

FROM  
AN OCCULT  
DIARY

AUGUST  
STRINDBERG

**S**trindberg's "Occult Diary" covers the final years of his life. It was begun in 1896. "From this time on," he wrote, "there began a series of manifestations which I cannot account for except by assuming the intervention of unknown Powers, and I began to make notes which mounted up by degrees to form a diary". No portion of this extraordinary document has ever before appeared in print. The section which we now publish covers the period which started with his third marriage in 1901 to the young Norwegian actress, Harriet Bosse, thirty years his junior.

The marriage began to break up after only six months; there was a divorce in 1904, but every step Harriet took to free herself—and the relationship in its *actual* phase is movingly described—only increased Strindberg's obsession. She "possessed" him, even if she were a hundred miles away. In his fevered imagination he slept with her night after night, sometimes in joy, sometimes in loveless passion. Then, early in 1908, she became engaged to a young actor, and Strindberg's obsession became akin to madness. The closing pages of his diary, written when he was feeling the first pains of the stomach cancer that was to kill him, possess an anguish and pathos seldom found in the written word. Almost the last entry reads: "Slept until the morning, tranquilly, even though I was aware of Harriet's erotic but unloving assaults (which appears to be my shooting pains). She wants to keep me to herself, out of hatred."

Mary Sandbach has made an excellent translation of the original Swedish, edited by Torsten Eklund.

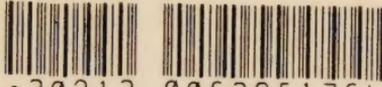
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*From an Occult Diary*

*Also published by Secker & Warburg*

Strindberg: The Plays, Volume I

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL MEYER

(Volumes II and III in preparation)

AUGUST STRINDBERG

*From an Occult Diary*

MARRIAGE WITH HARRIET BOSSE

Edited with Introduction and Notes by

TORSTEN EKLUND

Translated with additional notes and appendix by

MARY SANDBACH



LONDON

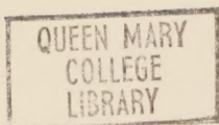
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## Introductory Remarks

The text of *From an Occult Diary* is made up from the following sources: *The Occult Diary*; letters from Strindberg to Harriet Bosse; Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes to these letters; letters from Harriet Bosse to Strindberg.

Square brackets indicate omissions from any of the above-mentioned sources.

Italics within round brackets indicate that Strindberg wrote the original words, expressions or sentences in Greek characters.

For those unfamiliar with Strindberg's career, a few remarks useful to the general reader will be found in the Appendix.

The Swedish editor's notes are signalled by \* or † and the translator's notes by numerals.

The translator has felt that inconsistencies or deviations from the normal in spelling and punctuation, notably the erratic use of capitals and exclamation marks, should be retained in order to keep some of the colour of the original.



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## Introduction

Strindberg's so-called *Occult Diary* occupies a place apart among his literary remains; it has no counterpart and there is nothing with which we can compare it. The fact that this document—the least revised and the most intimate self-portrait he has left us—has so far remained unprinted, is connected with his own vacillating and inconsistent attitude towards its eventual publication. The position he finally adopted is, however, clear. Shortly before his death he directed that the diary should constitute the last part in a complete edition of his autobiographical works, the first part being *The Son of a Servant*.

*The Occult Diary* was begun on February 21st, 1896, when Strindberg's great Inferno crisis was reaching its peak, and he had recently moved into the now celebrated Hôtel Orfila in Paris. "From this time on," he writes in *Inferno*, "there began a series of manifestations which I cannot account for except by assuming the intervention of unknown Powers, and I began to make notes which mounted up by degrees to form a diary."

To begin with he contented himself with jotting down brief notes of "strange coincidences", everyday happenings and details which he himself believed to be wonders and omens, hints from the Powers. These early notes were really a way of assembling material, the first draft for his two confessions *Inferno* and *Legends*. But it is only in their rearranged and expanded form, and through the interpretation that he himself put on what he had observed, that they become accessible and satisfying to the uninitiated.

By degrees the notes in the diary became fuller and were complemented by observations and reflections on what he had experienced. The "occult" element was pushed farther into the

background, though this did not mean that it ever completely disappeared. It was particularly from 1900, when Harriet Bosse entered his life, that the work assumed the character of a diary in the usual sense of the word. Harriet Bosse and his relationship to her now dominated it, and after she had definitely left him and married again he ceased to keep this diary of his life. The last dated entry was made on July 11th, 1908. On that day he gave up the flat in Karlavägen where he and Harriet had set up house when they were first married. He moved from there to his last home, The Blue Tower, 85 Drottninggatan.

A complete edition of *The Occult Diary* is planned in accordance with Strindberg's last wishes. However, while waiting for it to appear we here publish those sections of it which touch directly upon his third marriage. The main features and even some of the details of the relationship between Strindberg and Harriet Bosse are already known, above all through his letters to her. These were published in 1932 in an edition to which she contributed explanatory notes. But the diary is undoubtedly our most important source of information on this subject. When we look at the account given in it we shall be struck by how temperately he judges the other party. On the whole judgements on other people are few and far between. Of "plaidoyer" and accusation there is little; nor is there any of the passionate self-vindication that marks *A Madman's Defence*. Rather we gain from the diary a touching impression of his vain attempts to overcome the limitations of his own nature and to achieve harmony with his immediate surroundings. In one of the last entries that refer to his wife he declares: "I know that in gatherings, in trams, in the street in broad daylight she has had contact with me; we are indeed grown together as one being; and yet we may not live together. . . . Never can we part! Harriet really shows more delicacy by not wanting to correspond with me. Our relationship is so fragile that it cannot endure words, neither spoken nor written words. And I have a clumsy hand (Ungerschickt Hand)." (May 17th, 1908).

At an early stage in their marriage it was plain to Strindberg

and Harriet Bosse that it was impossible for them to live together under everyday circumstances. The difference in age between them was altogether too great. He was nearly thirty years older than she and more than twice her age. She did not belong to the submissive, accommodating type of woman that he glorified in theory but never chose in practice. "We both had strongly pronounced characters, and young as I was, I unfortunately had my own views," writes Harriet Bosse in one of her notes to the Strindberg letters. "Strindberg had lived his life and had finished with a whole lot of things on which I had not even begun."

But the schisms which ever and again arose between the husband and wife did not mean that Strindberg awoke from the state of infatuation in which he had entered upon his third marriage; nor did their juridical divorce in 1904 mean a severing of their relations. The couple continued to meet constantly and for a number of years still lived as man and wife. Time after time they were reunited only to separate again, usually in a spirit of discord. But every time they parted Strindberg's love blazed up anew and he saw his wife in a cloud of glory. This is how he describes the situation in *A Blue Book*. "There is a woman whom I cannot bear to be near, but who is dear to me at a distance. We write letters, always appreciative and friendly; but after we have longed for one another for a time and feel we must meet, we instantly begin to quarrel, grow coarse and disharmonious, part in anger. We love one another on a higher plane, but are not able to be in the same room, and we dream of meeting again, disembodied, on a verdant island where only we two may be and, at most, our child."

This brings us to the subject of Strindberg's "telepathic" life with his third wife upon which a few words must here be said. It is on this subject that the occult element in the diary becomes most pronounced and it is here that we are given the most peculiar and unparalleled information on Strindberg's personality at this time. The subject is mentioned in various places, both in letters and in his printed works, but only in the diary do we see it properly illuminated and explained. For instance, in the entry of

May 10th, 1908, he writes as follows: "This telepathic state of affairs (marriage, which indeed has also been a fact), began before our engagement, when Harriet, in a manner which I cannot explain, sought me at night; I was awakened even as I slept and experienced the illusion that she lay beside me, that I held her in my arms and possessed her, and had possessed her before I proposed. But then I did not think of it (when I proposed that is). Since then it has manifested itself every time we have been parted. Distance does not exist for us. She has sought me from Paris and Vienna and we have come together as man and wife. It can never cease!"

No attempt will be made here to give a psychological or physiological interpretation of the phenomenon in question. It is clear that, to a certain extent, it was connected with his ascetic manner of life and the occult experiences that preoccupied him during his Inferno crisis. After that crisis he had imposed increasing restrictions on his social life and contact with the outer world. Illusions and remote participation in the fate of others had come to replace actual experiences, and had created a world that, for him, became more and more the real one, so that through hallucinations he acquired the ability to become aware of the people who were in his thoughts.

Strindberg himself saw his imaginary erotic experiences in an occult light; but he could never make up his mind whether to interpret them according to the Swedenborgian teaching of a communion of spirits on a higher plane, or by means of the conceptions, drawn from mediaeval magic and witch-trials, of incubi and evil spirits who visit people in their sleep and have physical intercourse with them. In February 1901 he speaks of the ray of light that love had brought into his life and of how he had "experienced an elevating and ennobling influence—which surely no demon could possess", but he was still not fully convinced: "Demons, of course, are able to dress up as angels."

In the spring of 1908 Harriet Bosse became engaged to a fellow actor. By this time the bonds between her and Strindberg had begun to loosen in earnest, but now his love blazed up for the

last time more vehemently, more passionately than ever before. From now onwards the diary is entirely taken up with confessions of his intimate communion with Harriet Bosse in the realm of fantasy. On April 10th he wrote: "What I am now experiencing is so strange. Harriet and I are friends; she 'seeks' me. I eat but little, drink but little, dress myself—for whom? I am, as it were, just engaged, living in 1901, and seeing Harriet when she was young, seven years ago, great, glorious, ethereal!" But at the same time he shrank back from this improper relationship, and on April 13th he wrote: "I have prayed to God to deliver me from all this, to give me a thorn in my flesh, to smite me in the face! But He makes no move! I am happy when she seeks me."

Strindberg tried to persuade himself that Harriet Bosse participated in his new-born love, and this in spite of the fact that she was just about to marry again. By means of letters she tried in vain to explain to Strindberg that on her side all was over, that she belonged to another man, and to tell him that "all contact between us *must* cease". But not even the most palpable facts could seriously shake his conviction. It was *she* who sought him day and night. It was also her he blamed when he felt that the relationship was improper. "I beg you now: Leave me in peace! In my sleep I am defenceless, as everyone is, irresponsible . . . and I am ashamed afterwards—now I think it is criminal", he cries in a letter of April 9th. A few days later he was reproaching her again: "Why will you not let me go? What do you want with my old person? Take my soul if you must, but let me go! This will end badly!"

It does not matter whether the above-mentioned phenomenon is unwholesome or not; nor does it matter that the mystical happenings, to which the diary bears witness in realistic detail, are intermingled with naïve superstition. Regarded from a literary and poetic point of view they were fruitful, and inspired Strindberg to sublime expressions of love in verse and prose that have few counterparts in Swedish literature. We meet with these in the dramas *Swanwhite*, *To Damascus III* and *Queen Christina*, and also in the Chamber Play of 1907, *Storm*. "In my thoughts I embrace

you, in my dreams I kiss you, nothing on earth can part us," says the Prince to Swanwhite. "I see you though my eye sees you not, I taste you for you cast roses in my mouth . . ."

Something must also be said here on the subject of Strindberg's attitude to his *Occult Diary* and the question of its publication. He first mentions the matter in a letter of June 13th, 1904, to his German translator Emil Schering. In it he requested that, if he should die soon, the latter would collect and publish in one volume all his autobiographical works, including letters and the *Occult Diary*, and he added: "The only things I wish for as a memorial are a black wooden cross and the story of my life."

On October 21st, 1907, he offered Karl Otto Bonnier what he called "my greatest 'œuvre posthume' my 'Occult Diary' which I have kept since I lived in Hôtel Orfila in Paris in 1896, that is to say for eleven years. . . . As to when it should be published, well, that would have to be after my death. All the strange experiences I have had are recorded in it, intimate matters, but often with the names in Greek characters . . ." However, on January 29th, 1908, he asked Bonnier to cancel the agreement, and a month later, on March 7th, he wrote a note on the cover of the diary to the effect that it might never be published.

Shortly before his death he lifted this prohibition. In an envelope which was labelled "Literary Remains and other Documents of Importance" he expressed the same wish as in the letter to Schering of 1904, namely, that all his autobiographical works should be published in one volume in the following order.

The Son of a Servant

(to be published in one volume under the above title after my death)

The Son of a Servant

The Time of Ferment

The Red Room

The Son of a Servant, Part IV

Le Plaidoyer d'un fou

The Collection of letters "He and She"

The Quarantine Officer's Second Story

Inferno

Legends

Selected Letters

The Occult Diary

TORSTEN EKLUND



## 1900

*From Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes to the 1932 volume of Strindberg's letters to her.*

The spring of 1900 brought me a lot of work and much success. I played Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Anna in *The First Violin*. [. . .] Just at that time a production of Strindberg's *To Damascus* was being planned for the coming autumn season, but those concerned had not made up their minds who should play the part of the Lady. August Palme, who was seeing a great deal of Strindberg just then, suggested that they should try me. [. . .]

Strangely enough I was chosen. [. . .]

I had still not met Strindberg in person, but one day Palme arrived with a message from him to say that he wanted me to visit him at a certain time on the following day.

[. . .]

*From Strindberg's Diary, May 31st.*

Fröken Bosse visited me, 1st time.

*July 5th.*

Fröken Bosse visited me, 2nd time. She accepted the part in *Damascus*. Her sister waited outside in a cab.

*November 15th.*

First dress-rehearsal of *Damascus*. The inexplicable scene with (*Bosse*).

It happened like this! After the 1st act I went on to the stage and thanked (*Bosse*). Made some comment about the final scene where

the kiss has to be given with the veil down. As we stood there on the stage, surrounded by a lot of people, and I was talking seriously to her about the kissing scene (*Bosse's*) little face changed, grew larger and became supernaturally beautiful, seemed to come closer to mine while her eyes enveloped me with their luminous blackness. Whereupon, without excusing herself, she ran away and I stood amazed, feeling that a miracle had happened and that I had been given an intoxicating kiss.

After this (*B*) haunted me for three days so that I could feel her presence in my room.

Then I dreamt about her, thus. (*I was lying in a bed, B came to me in her Puck's costume from the play. She was married to me. She said of me: "Behold, the man who brewed me," gave me her foot to kiss. She had no breasts, absolutely none!*)

Gustaf Strindberg,\* who had been to see *Damascus*, said that *B* was exactly like Aunt Philp (my sister Anna). Now my second wife (the Lady in *Damascus*) was like my sister Anna. Consequently, (*B*) like both. Some years ago (*B*) played the girl in my play *In the Face of Death*.† (*B's*) sister and brother-in-law lived in the same pension as I did in Paris.

(*B*) lives at 12 Gref Magnigatan, right opposite the house I was living in when I wrote *Master Olof*.‡

*November 19th.*

After a long absence the sun is shining. It is dry and cold. *To Damascus* is being performed to-night.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, November 19th.*

As I shall not be putting in an appearance at the theatre to-night

\* Strindberg's elder brother Oscar's son.

† Harriet Bosse played this part in the Central Theatre in Christiania. The theatre was run by her sister and brother-in-law, Alma and Johan Fahlström, whom Strindberg had met in Paris in 1895.

‡ From 1872 to 1873 Strindberg lived at 7 Gref Magnigatan, opposite the house in which Harriet Bosse was living in 1900.

may I thank you now for what I saw at the dress-rehearsal? It was great and beautiful [. . .]

August Strindberg

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, December 5th.*

Fröken Harriet Bosse,

Having in mind that our Journey to Damascus ended to-day, I ordered some roses—with thorns, of course—they say there are no others! I send them with a simple “thank you”. Now stay on among us, *the* actress of the new century. You have struck a new note for us to hear, no matter where you found it!

And allow me to hope I may hear you again, in the spring, in *Easter*, as I think you have promised me!

August Strindberg

*December 12th.*

Sent (*Easter*) to (B) this evening. Sat down in the evening to write an analysis of the part for (B). Fancied I was having telepathic relations with (B). At night I dreamed . . . [. . .]

1901

*January 3rd.*

Have been plagued for a couple of months by a smell of Celery. Everything tastes and smells of Celery. When I take off my shirt at night it smells of Celery. What can it be? My (*chastity*), my celibacy?

*January 5th.*

Finished *The Bridal Crown* and in doing so had a feeling that there would be a pause in my work as a dramatist.

Longing for Paris; planning a visit.

*January 8th.*

Met (*Bonnier*) who dissuaded me from the Paris project. Read *Echo de Paris* sent by *Courier de la Presse*, and was frightened off. Had a message from (*Bosse*) saying that I must not go. Saw in the paper that 9 people had frozen to death in Paris. Decided not to go, for on the previous day I had (*begged God*) to signify (*his will*).

*January 9th.*

Reading Balzac. "Lucien, in short, was loved absolutely, and in a way in which women very rarely love a man." (Woman does not love; it is man who loves and woman who is loved.)

*January 13th, Sunday.*

(*B*), who read *Creditors* and *Simoon* on the 12th, haunted me on the 12th. This haunting grew more intense on the 13th, and at night she persecuted me. (First telepathic "intercourse" with *B*.) When she appeared telepathically during the night I "possessed" her. Incubus.

The whole thing seemed to me quite ghastly and I (*begged God to deliver me*) from (*this passion*).

*January 14th, Monday.*

Passed two ladies in the street; it was 6 degrees below zero and a fresh wind. A smell of Celery (*lasciviousness*).

Passed two ladies again in the evening, and there was a smell of Celery.

*January 15th, Tuesday.*

What is all this leading to? I want to flee to Berlin, but I cannot.

Last year (*Fru Geijerstam*) felt she was in telepathic communication with (*Arvid Ödman*) or that he was hypnotizing her from a distance. She had, in fact, been in love with him in her youth.

*January 25th.*

I saw a flag flying this morning from a house in Strandvägen. It made me happy. Coming closer I saw it was the "clean" Norwegian flag,<sup>1</sup> at half-mast, with a wreath of laurel round a coat of arms, and something in the centre. What could it mean? But, of course! They were flying the English flag in honour of Queen Victoria who died recently!

(*Aversion to B*)

It is evening now, I am sitting alone at home while they perform *The Saga of the Folkungs*. The excitement of it all is with me, though from time to time it relaxes, probably when the curtain falls.

Going over in my mind what my life has been I wonder whether all the horrible things I have experienced have been staged before my eyes to enable me to become a dramatist, and depict all mental states and all possible situations. I was a dramatist at twenty, but if the course of my life had run smoothly, I should have had nothing to write about.

[. . .]

<sup>1</sup> The Norwegian flag without the union device, a combination of the flags of Norway and Sweden which was carried in the upper square next to the flagstaff in the flags of both countries.

January 28th.

Played *The Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mendelssohn). Had a feeling that (B) would come. Then in came the maid and announced Fröken (*Vallberg*). I refused to see her!

Soon afterwards, as I was turning over the pages of Euripides, I came upon this: "But do not take a fancy to an evil woman" and immediately after that: "The visits of wicked women were my ruin."

Let this suffice!

Cf: my peculiar performance in the street last year. I was busy wondering whether it was my duty to marry again, when I fell and hurt my ring-finger.

February 4th.

[. . .]

Read Maeterlinck's *Princess Maleine*. Was sensible all the time of the scent and taste of incense. (Incense=The prayers of the pious.) N.B.! *Easter* was being rehearsed and collated at Dramaten for the first time. Incense, Olibanum=(B), see below, the 16th.

[. . .]

February 8th, Friday.

[. . .]

Went on writing *Damascus III* in the morning. Shaved myself towards dinner-time. (*Kissed kind B's picture. Prayed God to bless her.*) Then B arrived. (*I was ashamed . . . She was serious, lovely*), she said: (*God bless you*) for the beautiful things you have said in *Easter!* In the presence of (*this perfect specimen of a female child*) I felt like old Faust, mourning his lost youth.

Her mouth when she smiled was like that of an eight-year-old child.

She had an eagle's quill-feather\* in her hat and a strange ornament, a golden heart, on her breast.

\* This was clearly the occasion on which Strindberg was given the well-known eagle-pen.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, February 8th.*

Kind Fröken Bosse,

Happy to have had a talk with you at last about *Easter*. I feel now that I forgot so much of what I meant to say to you, and I am afraid too of appearing to want to interfere with your development. But since you so kindly and so charmingly thanked me to-day, when it was really I who wanted to thank you, I will first say a few words about Eleanora, and then about something else!

As a result of family troubles Eleanora has developed a certain mental condition, some would call it an ailment, by reason of which she has entered into rapport (telepathic) both with those related to her and with mankind as a whole, and finally with the lower forms of creation, so that she suffers with all living things, or realizes the idea of "Christ in Man". She is therefore kin to Balzac's Seraphita, Swedenborg's nièce, whose acquaintanceship I had meant to recommend to you as an introduction to *Easter*, had I not feared—yes—to make a nuisance of myself. Had even intended to ask you to read Hannah Ioël's *Beyond*, Fru Skram's *Hieronymus*, and, above all Maeterlinck's *Le Trésor des Humbles*.<sup>1</sup> But as I have just said, I was afraid you would not want to be instructed. [. . .]

Some other time, soon, I shall hope to hear your impressions of *La Princesse Maleine*, and after you have read *The Bridal Crown*, I shall introduce you to the enchanting girl Judith in *The Dance of Death*.

August Strindberg

*February 10th, Sunday.*

Woke up and went out in a wonderful mood. The sun was shining and I saw a rosy glow in the north-east (Furusund).

(*Experienced the feeling*) that life might again begin to smile.

<sup>1</sup> The first two works deal with mental derangement and life in the lunatic asylums of the time; the third, by Maeterlinck (English translation *The Treasures of the Humble*) is a book of essays of a mystical and philosophical nature.

On a new house in Karlavägen saw a notice: "Flats, 3 to 5 rooms, available April 1st." (This was the house into which we moved when we were newly married.)

. . . Went out in the evening and noticed that the city was illuminated; but now, on the 11th, still do not know why. That, and the sound of a festive march being played out on the ice, affected me oddly.

*February 11th, Monday.*

Cut the ring-finger of my left hand just where the ring had been. A large drop of blood oozed out.

Alone the whole day, in quiet mood, reading Peladan<sup>1</sup> and (*thinking of B and begging her to forgive my evil thoughts*). This evening a beam of green light from the lamp fell on my breast and followed me wherever I went. Is the light really coming back at last?

Since (*B's visit*) I have entered on a new phase of my life. I long for purity, beauty, and harmony. The 2nd act of *Damascus III* is influenced by (*B*) who has now entered my life [. . .] Harriet and I have, periodically, lived together telepathically and have "enjoyed" each other from a distance—after she had initiated me into the secret of it.

*February 12th.*

Night before: uneasy. Woke at 2 o'clock. (*Possessed her when she sought me.*) My telepathic relationship with (*B*) has intensified alarmingly. In my thoughts I live solely with her. (*Pray God to resolve this matter.*) It threatens to bring about a catastrophe.

[. . .]

I woke this morning with a fever and a pain in my chest. Went out all the same. Saw the golden cross on Jakob's church, that you see above the Synagogue, lit up by the sun, provocatively.

When I got home a parcel arrived from Maredsous Monastery, which I visited a couple of years ago.

What I am now going through is horrible and marvellous

<sup>1</sup> Sâr Mérodack J. Péladan, the French occultist,

—I feel as if I were expecting a death-sentence. Sometimes I think that (*she loves me*), sometimes not. God's will be done! If I only knew what it was. Up to now there have been as many premonitory signs for as against. On her last visit I felt as if an angel were in the room and I decided in favour of the good; hoping to achieve reconciliation with woman through woman. For three days now I have had her in my room and experienced an elevating, ennobling influence, which surely no demon could possess.

If the Supreme Powers are jesting with me, I am prepared to bear that too!

[. . .]

My fate will probably be decided to-day.

Will even love, great, sublime love come again? And have we seen the last of the economic-bargain marriages of the previous century?

*February 13th, Wednesday.*

[. . .]

This has been a brighter day than yesterday. The fever has left me.

I sent (B) a letter this evening, and an Easter birch<sup>1</sup> and a daffodil. It is odd: yesterday, my feverish day, everything was black; nothing seemed to make the rooms lighter. They were dark . . . to-day they are strikingly bright, yet the illumination is the same as it was yesterday.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, February 13th.*

Kind Fröken Bosse,

[. . .]

In the meantime, as the answer may come soon, I beg you to tell me quickly if I may count on you to play Kersti?\*

I can immediately secure the role for you. [. . .]

<sup>1</sup> A bunch of birch twigs tipped with brightly coloured feathers.

\* The leading part in *The Bridal Crown*.

It is not impatience on my part that dictates this letter. It is the fear of not getting you for the role, which they might give to someone else.

August Strindberg

*February 14th.*

Disharmonious, though the sun is shining. All my thoughts are centred on (B), but as if she were coming; good, loving, to give me back my faith in the good in woman, and in mankind. (B) is like (1) my second wife (whom she played in Damascus), (2) my sister Anna, (3) my mother, (4) M'lle Lecain, the beautiful English woman who wanted to capture me in Paris, and who was like all of them. She frequently gave me the impression of being warm and motherly, so that when I was at Mme Charlotte's\* I would often wish myself under her beautiful, warm, woollen cloak, as in a mother's womb. But Gauguin said she was a demon, and that she tempted men—and women. (5) She smiles like my son Hans did when he was four years old, angelically.

Every evening I pray to (B's) guardian angel to make her good and me good through her. Is it all a delusion?

Demons can dress up like angels.

. . . I waited the whole of this morning in deadly anxiety. The clock struck the half hour. I collapsed as if the thought "she is not coming" had brought my life to an end. . . . Soon after, she arrived. Unaffected, gentle, kind, not so glowing . . . as last time. Talked warmly and with dignity, kept the conversation above trifles . . .

I rallied, but was so much affected by the joy of seeing her that I wept . . . Finally I kissed her little hand and thanked her for wanting to visit me. When I showed her my alchemist's cupboard my hand bled.—She said: "You have your secrets, I see!" (à propos the pieces of paper in the cupboard).<sup>1</sup>

\* Mme Charlotte was the proprietress of the eating-place in Paris at which Strindberg was a regular customer in the middle of the nineties.

