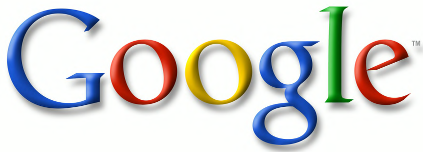


This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

Scan 9142.10.5

SHORT STORY

COLLECTION

WINWARD PRESCOTT

Harvard College Library

THE BEQ

WINWARD

CLASS

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

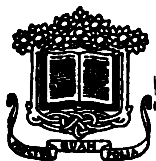
From a SWEDISH HOMESTEAD

By

SELMA LAGERLÖF

Translated by

JESSIE BROCHNER



GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1916

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
BEQUEST OF
WINWARD PRESCOTT
JANUARY 27, 1933

Copyright, 1901, *by*
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

A LIST *of the* STORIES

Page

The Story *of a* Country House . . . 1

Queens at Kungahälla 135

On the Site *of the Great* Kungahälla . 135

The Forest Queen 141

Sigrid Storräde 157

Astrid 172

Old Agnete 219

The Fisherman's Ring 231

Santa Caterina *of* Siena 257

The Empress's Money-Chest 277

The Peace *of* God 291

A Story *from* Halstanäs 309

The Inscription *on the* Grave 323

The Brothers 339

From a Swedish HOMESTEAD

I

The STORY *of a* COUNTRY HOUSE

The Story *of a* Country House

I

IT was a beautiful autumn day towards the end of the thirties. There was in Upsala at that time a high, yellow, two-storied house, which stood quite alone in a little meadow on the outskirts of the town. It was a rather desolate and dismal-looking house, but was rendered less so by the Virginia-creepers which grew there in profusion, and which had crept so high up the yellow wall on the sunny side of the house that they completely surrounded the three windows on the upper story.

At one of these windows a student was sitting, drinking his morning coffee. He was a tall, handsome fellow, of distinguished appearance. His hair was brushed back from his forehead; it curled prettily, and a lock was continually falling into his eyes. He wore a loose, comfortable suit, but looked rather smart all the same.

His room was well furnished. There was a good sofa and comfortable chairs, a large writing-table, a capital bookcase, but hardly any books.

Before he had finished his coffee another student entered the room. The new-comer was a

totally different-looking man. He was a short, broad-shouldered fellow, squarely built and strong, ugly, with a large head, thin hair, and coarse complexion.

'Hede,' he said, 'I have come to have a serious talk with you.'

'Has anything unpleasant happened to you?'

'Oh no, not to me,' the other answered; 'it is really you it concerns.' He sat silent for a while, and looked down. 'It is so awfully unpleasant having to tell you.'

'Leave it alone, then,' suggested Hede.

He felt inclined to laugh at his friend's solemnity.

'I can't leave it alone any longer,' said his visitor. 'I ought to have spoken to you long ago, but it is hardly my place. You understand? I can't help thinking you will say to yourself: "There's Gustaf Alin, son of one of our cottagers, thinks himself such a great man now that he can order me about."'

'My dear fellow,' Hede said, 'don't imagine I think anything of the kind. My father's father was a peasant's son.'

'Yes, but no one thinks of that now,' Alin answered. He sat there, looking awkward and stupid, resuming every moment more and more of his peasant manners, as if that could help him out of his difficulty. 'When I think of the difference there is between your family and mine, I feel as if I ought to keep quiet; but when I remember that it was your father who, by his help in days gone by, enabled me to study, then I feel that I must speak'

Hede looked at him with a pleasant smile.

'You had better speak out and have done with it,' he said.

'The thing is,' Alin said, 'I have heard people say that you don't do any work. They say you have hardly opened a book during the four terms you have been at the University. They say you don't do anything but play on the violin the whole day; and that I can quite believe, for you never wanted to do anything else when you were at school in Falu, although there you were obliged to work.'

Hede straightened himself a little in his chair. Alin grew more and more uncomfortable, but he continued with stubborn resolution :

'I suppose you think that anyone owning an estate like Munkhyttan ought to be able to do as he likes—work if he likes, or leave it alone. If he takes his exam., good; if he does not take his exam., what does it matter ? for in any case you will never be anything but a landed proprietor and iron-master. You will live at Munkhyttan all your life. I understand quite well that is what you must think.'

Hede was silent, and Alin seemed to see him surrounded by the same wall of distinction which in Alin's eyes had always surrounded his father, the Squire, and his mother.

'But, you see, Munkhyttan is no longer what it used to be when there was iron in the mine,' he continued cautiously. 'The Squire knew that very well, and that was why it was arranged before his death that you should study. Your poor mother knows it, too, and the whole parish knows

it. The only one who does not know anything is you, Hede.'

'Don't you think I know,' Hede said a little irritably, 'that the iron-mine cannot be worked any longer?'

'Oh yes,' Alin said, 'I dare say you know that much, but you don't know that it is all up with the property. Think the matter over, and you will understand that one cannot live from farming alone at Vesterdalarne. I cannot understand why your mother has kept it a secret from you. But, of course, she has the sole control of the estate, so she need not ask your advice about anything. Everybody at home knows that she is hard up. They say she drives about borrowing money. I suppose she did not want to disturb you with her troubles, but thought that she could keep matters going until you had taken your degree. She will not sell the estate before you have finished, and made yourself a new home.'

Hede rose, and walked once or twice up and down the floor. Then he stopped opposite Alin.

'But what on earth are you driving at, Alin? Do you want to make me believe that we are not rich?'

'I know quite well that, until lately, you have been considered rich people at home,' Alin said. 'But you can understand that things must come to an end when it is a case of always spending and never earning anything. It was a different thing when you had the mine.'

Hede sat down again.

'My mother would surely have told me if there were anything the matter,' he said. 'I am grate-

ful to you, Alin; but you have allowed yourself to be frightened by some silly stories.'

'I thought that you did not know anything,' Alin continued obstinately. 'At Munkhyttan your mother saves and works in order to get the money to keep you at Upsala, and to make it cheerful and pleasant for you when you are at home in the vacations. And in the meantime you are here doing nothing, because you don't know there is trouble coming. I could not stand any longer seeing you deceiving each other. Her ladyship thought you were studying, and you thought she was rich. I could not let you destroy your prospects without saying anything.'

Hede sat quietly for a moment, and meditated. Then he rose and gave Alin his hand with rather a sad smile.

'You understand that I feel you are speaking the truth, even if I *will* not believe you? Thanks.'

Alin joyfully shook his hand.

'You must know, Hede, that if you will only work no harm is done. With your brains, you can take your degree in three or four years.'

Hede straightened himself.

'Do not be uneasy, Alin,' he said; 'I am going to work hard now.'

Alin rose and went towards the door, but hesitated. Before he reached it he turned round.

'There was something else I wanted,' he said. He again became embarrassed. 'I want you to lend me your violin until you have commenced reading in earnest.'

'Lend you my violin?'

'Yes; pack it up in a silk handkerchief, and put it in the case, and let me take it with me, or otherwise you will read to no purpose. You will begin to play as soon as I am out of the room. You are so accustomed to it now you cannot resist if you have it here. One cannot get over that kind of thing unless someone helps one; it gets the mastery over one.'

Hede appeared unwilling.

'This is madness, you know,' he said.

'No, Hede, it is not. You know you have inherited it from the Squire. It runs in your blood. Ever since you have been your own master here in Upsala you have done nothing else but play. You live here in the outskirts of the town simply not to disturb anyone by your playing. You cannot help yourself in this matter. Let me have the violin.'

'Well,' said Hede, 'before I could not help playing, but now Munkhyttan is at stake; I am more fond of my home than of my violin.'

But Alin was determined, and continued to ask for the violin.

'What is the good of it?' Hede said. 'If I want to play, I need not go many steps to borrow another violin.'

'I know that,' Alin replied, 'but I don't think it would be so bad with another violin. It is your old Italian violin which is the greatest danger for you. And besides, I would suggest your locking yourself in for the first few days—only until you have got fairly started.'

He begged and begged, but Hede resisted; he would not stand anything so unreasonable as being a prisoner in his own room.

Alin grew crimson.

'I must have the violin with me,' he said, 'or it is no use at all.' He spoke eagerly and excitedly. 'I had not intended to say anything about it, but I know that it concerns more than Munkhyttan. I saw a young girl at the Promotion Ball in the spring who, people said, was engaged to you. I don't dance, you know, but I liked to watch her when she was dancing, looking radiant like one of the lilies of the field. And when I heard that she was engaged to you, I felt sorry for her.'

'Why?'

'Because I knew that you would never succeed if you continued as you had begun. And then I swore that she should not have to spend her whole life waiting for one who never came. She should not sit and wither whilst waiting for you. I did not want to meet her in a few years with sharpened features and deep wrinkles round her mouth——'

He stopped suddenly; Hede's glance had rested so searchingly upon him.

But Gunnar Hede had already understood that Alin was in love with his *fiancée*. It moved him deeply that Alin under these circumstances tried to save him, and, influenced by this feeling, he yielded and gave him the violin.

