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GEIJERSTAM
A STUDY IN PESSIMISTIC REALISM.

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Minnesota by
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quirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 1, 1911.

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Life is a struggle. Its manifestation is the conflict between two opposing forces, the elements of construction and destruction. These elements are present everywhere both in the animate and the inanimate, in the physical and the spiritual world. Their presence is attested in the pulsations of nature, and in the frantic efforts of man to obtain sustenance and realization of his physical and spiritual ideal. Life thus assumes the aspect of a great contest in the arena of existence. Continual warfare, struggling, striving and fighting are the conditions of development and become man's only salvation.

Warfare is often accompanied by intense suffering. Life's battlefield is strewn with the dead and the mortally wounded. Many also are the soul-sick and fatigued who have fallen behind the ranks of struggling humanity, because they could not endure courageously life's most insignificant defeats. A man's greatness is measured by his ability to meet defeat; to redouble his efforts and retrieve his losses in another place where opportunity may offer itself.

It is the lack of unified action that has often curtailed the power of genius, closed the way to progress and inevitably resulted in a pessimism which finally issues

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in universal disgust with oneself, humanity and the world. Psychologists and writers have theorised and explained the causes of this morbid state of mind, and it is here that Geijerstam manifests great insight into the hidden and mystic forces of the human soul, giving consecutively the little incidents along the way to ruin and destruction.

To understand Geijerstam's literary peculiarity it is requisite to get at least an idea of the trend of literature of his time, for no man lives entirely independent of his time. Swedish literature was at this period permeated by a realistic influence. A return to nature was strongly urged. Special significance was given to the heroic past. Bright hopes and optimistic confidence lingered at the threshold of the future, and so much dissatisfaction and disgust hovered over the present as to foster a gloomy and pessimistic spirit. These were and constituted the special literary inclinations of the time in which Geijerstam wrote, a new world, new theories, soaring ambitions and lofty ideals were the themes of the writer. Home, church and society were to be remodelled to better and holier institutions, and literature, which is often a tool in the hand of the reformer, should now be permitted to justify its existence.

Geijerstam did not grapple seriously with the prob-

lems of reform, nor did he go to any great metaphysical depth. On the contrary, he deemed it best to be a man of the people; to favor and even to cater somewhat to their literary idiosyncrasies and cravings. He knew the importance of the peculiar "Gemut" of the northern people, but above all does he deserve credit as a masterful student of psychologic analysis. At times, I may say that he is almost too minute and careful in his progression to the detriment of literary freshness and beauty. We maintain, however, with all certainty, that no writer of the Scandinavian North has surpassed him as a psychologist and as a revolutionary type of pessimistic realism.

Geijerstam is almost unique in modern literature. Seldom do we meet with characters of such peculiar type as in some of his literary works. Strindberg is a pessimist, yet the characters that he creates are not beyond redemption. Ibsen sometimes portrays the gloomy personality, but nothing there gives evidence of an absolutely demolished and helpless personality in its devotion to an unseen power. The pessimism here is one that robs of personality and renders all opposition powerless till the victim acquiesces in his own destruction. Sorrow, pain and emotion have fled out of the heart, and night has taken their place. One waits for the inevitable in the expectation that it will bring freedom.

The symptoms of this dreadful disease, for I call it so, are not exhibited in any irruptive force. The process is slow and gradual, beginning perhaps with a word, a thought, an action, or a little dissatisfaction, a restraint, unreciprocated love and sorrow which grow, double and redouble in the human mind. It becomes a slow sinking of the man on the beach of life's quicksands, daily, helplessly dying the death. Sometimes a whole life is required to show this pessimistic growth and evolution of the character. This mode of writing has no particular virtue. We expect to find some crucial point, some episode, some cloudburst of ethical significance to turn the tide of life and infuse elements of a deeper hue, to the otherwise apparently bright and indifferent personality. We demand that the characters of a drama should undergo great changes within a limited time, why then, should not the characters of life's great drama be subject to the same principles?

It has been remarked that the literature of this time with which we are concerned manifested dissatisfaction with existing conditions. A dissatisfaction, which carried to extremes, becomes pessimism. Geijerstam's early writings give evidence of this tendency.