<sup>1</sup> Pieces of paper on which Strindberg believed that he had laid a film of gold of his own making.

At 4 o'clock I was overcome by an attack of weeping—wept in general over my own misery and that of mankind, wept without reason, with a dim feeling of happiness, of pain because I had no happiness, with a premonition of coming disaster.

*February 16th.*

Letter from (B) that made me calm and happy.

I answered it. She was so glad to have my photograph.\*

The strange smell of incense manifested itself again to-day, more intensely than usual. The idea struck me that it was (B). I sniffed her letter, it smelt of incense! So it is her! But the smell has become nauseous. At first it was good, uplifting; then it smelt of madness and witchcraft. Finally it has become nauseous and terrifying.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, c. February 16th.*

Herr August Strindberg,

Thank you for the photograph. You made me so happy by sending it. I have only read part of *The Dance of Death*. I cannot bear to read much at a time; it affects me so deeply. May I please keep it for a few days longer?

Harriet Bosse

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, February 16th.*

Kind Fröken Bosse,

I go on calling you kind because last Friday you were kind and begged God to bless me.—Nobody has blessed me for years!—I hardly know whether you believe in a good God, but He

\* Strindberg had given Harriet Bosse a photograph of himself with the following dedication: "To the 'Lady' from the 'Unknown One'. This is what he looked like during his journey to Damascus of 1896, in Ystad." During his courtship of Harriet Bosse Strindberg often referred to himself as the Unknown One and to Harriet Bosse as the Lady, the hero and heroine of his play *To Damascus*. In 1896, at the height of his Inferno crisis, Strindberg spent some weeks in Ystad, a small town in the south of Sweden.

took you at your word and listened to you! Can you imagine it? I was ill and in darkness; then light came to me, good intentions and peace! That was why I kissed the little hand that had blessed me. Pray understand! That was why I wept. It is many yesterdays since I last wept! Understand that too!

Of course you may keep *The Dance of Death*. I await your verdict with patience, and I beg you to tell me exactly what you think of the play.

[. . .]

Your,  
August Strindberg

*February 17th, Sunday.*

Night before: tranquil, wonderful. Woke clear-eyed and happy. Loathed coffee and drank milk. A walk in Djurgården. A flag was hoisted on Skansen. Two dogs made much of me! Read in Stockholms Dagblad the words "Love is best". The text for the day treated of love = Caritas, not Eros—Amour—

Discovered the plan of a tour to Italy in Maeterlinck. Now contemplating a journey to an Italian monastery that Richard Bergh found. The smell of incense, which succeeded that of Celery and had become nauseating, is less strong to-day. Oh that I might have a new one!

This evening I saw the cross that is formed by the gas-lamps on Slottsbacken. I see it occasionally, not always.

*February 18th.*

Fairly quiet. The smell of incense less strong. Went on writing *Damascus III* but slept for the most part. x x x\* She sought me and I responded!

*February 19th.*

[. . .]

As I was about to go to bed this evening I became sensible of

\* The x sign by which Strindberg indicates here and subsequently the number of "telepathic embraces",

(B) out in the dining-room, of her smell of incense too. Later on in my room, but with such intensity and so weirdly that I grew afraid.

[. . .]

*February 20th.*

Went on writing *Damascus III*. (B) arrived, kind, friendly, diffident. I revived! She had her veil down the whole time. She likes babies. She had read *The Dance of Death*—I asked her if she had not herself experienced Judith's first love . . . Poor child; she did not answer! When she had gone it grew dark again. She had a fur round her neck with two little claws, sharp, black. There was a moment when the smell of incense came from her. The strange thing is, however, that every evening when I change my cotton shirt, I am aware of a smell of incense from myself. It used to be celery. What does this mean?

A tranquil night until 4 o'clock. Said my morning prayers.  
x x x Possessed her.

Who will deliver me from this sinful flesh?

*February 23rd.*

Woke firmly determined to release myself from (B). Sent both photographs of her to Germany and felt freer!\* Went on writing *Damascus III*.

Beethoven evening with Axel, Richard B and Gyllensköld.<sup>1</sup> Pleasant atmosphere. I thanked God for letting me have such an agreeable time after so many years of misery.

*February 24th.*

Night before: Dreamt about storks. N.B.! There are two pictures of storks in my present rooms, or rather three, now that I have bought a Japanese screen.

\* Strindberg sent photographs of Harriet Bosse in her roles as the Lady in *To Damascus* and Eleonora in *Easter* to his German translator Emil Schering, who was going to negotiate guest-artist appearances for her in Germany. Cf. the entry of March 4th, 1901, in the diary.

<sup>1</sup> Axel Strindberg, Strindberg's eldest brother; Richard Bergh the painter; Vilhelm Carlheim-Gyllensköld the physicist,

[. . .]

(B) haunting me.

About midday I wrote and sent off a letter to Personne at the theatre. There was a matinée and (B) was acting. I asked him to delete *Casper*\* and put *Simoon* in its place with (B) in the female part. For two whole hours afterwards I felt I was in friendly rapport with (B). So strong was the feeling that it gave me palpitations. I felt happy, as if she (*loved me*) and as if my fate were now decided. Smell of incense intense but not disagreeable.

My whole existence is now intertwined with hers. May God help me out of this!

*February 25th.*

x x x She offered herself and I possessed her.

Wrote more of *Damascus III*.

At midday, books lent to (B) returned along with a letter, stiff, cold, friendly.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, February 25th.*

Herr August Strindberg,

I have grown to like Mäterlinck more and more. There is a peculiar elegance about his art that impresses one as being strange at first, because of its originality, but later enchants by its sublime power of giving colour to a mood.

I am thinking here particularly of *Les Sept Princesses*, *Intérieur* and *Les Aveugles*.

I am grateful to you for having introduced me to him.

Harriet Bosse

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, February 25th.*

Fröken Harriet Bosse,

Please have patience with me and my letter-writing for a little longer. Our great mutual interest, Eleonora, is its ultimate

\* The play *Casper's Shrove Tuesday* which Strindberg had just written,

objective. Even the books I send you are concerned with her. You say that the part is so sensitive that it hardly bears touching. True, that is why I do not want to analyse it, or pick it to bits, or philosophize about it. [. . .]

*February 26th, Tuesday.*

[. . .]

Woke in the morning determined to free myself from (B). Thought of her stiff, arrogant letter of yesterday. Thought of the consequences of surrendering my power and my property, my freedom and my honour to a hard, calculating woman of an enemy nation!<sup>1</sup>

[. . .]

(B) haunted me continuously from noon to evening. Then I went to Gyllensköld to be quit of her. Before going I wrote a cold, stiff letter to (B) and put it in the pillar-box.

The conception of *Swanwhite* has kept me in a state of intoxication all day.

*February 27th.*

Night before fairly quiet x x x (= Possessed her). Woke obsessed by *Swanwhite* and worked on it the whole day. Heard nothing from (B). The smell of incense seems to be coming to an end. Have my three weeks of asceticism made me impervious to her Aura? Or has her Aura merged into mine and become refined through it?

Free of any contact with (B) all day, but longed for her at times. And, although I longed intensely, I got no response. Is the thread severed?

The day was really grey and rather dismal.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, February 27th.*

Fröken Harriet Bosse,

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Bosse was Norwegian by birth.

I have much to tell you and many things to ask, but I have got it into my head that my friendly advances give you pain and that my concern for your welfare embarrasses you. [ . . . ]

It would, of course, be improper if I asked you to come here, and I do not dare to do so either. But if I tell you that the impromptu table will certainly be laid at 2 o'clock, but cleared at 2.30, then you can please yourself whether you honour me by a visit as hitherto. If I am too bold in offering even this piece of information, please forgive me. I cannot at the moment see any other alternative.

[ . . . ]

*February 28th.*

Sent off a friendly letter to (B) this morning.

She came at 3 p.m., dressed in black, delightful, charming, good. We talked intimately, intimately! She told me she had had a feeling that I had been angry with her the last few days! Etc. I gave her *Damascus III* which is a confession.

[ . . . ]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, March 1st.*

Kind Fröken Bosse,

Come and give me your impressions of *Damascus III* before they are washed away by other things.

I attach so much value to your opinion because you have played the part of the Lady, you see!

Your

August Strindberg

*March 1st.*

Woke with a feeling that my fate had now been decided. Wrote a letter to (B) asking her to tell me what she thought of *Damascus*.

Spent the rest of the day in a state of great tension, waiting for her to come. (The clock has just struck 6.) This afternoon, immediately after dinner, I was certain she would come. Could not smell the scent but my heart beat violently.

(N.B.! The pendulum clock in the dining-room stopped this morning. My pocket watch stopped three days ago.)

(Telephone call from Branting this evening, which I refused to take.)

Very strange; I feel as if I were engaged. I have to-day chosen furniture for "my wife's" room from Bodafors' catalogue. I have bought new clothes, as if I were expecting visits of congratulation. Suppose the whole thing is and remains make-believe? What then? Why, I shall write a poem, a beautiful poem, and the anguish of loss will be transformed into song! Dante never got his Beatrice, and therefore he remained faithful to her, in spite of the fact that she was married to another man!

On the other hand, I had a feeling this evening that my contact with her was broken off and as if all were over.

[. . .]

*March 2nd.*

Received a letter from Germany about (B's) visit as a guest-artist. Engaged a messenger and sent it to (B). Thought to myself, now I have her in a trap. She came: lovely, child-like, gentle, wise. But immediately a rapping started on all the walls. She had with her *Damascus III* and to what was (as I thought) the question that would decide matters: "Ought I to let 'the Unknown One' end up in a monastery?" She answered: "No, he has more to accomplish in life." . . . I had now intended to strike my great blow and ask . . . but the question was not forthcoming and she slipped through my fingers. (In fact, she had written a letter accepting me. I did not receive it until April 25th, where it is now to be found.)\*

In order to reveal my feelings I had put out (as if by accident)

\* This letter from Harriet Bosse is the one dated March 4th, 1901, on page 33 of this book.

one of her green seals with four cords laid in a cross. She noticed it and smiled—smiled like a little girl when she has succeeded in catching her adorer off his guard. One thing is certain: she knows now where she has me!

She offered to play the piano for me. Oh!

[. . .]

*March 3rd.*

Woke resolved to disclose my feelings to (B). Wrote a long letter and sent it off. . . . It should be being delivered at this moment.

It was delivered, to (B), who was at home. (Instantly the sky cleared and turned bright blue over the Baltic.) I was, however, not sensible of any smell, none at all, but I was overcome by sleep, . . . and I was so cold that I had to light a fire and put on my brown cloak.

It is now 4.30. I know nothing. I have no presentiment of anything.

Read the text for the day, Passion Sunday, but could not feel devout!

What will happen now?

Evening, 9 o'clock. Nothing has happened. Have been uneasy and tense, but have experienced no contact with (B).

[. . .]

*March 4th.*

[. . .]

It is 10.30 a.m. Nothing has happened! G.H.M.<sup>1</sup>

At 11 o'clock a letter arrived from Schering giving his impression of (B's) portrait: "ethereal". Sent it on immediately to (B). Not so much as a whisper in reply, nor did I experience any sensation of her having received it.

It is now 6 o'clock. Nothing has happened.

Horrible shivering fit at dinner-time.

Another attack of drowsiness.

<sup>1</sup> God Help Me.

Wrote a letter to (B) and gave up hope. Suddenly the smell of incense returned! What can it mean?

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, March 4th.*

Herr Strindberg,

Thank you for your letter, it was so kind and gentle.

I should like with all my soul to give you the advice you ask for, but oh, what a very, very heavy responsibility!

If you believe that the woman you want to create for the Unknown One has the power to bind him fast to life by taking his hand and showing him all the brightness and goodness that is also to be found in the world, then he is not doing right by entering a monastery.

But suppose she is not capable of it?

How disappointed he will be if he discovers by degrees that she is far from being as gifted, as intelligent and as wise as he had imagined her to be!

Suppose he comes to feel that her spirit is too small to keep pace with his great and mighty one? Do you not think that he will lose heart, and that all his hopes will collapse, so that darkness will enfold him even more closely than before?

And she! She will suffer, suffer because she cannot attain her great goal, which was to lead him forward to a reconciliation with mankind—the thing he so much wanted and hoped for.

I can so well imagine to myself that little woman's exultation and joy if the Unknown One, in spite of all her forebodings, quite calmly and quietly took her hand in his and walked onwards with her, towards the goal.

And forgot the monastery!

Your Harriet Bosse

*March 5th.*

Sent off my letter to (B) from the corner of Strandvägen. Then walked round the block, expecting that when going along

Gref Magnigatan I should somehow become aware of her answer. I got to the corner of Storgatan . . . a window in her flat was open and out of it popped a little female head. . . . What does that mean?

This morning, after I had drunk my coffee, I heard my name whispered in the room, though no one was with me in the flat.

At noon I played *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. Was overcome by evil thoughts, and threw (B's) picture into a cupboard.

Immediately afterwards she arrived!

It was then 4 o'clock!

At 5 o'clock I was engaged!

Think of it! I have kissed her beautiful little mouth and her tiny milk-teeth! And this morning I gave up hope! How strange life is!

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

[. . .] He told me how severely and harshly life had treated him, how much he longed for a ray of light, a woman who could reconcile him with mankind and with woman. Then he laid his hands on my shoulders and looked deeply and ardently at me and asked: "Will you have a little child by me, Fröken Bosse?" I curtsied and answered quite hypnotized; "Yes, thank you," and then we were engaged.

*March 6th.*

Had intended to go into town to buy rings when a letter arrived from (B) in which she warned me of her wickedness.

I have now written to her and am waiting.

When I returned home from my morning walk I found that my landlady had put the key of the dining-room on the inside and made up my sofa as a bed. Why, I wonder? Shall we fall so quickly? That is the way things go! The way they should go! The way they always go, must go!

Why wait? Perhaps she cannot be a mother? Why all these prosaic preliminaries?

Waited for 3.30, when she had promised to come! She did not come! Evil thoughts and passions raged!

The clock struck 6. She came, bright, calm, radiant, her mind made up; whereupon the matter was settled. She gave me violets! We went out to put an announcement in a newspaper. Went with Harriet and the Möllers\* to Rydberg's in the evening.

*March 7th.*

A wonderful dinner with Harriet at Rydberg's.

*March 8th.*

Dinner at Lidingöbro, a drive in Djurgården. Met the King . . . Beethoven evening at home, with Harriet, the Möllers, Axel, Carl Larsson, Richard Bergh and Gyllensköld.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, March 31st.*

Beloved,

[. . .]

To me you are "Swanwhite", and when last night I laid my great, terrestrial-globe of a forehead beneath your little celestial one, then I knew that the universe had fallen into a state of harmony, and I noticed how I, an earth-spirit, was winning heavenwards through you, a spirit of the air!

This had to be written, for I could not say it. Hide it, for it is true, truer even than reality, knowledge, or experience!

Your Gusten

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes.*

As a fiancé Strindberg was a very attentive cavalier—sent flowers, presents, thought of everything that might give me

\* Harriet Bosse's sister Dagmar Möller, the singer, and her husband Carl Möller, the architect.

pleasure. He even forced himself to take me out to dine at Rydberg's—he hated appearing in public. [. . .]

He liked taking a drive in a victoria, sometimes all went well, but alas, many were the occasions when a victoria was engaged, and I just about to get into it in eager anticipation, when "No, I cannot, we must go in again," would come from tightly compressed lips.

My memories of our engagement—apart from my own anxiety about how it would all turn out—are purely bright and beautiful. During it Strindberg himself was certainly in a very happy frame of mind, which inspired him to write the fairy play, *Swanwhite*.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 17th.*

Beloved little Bosse,

[. . .]

Forgive me, friend, for spoiling your pleasure yesterday, but there are certain Powers that I cannot control.

When I stay quietly in my home, I am at peace. But if I go out among people, then Inferno is let loose.

That is why I long to have a home!

Your  
Strix

*April 18th*

[. . .]

After many wonderful hours with Harriet—who really loves me—we managed to-day to get permission for the banns to be published. Our joy this morning was great, especially as we have been confronted by difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

Alone and at peace the whole day. At 6 o'clock this evening grew uneasy. Harriet was by then at the Möllers'. At 7.30 I went

<sup>1</sup> Strindberg is here referring to the fact that he had not had all the necessary documents to prove that he was divorced from his second wife, Frida Uhl.

to see her. She was (poisoned), and taking arsenic pills into the bargain, so that the place reeked of arsenic.

*April 19th.*

Olavus Petri. We shall publish the banns to-day. I got up at 5 o'clock and saw the sun rise in a marvellous sky. A bright heart of light with a green rim fell on my bed three times.

In the evening walked with Harriet towards the setting sun, which lit up our faces.

*May 6th.*

Married for the third time, after an engagement full of marvellous moments and brave struggles against the ugly. Our home-coming, to a room full of flowers and the whole flat illuminated, was like a fairy story.

[. . .]

*May 7th.*

Harmony.

*May 8th.*

She says I am the very husband for her—in all respects!—and I am certain she was made for me. I call her my first “wife”.

We walk about the flat and wonder if it is true, if we shall be allowed to stay here or not. We do not feel it belongs to us.

This home has been paid for by my *Collected Dramatic Works*, the labour of 30 years.

Have been seized by an inexplicable longing to run away and rent an attic. I have told my wife about it. She says she understands!

[. . .]

The week of the Press Congress\* and (*Dagmar's*) innocent activities as a procuress<sup>1</sup> saw the beginning of our dissensions.

\* A Press Congress was held in Stockholm in the week of May 23rd–31st, 1901. Strindberg here, as in other parts of the diary, has added a comment referring to an event of a later date. N.B. There are no entries between May 8th and May 29th, 1901.

<sup>1</sup> Dagmer Möller was in the habit of introducing Harriet to other men, a thing to which Strindberg strongly objected.

Harriet wanted to go to a masked ball. I bought trunks and threatened to go away.

May 30th.

Explanations. (*Sleeping apart.*)

May 31st.

[. . .]

(*Reconciliation.*)

June 22nd.

Harriet went into the country: Two white pigeons, two small children beside the cab.

June 23rd.

Finished *Charles XIIth* this evening. At that same moment the music struck up on Gärdet<sup>1</sup> and the flags round the Maypole unfurled in the wind. Letter from Harriet, loving, tender.

June 25th.

Harriet home. Radiant with joy. She is reading *Charles XIIth* for me. We are now convinced that our union will be a lasting one, for we are living in complete harmony. I am telegraphing to Kymendö, trying to rent a cottage for the summer. If nothing is vacant we shall go abroad. Harriet is overjoyed at being back in her "yellow room"\* which is so beautiful, and peaceful, and according to her (*chaste*). It (*smells*) of incense.

June 26th.

Radiant morning, full of joy and hope.

Telegram from Kymendö to say it is let . . . I now feel that I am not "allowed" to leave Sweden, but must stay in my own country. H. is angry.

<sup>1</sup> Ladugårdsgärdet. A large open space to the north-east of Stockholm, of which Strindberg had an uninterrupted view when he lived in Karlavägen. In his day it was used primarily by the military as an exercise ground, but also by the general public as a place of assembly on festive or political occasions.

\* The Strindbergs' bedroom in their flat at 40 Karlavägen was decorated and furnished in yellow.

In the evening she set off, without saying goodbye, without saying where she was going!

What a night of anguish!

*June 27th.*

Horrible morning. Loss, sorrow, despair.

*June 29th.*

Letter from Harriet. She is on the Danish coast.

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

One day Strindberg told me—to my great joy—that we were going to travel in Germany and Switzerland. We made our plans, booked tickets for the round trip and packed our bags. I was indescribably excited at the prospect, but on the very morning of our departure—we were actually on the point of setting off with our luggage—he groaned out: “We are not going, the Powers will not allow it.” [. . .]

I grew impatient and nervy when, as a substitute for my summer trip, he gave me books to read in German, French and English. On top of everything else it appeared that he meant me to grind away at foreign languages! So I sobbed out that, if he would not come too, I should go away on my own, to Hornbaek in Denmark. And that is what I did!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, June 29th.*

[. . .]

After weeping for three days in my monastery—from which I have not stirred—I have your letter! [. . .]

Beloved! Do you not feel, even at a distance—for distance does not exist for us—that I only live for you, that I love you?

You are with me all day long and your incense travels through space to me, here in my room! [. . .]

What is this? Well, something to test us, I hope, just to test us! I am lacerated by self-reproach, but in my extremity I cry out:

"I could do nothing else". I *could* not go, but I had no right, when it came to the point, to try to prevent you!

[. . .]

*July 1st.*

I went to meet Harriet at Hotel Monopole in Copenhagen. Slept at Hotel Kramer in Malmö. (Horrible.)

*July 2nd.*

Met Harriet. We went to Hornbaek. Stayed at The Kro.

*July 10th.*

Moved into "The Red House" in Hornbaek, the one with the ivy.

*August 1st.*

Left for Berlin. Put up in the evening at Aachener Hof.

*August 3rd.*

Out to Charlottenburg (*terrible day*) after a scene with Harriet. She wanted me to take her to a whores' café, but I would not.

*August 6th.*

Returned, by the continental route.

*August 7th.*

Home again at 40 Karlavägen.

*August 9th.*

Visited a doctor. Pregnancy confirmed.

*August 20th.*

(*She said that the child's name was to be Bosse. Tit for tat! Crash!*)

This evening a meteor fell into the constellation of the Waggoner.

*August 21st.*

Fairly quiet, but horrible. Did not see Harriet until dinner-time. This evening, at the same time, a meteor again fell in the

neighbourhood of Capella; later on a shooting-star. *Easter* was being performed.

[. . .]

*August 22nd.*

Woke up with a disinclination for *Engelbrecht*, on which I have been working. Took out *The Corridor Play* and *Setting up House*.\*

Overcome several times by drowsiness. Read about Beethoven.

Dinner time arrived and with it a letter from Harriet in which she announced that she had "gone forever" . . . What is to happen now? What am I to make of this affair that I took in holy earnest?

[. . .]

It is the anniversary of my father's birthday, and Harriet's name-day.

Received a letter from Gyllensköld. It contained some most remarkable news. It might have been written especially with me in mind, to comfort me. The fact is that his wife, with their unborn child, has left him.

[. . .]

*August 23rd.*

Alone. Dismal. Wept a great deal. Life seemed to me a cruel jest, especially with our finest feelings. Life is all humbug!

*August 24th.*

Alone. An attack of weeping in the morning. Took a walk on Gärdet later. On my way home I found first a *hairpin*, then an undamaged *horseshoe*.

[. . .]

*August 25th, Sunday.*

Alone. Wept a great deal. Given comfort by a book of devotions.

"You have passed through the like before and you survived it."

Read my diary and all my letters to Harriet. Everything that had been great and lovely rose before me. I blessed her memory

\* The names Strindberg gave to *A Dream Play* while he was working on it. They refer to the scenes between the Officer and the Lawyer.

and thanked her for bringing light and joy into my life. (?)

*August 26th, Monday.*

Wept the whole day. From morning till evening my study was filled with the scent of incense (See Feb: Mar: of this year), sometimes refreshing, sometimes suffocating and exciting. I had the feeling that she was thinking kindly of me, perhaps longing for me!

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, August 27th.*

Say one single word! Tell me what you intend to do as soon as you yourself are sure.

I cannot hit upon any means of persuading you to return, as I do not know why you went. But if you, on your side, are waiting for a word from me, then I need hardly tell you that your home here awaits you, just as pure as when you left it.

[. . .]

August Strindberg

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, August 27th.*

Can you not understand why I went? I did so to save at any rate the last remnants of feminine modesty and self-respect, that is why.

The language you used to me on that memorable day in Berlin has been for ever ringing in my ears. The things you then imputed have so sullied me that the most loving words you could utter would never wash them away or cover them up!

It was this feeling of outraged modesty that came over me the other day, and with such overwhelming force, that I felt I should be the most worthless of women if I went on enduring it by remaining with you.

I blame myself for being a coward, a *coward* in that I did not leave you on the spot, in Berlin. My excuse is that I was ill.

And suppose I were to return to you? Then, of course, you would despise me even more, and the next time you got annoyed over something or other, you would again—only worse—deluge me with the sort of words that I do not understand how a man can utter, even to the filthiest prostitute, let alone to his wife.

No Gusten, I cannot be trampled in the dirt, least of all now, when I am going to have a darling little baby. It shall come into the world *pure*.—

You may imagine that things have not been easy for me lately for, after all, you are the father of my little baby. But rather than face a horrible future, full of unjust insults and pain for us both, I am going now, while I still have fresh in my memory all you have given me that is beautiful.—

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, August 28th.*

I stretched out my hand to you yesterday—that usually means let all the evil be forgotten; it usually means: forgive and forget. But you would not accept it. May you never regret it! [. . .]

There are things one is forced to say, even though one deprecates them. The thing that you recently took so badly was one of them. But it was a detonator, laid on the railway line at the last moment, to give warning of danger.

Call to mind how it was set off. You wanted to deprive my child of my name. My comment was that, if my child was called B, it might harm it later in life and that its comrades might sometime get it into their heads that it was illegitimate! [. . .]

Call to mind the first days of our marriage. The day after our wedding you declared that I was not a man. A week later you wanted to let the whole world know that you were not yet Fru Strindberg, and that your sisters regarded you as “unmarried”!

Was this kind? And was it wise?

If this child was not mine, then it must be another's. But that was not what you meant. You merely wanted to poison me, and that you did, but without being aware of what you were doing. That was why I had to bring you to your senses with a bang. [. . .]

*August 29th.*

Dreadful! Particularly having to see what is beautiful being dragged through the mud as now. Fie for shame!

*August 31st.*

Just as dreadful! Oh, how many tears!

*September 1st.*

Horrible to be living, alone!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, c., September 2nd.*

[. . .]

Every hour is agony and I must leave this place if you do not come!

What do you demand of me? What are your conditions?

