as Knute came thru the door. “Are you litigating again with your neighbor across the river?”

“No, I'm not,” said Knute quickly, as tho he wanted to impress upon Attorney Blom that he came on a much more important errand than litigation.

Knute was at a loss to know just how he should open the conversation. He did not for a moment want Blom to think that he had any idea of selling Solstad and emigrating to America. He thought he would start the conversation with Blom by telling

him of the letter he had lately received from Gunhild.

"I had a little time," said Knute, "and not having anything better to do, I came up here to make a friendly call. I have no special business."

"I'm glad you came in," said Mr. Blom as he pulled out a chair. "I suppose you are lonesome up at Solstad since Gunhild left."

"Oh, yes," said Knute, "we miss her very much. We had a long letter from her the other day."

"And how is she coming on?" asked Blom.

"Why, from the way she writes, I should say much better than we are getting on here in Norway."

Blom stuck the quill pen he held in his hand over his ear and for a while looked out thru the window. He looked as tho he was hesitating about telling Knute what he actually knew about America.

"What state did Arne and Gunhild go to?" said Blom finally.

"They are in the territory of Minnesota, about twenty English miles from the Mississippi river."

Blom turned around in his chair and leaned over towards Knute. In a low tone he said, "Knute Solstad, I believe that where your daughter and Arne live is the best land in the world. You know I wouldn't care to say this to everybody, but I'm saying it to you confidentially. Young people who go from here to Minnesota will all be rich. Now mark what I tell you."

At this remark from Blom, Knute's head dropped a little.

"It would be dangerous," began Knute, "to say these things out loud, for all the young people would go to America and some of the old ones too; and from what Gunhild has been writing home, I'm inclined to agree with you."

This remark from Knute seemed to stir Attorney Blom. Throwing his penknife on the table and putting his hands behind his head he stretched out in his chair.

"I should think," said he, "that it would be rather lonesome for you and Ingeborg to live all alone in the big house at Solstad. If I were in your place and had my only child in America I would sell the farm and go there myself."

Knute closed his lips tightly and shook his head.

"I have no thought whatever of doing that. Just think what kind of a government they must have! Take Finn Sandvik, for example, who has been just a common mattross all his life. He has a right to vote in America, and so have all the other common laborers that you and I know, who have left this country for America. With such people as that participating in public affairs, I don't understand how they can maintain law and order over there."

These words seemed to excite Attorney Blom very much. With much feeling and gesticulating with both hands, "Knute Solstad," he shouted, "I can't agree with you in this. You have always belonged to the land-owning aristocracy in this country. You have always hobnobbed with the military men, the preachers and the reeve. You are unable to comprehend that there is a great deal of intelli-

gence in the masses. Take, for example, Arne Ege-land, who was just a little cowboy when he worked for you. See what he's accomplished. He's well enough off already to buy you out two or three times over, and I'll wager my cow against your cat that he will some day be a very rich man in Minnesota."

Knute looked askance at Blom for a while and was stroking his beard. It seemed as tho Knute felt a little pride in the laudation given Arne by the lawyer. Then, after collecting his thoughts, he said coolly, "But, Squire Blom, you must remember that Arne Ege-land is the grandson of that renowned doctor, Frans Abel."

"But I must be going," said Knute, as he arose from his chair. "America is certainly getting to be an interesting country, and I shall be glad to discuss this matter further with you."

When Ingeborg began to notice that Knute was much interested in America she stopped talking about it to him. "For," said she to herself, "Knute is very stubborn and, if I should urge him too strongly, he would hesitate in yielding to my wishes. He has begun to think about America himself now, and I'll just let him go on. When he begins to talk America after this, I'll not appear to be quite as anxious as I used to be. Knute will then keep on thinking that his word is still law at Solstad."

His visit to Attorney Blom had set Knute thinking more than ever about America. He was beginning to realize that he had made himself ridiculous in his attempt to get Gunhild to marry Carl Wessel. He had treated Arne, his son-in-law, most shame-

fully and had treated his daughter very little better. He now knew that he should have accompanied Gunhild and Arne to town when they sailed for America. He saw that he had been beaten by Nora of the Mill, whom he hated, not entirely on account of what she had done to him, but rather on account of that triumphant air that she assumed when he met her. It seemed to him that she wanted to say by her conduct, "Knut Solstad, I humiliated you before your neighbors. I took your daughter away from you and made her my daughter-in-law."

Arne, he thought, would overlook the past, for he was such a broadminded, good-natured fellow. Then, too, he did not want Ingeborg to think that she was having her way all the time. Knute was beginning to feel that he was losing caste with his own family. His wife, Ingeborg, had always looked up to him as a great man. He could not help but feel, now, that she might think less of his greatness, his power and influence. All these things were troubling him a great deal. If he should finally make up his mind to sell Solstad and go to America, he would never admit that he intended to stay in that country. He would tell Ingeborg that he was going over there to pay Gunhild a visit.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE FEAST AT SOLSTAD

SEVERAL years had gone by. Ingeborg had refrained all this time from saying anything about going to America. Knute, however, had often talked about Gunhild and Arne. He seemed to be much interested in their welfare. He often talked with Captain Swanbeck when he was in town. Whenever there was any news in the paper about America, and especially Minnesota, he read it out loud to Ingeborg. Everything had been quiet at Solstad, and matters had gone on about the same as in the past.

"This house is getting old," said Knute one evening to Ingeborg, "and some of the out-buildings are badly in need of repair."

"Why don't you fix them up?" interjected Ingeborg.

Knute filled his pipe, lit it and sat down in a large rocking chair.

"It's uncertain," said he, "how long you and I will live, and who cares after that what happens to Solstad. None of our blood will live here after we're gone, and then it is not unlikely that I may take it into my head to sell this place."

Ingeborg was knitting and looked at him over her spectacles.

"Where shall you and I go then?" she asked.

"Oh," said Knute, as he stroked his whiskers, "we might go to America and see Gunhild and Arne. Just for a visit. I wouldn't want to live in that country. We could come back here to Norway and live in town."

Ingeborg kept on knitting and said nothing. It was near Christmas time.

"It's a long time," she began, "since we entertained anybody at Solstad. If you will invite your old friends, the maids and I will get up a dinner for them. It will be so lonesome thru the Christmas holidays, and it would be nice to see you and your friends having a good time in the old dining-room."

Knute looked up and said, "Very well, what day shall we invite them for?"

