

**THE FAMILY AT GILJE;
A DOMESTIC STORY
OF THE FORTIES**

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The Family at Gilje; A Domestic Story of the Forties by Jonas Lie

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A DOMESTIC STORY OF THE FORTIES

BY

JONAS LIE



TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY SAMUEL COFFIN EASTMAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JULIUS EMIL OLSON

NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

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Preface

To the Honorable Samuel Coffin Eastman, of Concord, New Hampshire, belongs the credit of having given American readers an English version of *The Family at Gilje* while the author was still at the height of his creative activity. Mr. Eastman, who was a lawyer by profession, was a man of varied interests, the author of a *White Mountain Guide* which has gone through numerous editions, and the translator of Brandes's *Impressions of Russia and Poland*. He was familiar with the translations by Mrs. Ole Bull of Jonas Lie's *The Pilot and His Wife* and *The Good Ship Future*. *The Family at Gilje* was called to his attention by Miss Amalia Krohg, of Christiania, and it charmed him so much that he rendered it into English. The translation appeared serially in the Concord magazine, *The Granite Monthly*, in 1894, and was illustrated with views from Valders, the mountain district where the scene of the story is laid.

When the Committee on Publications decided to include *The Family at Gilje* in the SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS, their attention was called to Mr. Eastman's excellent version, and permission was secured to reprint it. The translator consented to a revision of his text so as to make it conform to the general

style of the CLASSICS and to interpret more accurately some of the Norwegian idioms. His death, in 1917, prevented his coöperation in the work of revision, to which, nevertheless, he had given his cordial assent.

HANNA ASTRUP LARSEN

Introduction

THE story of Jonas Lie's life, even though told in brief, will readily yield the key to the various phases of his strange authorship. No one of his long list of books is an adequate index of his powers. The special character of each is the outgrowth of peculiar traits of natural endowment in conjunction with definite facts and experiences of his life. Some of the features of his genius seem strangely incongruous—as different as day and night. These features are clearly reflected in his writings. By critics he has been variously proclaimed "the poet of Nordland," "the novelist of the sea," or "the novelist of Norwegian homes," and is commonly classed as a realist. His reputation and great popularity rest mainly upon his realistic novels. In this field he ranks as one of the leading portrayers of character and social conditions in modern Norse literature; and of his realism *The Family at Gilje* is possibly the best illustration.

Yet there was much more than an ingenuous realist in Lie.¹ He was also a fascinating mystic; a teller of fantastic stories, profoundly symbolic in character; a great myth-making *raconteur* of grotesque tales that have a distinct folkloristic flavor,

¹ Pronounced as Lee in English.

particularly as found in his two volumes entitled *Trold*. This part of his authorship, though it does not bulk large, and, naturally enough, has not been fathomed by the general reader, is nevertheless a very important part, and is surely the most original and poetic. It appears in a definite though restrained form as mystic romanticism in his first prose work, *Second Sight*, and then scarcely a trace of it is seen until it bursts forth, twenty years later, with the vigor of long-repressed passion.

It would therefore be unfair to judge Jonas Lie by the single novel in hand—as unfair as it would be to judge Ibsen by a single one of his social dramas—*The Pillars of Society*, for instance. In Ibsen the imaginative power displayed in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* did not in the social dramas reassert itself in anything but an adumbration of the abandon and exuberance of the dramatic poems. In Lie, however, the mystic and myth-maker reappeared with strength redoubled. Erik Lie, in a book on his father's life (*Oplevelser*), says with reference to this: "If it had been given to Jonas Lie to continue his authorship in his last years, his Nordland nature would surely—such is my belief—more and more have asserted itself, and he would have dived down into the misty world of the subconscious, where his near-sighted eyes saw so clearly, and whence his

first works sprang up like fantastic plants on the bottom of the sea." There is not a trace or an inkling of this clairvoyant power in *The Family at Gilje*. Its excellences are of a distinctly different nature.

This much, then, must be said to warn the reader against a too hasty appraisal of Lie's genius—his power, range, and vision—on the basis of a single novel. Let him be assured that Jonas Lie stands worthily by the side of Ibsen and Björnson both as a creative author and as a personality. He was of their generation, knew them both well as young men and old, and was a loyal friend to both, as they were to him. He even knew Björnson well enough in the early sixties to give him pointed advice on his authorship. Though he seems never to have taken such liberties with Ibsen,—as Björnson so categorically did during the same decade,—he did lend him a helping hand by paying him in advance for the dramatic poem, *Love's Comedy*, published in a periodical owned by Lie. It is interesting to note that Ibsen, so punctilious in later years, was aggravatingly slow in forwarding the final batch of manuscript. As a last resource, Lie threatened to complete the drama himself. Later in life, during summer sojourns in the Bavarian Alps, they saw much of each other. In one of his social dramas, *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen used Lie, together with traits of