To-morrow I intend to break up this home, our home, eradicate our memories, all of them, and—as I cannot go abroad—put myself among other people's things again, in a furnished room!

That done, I shall pray God to grant me the grace of forgetting you, of forgetting your name, that you have ever existed, you, whom I called my "first wife".

One thing gave me hope: Your letter from Denmark when you went off last time without saying goodbye. In it I read: "Darling, what has happened? Our hearts that have been kissed together by God . . ." And it ended with this cry of love in distress: "Oh, my beloved friend!"

I have wept outwardly so that my eyes have paled, and inwardly so that my soul is washed clean! [. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 3rd.*

I have been putting myself to the test for a long time, so that I might finally be able to give you a decisive answer. It is best for both of us that I should not return. To live with you again with suspicion lurking under every word, every deed, would kill me. And you, on your side, would be tortured and hurt by things you were imagining, so that words—which you would certainly come to regret—would again slip from your lips. [. . .]

Our little child shall be kind and good. I shall always speak well of you to it. Of course it shall be called Strindberg if you wish.

*If you can* I think you should go on living at Karlavägen. You have a home there, *which you ought not to break up.*

[. . .]

Harriet

*September 3rd.*

Letter from Harriet.

[. . .]

Rooms being torn to pieces!

A big rainbow. A hawk and a crow.

*September 4th.*

A ray of light. Wrote a letter "To my child." Had a friendly answer.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to "My unborn Child", September 4th.*

To my child! (The little unborn one.)

My child! Our child! Our Midsummer child!

Your parents went about their home waiting for something; and, as all time spent in waiting is long and perhaps dreary, they thought *they* were dreary.

They were expecting something to come, and they did not know that it had come already, come beneath a white canopy in a silent, fragrant room with yellow walls, yellow as the sun and as gold!

Then your mother was seized by a longing to see her mother's country,\* a wonderful longing that, though her heart bled, reft her from hearth and home.

And you, child of the South and the North, you were carried in the fresh green beech-woods, beside the blue sea.

And your beautiful mother rocked you on the blue waves of

\* Harriet Bosse's mother was born in Denmark.

the sea that washes the shores of three kingdoms, and in the evenings, when the sun was going down, she sat in the garden and turned her face to the sun so that you might drink light.

Child of the sea and the sun, you slept your first sleep in a little red, ivy-clad house, in a white room, where no word of hate was so much as whispered, and where nothing impure was so much as thought.

Then you made a black journey, a pilgrimage to the City of Sin,\* where your father was to weep and your mother learn from his tears where that road was leading . . .

Then you came home to the golden room where the sun shines night and day, and where tenderness awaited you, and then you were carried away! . . .

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 4th.*

My child thanks you for your kind and beautiful message!

Harriet

*September 5th.*

Frightful!

*September 6th.*

I painted today!

For the first time in recent years the thought of suicide has risen in my mind. My motive: I am so keenly aware that this woman is going about with my gift to her of all that is finest in my soul, and inviting gatherings of people to partake of me. I feel defiled through her. Unknown men defile me by the glances with which they defile her. Through this woman I am sinking into the mire because, even if we are parted, I am sensible of her from a distance. Schopenhauer explains the meaning of "la jalousie légitime" thus: My thoughts are led through my woman to the sexual acts of an unknown man. In certain respects she makes a pervert of me, indirectly and against my will.

\* Berlin.

Suicide is a deadly sin, but Dante considered Cato\* was reprieved from Inferno because he left the world of sin and bondage when he no longer saw any possibility of keeping his soul out of the dirt.

I feel that my spirit is bound down to the lower spheres of activity where my wife now operates. This love story, that to me was so extraordinarily great and beautiful, but which has dissolved into a mockery, has fully convinced me that life is an illusion. All our most beautiful encounters are made to dissolve like bubbles in dirty water in order to imbue us with a loathing for life. We do not belong here and we are too good for this miserable existence.

It was my soul that loved this woman, and the brutalities of marriage disgusted me. For that matter, I have never really been able to understand what the not very elegant act of procreation has to do with love for a beautiful female soul. The organ of love is the same as one of the excretory organs. How characteristic that is! (I discovered four years ago that Hegel had said the same thing!) But I cannot have a spiritual marriage with a woman who is not my faithful wife, for if she is free and has an affair with another man, she delivers over my soul and transmits my love to that man, and thus forces me to live in a forbidden relationship with a man's soul or body or both.

E. V. Hartman says that love is a farce invented by nature to fool men and women into propagating their species.

Life disgusts me and has always done so. Everything is worthless! I have fulfilled my obligations and have been tortured enough. I think I have the right to go my way!

This time I took life in a spirit of holy seriousness, and look how cynically it has treated me.

It has always been the same! When I was a believing young idealist, I was mocked for it! When I turned materialist, I was persecuted for that!

\* Cato the Younger committed suicide after Julius Caesar had overthrown the Roman republic.

Life, for me, was as unmanageable as a woman; whatever I did was wrong and I was rebuked!

When I was immoral, abuse was heaped upon me, and when I became moral I got even more of it!

People are not born wicked, but life makes them wicked. So life cannot be an education, nor can it be a punishment (that improves); it is simply an evil! In order to live at all one must do evil to others just by getting in their way.

I was born for family life and a mate—and look what I have got!

(My latest reflections on women and love—firmly based on my own experiences—are to be found in *Damascus, Part Three.*)

“Resignation!” Yes indeed, that was what I tried last. But if you put up with everything, you have in the end to endure filth and humiliation, and that is what you have no right to do!

*September 7th.*

A terrible day. Painted! . . .

Saw a one-legged pigeon hopping along the road this morning. (Compare a dream of 1906 in which I saw Harriet with only one leg.)

[. . .]

Impossible to know where you are with women. Whatever you do is wrong. One day they call you a (*satyr*), the next day a (*Joseph*). You can never tell what they want, if they are (*sensual*) or (*chaste*). One fine day they find they are with child. Then they “wonder” how it happened. “It is impossible!” In a word, the poisoning has begun. They begrudge a man paternal happiness and will deprive him of it even at the risk of drawing upon themselves the suspicion that they are (*whores*). Give but a hint of that suspicion and all h-l is let loose!

Most women complain of disappointment in the matter of physical satisfaction. But a man would rather die before he complained. It never occurs to a woman to think that her husband may also have miscalculated about her. Oh this eternal torment of mutual recriminations, as if the bedroom held the keys to paradise!

Sent a letter to Harriet. She was very ill yesterday and had to call two doctors. She was still in bed today. What has happened?

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, c. September 8th.*

Harriet,

Before I put an end to my misery by entering a monastery or by some other means please write me that long letter and tell me why you cannot see me again. [. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 8th.*

Dear Gusten!

I ought to write you a long letter, but I have been and still am ill, so I shall not be able to collect my thoughts for a long, explanatory letter until a later date.

One thing I must tell you now. I cannot come home again, cannot, cannot! Forgive me if I cause you pain!!!

Harriet

*September 8th.*

A letter from Harriet. She says she *cannot* return!

Cato = the symbol of a voluntary decision to cast off the bondage of sin.

This evening she summoned me to visit her at the Möllers'. I saw her again. She behaved like an actress, insincere, scheming, as if she wanted to get something out of me. She was so changed that after ten minutes I got up saying: "I do not know you. You are a stranger." Then I left, without saying goodbye.

(She was like Nenny Geijerstam.)

*September 9th.*

Cleared the yellow room of her things! God was gracious and gave me strength to bear it, though I bled inwardly.

[. . .]

*September 11th.*

Sent away the grand piano! At it Harriet had her greatest and

most beautiful moments. She was ethereally lovely. Only I have seen her like that!

*September 13th.*

Harriet came to see me. Started to reproach me, but when I reminded her of some of the many wicked things she had done she left, of course. For four months she pecked away at my liver, and I considerably held my tongue. Now, when I utter one single *justifiable* word of reproach, she departs, as if it were I who had ill-treated her! Just like a woman!

After she had gone I calmed down and did not feel the loss of her.

[. . .]

*September 16th.*

The determination to cut short my life is not new, it began when I was 8. Now it has reawakened in me as if it were an imperative duty.

The woman who has left me has taken with her all that is best and finest in my soul. I can feel from afar that she is going about befouling my soul which during my Inferno period I washed fairly clean. It is as if, through her, I was entering into forbidden relationships with men and with other women. This torments me, for I have always had a horror of intimacy with my own sex; so much so that I have broken off friendly relations when the friendship offered became of a sickly nature, resembling love. (I have never been able to explain these breaches to other people.)

Cato = the symbol of a voluntary decision to cast off the bondage of sin.

Yes, that is how I now feel. "The decision" is coming to a head. I regard this act as a sacrifice of myself to God. He demands this proof of my faith that He is good and that I have nothing to fear as, through my sufferings, I have atoned for most things. He demands of me this deed of manly courage!

Terrible days! So many tears! Oh woe!

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 20th.*

Dear!

[. . .]

I woke at exactly 2 o'clock with a feeling that something near me was striving to wake me up. Then by the light of the lamp I saw some roses that were on my table bending over me, half dead with suspense and weariness, and looking at me with large, dry, tired eyes . . .

Then followed violent palpitations and meaningless dread.

[. . .]

Your  
Harriet

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, September 21st.*

My friend,

Only want to thank you for your letter. Am sending some roses which will certainly not look upon you with *dry* eyes. [. . .]

To see why you were woken on the stroke of 2 with palpitations and dread—read *Inferno*. You will find the explanation there.

Your friend,  
August Strindberg

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 21st.*

Dear!

Thank you for the lovely flowers. They are filling the room with the most heavenly perfume!

Who do you think can miss our times together at table more than I? Or the happiness of being beside you as you work?

Your  
Harriet

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, September 22nd.*

Dearest,

You complain most of all that you *may* not sit with me. Who is forbidding you?

Can you give me an answer to that?

Only recently you promised God that you would sit at table with me for the rest of your life!

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 22nd.*

I may not sit with you any more for this reason: if we come together again you will see things as unlovely. Oh, *that* is what I am so afraid of!

[. . .]

The next time we exchange views or either of us expresses a wish, the bomb will explode again.

I with my unshakeable opinions and you with yours, though of course we can adapt ourselves to each other—to some extent.

But just think what it would be like for me to have to hear, yet again, that I drag you down! I, who want nothing so much as to see you raised on high!

[. . .]

There are times too, when I am overcome by a mad desire to *laugh*, to rejoice, to embrace everything and everyone out of sheer delight. You would never understand that. If I suppress this impulse I shall wither and die, and into the bargain it would only make you unhappy to hear me talk like that. What then is it best for us to do, dear? If you dare to take me back after what I have told you, prepared as you now are for my way of looking at things, and if you *promise* me the sort of understanding that I will try to show you, then I will come.

[. . .]

Harriet

*September 22nd, Sunday.*

Terrible day. Suicide an obsession. Harriet came in the evening, meaning to stay, but left again. (She told me later that she thought she was on the brink of insanity. Went from here down to Munkbron, but did not know why. Afterwards sat on her sofa all night—until the morning.)

*September 23rd, Monday.*

Moved to 7 Brahegatan. Drove with Harriet to Lidingöbro and had lunch.

Most extraordinary day! C'est la vie! Complete harmony, everything hopeful!

*Christina* is finished!

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, September 23rd.*

Dear!

My thoughts follow you, as always. Oh that I could slip into your new home with them, and let you feel all the good I wish you: that you may find peace and rest from all sick and dismal thoughts.

[. . .]

Went to Karlavägen this evening to talk to Lovise; but there was no one at home. Shut up and dark. So dark that it can surely never be lit up again.—

It is so strange, all this that is happening . . . Good night—I should like to lay my hand on your forehead this evening—

[. . .]

Your Harriet

*September 24th.*

Moved out of Brahegatan in terrific haste.

(This is what happened there. When I moved in the lock flew out of the door, so that it could not be closed; the wardrobe smelt of carbolic acid, everything was dirty, and the landlady said her belongings must be left in the drawers with mine. Mat-beating in the courtyard and piano lessons going on somewhere.

The next morning the earthenware stove in my bedroom was demolished.)

Back again at Karlavägen. A visit from Harriet.

*September 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th.*

Terrible days. The impulse to die by my own hand grows stronger. It will soon be irresistible.

Why do I want to die? . . . To escape from the bondage of sin.

To free myself from an evil to which I can put no name! To offer myself up as a sacrifice for all my sins! God demands of me this act of faith! My blood shall atone for my past, and with my blood my longing for evil will be obliterated.

It is not Harriet's fault! The part she played in my life was, as she said herself, a "task". She was my last ray of sunshine, and for that I thank her. I loved her so deeply that I had to be punished!

My past? Can one ever fathom the depths of a creative artist's life? Has a man any right to repent of his past, from which he has learnt and which he did not plan himself? I have lived as I could and not as I should have wished! Being dragged through the mire, as I have been, was in itself a punishment! Like other people I acted evilly from lack of judgement or in the heat of the moment. And have I not suffered punishment enough? (See *Damascus Part Three*.)

When I looked upon Harriet's beauty, which was sometimes "ethereal", I trembled in awe and my former belief in woman as the connecting link between man and child was shaken. Then I told myself that though woman is, in origin, a higher being than man, she has fallen lower. For the wickedness and falsehood of woman is boundless—"she cannot speak a word of truth." . . .

When Harriet was in our flat there was light, literally. When she left, it grew dark, literally, not figuratively. But this was not always so, often quite the contrary!

(But how can what is dark spread light? For she comes from the dark underworld. She is "the wickedest woman ever born" as she said herself in a letter of 1901.)

All the same, her bright (?) little spirit could not prevail over my darkness, and when I saw that this was so, I begged her to save me, but too late!

"Poor friend", I said, "it is for me to go and by doing so to give you back your freedom and your light."

Negotiations, doubts, this way and that.

*October 4th.*

Went out to Djugårdsbrunn and had dinner with Harriet.

Home afterwards. x x x. Then she left promising to return home tomorrow.

October 5th.

Harriet returned in . . . light! T.B.t.G.\*

October 6th, Sunday.

. . . Peace reigns! Went to the Opera! Heard Aida!

October 10th.

Peace and light; but mixed with some fears that it may not last.

October 11th.

Darkness!

November 18th.

Am reading about Indian religions.

The whole world is but a semblance (= Humbug or relative emptiness). The primary Divine Power (Maham-Atma, Tad, Aum, Brama), allowed itself to be seduced by Maya, or the Impulse of Procreation.

Thus the Divine Primary Element sinned against itself. (Love is sin, therefore the pangs of love are the greatest of all hells.)

The world has come into existence only through Sin,—if in fact it exists at all—for it is really only a dream picture. (Consequently my *Dream Play* is a picture of life), a phantom and the ascetic's allotted task is to destroy it. But this task conflicts with the love impulse, and the sum total of it all is a ceaseless wavering between sensual orgies and the anguish of repentance.

This would seem to be the key to the riddle of the world.

I turned up the above in the History of Literature,† just as I was about to finish my *Dream Play*, *The Growing Castle*,<sup>1</sup> on the

\* Thanks be to God.

† For his account of Indian religion Strindberg used Arvid Ahnfelt's *History of World Literature* (1875).

<sup>1</sup> This was the title Strindberg often gave to *A Dream Play*, but by it he also meant an actual building, the Horseguards' Barracks, built in 1897, which he could see from his windows in Karlavägen. Resting on the pillars of the small balcony on top of the dome is a curious bud-shaped baldachin.

morning of the 18th. On this same morning I saw the Castle (= Horseguards' Barracks) illuminated, as it were, by the rising sun.

Indian religion, therefore, showed me the meaning of my *Dream Play*, and the significance of Indra's Daughter, and the Secret of the Door=Nothingness.

Read Buddhism all day.

1902

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

While I was expecting little Anne-Marie, Strindberg was always kind and considerate. Sometimes he could not resist raking up the touchy subject of women's rights. His whiskers would bristle and I would weep; then off he would go to a wash-stand he had in his room, wash his hands several times in nervous haste—as he always did when he was upset—and the storm would blow over. [. . .]

Strindberg promised, as he had done in 1901, that we should spend the summer in the country. Suitable places were discussed this way and that, but we could not agree. I was afraid that, when it came to the point, Strindberg would decide to stay on in Stockholm. I was longing to get into the country, which I have always loved, and I also wanted to escape from my sedentary life in Karlavägen.

If, now and then, I complained at feeling lonely, I was told: "How can you say that you are lonely? When you are on the stage you are among your friends and you have the whole of the audience as well." As time was dragging on and we remained firmly stuck in Stockholm, I made up my mind to take my little girl to Rävsnäs, an estate on the shores of Mälaren, where I had spent a year as a girl.

*January 1st.*

When Harriet returned to me on October 6th she was carrying Lillan<sup>1</sup> and she did so until March 25th.

<sup>1</sup> Lillan, meaning the little girl and Lillen, the little boy, are used as pet names in Sweden, often for as long as the girl or boy remains the youngest in the family.

Atmosphere calm but heavy. We play chess, we play the piano, Harriet works at her modelling, reads, goes for walks. Few visitors. Axel comes occasionally to play Beethoven.

*January 9th.*

[. . .]

Harriet crocheted a black collar; went to bed at 8 o'clock. She rejoices at the thought of the child.

*March 8th.*

Harriet ill this evening and during the night. She thought the child was about to arrive. A (*strange*) day. (My clothes caught fire in the night.) Harriet gave the alarm and I jumped out of bed to telephone for the midwife. When I lit the lamp my fluffy dressing-gown caught fire and burst into flames.

It was a false alarm.

*March 25th, Lady Day.*

Our daughter was born at 7.15 p.m.

*April 5th, Saturday.*

*Explanations! Dark!*

*May 6th.*

Anniversary of our wedding!! (*No flowers.*) Only (*Axel*) came.

*June 4th.*

All well after (*a long period of coldness*).

*June 15th.*

(*Crash, while at table. Dinner.*) [. . .]

*July 3rd.*

*Absolutely awful.* But ended well! Harriet left for the country, perfectly friendly. (*Räfnäs*).

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, July 4th.*

My darling Wife,

Naturally there was a calm at first—as there always is after an

earthquake, accompanied by thunder . . . but then it became rather too calm. I missed the patter of your restless little spirit on the floors; I missed the doors not being left open, and most of all perhaps (?), I missed the little cries from the nursery. But when I think how irreconcilably horrible my feeling of loss would have been if we had parted in anger yesterday, why then I am happy, and the calm is as refreshing as a rest!

[. . .]

Moreover, when I am alone you are present with me, but when I have company you disappear, and contact with you is broken.

[. . .]

Your little husband,

Gusten

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

Of course Strindberg longed for me and for Anne-Marie. Left on his own in town, solitude became burdensome, and he wanted to join us. Nothing ever came of this. Our dissensions had already begun. I felt myself imprisoned and shut up in a cage, and he thought it was quite natural that I should stop at home. [. . .]

With him, resignation was only a momentary thing. He was not sufficiently balanced to be resigned. He always flared up again. To the very last he struggled against his Karma.

It was probably the great difference in our ages that separated us most of all. Strindberg had lived his life and had finished with a whole lot of things on which I had not even begun.

*July 3rd.*

Stiff letter from H-t. I answered it sharply and frankly, for the first time.

*July 26th.*

Harriet came. Had dinner . . . and left again, uncertain whether we should have any more children.

*August 1st.*

Harriet came, and left again. All was quite pleasant and affectionate!

*August 2nd.*

Harriet telephoned this morning to say she was returning. By noon she had changed her mind.

*September 1st.*

Gyllensköld, Geijerstam and I at Rydberg's.

The night that followed at home was terrible.

*September 2nd.*

The first half of today was very nearly the most frightful time I have had. At 5 p.m. things took a turn for the better.

*October 14th.*

Today, in the early morning, she was aware of the smell of incense from herself, and I noticed it too. After that I was persecuted by it all day. It was exactly like the smell that occurred in the early days of our acquaintanceship. It began at noon on February 4th, 1901, when Harriet was collating in *Easter* and I was reading Maeterlinck's *Princess Maleine*.

This smell throws me into a state of ecstasy and makes me happy when I first notice it, though my sensations are mixed with terror. (Witchcraft and madness.)

[. . .]

*October 24th, Friday.*

*Fair Haven and Foul Strand* published. Fetched Harriet from *Simoon*.<sup>\*</sup> Restaurant in Masonic Lodge . . . pleasant walk home. Crash when we got home, on the subject of my book.

[. . .]

*November 18th.*

Harriet intending to go to a concert with (*Dagmar*). The idea

\* Harriet Bosse was at this time playing Biskra, the leading part in Strindberg's one-act play, *Simoon*.

of their meeting frightened me. A couple of hours later came a telephone message to say (D) was ill and could not go.

*November 19th.*

Incense again, very strongly.

*November 20th.*

Fröken Key called. Driven out by me, with good reason.<sup>1</sup>

*November 22nd.*

At the dinner table, while Harriet was out, the following inexplicable thing happened. My wedding ring, which I wear on the inside of my engagement ring (with the sapphire) fell from my finger on to the floor, but N.B. ! my engagement ring remained on. This is quite inexplicable!

[. . .]

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Key, the authoress and ardent apostle of female emancipation, with whom Strindberg had at one time been on the best of terms. She had called to ask Harriet Bosse to take part in an evening of readings and recitations to be held in honour of Björnson's 70th birthday. Strindberg, who suspected her of wanting to disrupt his third marriage, would have none of it.

1903

*March 4th.*

[. . .]

When (*Harriet*) got back from Lindberg's *Peer Gynt* this evening I gave her a piece of my mind and there was a terrible scene. Went to bed in a state of the most frightful disharmony. Thought I should die of contrition. But then in my Book of Devotions I read: "This was he whom we had sometimes in derision . . . We fools accounted his life madness and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God and his lot is among the Saints?" Wisdom of Solomon 5: 3, 4, 5. This book, usually so severe, was gentle and gave me comfort, so that I fell asleep under the impression that I had been right to speak out, even as brutally as I had. It is true that I was woken up a few times during the night, but my dreams were more beautiful than any I had had before.

[. . .]

*March 5th.*

Woke in the morning with a delightful sense of peace, as if all evil had departed from my house. It seemed to me purified and serene (just as it was last summer when *Harriet* was away).

Set out for my morning walk without having seen either my wife or my child. It had rained in the night; spring-like air, sunshine and gentle breezes. People struck me as being kindly disposed towards me.

[. . .]

When I got home after my walk there was dead silence in the house. I thought everyone had gone, but only *Madam* had

departed. Indescribable peace reigns as I write this. She came back again!

*March 6th.*

Dark in the flat, oppressive, poisonous.

Sultry days. Calm but threatening, Lillian ill.

*March 15th, Sunday.*

Had been thinking of going away but saw a newspaper on a chair with an advertisement in huge print: *Do not travel!* underlined. Pointed it out to Harriet! An hour later she had laid out a card on which was written; "Thou shalt not kill!" What can she mean? Does she think I intend to kill her?

*March 18th.*

Crash! Harriet is telephoning to a lawyer about a divorce.

N.B.! The whole nursery and Madam's room are infested by vermin.

*March 19th.*

Alone! Horrible.

*March 20th.*

This morning I gave Harriet back my wedding ring. Then I went to the telephone. When I returned to my room the ring was lying on my desk. I took this to imply that she did not want to break with me. Curiously enough, though I should like to be free, the thought that she was still fond of me gave me a certain sense of satisfaction, almost of pleasure. I sat down to write in good spirits—until one o'clock. Then for the first time it occurred to me to look at the ring, which I had put in a drawer. It was *her* ring! What my feelings were then is not clear to me. . . .

*April 4th, Palm Sunday.*

Alone at home this evening a feeling of anxiety came over me. I got it into my head first that Harriet was in mortal danger, then that she had been brought home dead and that I was alone with Lillian. My sorrow was great.

[. . .]

*May 27th.*

Electric light left on all night!!! (Out of spite on Harriet's part.)

*May 28th.*

On the night of the 27th Harriet came home at about 11 p.m. friendly and bringing various pieces of good news for me. She kissed me good-night and went to bed.

At 1.30 she woke me up and let fly at me the most appalling scolding because she believed I was having an improper affair with our maid, Ellen. It is simply not true, I swear it! Poor Harriet, who tried to poison me by making me jealous. Now the demon has taken hold of her!

[. . .]

*June 9th.*

Harriet and Lillan have gone to Blidö.

*June 22nd.*

Went to Blidö.

[. . .]

*July 6th.*

Left Blidö, after a terrible scene.

[. . .]

*July 31st.*

Harriet came to town. Telephoned to Axel asking him to meet her, but he would not. Harriet did not come. I was not sorry.

*August 1st.*

Cleared the flat of all the odds and ends that belonged to Harriet.

[. . .]

*August 15th.*

Harriet came to town this morning, but I did not see or hear anything of her.

I bought flowers this morning; needed some light but got

darkness that grew blacker towards evening. Axel here. He played Brahms, which made us nervous and disharmonious. The lamps were not burning properly, the side-board creaked, the tray clinked, the clock behaved uncannily.

Then came a telephone call from Harriet. She was mournful, gentle; ("Do you love me?"). She is in difficulties at her new home at 30 Biblioteksgatan.

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

In the autumn of 1903 I moved with Lillan into a furnished flat. This did not mean that Strindberg and I had broken with each other. He often came to see us, and Anne-Marie and I fell into the habit of dining with him every Sunday. This way of life brought our daily disputes to an end and we met only in a happy and festive mood. Of course Strindberg sometimes became bitterly aware of his loneliness, and then I would receive a letter like the one below.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, August 25th.*

How things are with me? Think what you would feel if you were forcibly torn from your child, and then you will know!

[. . .]

What do you want of me? You are free now and have the peace and happiness that you lacked at my side. Did you not discover that I was the reason for your lack of peace?

Grasp happiness, which I denied you, but let me keep my sorrow pure. Follow your own destiny, which you feel you can control, but do not interfere with my destiny, which is controlled by another! the one of whom you know nothing!

*August 21st.*

[. . .]

