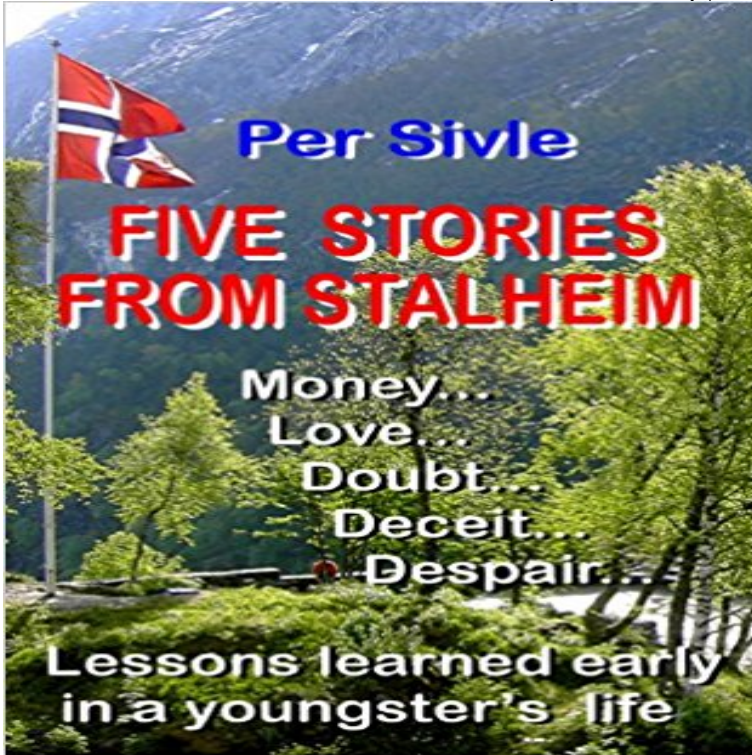


Five Stories from Stalheim (Norwegian History)



Per Sivle was one of Norway's greatest storytellers and still is highly regarded as an outstanding author, poet, and dramatist. In his work he has revealed a deep insight in the human mind and psyche. This also is also the case with the current short stories. Per, his central character, passes through life and comes to grip with the consequences of his many human frailties and illusions. In the present short series Sivle wrote about the experiences and emotions of a youngster who we think) grew up in Sivle's own home area. His stories most likely are also tied to instances in Sivle's own life, from childhood through adolescence. They illustrate five different stages of a youngster's development, from he was nine and suddenly found himself in possession of a three-skilling coin, until he in his early twenties struggled in Christiania, preparing for the university entrance exam, and being haunted by some hurting memories. The first story, "The Three-Skilling Piece", is really about money and its power over people, even over a nine year old kid. Young Per's long struggle to hold on to his treasured coin cost him his friends, their sympathies, and even his own peace of mind. In the end he donated the treasured three skilling piece to the good cause of helping unknown missionaries in Zululand save heathen children from going to Hell. The second story, "Gypsy-Nils", describes the gradual development of Per's feelings and attitudes vis-a-vis

Nils, a newly arrived boy of the same age, but of a different race. The budding relationship ended rather abruptly when Per heard Nils one day in class being praised by the schoolmaster for being such a good student. In a cold-hearted and unfounded feeling of having been wronged, Per schemed to make Nils the subject of the schoolmaster's wrath. In the end it resulted in Nils's expulsion from the school. Afterwards Per suffered much sadness and sorrow from this dark side of his soul. In the third story, "Home Baptism", Per still struggled to rid himself of the depressing memories of his unfair, ill-willed attack on Nils. He worried and wondered what he had to do to save his soul and to become a better, more righteous person. He began to believe this he could achieve only by being baptized anew. So he convinced Sjur-Ola, his closest friend, to come along and be baptized. An itinerant preacher-clockmaker happened to be around and he was ready to perform this sacred act. The fourth short story is simply called "Just a Dog". This is Per Sivle's most endearing and heartfelt tale, telling of Per's experiences the year he was twelve. During the summer of 1886 Per became the personal assistant to and local guide for an eccentric Englishman who had come to their valley to do some mountain-climbing. Mr. Johnson had brought with him a large dog, called Hall, which soon became Per's steady companion. When Mister Johnson one day fell to his death trying to climb the valley's towering peak, Jordalsnuten, Per got to take care of Hall. In the end subsequent events changed everything to the

worse. The final story is titled "Helpless" and recounts how Per, then a young man in Christiania (Oslo), often fell into a reflective mood, recalling a roster of sad and regrettable incidents in his life. These are memories that at times return to haunt him, even driving him to despair. All are tied to things he has said, done, or seen. In the end Per realizes he will have to live with those memories to the end, even though he feels completely helpless.

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