When Alin had gone, Hede read desperately for a whole hour, but then he threw away his book.

It was not of much good his reading. It would be three or four years before he could be finished, and who could guarantee that the estate would not be sold in the meantime?

He felt almost with terror how deeply he loved the old home. It was like witchery. Every room, every tree, stood clearly before him. He felt he could not part with any of it if he were to be happy. And he was to sit quietly with his books whilst all this was about to pass away from him.

He became more and more restless; he felt the blood beating in his temples as if in a fever. And then he grew quite beside himself because he could not take his violin and play himself calm again.

'My God!' he said, 'Alin will drive me mad. First to tell me all this, and then to take away my violin! A man like I must feel the bow between his fingers in sorrow and in joy. I must do something; I must get money, but I have not an idea in my head. I cannot think without my violin.'

He could not endure the feeling of being locked in. He was so angry with Alin, who had thought of this absurd plan, that he was afraid he might strike him the next time he came.

Of course he would have played, if he had had the violin, for that was just what he needed. His blood rushed so wildly, that he was nearly going out of his mind.

Just as Hede was longing most for his violin a wandering musician began to play outside. It was an old blind man. He played out of tune and without expression, but Hede was so overcome by hearing a violin just at this moment that he listened with tears in his eyes and with his hands folded.

The next moment he flung open the window and climbed to the ground by the help of the creepers. He had no compunction at leaving his work. He thought the violin had simply come to comfort him in his misfortune.

Hede had probably never before begged so humbly for anything as he did now, when he asked the old blind man to lend him his violin. He stood the whole time with his cap in his hand, although the old man was blind.

The musician did not seem to understand what he wanted. He turned to the young girl who was leading him. Hede bowed to the poor girl and repeated his request. She looked at him, as if she must have eyes for them both. The glance from her big eyes was so steady that Hede thought he could feel where it struck him. It began with his collar, and it noticed that the frills of his shirt were well starched, then it saw that his coat was brushed, next that his boots were polished.

Hede had never before been subjected to such close scrutiny. He saw clearly that he would not pass muster before those eyes.

But it was not so, all the same. The young girl had a strange way of smiling. Her face was so serious, that one had the impression when she smiled that it was the first and only time she had ever looked happy; and now one of these rare smiles passed over her lips. She took the violin from the old man and handed it to Hede.

'Play the waltz from "Freischütz," then,' she said.

Hede thought it was strange that he should have to play a waltz just at that moment, but, as a matter of fact, it was all the same to him what he played, if he could only have a bow in his hand. That was all he wanted. The violin at once began to comfort him; it spoke to him in faint, cracked tones.

'I am only a poor man's violin,' it said; 'but such as I am, I am a comfort and help to a poor blind man. I am the light and the colour and the brightness in his life. It is I who must comfort him in his poverty and old age and blindness.'

Hede felt that the terrible depression that had cowed his hopes began to give way.

'You are young and strong,' the violin said to him. 'You can fight and strive; you can hold fast that which tries to escape you. Why are you downcast and without courage?'

Hede had played with lowered eyes; now he threw back his head and looked at those who stood around him. There was quite a crowd of children and people from the street, who had come into the yard to listen to the music. It appeared, however, that they had not come solely for the sake of the music. The blind man and his companion were not the only ones in the troupe.

Opposite Hede stood a figure in tights and spangles, and with bare arms crossed over his chest. He looked old and worn, but Hede could not help thinking that he looked a devil of a fellow with his high chest and long moustaches. And beside him stood his wife, little and fat, and

not so very young either, but beaming with joy over her spangles and flowing gauze skirts.

During the first bars of the music they stood still and counted, then a gracious smile passed over their faces, and they took each other's hands and began to dance on a small carpet. And Hede saw that during all the equilibristic tricks they now performed the woman stood almost still, whilst her husband did all the work. He sprang over her, and twirled round her, and vaulted over her. The woman scarcely did anything else but kiss her hand to the spectators.

But Hede did not really take much notice of them. His bow began to fly over the strings. It told him that there was happiness in fighting and overcoming. It almost deemed him happy because everything was at stake for him. Hede stood there, playing courage and hope into himself, and did not think of the old tight-rope dancers.

But suddenly he saw that they grew restless. They no longer smiled; they left off kissing their hands to the spectators; the acrobat made mistakes, and his wife began to sway to and fro in waltz time.

Hede played more and more eagerly. He left off 'Freischütz' and rushed into an old 'Nixie Polka,' one which generally sent all the people mad when played at the peasant festivals.

The old tight-rope dancers quite lost their heads. They stood in breathless astonishment, and at last they could resist no longer. They sprang into each other's arms, and then they began to dance a waltz in the middle of the carpet.

How they danced! dear me, how they danced! They took small, tripping steps, and whirled round in a small circle; they hardly went outside the carpet, and their faces beamed with joy and delight. There was the happiness of youth and the rapture of love over these two old people.

The whole crowd was jubilant at seeing them dance. The serious little companion of the blind man smiled all over her face, and Hede grew much excited.

Just fancy what an effect his violin could have! It made people quite forget themselves. It was a great power to have at his disposal. Any moment he liked he could take possession of his kingdom. Only a couple of years' study abroad with a great master, and he could go all over the world, and by his playing earn riches and honour and fame.

It seemed to Hede that these acrobats must have come to tell him this. That was the road he should follow; it lay before him clear and smooth. He said to himself: 'I will—I *will* become a musician! I *must* be one! This is better than studying. I can charm my fellow-men with my violin; I can become rich.'

Hede stopped playing. The acrobats at once came up and complimented him. The man said his name was Blomgren. That was his real name; he had other names when he performed. He and his wife were old circus people. Mrs. Blomgren in former days had been called Miss Viola, and had performed on horseback; and although they had now left the circus, they were still true artists—artists body and soul. That he

had probably already noticed; that was why they could not resist his violin.

Hede walked about with the acrobats for a couple of hours. He could not part with the violin, and the old artists' enthusiasm for their profession appealed to him. He was simply testing himself. 'I want to find out whether there is the proper stuff for an artist in me. I want to see if I can call forth enthusiasm. I want to see whether I can make children and idlers follow me from house to house.'

On their way from house to house Mr. Blomgren threw an old threadbare mantle around him, and Mrs. Blomgren enveloped herself in a brown cloak. Thus arrayed, they walked at Hede's side and talked.

Mr. Blomgren would not speak of all the honour he and Mrs. Blomgren had received during the time they had performed in a real circus; but the *directeur* had given Mrs. Blomgren her dismissal under the pretence that she was getting too stout. Mr. Blomgren had not been dismissed: he had himself resigned his position. Surely no one could think that Mr. Blomgren would remain with a *directeur* who had dismissed his wife!

Mrs. Blomgren loved her art, and for her sake Mr. Blomgren had made up his mind to live as a free artist, so that she could still continue to perform. During the winter, when it was too cold to give performances in the street, they performed in a tent. They had a very comprehensive repertoire. They gave pantomimes, and were jugglers and conjurers.

The circus had cast them off, but Art had not, said Mr. Blomgren. They served Art always. It was well worth being faithful to Art, even unto death. Always artists—always. That was Mr. Blomgren's opinion, and it was also Mrs. Blomgren's.

Hede walked quietly and listened. His thoughts flew restlessly from plan to plan. Sometimes events happen which become like symbols, like signs, which one must obey. There must be some meaning in what had now happened to him. If he could only understand it rightly, it might help him towards arriving at a wise resolution.

Mr. Blomgren asked the student to notice the young girl who was leading the blind man. Had he ever before seen such eyes? Did he not think that such eyes must mean something? Could one have those eyes without being intended for something great?

Hede turned round and looked at the little pale girl. Yes, she had eyes like stars, set in a sad and rather thin face.

'Our Lord knows always what He is about,' said Mrs. Blomgren; 'and I also believe that He has some reason for letting such an artist as Mr. Blomgren perform in the street. But what was He thinking about when He gave that girl those eyes and that smile?'

'I will tell you something,' said Mr. Blomgren; 'she has not the slightest talent for Art. And with those eyes!'

Hede had a suspicion that they were not talking to him, but simply for the benefit of the

young girl. She was walking just behind them, and could hear every word.

'She is not more than thirteen years old, and not by any means too old to learn something; but, impossible—impossible, without the slightest talent! If one does not want to waste one's time, sir, teach her to sew, but not to stand on her head. Her smile makes people quite mad about her,' Mr. Blomgren continued. 'Simply on account of her smile she has had many offers from families wishful to adopt her. She could grow up in a well-to-do home if she would only leave her grandfather. But what does she want with a smile that makes people mad about her, when she will never appear either on horseback or on a trapeze?'

'We know other artists,' said Mrs. Blomgren, 'who pick up children in the street and train them for the profession when they cannot perform any longer themselves. There is more than one who has been lucky enough to create a star and obtain immense salaries for her. But Mr. Blomgren and I have never thought of the money; we have only thought of some day seeing Ingrid flying through a hoop whilst the whole circus resounded with applause. For us it would have been as if we were beginning life over again.'