"I think," said she, "we'd better have them to dinner the day after Christmas. Christmas day we'll all be going to church."

So it was arranged that invitations should be sent out as Ingeborg had suggested.

The day was beautiful. The guests all arrived before twelve o'clock. There was the pastor, who was a little unsteady in his walk on account of advancing years. Old Captain Wessel was there; Knute hadn't thought much of the captain in late years. His presence always brought back unpleasant memories, but he was invited for old times' sake. Neither Knute nor Ingeborg wanted to offend him. There was the reeve of the county, Judge Lund, Squire Blom and several others from the little town.

After dinner, while they were sitting around the table, the maids passed aquavit and Moselle. Knute

seemed pleased and in good spirits, as he sat at the head of the table. After drinking a toast to the host and hostess the conversation became general. Most of the guests lit their pipes and were eagerly discussing first one subject, then another. Finally the pastor asked Knute how Gunhild was coming on in the New World.

"We get nothing but good news from her," said Knute. "She and Arne have two children now; the oldest a boy, whom they named Knute Solstad after me," he added modestly.

Suddenly all the guests arose, clinked glasses with Knute, then with one another.

"Let us all drink a 'skaal' to the young Knute Solstad," said Judge Lund. "And here," he continued, "is hoping that the young man may excel in deed and virtue as his grandfather did before him."

After the guests had all sat down the pastor remarked, "It is certainly a pleasure to hear such good news from Knute Solstad himself. There is only one sad thing about it," he continued, "that a boy with such worthy forefathers should live in a country like America, so far away from his ancestral home."

"I agree with the pastor," said the reeve. "I say it's too bad."

"I can't see anything bad about that," said Squire Blom. "There are almost as many who have left the parish here for America as there are people left in the parish, and I'm not blaming them for going," said he, as he pounded the table for emphasis.

"Arne Egeland is worth more money than anyone in this whole parish."

The pastor took another drink of Moselle. After clearing his throat he retorted: "Money is not everything in this life. We must think of the spiritual side. Think how difficult it must be for people who have been accustomed to a Christian life to live among such a motley crowd as have gone to America! Think for a moment of those true Christians, for that I know they were, who left this valley, living among Indians and negroes, and I might say, pagans, for I have been informed that a large number of those who have gone to America care neither for God nor church."

"Tut, tut," said Captain Swanbeck. "You don't know what you're talking about. I have been in New York every year for six years. They have just as many churches and just as good church people there as we have here. If I'm not mistaken, there are just as many pagans here as there are in Minnesota. I say, for the poor man America is the best country to live in."

The judge was at a loss what to say; whether he should say a good word for Arne Egeland or not. If he said a good word for him, it might anger their host, for had he not driven him out of his house? It was possible, in spite of that fact, that Knute was proud of his son-in-law. So what should he say?

"I believe," said the judge, "that there is more crime in America than in any other country, yet notwithstanding that fact, there, no doubt, are many good people."

At this point Captain Wessel ventured to make a remark.

"I think the trouble with America is that they have no army over there; no soldiers that are worthy of the name. You can never maintain law and order without a well trained and well equipped standing army. There is nothing that will command the respect of the people so much as a good army."

At this remark by the captain, Squire Blom laughed.

"Why, captain," said he, "should they have an army? There is no danger of anyone attempting to invade the United States. They are too far away from Europe to be alarmed about any trouble from that quarter. You gentlemen do not seem to realize that they have republican form of government. It's the people that rule in America. They don't need any army to maintain law and order. It's only in Europe, where they have absolute monarchies, that it may be necessary to have an army in order to make people respect the government. If I were in Knute Solstad's place I would sell this farm and go to America."

"I never believe that will happen," broke in the reeve. "Think of the long line of ancestors who have lived and died on this place."

Knute's face broke into a smile during this talk.

"I would never go to America," said he, "to stay. Ingeborg and I will probably make a trip over there soon, but you can all rest assured," as he shook his head, "that we'll both come back and end our days here."

This remark was followed by applause from the guests. There were two who did not applaud this talk. They were Squire Blom and Captain Swanbeck. Turning around and looking at Knute, Swanbeck said, "If you knew as much about America as I do, you wouldn't talk that way."

The talk in the dining-room was all overheard by Ingeborg, for, unbeknown to anybody, she had taken a seat in the vestibule. "If I ever get Knute," she said to herself, "to go to America, he'll never get back to Norway."

From what Knute had said she concluded that everything was working out satisfactorily.

CHAPTER XLVII

CHANGES IN THE SETTLEMENT

A LARGE and beautiful frame house had been built by Arne, but the little cottage they had lived in when they arrived was still standing.

"Maybe some new settler will be glad to live in the cottage," said Arne, "until he can build a house of his own, so we will let it stand."

The lawn in front of the new house had been planted with shade trees and flower-beds.

"It is a much more beautiful house," said Gunhild, "than our old home in Norway."

Arne had prospered. The section of land he lived on was more than half broken. The whole prairie, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with corn fields and grain fields. Arne had built a large horse barn and a cow stable. A small village had sprung up down on the little stream about two miles from Arne's home. A large portion of the settlers were still living in their dugouts, yet here and there could be seen large, new houses.

Besides Knute, the first born, they now had a little baby girl. She had been named Ingeborg.

"It wouldn't seem right," said Gunhild, "to have father's name in our family and leave mother out."

Little Ingeborg was just beginning to walk.

Gunhild had learned English, so she now spoke it fluently. Pat O'Malley, Terence's brother, had

arrived from Ireland and brought with him a wife from the homeland. He had bought a farm on the other side of the little stream, about two miles from where Terence lived.

Towards spring Gunhild got a letter from home. After she had read it she felt so happy that she went out and brought Arne into the house.

"We have got the best news that we've had since we left home, and I want you to sit down and listen to this letter."

Nora became interested; came in and sat down.

"May I hear the news, too?" said she.

"Anybody can hear it," said Gunhild, "who wants to listen. I have never been so happy as now, since Arne came back from America."

"And such a long letter," said Arne as Gunhild pulled it out of the envelope.

"It's from mother."

"Dear Gunhild and Arne:—

"I was so happy when I received your last letter. The reason why I have not written you sooner is that I wanted to wait until I could give you some good news. Solstad has been sold. Nels Haraldson, the lumber dealer in town, bought it. He paid twelve thousand dollars, which was really more than Knute expected to get. We have agreed to vacate the house by the first of May, and now comes the best news of all. Your father has determined that he and I shall sail with Captain Swanbeck this spring for America. Arrangements for the trip

have already been made. Captain Swanbeck has agreed to provide us with a private cabin, and we are to eat at his table. You know that the emigrants that he takes across board themselves, but we did not want to go to the trouble of providing provisions for the journey.

