

The Galoshes of Fortune

Hans Christian Andersen

It was in Copenhagen, in one of the houses on East Street, not far from King's Newmarket, that someone was giving a large party. For one must give a party once in a while, if one expects to be invited in return. Half of the guests were already at the card tables, and the rest were waiting to see what would come of their hostess's query:

"What can we think up now?"

Up to this point, their conversation had gotten along as best it might. Among other things, they had spoken of the Middle Ages. Some held that it was a time far better than our own. Indeed Councilor of Justice Knap defended this opinion with such spirit that his hostess sided with him at once, and both of them loudly took exception to Oersted's article in the Almanac, which contrasted old times and new, and which favored our own period. The Councilor of Justice, however, held that the time of King Hans, about 1500 A.D., was the noblest and happiest age.

While the conversation ran pro and con, interrupted only for a moment by the arrival of a newspaper, in which there was nothing worth reading, let us adjourn to the cloak room, where all the wraps, canes, umbrellas, and galoshes were collected together. Here sat two maids, a young one and an old one. You might have thought they had come in attendance upon some spinster or widow, and were waiting to see their mistress home. However, a closer inspection would reveal that these were no ordinary serving women. Their hands were too well kept for that, their bearing and movements too graceful, and their clothes had a certain daring cut.

They were two fairies. The younger one, though not Dame Fortune herself, was an assistant to one of her ladies in waiting, and was used to deliver the more trifling gifts of Fortune. The older one looked quite grave. She was Dame Care, who always goes in her own sublime person to see to her errands herself, for then she knows that they are well done.

They were telling each other about where they had been that day. The assistant of Fortune had only attended to a few minor affairs, she said, such as saving a new bonnet from the rain, getting a civil greeting for an honest man from an exalted nincompoop, and such like matters. But her remaining errand was an extraordinary one.

"I must also tell you," she said, "that today is my birthday, and in honor of this I have been entrusted to bring a pair of galoshes to mankind. These galoshes have this peculiarity, that whoever puts them on will immediately find himself in whatever time, place, and condition of life that he prefers. His every wish in regard to time and place will instantly be granted, so for once a man can find perfect happiness here below."

"Take my word for it," said Dame Care, "he will be most unhappy, and will bless the moment when he can rid himself of those galoshes."

"How can you say such a thing?" the other woman exclaimed. "I shall leave them here beside the door, where someone will put them on by mistake and immediately be the happy one."

That ended their conversation.

II. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COUNCILOR OF JUSTICE

It was getting late when Councilor Knap decided to go home. Lost in thought about the good old days of King Hans, as fate would have it, he put on the galoshes of Fortune instead of his own, and wore them out into East Street. But the power that lay in the

galoshes took him back into the reign of King Hans, and as the streets were not paved in those days his feet sank deep into the mud and the mire.

"Why, how deplorable!" the Councilor of Justice said. "The whole sidewalk is gone and all the street lights are out."

As the moon had not yet risen high enough, and the air was somewhat foggy, everything around him was dark and blurred. At the next corner a lantern hung before an image of the Madonna, but for all the light it afforded him it might as well not have been there. Only when he stood directly under it did he make out that painting of the mother and child.

"It's probably an art museum," he thought, "and they have forgotten to take in the sign."

Two people in medieval costumes passed by.

"How strange they looked!" he said. "They must have been to a masquerade."

Just then the sound of drums and fifes came his way, and bright torches flared. The Councilor of Justice stopped and was startled to see an odd procession go past, led by a whole band of drummers who were dexterously drumming away. These were followed by soldiers armed with long bows and crossbows. The chief personage of the procession was a churchman of rank. The astounded Councilor asked what all this meant, and who the man might be.

"That is the Bishop of Seeland," he was told.

"What in the name of heaven can have come over the Bishop?" the Councilor of Justice wondered. He sighed and shook his head. "The Bishop? Impossible."

Still pondering about it, without glancing to right or to left, he kept on down East Street and across Highbridge Square. The bridge that led from there to Palace Square was not to be found at all; at last on the bank of the shallow stream he saw a boat with two men in it.

"Would the gentleman want to be ferried over to the Holm?" they asked him.

"To the Holm?" blurted the Councilor, who had not the faintest notion that he was living in another age. "I want to go to Christian's Harbour on Little Market Street."

The men gaped at him.

"Kindly tell me where the bridge is," he said. "It's disgraceful that all the street lamps are out, and besides, it's as muddy to walk here as in a swamp." But the more he talked with the boatmen, the less they understood each other. "I can't understand your jabbering Bornholm accent," he finally said, and angrily turned his back on them. But no bridge could he find. Even the fence was gone.

"What a scandalous state of affairs! What a way for things to look!" he said. Never had he been so disgruntled with his own age as he was this evening. "I think I'd better take a cab." But where were the cabs? There were none in sight. "I'll have to go back to King's Newmarket, where there is a cab stand, or I shall never reach Christian's Harbour."

So back he trudged to East Street, and had nearly walked the length of it when the moon rose.

"Good Heavens, what have they been building here?" he cried as he beheld the East Gate, which in the old days stood at the end of East Street. In time, however, he found a gate through which he passed into what is now Newmarket. But all he saw there was a large meadow. A few bushes rose here and there and the meadow was divided by a wide canal or stream. The few wretched wooden huts on the far shore belonged to Dutch sailors, so at that time the place was called Dutch Meadow.