Let us take "Erik Grane" as an example. It begins with a character sketch of the father, who was a man of considerable knowledge, great energy and a happy disposition. The ordinary prosaic routine of everyday life was a burden to him. Friendship, poetry and science attracted him into their spheres. Refinement and intelligence were his special endowments. He was a freethinker, but not a militant one. Always jovial, he lived a charming life. Everyone sought his companionship, for his geniality radiated to all who came in contact with him.

At the age of thirty he was married to a woman of most earnest religious convictions. From childhood she had clung to the religious tenets of her home, and now she regarded it her duty to inspire her husband with the same meekness of faith only to find him very irritated with her earnest endeavor. Nor was his attitude changed in the least when a son was born. The husband eventually yields, however, knowing that a Christian upbringing of the boy demanded concerted efforts from the parents.

The mother taught her son to pray. She guarded faithfully over his character, kept him from harmful amusement, provided him with good books and tried to lead him on, somewhat tyrannically, in the path of virtue, honesty and

Christian morality. Unfortunately she was wrong in assuming so much authority. The young man keenly felt the restraint.

At school a different life awaits him: Social functions there demand his attention, comrades entice and allure him, even the fair sex gain admission to the chamber of his affections. A certain incident occurred at this time which served to remind the boy strongly of his mother's faith and his own promise. It is nevertheless at school that the reaction sets in. Doubt begins to torment his troubled mind. There were many things in the Bible he could not explain. Was his life exemplary? Did he love? Did he not hate? Did he not gloat in his desire for retribution? Did he give to the poor? Was he a Christian? Such were the questions he put to himself and they are the first symptoms of a gloomy mind.

During such moments, when the shadow of doubt lingered over him, Erik would write to his mother. He discouraged her, saying that the ministry would be his last resort. The evil within had taken precedence of the good; the forces under restraint suddenly broke out into a violent flood threatening to overflow the bounds of decency and honor. The bad element with whom pleasure, happiness and comfort seem to dwell, become his most intimate friends and companions. But even among them life's great problem remains unanswered. Nothing tangible, nothing satisfactory, nothing consoling, could

they give a yearning soul, a soul full of turmoil, of doubt, of unrest, longing for peace.

The pious loving mother cannot release her hold on the son. Probably some theological professor could be of service in deciding Erik's destiny. Perhaps some kind remark, some instruction, was needed to guard the misdirected energies into the right path again. So the worried mother reasons and advises accordingly. But circumstances are not bettered, on the contrary they take a darker aspect. How repellant was it not to see the theological professor honored, respected, and looked up to by all, and yet what was he? a doctor who could not cure the heart-sick and the soul-sick. It all re-acts upon him and fills him with intense hatred towards the old mother's religion.

The struggle becomes more violent and soul-stirring. The deep yearning for truth has never been satisfied. Truth had been Erik's first and only ideal; he had longed for it, sought it, and prayed for it, and yet God had never deigned to grant it. Such is the trend of his reasoning. What is there now but to plunge into sin and degradation? Let every impulse have its way and every pleasure and delusion be satisfied? Yet is that happiness? Is that the extreme joy? No, that only drags down and beclouds the memory of happier days, then melts away into pain and sorrow.

A telegram from home summons the son to his mother's death bed. That was the hoped for event that should revive dying affection and kindle anew the smothered flame of love, inspire dutiful obedience, destroy disbelief, and lead on in the path of honesty, purity and truth. But the hidden, the mystic would have it different. Never had the chasm between mother and son seemed greater than now when death lent a halo of glory to the sainted one. The son stood there nonplussed by the mysterious working of a hidden power. What it was he could not explain. His life cried out against him. Had he not lived in direct contravention to the desire of her, now dying? She was pure, he was filthy, and nothing could unite those whom destiny would have separated forever.

After the mother's death the son obtained a position with his father, married and seemed to live happily.

Erik Grane is a type of moral unrest; a soul torn to tatters between conflicting ideas. Dissatisfied because restricted, pessimistic because he cannot solve the great mystery and satisfy the craving of his soul. Hence he gropes about in the darkness, a type of genuine dissatisfaction.