'Why do we keep her grandfather?' said Mr. Blomgren. 'Is he an artist fit for us? We could, no doubt, have got a previous member of a Hofkapell if we had wished. But we love that child; we cannot do without her; we keep the old man for her sake.'

'Is it not naughty of her that she will not allow us to make an artist of her?' they said.

Hede turned round. The little girl's face wore an expression of suffering and patience. He could see that she knew that anyone who could not dance on the tight-rope was a stupid and contemptible person.

At the same moment they came to another house, but before they began their performance Hede sat down on an overturned wheelbarrow and began to preach. He defended the poor little girl. He reproached Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren for wishing to hand her over to the great, cruel public, who would love and applaud her for a time, but when she grew old and worn out, they would let her trudge along the streets in rain and cold. No; he or she was artist enough, who made a fellow-being happy. Ingrid should only have eyes and smiles for one, should keep them for one only; and this one should never leave her, but give her a safe home as long as he lived.

Tears came into Hede's eyes whilst he spoke. He spoke more to himself than to the others. He felt it suddenly as something terrible to be thrust out into the world, to be severed from the quiet home-life. He saw that the great, star-like eyes of the girl began to sparkle. It seemed as if she had understood every single word. It seemed as if she again felt the right to live.

But Mr. Blomgren and his wife had become very serious. They pressed Hede's hand and promised him that they would never again try and persuade the little girl to become an artist. She should be allowed to lead the life she wished. He had touched them. They were artists—

artists body and soul; they understood what he meant when he spoke of love and faithfulness.

Then Hede parted from them and went home. He no longer tried to find any secret meaning in his adventure. After all, it had meant nothing more than that he should save this poor sorrowful child from always grieving over her incapacity.

II

MUNKHYTTAN, the home of Gunnar Hede, was situated in a poor parish in the forests of Vesterdalarne. It was a large, thinly-populated parish, with which Nature had dealt very stingily. There were stony, forest-covered hills, and many small lakes. The people could not possibly have earned a livelihood there had they not had the right to travel about the country as pedlars. But to make up for it, the whole of this poor district was full of old tales of how poor peasant lads and lassies had gone into the world with a pack of goods on their backs, to return in gilded coaches, with the boxes under the seats filled with money.

One of the very best stories was about Hede's grandfather. He was the son of a poor musician, and had grown up with his violin in his hand, and when he was seventeen years old he had gone out into the world with his pack on his back. But wherever he went his violin had helped him in his business. He had by turns gathered people together by his music and sold them silk handkerchiefs, combs, and pins. All

his trading had been brought about with music and merriment, and things had gone so well with him that he had at last been able to buy Munk-hyttan, with its mine and ironworks, from the poverty-stricken Baron who then owned the property. Then he became the Squire, and the pretty daughter of the Baron became his wife.

From that time the old family, as they were always called, had thought of nothing else but beautifying the place. They removed the main building on to the beautiful island which lay on the edge of a small lake, round which lay their fields and their mines. The upper story had been added in their time, for they wanted to have plenty of room for their numerous guests; and they had also added the two large flights of steps outside. They had planted ornamental trees all over the fir-covered island. They had made small winding pathways in the stony soil, and on the most beautiful spots they had built small pavilions, hanging like large birds'-nests over the lake. The beautiful French roses that grew on the terrace, the Dutch furniture, the Italian violin, had all been brought to the house by them. And it was they who had built the wall protecting the orchard from the north wind, and the conservatory.

The old family were merry, kind-hearted, old-fashioned people. The Squire's wife certainly liked to be a little aristocratic; but that was not at all in the old Squire's line. In the midst of all the luxury which surrounded him he never forgot what he had been, and in the room where he transacted his business, and where people

came and went, the pack and the red-painted, home-made violin were hung right above the old man's desk.

Even after his death the pack and the violin remained in the same place. And every time the old man's son and grandson saw them their hearts swelled with gratitude. It was these two poor implements that had created Munkhyttan, and Munkhyttan was the best thing in the world.

Whatever the reason might be—and it was probably because it seemed natural to the place that one lived a good, genial life there, free from trouble—Hede's family clung to the place with greater love than was good for it. And more especially Gunnar Hede was so strongly attached to it that people said that it was incorrect to say of him that he owned an estate. On the contrary, it was an old estate in Vesterdalarne that owned Gunnar Hede.

If he had not made himself a slave of an old rambling manor-house and some acres of land and forest, and some stunted apple-trees, he would probably have continued his studies, or, better still, gone abroad to study music, which, after all, was no doubt his proper vocation in this world. But when he returned from Upsala, and it became clear to him that they really would have to sell the estate if he could not soon earn a lot of money, he decided upon giving up all his other plans, and made up his mind to go out into the world as a pedlar, as his grandfather before him had done.

His mother and his *fiancée* besought him rather to sell the place than to sacrifice himself

for it in this manner, but he was not to be moved. He put on peasant's attire, bought goods, and began to travel about the country as a pedlar. He thought that if he only traded a couple of years he could earn enough to pay the debt and save the estate.

And as far as the latter was concerned he was successful enough. But he brought upon himself a terrible misfortune.

When he had walked about with his pack for a year or so he thought that he would try and earn a large sum of money at one stroke. He went far north and bought a large flock of goats, about a couple of hundred. And he and a comrade intended to drive them down to a large fair in Vermland, where goats cost twice as much as in the north. If he succeeded in selling all his goats, he would do a very good business.

It was in the beginning of November, and there had not yet been any snow, when Hede and his comrade set out with their goats. The first day everything went well with them, but the second day, when they came to the great Fifty-Mile Forest, it began to snow. Much snow fell, and it stormed and blew severely. It was not long before it became difficult for the animals to make their way through the snow. Goats are certainly both plucky and hardy animals, and the herd struggled on for a considerable time; but the snow-storm lasted two days and two nights, and it was terribly cold.

Hede did all he could to save the animals, but after the snow began to fall he could get

them neither food nor water. And when they had worked their way through deep snow for a whole day they became very footsore. Their feet hurt them, and they would not go any longer. The first goat that threw itself down by the roadside and would not get up again and follow the herd Hede lifted on to his shoulder so as not to leave it behind. But when another and again another lay down he could not carry them. There was nothing to do but to look the other way and go on.

Do you know what the Fifty-Mile Forest is like? Not a farmhouse, not a cottage, mile after mile, only forest; tall-stemmed fir-trees, with bark as hard as wood, and high branches; no young trees with soft bark and soft twigs that the animals could eat. If there had been no snow, they could have got through the forest in a couple of days; now they could not get through it at all. All the goats were left there, and the men too nearly perished. They did not meet a single human being the whole time. No one helped them.

Hede tried to throw the snow to one side so that the goats could eat the moss; but the snow fell so thickly, and the moss was frozen fast to the ground. And how could he get food for two hundred animals in this way?

He bore it bravely until the goats began to moan. The first day they were a lively, rather noisy herd. He had had hard work to make them all keep together, and prevent them from butting each other to death. But when they seemed to understand that they could not be

saved their nature changed, and they completely lost their courage. They all began to bleat and moan, not faintly and peevishly, as goats usually do, but loudly, louder and louder as the danger increased. And when Hede heard their cries he felt quite desperate.

They were in the midst of the wild, desolate forest; there was no help whatever obtainable. Goat after goat dropped down by the roadside. The snow gathered round them and covered them. When Hede looked back at this row of drifts by the wayside, each hiding the body of an animal, of which one could still see the projecting horns and the hoofs, then his brain began to give way.

He rushed at the animals, which allowed themselves to be covered by the snow, swung his whip over them, and hit them. It was the only way to save them, but they did not stir. He took them by the horns and dragged them along. They allowed themselves to be dragged, but they did not move a foot themselves. When he let go his hold of their horns, they licked his hands, as if beseeching him to help them. As soon as he went up to them they licked his hands.

All this had such a strong effect upon Hede that he felt he was on the point of going out of his mind.

It is not certain, however, that things would have gone so badly with him had he not, after it was all over in the forest, gone to see one whom he loved dearly. It was not his mother, but his sweetheart. He thought himself that

he had gone there because he ought to tell her at once that he had lost so much money that he would not be able to marry for many years. But no doubt he went to see her solely to hear her say that she loved him quite as much in spite of his misfortunes. He thought that she could drive away the memory of the Fifty-Mile Forest.

She could, perhaps, have done this, but she would not. She was already displeased because Hede went about with a pack and looked like a peasant; she thought that for that reason alone it was difficult to love him as much as before. Now, when he told her that he must still go on doing this for many years, she said that she could no longer wait for him. This last blow was too much for Hede; his mind gave way.