During the night I was woken by a feeling that Harriet was

attacking me, out of spite. Then I dreamt that I was lying on the sofa in my study; somebody came in with Lillan and held her out to me to fondle. I took her little face between my hands, wanting to look at her, but I could not open my eyes; it was dark, I was blind. Thereupon I woke up and wept a great deal. Felt sure that Lillan was ill. Dreamt about her time after time.

*August 22nd.*

Worked on the play about Luther.<sup>1</sup> Was aware of a friendly Harriet all day (Incense).

[. . .]

*September 5th.*

Re-established relations with Harriet and Lillan. They are living at 30 Biblioteksgatan. Harriet has bought a grand piano.<sup>2</sup> The first time she played it her engagement ring broke. Later she hurt her mouth on the music rack so that her lip swelled up.

[. . .]

*October.*

It is two years since Harriet left me!

We are now enjoying the best time we have had together. Harmony in *all* respects! We live apart but meet at dinner with Lillan and in the evening.

*November 1st.*

Harriet, I and Lillan were going for a drive in Djurgården. However, when Harriet and Lillan were waiting outside their door for the cab, Harriet saw the heads of two horses appearing round the corner: "There comes our cab", she said. The horses moved forward,—they were pulling a hearse—

Was this a warning?

*November 2nd.*

A rupture with Harriet, for no reason!

<sup>1</sup> *The Nightingale of Wittenberg.*

<sup>2</sup> Strindberg hated grand pianos and was angry because Harriet Bosse had insisted on having one at Karlavägen. No doubt he thought these accidents were a punishment.

November 3rd.

Alone!

November 5th.

Saw the "Castle" illuminated by sunshine. In a bright mood. Saw a picture of "Victoria with a triumphal wreath"<sup>1</sup> in a window in Banérgatan. Met all my Djurgård friends in a body. Flags are being flown! Finished *The Lamb and the Beast*.

Harriet with me in the evening.

December 2nd.

Harriet to dinner. Subsequently in the yellow room! In dread of a child. Went to see Harriet in the evening. Harriet extremely nervous and I was frightened. When I got home I "saw" a child's face on a card decorated with roses that had been placed on the calendar showing the date. Thought: now we are going to have another child.

December 4th.

*Gustav Adolf* being performed in Berlin.

Sunshine reflected on all the window-panes this morning.

A cart with palms and laurels dogged my footsteps. Rose-red and yellow.

Harriet with me in the evening; very pleasant atmosphere.

[. . .]

<sup>1</sup> The name Victoria had a special significance for Strindberg. When returning to Sweden from Switzerland to face a charge of blasphemy, after the publication of his book *Married*, he was very depressed until he saw that the name of the boat that was to take him from Kiel to Denmark was *Augusta Victoria*. He interpreted this to mean Victory for August. He was in fact acquitted.

1904

*January 22nd.*

My birthday. Harriet brought roses.

*January 23rd.*

*Rupture* again, for the thousandth time.

*January 24th.*

At the dinner-table today the petals from Harriet's roses came showering down on the plates like so many red hearts.

*February 1st.*

A reunion with Harriet. In dread of a child.

Believe we are going to have a child.

*February 9th.*

Harriet here this evening. We talked about getting a divorce. Crash!—*She went away; probably for the last time—Horrible!*

[. . .]

*March 7th.*

Harriet here again.

*March 20th, Sunday.*

Anniversary of Mother's death. Went for a drive in Djurgården with Harriet and Lillan. In mood and manner Harriet was just like she used to be when we were engaged, kind, . . . Slept in the yellow room. In dread of a child. (She behaved like a girl of fourteen.)

*March 27th.*

Harriet and Lillan to dinner. (Afterwards—in dread of a child.)

That evening H. was taken ill at the theatre and the performance had to be broken off.

*March 29th.*

Harriet went to Saltsjöbaden.

*April 9th.*

Letter from Harriet in which she asks for a divorce.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

It was impossible to go on living as we were, to all appearances in different places; either we had to live together or to get a divorce. We decided that we would apply for a divorce.

Being wrenched first one way and then another in my marriage, combined with over-exertion in my theatrical work was too much for me, and I broke down completely.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 10th.*

My friend,

So you really think that a simple-minded lawyer can achieve what we ourselves have tried to do but failed. Or is it that you feel your bonds are too irksome? If so, then it must be as you wish, though it seems to me that you have availed yourself of your freedom without much regard for your bonds. The marriage ceremony could not bind us, but you think that divorce can part us; very well then! I, who have felt myself bound by my vows, might derive benefit from it. I could then associate with whom I pleased, furnish my home as I pleased, keep what servants I pleased, think and act as I pleased, without anyone having the right to object. [. . .]

*April 12th.*

Harriet back from Saltsjöbaden,

*April 13th.*

Harriet with a lawyer. Divorce proceedings started.

[. . .]

*April 18th.*

Went to the lawyer's and signed the petition for a divorce. I experienced a sensation of great and solemn calm. Axel and Gyllensköld came of their own accord this evening. We had some Beethoven. I put away the Venus—which I bought with the Jason\* on my wedding day—and took out the portraits of my children.

Had a very friendly telephone call from Harriet in the morning.

*April 19th.*

This is Master Olof's day (Olaus Petri). N.B. *The Gothic Room* comes out tomorrow.

In Djurgården met two riders (separated by a long interval) both unable to control restive horses, though in the end they did get the upper hand.—I went up to Hasselbacken and looked at the veranda window and the Bird-Cherry, where I had sat in the Sun at my wedding breakfast, when I married Harriet. I experienced next to no emotion, only a quiet satisfaction at being free. I did not regret what had happened; on the contrary it seemed to me bright, almost beautiful, though it has been so ugly.

N.B! Three years ago today I published the banns!

[. . .]

*April 24th, Sunday.*

Went for a walk in Djurgården. Saw the figure IX, 9 three times. "Saw" Harriet, dressed in blue on my special path by the shore. Am still not certain whether it was her or not.

This evening, in the neighbourhood of the setting sun, I saw clouds which formed themselves into peaks, mountains, wooded eminences and castles (resembling Valhalla in *Rhinegold*). N.B!

\* Two statues, the latter by Thorvaldsen. Strindberg had obviously bought them because they symbolized Woman and Man, i.e. Harriet Bosse and himself.

For three years now, in the spring, the summer and the autumn, I have seen these same cloud-formations in a west or north-westerly direction after sunset. I am beginning to think that these "cloud-formations" must have a foundation in fact, for they are invariably the same. They must be optical illusions (or mirages) of places on the earth of which we know nothing. Swedenborg speaks of high places on the earth, unknown to us, where mighty beings dwell.

[. . .]

Harriet was acting in *A Venetian Comedy*, but in the middle of it she became convinced that her jaw was locked, and that she was unable to speak. A doctor had to be sent for!

*May 5th.*

Harriet is taking mud baths. (!)

Lillian came to see me; lost a button from her coat.

*May 6th.*

Axel, Rich. B., C. Gyllensköld and Nordström here this evening, for the last time until the autumn. Axel played Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the Concerto in G major and the Overture to Egmont. I have never been so much moved. We were all happy and in good spirits. At about 12 o'clock the electric light failed and we had to sit in darkness. I took this to mean that all was over between me and Harriet. We said goodbye to this flat as if we never expected to meet here again. I took a candelabra and retired to bed. A memory of the wonderful atmosphere of my wedding night came upon me; but strangely enough, I did not remember that it was the anniversary of my wedding day; did not remember it until to-day, the 7th, in the evening. Three years have passed since then!

*May 7th.*

Have been re-reading *Inferno* and *Legends* in a reverent frame of mind, but I still do not understand the intentions of Providence. Are we to be made to suffer in order to learn, or are we to be punished and frightened off?

*May 16th.*

Received an impertinent letter from Harriet; conceited and wicked.

Axel here this evening. *The Growing Castle* (Horseguards' Barracks) was lit up by the setting sun for the first time for ages.

[. . .]

*May 17th.*

Saw a white cross outside my front-door. Whitsun cold and dismal.

*May 24th.*

When I drew up my blind this morning two white pigeons were sitting on a chimney, caressing each other demonstratively. Had a loving, rapturous letter from Harriet.

[. . .]

*May 27th.*

A book on Buddhism arrived by post from Schering this morning. My eye was immediately caught by one chapter-heading "The Permissibility of Suicide", and these words of Buddha's: "In three months from to-day the man who has run his course will go to his eternal rest."

A letter from Harriet and we took up the threads again. She will come to Furusund at midsummer, after she has been in Paris.

(I have just remembered that last autumn, when I ordered legs for Harriet's bed, the carpenter made them exactly like the legs of a coffin.)

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 27th.*

Beloved!

Is one not doing the right thing if one follows one's best feelings, especially when they direct one to do what is right?

Is there not clear enough indication that we are drawn to each other, in spite of all our differences?

[. . .]

[. . .] Just as your theatrical work is your affair, so my writing must be mine. We must have nothing in common but our home, our child and our friends. If we each have our own circle of friends, we shall drift apart and be unfaithful.

[. . .]

But we must live as man and wife, for I love your body as I love your soul, and I know that our knowledge of each other has gained ground, though this has required time, as I told you it would on our first night together.

[. . .]

*May 28th.*

Harriet broke with me by letter and took everything back.

*May 30th.*

The first thing I saw outside my front-door this morning was a cart labelled "Victoria".

Harriet here to dinner and we "came together" again. (In dread of a child!)

*May 31st.*

Another crash! Rich. Bergh, Gyllensköld and Axel here.

*June 1st.*

Left for Furusund at 1 o'clock with Lillan. Harriet, who was leaving for Copenhagen that evening to facilitate her divorce, stood on the quay waving to us. I experienced no emotion, merely noted, with complete detachment, that I had had a beautiful young wife and felt grateful for that, and justifiably proud.

Met Svennberg on the boat. We celebrated.

Beautiful evening at Furusund.

Somewhat overwrought during the night.

*June 2nd.*

Glorious morning. Walked to Monte Bello alone. As I stood there again, after the lapse of four years, and saw my archipelago

with its stretches of water and its islands, I re-discovered myself. Then, when I saw the northern point of Köpmansholm—the one I sailed past last year, when I was fleeing from Blidö and Harriet's violent behaviour—it seemed to me that I had again found purity, freedom and peace.

[. . .]

Am now recalling several minor aspects of my relationship with Harriet in our early days. A couple of months before we were engaged I woke at night in my bed and felt as if H-t were there. I "possessed" her before we were engaged. I did not seek her; on the contrary she sought me. When I visited Harriet during our engagement, I used to be overcome by an inexplicable sensation of *weight*, so that I would collapse on her sofa saying: "I feel so heavy, just as if I were sinking through all the floors and being drawn to the centre of the earth." (Opposite of levitation.) In the early days of our marriage Harriet used to get cramp in the calf of her leg as she lay in my arms.

[. . .]

On our first night Harriet was so like my 2nd wife that it frightened me. We were also disturbed on those first nights by the "nightmare". We both used to wake up suffering from palpitations and dread, so much so that we had to get out of our beds.

*June 3rd.*

[. . .]

Even though Harriet is now in Denmark I sense her presence in my mouth, like violets. Very close in the early morning. x x x.

*June 4th. Saturday.*

Axel came. Beethoven night, Harriet is so close to me that I think she must be in Stockholm, or even here in Furusund.

*June 6th.*

Harriet so close to me this morning that she seemed to be in the room. A card from Harriet this evening, from Korsör and Cologne. At Cologne on the 4th, i.e. Saturday. That means she is in Paris today, yet I could feel her in this room! She was friendly and gave no hint of any kind of a divorce.

*June 16th.*

Harriet's perfume has been absent. Today it returned, strongly!

*June 17th.*

Card of Notre-Dame from Harriet. She lit a candle there for me on Sunday.

[. . .]

*June 18th.*

[. . .]

Letter from Harriet saying she went to a service in Sacré-Cœur on the 16th and lit a candle.

*June 22nd.*

Harriet came!

Harriet's return from Paris to Furusund is one of my loveliest memories. When she left my bed that night she did not look like herself. Her face was long and oval (as it is in the portrait of her as Miss Hopps (?)<sup>\*</sup> and she gave off a fragrance so strong and delicious, that I fell into a state of ecstasy and almost lost consciousness. This thing is supernatural and sometimes makes me think she must be a being from a very high sphere, not an ordinary mortal.

[. . .]

*July 18th.*

Crash! I thought of going back to town.

[. . .]

*August 9th.*

Left Furusund without saying good-bye to Harriet. Axel and Gyllensköld came to my home in the evening.

*August 12th.*

Harriet came to town. A strangely uneasy evening at her home. The plants in her room had been removed. It was desolate, bare.

<sup>\*</sup> Jerome K. Jerome's play *Miss Hobbs* which was performed at Dramaten in 1902-3 with Harriet Bosse in the leading part.

*August 13th.*

When I was on my way to Biblioteksgatan at 7 o'clock this evening, the sun was right in the middle of the background at the end of Kommendörsgatan,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times as high as the trees in Humlegården, so that no part of the street was in shadow.

*August 22nd.*

Harriet's name-day. It is 3 years since she left me. She came to dinner; became unwell; in dread of a child.

[. . .]

*August 23rd.*

[. . .]

Harriet to dinner. Left the table in a temper.

*August 26th.*

Harriet here for dinner. Left. Axel and Anna with me in the evening.

Lillian ill in the night.

[. . .]

*September 3rd.*

Life is so horribly ugly, we human beings so abysmally evil, that if a writer were to describe *all* that he had seen and heard no one could bear to read it. I can think of people I have known, good, respectable, popular people, who have said or done things that I have crossed out, things that I can never bring myself to mention and that I refuse to remember. Breeding and education seem to do no more than mask the beast in us, and virtue is a disguise. Our highest achievement is the concealment of our vileness.

Life is so cynical that only a swine can be happy in it, and anyone who can see this hideous life as beautiful is a swine!

Sure enough, life is a punishment! A hell. For some a purgatory, for none a paradise.

We are absolutely forced to do evil and to torment our fellow men. It is all sham and delusion, lies, faithlessness, falsehood and

self-deception. "My dear friend" is my worst enemy. Instead of "My beloved" one should write "My hated".

*September 6th.*

Letter from Harriet, in which she humbles herself. Wants to leave the theatre and stay with me; but I have already written to Miller\* telling him to start divorce proceedings.

[. . .]

*October 29th.*

Lillan left me today. Harriet returned from Finland.

*October 30th, Sunday.*

Very close contact with Harriet. x x x though divorced!

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

I got my divorce from Strindberg during my season in Helsingfors in 1904. As in the preceding year Strindberg often came to see us and Lillan and I went on being his guests at dinner on Sundays.

*December 6th.*

[. . .]

Very close contact with Harriet during the night of the 5th and for the whole of this day. The Growing Castle (Horseguards' Barracks) magically lit up while I was writing *Black Flags*.† Two white figures standing on the balcony of the tower.

*December 10th.*

Nobel's day.

Yesterday evening, the 9th, I sent off the letter I wrote to Harriet 14 days ago. We were divorced on October 27th.

[. . .]

\* James Millar, the lawyer who was handling the Strindbergs' divorce.

† *Black Banners*.

*December 20th.*

Letter from Harriet in which she tells me, among other things, that on the previous night the oil-painting of Möller fell from the wall, knocking a large palm that was underneath it to the floor, while it remained upright, as if it had been lifted down. M. so much alarmed by this that he postponed his proposed trip to Paris until Christmas.

*December 21st.*

The Möllers went all the same, but only to Copenhagen. Letter from Harriet. "The Distant One".<sup>1</sup>

[. . .]

*December 24th, Christmas Eve.*

Strange day. I had made up my mind to being alone at home. At 6 o'clock Emil Sjögren arrived. He sat down to the piano and began to play. The telephone rang. It was Harriet asking me to go and spend Christmas Eve at her home. I went! Everything was peaceful and pleasant. At 10 o'clock Inez and Alf\* arrived and we sat having supper until 11.30. Down in the street Inez fell and lost all her money in the snow. (The following year Inez went bankrupt.) Then I remembered that Harriet had just been telling us upstairs how her elder sister (Dagmar) had fallen on the self-same spot sometime ago and had sprained her ankle. She had had to lie there calling for help as she could not get up. A passing butcher's boy would not touch her. She got help in the end and was taken home in a cab. She had to stay in bed for a week. (She was the person who parted me from my wife and child!)

<sup>1</sup> "Die Ferne".

\* Inez and Alf Ahlquist, Harriet Bosse's sister and her son.

1905

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, January 1st.*

Beloved,

Want to thank you for Christmas Eve, which I shall treasure as one of my most beautiful memories. You let me see you in your rightful setting, alone, your own mistress, but with your loveliest jewel—the child!

And you let me see the mother undressing her child for the night! Your bedroom should always look as it did then!

You, who are so proud, wanted to have a husband at your side! That was a mistake which is now put right. But it was made because of the child. I feel honoured, to be sure.

[. . .]

Our visible bonds could be severed, but not our invisible ones. I think things are beautiful as they are and, at a distance, I can see you as a being from a higher sphere. I do not believe that we two are real mortals. We are creatures cast far down from a loftier home. That is why our bodily clothing is so irksome and why we are so ill at ease together.

Last night at 12 o'clock your perfume seemed to me like a sudden cry, to which I responded!

Wonder at times if there is not some little soul that drives us together because it wants to make parents of us again.

*January 1st.*

[. . .]

A cold day, but calm and sunny. My clouds appeared over "The Castle" this morning. (Cf. 1904-24/4.) These clouds were

like the steep coast of Rügen, with tree-clad heights, and glens running inland. But there are some formations that recur and that I recognize again. (See Plato's *Phaedo*.) It follows therefore that these are mirages, optical illusions of the "high places" that Swedenborg speaks of. (The Monastery at Lhasa resembles these cloud fortresses. See Hellwald, *Countries and Peoples of the World*, new edition.)

Axel, Maggie,\* Anna, Märtha, and Hugo Fröding† to dinner. Loving letter from Harriet.

*January 3rd.*

The hall door was open this morning; was closed, but opened again of itself, twice. Signifies a death!

Now associating with Harriet as before!

*January 21st.*

The bill for my Divorce arrived from Millar this morning. It came to 196 crowns. 196 is the atomic weight of gold. When I got out into the street there was a flag flying (just as there was on the parson's house—the house I was married in—the day divorce proceedings were made public).

[. . .]

*January 22nd.*

Harriet and Lillan to dinner. H-t taken ill in the evening.

[. . .]

*January 30th.*

[. . .]

Harriet ill. Dark.

*January 31st.*

Harriet ill. "Nearly died" this morning.

Dark, bad weather too.

\* Axel Strindberg's wife Margarethe.

† Anna von Philp, Strindberg's sister, his niece Märtha and her fiancé, Hugo Fröding.

*February 1st.*

Brighter. The sun illuminated "The Growing Castle". My sister Anna visited me. Among other things we talked about 'cello playing. I said a 'cello solo sounded like the bellowing of cattle. When I went to bed at 10 o'clock I heard a 'cello solo in the distance. Thought: Now I've got to put up with one of those blessed things in the house.

Went to see Harriet this evening. *Violent quarrel* over some china!

*February 10th.*

Harriet was here this evening until 1.30 a.m. Her face changed after 12 o'clock, grew old and ugly. This indicates that she is another person at night, exteriorized.<sup>1</sup> She was always ugly when she was asleep; ugly and repulsive.

I took her down to her cab. When I came up and shut the hall door, it opened again of itself.

[. . .]

*May 6th.*

Anniversary of my wedding with Harriet. Visited Hasselbacken in the morning. Broke off a twig of the bird-cherry outside the window of the room where we celebrated it. Spent the evening with Harriet at her home. Nothing was said about the significance of the day.

*May 13th.*

Harriet had supper with me!

*May 14th.*

Went to see Harriet in the evening. Gloomy conversation about the misery of life, about the coming summer, and so forth. On my

<sup>1</sup> It is clear, I think, that Strindberg is using the word "exteriorized" in the sense in which he seems to have understood it when he wrote: "I am certain that the soul possesses the power of extending itself and that it does extend itself greatly during normal sleep and that finally, at death, it leaves the body and is in no way extinguished." *Legender*, p. 278.

way home I saw a display of fireworks over the roof-tops which put me in happier frame of mind.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory note, 1932.*

During the summer of 1905 I took Lillian down to Hornbaek, a place of which I had the happiest memories. We stayed there the year we were married and I thought then that it was very beautiful. Strindberg had gone to Furusund again.

*June 17th.*

[. . .]

Saw beautiful female faces on my pillow and on the sheets; Harriet's and a nun's.

Have been aware of Harriet all day like a taste on my palate. The ring finger of my left hand has been numb to-day as well.

*June 18th.*

For no apparent reason a large piece of wood fell out of the dinner-table this morning.

(Crash.)

[. . .]

An affectionate letter from Harriet. She is not happy at Hornbaek.

*July 8th.*

[. . .]

On Wednesday and Thursday I had a feeling that Harriet was very unhappy. Wrote yesterday, Friday, and invited her here.

The innkeeper here at Furusund is called Swedenberg. (!)

*August 1st.*

Left Furusund.

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory note, 1932.*

In the autumn I had an engagement as a guest-artist at Stora Teatren in Gothenburg.

[. . .]

Later that autumn, when my time in Gothenburg was over, I went to Berlin on a journey of study and reconnaissance.

*September 5th.*

Letter from Harriet now in Gothenburg with Castegren\* [. . .]  
She is in Inferno.

*September 6th.*

This morning a white canoe, without an owner, was lying in Sirishofsvik. (Cf. the white sailing-boat that lay in the same spot on June 12th, 1903.)

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, September 13th.*

Dear Friend,

[. . .]

AnnMari's presence makes my life brighter,<sup>1</sup> but we sadly miss our "third party". She is no longer a baby and therefore I begin to feel that I am superfluous. My interest in life has slackened, I long to escape and have lost all desire to bind myself to life or to the living. I only want to float over what remains, to be ready to sail at a moment's notice.

In Sirishofsvik, where the white sailing-boat came ashore three years ago, a white canoe has gone aground. It has been lying there for eight days and no one has tried to steal it. I wonder if it is waiting for me, has come to fetch me?

\* Victor Castegren, who produced *A Dream Play* at Svenska Teatren in 1907, but was at this time directing at Stora Teatren in Gothenburg. Harriet Bosse did not like the plays in which she was being asked to perform.

<sup>1</sup> Anne Marie frequently lived with her father when her mother was away from home.

I am ready to depart! The whole of my life has been spent in preparing for the journey!

Your  
August Sg

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, c. September 14th.*

Gusten, I am so fond of you! Good-night.

Harriet

*November 1st.*

Walked along Strandvägen, salvoes, and flags flying, "clean" flags.

(Day of rejoicing!)

*November 6th.*

Harriet returned from Gothenburg this evening.

[. . .]

*November 7th.*

Harriet and Lillan to dinner.

*November 8th.*

Supper with Harriet.

*November 21st.*

Harriet left for Berlin. Lillan staying with Inez Ahlqvist.

[. . .]

*November 29th.*

Suspense! Darkness. Do not know what is going to happen next. Can sense Harriet in Berlin; she is agitated.

*December 8th.*

Aware of Harriet all day. Friendly, extremely!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, December 8th.*

Dear Harriet,

Do you think we shall ever disentangle ourselves from each

other after the way in which we have entwined our lives? When you are anxious, even far away in a distant land, the heart in my breast beats as hard as if it were yours.

There are times when I feel your warm breath sweep past my cheek, and then I think you are uttering my name in a kindly spirit.

There are times too when I have you within my coat, and I am You—

[. . .]

August Sg

1906

*January 1st.*

Sunshine. Took flowers to Harriet and Lillan this morning. H-t (*had a bath!*) Gave H. and Lillan dinner here.

Relations with Harriet peaceful and affectionate.

*January 13th, Saturday.*

Spent the evening until about 10 o'clock with Harriet. She asked me to stay, but I did not.

*January 14th, Sunday morning.*

After a restless night woke with an impression that I was free of H-t. Made plans for absconding. At 10.30 a letter arrived from H-t. Convinced that it was a "final letter" I opened it in some trepidation. It turned out to be an agitated love-letter! But earlier in the morning Harriet had telephoned to say that she was ill in bed and could not come to dinner. I too was ill, but I went to see H-t in the evening. She asked me to stay the night, but I left.

*January 15th.*

[. . .]

Spent the evening with H-t. Poisonous, gloomy, so much so that I had to leave her. H-t told me that she had had a terrifyingly infernal day; quite indescribable. [. . .]

*February 21st.*

After a period of distaste, darkness and disputes Harriet invited herself and Lillan to dinner. The wine-merchant had sent a bottle of Champagne by mistake, so we celebrated H-t's birthday (instead of on the 19th). Gay and bright! Lillan was sent to Inez. Alone with H-t,

*February 27th.*

[. . .]

Went to see Harriet this evening. Subdued; ill, décolletée, beautiful, evil, loving. She told me that yesterday evening she had intended to write me a final letter. This upset me so much that her caresses left me cold, at which she grew angry. I left in a hurry.

Dark at home.

*February 28th.*

Dark all day. Telephone call from Harriet that I did not take. Felt as if everything was over. Pitch dark.

*March 1st.*

Darkness and gloom until dinner-time. Once again I had the feeling that my light came from her and the child. Harriet telephoned and invited herself for the evening. She came: light returned. I had flowers, Champagne, and "souper". She played. It was glorious.

*March 2nd.*

At H-t's home in the evening. Lillian had a bath. All was light, warmth, and peace. There you have it!

*March 5th.*

Harriet went to Finland.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, March 13th.*

Dear child,

You are storming and buffeting me more than usual to-day, the 13th.

[. . .]

Your  
August Sg

*May 2nd.*

Visited Hasselbacken this morning. The bridal bird-cherry is in leaf again. My wedding day was May 6th, 1901.

*May 3rd.*

Harriet returned from Finland.