"Either I'm seeing what is called Fata Morgana, or I'm drunk," the Councilor of Justice moaned. "What sort of place is this? Where am I?" He turned back, convinced that he

must be a very ill man. As he walked through the street again he paid more attention to the houses. Most of them were of wood, and many were thatched with straw.

"No, I don't feel myself at all," he complained. "I only took one glass of punch, but it doesn't agree with me. The idea of serving punch with hot salmon! I'll speak about it severely to our hostess-that agent's wife. Should I march straight back and tell her how I feel? No, that would be in bad taste, and besides I doubt whether her household is still awake." He searched for the house, but wasn't able to find it.

"This is terrible!" he cried. "I don't even recognize East Street. There's not a shop to be seen; wretched old ramshackle huts are all I see, as if I were in Roskilde or Ringstedt. Oh, but I'm ill! There's no point in standing on ceremony, but where on earth is the agent's house? This hut doesn't look remotely like it, but I can hear that the people inside are still awake. Ah, I'm indeed a very sick man."

He reached a half-open door, where light flickered through the crack. It was a tavern of that period-a sort of alehouse. The room had the look of a farmer's clay-floored kitchen in Holstein, and the people who sat there were sailors, citizens of Copenhagen, and a couple of scholars. Deep in conversation over their mugs, they paid little attention to the newcomer.

"Pardon me," the Councilor of Justice said to the landlady who came toward him, "but I am far from well. Would you send someone for a cab to take me to Christian's Harbour?"

The woman stared at him, shook her head, and addressed him in German. As the Councilor of Justice supposed that she could not speak Danish, he repeated his remarks in German. This, and the cut of his clothes, convinced the woman that he was a foreigner. She soon understood that he felt unwell, and fetched him a mug of water, decidedly brackish, for she drew it directly from the sea-level well outside. The Councilor put his head in his hands, took a deep breath, and thought over all of the queer things that surrounded him.

"Is that tonight's number of *The Day*?" he remarked from force of habit, as he saw the woman putting away a large folded sheet.

Without quite understanding him, she handed him the paper. It was a woodcut, representing a meteor seen in the skies over Cologne.

"This is very old," said the Councilor, who became quite enthusiastic about his discovery. "Where did you get this rare old print? It's most interesting, although of course the whole matter is a myth. In this day and age, such meteors are explained away as a manifestation of the Northern Lights, probably caused by electricity."

Those who sat near him heard the remark and looked at him in astonishment. One of them rose, respectfully doffed his hat, and said with the utmost gravity:

"Sir, you must be a great scholar."

"Not at all," replied the Councilor. "I merely have a word or two to say about things that everyone should know."

"*Modestia* is an admirable virtue," the man declared. "In regard to your statement, I must say, *mihī secus videtur*, though I shall be happy to suspend my *judicium*."

"May I ask whom I have the pleasure of addressing?" the Councilor of Justice inquired.

"I am a Bachelor of Theology," the man told him in Latin.

This answer satisfied the Councilor of Justice, for the degree was in harmony with the fellow's way of dressing. "Obviously," he thought, "this is some old village schoolmaster, an odd character such as one still comes across now and then, up in Jut land."

"This is scarcely a *locus docendi*," the man continued, "but I entreat you to favor us with your conversation. You, of course, are well read in the classics?"

"Oh, more or less," the Councilor agreed. "I like to read the standard old books, and the new ones too, except for those 'Every Day Stories' of which we have enough in reality."

"Every Day Stories?" our bachelor asked.

"Yes, I mean these modern novels."

"Oh," the man said with a smile. "Still they are very clever, and are popular with the court. King Hans is particularly fond of the 'Romance of Iwain and Jawain,' which deals with King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The king has been known to jest with his lords about it."

"Well," said the Councilor, "one can't keep up with all the new books. I suppose it has just been published by Heiberg."

"No," the man said, "not by Heiberg, but by Gotfred von Ghemen."

"Indeed! What a fine old name for a literary man. Why Gotfred von Ghemen was the first printer in Denmark."

"Yes," the man agreed, "he is our first and foremost printer."

Thus far, their conversation had flowed quite smoothly. Now one of the townsmen began to talk about the pestilence which had raged some years back, meaning the plague of 1484. The Councilor understood him to mean the last epidemic of cholera, so they agreed well enough.

The freebooter's War of 1490 was so recent that it could not be passed over. The English raiders had taken ships from our harbor, they said, and the Councilor of Justice, who was well posted on the affair of 1801, manfully helped them to abuse the English.

After that, however, the talk floundered from one contradiction to another. The worthy bachelor was so completely unenlightened that the Councilor's most commonplace remarks struck him as being too daring and too fantastic. They stared at each other, and when they reached an impasse the bachelor broke into Latin, in the hope that he would be better understood, but that didn't help.

The landlady plucked at the Councilor's sleeve and asked him, "How do you feel now?" This forcibly recalled to him all of those things which he had happily forgotten in the heat of his conversation.

"Merciful heaven, where am I?" he wondered, and the thought made him dizzy.

"We will drink claret wine, and mead, and Bremen beer," one of the guests cried out, "and you shall drink with us."

Two girls came in, and one of them wore a cap of two colors. They filled the glasses and made curtsies. The Councilor felt cold shivers up and down his spine. "What is all this? What is all this?" he groaned, but drink with them he must. They overwhelmed him with their kind intentions until he despaired, and when one man pronounced him drunk he didn't doubt it in the least. All he asked was that they get him a *droschke*." Then they thought he was speaking in Russian.

Never before had he been in such low and vulgar company! "One would think that the country had lapsed back into barbarism," he told himself. "This is the most dreadful moment of my life."