He did not grow quite mad, however; he retained so much of his senses that he could attend to his business. He even did better than others, for it amused people to make fun of him; he was always welcome at the peasants' houses. People plagued and teased him, but that was in a way good for him, as he was so anxious to become rich. And in the course of a few years he had earned enough to pay all his debts, and he could have lived free from worry on his estate. But this he did not understand; he went about half-witted and silly from farm to farm, and he had no longer any idea to what class of people he really belonged.

III

RAGLANDA was the name of a parish in the north of East Vermland, near the borders of Dalarne, where the Dean had a large house, but the pastor only a small and poor one. But poor as they were at the small parsonage, they had been charitable enough to adopt a poor girl. She was a little girl, Ingrid by name, and she had come to the parsonage when she was thirteen years old.

The pastor had accidentally seen her at a fair, where she sat crying outside the tent of some acrobats. He had stopped and asked her why she was crying, and she had told him that her blind grandfather was dead, and that she had no relatives left. She now travelled with a couple of acrobats, and they were good to her, but she cried because she was so stupid that she could never learn to dance on the tight-rope and help to earn any money.

There was a sorrowful grace over the child which touched the pastor's heart. He said at once to himself that he could not allow such a little creature to go to the bad amongst these wandering tramps. He went into the tent, where he saw Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren, and offered to take the child home with him. The old acrobats began to weep, and said that although the girl was entirely unfitted for the profession, they would so very much like to keep her; but at the same time they thought she would be happier in a real home with people who lived in the same place all the year round, and therefore they were

willing to give her up to the pastor if he would only promise them that she should be like one of his own children.

This he had promised, and from that time the young girl had lived at the parsonage. She was a quiet, gentle child, full of love and tender care for those around her. At first her adopted parents loved her very dearly, but as she grew older she developed a strong inclination to lose herself in dreams and fancies. She lived in a world of visions, and in the middle of the day she could let her work fall and be lost in dreams. But the pastor's wife, who was a clever and hard-working woman, did not approve of this. She found fault with the young girl for being lazy and slow, and tormented her by her severity so that she became timid and unhappy.

When she had completed her nineteenth year, she fell dangerously ill. They did not quite know what was the matter with her, for this happened long ago, when there was no doctor at Raglanda, but the girl was very ill. They soon saw she was so ill that she could not live.

She herself did nothing but pray to God that He would take her away from this world. She would so like to die, she said.

Then it seemed as if our Lord would try whether she was in earnest. One night she felt that she grew stiff and cold all over her body, and a heavy lethargy fell upon her. 'I think this must be death,' she said to herself.

But the strange thing was that she did not quite lose consciousness. She knew that she lay as if she were dead, knew that they wrapped

her in her shroud and laid her in her coffin, but she felt no fear of being buried, although she was still alive. She had but the one thought that she was happy because she was about to die and leave this troublesome life.

The only thing she was uneasy about was lest they should discover that she was not really dead and would not bury her. Life must have been very bitter to her, inasmuch as she felt no fear of death whatever.

But no one discovered that she was living. She was conveyed to the church, carried to the churchyard, and lowered into the grave.

The grave, however, was not filled in; she had been buried before the service on Sunday morning, as was the custom at Raglanda. The mourners had gone into church after the funeral, and the coffin was left in the open grave; but as soon as the service was over they would come back, and help the grave-digger to fill in the grave.

The young girl knew everything that happened, but felt no fear. She had not been able to make the slightest movement to show that she was alive, even if she had wanted to; but even if she had been able to move, she would not have done so; the whole time she was happy because she was as good as dead.

But, on the other hand, one could hardly say that she was alive. She had neither the use of her mind nor of her senses. It was only that part of the soul which dreams dreams during the night that was still living within her.

She could not even think enough to realize

how terrible it would be for her to awake when the grave was filled in. She had no more power over her mind than has one who dreams.

'I should like to know,' she thought, 'if there is anything in the whole wide world that could make me wish to live.'

As soon as that thought rushed through her it seemed to her as if the lid of the coffin, and the handkerchief which had been placed over her face, became transparent, and she saw before her riches and beautiful raiment, and lovely gardens with delicious fruits.

'No, I do not care for any of these things,' she said, and she closed her eyes for their glories.

When she again looked up they had disappeared, but instead she saw quite distinctly a little angel of God sitting on the edge of the grave.

'Good-morning, thou little angel of God,' she said to him.

'Good-morning, Ingrid,' the angel said. 'Whilst thou art lying here doing nothing, I would like to speak a little with thee about days gone by.'

Ingrid heard distinctly every word the angel said; but his voice was not like anything she had ever heard before. It was more like a stringed instrument; it was not like singing, but like the tones of a violin or the clang of a harp.

'Ingrid,' the angel said, 'dost thou remember, whilst thy grandfather was still living, that thou once met a young student, who went with thee

from house to house playing the whole day on thy grandfather's violin?'

The girl's face was lighted by a smile.

'Dost thou think I have forgotten this?' she said. 'Ever since that time no day has passed when I have not thought of him.'

'And no night when thou hast not dreamt of him?'

'No, not a night when I have not dreamt of him.'

'And thou wilt die, although thou rememberest him so well,' said the angel. 'Then thou wilt never be able to see him again.'

When he said this it was as if the dead girl felt all the happiness of love, but even that could not tempt her.

'No, no,' she said; 'I am afraid to live; I would rather die.'

Then the angel waved his hand, and Ingrid saw before her a wide waste of desert. There were no trees, and the desert was barren and dry and hot, and extended in all directions without any limits. In the sand there lay, here and there, objects which at the first glance looked like pieces of rock, but when she examined them more closely, she saw they were the immense living animals of fairy tales, with huge claws and great jaws, with sharp teeth; they lay in the sand, watching for prey. And between these terrible animals the student came walking along. He went quite fearlessly, without suspecting that the figures around him were living.

'But warn him! do warn him!' Ingrid said

to the angel in unspeakable fear. 'Tell him that they are living, and that he must take care.'

'I am not allowed to speak to him,' said the angel with his clear voice; 'thou must thyself warn him.'

The apparently dead girl felt with horror that she lay powerless, and could not rush to save the student. She made one futile effort after the other to raise herself, but the impotence of death bound her. But then at last, at last, she felt her heart begin to beat, the blood rushed through her veins, the stiffness of death was loosened in her body. She arose and hastened towards him.

IV

It is quite certain the sun loves the open places outside the small village churches. Has no one ever noticed that one never sees so much sunshine as during the morning service outside a small, whitewashed church? Nowhere else does one see such radiant streams of light, nowhere else is the air so devoutly quiet. The sun simply keeps watch that no one remains on the church hill gossiping. It wants them all to sit quietly in church and listen to the sermon —that is why it sends such a wealth of sunny rays on to the ground outside the church wall.

Perhaps one must not take it for granted that the sun keeps watch outside the small churches every Sunday; but so much is certain, that the morning Ingrid had been placed in the grave in the churchyard at Raglanda,

it spread a burning heat over the open space outside the church. Even the flint stones looked as if they might take fire as they lay and sparkled in the wheel-ruts. The short, down-trodden grass curled, so that it looked like dry moss, whilst the yellow dandelions which grew amongst the grass spread themselves out on their long stems, so that they became as large as asters.

A man from Dalarne came wandering along the road—one of those men who go about selling knives and scissors. He was clad in a long, white sheep-skin coat, and on his back he had a large black leather pack. He had been walking with this burden for several hours without finding it too hot, but when he had left the highroad, and came to the open place outside the church, he stopped and took off his hat in order to dry the perspiration from his forehead.

As the man stood there bare-headed, he looked both handsome and clever. His forehead was high and white, with a deep wrinkle between the eyebrows; the mouth was well formed, with thin lips. His hair was parted in the middle; it was cut short at the back, but hung over his ears, and was inclined to curl. He was tall, and strongly, but not coarsely, built; in every respect well proportioned. But what was wrong about him was his glance, which was unsteady, and the pupils of his eyes rolled restlessly, and were drawn far into the sockets, as if to hide themselves. There was something drawn about the mouth, something

dull and heavy, which did not seem to belong to the face.

He could not be quite right, either, or he would not have dragged that heavy pack about on a Sunday. If he had been quite in his senses, he would have known that it was of no use, as he could not sell anything in any case. None of the other men from Dalarne who walked about from village to village bent their backs under this burden on a Sunday, but they went to the house of God free and erect as other men.

But this poor fellow probably did not know it was a holy day until he stood in the sunshine outside the church and heard the singing. He was sensible enough at once to understand that he could not do any business, and then his brain began to work as to how he should spend the day.

He stood for a long time and stared in front of him. When everything went its usual course, he had no difficulty in managing. He was not so bad but that he could go from farm to farm all through the week and attend to his business, but he never could get accustomed to the Sunday—that always came upon him as a great, unexpected trouble.

His eyes became quite fixed, and the muscles of his forehead swelled.

The first thought that took shape in his brain was that he should go into the church and listen to the singing, but he would not accept this suggestion. He was very fond of singing, but he dared not go into the church. He

was not afraid of human beings, but in some churches there were such quaint, uncanny pictures, which represented creatures of which he would rather not think.