*May 5th.*

Harriet, Lillan and I had dinner together at Lidingöbro. Drove home by way of Djurgården.

*September 22nd.*

Night before: Death of Levertin.<sup>1</sup> A bright morning. Good news from Malmö. *Miss Julie*, with August Palme performing in it, had gone well.

In the morning I walked down Strandvägen in high spirits; continued along Hamngatan, saw Klara church and its school—a neighbourhood where every house holds memories—down to Vasagatan and saw Klara Primary School, where I had once taught; passed Vasateatern where *Master Olof* and *Lucky Peter* were performed; walked up Kungsgatan—where I saw a horrible picture of myself—turned up by Hötorget, Badstugatan and Oxtorgsgatan, past the house where the Seippels\* and then Wieselgren† lived; along Regeringsgatan and past Jacob's School and the house where Axel lives; down past the furniture shop where I bought the things with which I last set up house; but the whole time I was being drawn towards Sturepark, towards Lillan and Harriet. I had an "idea" that I must go to them to give them the money for Lillan's school fees and take some scent to Harriet. On my route I had tried to call at a number of perfumeries, but they had all been shut. I renewed my efforts and eventually found some French Muguet,<sup>2</sup> but not the Syren (Lilac) that I was looking for. After that I tried to find a florist and some flowers, but in vain. I climbed the stairs at No. 3 Sturepark. There I found sunshine and beauty. Harriet and Lillan were friendly and grateful.

<sup>1</sup> Oscar Levertin, the author and critic, whom Strindberg regarded as one of his worst enemies because of the unflattering things Levertin had said about his works.

\* S. Seippel and his family, friends of Strindberg's parents.

† Harald Wieselgren, a colleague of Strindberg's at the Royal Library.

<sup>2</sup> Muguet = Lily of the Valley.

As I walked back to Karlavägen I thought to myself: this has been like an "Agony" or the very moment of death when the whole of one's life passes before one, and I decided to write about this morning walk, on which, in an hour and a half, I had been able to review the whole of my life till now.

When I got home I felt that life was easy and bright. Something that had been oppressing me had gone. I took time off from work and fell into a holiday mood. Kind letters arrived, money too. At 2 o'clock I learned that Levertin had died (at 10 a.m.). That was the first I heard of it!

This is incomprehensible. He dies, but I pass through my "agony". And I wanted Harriet to have a bottle of scent (while he stank).<sup>1</sup>

[. . .]

October 6th.

My sister Anna's wedding anniversary. Five years ago to-day Harriet came back to me. She had left me on August 22nd, 1901, her name day, and the date of my father's birth.

This morning, near Sirishofsvik, I met a large muzzled dog by itself. A horse, also with a muzzle, was standing outside my door. Though he is in his grave August Bondeson stinks in my nostrils just as Levertin did when his unfavourable review of *New Swedish Destinies* appeared posthumously in *Svenska Dagbladet*. When his father died a couple of years ago, Bondeson jeered at him for having found again the faith of his childhood. Bondeson went mad, was shut up and died. We are not told whether, before that happened, he too had found again the faith of his childhood. That is a thing they are careful not to mention.

Spent the evening with Harriet. A gloomy, poisonous and entirely false atmosphere. She fondled me but I remained cold.

<sup>1</sup> Levertin was taken ill on the night of the 21st-22nd. It is believed that he accidentally swallowed a gargle containing potassium chlorate. This may explain what was in Strindberg's mind when, in a note added later to the above entry, he wrote: "Heard that L's body instantly began to decompose, so that he had to be buried as quickly as possible because of the stench (= perfume)."

When she drew back her face changed into her Miss Hopps' face.  
[. . .]

*October 28th, Sunday.*

Night before: Woken just before 2 o'clock by what seemed to be a hostile attack by Harriet, that gave me palpitations and a pain in my head. This is exactly what happened when she once tried to hypnotize me while I was asleep in our bedroom. This time I had dreamt that she was (using (*Gyllensköld*)) as a means of irritating me, and I hit her in the face. When her only retort was to cast evil, scornful glances upon me I prayed God that she might be abandoned by her family, her friends and her servants (for has not she divided me from all my people?) and that she might be "eaten alive by worms". Fell asleep once more, but again dreamed antagonistically, of H-t.

[. . .]

*November 5th.*

Have not seen Harriet since October 6th, on that occasion I withdrew, as she was expecting her suitor, Docent Castrén,\* and I did not want to be her second string. I do not know whether he ever came.

*November 10th.*

[. . .]

It is worth noting that, since I freed myself from Harriet, I can again plainly see the road to Christianity and that, in my thoughts, I have achieved reconciliation with my worst enemies such as (*G. of G., Paul, Philp, Sigurd, Wirsén*),† even with (*Levertin*). Then too, I live as if I were preparing myself for death. It seems to me now, that all the beautiful things I wrote during my life with Harriet came about as a reaction to her wickedness and that,

\* Gunnar Castrén, the Finnish literary historian, whom Harriet Bosse had met during her visit to Helsingfors as a guest-artist.

† Gustav af Geijerstam, Adolf Paul, Alfred Hedenstierna (pen-name Sigurd), Carl David Wirsén. Fellow writers of whom Strindberg had fallen foul for one reason or another. Hugo von Philp, Strindberg's brother-in-law.

by re-creating her as beautiful, I sometimes managed to bring a good influence to bear on her. She said herself that she was "the wickedest person ever born".

*November 28th.*

Intensely aware of Harriet every day.

Last night I dreamed of white horses followed by brown. This made me uneasy and I tried to get away. Instead I fell under a white horse that lay down on top of me, but I crept out from under him and was saved.

This morning a cart, drawn by a large white horse, came up behind me and then crossed my path in an unpleasant fashion. When (remembering my dream) I tried to get out of its way, a cab, drawn by a brown horse, came up and brushed against me. The coachman yelled and I only just managed to avoid being run over.

[. . .]

The telephone rang this evening. I picked it up, it was Harriet. She simply wanted to talk about the production of *Sir Bengt's Wife* that Ranft wants to put on. I disapproved, and we had exactly the same conversation we had in the autumn, the same subject, the same words. I gently cut it short. N.B! I have not seen or spoken to Harriet since October 6th = 7 weeks. This conversation was conducted and broken off without the least trace of emotion. This must mean either that she is quite indifferent to me, or that our life together has been continuing as before, but secretly, and that she takes it as a matter of course.

*December 14th.*

Harriet came to see me after an interval that lasted since October 6th. I visited her in the evening. Everything as before; no explanations. This after over 2 months!

*December 15th.*

Harriet has hurt her foot.

Associating with Harriet and Lillan as before. She is like herself though not quite. Cool, untrustworthy, false!

*December 23rd, Christmas Eve.*

H-t and Lillan to dinner. August Lindberg arrived with presents.

Associating with Harriet and Lillan but on a false footing. She is intimate with my enemies!

*December 31st.*

Rupture with Harriet! Because I refused to visit her this evening.

1907

*January 9th.*

Remained at home this evening, instead of going to Harriet. There was light. I now believe that the darkness comes from her and I want to break free. On the occasion of our last reunion I found her stupider than before, but just as proud and wicked! Black and venomous!

[. . .]

*January 10th.*

Lillan telephoned this evening. She asked me to go to her. I went. Calm, peaceful, beautiful.

*January 20th.*

Harriet and Lillan came to dinner. Ruth\* and Lillan went to see Aug. Lindberg. H-t remained behind in the Yellow Room. (Last time.)

[. . .]

*March 8th.*

[. . .]

Went with Lillan and Harriet to the dress-rehearsal of *Lucky Peter's Travels* this evening.

What is going to happen next?

*March 9th.*

Dark and austere. Fröken Kopparberg came to work in the house instead of Ebba.

*March 10th, Sunday.*

(Passion Sunday or Mid-Lent Sunday.) Dark, threatening,

\* Harriet Bosse's maid.

horrible. Alone, and have no news of *Lucky Peter's* fate yesterday evening. I lost my appetite at dinner and a frightful sensation came over me x x x. This state of dejection continued until 6 o'clock. As the clock struck 6 Harriet telephoned to say that *Lucky Peter* had gone well.—What I experienced to-day was not a physical thing; it must certainly have taken place on the "astral plane". It resembled what happened in August and September 1901 (when Harriet had left me). Then I had the same sensations and the same desire to commit suicide, but not so pronounced.

[. . .]

*March 13th.*

Harriet and Lillan have come to live with me as they are moving house.

*March 15th.*

Everything the same, poisonous, spiteful. She blames me, poor innocent, for all her troubles.

*March 26th.*

Anna has left! Alma has entered the house. Calm, clean and pleasant. Decent food for dinner. Lillan and Ruth came to visit me. Telephone call from Harriet! Have taken a dislike to strong drink in the evening.

*March 27th.*

Beginning to drink wormwood-ale!

*March 29th.*

Alma has left, because I complained that she spoiled the food.

*March 30th.*

Caretaker's wife cleans. Food fetched in. (Pig-swill.)

Horrible! Dinner with Harriet and Lillan on Easter Day in their new home. This home is so preternaturally beautiful, that I might very well have "wished it together" for the two of them.

[. . .]

*April 1st.*

Sofi came to look after the house. Things worse than ever.

*April 14th, Sunday.*

Alone. Grew more light-hearted this evening. I got out the punch, which I have not tasted for fourteen days. As I raised the glass to my lips the people in the flat downstairs struck up a brilliant gallop. It cheered me up.

*April 15th.*

Once again I found a red feather, but in the street.

To-day, at 12 o'clock (it is now 10.30), there is to be a dress-rehearsal of *A Dream Play*. The odd thing is that I wrote this play after 40 days of suffering (Aug., Sept. 1901), at a time when Harriet had left me, bearing with her my last child, then unborn. Now, when it is about to be performed, I have, for 40 days, been in a depressed (black) inferno-like mood and afflicted by domestic misery.

The sun is shining. All the shutters of the tobacco-drying shed are wide open and leaning against it, white and gleaming, are four paper windows (from the forcing-frame).

A kind of calm, resigned feeling of uncertainty prevails within me. I ask myself if some catastrophe will not prevent the play's being performed, if in fact it *may* be performed. True, I have talked nicely to people; but to wish to influence Him who rules the world is presumptuous (perhaps blasphemous). The fact that I have revealed the relative nothingness of life (Buddhism), its insane contradictions, its wickedness and unruliness, may be regarded as praiseworthy, if it imbues people with resignation, and to have shown that man is relatively guiltless in a life which of itself entails guilt, is surely no bad thing . . . But . . .

Just had a telephone call from Harriet: "The outcome of all this is in the hands of God." "I entirely agree," I answered, "and I doubt whether the play *may* be performed." (I believe the Powers on High have already made up their minds about that, and also about the result of the first night—if there should ever be one.)

It feels like Sunday at this moment. I can see the white figures

on the balcony of "The Growing Castle". During these past . . . days my thoughts have been much occupied with death and the life to come. Yesterday I read Plato's *Timaëus* and *Phaëdo*. Am I going to die now, or soon, I wonder? At present working on *Toten-Insel*, in which I am describing the awakening after death and what follows it; but I shrink with horror from laying bare the abysmal misery of life. I recently burnt a play so honest that it made me shudder. Yet I never feel sure that I ought to flatter humanity by concealing what is vile. I should like to write of things as bright and beautiful, but I may not, I cannot. I regard it as my dreadful duty to be truthful, and life is so indescribably ugly.

The clock has just struck 11! . . . (The rehearsal is at 12.)

Evening, 8 o'clock. I went to the rehearsal of *A Dream Play* and suffered intensely; had the impression that this thing ought not to be performed . . . It is a presumption, probably a blasphemy (?) . . . I am out of harmony and afraid (unblest).

Got no dinner. Have just eaten—at 7 o'clock—cold food fetched in a container. The Publisher has just returned my three Chamber Plays.

During these last forty days of pondering on religious matters I have read the Book of Job, telling myself, it is true, that I was no righteous man. But then I came to Chapter 22, in which Eliphaz the Temanite exposes Job thus: "For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry". . . "Is not thy wickedness great? Neither is there any end to thine iniquities."

So the comfort I had expected from the Book of Job came to nothing and I was left standing, deserted, at my wits' end. To what is a poor human being to cling? What is he to believe? Is he to blame if he thinks wrongly?

Yesterday I read Plato's *Timaëus* and *Phaëdo* and got from them so much contradictory wisdom, that in the evening I cast aside all my devotional books and recited "God who holds all

children dear”<sup>1</sup> with my whole heart. What will happen next? God help me, Amen!

Castegren came to see me this evening; dejected. Quiet night.  
[. . .]

*April 16th.*

Read the proofs of *Black Banners*, written in 1904. Is this book a crime and should it be withdrawn? I hesitated; turned over the leaves of the Bible and came upon the Book of Jonah which tells how the prophet was forced to come forth and prophesy, even though he had tried to conceal himself.

This gave me solace. But it is a terrible book!

*April 17th.*

*A Dream Play* is being performed to-day. Snow fell gently this morning. Read the last chapters of the Book of Job which tell how God punished Job for his arrogance in daring to find fault with His works. Job begged for forgiveness and this was granted. Quiet and grey until 3 o'clock. Then Greta\* arrived with the news that I had been nominated to receive an Honorary Doctorate in Upsala at the Linnéan Celebrations in May, and that the dress rehearsal of *A Dream Play* had been favourably reviewed. Alone at home in the evening. On the stroke of 8 the door-bell rang and a girl entered with a laurel wreath and three roses, sent anonymously and inscribed: "Truth", "Light", "Liberation". I immediately took it to the mask of Beethoven on the stove, as there is so much I have to thank him for. But to-day *children* have been haunting me. When I got outside the front door this morning the first thing I saw was a lady with a little girl, and when I returned there was a boisterous child and an old woman in front of me. This depressed me so much that I tried to hang back, but it was impossible. I had to pass them and as I did so the old woman turned threateningly to the child and said: "Don't you dare go ringing the door-bells". Later on at dinner-time,

<sup>1</sup> Gud som haver barnen kär. A traditional child's prayer.

\* Greta, Strindberg's second daughter by his first wife.

when I was lying in the Yellow room, they whipped a child three times in the house next door. I could hear it screaming horribly. What does all this mean? Is it tit for tat? (*A Dream Play*)? Human beings=naughty children! August Falck\* came to see me.

The tobacco shed is shut, but outside it I saw a large grey goose (it was a wheel-barrow for muck).

[. . .]

"The Castle" (=The Barracks) is dark this evening. Heard the neighbour's cuckoo-clock strike! (most unusual). Used to mean horrors, but the last time all was well!

At 11 o'clock this evening Harriet, Castegren and Ranft† telephoned to say that *A Dream Play* had been a success! T.b.t.G.!

*April 18th.*

My mind is in a turmoil! A storm of hatred—even Harriet's, who had vowed that the play should fail—is being loosed upon me from a distance; envious hatred, inspired by its success. Falck came to see me!

Found a stone on the stairs!

Axel here this evening!

N.B! *After 40 days of fasting*, confusion and suffering of all kinds, I can see on both my hands deep scars that look as if they had been made by large nails (=stigmata!). Is this my Easter? Shall I be crucified again? As I crucified Christ? I am filled with thoughts of death and await a catastrophe!

I have now been drinking wormwood-ale (=gall) for a whole month.

*April 21st.*

In one of the windows of my former home at 31 Banérgatan there is now a little white cutter (a toy) with all her sails set. At the rudder sits a child wearing a blue cap. (Cf: this diary on the

\* August Falk, the future director of Strindberg's Intimate Theatre.

† Albert Ranft, who was, among other things, the proprietor of Svenska Teatern.

white boats in Djurgårdsbrunnsviken). Later on I noticed inside the boat a little white-clad girl.

Harriet and Lillan to see me. Very friendly.

Schering has recently sent me Klinger's etchings of *Dead Children*. This foreshadows a child's death!

During these painful 6 weeks in which, among other things, I have been given over-cooked and filthy food, I have lamented like Job: "Can that which hath no savour be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? . . ." Only to be answered by Ezekiel, Chapter IV: "And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it in their sight with dung that cometh out of man." (And the Lord added: "Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles . . ." And when the prophet lamented he was granted the favour of baking with cow-dung . . .) (Prototype of the overthrow of Jerusalem.)

Cf. below the 23rd when, as I was telling Axel about this, it instantly started to thunder and lighten.

*April 22nd.*

*A Dream Play* has now been going well since last Wednesday. So in the end permission was granted, but I had to suffer until it was. I am still out of harmony, but less so than before.

[. . .]

*April 23rd.*

Axel here this evening. I told him that the food I had been given was so filthy that I could not eat it. (At the same time I had bestowed 2 crowns on a beggar, and for his dinner what is more.) At that very moment a flash of blue lightning shot past the dining-room window, followed immediately by a clap of thunder. This happened three times in succession!

*April 24th.*

Ellen arrived this evening.

*April 25th.*

My heart is somewhat lighter. Huge mountains of cloud in the north.

Harriet and Lillan to see me.

*April 26th.*

Darkness!

Apathetic, idle, no interest in anything, unable to work. Tried to write about Linné's System of Classification, but lost interest.

Shivering fit at dinner-time, a deathly ague, forced myself to eat. Opened the Bible at the Book of Job and came upon reproaches for having blasphemed. Wanted to read the Psalmist, but the rapping on the wall started.

After my mid-day nap I found that the thermometer on the window had been wrenched off. This thermometer, which neither of us had wanted to put up (since neither of us believed that our union would last), had been left lying about or moved from place to place and had finally ended up in a drawer. When at last Harriet departed from the house I put it up. Why had it been taken down? And who could have done it?

Have had a feeling all day that Harriet was friendly, very! (too much so).

Harriet's Benefit Performance of *A Dream Play* this evening.

[. . .]

*May 1st.*

Harriet has gone on tour. Lillan came to dinner. Cold, distant, naughty; result of Fru Möller's upbringing.

*May 2nd.*

My heart a little lighter! Thinking of writing Idylls and a Shepherd's song. Slept this afternoon and woke in an ecstasy, having seen again in my dreams the Dalarö of my youth, 1871.

*May 9th, Ascension-day!*

Letter from Harriet!—Alone all day!—

She is being tormented and complaining about it. I knew of this already, knew too *who* was tormenting her!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 12th.*

Harriet,

Need I write to you? You are aware of my thoughts and my feelings as I am of yours. I already knew of what you told me in your letter and who was annoying you, though no one had said a word to me about it. I am near you when you suffer and suffer with you; but when you are happy I cannot always follow you, as life then puts you on the side of my enemies. I cannot rejoice at unwarranted success that is achieved at my expense!

I am growing accustomed to the great loneliness of the summer and no longer hope for anything from life, as everything has shown itself to be unstable, transitory, and perishable. [. . .]

I cannot bear to see your home, as it is now the haunt of beings alien to me. And yet your home is so completely beautiful that I might myself have wished it together for the two of you, you and the child. I cannot talk to you, for I have nothing to say that can be put into words. I do not long to see you, for I can see you when I will and as I will.

People and life have tried one means of parting us, but I believe we still meet, sometimes, in another place, for we are kin, you and I, and shall never cease to be so . . .

Your  
Nameless One

*May 14th.*

Aware of Harriet in kindness and intimacy right up to noon, then she disappeared.

*May 16th.*

Read the last proofs of *Black Banners*. Nothing now remains, I suppose, but to drain the last Cup.

*May 17th.*

My brother Oskar came to supper.

*May 18th, Whitsun Eve.*

Harriet "persecutes" me from morn till noon! Had a card from H-t from Lund. She seeks me in intimacy and forces herself upon me. Ill in the evening, chest, throat, stomach.

[. . .]

May 19th, Whit Sunday.

[. . .]

Have a feeling that Harriet and Lillan have met.

There has been no sound from Captain M.'s flat under mine for about a month. Have heard neither the Pianola nor the Phonograph. I decided the family must be away. A few days ago someone began to play the pianola, but stopped suddenly. Ellen tells me that the couple have parted and that the husband is alone. The impression this made on me was horrible. Even in the silence I can hear the man down there suffering!

[. . .]

When I woke this afternoon I heard the pianola and the phonograph in the flat below. [. . .] But female voices as well. I thought M.'s wife and children had returned and rejoiced; but very soon I heard the sound of dancing and the gabbling of females who were certainly not members of the family. They sounded quite different, and I pictured to myself what had been a home invaded by sluts. The contrast affected me so deeply that I began to weep, so dear to me is my dream of home-life and family as something austere, strict, but purifying, sacred! (And look what life gave me!) However, the merry-making quietened down towards evening and by the following day all was silent again.

He was divorced and was now celebrating a new engagement.

It seems to be part of my fate that I may not defend myself!

As soon as I try to get people to admit that I am in the right, they say I am wrong, and call it justice!

If I were to write about my experiences of recent years and of what now oppresses me, no one would believe me. All the same I have slipped in a hint of it into *Historical Miniatures*.<sup>\*</sup> This misunderstanding is so horrible and every effort to correct it proves impossible.

<sup>\*</sup> Strindberg is referring here to a passage in the short story about the French Revolution, *Days of Judgement*. In it he says that Queen Marie Antoinette led a dissolute life at night and that she had an "illicit relationship with her son". [See *Historiska Miniatyurer*, Samlade Skrifter, vol. 42, pp. 316-17, as the passage in question is omitted in the English translation. M.S.]

When I married Bosse I got her with child immediately. But she grudged me that great honour, and out of spite she went off with her unborn child. She alleged that I had deserted our bedroom, but the truth was that she had *begged me to move*, as pregnancy had given her a dislike for my person. She returned and the child was born. The next thing was that she did not want to have more children, but did want to continue "married life". This resulted in distaste and disgust. First we separated, then we got a divorce. After that we came together again and I became her lover, and still am. This then is the question, in what have I failed? My reputation was restored, but is so no longer, for her lies are enduring, in spite of all there is to confute them! At 50 I was no good as a husband, but at 58 I am good enough to be a lover! It is sublime! Sublime!!!

To-day, Whit Sunday, I dined alone, of course. As I sat at table in the dining-room two pigeons came and pecked insistently at the window. I gave them bread and peas which they ate, looking at me all the while through the window. When they had done, they kissed each other and flew away. It was like having a visit from Harriet and Lillan, who are far away, and reminded me of our Sunday dinners.

*Swedenborg's* body is to be brought home to Sweden. Read *Swedenborg* all to-day! and yesterday too! See B.

*May 20th, Whit Monday.*

Night before: woke to hear the clock striking 3 and simultaneously the click of an electric switch. This was followed by the slop-pail rattling first three times and then two. I was not alarmed but turned on the light and took it as a warning. Dreamt about murderers, whom I evaded. Likewise about a gold coin (in my waistcoat pocket) that multiplied itself.

Reading *Swedenborg*. When he visited the other planets he came to the conclusion that the Earth was the worst of them all because its inhabitants do not say what they think, or else they say things other than those they think. This is why they have governments and princes, things that are not found on the other planets, where

people live solely in families, and where they cannot lie. *Swedenborg* says that the Swedish nation is on the whole worse than the others and, with the exception of the Russians and the Italians, 'the *worst* in Europe, as the Swedes do not say what they think'. Quite right!

I am well to-day and was able to take my morning walk.

Rupture with Ellen while at dinner, as she had given me *overdone* pig-swill! She gave notice! Interesting to see what happens! (She stayed.)

*May 24th.*

Feeling of contact with H-t very strong in the early morning and followed me through the day, the whole of it, intensifying towards evening. In other respects a gloomy, colourless day.

It is curious that contact and harmony with H-t should give me a sensation of being drawn towards the light, even though she hates me, *on one plane*. Now and then she has a suspicion of what manner of man I am, but then evil influences are brought to bear on her from outside. She must be both a very high and a very low creature! She can be the wickedest and vilest person I have met; in a way the stupidest and the ugliest, yet at times she is the very reverse, in every respect!

*May 29th.*

*Black Banner* comes out to-day. Made an agreement about *A Blue Book*, on *excellent* terms. Decided to remain in town and in the flat.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

I had been to see Strindberg one Sunday and played the piano for him. In order to do so with greater ease I took off my engagement ring, the one Strindberg had given me set with brilliants and sapphires. I placed the ring beside me on the piano, but forgot to put it on again when I left. When I got home I telephoned to Strindberg to ask him to take care of the ring, but he replied it was

not there. A thorough search was made for it; the floor was taken up, but with no result, the ring had gone. When I dined there the following Sunday we discussed the disappearance of the ring in front of the maid, who was waiting at table. She consoled with us on its loss—with rather too much animation, I thought—and quite intuitively I began to suspect her.

*June 11th.*

Telephone call from an unknown lady who says that Harriet's engagement ring was stolen by Ebba. It disappeared on Feb. 17th, 1906. The curious thing about it is that, just before this telephone call about the ring (it has one sapphire and two diamonds), I had been working on precious stones. A book with coloured illustrations is still lying open beside me.

*June 12th.*

Fru Kreüger came, bringing with her the ring. I sent it on to Harriet with a "final letter", in which I rejected her offer of a visit!

[. . .]

*June 13th.*

[. . .]

Loving letter from Harriet! Heard the cuckoo-clock striking insistently this evening.

[. . .]

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, June 13th.*

How very strange about that ring—

How very strange life is as a whole—

My dear, beloved friend, yes, I still call you that. You must feel, you must know that no one has yet taken your place in my heart—

You do not ever want to see me, us, again. I understand you, and I shall respect your wishes.

We are together, all the same, and I am firmly convinced, *now*, at any rate, that even if I were sometimes to link my future with that of another man, *you* have coloured my life in such a special way that I shall never forget you.

You may think I go out and about among people to amuse myself. *Amuse myself!* Oh no! I do so in order to have something to occupy me, something to deaden myself with for, like you, I long to make an end, long for it so intensely that, if I had not our child to hold me back, I should have set myself free long ago.

I am so profoundly sad and sorrowful that I think nothing can ever make me happy again.