Then it occurred to him to slip down under the table, crawl to the door, and try to sneak out, but just as he neared the threshold his companions discovered him and tried to pull him out by his feet. However, by great good luck they pulled off his galoshes, and-with

them-the whole enchantment.

The Councilor of Justice now distinctly saw a street lamp burning in front of a large building. He knew the building and the other buildings near-by. It was East Street as we all know it today. He lay on the pavement with his legs against a gate, and across the way a night watchman sat fast asleep.

"Merciful heavens! Have I been lying here in the street dreaming?" the Councilor of Justice said. "To be sure, this is East Street. How blessedly bright and how colorful it looks. But what dreadful effect that one glass of punch must have had on me."

Two minutes later he was seated in a cab, and well on his way to Christian's Harbour. As he recalled all the past terror and distress to which he had been subjected, he wholeheartedly approved of the present, our own happy age. With all its shortcomings it was far preferable to that age into which he had recently stumbled. And that, thought the Councilor of Justice, was good common sense.

III. THE WATCHMAN'S ADVENTURE

"Why, I declare! There's a pair of galoshes," said the watchman. They must belong to the lieutenant who lives up there on the top floor, for they are lying in front of the door." A light still burned upstairs, and the honest fellow was perfectly willing to ring the bell and return the overshoes. But he didn't want to disturb the other tenants in the house, so he didn't do it.

"It must be quite comfortable to wear a pair of such things," he said. "How soft the leather feels." They fitted his feet perfectly. "What a strange world we live in. The lieutenant might be resting easy in his soft bed, yet there he goes, pacing to and fro past his window. There's a happy man for you! He has no wife, and he has no child, and every night he goes to a party. Oh, if I were only in his place, what a happy man I would be."

Just as he expressed his wish, the galoshes transformed him into the lieutenant, body and soul, and there he stood in the room upstairs. Between his fingers he held a sheet of pink paper on which the lieutenant had just written a poem. Who is there that has not at some time in his life felt poetic? If he writes down his thoughts while this mood is on him, poetry is apt to come of it. On the paper was written:

IF ONLY I WERE RICH

*If only I were rich; I often said in prayer
When I was but a tiny lad without much care
If only I were rich, a soldier I would be
With uniform and sword, most handsomely;
At last an officer I was, my wish I got
But to be rich was not my lot;
But You, oh Lord, would always help.*

*I sat one eve, so happy, young and proud;
A darling child of seven kissed my mouth
For I was rich with fairy tales, you see
With money I was poor as poor can be,
But she was fond of tales I told
That made me rich, but - alas - not with gold;
But You, oh Lord, You know!*

*If only I were rich, is still my heavenly prayer.
My little girl of seven is now a lady fair;
She is so sweet, so clever and so good;*

*My heart's fair tale she never understood.
If only, as of yore, she still for me would care,
But I am poor and silent; I confess I do not dare.
It is Your will, oh Lord!*

*If only I were rich, in peace and comfort rest,
I would my sorrow to this paper never trust.
You, whom I love, if still you understand
then read this poem from my youth's far land,
Though best it be you never know my pain.
I am still poor, my future dark and vain,
But may, O Lord, You bless her!*

Yes, a man in love writes many a poem that a man in his right mind does not print. A lieutenant, his love and his lack of money - there's an eternal triangle for you, a broken life that can never be squared. The lieutenant knew this all too well. He leaned his head against the window, and sighed, and said:

"The poor watchman down there in the street is a far happier man than I. He does not know what I call want. He has a home. He has a wife and children who weep with him in his sorrows and share in his joy. Ah, I would be happier if I could trade places with him, for he is much more fortunate than I am."

Instantly, the watchman was himself again. The galoshes had transformed him into the lieutenant, as we have seen. He was far less contended up there, and preferred to be just what he had been. So the watchman turned back into a watchman.

"I had a bad dream," he said. "Strangely enough, I fancied I was the lieutenant, and I didn't like it a bit. I missed my wife and our youngsters, who almost smother me with their kisses."

He sat down and fell to nodding again, unable to get the dream out of his head. The galoshes were still on his feet when he watched a star fall in the sky.

"There goes one," he muttered. "But there are so many it will never be missed. I'd like to have a look at those trinkets at close range. I'd especially like to see the moon, which is not the sort of thing to get lost in one's hands. The student for whom my wife washes, says that when we die we fly about from star to star. There's not a word of truth in it. But it would be nice, just the same, if I could take a little jaunt through the skies. My body could stay here on the steps for all that I'd care."

Now there are certain things in the world that we ought to think about before we put them into words, and if we are wearing the galoshes of Fortune it behooves us to think twice. Just listen to what happened to that watchman.

All of us know how fast steam can take us. We've either rushed along in a train or sped by steamship across the ocean. But all this is like the gait of a sloth, or the pace of a snail, in comparison with the speed of light, which travels nineteen million times faster than the fastest race horse. Yet electricity moves even faster. Death is an electric shock to the heart, and the soul set free travels on electric wings. The sunlight takes eight minutes and some odd seconds to travel nearly one hundred million miles. On the wings of electricity, the soul can make the same journey in a few moments, and to a soul set free the heavenly bodies are as close together as the houses of friends who live in the same town with us, or even in the same neighborhood. However, this electric shock strips us of our bodies forever, unless, like the watchman, we happen to be wearing the galoshes of Fortune.