Another romance similar with respect to this chaotic confusion of the inward struggle is "Pastor Hallin". The one great difference, however, lies in the spirit of dependency, which in this case becomes the real solution and restorer of the equilibrium. Let me give a brief sketch of the book, touching the high points of interest.

This is Earnest Hallin's last year at the University. One step more and he has crossed the threshold of active life. That is a serious one. Unwelcome moments of doubt torment him; he has no peace, no rest. Evil spirits hover about him in his sleep. He dreads the day of ordination because he knows that he is not true to the cause and to himself if he should enter that holy profession in his present state of disbelief and misery. And yet what alternative is there? His father could not afford to keep him in school any longer. A large household accustomed to luxury, a younger brother attending college relying entirely upon the father for subsistence, made the burden of domestic cares almost unbearable. Even while a student the father had incurred large debts, which were but multiplied now, since a home and a household demand greater responsibility.

The mother's firm reliance on Providence helped to bear the burdens and vicissitudes of life. She was extremely

pious; her delight was in the Scriptures and her first concern was to give her children a Christian training. Nothing would gratify her more than to find them interested in her discussions of eternal things.

Secretly the children rebelled at the mother's piousness. They chafed under the yoke of restriction and longed for freedom, - freedom to breathe, freedom to enjoy life, freedom from asceticism, freedom to think and act. They therefore longed to get away from her, from a mother's despotism. Outside of the family circle they sought their amusements, which was also a cause of grief and sorrow to the loving mother.

Time goes on and Earnest returns home previous to his ordination. All interest centers around him. Everybody had expected to find the expression of well-grounded faith and religious fervor in the countenance of this our young hero, but alas, instead he betrays weakness, instability, doubt and general incompetence to undertake the great responsibilities of a Gospel bearer. Was he a man in every respect? Was he prepared? Had he faith? Or, was it not better to disregard the wish of his parents and give up the ministry as a future profession, since nature had not intended him for that place? Again, one of life's battles fought on the field of vacillating dependency ^{which} is in this case the power for good deciding to fight for truth and justice.

The sacerdotal sermon was preached to the admiration and astonishment of all except a former sweetheart who clearly saw that it was all imagination, simulation and deception; that deep underneath lay a mass of bubbling and seething disbelief, clamoring for expression. In reality he was a different personality than what outward dignity testifies of him.

Ordination comes and goes, leaving the same unrest and chaos in the troubled mind. Pastor Hallin gets an adjunct position in a quiet neighborhood where peace and harmony reigns. There he fights the battles with his rebellious self, and with the help of divine power wins a glorious victory; so that upon the ruins of his former gloomy, doubting self he has raised a righteous edifice. In this case the problems and the besetting evils were met because circumstances compelled, and it manifests the ultimate triumph of a noble struggle for the right.

Geijerstam's sympathies were with the poor people. He was not unfamiliar with their trials, their cares and their hardships, and he is especially happy when he writes about them. A story like "Sno Vinter" is very pleasing, homely, quaint and intensive. It tells the story of two old people living alone in peace and quietude. The only living creature on which they can bestow their care is an old cow

that has grown old as their property. We can at once see how quiet and restful life must be for them. It is winter. A snow storm is raging. More fuel must be brought in for the night. When the husband delays his return his wife peers out if perchance she could see him, but the heavy storm obscures her vision. She shouts, but no answer comes except a mad gust of wind. Suddenly cold, she returns to the hut. A little later the husband returns, angry because the light had been extinguished previous to his return, leaving him in the darkness, without any guide in the blinding storm.

That night she had the chills and lay abed till the room was warmly heated. The husband clearly saw a great change in her. He was not surprised to find her conscious of approaching death. Terrified he hurried after a companion, disliking to be alone with her at her death, fearing all the time that she would die before his return. Their life had not been so very harmonious, yet he disliked to see her go. He returns with a companion, and that day, when the dusk of evening came on, he sat by her bedside. Although he had often read the Bible in the home, he had never ventured to talk to her about religion. Should he do it now? She does not ask him. She lingers only a few hours, than passes quietly away.

The oldtime companion was placed in a wooden box and set out in a littleshed. The spring would see her taken to the graveyard. While out there the old man conducts a little funeral service together with his companion, reads a psalm, dilates a little on their relation to one another, then reads a little from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus teaches about the marriage relation. First when he comes home does he find how empty life has become.