“Last Christmas I got up a dinner for your father and his friends. It reminded me so much of old times when you were here. America was the topic of conversation at the table. Among those present were our pastor, Captain Wessel and several old friends from town. The reeve and Captain Wessel argued strongly against America; but Captain Swanbeck and Squire Blom were too much for them, and I think it had a good influence on your father. The first intimation I had was when your father told them that he was going to take a trip to America, but added emphatically that he was coming back; that he would never stay in such a country. I sat in the vestibule and heard it all.

“Of late your father has been more cheerful than usual. I have made up my mind that we shall never return to Norway. My joy and hope is in your country, where you live. Captain Swanbeck intimated that he would not sail until late in May, and told me that we probably would not reach New York until the first of August. I shall not write you another letter before we leave. I hope Divine Providence will protect and keep us on this long and dangerous journey. Until we see you, good-bye.

"With love to both of you and to little Knute and Ingeborg and with greetings to Nora,

"I am your most affectionate mother,
INGEBORG."

"Aren't you glad?" said Gunhild as she looked at Arne.

"Yes, this is a very happy ending of the whole matter," answered Arne.

"Do you remember," said Nora, as she looked at Gunhild, "what I said to your father out on the lawn at Solstad?"

"Oh, yes, I remember it all," said Gunhild; "but he was so excited then. That happened about the time when Carl was arrested, you know."

"Do you remember how he drove me off the lawn and showed me the road?" retorted Nora. As she said this the fire came into her eyes. "Knute Solstad's stubbornness," she continued, "brought about all the trouble you had with your father. Think how it must have cut him to the quick when he sold the old homestead!"

"When father comes," said Gunhild, "you must not talk that way to him, for mother and I are going to coax him to stay with us the rest of his life."

"I suppose I shall have to leave the house then," said Nora, as she nervously pulled at her apron.

"No, mother," spoke up Arne, "nobody can drive my mother out of my house, but I agree with Gunhild that you must be careful how you talk to him. You must not open up the old wounds again."

"I will go and live in the old house," said Nora.

"That's good enough for me. It's better than the old mill used to be."

But Gunhild protested, "Oh, no, grandmother, you shall keep your room. I know you and mother will get along very well together, and you make up your mind not to say offensive things to father."

While Nora was glad that she had at last triumphed over Knute Solstad's selfishness, she did not wish to embarrass either her son or his wife, for she had always been strongly attached to Gunhild.

It was already in the month of May when this remarkable letter came. Preparations were at once begun to put everything in order for the visitors. That summer Gunhild and Arne went to St. Paul and refurnished the whole house. They bought carpets and curtains. The furniture was black walnut, upholstered in black horsehair. Everything was new all over the house.

CHAPTER XLVIII

EXPECTATIONS

IT was the latter part of May. Two large wagons, loaded with furniture, stood in front of the old house at Solstad. Knute and Ingeborg were busy directing the servants how to load the stuff. A large chest had been packed with clothes for their journey to America. They had received word from Captain Swanbeck that the Sea Gull would not sail until the tenth of June. Knute's face was set, but showed no signs of emotion. Knute and Ingeborg drove down the road to town with Fleetfoot and Sorrel ahead of the two large loads. At the bend of the road Ingeborg turned around to get a last look at the old homestead.

"Never before," said she, "has Solstad looked so pretty to me as it does now."

Knute, also, turned around and looked back.

"Solstad always looked beautiful to me," said he. "Never again will I find a spot on this earth that I shall love so dearly as I have loved Solstad."

He pulled up the horses and stopped.

"The first time I ever saw the sun rise," said he, "was when it rose above the Gaustad Ridge. Oh, how well I remember it! It was early one morning in September when I was going to ride to town with my father and mother."

"Then, why did you sell it?" asked Ingeborg.

"Why do you ask me that question?" answered Knute with some feeling. "You know you and I had nothing more to live for at Solstad after Gunhild went. My ambition was to keep up that chain of honorable ancestry that had called Solstad their home for centuries; but I was robbed of that privilege," said Knute as he urged his horses forward.

"You mean," said Ingeborg quickly, "unless you could leave it to that dissipated wretch, Carl Wes-sel."

Knute, realizing that Ingeborg would get the better of the argument, said, "We'll not discuss that. That's too old."

As they were going forward Ingeborg began to sob, the tears trickling down her cheeks.

"What are you sniffing and crying for?" said Knute, looking angrily at her. "First you begged me to sell Solstad and now that I've sold it you sniffle and cry."

"If I had had my way about it," she said between her sobs, "we would all now be happy and living at Solstad."

Knute turned his face away from Ingeborg, as tho he were in pain. If it had been difficult for Ingeborg to say good-bye to Solstad, it was even worse for her to say good-bye to her native land, for she knew that they would never return. Knute, however, seemed to take things as a matter of course and acted as tho he were going on a short trip down the coast.

A large number of friends were at the wharf to say good-bye to them, and as the Sea Gull sailed out

of the harbor, they stood and watched her until she entirely disappeared.

The trip across the ocean was long and tiresome. They did not encounter much rough weather, but the winds were contrary, and they did not reach New York until the fifth day of August. After landing Captain Swanbeck helped them to get their baggage to the railway station, for they were to travel by rail from New York to Chicago. They found that they could not get a train until the following day, so they took a room at a hotel. In the afternoon they went on Broadway, as Knute was desirous of seeing New York city.

He was disgusted with Broadway. There was such a jam. Everybody seemed to be in a hurry. All kinds of people pushed by him and jostled him. Knute had never before been in so large a city. The noise and tumult made him nervous. Newsboys were shouting, cab drivers were snapping their whips and rattling over the pavement like madmen. All kinds of people were hurrying by him—negroes, laborers and business men, all mixed together.

"This is America for you," said Knute to Ingeborg. "Just what I expected. No order, everybody for himself."

Soon they saw a large crowd watching something out in the street. Knute walked up to the crowd and craned his neck to see what was going on. Just then a burly policeman caught him by the shoulder, pushed him back on the walk and told him to move on. Never before had an officer of the law

laid hands on Knute Solstad. He was embarrassed and humiliated, but he and Ingeborg walked on.