In a few seconds the watchman took in his stride the two hundred and sixty thousand

miles to the moon. As we know, this satellite is made of much lighter material than the earth, and is as soft as freshly fallen snow. The watchman landed in one of the numerous mountain rings which we all know from Doctor Maedler's large map of the moon. Within the ring was a great bowl, fully four miles deep. At the bottom of this bowl lay a town. We may get some idea of what it looked like by pouring the white of an egg into a glass of water. The town was made of stuff as soft as the egg albumen, and its form was similar, with translucent towers, cupolas, and terraces, all floating in thin air.

Over the watchman's head hung our earth, like a huge dull red ball. Around him he noticed crowds of beings who doubtless corresponded to men and women of the earth, but their appearance was quite different from ours. They also had their own way of speaking, but no one could expect that the soul of a watchman would understand them. Nevertheless he did understand the language of the people in the moon very well. They were disputing about our earth, and doubting whether it could be inhabited. The air on the earth, they contended, must be too thick for any intelligent moon-man to live there. Only the moon was inhabited, they agreed, for it was the original sphere on which the people of the Old World lived.

Now let us go back down to East Street, to see how the watchman's body was making out. Lifeless it lay, there on the steps. His morning star, that spiked club which watchmen carry, had fallen from his hands, and his eyes were turned toward the moon that his honest soul was exploring.

"What's the hour, watchman?" asked a passer-by. But never an answer did he get. He gave the watchman a very slight tweak of the nose, and over he toppled. There lay the body at full length, stretched on the pavement. The man was dead. It gave the one who had tweaked him a terrible fright, for the watchman was dead, and dead he remained. His death was reported, and investigated. As day broke, his body was taken to the hospital.

It would be a pretty pass if the soul should come back and in all probability look for its body in East Street, and fail to find it. Perhaps it would rush to the police station first, next to the Directory Office where it could advertise for lost articles, and last of all to the hospital. But we needn't worry. The soul by itself is clever enough. It's the body that makes it stupid.

As we said before, the watchman's body was taken to the hospital. They put it in a room to be washed, and naturally the galoshes were pulled off first of all. That brought the soul dashing back posthaste, and in a flash the watchman came back to life. He swore it had been the most terrible night he had ever experienced, and he would never go through it again, no, not for two pennies. But it was over and done with. He was allowed to leave that same day, but the galoshes were left at the hospital.

IV. A GREAT MOMENT, AND A MOST EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY

Everyone in Copenhagen knows what the entrance to Frederic's Hospital looks like, but as some of the people who read this story may not have been to Copenhagen, we must describe the building-briefly.

The hospital is fenced off from the street by a rather high railing of heavy iron bars, which are spaced far enough apart-at least so the story goes-for very thin internes to squeeze between them and pay little visits to the world outside. The part of the body they had most difficulty in squeezing through was the head. In this, as often happens in the world, small heads were the most successful. So much for our description.

One of the young internes, of whom it could be said that he had a great head only in a physical sense, had the night watch that evening. Outside the rain poured down. But in spite of these difficulties he was bent upon getting out for a quarter of an hour. There was no need for the doorman to know about it, he thought, if he could just manage to slip through the fence. There lay the galoshes that the watchman had forgotten, and while the

interne had no idea that they were the galoshes of Fortune, he did know that they would stand him in good stead out in the rain. So he pulled them on. Now the question was whether he could squeeze between the bars, a trick that he had never tried before. There he stood, facing the fence.

"I wish to goodness I had my head through," he said, and though his head was much too large and thick for the space, it immediately slipped through quickly and with the greatest of ease. The galoshes saw to that. All he had to do now was to squeeze his body through after his head, but it wouldn't go. "Uff!" he panted, "I'm too fat. I thought my head would be the worst difficulty. No, I shall never get through."

He quickly attempted to pull his head back again, but it couldn't be done. He could move his neck easily, but that was all. First his anger flared up. Then his spirits dropped down to zero. The galoshes of Fortune had gotten him in a terrible fix, and unluckily it did not occur to him to wish his way out of it. No, instead of wishing he struggled and strove, but he could not budge from the spot. The rain poured down; not a soul could be seen in the street; and he could not reach the bell by the gate. How could he ever get free? He was certain he would have to stay there till morning, and that they would have to send for a blacksmith to file through the iron bars. It would take time. All the boys in the school across the way would be up and shout, and the entire population of "Nyboder," where all the sailors lived, would turn out for the fun of seeing the man in a pillory. Why, he would draw a bigger crowd than the one that went to see the championship wrestling matches last year.

"Huff!" he panted, "the blood's rushing to my head. I'm going mad! Yes, I'm going mad! Oh, if I were only free again, and out of this fix, then I would be all right again."

This was what he ought to have said in the first place. No sooner had he said it than his head came free, and he dashed indoors, still bewildered by the fright that the galoshes of Fortune had given him. But don't think that this was the end of it. No! The worst was yet to come.

The night went by, and the next day passed, but nobody came for the galoshes. That evening there was to be a performance at the little theatre in Kannike Street. The house was packed and in the audience was our friend, the interne, apparently none the worse for his adventure of the night before. He had again put on the galoshes. After all, no one had claimed them, and the streets were so muddy that he thought they would stand him in good stead.

At the theatre a new sketch was presented. It was called "My Grandmother's Spectacles and had to do with a pair of eyeglasses which enabled anyone who wore them to read the future from people's faces, just as a fortune teller reads it from cards.

The idea occupied his mind very much. He would like to own such a pair of spectacles. Properly used, they might enable one to see into people's hearts. This, he thought, would be far more interesting than foresee what would happen next year. Future events would be known in due time, but no one would ever know the secrets that lie in people's hearts.