At last his brain worked round to the thought that, as this was a church, there would probably also be a churchyard, and when he could take refuge in a churchyard all was well. One could not offer him anything better. If on his wanderings he saw a churchyard, he always went in and sat there awhile, even if it were in the middle of a workaday week.

Now that he wanted to go to the churchyard a new difficulty suddenly arose. The burial-place at Raglanda does not lie quite near the church, which is built on a hill, but on the other side of the road; and he could not get to the entrance of the churchyard without passing along the road where the horses of the church-goers were standing tied up.

All the horses stood with their heads deep in bundles of hay and nosebags, chewing. There was no question of their being able to do the man any harm, but he had his own ideas as to the danger of going past such a long row of animals.

Two or three times he made an attempt, but his courage failed him, so that he was obliged to turn back. He was not afraid that the horses would bite or kick. It was quite enough for him that they were so near that they could see him. It was quite enough that they could shake their bridles and scrape the earth with their hoofs.

At last a moment came when all the horses were looking down, and seemed to be eating for a wager. Then he began to make his way between them. He held his sheepskin cloak tightly around him so that it should not flap and betray him, and he went on tiptoe as lightly as he could. When a horse raised its eyelid and looked at him, he at once stopped and curtsied. He wanted to be polite in this great danger, but surely animals were amenable to reason, and could understand that he could not bow when he had a pack full of hardware upon his back; he could only curtsy.

He sighed deeply, for in this world it was a sad and troublesome thing to be so afraid of all four-footed animals as he was. He was really not afraid of any other animals than goats, and he would not have been at all afraid of horses and dogs and cats had he only been quite sure that they were not a kind of transformed goats. But he never was quite sure of that, so as a matter of fact it was just as bad for him as if he had been afraid of all kinds of four-footed animals.

It was no use his thinking of how strong he was, and that these small peasant horses never did any harm to anyone: he who has become possessed of such fears cannot reason with himself. Fear is a heavy burden, and it is hard for him who must always carry it.

It was strange that he managed to get past all the horses. The last few steps he took in two long jumps, and when he got into the churchyard he closed the gate after him, and

began to threaten the horses with his clenched fist.

'You wretched, miserable, accursed goats!'

He did that to all animals. He could not help calling them goats, and that was very stupid of him, for it had procured him a name which he did not like. Everyone who met him called him the 'Goat.' But he would not own to this name. He wanted to be called by his proper name, but apparently no one knew his real name in that district.

He stood a little while at the gate, rejoicing at having escaped from the horses, but he soon went further into the churchyard. At every cross and every stone he stopped and curtsied, but this was not from fear: this was simply from joy at seeing these dear old friends. All at once he began to look quite gentle and mild. They were exactly the same crosses and stones he had so often seen before. They looked just as usual. How well he knew them again! He must say 'Good-morning' to them.

How nice it was in the churchyard! There were no animals about there, and there were no people to make fun of him. It was best there, when it was quite quiet as now; but even if there were people, they did not disturb him. He certainly knew many pretty meadows and woods which he liked still better, but there he was never left in peace. They could not by any means compare with the churchyard. And the churchyard was better than the forest, for the forest the loneliness was so great that frightened by it. Here it was quiet, as

in the depths of the forest; but he was not without company. Here people were sleeping under every stone and every mound; just the company he wanted in order not to feel lonely and strange.

He went straight to the open grave. He went there partly because there were some shady trees, and partly because he wanted company. He thought, perhaps, that the dead who had so recently been laid in the grave might be a better protection against his loneliness than those who had passed away long ago.

He bent his knees, with his back to the great mound of earth at the edge of the grave, and succeeded in pushing the pack upwards, so that it stood firmly on the mound, and he then loosened the heavy straps that fastened it. It was a great day—a holiday. He also took off his coat. He sat down on the grass with a feeling of great pleasure, so close to the grave that his long legs, with the stockings tied under the knee, and the heavy laced shoes dangled over the edge of the grave.

For a while he sat still, with his eyes steadily fixed upon the coffin. When one was possessed by such fear as he was, one could not be too careful. But the coffin did not move in the least; it was impossible to suspect it of containing any snare.

He was no sooner certain of this than he put his hand into a side-pocket of the pack and took out a violin and bow, and at the same time he nodded to the dead in the grave. As he was so quiet he should hear something pretty.

This was something very unusual for him. There were not many who were allowed to hear him play. No one was ever allowed to hear him play at the farms, where they set the dogs at him and called him the 'Goat'; but sometimes he would play in a house where they spoke softly, and went about quietly, and did not ask him if he wanted to buy any goat-skins. At such places he took out his violin and treated them to some music; and this was a great favour—the greatest he could bestow upon anybody.

As he sat there and played at the edge of the grave it did not sound amiss; he did not play a wrong note, and he played so softly and gently that it could hardly be heard at the next grave. The strange thing about it was that it was not the man who could play, but it was his violin that could remember some small melodies. They came forth from the violin as soon as he let the bow glide over it. It might not, perhaps, have meant so much to others, but for him, who could not remember a single tune, it was the most precious gift of all to possess such a violin that could play by itself.

Whilst he played he sat with a beaming smile on his face. It was the violin that spoke and spoke; he only listened. Was it not strange that one heard all these beautiful things as soon as one let the bow glide over the strings? The violin did that. It knew how it ought to be, and the Dalar man only sat and listened. Melodies grew out of that violin as grass grows out of the earth. No one could understand how it happened. Our Lord had ordered it so.

The Dalar man intended to remain sitting there the whole day, and let the dear tunes grow out of the violin like small white and many-coloured flowers. He would play a whole meadowful of flowers, play a whole long valleyful, a whole wide plain.

But she who lay in the coffin distinctly heard the violin, and upon her it had a strange effect. The tones had made her dream, and what she had seen in her dreams caused her such emotion that her heart began to beat, her blood to flow, and she awoke.

But all she had lived through while she lay there, apparently dead, the thoughts she had had, and also her last dream—everything vanished in the same moment she awoke to consciousness. She did not even know that she was lying in her coffin, but thought she was still lying ill at home in her bed. She only thought it strange that she was still alive. A little while ago, before she fell asleep, she had been in the pangs of death. Surely, all must have been over with her long ago. She had taken leave of her adopted parents, and of her brothers and sisters, and of the servants. The Dean had been there himself to administer the last Communion, for her adopted father did not think he could bear to give it to her himself. For several days she had put away all earthly thoughts from her mind. It was incomprehensible that she was not dead.

She wondered why it was so dark in the room where she lay. There had been a light all the other nights during her illness. And then they had let the blankets fall off the bed. She was

lying there getting as cold as ice. She raised herself a little to pull the blankets over her. In doing so she knocked her head against the lid of the coffin, and fell back with a little scream of pain. She had knocked herself rather severely, and immediately became unconscious again. She lay as motionless as before, and it seemed as if life had again left her.

The Dalar man, who had heard both the knock and the cry, immediately laid down his violin and sat listening; but there was nothing more to be heard—nothing whatever. He began again to look at the coffin as attentively as before. He sat nodding his head, as if he would say 'Yes' to what he was himself thinking about, namely, that nothing in this world was to be depended upon. Here he had had the best and most silent of comrades, but had he not also been disappointed in him?

He sat and looked at the coffin, as if trying to see right through it. At last, when it continued quite still, he took his violin again and began to play. But the violin would not play any longer. However gently and tenderly he drew his bow, there came forth no melody. This was so sad that he was nearly crying. He had intended to sit still and listen to his violin the whole day, and now it would not play any more.

He could quite understand the reason. The violin was uneasy and afraid of what had moved in the coffin. It had forgotten all its melodies, and thought only of what it could be that had knocked at the coffin-lid. That is how it is one forgets everything when one is afraid. He

saw that he would have to quiet the violin if he wanted to hear more.

He had felt so happy, more so than for many years. If there was really anything bad in the coffin, would it not be better to let it out? Then the violin would be glad, and beautiful flowers would again grow out of it.

He quickly opened his big pack, and began to rummage amongst his knives and saws and hammers until he found a screw-driver. In another moment he was down in the grave on his knees and unscrewing the coffin-lid. He took out one screw after the other, until at last he could raise the lid against the side of the grave; at the same moment the handkerchief fell from off the face of the apparently dead girl. As soon as the fresh air reached Ingrid, she opened her eyes. Now she saw that it was light. They must have removed her. Now she was lying in a yellow chamber with a green ceiling, and a large chandelier was hanging from the ceiling. The chamber was small, but the bed was still smaller. Why had she the sensation of her arms and legs being tied? Was it because she should lie still in the little narrow bed? It was strange that they had placed a hymn-book under her chin; they only did that with corpses. Between her fingers she had a little bouquet. Her adopted mother had cut a few sprigs from her flowering myrtle, and laid them in her hands. Ingrid was very much surprised. What had come to her adopted mother? She saw that they had given her a pillow with broad lace, and a fine hem-stitched

sheet. She was very glad of that; she liked to have things nice. Still, she would rather have had a warm blanket over her. It could surely not be good for a sick person to lie without a blanket. Ingrid was nearly putting her hands to her eyes and beginning to cry, she was so bitterly cold. At the same moment she felt something hard and cold against her cheek. She could not help smiling. It was the old, red wooden horse, the old three-legged Camilla, that lay beside her on the pillow. Her little brother, who could never sleep at night without having it with him in his bed, had put it in her bed. It was very sweet of her little brother. Ingrid felt still more inclined to cry when she understood that her little brother had wanted to comfort her with his wooden horse.