We are going into the country now. One must be somewhere, in one place or another and, as it will probably do my throat good, we are going to Åre again. It does not *really* matter to me where I am—

I am very fond of you—whatever may happen—I love you, perhaps because, through such deep and boundless sorrow, you have infused my life with meaning—

Farewell,

Your  
Harriet

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, July 25th.*

My dear ones,

To meet only to part is more pain than pleasure, to be sure; but as we are going to live in the same town, it would be better to consort than to turn into ghost-like memories, and hardly know if we dare greet each other.—Therefore I ask if you will both dine with me on Sunday at 3 o'clock? [. . .]

Your  
August Sg

*July 25th.*

Friendly letter from Lillan (Harriet).

[. . .]

*July 29th.*

Harriet and Lillan came; but Ellen departed, so we got no dinner. I myself laid out cold food at 5 o'clock. Then Ruth arrived!

*August 4th, Sunday*

Ruth departed. Fröken Johansson came instead.

*August 22nd.*

Six years ago to-day (1901), on her name-day and the anniversary of my father's birth, Harriet took herself off, for no reason, bearing with her my unborn child. On the same day a fire-ball (bolide) fell in the Waggoner, close to Capella. A year ago to-day a comet appeared in Pegasus!

I am now reading the proofs of *A Blue Book* and feel that, with it done, my mission in life is ended. I have been permitted to say all that I have to say.

*October 6th.*

Anniversary of (1) Anna's wedding, (2) my unfortunate trip to Paris in 1879?,\* (3) Harriet's return with my child in 1901. I went to fetch my Anne-Marie for a drive. Harriet, whom I had not seen for two months, came to see us off. (Siri v. E., who has been in town for fourteen days, is leaving to-day.)

[. . .]

*December 24th, Christmas Eve.*

Alone. It is hard! Harriet did ask me there, but I would not go. Aug. Lindberg came to see me. Axel Jäderin and Tor Aulin telephoned in the evening. Completely alone all day, and in the evening too!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, c. December 24th.*

Do not let us meet, it is too painful. Now, in the seventh year

\* Strindberg is referring here to his interrupted journey to Paris in 1879 on which he had embarked in order to avoid the love affair that he knew was developing with Siri von Essen, his first wife.

of this everlasting bidding of farewell, have I not suffered enough?

As for the world in which you live, I have broken with it forever.

My child was stolen from me while still in her mother's womb. Now her mind has been stolen too . . .

[. . .]

1908

*February 26th.*

Lillan and I out for a drive. Contact with H-t again! from a distance.

*April 3rd.*

Aware of H-t this afternoon before 5 o'clock. At the same instant sound of furniture-moving overhead. I jumped up. This evening Anne-Marie came. [. . .] Later I went out with her. At the corner of Karlaplan Harriet drove up in a cab. I did not recognize her; she was small, insignificant, ugly. I greeted her as one would a stranger! Hardly saw her!

[. . .]

*April 4th.*

In the evening Lillan arrived with a letter from Harriet telling me she was engaged. Lillan said to W-d.\* Yet H. had "sought" me that afternoon! Shortly afterwards Lillan made out a card for me in our alphabet game: "Unkind". I asked her if W. was kind. She answered: "Yes".

The night that followed was marvellous! At about 11.30 I became conscious of H-t, but did not respond. At 3 o'clock again, and that time . . . In the morning ditto—On the very night of her engagement! ! !

[. . .]

\* Gunnar Wingård, the actor. He and Harriet Bosse were divorced in 1911, and he died by his own hand in 1912.

*April 5th, Sunday.*

In a strange mood all day. I am re-living my engagement of 7 years ago. Grew cheerful in the evening and played Gounod's *Romeo*. Could feel that H-t was friendly, almost as if we had just got engaged again!

*April 7th.*

Went out early in the morning. The feeling that it was Sunday was so strong that I almost believed it was. Remembered all that was beautiful in my early days with Harriet. She is now as one dead, and therefore I only see her as beautiful, mourn and lament her as one does the dead, regret every harsh word, reproach myself for everything, tell myself that I was in the wrong. . . .

Laid aside *A Blue Book*. Did nothing. Wept in anguish over the dead illusions of love. Were they no more than illusions, those feelings that overpowered me?

Is there no end to this? Will it last for ever? Is it seeking to find expression in poetry, but failing? Heard Schubert's *Serenade* being played this evening: "Softly through the night is calling, love, my song to thee . . .", but I do not know where it was being played.

[. . .]

*April 8th.*

In a light-hearted mood all day. Paid Harriet's bookseller's bill and had the receipt sent to her. Experienced warm contact with Harriet the whole day. She sought me. I believed that she was unhappy! Her *Swanwhite*\* is being performed in Helsingfors this evening! Wrote a letter which I did not send.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 8th.*

When you told me last Saturday that you were engaged, I

\* In 1901 Strindberg had given *Swanwhite* to Harriet Bosse as an engagement present.

think I almost knew it beforehand. But I could not wish you happiness, for I do not believe in it, since it does not exist. About the child I felt no uneasiness, for I believe in God.

All the same I did want to bid you farewell, and now I want to thank you, in spite of everything, for everything, for those months of spring, seven years ago when, after 20 years of misery, I was permitted to see a little splendour in life. I could not bring myself to write before. I had experiences that made me hesitate. Sunday passed, Monday too, in work and calm resignation. You will have noticed that for exactly a year I have ceased to visit you, and you know why.

Then came yesterday, Tuesday! When I went out in the morning, I thought it was Sunday. The city did not look the same, nor did the flat here at home. You were dead! And then began the apotheosis of my memories. For the whole day, for twelve hours, my life was no more than a re-living of these past seven years.

Everything, everything, reproaches, pangs of conscience for all things left undone, for every harsh word, exactly as when a beloved person dies. All that was less beautiful had gone, only what was lovely stood out. [. . .]

Just one thing! Let me have Lillan when you marry! Or would you rather have me go far away?

For us to pass each other by in the street would be painful and unclean, and the child ought to be kept out of it!

Shall I go away? I think I am a disturbing influence here and I know that invisible wires stretch from this flat and transmit inaudible sound-waves, which nevertheless reach their mark. . . .

Our bonds are not broken, but they must be severed . . . otherwise we shall be defiled. . . . You remember how it was in our early days, when malicious alien souls, merely by the act of thinking of us, were able to project rays upon us that perturbed us, that destroyed us!

Say how you would like matters arranged, but see to it that this does not drag us down into the murky depths, a thing I dread.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 9th.*

[. . .]

I will not live this double life, ensnared in the erotic life of other people . . . I would rather mourn you as dead than remember you as another man's wife. You are bringing disharmony into your own life too, for it is not only you and I who "live on the astral plane". Lightning can strike backwards or to the side, and any one of us may die; perhaps the one you would miss most.

[. . .]

I beg you now: Leave me in peace! In my sleep I am defenceless, as everyone is, irresponsible . . . and I am ashamed afterwards. Now I think it criminal!

[. . .]

*April 10th.*

Spent the whole morning reading Harriet's and my letters. I wept with emotion, so great and beautiful did they seem. Wrote an agitated letter to Harriet and enclosed some of my letters of 1901. Contact with Harriet was very strong all day.

What I am now experiencing is so strange. Harriet and I are friends. She "seeks" me. I eat but little, drink but little, dress myself—for whom? In the thoughts that obsess me I am, as it were, just engaged, re-living 1901, seeing Harriet as she was seven years ago, young, great, glorious, ethereal!

*April 11th.*

Wrote a letter to Castegren this evening asking him to put on *Swanwhite* and let Harriet and her fiancé perform in it. Left the letter unposted overnight. During the night Harriet sought me twice with passionate intensity and I responded. This after I had experienced a feeling at 10.30 yesterday evening that Harriet was in a state of great anguish. In the morning I sent off the letter to Castegren and one to Harriet to inquire whether she would act in *Swanwhite*.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 11th.*

[. . .]

Of one thing I am certain; I shall not survive your wedding night, not out of envy, but because of the power I have of imagining what will take place.

So be it! On that night I shall celebrate my marriage with Death! God will allow me that after all my suffering! For I must go before my true self, my immortal soul is defiled. It is no good my saying to myself: Why should he touch my woman? She is not mine in the ordinary sense, and he has the right. But she is my creation, all the same, and there is in her something of me for him to touch . . . it is me he caresses, that is why I must depart!

Why will you not let me go? What do you want with my old person? Take my soul if you must, but let me go!

This will end badly!

[. . .]

Did you never notice that many of those who wanted to take you from me were hurt, died, lost wife and child? I did nothing to bring these things upon them, hardly dared even to wish them ill, for I knew how dangerous it was!

That is why I am so afraid of interfering with you both; for if I do I shall suffer for it!

Therefore let me go!

You may not have more than one! Two is murder, crime!

*April 12th, Sunday.*

Night before: It was as if I were only just married. . . . And without any feeling of self-reproach. This morning I sent flowers and a letter.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 12th.*

[. . .]

. . . Nothing now remains but to ask you, as I did when I

proposed: Will you have a little child by me? And in reply you smiled, smiled as Anne-Marie sometimes does.

Of course I knew this last Saturday night, but I had too little self-conceit to believe it.

Will you have a little child by me, Harriet?

*April 13th, Monday.*

Night before. From 11.30 I held Harriet in my arms. I "saw" her face, heard her breathing, kissed her little hand good-night. Then we slept until morning, just as we used to do when we were newly married.

What is this marvel that I have been experiencing for 8 days?  
[. . .]

She becomes engaged to W., but at night she flies to me. We live as if we were newly married, we correspond with each other. I send flowers to her every morning. I am like a man newly married. I eat little, have ceased to drink, dress myself, for whom? [. . .] I have prayed God to deliver me, to give me a thorn in my flesh, to smite me in the face! But he makes no move! I am happy when she seeks me and I do not reproach myself. What am I to make of it all?

To-day, the 13th, in the morning, I saw a whole row of carts taking away the earth from the nursery-garden down beside the tobacco-drying sheds and the forcing-frames. For 7 years I have watched this garden and its frames being equipped. Now, in their 8th year, it is all over with them!

Continuous contact with H-t all evening. At 10.30 I had such violent palpitations that I had to put my hand on my heart, but when I did so I fancied it was Harriet's heart. It quietened down, then stopped. I thought she was dying, but it started to beat again, only more tranquilly. I slept. At 11.30 the feeling of anxiety returned (I believed this time that he was striking her! She told me in her letter that "she had fought and been struck"). By 12 o'clock she was lying on my arm, calm, friendly. I was woken three times during the night and received her as my wife.

*April 14th.*

This morning I went out rejuvenated. Did something foolish but with the best intentions. Later this morning I wrote her a letter about all this and sent it off. Subsequently became aware of a hostile H-t. [. . .] Now, this evening, H-t is gone. I have no awareness of her, neither hostile nor the reverse.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 14th.*

I do not know what happened last night between 10.30 and 11.30, but you two were near to bursting my heart. Your little heart beat so violently in *my* breast, that I had to lay my hand upon it, and behold it quietened down and then stopped beating, so that I thought you were dead.

But as I lay in the moonlight in the faithful blue bed, that has never thought of any woman but you, you lay upon my arm, I could see your little face, feel your breath, and in the darkness I took your little hand and kissed it and whispered as of old: "Good night beloved, beloved wife!"

Is this what Beethoven meant by "The Distant Beloved"? It is a truth, but I was too much of a child to grasp it before you crossed my path.

What is this thing? A higher life on a higher plane, that only we "Children of the Gods" are able to live! And into this life an earthworm is to be initiated, to be incorporated! No, Agnes, Indra's daughter, No! Let no profane creature enter here! Such a one must stand outside the temple!

At first I shrank back as one would from a crime! "I will not become a dissembler," I cried to God. I begged Him to strike me as a sign that He disapproved of me. But He did not strike me. He made the moon shine into my room, and at midnight He laid my beautiful little wife on my arm!

I may do it, I have permission! But mark well, only in the soft darkness of the night, which makes this mystery innocent! In the day-time, by the light of day, it is a sin!

And then there comes a rapping on all the walls!

[. . .]

*April 15th.*

Night before. H-t came again, but without perfume. Towards morning things were different. Ter.<sup>1</sup> At 2 and 5 o'clock (on the stroke).

After a glorious walk in Djurgården wearing only my jacket, (so warm am I), I went home. And then H-t came, intensely, deliciously, as if she had only now read my letter of yesterday. This sensation remained with me until 2 o'clock, when it disappeared and for a moment I became uneasy. I ate my dinner cautiously and without schnapps. When I got up and opened the window, a whole army of White Banners was waving to me (out on Gårdet). Then I understood and was so much moved that I burst into tears. Went to my desk and opened this diary. At that instant came a scent of roses that threw me into a state of ecstasy. But when I tried to take my after-dinner rest I was so uneasy that I had to get up. I remained awake and thus missed my nap, a thing that has not happened for seven years. H-t sought me several times, but I resisted her, for I have "learned" that it is only allowed at night . . . in the chaste hours of darkness.

Axel here in the evening; gloomy, uneasy. H-t was gone the whole time. But then night came. She reappeared, I saw her! and she slept with me all night! At 2 and 5 o'clock . . .

*April 16th, Maundy Thursday.*

Took my morning walk in sunshine! People half smiled at me in a kindly way, as if they knew something that I did not.

I wrote a letter to H-t: "Say one word!" (I do not even know if she is free!).

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 16th.*

Say one word! I know nothing, but to-day, in the morning, I

<sup>1</sup> Three telepathic embraces.

read so much in the glances of the people I met, out in the streets, in the roads! [. . .]

Say one word! You believe, I am sure, that I know what the whole world knows, but it is not so! I do know in a certain way, intuitively, but not as the world knows! Have been told nothing!!!

*April 16th, Maundy Thursday.*

A dress rehearsal of *Easter* this morning. Flygare\* played Harriet's role. Got home at 4.30. Tranquil, slept for an hour. Then became aware of a wicked and threatening Harriet. Anne-Marie came to see me. She was wearing a bracelet. I asked who had given it to her. Uncle W!—Oh God, what malice! Thou wicked woman! "The wickedest ever created." May God never call you to account for this sin!

Yet I sense her as the "incense" of the early days of our acquaintanceship, Feb. 4th, 1901, when *Easter* was collated. Before that time, from the autumn of 1900, it was celery, and from myself as well.

Spent the evening alone. Played Haydn's *Seven Last Words* while they were performing *Easter* at the Intimate Theatre. Experienced contact with H-t, but fitfully. A telephone call from Falck after 10 o'clock to say that *Easter* had gone well. At 10.30 H-t began to seek me, but irresolutely, and this continued all night until 5 o'clock, when she found me, but without joy. Hatred came between us! There was no soul! And without soul (love), no joy.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 17th.*

Yesterday, Thursday, I woke with the feeling that I was once more newly married, so begged you for one word, you will know

\* Anna Flygare, who took the part of Eleonora in the production of *Easter* at Strindberg's Intimate Theatre in 1908.

which, the word those people would have liked to say to me, but that I only want from your lips.

I did you no ill yesterday, neither with words nor with thoughts, not even with looks!

In the evening came your answer! You sent your child to me wearing the Thrall's<sup>1</sup> bracelet! From that moment the child ceased to be mine! I renounced her. I renounce her! To protect her little soul from your malice, you wickedest being ever created! I will never see her again.

[. . .]

You have now sunk so low that only One, the Almighty, can raise you up from the abyss.

I did not weep yesterday, I was turned to stone! You Black Swanwhite! You took with you all my good thoughts, took them away. Now take with you everything, everything, the child too. And go!

[. . .]

*April 17th, Good Friday.*

Wrote a letter to Harriet in which, after the business of the bracelet yesterday, I renounced the child and said farewell! It was sent off at 10 a.m. It is now 10.30. Experienced H-t as friendly, almost loving until 2 o'clock. Then a storm began, first of palpitations, then of shooting pains in the region of the stomach and a noise like Grasshoppers in my ears. (Duplicity and Sensuality, according to Swedenborg.) I assumed from this that she had only just opened my letter. Then came incense (= Harz)<sup>2</sup> which probably signifies malice and hatred.

[. . .]

The evening, 8.30. A misgiving is growing within me. Perhaps the bracelet was a trifle (I did not look carefully at it), a thing of

<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Wingård. A few lines later Strindberg bursts out: "Now the child is his! from this very moment; the Earl's daughter has become the Thrall's possession, and her mother likewise!"

<sup>2</sup> The German for rosin.

no importance, that the child would not surrender and the mother had not the heart to take from her. Was the whole business a demoniacal plot to ensure that I too should suffer Good Friday? To ensure too that I should have it in me to say to her: "He struck you!"—I almost feel as if it were. At this moment I am experiencing Harriet as friendly!—But why not? It was love that inspired us. We love each other! And it was not done in malice. But on Good Friday we had to live through this evil thing.

[. . .]

*April 18th, Easter Saturday.*

Night before: At 11.30 she sought me, kindly, lovingly, x x x x. 3 o'clock ditto; 7 o'clock ditto. Six times!—News of *Easter*. It went well yesterday. Saw my portrait and that of a dark young girl in Strandvägen. I bought the latter. . . . Sent Anne-Marie an Easter card.—Experienced H-t first friendly, then indifferent, at times with palpitations.

. . . In the afternoon I was warned at 5 o'clock by a din from the courtyard. Heeded the warning and got up. . . .

Later on H-t, by turns neutral, hostile or friendly. . . .

At about 9 o'clock (she was at that moment playing *vis-à-vis* W. in *Elga* at Svenska Teatren) she came to me like roses in my mouth. I sensed that she was already longing to come home and rest. At about 11 o'clock she came, lovingly, with fire and roses. . . .

At 2 o'clock I had a most extraordinary experience. [A sort of dragging sensation began in the small of my back and proceeded downwards through my pelvis on the opposite side. I assumed from this that Harriet was about to start her period. This was confirmed later on by the fact that she only sought me shyly and without delight. We wrestled amiably until the morning, when I was victorious.]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The paragraph between square brackets was not included in the Swedish edition of the book.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, April 18th.*

After a Good Friday—about which you know—when everything was one huge, distressing mockery, the evening came. I fell into a calmer mood, someone whispered in my ear: "That unoffending bracelet was a worthless toy, of which no one wanted to deprive the child. It was no great treasure." There I was, humbled, again, but I could hardly bring myself to wish that the ordeal we had passed through had never been. It was necessary, or at least beneficial.

Was it so about the bracelet?

In any case I sent you a 1000 prayers for forgiveness and do so still, even if it was not so, but that a demon had spoken ill of me, as I believed. Of me! who can never be other than faithful to you in my heart, if not always in my words!

My one question, which you have perhaps misunderstood, is this: Are you free? It is a matter of life and death to me, for I will not live as a criminal. Why do you not answer? I implore you, send me your answer!

[. . .]

Last night you sought me like fire and roses, roses in my mouth. Every morning, when the sun rises, I feel a need to give you something! But my hand is so clumsy, my gifts always a mistake, giving pain where only good is intended . . .

Whisper me a wish, great or small, preferably great! I want to make a sacrifice, take something of value from myself to bestow on you in exchange for the joy you give me by loving me, the joy that only spiritual love can give! You understand!

But above all: Answer! Are you free?

[. . .]

*April 19th, Easter Day.*

H-t kind, loving, giving me roses in my mouth, all the morning until 2 o'clock.—H-t must have been having her period 6th to 12th when she did not come. She sought me again on the night of the 12th with ardour. Yesterday evening, when she

knew her period was approaching, she sought me like a taste or a fragrance in my mouth, as of roses or fruits. Then I asked myself: Can the abode of demons smell of roses? Surely not! Swedenborg says that when good spirits draw near there is a scent of flowers.

[. . .]

Every time I have achieved mental reconciliation with Harriet I have reproached myself, even to the verge of despair, for all the evil things I have thought or spoken or written about her. But subsequently, when I have reflected upon the matter in a calmer mood, it has struck me that I have, as it were, "written away" her malice, put it on a piece of paper and let it float away on the wind. For, after every outburst she has, as it were, been cleansed, been more careful what she said, particularly in the matter of faulty accusations. She has refrained from insolence, wickedness and quarrels; she has grown calmer. That means that no harm was done! It means that by writing it away I also rid her of her malice.

At 10 o'clock in the evening, H-t returned, gentle, fragrant.

*April 20th.*

[. . .]

This evening she came again, like roses, loving and full of longing. Night came; she slept on my arm, but did not desire me until towards morning, then x x x.

[. . .]

*April 21st.*

The whole morning, solely as roses. Later she disappeared! In the evening she returned, but went again. At night apathetic and calm until the morning, when she sought me x x x.

*April 22nd.*

A delicious Harriet with me as I worked for the whole of the morning and afternoon. At dinner I ate meat and drank wine. My strength returned after 18 days and nights of fasting and abstinence and I thanked God. Had the feeling or awareness that Harriet was with the Möllers and that they were advising her to

re-marry me and have a child. She put up a fight! This evening from 8 o'clock she has been stretching and squeezing me as if she were inside me or wanted to fling herself upon me . . .

[. . .]

*April 23rd.*

[. . .]

A heavy day, spent in idleness. Slept much. H-t away, but towards evening could feel her stretching me below the chest.

Went to bed, grew calmer. No contact with H-t during the night. I sought her but did not find her until 5 o'clock, x x.

*April 24th.*

A glorious morning. H-t was with me all forenoon, gentle, loving, like flowers in my mouth! Now I believe that she is free and that we are united! But no, she disappeared in the evening when Axel came and although I received a summons to go to bed at 10 o'clock, she was not there to meet me.

Slept and experienced faithlessness. Had bad dreams but was left in peace until morning when she sought me with passion but without love. I responded x x x.

*April 25th.*

The morning bright, pleasant. She was with me in love for the whole forenoon while I worked. Then the photographs of *Swanwhite* arrived from Helsingfors. I sent them on to H-t and also the title-page, previously overlooked, of the manuscript of *Swanwhite* that belongs to her. It must have been 3.30 before she received them.

Neutral until the evening, then gone. She sought me but without love and only towards morning with any fire. But she was cold, there is hatred between us!

*April 26th.*

[. . .]

Last night H-t was gone and I did not seek her. She sought me, but not in love and therefore I did not respond until about 5 o'clock in the morning, and then up to 6.30.

*April 27th.*

Bought and sent roses to "Anne-Marie". I was aware of it when H-t received them, she "exhaled fragrance". After that she was kind and loving right up to 3 o'clock and on to 6, when she became uneasy and gave me palpitations. She was suffering (from W.) and was not being unfriendly to me. Now, at 7 o'clock, she is calmer (W. is acting this evening).

Here is another of the things that happened during these wonderful 23 days of suffering and delight. When I saw the photograph of the dark-haired lady who resembled Harriet in Strandvägen, I bought it and wanted to get it framed. That morning I went to a certain frame-maker, but he was shut. I continued along the street, saw another shop and marched in. There I encountered an old fellow who had cheated me shamelessly two years before and whom I had hated ever since. On that morning I was in a conciliatory mood, so said: "Well, I never intended to come here again, but here I am!"—Even here I had to become reconciled. The old fellow grunted, and that was that.

This evening I looked out of the window. The whole sky was overcast and in the north-west horrible smoke was pouring from the chimney of the Sports Hall, though above it I could detect an orange glow left by the sunset. The smoke was fighting the light and the light won. It turned into a long streak and then widened out towards the north, while the smoke subsided and came to an end.

*April 28th.*

Harriet all day: seeking me lovingly, quietly, sorrowfully. Drank wine in the evening; slept heavily. Did not wake until 3 o'clock when she began to seek me. At about 5 o'clock we met x x x.

Note: It seemed to me that she woke as I was being woken, and with palpitations, which I then got. (H-t has complained of being woken up at night by palpitations and anxiety. Incubus, those that she herself has roused to life and activity.) This evening *Elga* is being performed for the last time.

I experienced the feeling that H-t had been set free.

*April 29th.*

[. . .]

Had Harriet strongly, at times tempestuously the whole forenoon. After that, towards evening, she disappeared.

At night she sought me several times, but I did not respond. Finally, at 5 o'clock x x x, when she came to me, submissive and loving. Afterwards she thanked me with a fragrance!

*April 30th.*

[. . .]

(This business with Harriet. At times she seems to seek me in her sleep. When I wake and respond, she wakes up and withdraws. This makes it appear as if when unconscious (sleeping) she wants to possess me, but when conscious does not!)

Harriet with me the whole morning as I worked, but in the afternoon she disappeared. In the evening, anxiety and faithlessness. At night, cold. I sought her but she only responded with palpitations, as if she lay weeping. Not until morning did she seek me, and then I received her x x x.

*May 1st.*

Harriet amorous all day, especially in the afternoon. At about 6-7 she sought me and tried to take me by storm. Telephone call from Castegren about *Swanwhite* at the Opera. Presumably H-t is studying the part.

At night she sought me, eagerly, imperiously, but I said no! . . . Whereupon she withdrew, in anger.

*May 2nd.*

H-t gone! Her love as I experienced it to-day is nothing but pure deception. *He* probably threw her over yesterday, and in desperation she flung herself at me. It would be best if I could rescue the child and we were out of all this. She cannot change her nature. I cannot be the saviour of one who is made only of lies, treachery, malice, and lust! Lust and hate!

Towards evening she sought me in love. Castegren came to talk about *Swanwhite*, which they are going to perform. He told me that Bosse has asked that Kåge should be the Prince. (Not W. therefore.) This must mean that she has finished with W.! I was pleased, of course. When Castegren had gone I drank wine and played the overture to *Romeo*. Was aware of H-t storming me and expected her at night. However, at about 10 o'clock I was overcome by intense drowsiness and at about 10.30 I fell asleep. Woke at 11.30 to a moment of jubilant embrace x x x x. Was woken again at 5 and 6.30. This was the greatest of our unions, it was wedlock! And on this same day she published the banns of her marriage to W.!!!

*May 3rd, Sunday.*

H-t amorous all day until noon when I wrote and sent off a letter about this intimate relationship of ours. Silence followed! It is now 5.45.

[. . .]

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 3rd.*

[. . .]