"Look at those ladies and gentlemen in the front row," he said to himself. "If I could see straight into their hearts what stores of things-what great shops full of goods would I behold. And how my eyes would rove about those shops. In every feminine heart, no doubt I should find a complete millinery establishment. There sits one whose shop is empty, but a good cleaning would do it no harm. And of course some of the shops would be well stocked. Ah me," he sighed, "I know of one where all the goods are of the very best quality, and it would just suit me, but-alas and alack-there's a shopkeeper there already, and he's the only bad article in the whole shop. Many a one would say, "Won't you walk in?" and I wish I could. I would pass like a nice little thought through their hearts."

The galoshes took him at his word. The interne shrank to almost nothing, and set out on a

most extraordinary journey through the hearts of all the spectators in the first row. The first heart he entered was that of a lady, but at first he mistook it for a room in the Orthopaedic Institute, or Hospital, where the plaster casts of deformed limbs are hung upon the walls. The only difference was that at the hospital those casts were made when the patients came in, while these casts that were kept in the heart were made as the good people departed. For every physical or mental fault of the friends she had lost had been carefully stored away.

He quickly passed on to another woman's heart, which seemed like a great holy cathedral. Over the high altar fluttered the white dove of innocence, and the interne would have gone down on his knees except that he had to hurry on to the next heart. However, he still heard the organ roll. And he felt that it had made a new and better man of him—a man not too unworthy to enter the next sanctuary. This was a poor garret where a mother lay ill, but through the windows the sun shone, warm and bright. Lovely roses bloomed in the little wooden flower box on the roof, and two bluebirds sang of happy childhood, while the sick woman prayed for a blessing on her daughter.

Next the interne crawled on his hands and knees through an overcrowded butcher shop. There was meat, more meat, and meat alone, wherever he looked in this heart of a wealthy, respectable man, whose name you can find in the directory.

Next he entered the heart of this man's wife, and an old tumble-down dove-cot he found it. Her husband's portrait served as a mere weathervane, which was connected with the doors in such a way that they opened and closed as her husband turned round.

Then he found his way into a cabinet of mirrors such as is to be seen at Rosenberg Castle, though in this heart the mirrors had the power of magnifying objects enormously. Like the Grand Lama of Tibet, the owner's insignificant ego sat in the middle of the floor, in admiring contemplation of his own greatness.

After this he seemed to be crammed into a narrow case full of sharp needles. "This," he thought, "must certainly be an old maid's heart," but it was nothing of the sort. It was the heart of a very young officer who had been awarded several medals, and of whom everyone said, "Now there's a man of both intellect and heart."

Quite befuddled was the poor interne when he popped out of the heart of the last person in the front row. He could not get his thoughts in order, and he supposed that his strong imagination must have run away with him.

"Merciful heavens," he groaned, "I must be well on the road to the madhouse. And it's so outrageously hot in here that the blood is rushing to my head." Suddenly he recalled what had happened the night before, when he had jammed his head between the bars of the hospital fence. "That must be what caused it," he decided. "I must do something before it is too late. A Russian bath might be the very thing. I wish I were on the top shelf right now."

No sooner said, than there he lay on the top shelf of the steam bath. But he was fully dressed, down to his shoes and galoshes. He felt the hot drops of condensed steam fall upon him from the ceiling.

"Hey!" he cried, and jumped down to take a shower. The attendant cried out too when he caught sight of a fully dressed man in the steam room. However, the interne had enough sense to pull himself together and whisper, "I'm just doing this because of a bet."

But the first thing he did when he got back to his room was to put hot plasters on his neck and his back, to draw out the madness.

Next morning he had a blistered back and that was all he got out of the galoshes of Fortune.

V. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE COPYING CLERK

The watchman-you remember him-happened to remember those galoshes he had found, and that he must have been wearing them when they took his body to the hospital. He came by for them, and as neither the lieutenant nor anyone else in East Street laid claim to them, he turned them in at the police station.

"They look exactly like my own galoshes," one of the copying clerks at the police station said, as he set the ownerless galoshes down beside his own. "Not even a shoemaker could tell one pair from the other."

"Mr. Copying Clerk!" said a policeman, who brought him some papers.

The clerk turned around to talk with the policeman, and when he came back to the galoshes he was uncertain whether the pair on the right or the pair on the left belonged to him.

"The wet ones must be mine," he thought, but he was mistaken, for they were the galoshes of Fortune. The police make their little mistakes too.

So he pulled them on, pocketed some papers, and tucked some manuscripts under his arm to read and abstract when he got home. But as this happened to be Sunday morning, and the weather was fine, he thought, "A walk to Frederiksberg will be good for me." And off he went.

A quieter, more dependable fellow than this young man you seldom see. Let him take his little walk, by all means. It will do him a world of good after so much sitting. At first he strode along without a wish in his head, so there was no occasion for the galoshes to show their magic power. On the avenue he met an acquaintance of his, a young poet, who said he was setting out tomorrow on a summer excursion.

"What, off again so soon?" said the clerk. "What a free and happy fellow you are! You can fly away wherever you like, while the rest of us are chained by the leg."

"Chained only to a breadfruit tree," the poet reminded him. "You don't have to worry along from day to day, and when you get old they will give you a pension."

"You are better off, just the same," the clerk said. "How agreeable it must be to sit and write poetry. Everyone pays you compliments, and you are your own master. Ah, you should see what it's like to devote your life to the trivial details of the courts."