But she did not get so far as crying. The truth all at once flashed upon her. Her little brother had given her the wooden horse, and her mother had given her her white myrtle flowers, and the hymn-book had been placed under her chin, because they had thought she was dead.

Ingrid took hold of the sides of the coffin with both hands and raised herself. The little narrow bed was a coffin, and the little narrow chamber was a grave. It was all very difficult to understand. She could not understand that this concerned her, that it was she who had been swathed like a corpse and placed in the grave. She must be lying all the same in her bed, and be seeing or dreaming all this. She would soon find out that this was no reality, but that everything was as usual.

All at once she found the explanation of the whole thing—' I often have such strange dreams. This is only a vision '—and she sighed, relieved and happy. She laid herself down in her coffin again; she was so sure that it was her own bed, for that was not very wide either.

All this time the Dalar man stood in the grave, quite close to the foot of the coffin. He only stood a few feet from her, but she had not seen him; that was probably because he had tried to hide himself in the corner of the grave as soon as the dead in the coffin had opened her eyes and begun to move. She could, perhaps, have seen him, although he held the coffin-lid before him as a screen, had there not been something like a white mist before her eyes so that she could only see things quite near her distinctly. Ingrid could not even see that there were earthen walls around her. She had taken the sun to be a large chandelier, and the shady lime-trees for a roof. The poor Dalar man stood and waited for the thing that moved in the coffin to go away. It did not strike him that it would not go unrequested. Had it not knocked because it wanted to get out? He stood for a long time with his head behind the coffin-lid and waited, that it should go. He peeped over the lid when he thought that now it must have gone. But it had not moved; it remained lying on its bed of shavings.

He could not put up with it any longer; he must really make an end of it. It was a long time since his violin had spoken so prettily as to-day, he longed to sit again quietly with it.

Ingrid, who had nearly fallen asleep again, suddenly heard herself addressed in the sing-song Dalar dialect:

'Now, I think it is time you got up.'

As soon as he had said this he hid his head. He shook so much over his boldness that he nearly let the lid fall.

But the white mist which had been before Ingrid's eyes disappeared completely when she heard a human being speaking. She saw a man standing in the corner, at the foot of the coffin, holding a coffin-lid before him. She saw at once that she could not lie down again and think it was a vision. Surely he was a reality, which she must try and make out. It certainly looked as if the coffin were a coffin, and the grave a grave, and that she herself a few minutes ago was nothing but a swathed and buried corpse. For the first time she was terror-stricken at what had happened to her. To think that she could really have been dead that moment! She could have been a hideous corpse, food for worms. She had been placed in the coffin for them to throw earth upon her; she was worth no more than a piece of turf; she had been thrown aside altogether. The worms were welcome to eat her; no one would mind about that.

Ingrid needed so badly to have a fellow-creature near her in her great terror. She had recognized the Goat directly he put up his head. He was an old acquaintance from the parsonage; she was not in the least afraid of him. She wanted him to come close to her. She did not mind in the least that he was an idiot. He was,

at any rate, a living being. She wanted him to come so near to her that she could feel she belonged to the living and not to the dead.

'Oh, for God's sake, come close to me!' she said, with tears in her voice.

She raised herself in the coffin and stretched out her arms to him.

But the Dalar man only thought of himself. If she were so anxious to have him near her, he resolved to make his own terms.

'Yes,' he said, 'if you will go away.'

Ingrid at once tried to comply with his request, but she was so tightly swathed in the sheet that she found it difficult to get up.

'You must come and help me,' she said.

She said this, partly because she was obliged to do it, and partly because she was afraid that she had not quite escaped death. She must be near someone living.

He actually went near her, squeezing himself between the coffin and the side of the grave. He bent over her, lifted her out of the coffin, and put her down on the grass at the side of the open grave.

Ingrid could not help it. She threw her arms round his neck, laid her head on his shoulder and sobbed. Afterwards she could not understand how she had been able to do this, and that she was not afraid of him. It was partly from joy that he was a human being—a living human being—and partly from gratitude, because he had saved her.

What would have become of her if it had not been for him? It was he who had raised the

coffin-lid, who had brought her back to life. She certainly did not know how it had all happened, but it was surely he who had opened the coffin. What would have happened to her if he had not done this? She would have awakened to find herself imprisoned in the black coffin. She would have knocked and shouted; but who would have heard her six feet below the ground? Ingrid dared not think of it; she was entirely absorbed with gratitude because she had been saved. She must have someone she could thank. She must lay her head on someone's breast and cry from gratitude.

The most extraordinary thing, almost, that happened that day was, that the Dalar man did not repulse her. But it was not quite clear to him that she was alive. He thought she was dead, and he knew it was not advisable to offend anyone dead. But as soon as he could manage, he freed himself from her and went down into the grave again. He placed the lid carefully on the coffin, put in the screws and fastened it as before. Then he thought the coffin would be quite still, and the violin would regain its peace and its melodies.

In the meantime Ingrid sat on the grass and tried to collect her thoughts. She looked towards the church and discovered the horses and the carriages on the hillside. Then she began to realize everything. It was Sunday; they had placed her in the grave in the morning, and now they were in church.

A great fear now seized Ingrid. The service

would, perhaps, soon be over, and then all the people would come out and see her. And she had nothing on but a sheet! She was almost naked. Fancy, if all these people came and saw her in this state! They would never forget the sight. And she would be ashamed of it all her life.

Where should she get some clothes? For a moment she thought of throwing the Dalar man's fur coat round her, but she did not think that that would make her any more like other people.

She turned quickly to the crazy man, who was still working at the coffin-lid.

'Oh,' she said, 'will you let me creep into your pack?'

In a moment she stood by the great leather pack, which contained goods enough to fill a whole market-stall, and began to open it.

'You must come and help me.'

She did not ask in vain. When the Dalar man saw her touching his wares he came up at once.

'Are you touching my pack?' he asked threateningly.

Ingrid did not notice that he spoke angrily; she considered him to be her best friend all the time.

'Oh, dear good man,' she said, 'help me to hide, so that people will not see me. Put your wares somewhere or other, and let me creep into the pack, and carry me home. Oh, do do it! I live at the Parsonage, and it is only a little way from here. You know where it is.'

The man stood and looked at her with stupid eyes. She did not know whether he had understood a word of what she said. She repeated it, but he made no sign of obeying her. She began again to take the things out of the pack. Then he stamped on the ground and tore the pack from her.

However should Ingrid be able to make him do what she wanted?

On the grass beside her lay a violin and a bow. She took them up mechanically—she did not know herself why. She had probably been so much in the company of people playing the violin that she could not bear to see an instrument lying on the ground.

As soon as she touched the violin he let go the pack, and tore the violin from her. He was evidently quite beside himself when anyone touched his violin. He looked quite malicious.

What in the world could she do to get away before people came out of church?

She began to promise him all sorts of things, just as one promises children when one wants them to be good.

'I will ask father to buy a whole dozen of scythes from you. I will lock up all the dogs when you come to the Parsonage. I will ask mother to give you a good meal.'

But there was no sign of his giving way. She bethought herself of the violin, and said in her despair:

'If you will carry me to the Parsonage, I will play for you.'

At last a smile flashed across his face. That was evidently what he wanted.

'I will play for you the whole afternoon; I will play for you as long as you like.'

'Will you teach the violin new melodies?' he asked.

'Of course I will.'

But Ingrid now became both surprised and unhappy, for he took hold of the pack and pulled it towards him. He dragged it over the graves, and the sweet-williams and southernwood that grew on them were crushed under it as if it were a roller. He dragged it to a heap of branches and wizened leaves and old wreaths lying near the wall round the churchyard. There he took all the things out of the pack, and hid them well under the heap. When it was empty he returned to Ingrid.

'Now you can get in,' he said.

Ingrid stepped into the pack, and crouched down on the wooden bottom. The man fastened all the straps as carefully as when he went about with his usual wares, bent down so that he nearly went on his knees, put his arms through the braces, buckled a couple of straps across his chest, and stood up. When he had gone a few steps he began to laugh. His pack was so light that he could have danced with it.

It was only about a mile from the church to the Parsonage. The Dalar man could walk it in twenty minutes. Ingrid's only wish was that he would walk so quickly that she could get home before the people came back from church. She could not bear the idea of so many people seeing her. She would like to get home when only her mother and the maid-servants were there.