I have your soul now in a little Japanese box on my desk. In this box lie all your letters, a ring with many smaller rings attached (one is lost), your bridal crown and veil, the gold pen,—Grant that I may write more lovely things with it! Beloved!—and two little lavender bags from Denmark (1901), one red and one green, joined by an inextricable knot.

The most beautiful letters are those of 1904 (when we got our divorce). I am reading one in which you respond to the news of my application for a divorce by a cry of anguish and of defeated love! It reads like a cry of woe to high heaven and I roar in pain!

My bride of seven years ago! And now another's, and yet not!  
Can you loosen this bond? Can you? I cannot!

[. . .]

After fourteen days of negotiation with Ranft about your

*Swanwhite*, he went away yesterday without giving me an answer. We can do nothing unless he accepts the play.

Do you demand that I should abandon this favourable opportunity and wait for you? You know that I can wait, but you have so much and I have so little! There is a chance that I may be able to get *Swanwhite* performed at Dramaten. Only a chance, mark you! Falck will always be willing to put it on—Ranft knows that—and with a little child of seventeen,<sup>1</sup> who is like you, can smile as you do, but is melancholy. She is well educated, of good family. Would you not, if necessary, adopt her as your pupil, your spiritual child, since you refuse to have one of the earthly variety? In that way you would still be acting, but through her.

I cannot understand why you will not let your talent breed, and why you are so unwilling to see offspring of your strong, unusual soul. The common run of people can give life to ordinary children, but only Children of the Gods can give birth to beings within human souls.

I sometimes wonder if there will not emerge from our supernatural marriage small beings of a spiritual nature. Something must surely come of a union like ours, in which tremendous spiritual forces meet and merge.

At times I believe that you will have another child by me, though I do not know how. And it will be born in love and will become a power on the earth, not of great estate, but a power in word and deed. I have a fancy that a little soul is waiting to make parents of us again, and I believe I have seen her little face on a white sheet, at night, in the moonlight.

I want to take this opportunity to inform you of something, so that, if it should occur, you will not be alarmed. I have read in "a book" that there is such a thing as false pregnancy, which has all the symptoms of real pregnancy, but is without any reality. I wonder if we may not expect something of the kind? I have also

<sup>1</sup> Fanny Falkner, whom Strindberg had seen playing the part of a page in *Sir Bengt's Wife* at the Intimate Theatre. Thanks to him she was given the title role in *Swanwhite* at the same theatre in October 1908. She was his last love and in 1909 they were engaged for 5 days.

read, but still doubt its truth, that an actual immaculate conception can take place, that is to say telepathically! What should we believe then? What would the world say?

Whatever happens I shall learn of it through my own sensations for the soul of your body is in mine. [. . .]

I know of your every emotion. Know when you are happy, when someone is tormenting you (then a nail is struck into my heart), and when He is angry with me, I have shooting pains below my breast.

*May 3rd, cont.*

A tranquil evening. H-t seems to be spending it at home with Lillan.

However, when I went to bed at 10 o'clock she was lying there waiting for me x x x. Again at 5 o'clock x x x. Last at 6.30, but then she was satisfied.

*May 4th.*

H-t has not answered my letter. It is a month now since she got engaged. In the forenoon she sought me, but angrily, hostilely. At 12.30 aggressively, not in love, only in desire. I sent off a letter at dinner-time. In the evening came her answer! See what follows! Auto-deception! W. is going to Gothenburg this evening. She says she is getting married in June. It is a lie! He will not have her! [. . .]

She got my second letter while at the theatre, but cannot have read it before 10.30.—I fell asleep, was sought by H-t at 3.30, but in her sleep, and she retreated when I responded. She sought me again and at 6.30 we found each other in love. This after my sharply worded letter of yesterday! It might have been a whipping! She must love being whipped!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, c. May 4th.*

You have not answered my direct question about *Swanwhite*.

If you have outgrown her, or are tired of her, tell me. I do not like the idea of Ranft's having the play. It was only for your sake that I offered it to him. Herod's daughter is more in your line to-day, is she not? I shall regard your silence, if it continues, to mean you do not care, and shall request the return of the play.  
[. . .]

I think the time has now come for me to escape from your net. There is only one way, but it never fails! You have recently tried this method, but unsuccessfully. I shall be successful!

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, May 4th.*

No, I did not answer you—I told you in my last letter that all contact between us *must* cease—

I belong to another man, am going to marry him in June. Put yourself in his place. What would you not suffer—

You demand the return of *Swanwhite*. You should never take back what you have given—

However, here it is, to be performed, if you want, either at Dramaten or at the Intimate Theatre. I relinquish it without bitterness. I can only rejoice that such a lovely thing should have been written, whoever interprets these thoughts of yours from the stage in future—

*May 5th.*

Sent off another letter, equally sharp and ruthless, and which she must have read just now, at 10 o'clock. She is storming me so that I am almost suffocated, but she is seeking me too, erotically.  
[. . .]

This morning I received a letter of which every word was untrue. I tore it to bits!

At 4 o'clock she stormed me with palpitations, so that I was almost suffocated. She must just have read my last letter. I slept until 5 o'clock. Then she sought me erotically. Curious creature! And the whole of this evening while acting in *Elga* she has been with me.

Night: 11 o'clock. Could feel that she was seeking me, but was unable to reach me. I was, as it were, shielded from contact. Slept until 4 o'clock, when she came x x x, and again at six-thirty. But she was in a selfish mood and went away when she was satisfied, could not be bothered to wait for me. I suppose that her period must have come on towards morning.

*May 6th.*

My last letter, unopened, was returned by post. All the better, for it was cruel! Thereupon I burned the last 3 letters, which were evil. They swelled up, formed shapes and finally 2 hearts!

[. . .]

Now, at 11 a.m. she is with me erotically as I work.

A telegram from Ranft to say he will accept *Swanwhite*. I telegraphed the news to H-t and reminded her that to-day is the anniversary of our wedding . . . After doing so I slept and dreamed about W. . . . Then Falck arrived and told me that Harriet's banns had been published on Sunday the 3rd. And I had not known of it!!! My mind is now at a standstill! Is she literally two persons? And do I possess one? The better one? That would seem to be the case, for when we meet or write we hate each other. Is this possible? (She must be two independent persons who are unaware of each other for, when I talk or write to her of this life we live together unconsciously, she keeps silent, makes no response, knows nothing about it, or will not know.)

Axel here in the evening; gloomy.—I did not know what to make of H-t this evening. She sought me at 4 a.m. and at 6.30 x x x. She had sought me at 12 o'clock, but had not been able to reach me!

*May 7th.*

H-t lived with me from morning till dinner-time in love and eros. While under this influence I wrote to Falck and asked him to find out if she is expecting a child. I offered, if that is the case, to take her to Switzerland until the child is born, and then there would be no necessity for her to marry.—Now, at 5 p.m. she has tried to take me by storm, erotically. I was just about to yield

when there came a sharp, purposeful bang from above, followed by the moving of furniture.

In the evening I sent her *Huon de Bordeaux*\* with a dedication.

H-t fairly friendly during the evening. At night I was woken at 1 o'clock by an unusual sensation. She was mournful and submissive and kissed me but would not have me. Nevertheless at 5 o'clock she came and after I had kissed her x. Later she sought me, but without joy or ardour.

*May 8th.*

Overcast, gloomy, H-t mournful, yet seeking me at times, erotically but submissively. H-t with me all day in love and eros, storming me without pause. The same in the evening. Then I sent her a glorious rhododendron, in full bloom, like the one I gave her after Lillan's birth. I reckoned that she would see it when she got back from the theatre to-night.

I went to bed at 10 o'clock when H-t stormed me with palpitations. I fell asleep, but was roused at 11.45, when H-t gave me palpitations. On top of that I developed a pain in my abdomen (the spot corresponding to her "Athanor")†. After a while she sought me ardently and I responded x. She came again at about 4 o'clock x x. What does all this mean? Are the two of them playing an insolent game with me? Have not the banns been published? Yet she is with me night and day. When does she have time to think of him?

[. . .]

*May 10th, Rogation Sunday.*

Walked along Gref Magnigatan, past the door of No. 12,

\* A mediaeval French heroic poem about the Fairy King, Oberon. Strindberg sent a Swedish translation of this poem to Harriet Bosse with the following dedication: "Give me more beautiful things to write about, Swanwhite, give me a new golden pen, Chrysaetos."

† Really a digestive furnace used by alchemists, here womb. Writing about the womb in *A Blue Book* Strindberg says: "It resembles the alchemist's Athanor, in which were distilled the Philosopher's Stone, gold, the Elixir of Life, and the homunculus."

where H-t lived when she was my fiancée. It has a pane of glass through which we used to kiss good-night. I wondered whether, after 7 years, the marks of our lips would still be there. They were; and there too was a marvellously beautiful drawing of an Angel with a child on her arm, floating in the air, and behind her a man who might be me. What can this signify?

It is 11 o'clock. I am aware of H-t in a loving mood. I am reading the text for the day and praying to God on her behalf. "Help us, Oh Lord, for we are undone!"

H-t is seeking me in love and eros, but I am not responding. I write, I read the Bible, I pray, I weep. Viewed from one angle things look threatening (she weeps), from another hopeful (but lamentable). What is it that I hope for? That Lillan may escape having a stepfather! But for the rest, what? I do not believe in any happiness with H-t. She cannot change her nature! I beg God to deliver me from this tunic of Nessus.

Ate scarcely anything at dinner. Wept and prayed to be allowed to die! Then came a shower of rain. Great white clouds appeared in the N.E., followed by a splendid rainbow. I slept tranquilly!

This telepathic state of affairs (marriage, which has also been a fact), began before our engagement, when Harriet, in a manner which I cannot explain, sought me at night. I was awakened, even as I slept, and experienced the illusion that she lay beside me, that I held her in my arms and possessed her and had possessed her before I proposed. But then I did not think of it (when I proposed that is). Since then it has manifested itself every time we have been parted. Distance does not exist for us. She has sought me from Paris and Vienna, and we have come together as man and wife. It can never cease!

Drank wine in the evening; it gave me courage and the life I am living seemed to me unworthy. I determined to break out of it, even felt that I was on the way to freeing myself. Fell asleep! Slept until 3.30 when she woke me though she did not receive me until about 5, and then briefly and ardently. After that she would not have me. Beforehand she had played with me and kissed me

too, submissively, in the way she did just once before, but not quite the same.

[. . .]

*May 11th.*

H-t friendly and loving all forenoon, erotic at times, but briefly. I think she is having her period! In the morning I walked round Rosendahl where I had not been for months. It seemed to me that Harriet had been deposited there on the ground and that she now rose up. I found her again and fell into a state of ecstasy and wept and called to her. The fact is, that for seven summers I have walked there thinking about her, caressing her remembered image, weaving stories about her. That is why she was deposited there!

N.B! Harriet and I got engaged on March 5th, 1901; but before that time I had possessed her at *night*, telepathically, from January 13th, 9 times in all; Jan. 13th and 26th, Feb. 12th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 25th, and 27th. During that time she came to visit me in the day-time, looking just as innocent as before and behaving as if nothing had happened. It is very strange. Does she know nothing about her nocturnal adventures and her visits to me?

H-t loving the whole day and towards evening erotic. I think her period started on the 6th and comes to an end to-day. I have now written and proposed but have not sent the letter!

[. . .]

*May 12th.*

[. . .]

Went up to Hasselbacken to look at our Bird-Cherry—now bursting into leaf outside the room where our wedding-feast was held—and to break off a twig. (Cf. the May 6ths in various parts of this diary, on which I took the first green twig from this tree.) A waiter was standing on the bank as if he were expecting me. He followed me with his eyes and walked towards the tree. Another waiter was sitting on a bench right opposite the tree, as if he were guarding it. Two more men appeared and also a waitress who said: "What is going on here?" In a word, the tree seemed to be under guard and I was not to be permitted to break

off a twig. But the tree was in full leaf and had sent up a quantity of suckers! What can that mean?

Last autumn, when Harriet returned from Jämtland and came to see me, she suddenly said: "We are married! you know"—She meant of course that we had lived (telepathically) as man and wife for the whole summer and for long before it!

H-t mournful but erotic all day. Drank wine with my dinner and punch in the evening.

I felt too weak to go on suffering to-day, so went back to wine and punch. I suppose that things must run their course. My 40 days will have run theirs on the 16th. Nearly fell out of a cab and got killed this morning, I was so weak!

Fell asleep at 10.30. Then H-t stormed me with fearful palpitations, as if she had received a piece of evil news, or as if someone were teasing and tormenting her. Was woken about 2 o'clock with palpitations, but was forced to seek her out myself in eros. She was mournful and unwilling. At about 4 o'clock she came herself and I took her by storm until 5 o'clock x x x. Woke again at about 6 in a violently erethistic state. Wanted to take her in my arms then and there, but was instantly disarmed. This suggests that, during my sleep, she is within my body, but when I wake she withdraws, for otherwise this sudden retreat on my part is inexplicable. Such a thing usually takes time, but this happened in an instant. It used to be the same in our conjugal life when she sought me and offered herself; but as soon as I came to her I was deprived of my arms by her "Athamor", which seemed to possess an individuality of its own.

[. . .]

I wrote to Anne-Marie in the evening, offering her my services! But I burnt the letter this morning thinking: H-t shall say the first word this time.

[. . .]

*May 13th.*

[. . .]

Towards noon I "heard" Harriet's heart pounding in anguish.

I thought she was dying! I sent her a card with a few words of comfort and offered her my help. After two hours I received the following sphinx-like answer. What in fact does her letter say? Nothing! A few words, words! "Wish me happiness! I believe in happiness. The banns have been published twice!" What is this? Nothing!

Fell asleep. She sought me ardently, but I was shielded, as it were, from within. Against my will there was something that put up resistance and drove her back. This happened repeatedly until morning, when she got her way and I took her in my arms. She literally drank me and departed in a swoon.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 13th.*

My dearly beloved little friend!

Your little heart throbs all day!

You are unhappy and seem to be calling to me.

Say one word! Just one! I promise to answer kindly! I shall help you out of all this! There is nothing I would not do for you, for the two of you!

Say one single word!

August Strindberg

*Harriet Bosse to Strindberg, May 13th.*

I told you not to write—True—my heart throbs—all day—but only because I am overwrought—because I have worked too hard this year—

The banns have already been published twice—

Wish me every happiness—I believe—in happiness—

Harriet

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 14th.*

You are beginning to believe in happiness! That is what I have done during these wonderful six weeks! But your two last letters have deprived me of my faith in it.

Write one more!

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 14th.*

Three times have I written and then burnt these words, that come from the depths of my heart:

Wilt thou be my wedded wife,  
 In the eyes of God, the law and the world,  
 For better or for worse,  
 In faithful love,  
 Now and for evermore?  
 Must this too be burnt?  
 Yes? or No?

But you must be free, so that you can receive into your womb a blessed and longed-for child, receive it in my arms, those arms that I have never opened, not even in thought, for any woman! but you ever since I saw you.

[. . .]

*May 14th.*

Wrote a post-card to H-t this morning. No answer! Wrote again at noon and proposed! No answer! Only naïve eroticism!

This evening the growing castle was illuminated and I saw a red tuft rising up out of the sun. No answer to my letter other than erotic advances. I was cheerful all evening; drank punch and played *Faust*. Fell asleep. Woke at 3.30 and sought Harriet, but she was gone. I could not reach her. However, on the stroke of 5 I experienced within my body a sensation as though her matrix were moving slowly downwards, and when it got down my desire was kindled and hers too, at the very same moment, so that embraces in love and eros followed. Her matrix really seems to be an independent being, possessed periodically by desire, at 2 and 5 a.m. Her little athanor seems to love my counterpart, which is as childish as her own. But H-t's acts independently of her will and is filled with desire at certain specific times! This means that it loves me against its owner's will. At 5 o'clock in the morning it descends and wants love. At other times it is no good trying, nothing comes of it. If only one had known this seven years ago!

H-t sought me at 6.30 too and I responded, but something disturbed her. Probably the child woke up.

*May 15th.*

*Sofia.* Harriet's name-day.

Sent H-t another card this morning telling her that the flat under mine is vacant. I was out for a walk at the time she received my note, and could sense that it had made a good impression. This sensation remained with me until 11.30. No answer has come. Only the feeling that she is seeking me in eros. I am calm, have a feeling that my fate has been decided! It would be ideal if she and Lillan lived in the flat below. I think it is going to happen! We shall see!

No answer! An endlessly long evening.

Fell asleep! Was not woken until 5.30, but by that time the spell she casts was lifted. I thanked God and rose feeling well. Saved.

*Strindberg to Harriet Bosse, May 15th.*

To Let (immediately).

No. 40<sup>8</sup> Karlavägen, (*third*) floor.

Four rooms and kitchen, etc.

No rent need be paid!

*Harriet Bosse's explanatory notes, 1932.*

I cannot describe how I suffered during this time, when I knew that Strindberg thought of me daily, hourly, and lived with me in his imagination. I wanted to cut myself off from all contact with Strindberg and begged him not to write to me, but it was no good.

[. . .]

I never saw Strindberg again after the spring of 1908. My daughter continued to visit him right up to a few months before his death.

*May 16th.*

[. . .]

Fell asleep at 10.30; had imagined I was cold and had pulled another blanket round me like a shawl. I was expecting H-t, of course, for she had sought me out in the evening and misled me. . . . During the course of the evening I had sent her a letter containing an explicitly worded proposal of marriage, and with it a photograph: Hartman: Man and Woman, so I was expecting to be woken at 11.30 when she returned from the theatre and had time to read the letter. I did not wake until 2.30 and then became aware that she had been attacking me since 2 o'clock, but the blanket had protected me. She continued her onslaught but without success. I fell asleep again, woke just before 5 and sought her. She responded but without success. Not until the clock in the dining-room struck the first chime of 5 did we meet and then what a wedding it was! x x Ditto 6.30 after which she sank back into the void and disappeared!

[. . .]

*May 17th (Norway's Seventeenth).*

[. . .]

At 12 o'clock a letter arrived from her fiancé W., now in Gothenburg. He is threatening to shoot me if I continue to "persecute" H-t. Wrote a lot of nonsense about how I had wrecked her youth, and the like. My letter of yesterday to H-t was also returned unopened. (H-t must have received a letter from W. at the same time that I did, for she gave me palpitations for a whole hour, during which time I experienced her as loving and erotic, which I still do at 2.30.)

In the paper-shop in Strandvägen this morning I saw two portraits of H-t that were so horribly ugly and evil (devilishly) that I grew frightened and prayed God to deliver me! It was terrible!—She is playing with us both, but most of all with W. She loves me body and soul! (See this diary.) But her evil self would willingly murder me!

This will certainly end in tragedy!

[. . .]

I know that in gatherings, in trams, in the street in broad daylight, she has had contact with me. We are indeed grown together as one being, and yet we may not live together. There is no place here for W!, and yet the banns were published for the 3rd time to-day! What can this be? For the whole of to-day, since the stroke of 5 this morning, we have lived as one; the same heart-beats, the same sufferings, the same fears! Now she is at the theatre, acting before the public, but she is with me! Talking to me. Never can we part!

H-t really shows more delicacy by not wanting to correspond with me. Our relationship is so fragile that it cannot endure words, neither spoken nor written words. And I have a clumsy hand. (Ungeschickt Hand.)

Drank much wine at supper; slept heavily and did not wake until about 3 o'clock. H-t sought but in vain. Fell asleep and woke at 6.45 when I got up, saved! That is to say slept through 5 o'clock. T.b.t.G. At about 10 o'clock, before I fell asleep, H-t had attacked me so violently that I thought she was dying! After that too she sought me in Eros and love, but I was shielded.

*May 18th.*

[. . .]

Axel here to supper. Beethoven, but without enthusiasm. The night that followed was terrible. I woke at 1.30 to find H-t stretching my Epigastrium\* so that I had to get up. I waited until the stroke of 2 when she stormed me in eros, but I resisted and fell asleep about 3. Was woken again at 5.30 and was again attacked, but stood firm!

Got up saved.

*May 19th.*

H-t sought me this morning in true love, at last, and innocently, like a rose. When that scent came to me, about dinner-time, I responded. After dinner I sought her out, and went into the attack

\* The part of the abdomen immediately above the stomach, the pit of the stomach.

when she tried to escape me. We embraced again in eros, as before x. And all this evening, while acting in the theatre, she had been with me, erotically, naïvely.

This morning a man came up to me in Djurgården and sold me a brooch: an anchor with a red stone and a white pearl. (Anchor = Hope.)

White banners are waving on Gärdet. The Growing Castle is illuminated by the evening sun.

Went to bed at 9.30. Was woken at 1.30, but with a feeling of aversion. Fell asleep and was woken at 5.30, but nothing came of it as H-t was cold and sceptical. Saved.

*May 20th.*

H-t is seeking ineffectively. I have been reading the offensively intimate interview with H-t in D.N.\* Also read her announcement about her honeymoon trip and the one about *Swanwhite*.

I drank at dinner, drank until 5 o'clock<sup>1</sup> and eradicated her by destroying a heap of photographs!

She is furious with me. I burnt them up in a stove, all the pictures of her out of the Green Room.† [. . .] At 9 o'clock I wanted to go to bed, but I was so dangerously attacked by—hatred=electric currents, that I did not dare to lie down. It streamed upon me from above, from below and my chest was squeezed together. Thought: You are trying to kill me. . . . Fell asleep. Did not wake until 4.45. On the stroke of 5 H-t sought me! but I got up from the bed!

I put up a struggle and begged God for help. I walked to and fro, not daring to lie down. But I was driven to it against my will, and when she came to my arms I had no feeling of regret, only one of infinite happiness. In our repeated embraces that threatened never to end x x x x, it seemed to me that she shared my feelings.

\* The daily paper *Dagens Nyheter* interviewed Harriet Bosse on May 20th, 1908, on the topical subject of actresses' extravagance in the matter of stage costume.

<sup>1</sup> Strindberg always had his dinner punctually at 3 o'clock.

† The sitting-room at 40 Karlavägen which was decorated and furnished in green.

We could hardly bring ourselves to part . . . What am I to believe now? That she is mine, that I shall regain her and that this is the will of Providence? Or shall I die? By my own hand, in order to escape this life of sin and crime with W. through H-t.

*May 21st.*

Harriet accompanied me in Eros on the whole of my early morning walk. . . . I went out again and bought a revolver.

Am preparing myself for death. At this moment, 10 o'clock, she is with me in love and eros.

Received a letter from W. that I burnt unopened.—It is now between 11 and 1. H-t is seeking me in a way I do not understand, but which produces in me a mania for suicide.

Praying to God for advice and help. The house is as quiet as if there were a dead body in it! A terrible morning, filled with thoughts of suicide. Spent it in anguish of mind and prayers to God. Falck came and stayed to dinner. Slept peacefully until 5.30.

H-t is sometimes afflicted by suicidal mania. Is it she who is passing on to me this deadly anxiety, or is it W.?

Axel here; it calmed me! Slept well all night, though H-t repeatedly assaulted me in Eros. Got up saved!

[. . .]

*May 22nd.*

Went out strong. H-t sought me mournfully as if she had lost me. She remained loving for the rest of the morning.

Found a scrap of paper saying *Pax* (Peace). Met a cart carrying Palms (Victory and *Peace*.) Heard a shot and a rumbling noise like thunder from Djurgården in the south-west. Thought of Gbg<sup>1</sup> in the S.W.

There was a sound in my right ear this morning like the moaning of a dying person! (W.) Felt that I was getting better all day and worked with enthusiasm and hope, accompanied by H-t's love and eros to which I did not respond. There is a Benefit Performance for her to-day. Roses were sent to me from two sources. Axel here. We drank wine and he played Beethoven.

<sup>1</sup> Gothenburg.

It gave me a feeling of joy and I went to bed. At 10.30 H-t stormed me but I feel asleep. At 11.30 I was half awakened by H-t, who offered herself to me, but I was shielded and fell asleep again. She sought me all night but I resisted her. Finally on the stroke of 6 she found me. x x in love, but mournfully and without ardour. Made up my mind to go to Stocksund! Bought portmanteaus!

[. . .]

*May 23rd, Desideria.*

Gloomy! Prayed God to let me die! Now I am bound to her again.

Gloomy all day. Weep, and pray for release. I pray God to help me out of this; pray for W. too, who perhaps suffers most.

Falck here. Axel here. Went to bed at 9.30. Slept right through in spite of the fact that she stormed me in eros. Woke saved.

[. . .]

*May 24th, Sunday.*

A heavy morning, wept mostly. Axel came. Nils Andersson\* came. I went to the station with him in a barouche. When I got home at 7.30 I wept for my child, who I could feel was longing for me too. Then Harriet came to me in love, and this time I indicated that I had not abandoned her. She responded by giving me roses in my mouth! Fell asleep. Was woken at 12 o'clock and embraced her in endless love x x x. When she was married . . . She sought me later, at 5 o'clock and at 6.30, but was not allowed to have her way.

[. . .]

*May 25th, Monday.*

On this, the very day of her marriage, Harriet dogs my steps in eros! Found a post-card this morning with a picture of two sailors beside a sentry-box and underneath the words: Corps de garde! That means *you* are protected against his attempt on your life! On certain occasions during the past 7 years I have met

\* One of Strindberg's friends from his time in Lund. He was Clerk to the Justices and later Mayor of Lund.

sailors in Djurgården, and have instinctively turned back at the sight of them. I felt they were a warning. It seemed to me to-day that the reason for this was made clear to me.—In Banérgatan, outside the house in which I once lived, I found two objects that looked like cartridges, joined together by iron wire.

I asked a workman if they were dynamite. He looked at them, took a pair of pliers (!) out of his pocket, and cut the wire. I asked a guardsman. He thought it was the battery of an electric bell. I took the objects home and joined the piece of wire together again. Wrote, grew drowsy, slept. Had lunch. Then H-t called to me. I went into our yellow room! She welcomed me and we embraced 6 times! . . . though she is now married to W.