The poet shook his head, and the clerk shook his too. Each held to his own conviction, and they parted company.

"They are a queer race, these poets." thought the clerk. "I should like to try my hand at their trade-to turn poet myself. I'm sure I would never write such melancholy stuff as most of them do. What a splendid spring day this is, a day fit for a poet. The air is so unusually clear, the clouds so lovely, and the green grass so fragrant. For many a year I have not felt as I feel just now."

Already, you could tell that he had turned poet. Not that there was anything you could put your finger on, for it is foolish to suppose that a poet differs greatly from other people, some of whom are far more poetic by nature than many a great and accepted poet. The chief difference is that a poet has a better memory for things of the spirit. He can hold fast to an emotion and an idea until they are firmly and clearly embodied in words, which is something that others cannot do. But for a matter-of-fact person to think in terms of poetry is noticeable enough, and it is this transformation that we can see in the clerk.

"What a glorious fragrance there is in the air!" he said. "It reminds me of Aunt Lone's violets. Ah me, I haven't thought of them since I was a little boy. The dear old girl! She used to live over there, behind the Exchange. She always had a spray or a few green

shoots in water, no matter how severe the winter was. I'd smell those violets even when I was putting hot pennies against the frozen window pane to make peep holes. What a view that was—ships frozen tight in the canal, deserted by their crew, and a shrieking crow the only living creature aboard them. But when the springtime breezes blew the scene turned lively again. There were shouts and laughter as the ice was sawed away. Freshly tarred and rigged, the ships sailed off for distant lands. I stayed here, and I must forever stay here, sitting in the police office where others come for their passports to foreign countries. Yes, that's my lot! Oh, yes!" he said, and heaved a sigh. Then he stopped abruptly. "Great heavens! What's come over me. I never thought or felt like this before. It must be the spring air! It is as frightening as it is pleasant." He fumbled among the papers in his pockets.

"These will give me something else to think about," he said, as he glanced at the first page. "*Lady Sigbrith, An Original Tragedy in Five Acts*," he read. "Why, what's this? It's in my own handwriting too. Have I written a tragedy? *The Intrigue on the Ramparts, or The Great Fast Day - a Vaudeville*. Where did that come from? Someone must have slipped it in my pocket. And here's a letter." It was from the board of directors of the theatre, who rejected his plays, and the letter was anything but politely phrased.

"Hem, hem!" said the copying clerk as he sat down on a bench. His thoughts were lively and his heart sensitive. He plucked a flower at random, an ordinary little daisy. What the professor of botany requires several lectures to explain to us, this flower told in a moment. It told of the mystery birth, and of the power of the sunlight which opened those delicate leaves and gave them their fragrance. This made him think of the battle of life, which arouses emotions within us in similar fashion. Air and light are the flowers' lovers, but light is her favorite. Toward it the flower is ever turning, and only when the light is gone does she fold her petals and sleep in the air's embrace.

"It is the light that makes me lovely," the flower said.

"But," the poet's voice whispered, "the air enables you to breathe."

Not far away, a boy was splashing in a muddy ditch with his stick. As the water flew up among the green branches, the clerk thought of the innumerable microscopic creatures in the splashing drops. For them to be splashed so high, was as if we were to be tossed up into the clouds. As the clerk thought of these things, and of the great change that had come over him, he smiled and said:

"I must be asleep and dreaming. It's marvelous to be able to dream so naturally, and yet to know all along that this is a dream. I hope I can recall every bit of it tomorrow, when I wake up. I seem to feel unusually exhilarated. How clearly I understand things, and how wide awake I feel! But I know that if I recall my dream it will only be a lot of nonsense, as has happened to me so often before. All those brilliant and clever remarks one makes and one hears in his dreams, are like the gold pieces that goblins store underground. When one gets them they are rich and shining, but seen in the daylight they are nothing but rocks and dry leaves. Ah me," he sighed, as he sadly watched the singing birds flit merrily from branch to branch. "They are so much better off than I. Flying is a noble art, and lucky is he who is born with wings. Yes, if I could change into anything I liked, I would turn into a little lark."

In a trice his coat-tails and sleeves grew together as wings, his clothes turned into feathers, and his galoshes became claws. He noticed the change clearly, and laughed to himself.

"Now," he said, "I know I am dreaming, but I never had a dream as silly as this one."

Up he flew, and sang among the branches, but there was no poetry in his song, for he was no longer a poet. Like anyone who does a thoroughgoing job of it, the galoshes could only do one thing at a time. When he wishes to be a poet, a poet he became. Then he

wanted to be a little bird, and in becoming one he lost his previous character.

"This is most amusing," he said. "In the daytime I sit in the police office, surrounded by the most matter-of-fact legal papers, but by night I can dream that I'm a lark flying about in the Frederiksberg Garden. What fine material this would make for a popular comedy."

He flew down on the grass, twisting and turning his head, and pecking at the waving grass blades. In proportion to his own size, they seemed as large as the palm branches in North Africa. But this lasted only a moment. Then everything turned black, and it seemed as if some huge object had dropped over him. This was a big cap that a boy from Nyboder had thrown over the bird. A hand was thrust in. It laid hold of the copying clerk by his back and wing so tightly that it made him shriek. In his terror he called out, "You impudent scoundrel! I am the copying clerk at the police office!" But this sounded like "Peep! peep!" to the boy, who thumped the bird on its beak and walked off with it.