"A blockade of the street like this," said Knute, "could never happen in a city in Norway. People wouldn't have stood that way and stared at a broken truck."

"But I noticed that you craned your neck, too, to find out what they were looking at," said Ingeborg.

Knute made no answer. After walking for some time, he said, "It's six o'clock, let's get our supper."

They sat down at a table in a restaurant, and a young waitress appeared. She repeated very rapidly a long list of the foods she was serving.

"No talk English," said Knute.

Then the girl started over again and more slowly and distinctly.

"Soup," she said.

Ingeborg looked at Knute and nodded, then Knute nodded his head. Then the girl said, "Fish."

Knute spoke up, "Lutefisk."

Finally Ingeborg succeeded in making the girl understand that she might bring them something to eat. She soon returned with a bowl of soup for each.

"Nobody would think of calling that soup in Norway," said Knute with a scowl on his face.

Ingeborg tasted it.

"It's good," said she. "Try it. It's chicken soup."

Then came the girl with a bountiful supply of meat, vegetables, rolls and a piece of pie for each one.

"What it that?" said Knute to Ingeborg, as he pointed to the pie.

"I don't know," said Ingeborg, "but it looks good."

Knute ate his pie with his knife and fork and seemed to like it. Ingeborg said it was delicious.

The following morning they boarded a train for Chicago. Knute took his seat by the window and watched the landscape as the train was speeding towards the west. Whenever he saw anything that was disorderly or out of place he always called Ingeborg's attention to it. The old fashioned rail fence was an abhorrence to him.

"Look!" he exclaimed to Ingeborg. "Look at the amount of good land that's wasted by this crooked fence. Look at the weeds and the underbrush in the fence corners. That shows what kind of indolent, wasteful fellows they have in America," said he, with a satisfied look on his face.

"Yes, but look at the nice grain fields," answered Ingeborg. "Aren't they beautiful? They can afford to waste a little land in the fence corners here. See the beautiful white farm houses, with green blinds, the close clipped lawns and the delightful shade-trees. Oh, I like this country," said Ingeborg.

Soon Knute looked at his watch.

"It's noon," said he. "I wonder where we'll get our dinner."

A little later the conductor came thru the car announcing a certain station, then adding. "Twenty minutes for dinner."

No sooner had these words been spoken than the

passengers grabbed their hats and ran out like crazy men, pushing and shoving as they went down the steps.

"What's the matter," said Knute, "is there a fire somewhere?"

Ingeborg looked out of the window and saw the passengers run into an eating house.

"They're going to eat," said she. "Get your hat quick. Let's go."

They sat down at a table and began enjoying a good meal. When they were about half thru, somebody out on the railway platform shouted something again.

"The train is going," said Ingeborg, as she hustled Knute out of the door and into the train.

"This is terrible," grumbled Knute. "I had just begun to eat. No wonder the Yankees look lank and lean. They don't take time to eat in this country."

"Next time," said Ingeborg, "when we go out to eat you will hurry more."

The following day, late at night, they arrived in Chicago. Here they put up at a hotel. From there they took the train the next morning for La Crosse, Wisconsin. It took them two days to go on the boat from La Crosse to the little river town in Minnesota. They got in late in the evening. The next morning they found the old surveyor who had located Arne Egeland and Terence O'Malley. He was now running a livery barn. Not long after they were on the road.

It was harvest time on the prairie. Arne had

three hired men working in the wheat field. Two of them were cradling, while the other man and Nora were raking the grain and binding it. Arne was shocking.

As the team drove up in front of the house Arne recognized Knute and Ingeborg. Knute was a little diffident when he thought back on how he had treated Arne at Solstad. It is not certain but that he felt some sense of shame. To say the least, it was embarrassing to come now as a guest to the house of the man he had driven outdoors.

A broad, good natured smile beamed from Arne's face as he walked up to the carriage, reached out his hand and cried, "You are welcome, father and mother Solstad."

Gunhild had heard the talking and came running out to the road. Ingeborg and she embraced, hugged and kissed each other. Gunhild also put her arms around her father and kissed him. By this time little Knute and little Ingeborg had come up, too.

"Here is grandpa," said Gunhild, as she turned around and saw little Knute.

Knute Solstad lifted little Knute up in his arms, and as the child rubbed his little chubby face against the grizzled cheeks of his grandpa, Gunhild, for the first time in her life, saw tears glistening in her father's eyes.

Arne made himself so agreeable to the old couple that their embarrassment was soon dissipated.

"What a beautiful home you have, Gunhild," said Ingeborg.

Arne's new house was stately and impressive, with its long porch and beautiful pillars. Everything was new, everything looked clean and tidy. It was a red-letter day for Gunhild, as she took her father and mother thru the large house and showed them her beautiful furniture and settings.

Nora was aware of the arrival of the visitors, but kept on working out in the field.

"So you sold the old home," said Gunhild to her father.

"Yes," he replied. "I wanted to get rid of the worry and the cares that go with a place like that, and then Ingeborg and I had nothing to work for. All that was dear to us was here. But we're only paying you a visit. We're going to stay with you probably a year or more."

While Knute was saying this, Ingeborg cast a side glance at him, as much as to say, "We'll see about that."

At supper time Arne, the hired men and Nora came to the house. As she met Mr. and Mrs. Solstad, Nora greeted them with an apology for her appearance.

"It is so hard to get hired help. The wheat is ripe and I must help them harvest. You must be very tired," said she, "after such a long journey. I suppose you came on the railroad. We had to travel on the canal boat and by stage."

Knute said little, but gave her a formal greeting.

"I am so surprised," said Ingeborg, "that things should look so well in America. It is hard for me

to believe that I am in a new country. Everything looks grand to me."

As the three hired men came in, Arne said to Knute, "I suppose you remember Torkel Finstad, the head master of the Latin school at home; this is his son, Magnus."

As Knute shook hands with the young man, he said, "If you are Torkel Finstad's son you have some education. I am surprised to see you working as a common laborer."

"We don't mind that in this country," said Magnus with a smile. "I enjoy working in the fields very much. I intend to have a farm of my own pretty soon."

They all sat down at the table together. It was noticeable that Knute was a little surprised at this, for at Solstad the hired men ate by themselves. In the evening the O'Malleys came over and were introduced to the old couple. The next day Arne took Knute out and showed him his land. Knute was very much impressed with the size of Arne's farm and the quality of the soil. He was struck with amazement when Arne told him what he had paid the government for his farm.