Ingrid had taken with her the little bouquet of flowers from her adopted mother's myrtle. She was so pleased with it that she kissed it over and over again. It made her think more kindly of her adopted mother than she had ever done before. But in any case she would, of course, think kindly of her now. One who has come straight from the grave must think kindly and gently of everything living and moving on the face of the earth.

She could now understand so well that the Pastor's wife was bound to love her own children more than her adopted daughter. And when they were so poor at the Parsonage that they could not afford to keep a nursemaid, she could see now that it was quite natural that she should look after her little brothers and sisters. And when her brothers and sisters were not good to her, it was because they had become accustomed to think of her as their nurse. It was not so easy for them to remember that she had come to the Parsonage to be their sister.

And, after all, it all came from their being poor. When father some day got another living, and became Dean, or even Rector, everything would surely come right. Then they would love her again, as they did when she first came to them. The good old times would be sure to come back again. Ingrid kissed her flowers. It had not been mother's intention, perhaps, to be hard; it was only worry that had made her so strange and unkind.

But now it would not matter how unkind they

were to her. In the future nothing could hurt her, for now she would always be glad, simply because she was alive. And if things should ever be really bad again, she would only think of mother's myrtle and her little brother's horse.

It was happiness enough to know that she was being carried along the road alive. This morning no one had thought that she would ever again go over these roads and hills. And the fragrant clover and the little birds singing and the beautiful shady trees, which had all been a source of joy for the living, had not even existed for her. But she had not much time for reflection, for in twenty minutes the Dalar man had reached the Parsonage.

No one was at home but the Pastor's wife and the maid-servants, just as Ingrid had wished. The Pastor's wife had been busy the whole morning cooking for the funeral feast. She soon expected the guests, and everything was nearly ready. She had just been into the bedroom to put on her black dress. She glanced down the road to the church, but there were still no carriages to be seen. So she went once again into the kitchen to taste the food.

She was quite satisfied, for everything was as it ought to be, and one cannot help being glad for that, even if one is in mourning. There was only one maid in the kitchen, and that was the one the Pastor's wife had brought with her from her old home, so she felt she could speak to her in confidence.

'I must confess, Lisa,' she said, 'I think anyone would be pleased with having such a funeral.'

'If she could only look down and see all the fuss you make of her,' Lisa said, 'she would be pleased.'

'Ah!' said the Pastor's wife, 'I don't think she would ever be pleased with me.'

'She is dead now,' said the girl, 'and I am not the one to say anything against one who is hardly yet under the ground.'

'I have had to bear many a hard word from my husband for her sake,' said the mistress.

The Pastor's wife felt she wanted to speak with someone about the dead girl. Her conscience had pricked her a little on her account, and this was why she had arranged such a grand funeral feast. She thought her conscience might leave her alone now she had had so much trouble over the funeral, but it did not do so by any means. Her husband also reproached himself, and said that the young girl had not been treated like one of their own children, and that they had promised she should be when they adopted her; and he said it would have been better if they had never taken her, when they could not help letting her see that they loved their own children more. And now the Pastor's wife felt she must talk to someone about the young girl, to hear whether people thought she had treated her badly.

She saw that Lisa began to stir the pan violently, as if she had difficulty in controlling her anger. She was a clever girl, who thoroughly understood how to get into her mistress's good books.

'I must say,' Lisa began, 'that when one has a mother who always looks after one, and takes

care that one is neat and clean, one might at least try to obey and please her. And when one is allowed to live in a good Parsonage, and to be educated respectably, one ought at least to give some return for it, and not always go idling about and dreaming. I should like to know what would have happened if you had not taken the poor thing in. I suppose she would have been running about with those acrobats, and have died in the streets, like any other poor wretch.'

A man from Dalarne came across the yard; he had his pack on his back, although it was Sunday. He came very quietly through the open kitchen-door, and curtsied when he entered, but no one took any notice of him. Both the mistress and the maid saw him, but as they knew him, they did not think it necessary to interrupt their conversation.

The Pastor's wife was anxious to continue it; she felt she was about to hear what she needed to ease her conscience.

'It is perhaps as well she is gone,' she said.

'Yes, ma'am,' the servant said eagerly; 'and I am sure the Pastor thinks just the same. In any case he soon will. And the mistress will see that now there will be more peace in the house, and I am sure the master needs it.'

'Oh!' said the Pastor's wife, 'I was obliged to be careful. There were always so many clothes to be got for her, that it was quite dreadful. He was so afraid that she should not get as much as the others that she sometimes even had more. And it cost so much, now that she was grown up.'

'I suppose, ma'am, Greta will get her muslin dress?'

'Yes; either Greta will have it, or I shall use it myself.'

'She does not leave much behind her, poor thing!'

'No one expects her to leave anything,' said her adopted mother. 'I should be quite content if I could remember ever having had a kind word from her.'

This is only the kind of thing one says when one has a bad conscience, and wants to excuse one's self. Her adopted mother did not really mean what she said.

The Dalar man behaved exactly as he always did when he came to sell his wares. He stood for a little while looking round the kitchen; then he slowly pushed the pack on to a table, and unfastened the braces and the straps; then he looked round to see if there were any cats or dogs about. He then straightened his back, and began to unfasten the two leather flaps, which were fastened with numerous buckles and knots.

'He need not trouble about opening his pack to-day,' Lisa said; 'it is Sunday, and he knows quite well we don't buy anything on Sundays.'

She, however, took no notice of the crazy fellow, who continued to unfasten his straps. She turned round to her mistress. This was a good opportunity for insinuating herself.

'I don't even know whether she was good to the children. I have often heard them cry in the nursery.'

'I suppose it was the same with them as it

was with their mother,' said the Pastor's wife; 'but now, of course, they cry because she is dead.'

'They don't understand what is best for them,' said the servant; 'but the mistress can be certain that before a month is gone there will be no one to cry over her.'

At the same moment they both turned round from the kitchen range, and looked towards the table, where the Dalar man stood opening his big pack. They had heard a strange noise, something like a sigh or a sob. The man was just opening the inside lid, and out of the pack rose the newly-buried birl, exactly the same as when they laid her in the coffin.

And yet she did not look quite the same. She looked almost more dead now than when she was laid in her coffin. Then she had nearly the same colour as when she was alive; now her face was ashy-gray, there was a bluish-black shadow round her mouth, and her eyes lay deep in her head. She said nothing, but her face expressed the greatest despair, and she held out beseechingly, and as if to avert their anger, the bouquet of myrtle which she had received from her adopted mother.

This sight was more than flesh and blood could stand. Her mother fell fainting to the ground; the maid stood still for a moment, gazing at the mother and daughter, covered her eyes with her hands, and rushed into her own room and locked the door.

'It is not me she has come for; this does not concern me.'

But Ingrid turned round to the Dalar man.

'Put me in your pack again, and take me away. Do you hear? Take me away. Take me back to where you found me.'

The Dalar man happened to look through the window. A long row of carts and carriages was coming up the avenue and into the yard. Ah, indeed! then he was not going to stay. He did not like that at all.

Ingrid crouched down at the bottom of the pack. She said not another word, but only sobbed. The flaps and the lids were fastened, and she was again lifted on to his back and carried away. Those who were coming to the funeral feast laughed at the Goat, who hastened away, curtsying and curtsying to every horse he met.

V

ANNA STINA was an old woman who lived in the depths of the forest. She gave a helping hand at the Parsonage now and then, and always managed opportunely to come down the hillside when they were baking or washing. She was a nice, clever old woman, and she and Ingrid were good friends. As soon as the young girl was able to collect her thoughts, she made up her mind to take refuge with her.

'Listen,' she said to the Dalar man. 'When you get onto the highroad, turn into the forest; then go straight on until you come to a gate; there you must turn to the left; then you must go straight on until you come to the large gravel-pit.

From there you can see a house: take me there, and I will play to you.'

The short and harsh manner in which she gave her orders jarred upon her ears, but she was obliged to speak in this way in order to be obeyed; it was the only chance she had. What right had she to order another person about—she who had not even the right to be alive?

After all this she would never again be able to feel as if she had any right to live. This was the most dreadful part of all that had happened to her: that she could have lived in the Parsonage for six years, and not even been able to make herself so much loved that they wished to keep her alive. And those whom no one loves have no right to live. She could not exactly say how she knew it was so, but it was as clear as daylight. She knew it from the feeling that the same moment she heard that they did not care about her an iron hand seemed to have crushed her heart as if to make it stop. Yes, it was life itself that had been closed for her. And the same moment she had come back from death, and felt the delight of being alive burn brightly and strongly within her, just at that moment the one thing that gave her the right of existing had been torn from her.

This was worse than sentence of death. It was much more cruel than an ordinary sentence of death. She knew what it was like. It was like felling a tree—not in the usual manner, when the trunk is cut through, but by cutting its roots and leaving it standing in the ground to die by itself. There the tree stands, and cannot understand why it no longer gets nourishment and support. It

struggles and strives to live, but the leaves get smaller and smaller, it sends forth no fresh shoots, the bark falls off, and it must die, because it is severed from the spring of life. Thus it is it must die.