On the avenue this boy met with two other schoolboys. Socially, they were of the upper classes, though, properly ranked according to their merit, they were in the lowest class at school. They bought the bird for eight pennies, and in their hands the clerk came back to Copenhagen, to a family who lived in Gothers Street.

"It's a good thing I'm only dreaming this," said the clerk, "or I'd be furious. First I was a poet, and now I'm a lark. It must have been my poetic temperament which turned me into this little creature. It is a very sad state of affairs, especially when one falls into the hands of a couple of boys. But I wonder how it will all turn out."

The boys carried him into a luxuriously appointed room, where a stout, affable lady received them. She was not at all pleased with their common little field bird, as she called the lark, but she said that, for one day only, they could keep it in the empty cage near the window.

"Perhaps Polly will like it," she said, and smiled at the large parrot that swung proudly to and fro on the ring in his ornate brass cage. "It's Polly's birthday," she said, like a simpleton. "The little field bird wants to congratulate him."

Polly did not say a word, as proudly he swung back and forth. But a pretty canary bird who had been brought here last summer from his warm, sweet-scented homeland, began to sing at the top of his voice.

"Bawler!" the lady said, and threw a white handkerchief over his cage.

"Peep, peep. What a terrible snowstorm," the canary sighed, and with that sigh he kept quiet.

The clerk, or as the lady called him, the field bird, was put in a cage next to the canary's and not far from the parrot's. The only human words that the parrot could say, and which at times sounded quite comical, were "Come now, let us be men." All the rest of his chatter made as little sense as the twittering of the canary. However, the clerk, who was now a bird himself, understood his companions perfectly.

"I used to fly beneath green palms and flowering almond trees," the canary bird sang. "With my brothers and sisters, I flew above beautiful flowers, and over the smooth sea where the plants that grow under water waved up at us. We used to meet many brilliant parrots, who told us the funniest stories-long ones and so many."

"Those were wild parrots!" said Polly. "Birds without any education. Come now, let us be men. Why don't you laugh? If the lady and all her guests laugh at my remark, so should you. To lack a sense of humor is a very bad thing. Come now, let us be men."

"Do you remember the pretty girls who danced in the tents spread beneath those flowering trees?" the canary sang. "Do you remember those delicious sweet fruits, and the cool juice of the wild plants?"

"Why yes," said the parrot, "but I am much better off here, where I get the best of food and intimate treatment. I know that I am a clever bird, and that's enough for me. Come now, let us be men. You have the soul of a poet, as they call it, and I have sound knowledge and wit. You have genius, but no discretion. You burst into that shrill, spontaneous song of yours. That's why people cover you up. They don't ever treat me like that. No, I have cost them a lot and, what is more imposing, my beak and my wits are sharp. Come now, let us be men."

"Oh, my warm flowery homeland!" said the canary. "I shall sing of your deep green trees and your quiet inlets, where the down-hanging branches kiss the clear mirror of the waters. I shall sing of my resplendent brothers and sisters, who rejoice as they hover over the cups of water in the cactus plants that thrive in the desert."

"Kindly stop your whimpering tunes," the parrot said. "Sing something to make us laugh. Laughter is a sign of the loftiest intellectual development. Can a dog or a horse laugh? No! They can cry, but as for laughter-that is given to mankind alone. Ho, ho, ho!" the parrot chuckled, and added his, "Come now, let us be men."

"You little grey bird of Denmark," the canary said to the lark, "have they made you a prisoner too? Although it must be very cold in your woods, you have your freedom there. Fly away! They have forgotten to close your cage. The door of the top is open. Fly! fly!"

Without pausing to think, the clerk did as he was told. In a jiffy he was out of the cage. But just as he escaped from his prison, the half-open door leading into the next room began to creak. Stealthily, with green shining eyes, the house cat pounced in and gave chase to him. The canary fluttered in his cage. The parrot flapped his wings and called out, "Come now, let us be men." The dreadfully frightened clerk flew out of the window and away over the streets and houses, until at last he had to stop to rest.

That house across the street looked familiar. He flew in through one of its open windows. As he perched on the table he found that he was in his own room.

"Come now, let us be men," he blurted out, in spontaneous mockery of the parrot. Instantly he resumed the body of the copying clerk, who sat there, perched on the table.

"How in the name of heaven," he said, "do I happen to be sleeping here? And what a disturbing dream I've had-all nonsense from beginning to end."

VI. THE BEST THAT THE GALOSHES BROUGHT

Early the next morning, before the clerk was out of bed, someone tapped on his door. In walked his neighbor, a young theological student who lived on the same floor.

"Lend me your galoshes," he requested. "It is very wet in the garden, but the sun is shining so gloriously that I'd like to smoke a pipeful down there."

He pulled on the galoshes and went out into the garden, where there was one plum tree and a pear tree. But even a little garden like this one is a precious thing in Copenhagen.

It was only six o'clock. As the student walked up and down the path, he heard the horn of a stagecoach in the street.

"Oh, to travel, to travel!" he exclaimed, "that's the most pleasant thing in the world. It's the great goal of all my dreams. If only I could travel, I'm sure that this restlessness within me would be stilled. But it must be far, far away. How I should like to see beautiful Switzerland, to tour Italy, and-"

Fortunately the galoshes began to function at once, or he might have traveled entirely too much to suit him or to please us. Travel he did. He was high up in Switzerland, tightly packed in a diligence with eight other travelers. He had a pain in his head, his neck felt tired, and the blood had ceased to circulate in his legs. His feet were swollen and his

heavy boots hurt him. He was half awake and half asleep. In his right-hand pocket he had his letter of credit, in his left-hand pocket he had his passport, and sewn into a little bag inside his breast pocket he had a few gold pieces. Every time he dozed off he dreamed that he had lost one or another of these things. Starting feverishly awake, his first movement would be to trace with his hand a triangle from right to left, and up to his breast, to feel whether his treasures were still there.