"I guess Squire Blom and Captain Swanbeck were right," thought Knute. "This is a fine farm."

Arne then took him thru the barn and showed him his horses.

"Your horses are much larger than those we have in Norway," said Knute.

"But none of them can go as fast as Fleetfoot and Sorrel. I wish I had them here for a driving

team. What did you do with them when you sold the place?"

"I sold them with the place."

Knute admired Arne's cow stable. Arne also showed him the quarter section of land that he had bought for him.

"This is your land, Grandpa Solstad," said Arne. "Here you can build a home for yourself, if you want to."

"But I want to pay for it," said Knute.

"I'll not sell it to you," said Arne, "but you can have it for nothing."

The following Sunday they all went to church. Gunhild had invited some of Knute's old friends to dinner that day. Among them were Sven Oyen and Hermo Halvorson.

"And how do you like America?" said Sven Oyen, when they were seated at the dinner table.

"Some things I like well," said Knute, "but on the whole I don't believe I could get used to living in this country."

"Aren't you going to stay?" asked Sven.

Knute closed his lips tightly, shook his head and said, "No, no, Mr. Oyen, Ingeborg and I may stay here a year and maybe longer, but we must go back to the old homeland."

At this talk the whole company began to laugh.

"We know all about that kind of talk," said Sven.

"I've heard several newcomers say that, but they never go back," said he with emphasis.

Ingeborg looked sharply at Knute, but said noth-

ing. Then Knute began to tell about his experience in New York and on the train coming west.

"I don't understand," said he, "how a government can maintain itself in a country like this where everybody has a right to vote, and I don't believe that it will last."

"Government rests on a firmer foundation here," said Sven, "than it does in Norway, for here it rests on all the people, for all the people have a chance to vote. In Norway it rested principally on the governing class, which was supposed to possess all the knowledge and intelligence in the country. I, for one, got tired of that kind of government. That was one of the reasons why I emigrated to America. No government can long endure that is based on the superiority of one class over the masses."

"Most of the government class in Norway," put in Nora, "were scoundrels. When any one of them was arrested, all the others tried to get him out of jail by any available means."

It was plain to everybody that the remark was flung at Knute. It was also plain that Knute understood it in that way, for the color came into his face, but he said nothing.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE NEW SOLSTAD

TERENCE O'MALLEY had built on his place a house just like Arne's. In fact, the two boys had built their houses at the same time.

Kathleen had left home. She had married a young man in the little town that had sprung up down in the valley, where he kept a country store.

A young girl, Mary Flynn, was teaching the school in the new settlement. She was from St. Paul. The school house was not far from Terence's place. He and his mother attended church in the town down on the Mississippi river. Mary Flynn generally rode with them, for she attended the same church. When school was out in the spring Mary and Terence were married. Widow O'Malley stayed with Terence.

At Arne's place Knute and Ingeborg got along well. Ingeborg was happy. She said that she liked America better than Norway. Perhaps that was because her only child lived here, or it may have been on account of some of the sad recollections that clung around the old home in Norway. Ingeborg and Nora got along well together. Ingeborg would say, at times, "I never thought that Nora was such good company."

"Nora is a jewel," said Gunhild. "I never knew

a person more conscientious than she is, and then she is so reliable with the children."

Knute grumbled a great deal about America and every once in a while seemed anxious to impress those about him with his firm convictions that some day he and Ingeborg would go back to the homeland.

Whenever Nora heard Knute rant about America, she always hit back. This Knute didn't like, so whenever Nora was around he said nothing against America.

In the spring after he had arrived, Knute said he was going to build a house on the land Arne had given him, for Arne had already deeded the land to him and recorded the deed. This had been a great solace to Gunhild, because she felt that when her father owned land in America, they might coax him to stay. When talking about the new house he intended to build, he always said that it was to be just like the old home at Solstad.

"You must be crazy," said Ingeborg. "You know, Knute, that our home in Norway was at least one hundred and fifty years old, and people don't build houses like that nowadays. If we have a new house, why shouldn't the design and architecture be new too. When you're in America, you must be an American."

Knute's face became set. "I don't want to be an American," said he. "I'm a Norwegian and I'm going to die a Norwegian."

"But your children and your grandchildren are Americans," said Ingeborg. "Arne has taken out

his citizenship papers and your grandchildren are native-born Americans. Now don't be so silly, Knute. Remember that you can't kick against the pricks."

Knute was about to say, as Ingeborg suspected, that Knute Solstad's word had always been law in Norway, and that it would be law in America, but he did not say it. Perhaps the reason was that he was afraid to say it, for he had already sniffed the atmosphere of equality and liberty in America, but Knute spoke to Gunhild about it, but Gunhild stood with her mother. She insisted that if he was going to build a new house he should build it like those built by the Yankees. This set Knute to thinking. It seemed so strange to him. Such different conditions had come into his life. It seemed that those conditions began in Norway, but in America they were even worse, for here everybody had a right to talk. Even the women assumed almost as great authority as the men, and the hired men were treated as equals by their employers.

"How long can this state of affairs last?" mused Knute.

Soon the house that Knute was to build became a subject for discussion by the whole household. Even Nora and Gunhild's maid took a hand in the talk. One day Knute had said, perhaps thoughtlessly, that he was not building this house for himself, but that he was building it for Vesle Knute. This was what they called the grandson to distinguish him from his grandfather. Vesle Knute, in Norwegian, means little Knute. But Knute kept on

grumbling about America. He seemed to be studying out the points in favor of Norway. He thought the prairie looked ugly, when compared to the beautiful valleys and mountains of the homeland. Then there were not so many pretty birds as in Norway and the birds they did have couldn't sing.

Nora could always answer Knute's arguments.

"You wait," said she, "until people plant their fruit trees; the plum, the apple and the cherry and shade trees, the mountain ash, the evergreens, the maple and the basswood, then you'll see the birds come."

One day he rode to town with Arne. He told his troubles about the new house to him, for Knute had become strongly attached to his son-in-law and had great respect for his judgment.

"What kind of a house do you think I ought to build?" said he to Arne as they were driving down the road.

"I would take the advice of my wife if I were you," said Arne. "Gunhild planned our house. Of course, I consented to her suggestions, because I thought they were good. You know the women are in the house more than the men," continued Arne, "for that reason they know more about it. I think you ought to build a modern house, something like ours."

This was another bitter dose for Knute, but he took it in good part.

