

It was now the busiest season of the year; the sailors and fishermen, the workmen in the stone quarries all demanding the warmest of woolen and linen. Anne and her two apprentice girls did not go to bed before midnight, and were up long before the cock crew. But it was hard work, and the return so, so meagre.

"Johanne, don't you see there is a thread broken in the warp," and slipping off her seat—not the first time—Anne deftly tied the refractory thread. With the customary caution the steady thump was again resumed. Scarce a word was spoken till Anne asked Johanne to prepare the evening meal in the kitchen adjoining.

For Anne Lowe it was a hard struggle. But a few months before her husband had sailed for America, a land far in the unknown west, a land in which money was plenty, and where a better home could be won.

Climbing the gradual ascent to the house that evening an old woman might have been seen, a village gossip, whose chief business was to learn the affairs of everyone on the island and then to distribute her knowledge generously. Her usual reward was a little to eat and a "Syp." She walked through the kitchen into the weaving-room, her rude wooden shoes giving a loud thump at every step. Entering she nodded and said: "Good evening, Anne." Sitting down on a chair beside the loom she removed her worn, red-figured white shawl, showing an old wrinkled face, the prominent feature of which was her nose, almost unlimited in its capacity for snuff.

"You just came in time, Karen," said Anne, as the girl announced that supper was ready. Karen simply nodded, her tongue was not let loosed.

A little previous to Karen's arrival, Anne's oldest boy, Peter, had rushed into the house bearing a huge bunch of pretty leaves, which were carefully put away. Peter was beginning to get hungry, but forgot this in the ecstasy of sitting in his new high chair. When all were at table Peter repeated:

"Mæt vort Legem, Jesu sod!  
Og vor Sjol med Livsen's Brod.  
Lad engang as med de Fromme  
Til din store Nadver komme!"

Anne was looking into the distance, thinking. The impatient cry of the little one brought her back.

Theirs was a frugal meal: herring and potatoes, with a little brown bread and milk. Karen did most of the talking—that was her profession. But she also liked to do most of the eating. Her gossip was a mixture more of fiction than of fact. The theme or no-theme of her conversation was taken first from one incident and then another, usually by beginning a new story before the former one was half finished.

"I was over to Nexon's, yesterday," she said, "and I find they are having a great deal of trouble. You see that their son, Jacob, who used to work over on the Guldbrand Gaard, has suddenly gone off. They say he shipped as a common sailor on a bark bound for Australia. You see Australia is a place where they pick up gold. When my son came back he had some gold. I suppose he found it, for you know Hamburg is a big place." \* \*

"But you know," continued Karen, after a time, "people all wonder at the way you are getting along. It surprises them to see you so cheerful, and, it seems, that all wish you well."

"But I forgot to tell that there is going to be a fair held at Capt. Maansen's in a couple of weeks, and a prize of twenty Kroner is to be given for the best woven piece of cloth. I know you are too poor to make much, but may be you could try."

Anne answered nothing to this.

The supper was now finished. Karen rose and stood silently by the door for some time, then putting her worn white, red-figured shawl over her head, grasped her snuff-box, took a liberal dose, muttering with an omnious croak as she went out, "ingen Syp."

Anne well knew this meant that before another day was gone the whole village