A better illustration of quiet, peaceful, idyllic life of old-fashioned purity can hardly be found. Yet underneath it all we cannot fail to notice the stern picture of harsh reality, a dissatisfaction with life and its hardships, its poverty and worry especially in the case of the woman, who has no hope for a better existence in a life after this. That is pessimism, which is but a dissatisfaction with life without any hope of a better existence after this.

"Mor Lenas pojke" takes us away from the quiet, peaceful serenity of seclusion to the noise and stir of the world's active life. Lena is a stingy woman, everybody in the neighborhood knows it. Between the plastering and the outer wall she has hoarded great quantities of money. A son, seemingly a wild type, is her one great hope. Too parsimonious to provide for him, she sends him early out to earn his own living. He becomes clerk in a store, wins the friendship

of all the customers, the confidence of his employer and is soon promoted to a position of trust as bookkeeper. His great misfortune, however, is a love affair with a lady of lordly extraction. She regards him as decreed by fate to become her husband. The father, on the contrary, spurns an overture made by the young man for the hand of the daughter. A second visit is rewarded with expulsion, although it is made known that the two have committed the sin.

These misfortunes affect the young man seriously. Only he had money, only he had money! Information comes that his mother is sick. He hurries home, finds the door shut, but sees through the window his mother's wild, emaciated form and face, with a mysterious bag at her side, which he thinks contains money. Fearful lest she hide the gold he breaks through the door and finds, to his horror, that she died just now from terror. The money, however, becomes his and, with due respect to former calculations, he moves to another place, gets his own business agoing and according to rumor, becomes rich.

The story manifests the struggle for existence, the hardships of poverty, and the peculiar parsimonious self-denying personality who will not enjoy any of life's comforts and pleasures.

One of the most terrible stories Geijerstam has written is one entitled "Fadermord". Human nature in its most degraded state is here depicted. Characters devoid of all nobility of soul, purity of thought and decency of behavior are permitted, under the impulse of passion, to live a most debased and sinful life.

A woman full of the devil, two sons respectively eighteen and twenty-one, of the same nature, drunkards, rowdyists and ruffians, are all opposed to the father who is an honest, upright, noble and well-meaning man. The woman of forty-five is still passionate. She seeks the company of men. Inordinate hatred towards her husband impels her to murder him. The attempt fails, so she turns to her sons and importunes them daily. Timidness restrains them from self-action, but with cooperation they gather enough courage.

Bribery and liquor succeeded in procuring a man of questionable morals to aid the boys in the crime on their father, an act which was a most hideous climax in the awful tragedy.

The following day the father is taken out and buried in a snowdrift by the sea. The oldest son who previously has been weak and unwilling, now takes the lead. Simultaneously, however, there wells up a fountain of hatred within

his heart. He cannot account for it, but he despises his brother and his mother.

Danger unites like and unlike. When the law threatens the nest of sin, murder and corruption, its inhabitants swore to abide, under all circumstances, by the assertions of innocence. How could they so lie in the face of truth? The man who had cooperated testified to the guilt and that night, whose day saw the imprisonment, also heard the confession of the older and weaker of the brothers. Punishment came quickly to deprive the unworthy of that of which he was not worthy.

"Nils Tufresson och hans Moder" is very similar to "Fadermord", being equally dramatic both in its situations, in its hideousness, and in its very make-up and texture. It is not very psychological, however, being simply the human beast in all its hideousness, all its bestiality combined with a human brain; stooping so low that we say it is not a human, it is a devil. To justify the situation we have a contrast; a perfectly human character; the very ideal of childlike submissiveness and gentleness, pure, sweet and undefiled.

A heartless woman, domineering, tyrannic, vulgar, passionate, tragic and devilish. A son sleepy, phlegmatic, rough and overbearing. The wife of the son, kind hearted, loving and beautiful, always helping others and making their lives

pleasant. These are the principal character of the book.

How utterly nauseating is a sinful love between mother and son! It is rumored that the father was put to death through the instigation of the mother, and therefore she advises her son to get married in order to do away with scandal. First of all, however, he must swear not to love his wife; this request being complied with, the wife is procured and brought home under seemingly favorable circumstances.