When the time for building came, Knute and Ingeborg had agreed on a plan. Before they got

thru they had consulted all the members of the family. Nora chuckled.

"Knut Solstad's word is no longer law," said she one day to Gunhild.

Gunhild held up her hands. "Sh!" said she, "don't say that to father."

Before fall Knute was a full-fledged Minnesota farmer. He had bought a team of horses. He had a hired man, and Ingeborg had a maid. He broke some of the prairie that fall and was prepared to raise a crop the following season. Still he grumbled about America. The food here did not taste as good. The fruit didn't have as delicious a flavor.

Knute had talked right along as tho he were going back to Norway. Gunhild had come to believe that this talk was not sincere, that he kept it up so that Ingeborg and the rest of the family might know that he had not surrendered.

"Why did you build this house," said Ingeborg, "if you do not intend to stay here?"

"When we go," said Knute, "Vesle Knute shall have the place."

"You mean, when we die," said Ingeborg.

"No," answered Knute with a shake of his head. "When we go back to Norway."

"If we're going back," said Ingeborg, "we had better go soon, for it will not be long before you and I will be too old to travel across the Atlantic ocean."

This kind of talk seemed to worry Knute, for he made no answer to it.

Knute called his place "Solstad", because his old

friends from Norway called it that. On this place, Knute used to say, the long line of honorable ancestry should be continued by Vesle Knute. At this talk Nora usually laughed and reminded him that he had better stay with Vesle Knute, so as to get the line of ancestry firmly established in America.

The following spring a daughter was born to Arne and Gunhild. She was named Nora, after her grandmother.

CHAPTER I

THE WAYWARD SON

IT was a beautiful Sunday morning in May. The prairie was bathed in sunlight. As far as the eye could reach, in every direction, were well cultivated farms, large houses and barns, cornfields, wheat fields and herds of cattle. Large, fleecy clouds were hanging along the horizon.

A man was staggering along on the country road leading from the river town to Arne's place. His face was ashen white. His eyes were sunken; around and below them were dark rings. His face was wrinkled and thin. You could see the outline of the skeleton by the protruding bones.

His gait was unsteady; sometimes he would sit down on the bank along the roadbed and rest. He seemed to be urging himself forward. He was walking towards the west. There was a longing, anxious look on his face. Every once in a while he would stop to cough. His cough had a hollow, death-like sound, as tho his lungs were all gone. His shoes were full of holes. His clothes were old and weatherbeaten. On the elbows the lining was coming out. His pants were in tatters. On his head he wore an old cap.

He sat down on the bank beside the road and coughed. He seemed to be looking for something. He got up, walked along, looking at the road.

After a while he stooped down, picked up something, carried it in his hand. It was a flat stone. Again he sat down on the grass. He pulled from his pocket a dirty piece of paper. He also brought out a stub of a lead pencil. He laid the dirty paper on the flat stone and began to write. After writing a few words he coughed. He put his hand to his breast and groaned. Again he got up and walked forward, but soon he sat down again and resumed writing.

While he was writing, a little barefoot boy and girl came along the road. They were driving the cattle, after the milking, down into the pasture. They stopped and looked at the strange man lying on his knees, writing with the flat stone for his table. Never had they seen such wretchedness depicted in a human face. The children's faces became sad from looking at him. There was something so uncanny and mysterious about him.

He became aware of the children; looked up at them. He saw the sadness in their faces. Was it his appearance that had made those two little innocent children look sad? He thought it was. The children left him writing on the stone. When they had put the cows in the pasture they came back. They stopped again and looked at the man. He was still writing, lying on his knees. As the children went by him they turned out into the road, as though they were afraid to go too near him. Then the man stopped writing, threw the stone away and put the paper in his pocket. He followed the children. There was a large dog lying on the front

porch. Was he afraid of the dog? Was that why he followed the children? He went to the back door.

The housewife came out. He pleaded for milk and some bread and butter. He got it. He ate it on the well platform. The two children had followed their mother. They watched him eat. Again the sad expression came into their faces.

This was the third day that he had been on the road. In St. Louis he had crawled into the coal bunkers of a river boat that was going north. One of the coal heavers had helped him with food that he brought to him from the kitchen.

This May morning, after his breakfast, he started westward again. It seemed as tho something were urging him onward; as tho he had forgotten the easy, lazy life of the tramp. He was on some errand. He must reach his destination. Again he rested beside the road. He took out the letter he had written. He folded it around a picture that was dirty and soiled. Again he unwrapped the paper and looked at the picture.

Soon he was on the road, coughing as he hurried along. When he came to a crossroad, he stopped. Up on the high ground stood a church. He surveyed the surroundings carefully. Had he reached his destination? He followed the crossroad and walked north. The church attracted his attention. He stopped, looked it over carefully, then walked on.

Arne Egeland was sitting on his front porch. The bell in the church was ringing. Out over the wide prairie the call to church went forth. The wild

canary was swinging on the tall weeds. Two robins were pulling angleworms out of the lawn. Arne and Gunhild saw the man coming up the road, staggering as he walked.

"Is he drunk?" asked Arne.

"No, he's sick," said Gunhild. "He's coughing."

When he got in front of Arne's house he stopped and sat down on a large granite boulder that Arne had placed there for a hitching post. Little Ingeborg ran out to the road. She walked up to the tramp cautiously and looked at him. He was coughing.

"What is your name, little girl?" said the man.

"Ingeborg," was the answer.

The tramp drew a long breath, raised his head and looked at the little girl. Ingeborg was smoothing the dust in the road with her little bare foot.

"What is your other name?" said the man feebly.

"Egeland, Ingeborg Egeland," she repeated.

"And what is your father's name?"

"Arne Egeland," said the little girl, still busy with her little bare foot in the dust.

"And your mother's name?"

"Gunhild," she answered.

Soon Arne, Gunhild and Nora came over to the road. Behind them followed Knute Solstad. The tramp was lying up against the granite boulder. As Gunhild and Arne came up to him, he looked sharply at Gunhild.

"It's she," he muttered under his breath.

"Are you hungry?" asked Gunhild.

The tramp shook his head. Then he got a coughing spell. A sad look came over the little group.

"I'm so thirsty," he said. "Can you give me a drink of water?"

Arne went over to the well and came back with a large dipper full. The tramp bent forward. After drinking he said, "Thank you."

Nora had watched him closely. As he handed the dipper back to Arne, she said, "It's Carl Wessel."