After dinner she was gone, not to be found.

At 6 o'clock came a telephone call from Falck who told me that Harriet and W. were married yesterday! (May 24th.) What am I to make of this? . . . For the whole of to-day I have been in a good mood, almost a happy one! Can anyone explain this?

Axel here this evening. I went to bed at 10 o'clock to avoid visitors. But then something happened between me and H-t that put me on the rack. I prayed to God from the depths of my soul that I might henceforth be delivered from living this life which is now adultery. Slept with my prayer book on my breast and prayed to God, even in my sleep, that he would take my soul. Was woken at 1.30 by my heart that was heavy as a stone, and because I was being squeezed together below my chest. Read the Bible and prayed. . . . Two o'clock came, and with it the irresistible, like a friendly summons. Harriet was in my arms and received me with delight. I felt no self-reproach, only joy and happiness. Later on she sought me again, twice, but we were no longer permitted to meet!—Then came the morning, bringing with it self-reproach and despair.

*May 26th.*

Self-reproach, despair. I pray God to let me die rather than live in sin, for now she is married. It is 9.30 a.m. and she is seeking me in eros! though married.

Harriet persecuted me erotically all morning and finally I was forced to embrace her or burn up (even though she is married to W!).—Despair and shame followed! I called upon God to let me die rather than go on living in sin!

Some days ago Axel told me of a dream he had had. He was conducting a small choir. Harriet was on one side of it and I on the other. Axel was conducting with a silver table-spoon. What can this mean? That H-t and I are to be reunited? A silver table-spoon? (A christening present?) Is it possible that this will end as with Job? With three daughters, Jemima (= Day) Kezia (= Fragrance) Keren-Happuch (= Power and splendour overthrown). Is it possible? No!

Every day and every hour I pray God to let me die, but he has hidden himself from me! I believe that no human being has ever suffered as I suffer!

H-t pursues me, but I elude her. I lay down for my after-dinner nap in the parlour.

[. . .]

At noon I wrote two more farewell letters, one to H-t and one to Axel, as I was intending to shoot myself before evening! Drank a lot of wine. Slept saved!

*May 27th.*

Night before: Slept shielded from H-t's onslaught. T. b. t. G.

Towards morning I began to feel I was being liberated from H-t. It was as if many small knotted strings were being untied in my trunk; first in the nerves of my spine, then in my spleen, my liver, my lungs, my heart, my stomach and the small of my back. I felt blessedly delivered from tension . . . I got up, washed my whole body, put on clean linen and went out. The whole of Strandvägen was beflagged: saw a flag with a black cross, but it was blue. Saw some dry paint spilt on the road; red and green!—While I was having my coffee two erotic pigeons settled on the sill outside the dining-room window and gazed at me. When I got out into the street these same pigeons came and coquetted just in front of my feet. It is now 9 o'clock. *A New*

*Blue Book* is just coming out! White flags are waving on Gärdet!  
[. . .]

Wept half the day for Lillan (Children's Day). H-t seeks me in Love and eros, but I respond only in love. Ate no dinner. Things looked somewhat brighter in the evening and I played the piano. H-t sought me in eros all night. I fought back, came near to falling, but was saved.

*May 28th.*

Woke with a new idea: H-t has simply entered into a pact with W. "in order to have companionship" (which is what she said herself in her first letter). He has rented a room from her in the new flat. He gets engaged to her, and the following night she is with me. He gets married, goes away, and that night she celebrates a wedding with me. Is theirs a platonic relationship? Spiritual marriage without rapport? A disgraceful pact? A Eunuch's Marriage? Perhaps this is the secret! But I have been given a hint that she was not really properly married (when she went to parson Fries's house), but that she was "bound" in some way by a betrothal, or that nothing at all happened there! I met Fries one morning recently and he looked very sly.

Wept all morning! Resisted H-t's attacks! But after dinner I took her in my arms, rather than burn up!—No self-reproaches, only happiness and release from melancholy and the desire to kill myself.—Abstemiousness has produced suicidal mania before, has always done so! (Aug., Sept. 1901?) Now I believe that things are as they should be. We shall see . . .

A terrible evening even though H-t was with me in eros.

Slept through the night, shielded! Got up saved.

*May 29th.*

Terrible morning! Wept so much that my soul almost fled from my body. But H-t was with me in eros, shyly, mournfully. I was forced to embrace her in order not to take my own life. . . She responded by giving me roses in my mouth. Is this a sin? Why am I not warned? I have begged God to kill me if this is a sin.

H-t seeks me all day in Eros!

Axel here in the evening. I went to bed in a new frame of mind. At about 2 o'clock I woke and sought H-t, but did not find her. At about 6 she sought me, but I was shielded! Got up saved.

*May 30th.*

Wrote to Fröken Falkner. She came to see me! . . . H-t pursued me this morning and insisted that I must embrace her.

[. . .]

In a light-hearted frame of mind this evening. Is their marriage about to break up? I am sure that something must have occurred in Gbg.<sup>1</sup> Drank punch. Played the piano!

Slept peacefully, but only after vain, mournful seeking.

Got up saved!

*May 31st, Sunday.*

H-t is seeking me in infinite love, mournful, despairing. All must be over between her and W.!

Axel and Aulin here for the evening, bringing Bach. Beethoven until 3 o'clock, when the sun rose. The atmosphere was good, but heavy-laden. At 5 o'clock I was woken by H-t who seemed to want to kill me or take me by force. I was saved, got up, went out!

[. . .]

*June 1st.*

H-t seeking me mournfully all morning. When I responded she stormed me with such violence that I had to embrace her several times and she received me without reservation or doubt, and in great and infinite love. And to-day her husband, W., is coming back!

At about dinner-time I was attacked by the most violent palpitations and shooting pains in my abdomen. I thought that H-t must have received a telegram to say he had run away, or something of the sort, and that she was ill with hysterics. I was in pain all afternoon, but H-t, who seemed to have gone to bed, pursued me in eros, as if she were keeping jealous guard over me. What has happened to-day? The theatre in both Gbg<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Gothenburg

Sthlm<sup>1</sup> closed yesterday. *He*, *W.*, ought then to return to-day, or has he already arrived?

What is to happen to me will probably be decided to-morrow. The revolver is ready loaded!

I dreaded the night, prayed to God for deliverance and put the revolver beside my bed. Was sought by *H-t* in eros towards morning, but she disappeared. Got up saved!

*June 2nd.*

They must have just met. *H-t* is gone! But at about 11 a.m. she sought me in eros, shyly. I responded! Where is *she* now? In *Ggb* or here? Where is *he*?

This is the critical day!—

*H-t* sought me, but sadly, as if she only wanted to find out if I was still there! When I took her seriously she drew back. I think she must be lying ill, here, in Stockholm!—

Tor Aulin was here between 5.30 and 7.30. *H-t* sought me the whole time, sometimes she stormed me. . . . Went to bed at 10 o'clock. *H-t* was waiting for me and I embraced her several times in endless love!—The same later on, at 5 o'clock, but without joy. What is this? Where is she? Is she married? How can there be room for me?

*June 3rd.*

*H-t* is now seeking me at my desk, in eros, ceaselessly, the whole day! At times I am in despair! Albert Wickman\* and Fröken Falkner came to see me. Ate scarcely any dinner! A horrible evening.—Thunder!—Called upon God: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This evening Blake's *Book of Job* gave me comfort.

*H-t* sought me during the night at 2 and 5 o'clock in great love, and I responded!

*June 4th.*

[. . .]

*H-t* seeking me all this morning, in endless love and eros,

<sup>1</sup> Stockholm.

\* A Baptist Minister and pacifist agitator, known as the Peace General.

giving me roses in my mouth. Things are a little better to-day. Have a feeling that the crisis is approaching! It is just 2 months since April 4th. (The engagement!) I drank a lot in the evening, went to bed at 11 o'clock and slept until morning in spite of H-t's repeated attacks. Got up saved.

*June 5th.*

[. . .]

God help me now so that I may free myself! ! !

Having made up my mind to free myself I intended to spend a peaceful night in sleep. Was woken, however, at 5 o'clock and, after H-t had shown her delight and surprise at finding me again, we met, irresistibly, in endless love.—First I saw her face and then that of a little smiling child!

*June 6th, Whit Saturday.*

All this morning as I work H-t pursues me with her naïve eroticism. I am aware of her with every breath I draw! But at about 10 o'clock she stormed me with such violence that my epigastrium was nearly shot to pieces. . . . She is in my mouth like a fragrance.—Where is she? Lying ill? Where? She does not leave me for an instant! . . . I know nothing about the journey she made last Monday. (On that very evening, at about 6 o'clock, I possessed her!)

I ate and drank a lot at supper. Slept through the night. Got up saved!

*June 7th, Whit Sunday.*

In the early morning H-t was gone. But at about 10 o'clock she stormed me so that my epigastrium was nearly shot to pieces! Does that mean that he is beating her? These shooting sensations occur in the morning and in the afternoon!

I have been hearing a steamer to-day, from morning till noon!

Terrible day! Went to bed in the afternoon and met H-t in love. She called to me! She must be lying ill in bed.

Slept right through the night! Got up saved, though H-t sought me at 5 o'clock, but in vain.

*June 8th, Whit Monday.*

I had shooting pains in my epigastrium from 9.30 to 11.30. H-t sought me in eros, but weakly, mournfully, as if she were ill.

I was obliged to embrace her in the morning and in the afternoon, on the last occasion in love, after which she followed me, in love only, all evening. My heart rejoiced, I felt as if she had now made up her mind to choose me and that she had parted from W. I drank, and I played for her until 12 o'clock. But at 11 o'clock something must have happened for she assailed me with palpitations, as if someone was tormenting her.—I slept all night in spite of H-t's attacks. Got up saved.

This was an infinitely dismal Whitsun, but I worked hard at *A Blue Book*.

[. . .]

*June 9th.*

H-t is seeking me in love and eros, but I do not respond to eros, for it is her soul I want to meet.—At about 10 o'clock I could feel her in my epigastrium, shooting me to pieces, and I had to lie down and sleep. I wonder if she has another stomach ulcer that torments her in the morning and the evening; or is she pregnant?

When I was reading (Matter)\* on Swedenborg yesterday, I began to wonder whether H-t is conscious of our life together, or whether the personality I embrace is a "double" about whom she knows nothing, a phantom.

Matter tells us that one day, as Swedenborg sat writing, Cuno came in. Swedenborg proceeded to tell him that recently, in the spirit world, he had encountered the deceased King and also the still *living* Queen. Cuno asked him if a living person could visit the spirit world. S. answered that it was not the Queen herself, but her habitual spirit (*esprit familier*;<sup>1</sup> is that the same as *spiritus familiaris*?). S. said he had even encountered himself and Professor Ernesti in the spirit world.

\* A French theologian who published a biography of Swedenborg in 1863.

<sup>1</sup> Strindberg was quoting here from the French translation through which he had first become acquainted with Swedenborg.

This cannot be the explanation in H-t's case. Last autumn, when she returned after being away in the country for two months, she said quite openly: "We are married, you know". (She meant and admitted that for the whole summer we had lived together like married people, telepathically, and with a joyousness that was never vouchsafed us when we were actually in each other's company.) And then again, after she got engaged, she wrote saying that W. "suffers because we are in rapport, he feels instinctively that we are". That is a clear admission. And when we were newly married she told me too how she managed to seek me out during our engagement! She lay and "thought herself" into my dwelling . . .—Yesterday afternoon I saw her face clearly on my pillow. It was probably her astral body!

Fröken Falkner came; told me that Harriet is living at Grand Hotel, here in Stockholm. Made no mention of W. What can that mean?

H-t feels *abstracted*, almost unfriendly. She seeks me, it is true, but I seem to be shielded, or she withdraws. At about 6 o'clock I experienced the most fearful tension in my epigastrium: 10 o'clock in the morning and 6 o'clock in the evening! What can it be? I slept it off this morning. Yesterday evening I embraced H-t and that caused it to subside. It is inexplicable!

The night: H-t tormented me all night but I resisted her, for I experienced her as *false* and *hostile*. Fell for the temptation at about 7 o'clock, but it brought me no joy.

[. . .]

*June 10th.*

H-t seeks me in eros. On the stroke of 10 a.m., the tension in my epigastrium was such that I got up and went to lie down. 12 o'clock x x x.

By dinner-time suicidal mania had come upon me.

At 5.30 the tension in my epigastrium began and lasted until 6.30. (It is *not* hysterical mereorism,\* nor is it colic.) My awareness of it is connected with H-t (she feels friendly, like roses in my

\* Hysterical mereorism is a nervous condition of the intestines.

mouth) she wants me to embrace her, but I do not want to abuse eros, or her. To-day H-t was at Vetttersö with Lillan!

A terrible evening. Went to bed at 10 o'clock. H-t sought me naïvely all night, but I was shielded. A little dog howled almost all night.

Read the last part of *A Blue Book* in the evening. Felt that my life was over!

[. . .]

*June 11th.*

Got up ill and returned to bed. Lay ill. Received a letter and flowers from Lillan. H-t had addressed the envelope. [. . .]

In the evening came a telephone call from Fru W. (Bosse). I went to take it, but the telephone rang off, gently, not in malice. I went back to bed and had H-t's palpitations. H-t seeks me all night, but I am shielded.

*June 12th.*

Got up while the bed was made. Lay down again! Suffered such frightful tension and was so much sought by H-t that I was forced to embrace her! After that I got up well, gave my body a thorough wash down, drank some milk and put on my clothes.

Have now settled down to work, but H-t is with me in eros and love. What is the meaning of all this?

H-t gave me shooting pains all night. The pain in my ventricle<sup>1</sup> was excruciating but I did not fall, even though I knew I should be free of it if I embraced her (in my thoughts).

"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"<sup>2</sup>

[. . .]

*June 13th.*

H-t torments me so much that I think I shall die of it. At this moment, 10 a.m., it is unendurable, but I will die rather than fall. Now, when I resist her and refuse to accept her in eros, she seeks me like roses in my mouth.

<sup>1</sup> An obsolete word for stomach in man or quadrupeds.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xxxix: 9.

I wonder if she has a stomach ulcer (as she had last year), and I am in pain because of it? Or is she pregnant and suffering periodically from the explosive movements of the foetus? (10 a.m. and 6 p.m.) (Or an abortion or a miscarriage?) God let me die rather than fall into sin. From now onwards I shall do my best to resist her in earnest, even if I have to die for it! Up to now I have not known how to act, have thought things were meant to be as they are, since the temptation was irresistible and God gave me no help. 10.30 a.m. My pain is at its height: even my heart is affected!—I lay down to sleep, it calmed me. (Reading: Christian Science.) When I woke I looked out of the dining-room window. A piece of white paper with something written on it was being carried by the wind, outwards, upwards, never came down, disappeared. A letter? The little dog howled (Anne-Marie). Worked on *A Blue Book*! Read Christian Science. Ate no dinner. Slept peacefully! Reading Christian Science. The sky is dark! I feel as if my last hour had come! The moment of suicide approaches! But that would appear hardly necessary as I am dying of hunger. My loathing for food has increased so rapidly that I have lost an incredible amount of weight. In 12 days I shall be dead as only  $\frac{3}{5}$  of my body is left now. Falck came. Told me the reason they could not go away was that W. had no money. Are living at 6 Grefgatan.

At 5.30 the excruciating tension in my epigastrium began!

After 60 years of torture I pray God that I may depart from this life! The little joy there was in it was illusory or false! My work was the only thing worth while, but that in part was wasted, or useless, or harmful.

Wife, child, home, all a mockery!

The only thing that gave me an illusion of happiness was wine! That is why I drank! It also mitigated the torment of being alive. It made my sluggish mind alert and intelligent! At times, in my youth, it stilled my hunger!

In my *Blue Book* I have been able to build and plant on the fire-ravaged sites, to set things right, to make amends. Now I have nothing more to say.

Women too gave me great, though specious, happiness which, however, immediately evaporated, and revealed itself for what it was. The first two left no memories, only active abhorrence. The last had qualities from a higher sphere, but mixed with much that was evil and ugly. All the same I remember her often as very beautiful though most of her was false! When my children were small they gave me the purest delight, but that did not last long!

Friends? They are among life's compromises! One cannot be quite alone! But since people all have conflicting interests they cannot be friends, may not be! Everything one does cuts across somebody's interest. Nils Andersson was my most faithful friend, and I his, perhaps most of all because we were not pursuing the same career!

A fairly quiet evening. I had a feeling that H-t must be with Lillan at Vetersö. All the same she sought me in eros, and I indicated that I was still with her; expected that she would come at night. She woke me at 12 o'clock, but I was shielded. Slept until morning, even though she sought me erotically. Got up saved. I had in fact intended to respond to her in eros, in order to be quit of my shooting pains and suicidal thoughts, for it is her hysterics that torture me, but I was not given leave. The little dog howled frightfully, but the noise it made sounded as if there were two of them. Mother and child?

[. . .]

*June 14th.*

Got up in a state of disharmony. In my book of devotions I was chastised for defending sin. At 9 o'clock my epigastrium was attacked so violently that I had to go to bed. Slept until getting on for 11 and was then calm. Read the text for the day and was again chastised.—But I cannot really feel guilty, for when H-t assaults me in my sleep I am defenceless and irresponsible, and in our embraces there is chaste love, as between husband and wife! She is "my wife", isn't she? It makes me well and happy and, in the hell in which she now lives, she seems to find support in my

love. Indeed, I sometimes believe that I shall save her from W.; save her for Lillan (not for myself)

[. . .]

About 1 p.m. the shooting pains began again. For a time I resisted temptation, but then I noticed that H-t was seeking me. I gave her to understand that I was still with her, and things became quieter. She felt friendly and loving (at that moment, about 2 o'clock, came a salute of guns); I had found her again, like roses in my mouth, palpitations and eros. What can have happened now? Is it she who stretches me? And with such strength? I seem doomed to love her or die!

[. . .]

Ate just a little at dinner. Slept tranquilly. No tension at 6 o'clock, but at about 8 it began. I sat down at the piano. H-t sought me out. I sat down at my desk. H-t was there too. And no sooner do I respond to her than the tension begins to ease. So it is caused by her onslaughts.

A terrible evening filled with suicidal mania! (Fru Carlén the portress came in for a chat. About Klemming!)<sup>1</sup> Later on, as I sat at my desk, H-t came, friendly, loving. I went to bed at 10 o'clock. As soon as H-t began to attack me I embraced her in order to get some peace.—Got peace and fell asleep. Was woken at 12 o'clock and was so squeezed until 5 o'clock that I thought I should die. The pain that came up from my stomach was like two swords penetrating my lungs. I could not bring myself to abuse H-t, but then I was made aware of her infernal hatred by a nauseating odour, like that of madness, as if she were trying to murder me by some of her wiles. On the stroke of 5, the time when I am usually called to her arms, the tension ceased.

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Edvard Klemming, d. 1893. Librarian of the Royal Library in Stockholm at the time Strindberg was working there as an assistant, 1874-82. He was an ardent spiritualist and Swedenborgian and appears to have been a sort of father-figure to Strindberg. "He seemed to be omniscient yet just, mild yet annihilating like the Almighty", Strindberg said of him in *Genväger* (*Short Cuts*), and he would have felt it to be no accident that the portress came in to talk about him at this crisis in his life.

*June 15th.*

Walked out to Djurgården. On the stroke of nine, while still there, the sensation of tension in my epigastrium, rising towards my chest, came on; but it only lasted for half an hour.

Worked all day and was spared further sensations of tension, probably because I maintained vague contact with H-t. All was quiet until 6.30, when I began to suffer frightful tension in my chest and stomach. Took a whisky, but did not enjoy it. Sat down to my desk. H-t was there and shot me to pieces. I went into the Yellow Room and took her in my arms x x x. Then things calmed down!—Is this what she wants of me? What then does her “husband” mean to her? She is my wife, isn’t she? If so, all is as it should be!

[. . .]

Night came. H-t attacked me with shooting pains, but I immediately put out my hand and stroked her and things grew quieter. Was woken at 3 and 5 o’clock, but avoided pain by caressing her. She could not receive me (period, or prolapse, inversion?)<sup>1</sup>

*June 16th.*

Went for a walk this morning. At 8.30 the shooting pain began. I tried to calm it by responding. It helped to some extent, but not completely. The pain lasted until 11 o’clock. I slept for an hour.

My state is unendurable, but there is no need for me to take my own life as I shall die of this shooting pain that threatens my heart. What it is I do not know!

At about 1 o’clock, when the shooting pains came on, I drank cognac with wormwood. Fröken Falkner came and played Mendelssohn to me.

Had soup for dinner. Slept! tranquilly. Drank all evening and

<sup>1</sup> In another part of the diary he writes: “In the early days of our marriage I used to be pushed out at the very moment of climax, exactly as if her uterus were driving me back. She suffered both from ‘prolapsus uteri’ and ‘inversio vaginae’. This is what I had to put up with.”

ate. Drank until 12 o'clock when I went to bed. Slept until the morning, tranquilly, even though I was aware of H-t's erotic but unloving assaults (which appear to be my shooting pains). She wants to keep me to herself, out of hatred. She wants to deprive me of my strength, so that I cannot re-marry, as she fears I may. Or is it that she wants to inveigle me into her infernal schemes? . . .

*June 17th.*

Went for a walk in Djurgården. At 9 o'clock she attacked me with shooting pains. When I got home I was aware of her in my mouth, like madness, elemental evil, hatred, witchcraft, like a taste from hell of brass and corpses. She sought me at my desk, erotically, but I did not respond!—Slept!—At about 1 o'clock she gave me more shooting pains and I took wormwood. Now, as I write, she is seeking me erotically, with shooting pains. So it is she! What does she want with me when she has a husband?

Terrible day and evening! Hatred!

A hard night; was tortured by pain from 2 o'clock until 5.30.

*June 18th.*

Ate hardly anything this morning. Took a walk in Djurgården. Both life and nature are black. At 8.30 the pain came on again, but when I caressed H-t, quite lightly, so that she knew I was there, it stopped. This is how I got through the morning until 11 o'clock, when I was forced to embrace her and thus escape further torture.

Grew more cheerful.

[. . .]

From 10 o'clock the night was tranquil, free from pain because I calmed H-t by stroking her gently. She could not receive my embraces. She must certainly be ill.

*June 19th.*

Out in Djurgården. Slight tension at about 8.30, but it slackened when I intimated I was there. Slept a lot. Ate little. A hard night!

*June 21st., Sunday.*

[. . .]

A terrible day!

A terrible night! Was tortured for five hours! Dreamt of H-t, modest, beautiful, like she was the time she knotted my cravat and afterwards kissed my lips as if I were her child. Dreamt too of a grey hen who came rubbing against me, wanting to be stroked. She was afraid of me, thought I was dangerous, but I stroked her and then she flew up and settled on the roosting-bar or shelf in the hen-house.

*June 22, June 23rd, Midsummer Eve, June 24th, Midsummer Day.*

Terrible days! So terrible that I shall no longer describe them! I shall only pray to God to let me die, and by dying escape from this horrible physical and spiritual agony!

A doctor has been called!

Stayed at 40 Karlavagen until the 11th.

*July 11th.*

Moved to 85 IV Drottninggatan.

## Postscript

On the same day, June 24th, 1908, Strindberg wrote to his publisher, Karl Otto Bonnier: "I am sure that I have cancer of the stomach. I am in pain for twelve hours out of the 24, and shall cease, little by little, to eat or sleep." The shooting pains in his epigastrium, so often mentioned in his diary at this time, and which he himself associated with Harriet Bosse's telepathic visits, were probably the first symptoms of cancer, and a forewarning of the illness from which he died four years later.



## Appendix

August Strindberg was born in Stockholm in 1849 and died there in 1912. He was an enormously prolific writer, interested in everything, and there is hardly a field of literary activity to which he did not make some contribution. John Landquist's edition of his collected works numbers 55 volumes.

Strindberg's first major work, the play *Master Olof* written in 1872, did not win recognition until 1881, and his real literary break-through was achieved with a novel, *The Red Room* (1879).

In 1872 he married the actress, Siri von Essen, and in the 80's he again began to write plays, among them the naturalistic dramas, of which *The Father*, *Miss Julie* and *Creditors* are perhaps the best known.

In 1891 he was divorced from Siri von Essen, and in 1892 lack of recognition in Sweden drove him to Berlin where he met his second wife, the young Austrian journalist Frida Uhl, whom he married in 1893. After a brief visit to England they went to France and parted in 1894.

Strindberg now entered upon a new phase, known as his Inferno period, a time of mental and spiritual ferment and readjustment, described in two autobiographical works, *Inferno* and *Legends* (1897-98). During this period he eschewed belles-lettres and, under the influences of the French alchemists and occultists, devoted himself instead to scientific or pseudo-scientific studies and writings.

In 1898, after he had regained his equilibrium and was settled for a time in Lund, came first *To Damascus, Part I*; the story in dramatic and symbolic form of his second marriage and Inferno crisis, interwoven with reminiscences from both earlier and later

periods; followed in the same year by *To Damascus, Part II* and then, in 1899, by a flood of historical plays. His standing as a dramatist was now greatly improved and with his return to Stockholm came more plays, among them *Easter* and *The Dance of Death*.

In 1900 he met, and in 1901 he married the gifted young Norwegian actress Harriet Bosse and, under the influence of his love for her, he wrote three remarkable expressionistic and symbolic dramas, *Swanwhite*, *To Damascus, Part III* and *A Dream Play* as well as *Charles XII*, *Queen Christina* and other plays.

Writing was the breath of life to Strindberg, and even after his marriage to Harriet Bosse had broken down and in days of dark despair he continued to produce both plays and prose works. In 1907 he and the young actor August Falck succeeded in starting the Intimate Theatre, especially for the performance of Strindberg's plays, and for this he wrote the four Chamber Plays, *Storm*, *After the Fire*, *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican*. His last play, *The Great Highway*, was written in 1909. Sequels to his *Blue Book* and philological and polemical writings occupied his last years.

M. S.







STRINDBERG

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