Umbrellas, hats, and walking sticks swung in the net above him and almost spoiled the magnificent view. As he glanced out the window his heart sang, as at least one poet has sung in Switzerland, these as yet unpublished words:

"This view is as fine as a view can be.
Mount Blanc is sublime beyond a doubt,
And the traveler's life is the life for me-
But only as long as my money holds out."

Vast, severe, and somber was the whole landscape around him. The pine woods looked like patches of heather on the high cliffs, whose summits were lost in fog and cloud. Snow began to fall, and the cold wind blew.

"Ah," he sighed, "if only we were on the other side of the Alps, then it would be summer weather and I could get some money on my letter of credit. Worrying about my finances spoils all my enjoyment of Switzerland. Oh, if only I were on the other side."

And there he was on the other side, in the middle of Italy, between Florence and Rome. Before him lay Lake Thrasymene. In the evening light it looked like a sheet of flaming gold among the dark blue hills. Here, where Hannibal beat Flaminius, the grape vines clung peacefully to each other with their green tendrils. Pretty little half-clothed children tended a herd of coal-black pigs under a fragrant clump of laurels by the roadside, and if we could paint the scene in its true colors all would exclaim, "Glorious Italy!" But neither the student nor his companions in the stagecoach made any such exclamation.

Poisonous flies and gnats swarmed into the coach by the thousands. In vain the travelers tried to beat them off with myrtle branches. The flies stung just the same. There was not a passenger whose face was not puffed and spotted with bites. The poor horses looked like carcasses. The flies made life miserable for them, and it only brought them a momentary relief when the coachman got down and scraped off swarms of the insects that settled upon them.

Once the sun went down, an icy chill fell upon everything. It wasn't at all pleasant. However, the hills and clouds took on that wonderful green tint, so clear and so shining. Yes, go and see for yourself. That is far better than to read about it. It was a lovely sight, and the travelers thought so too, but their stomachs were empty, their bodies exhausted, and every thought in their heads was directed toward a lodging for the night. But where would they lodge? They watched the road ahead far more attentively than they did the splendid view.

Their road ran through an olive grove, and the student could fancy that he was at home, passing through a wood of gnarled willow trees. And there stood a lonely inn. A band of crippled beggars were camping outside and the liveliest among them looked like the eldest son of Famine who had just come of age. The rest either were blind, or so lame that they crawled about on their hands, or had withered arms and hands without any fingers. Here really was misery in rags.

"Eccellenza, miserabili!" they groaned, and stretched forth their crippled limbs. The hostess herself went barefoot. With uncombed hair and an unwashed blouse, she received her guests. The doors were hinged with string; half of the bricks of the floors had been put to other use; bats flew about the ceiling; and the smell-

"It were better to have supper in the stable," one traveler maintained. "There one at least knows what he is breathing."

The windows were opened to let a little fresh air come inside, but swifter than the air came those withered arms and that perpetual whine, "Miserabili, eccellenza." On the walls were many inscriptions, and half of them had little good to say for *la bella Italia*.

Supper was served. Supper was a watery soup flavored with pepper and rancid oil. This same oil was the better part of the salad. Dubious eggs and roasted cockscombs were the best dishes, and even the wine was distasteful. It was a frightful collation.

That night the trunks were piled against the door, and one of the travelers mounted guard while the others slept. The student stood the first guard mount. How close it was in there! The heat was overpowering, the gnats droned and stabbed, and outside, the *miserabili* whined in their dreams.

"Traveling," said the student, "would be all very well if one had no body. Oh, if only the body could rest while the spirit flies on without it. Wherever I go, there is some lack that I feel in my heart. There is always something better than the present that I desire. Yes, something better—the best of all, but what is it, and where shall I find it? Down deep in my heart, I know what I want. I want to reach a happy goal, the happiest goal of all."

As soon as the words were said, he found himself back in his home. Long white curtains draped the windows, and in the middle of the floor a black coffin stood. In this he lay, sleeping the quiet sleep of death. His wish was fulfilled—his body was at rest, and his spirit was free to travel. "Call no man happy until he rests in his grave," said Solon, and here his words proved true again.

Every corpse is a sphinx of immortality. The sphinx in this black casket that confronts us could say no more than the living man had written two days before:

*"Stern Death, your silence has aroused my fears.
Shall not my soul up Jacob's ladder pass,
Or shall your stone weight me throughout the years,
And I rise only in the graveyard grass?"*

*"Our deepest grief escapes the world's sad eye!
You who are lonely to the very last,
A heavier burden on your heart must lie
Than all the earth upon your coffin cast!"*

Two figures moved about the room. We know them both. Those two who bent over the dead man were Dame Care and Fortune's minion.

"Now," said Care, "you can see what happiness your galoshes have brought mankind."

"They have at least brought everlasting rest to him who here lies sleeping," said Fortune's minion.

"Oh, no!" said Care. "He went of his own free will. He was not called away. His spiritual power was not strong enough to undertake the glorious tasks for which he is destined. I shall do him a favor."

She took the galoshes from his feet. Then the sleep of death was ended, and the student awakened to life again. Care vanished, and she took the galoshes along with her, for she probably regarded them as her own property.