Looking up at Nora he said, "Nora of the Mill, you're right, it is Carl Wessel."

Knute Solstad had moved up nearer when he heard it was Carl Wessel.

"I have traveled far and wide," said Carl. "I have suffered much. I have made my living by fair and foul means."

"Mostly foul," interjected Nora.

"I have lived the life of a sinner," he continued. "I have violated not only the laws of God and man, but also the laws of nature. I cannot live. I must die, but before going hence I ask you all to forgive me."

Then he was seized as if by convulsions. He stared wildly about him as tho afraid of something.

"I robbed Nels peddler," said he, looking at Knute Solstad. A look of compassion had settled on Knute's face as he watched the prostrate man.

"My life has been wasted," continued Carl. "I threw away my opportunities. I chose a life of crime and wild joy. My father was a soldier, and

no soldier can bring up a child. I never learned that word, obedience. I never learned to curb my passions or my desires. They ruled me. They led me; yes, sometimes they drove me. When I'm gone, send this letter to my mother. Oh; how I strove to get to this settlement this morning! My mother had written me that some of our old neighbors in Norway were living here. I worked my way south from San Francisco to the Isthmus, walked across the Isthmus, sailed from the Isthmus to New Orleans as a stowaway. It took me three days to travel from the little river town to this place."

Here his talk was interrupted by a spell of coughing.

"Had I died before reaching this settlement, my mother would never have known how her poor boy died."

Again he went into convulsions. Blood flowed from his mouth. He rolled his eyes, as tho in agony. Arne held up his head.

"God forgive me my sins!" he cried, then fell from the stone and lay on the ground, stiff in death.

For a few moments the little group stood motionless. Nora was watching Knute Solstad.

"We will give him Christian burial," said Arne.

Knute said nothing, turned around and was about to walk away.

"Knute Solstad," said Nora. "You're not going to turn your back on an old friend like Carl Wessel when he's dead!"

But Knute kept walking away.

"This," she cried, "is the man you selected to be

a link in that glorious ancestral chain that had lived at Solstad!"

Knute made no answer, but quickened his pace. A sarcastic chuckle was heard coming from Nora.

That Sunday the minister announced that funeral services would be held for Carl Wessel the following Wednesday. The letter that Carl had written was found clutched in his hand, wrapped around his mother's picture. Ingeborg took the letter and the picture and sent them to Carl's mother. She wrote her that Carl had died repenting of his wrongdoing; that his last words were a prayer that God would forgive him his sins.

The letter read:

"Dear Mother:

"I am sick unto death. I am on my way to the settlement in Minnesota where Knute Solstad lives. If I get there before I die, you will get this letter. Mother, forgive me for all the sorrow and pain I have caused you.

"Good-bye,

CARL WESSEL."

* * *

The death of Carl Wessel had occasioned much talk among those who had come from the home parish of Knute Solstad. The story of his courting and subsequent disgraceful career was revived. Knute Solstad realized this and, for the first time in many, many years, he had a sense of shame. It made no difference where he turned or what he did, his past life in Norway crowded into his mind. He began to realize how kind his immediate family

had been to him. He was afraid to look at Gunhild and Arne. He stayed in the house. The whole matter came back to him as an ugly dream. It would do no good for him to return to Norway, for there everybody had heard of the occurrence. He even blamed himself for the manner in which he had treated Nora. He was forced to confess that she had been right all the time.

"My word may have been law at Solstad," he mused, "but it was very poor law."

Old Captain Wessel and Annette had meant well, thought Knute. They did not realize what a wreck their son would become. Sometimes he would defend himself by saying, "I was honest. I thought Carl was a promising young man." Then his conscience would rise up within him and condemn him. "You had no right, Knute Solstad," it would say, "to urge your child to marry a man she could not love."

So, in his reasoning, Knute could get no farther. He could no longer muster courage enough to tell Gunhild and Ingeborg that he was going back to Norway. He finally concluded that at last he would have to surrender. He could see no escape.

CHAPTER LI

AMERICANIZATION

AFTER some years Knute was beginning to lose interest in Norway. He had already become attached to his new home in Minnesota. The happy home life of Arne and Gunhild was beginning to shed its light upon him. The new Solstad in America was receiving Knute's undivided attention. He made the lawn in front of the house beautiful. He planted fruit trees, shade trees and berry bushes. He began to realize that his new house in America was more comfortable and better in every way than his old home in Norway. The prairie now looked beautiful to him. The birds had come to his new home. He no longer grumbled about their singing. He began to think that their songs were just as sweet as those he had heard in the old country.

He was taking a Norwegian paper. He was interested in American problems. He enjoyed getting together with his friends and discussing public questions. The slavery question was the big topic. His country people were all opposed to it. Abraham Lincoln had been nominated for president by the new Republican party. At first he thought it ridiculous that a rail splitter should aspire to be the head of a great nation. But as the arguments took shape he became interested in his candidacy.

Sven Oyen, his old friend, was shouting early and

late for Mr. "Linkin", as he called him. Arne, Terence and Finn were all strong Republicans.

When Ingeborg noticed that Knute never talked about Norway she said to herself, "He is becoming an American. He has started in that direction; he'll never stop now until he is a full-fledged American citizen." She heard no more grumbling from him. Everything was going along smoothly and Ingeborg was happy.

Terence had been to the river town with a load of wheat. He came up to Arne's house that evening.

"I heard great news today," he said. "Mr. Seward, the statesman from New York, is coming to the county seat to speak for Abraham Lincoln. They are making great preparations for the meeting. They're going to clean the stuff out of the large warehouse that stands on the river bank. They expect to have over a thousand people there."

"When will it be?" asked Arne.

"One week from next Monday," replied Terence. "I'll take my team and give the boys a ride that want to go."

"I'll take my team, too," said Arne.

"They say," continued Terence, "that Seward is a great speaker."

"Well, I'm going to hear him," said Arne, as he nodded his head.

The news spread rapidly and preparations were made to drive to the meeting.

"Do you want to go along?" said Arne to Knute Solstad.

"There is not much use of my going," said Solstad. "I don't know enough English to understand the speech."

Arne, however, urged him to go.

"If you're going to be an American," said he, "you must attend political meetings."

After some consideration Knute finally made up his mind to go with the boys.

The weather was good and the farmers turned out well. Mr. Seward was expected to arrive that evening on the boat from St. Paul. The little town was filled with people. A much larger crowd came than had been anticipated. Two large river boats were moored close to the warehouse. The boats were packed with people, who had come up the river to hear the great statesman. Temporary lights had been arranged, and the old warehouse had been turned into a commodious and convenient assembly place.