Peace cannot long remain in a home where a tiger-like mother-in-law is the domineering factor. Subjected to corporal punishment, to threats and infamy, becomes unbearable and so the young woman returns home. What she has suffered is too terrible to tell to her relatives, her tongue denies her speech and her modesty cooperates in keeping it a secret.

Elin tries every means to win her husband's love. All is in vain. She begins to suspect that her life is in danger, even threatens to leave her husband the following day never to return if he will not grant her the things most sacred to her heart. The mistake was that she did not leave soon enough, for the husband and his mother had this day planned that night would see the death of Elin, and that night the monster woman saw the fulfillment of her desire.

"Murder will out" - a saying expressive of great comfort and satisfaction. The community well knew that the

woman had her hand in the deed, and it was her principally they wanted to punish. Secretly the two had agreed that, if the murder could not be kept entirely secret, the son should take all blame upon himself and free the mother. He thus had some redeeming feature, while the mother was absolutely decrepid.

The trial was very much prolonged. No satisfactory agreement could be made until the court was held in the very house where the loving Elin was put to death. The mother was punished while the son went free with great reluctance, desiring to die in her stead.

In our study thus far we have been reminded to a great extent of violent powers and emotions working within and through man. In almost all cases we have witnessed the satisfaction of wild desires with unrestrained actions, going so far as to slay those who may be in the way for a full realization of one's evil propensities. We have seen very little nobility of soul. We have witnessed evil characters lying in the cesspool of corruption without a single effort to extract themselves; without a thought or an inclination towards a higher or nobler life.

We are now entering the field of Geijerstam's literary activity where he has achieved his greatest success, which is the psychologic development of the pessimistic trend in his character productions.

Up to this time psychology has played a very humble part; now it becomes all important.

As yet we are concerned with the poor people. Ivar Lyth is the child of a poor, sinful mother. The father has escaped. While the parents lived together, it was not with the accompaniment of peace and harmony. Ivar is taken to foster parents while yet an infant, after the death of his foster mother, to an orphan's home, and thence thrown upon his own resources. While he never knew his mother, he still bears a burning hatred towards her, for there is a keen perception in the child which understands where the evil has its stronghold with little information.

Ivar has a great desire for reading. It is his happiest pastime. One day in the library he chanced to meet with a doctor, is invited to his home and becomes a frequent visitor. It is there that he once lets drop the fatal expression that if a child should be given him he would kill it.

A love affair and marriage, not of the extreme happy type, for the memory of that word can never be obliterated from his mind. The unhappy expression threatens Ivar like a portent. He moves about mechanically and thoughtlessly; his whole being is uproar and confusion, and existence becomes a horrifying melodramatic dream.

No unusual celebrations attend the birth of the first

child. Unmoved the father remains the same callous dreamer. Only when the child grows up one is surprised to find what intimate ties of friendship unite the two. The father can sit for hours and look into the child's deep blue eyes. Everything must yield to the admiration of the dear little soul. And yet the father has a consciousness of the final outcome, a still bodeful voice tells him.

When the boy Felix is large enough he goes promenading with his father. Nor can the father regard his son otherwise than as a fullgrown person to whom he reveals his most secret thoughts and intentions. They speak mostly of the home. Once the boy confided that the mother had taken to drinking. We can imagine what impression it made on the father. Could it be true, and she the supervisor of the moral and intellectual training of the children! From that day a permanent division was noticeable in the home.

A few days later the horrible charge is confirmed when the father, returning home, finds his mother lashing Felix. The father cannot refrain from violence at this time, which turns out to his own discredit. Bodeful quietude then reigns for a few days till early one morning, when the father wakes Felix for a stroll. Gladly the invitation is accepted. The wife wakes, however, before they have left the house, ready with her discussions, philippics and invectives, during which the father divulges his evil intention.

What thoughts filled the father now we can readily imagine. His little boy was in danger of corruption. Poverty with its eagle claws was grappling with its prey. As the two were walking down the lane or sitting in the woods the boy would notice the birds and say, "Why do not human beings live like birds in harmony and love"? Those words sounded like a sermon to him, full of pity, of devotion, of love.