When Mr. Seward landed from the steamboat a great throng shouted and yelled, "Hurrah for Seward!" "Hurrah for Abe Linkin!" Thru this cheering and shouting crowd Mr. Seward made his way to the platform. Knute Solstad sat near the front, between Arne and Terence. Mr. Seward delivered a scholarly and argumentative address. Towards the end of his speech somebody shouted, "Throw in the hot stuff, Bill!"

This appeared to arouse the speaker. It seemed that he was not aware of the loyalty and determination, as well as enthusiasm, of these rugged western frontiersmen. Little did he realize that the first

regiment to enlist under the service of Lincoln in the war would come from the state of Minnesota.

What a motley crowd had gathered that evening! They were rivermen, woodchoppers, freight-handlers, and farmers. All nationalities seemed to be represented. In the latter part of his speech Mr. Seward threw in the "hot stuff", as had been suggested. This was followed by cheer upon cheer. Some stood on their seats, waved their hats and shouted. To Knute Solstad, Arne and Terence seemed as wild and demonstrative as anybody in the crowd. They stood up, shouted and clapped their hands. The shouting and cheering was so incessant that it had its effect even on Knute Solstad. He had difficulty in restraining himself from joining in the demonstration.

The meeting lasted until after eleven o'clock, but the shouting and enthusiasm continued a long time after the meeting was over. On the way home that night the noise and yelling was kept up. It became evident that a great boom had been started in the young state—for the Republican party.

Knute Solstad had enjoyed the meeting. His interest in the coming election was heightened. He told Ingeborg all about the enthusiasm he had witnessed.

A few days after that his old friend Sven Oyen called on him. He and Sven had a long talk that day. It was in this talk that Knute Solstad showed a genuine interest in American public questions.

"That was a queer looking crowd we had at the meeting the other night," he began.

"Yes," said Sven, "but those fellows knew what they were shouting for. You notice in this country," continued Sven, "there is only one class of people. You couldn't have held a meeting like this in Norway. The laboring people there are not interested, because they cannot vote. I want to tell you, Knute, that this right to vote educates the people."

"Yes, I can see that it does," said Knute, as he nodded his head. "This Mr. Seward must be a fine speaker," he continued.

"He's a great man," answered Sven quickly. "He came very near being the nominee of the Republican party."

It was after supper. Gunhild, Arne and the children were in the sitting-room.

"Have you noticed that a change has come over father?" said Gunhild. "I have never seen him so pleasant and agreeable since I was a little girl. He seems to enjoy the children so much. He calls Vesle Knute his boy and tells him that he shall have the new Solstad when Grandpa is gone. He never grumbles about this country anymore. Whenever he compares Norway with America now, it is always to the advantage of America."

Arne nodded his head and said, "Yes, Gunhild, I have thought for some time that there is a great change in your father. I've noticed it more especially since we attended the big political meeting. He had never seen so much enthusiasm in a meeting before, and then, too, there was so much good nature about it. You know, in Norway he belonged to a certain aristocratic class that always considered

themselves better and above the small farmer and laborers. The feeling between the two classes at times became quite bitter."

"Nora and father get along better, too," said Gunhild. "He seems to have a good deal of respect for her now and treats her considerately whenever he meets her."

"Yes," said Arne, "I think Knute Solstad is getting to be an American."

Arne walked over towards the large rocking chair in the sitting room. Little Ingeborg and Nora were clinging to his pants legs while Vesle Knute was holding his coat tail. Arne sat down and the two little girls were soon in his lap, one on each knee. Vesle Knute was standing by and asked his father to tell them a story. Little Nora clapped her hands and shouted, "Oh, yes, papa, do tell us a story!"

"Very well," said Arne. "Then you must all keep quiet while I'm talking."

"Many, many years ago," he began, "there lived down on the beach near the sea a poor fisherwoman. Her husband and her son had been drowned when a terrific storm came upon them while they were out fishing. Her name was Bertha Fisker. She did not moan and cry. She did not grumble over her sad fate, but she said that it was the will of her Maker and that He was all wise and all good, and that it was probably for the best that she should be punished in this way.

"In that same storm there was a lifeboat blown ashore near her little cottage. In this lifeboat she found a little baby boy. She took the little boy

to her home to live with her and became his godmother. She brought him up and taught him to be good, to be gentle and kind, to love everybody and to love everything that God had created. She taught the little boy how to live a Christian life, to trust in God and to accept everything that came to him as a gift from a kind and merciful Father. Bertha Fisker was poor. She had to work hard for herself and the little boy, but she never grumbled. She said she had come into the world to make a light. If she couldn't make a big light, she would make a small one and make it grow brighter and brighter every day. When she died, she gave all her money, which was very little, to this little boy and told him that the biggest part of it should be used for the poor and unhappy."

"What became of the little boy?" said Vesle Knute. "Did he do as his godmother told him?"

Gunhild came over, the tears glistening in her eyes as she stooped down and kissed Vesle Knute.

"That little boy," she said, "grew up, came to America, and is your papa."

The two little girls had listened to the story with great interest. Ingeborg put her arms around her papa's neck and said, "That little boy, that you told us about, became a nice papa."

"The little light," said Arne, "that Bertha Fisker made has been shining brighter and brighter all the time, and for all we know it may continue to shine a long time after we're all gone."

* * *

Early one morning, in the latter part of October,

Knute Solstad came down to Arne's house. The gloomy, grouchy look had left his face. He seemed happy. Arne was out in the barn.

"You're up early this morning," said Arne.

"Yes," said Knute, "I got to thinking about something and couldn't stay in bed any longer. I wanted to see you."

"Has anything happened to Ingeborg?" asked Arne.

"Oh, no," said he. "She is well. I wanted to ask you when you could take me down to the county seat."

"Is there any hurry about it?" said Arne.

"Yes," said Knute, "I want to get it off my mind. I want to go down and declare my intention to become a citizen of the United States."

"And what is that for?" said Arne, a faint smile playing around his mouth.

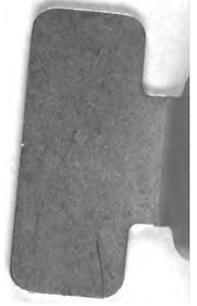
"What's it for?" repeated Knute. "Why, I want to vote for Abraham Lincoln."

THE END.

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