The father must do it. No longer could he master himself. There was a power behind that fateful word he once uttered which he could not hinder; so taking the little boy in his arms he runs down to the bridge and, holding him out at full arms' length, immerses him beneath the water. But the last thoughtful look and the frantic clasp of the boy's hands around the father's arm nearly broke his heart. He rises up, is at first glad, then in hazy confusion starts to run and run without aim or purpose.

When he comes home he is very much surprised to find that nobody knows what has happened; it seems to him that everybody ought to know of the terrible crime that he has committed. Anxiously he waits for the death penalty, glad to die for his crime. The gloom settles again over him when the prison doors close upon him in confinement to pine away in a slow death. There behind the prison bars he sits philosophizing on existence and on the great riddle of his own life.

Here we have a manifestation of unusual psychologic growth. Superficial minds will perhaps sneer and say that it is unnatural. We do not say that it is a common occurrence, but it contains a great amount of natural truth. Fate has, of course, played an important part; perhaps we can say that fate induced him to utter those terrible words which afterward beclouded his whole career. He could not restrain himself. Poor man, perhaps suffering from the sins of his parents. At any rate, the mysterious, the inexplicable, would have its way.

"In Aktenskapets Komedi" we meet with a psychology which is not so violent in its effects although the same secret motive is active in changing human fate and destiny, the same concealed working of a mysterious something, that always leads its victim to the verge of ruin, and even tumbles him down the precipice of destruction.

The outline is the following: A young student at the University to all appearances sanguinary and happy, one of the popular kind who can tell stories at the jovial feasts and places of amusement, for such was Bob who stood high in the estimation and affections of many; yet poor Bob! it is not so well with him. His outward appearance conceals a heavy heart. There is something beneath the happy superficial layer threatening with irruption, if not given expression. He must, though he should thereby incur the disfavor of all his comrades.

A few years pass on. We find Bob married and settled down. Exquisite harmony reigns in the home; not a single distrustful and disquieting breeze touches the life of the happy twain until one day when the matter of fact, unpoetic personality of a frequent visitor sows the seeds of discontent by telling Bob that he was his wife's suitor before they were married. Bob in his unwisdom cannot refrain from telling his wife. From that day misfortune lingered over the home. The chasm of separation becomes wider. Both listen in silence to the heart-throbs of the other one. They know each other's thoughts, for in a very acute situation an ethereal medium is formed that carries the thoughts from one to another. One becomes conscious of the intentions and the feelings of one's associate. In this case the situation becomes unbearable and the wife elopes with her old suitor.

Bob who has, up to this time, entirely ignored his son, suddenly begins to find comfort in him. The son has certainly taken notice of the happenings in the home and consequently approaches the father rather shyly and timidly. After a time they are the best of friends. Their chats take in a great variety of subjects, among them even the sorrowful aspect of the mother's unfaithfulness. Life blossoms anew for the father. But alas! earthly happiness is of short duration. The boy becomes very sick one day. At the hospital he receives

every care that human skill and experience can afford, the mother also being present and vieing with the father in doing her duty to the child. They forget their troubles, they forget the past. Something of the old happiness is felt as they go about in the chamber of death. They understand and feel that they are one, that the child is their child and the bondage of love between them.

After the child's death the mother returns to her new master while the father is left in his loneliness. She surprises Bob one day with a visit. The relation is at first a little strained, but the visits are repeated becoming rarebits of happiness. The new master is cold, reserved, haughty, even tyrannical in the home, so that the wife is glad to return to him who had at least been good to her.

We have here an illustration of the futility of implicit faith in humanity. No one is absolutely true, not even the nearest and dearest ones. They all vacillate and play false. The peculiarity is that the revolt may be caused by the heartiest demonstrations of love. Love may engender the most burning hatred, which only a great calamity or severe punishment can assuage. It is peculiar how a little thing, perhaps but a word or an action, can roll up to great dimensions in the mind and force its victim into endless complications, making him do things he would not do, and accept things and circumstances contrary to his will and desire.

A romance producing a kindred tone to the previous is "Herrskaps Allen". Harsh circumstances and an unthinking father force the marriage upon the young and beautiful daughter to an old man of distasteful appearance, little manliness and of ill repute in the neighborhood, although his wealth afforded every pleasure and every luxury that money can buy. But hate is stronger than death. When her personality had fully developed she opposed him most vigorously. His kindness and love was rejected. The great ensuing conflict eventually saw the victory of the weaker one.

Reality, severe reality! How often have we not seen persons yield to the wishes of others without really knowing what it means, then gradually aroused, find themselves in a wrong element, begin to hate, revolt and desire an escape from the cumbersome obligations which they are subjected to.

In "A Struggle for Love", a disastrous love becomes the burden of a man's life, threatens it with ruin, and tortures with a sickly imagination. She is dead, which is but a relief from a burden. Another one comes instead. People demand the expression of sorrow. The worst is that they even sympathize with me.

Why did I not love her? Because she hindered my development. She wanted me, whole and entire, feared the company of others, shunned society and longed to converse alone with me. I had been a man of high ambition. My intention was to write a history, but she stunned my literary growth and now

I cannot recuperate. I tried to talk to her about my work as a professor when she retorted, "You cannot interest me".

After that I saw how the gloom was gathering over our household. My wife approached me optimistically one day informing me that she was to become a mother. It did not affect me. Time went on and I found myself at her death-bed; holding her hand in mine I saw her pass away uncombed by me. After that I have become a dreamer and even see visions.

Such is the pessimistic reasoning of a man whose hopes and aspirations have blighted, all which he blames to a woman. We have here little of action, we see only despairing thought tumbling with its victim mercilessly and pitilessly. Life's poetry has been supplanted by an elegiac song coming from a heart whose hopes now lie shattered in the dust of oblivion.

Geijerstam's best and most representative work is undoubtedly "Medusas hufvud", a well-planned, fatalistic, pessimistic, somewhat enigmatic book, having a deeper psychological significance and a correct application to life. Its theme can be said to be the reason why men of genius and ability fail in life. The reason lies not only in outward circumstances nor in our inability to meet those circumstances; it depends also on our ability to meet defeat and retrieve our losses by fresh conquests. This world is essentially a world of "give

and take". Let not one disaster tempt us to shrink from duty and endeavor; let it rather stimulate us to greater effort.

Tore Gam, the principal character of "Medusas hufvud", lacked a wellrounded personality, he had not the ability of indifference towards the besetting forces of existence, the ability of indifference to the very insignificant trifles of everyday life. He could not direct his attention away from the immediate and the surrounding towards the goal of a loftier ambition. Tore was no intellectual mediocrity; his writings were brilliant and witnessed of logic, research and spirit. In him were combined wit and pathos, eloquence and dignity, a broad mind and a charming personality. Science saw in him a scholar, society a leader, literature a master and the fatherland a patriot.

What was then that which sidetracked this brilliant, promising man from the course of right living? Was it some magnificently ponderous object, was it a great moral conflict, or a great physical or mental failure? No, the cause is very superficial, very insignificant, even trifling, beginning, as it did, with a little discontent. Tore Gam is connected with a newspaper establishment. Every morning it becomes his sad duty to scrutinize the heaps of uninteresting news and editorials awaiting him on his desk. This work becomes drudgery. Melancholy and slothfulness overtake him. Pessimism puts its

stamp on him, and renders him a burden rather than a social benefactor.

The home suffered the most from the husband's peculiarity: especially was the wife worried to see the awful change. Anxiously would she see him, reserved and unemotional, enshrouded as in a heavy mist. For hours she would sit at his side quietly awaiting the doom of his word, knowing that silence, though terrible, was required of her. His children would climb on his knees and look pitifully into his eyes, while he was numb and cold to their demonstrations of love.

Neglect of duty causes dismissal from employment. Utter detestation of all men is engendered except Sixten Ebeling, a man of the same delicate, finespun personality, in whose sad fate we discover a foreboding of the end of Tore Gam. He is fast going down hill. No advice, no help can save him. At New Year, when the old clock stops between twelve and one, a strange coincidence, he happily remarks that it is only their clock. When his dog is run over by the train Tore knows definitely that such will be the end of his own life. A few days afterwards sees the execution of the deed.

Let us turn our eyes from this gloomy picture to a brighter one, a beautiful, sweet and tender picture, though

on account of its great intensity, seriously painful. In Geijerstam's "Boken om Lillebror" we have a love between mother and child exceeding all bounds. Being a little languishing child it matured early, possessed of a heavenly charm irresistible and all powerful. We cannot but admire and love those children; they conquer us with loving simplicity, the greatest of all human virtues.

The mother was a virtual slave to her child, she prayed for it, lived for it, and was willing to die for it. Peace, love and joy became the rich possession of the home because Swen, for so the child was called, dwelt there. Always happy and congenial, he brought sunshine into the darkest corners of the home. His presence conveyed the right spirit. Young and old delighted in his company. It seemed as if a spirit from another world had transformed little Swen into an angel of light and love.

With fanatical zeal the mother watches over her son. Goes she away, her motherly heart can find no rest until she again sees him. He was her hope, her joy, her love, her sunbeam of happiness. With him she had everything, without him, nothing.

Now it chanced that the harmony of the home was broken by oft repeated discord. The mother had even threatened rupture in the marriage relation; an act causing a frozen atmosphere to linger over the home. But Swen's warmth is enough to melt the ice of indifference and make the strains

of discord reverberate in harmony.

Alas, the boy grows weaker every day. His strength yields to the grasp of the inevitable. But as the physical perishes the spiritual is on the ascendency. The home is changed. Heaviness fills the heart of every one. Solemnity rules over the dwelling hushing everything into silence. Mother and father sit one on each side of the deathbed, clasping hand in hand as Swen passes away.

The grave becomes the mother's mecca. There amidst profuse tears her heart finds pleasure. A reserved atmosphere still dominates in the home. No one is happy. Gently the mother pines away in gradual death. Her desire is to die and be with her child, for alone with him is peace and comfort.

The longed-for moment comes. The sacred little room where Swen breathed his last has another being longing for the presence of his spirit. In accordance with her wish only the father and the two remaining sons are present. Swen is the last painful word that she utters when the soul is on its way.

We have here characters dominated entirely by altruistic emotions. Such intense love predominates that it literally welds the two together into an almost indissoluble union. Then when parting comes life becomes indescribable pain and misery, making it a peculiar preliminary death void of strife and ambition.

Is it then reasonable to maintain that Geijerstam is a realist? Are his characters true to life and do they play the part they could be expected to do? Art, we know, demands concession from our part. Common everyday life is not art. We must have elevation and motivation if the thing produced is to captivate and interest. The illusion of reality, that is art. Geijerstam has painted the dark in the darkest colors. But then, that is only the way he looks upon things. Life is, as we know, ushered in under the auspices of suffering, and the last breath is a sigh of relief.

None of the characters act different than we can conceive of an actuality. If they do, they would not incite our pity and sorrow. We feel that they are intensely close to our own more pessimistic selves, feeling as we do, perhaps more intensely, acting, striving as we do, but seriously blinded by some misfortune that ultimately means destruction.

Germanic in thought and sentiment, we can easily conceive of these personalities, for we look more to the deep and the mystic in human nature. We are interested in the psychologic growth of character. To be sure, Geijerstam was not concerned with that in his early writings. They portray more the horrible play of the evil powers with man tumbling him into outward difficulties, demanding death for solution. Later, he penetrates into the depths of man, studies the growth of the

motive that leads down the slope of degeneracy to final catastrophe. What the motive is remains a partial mystery. Who can enter into the heart of man and reveal the soul-stirring and hidden causes of ruin? It remains forever a mystery; for the human soul is unfathomable and inexplicable. Its only manifestation is the working in and through man: the words and deeds of man.

Their behavior betrays them as pessimistic individuals, as mortals longing for freedom from this earthly torture that daily kills them, only to arise another day and repeat the same sad experience. It is one endless torture, broken only by life's rippling movement. All happiness, all joy, all illusion have fled, and pain, woe and torture have taken their place.

How insignificant is not the incipient cause of this pessimism: being but a dissatisfaction with man, society, and the occupation of life. The characters are sentimentalists staring on the object of their fear until they have lost all ability of counteraction. They know, but they cannot force their indifferent nature to the conflict. They spurn council, reject help, desiring to live alone; to melt into an expression of pain and sorrow. Beings, who perish because they can not live; to whom life is infinite pain, and death the end. 4