At last the Dalar man put down his pack on the stone step outside a little house in the midst of the wild forest. The door was locked, but as soon as Ingrid had got out of the pack she took the key from under the doorstep, opened the door, and walked in.

Ingrid knew the house thoroughly and all it contained. It was not the first time she had come there for comfort; it was not the first time she had come and told old Anna Stina that she could not bear living at home any longer—that her adopted mother was so hard to her that she would not go back to the Parsonage. But every time she came the old woman had talked her over and quieted her. She had made her some terrible coffee from roasted peas and chicory, without a single coffee-bean in it, but which had all the same given her new courage, and in the end she had made her laugh at everything, and encouraged her so much, that she had simply danced down the hillside on her way home.

Even if Anna Stina had been at home, and had made some of her terrible coffee, it would probably not have helped Ingrid this time. But the old woman was down at the Parsonage to the funeral feast, for the Pastor's wife had not forgotten to invite any of those of whom Ingrid had been fond. That, too, was probably the result of an uneasy conscience.

But in Anna's room everything was as usual.

And when Ingrid saw the sofa with the wooden seat, and the clean, scoured table, and the cat, and the coffee-kettle, although she did not feel comforted or cheered, she felt that here was a place where she could give vent to her sorrow. It was a relief that here she need not think of anything but crying and moaning.

She went straight to the settle, threw herself on the wooden seat, and lay there crying, she did not know for how long.

The Dalar man sat outside on the stone step; he did not want to go into the house on account of the cat. He expected that Ingrid would come out and play to him. He had taken the violin out long ago. As it was such a long time before she came, he began to play himself. He played softly and gently, as was his wont. It was barely possible for the young girl to hear him playing.

Ingrid had one fit of shivering after the other. This was how she had been before she fell ill. She would no doubt be ill again. It was also best that the fever should come and put an end to her in earnest.

When she heard the violin, she rose and looked round with bewildered glance. Who was that playing? Was that her student? Had he come at last? It soon struck her, however, that it was the Dalar man, and she lay down again with a sigh. She could not follow what he was playing. But as soon as she closed her eyes the violin assumed the student's voice. She also heard what he said; he spoke with her adopted mother and defended her. He spoke just as nicely as he had done to Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren. Ingrid needed

love so much, he said. That was what she had missed. That was why she had not always attended to her work, but allowed dreams to fill her mind. But no one knew how she could work and slave for those who loved her. For their sake she could bear sorrow and sickness, and contempt and poverty; for them she would be as strong as a giant, and as patient as a slave.

Ingrid heard him distinctly and she became quiet. Yes, it was true. If only her adopted mother had loved her, she would have seen what Ingrid was worth. But as she did not love her, Ingrid was paralyzed in her efforts. Yes, so it had been.

Now the fever had left her, she only lay and listened to what the student said. She slept a little now and then; time after time she thought she was lying in her grave, and then it was always the student who came and took her out of the coffin. She lay and disputed with him.

'When I am dreaming it is you who come,' she said.

'It is always I who come to you, Ingrid,' he said. 'I thought you knew that. I take you out of the grave; I carry you on my shoulders; I play you to sleep. It is always I.'

What disturbed and awoke her was the thought that she had to get up and play for the Dalar man. Several times she rose up to do it, but could not. As soon as she fell back upon the settle she began to dream. She sat crouching in the pack and the student carried her through the forest. It was always he.

'But it was not you,' she said to him.

'Of course it was I,' he said, smiling at her contradicting him. 'You have been thinking about me every day for all these years; so you can understand I could not help saving you when you were in such great danger.'

Of course she saw the force of his argument; and then she began to realize that he was right, and that it was he. But this was such infinite bliss that she again awoke. Love seemed to fill her whole being. It could not have been more real had she seen and spoken with her beloved.

'Why does he never come in real life?' she said, half aloud. 'Why does he only come in my dreams?'

She did not dare to move, for then love would fly away. It was as if a timid bird had settled on her shoulder, and she was afraid of frightening it away. If she moved, the bird would fly away, and sorrow would overcome her.

When at last she really awoke, it was twilight. She must have slept the whole afternoon and evening. At that time of the year it was not dark until after ten o'clock. The violin had ceased playing, and the Dalar man had probably gone away.

Anna Stina had not yet come back. She would probably be away the whole night. It did not matter to Ingrid; all she wanted was to lie down again and sleep. She was afraid of all the sorrow and despair that would overwhelm her as soon as she awoke. But then she got something new to think about. Who could have closed the door? who had spread Anna Stina's great shawl over her? and who had placed a piece of dry bread beside her on the seat? Had he, the Goat, done

all this for her? For a moment she thought she saw dream and reality standing side by side, trying which could best console her. And the dream stood joyous and smiling, showering over her all the bliss of love to comfort her. But life, poor, hard, and bitter though it was, also brought its kindly little mite to show that it did not mean to be so hard upon her as perhaps she thought.

VI

INGRID and Anna Stina were walking through the dark forest. They had been walking for four days, and had slept three nights in the Säter huts. Ingrid was weak and weary; her face was transparently pale; her eyes were sunken, and shone feverishly. Old Anna Stina now and then secretly cast an anxious look at her, and prayed to God that He would sustain her so that she might not die by the wayside. Now and then the old woman could not help looking behind her with uneasiness. She had an uncomfortable feeling that the old man with his scythe came stealthily after them through the forest to reclaim the young girl who, both by the word of God and the casting of earth upon her, had been consecrated to him.

Old Anna Stina was little and broad, with a large, square face, which was so intelligent that it was almost good-looking. She was not superstitious—she lived quite alone in the midst of the forest without being afraid either of witches or evil spirits—but as she walked there by the side

of Ingrid she felt as distinctly as if someone had told her that she was walking beside a being who did not belong to this world. She had had that sensation ever since she had found Ingrid lying in her house that Monday morning.

Anna Stina had not returned home on the Sunday evening, for down at the Parsonage the Pastor's wife had been taken very ill, and Anna Stina, who was accustomed to nurse sick people, had stayed to sit up with her. The whole night she had heard the Pastor's wife raving about Ingrid's having appeared to her; but that the old woman had not believed. And when she returned home the next day and found Ingrid, the old woman would at once have gone down to the Parsonage again to tell them that it was not a ghost they had seen; but when she had suggested this to Ingrid, it had affected her so much that she dared not do it. It was as if the little life which burnt in her would be extinguished, just as the flame of a candle is put out by too strong a draught. She could have died as easily as a little bird in its cage. Death was prowling around her. There was nothing to be done but to nurse her very tenderly and deal very gently with her if her life was to be preserved.

The old woman hardly knew what to think of Ingrid. Perhaps she was a ghost; there seemed to be so little life in her. She quite gave up trying to talk her to reason. There was nothing else for it but giving in to her wishes that no one should hear anything about her being alive. And then the old woman tried to arrange everything as wisely as possible. She had a sister who was

housekeeper on a large estate in Dalarne, and she made up her mind to take Ingrid to her, and persuade her sister, Stafva, to give the girl a situation at the Manor House. Ingrid would have to be content with being simply a servant. There was nothing else for it.

They were now on their way to the Manor House. Anna Stina knew the country so well that they were not obliged to go by the highroad, but could follow the lonely forest paths. But they had also undergone much hardship. Their shoes were worn and in pieces, their skirts soiled and frayed at the bottom, and a branch had torn a long rent in Ingrid's sleeve.

On the evening of the fourth day they came to a hill from which they could look down into a deep valley. In the valley was a lake, and near the edge of the lake was a high, rocky island, upon which stood a large white building. When Anna Stina saw the house, she said it was called Munkhyttan, and that it was there her sister lived.

They made themselves as tidy as they could on the hillside. They arranged the handkerchiefs which they wore on their heads, dried their shoes with moss, and washed themselves in a forest stream, and Anna Stina tried to make a fold in Ingrid's sleeve so that the rent could not be seen.

The old woman sighed when she looked at Ingrid, and quite lost courage. It was not only that she looked so strange in the clothes she had borrowed from Anna Stina, and which did not at all fit her, but her sister Stafva would never take her into her service, she looked so wretched and pitiful. It was like engaging a breath of wind.

The girl could be of no more use than a sick butterfly.

As soon as they were ready, they went down the hill to the lake. It was only a short distance. Then they came to the land belonging to the Manor House.

Was that a country house?

There were large neglected fields, upon which the forest encroached more and more. There was a bridge leading on to the island, so shaky that they hardly thought it would keep together until they were safely over. There was an avenue leading from the bridge to the main building, covered with grass, like a meadow, and a tree which had been blown down had been left lying across the road.

The island was pretty enough, so pretty that a castle might very well have been built there. But nothing but weeds grew in the garden, and in the large park the trees were choking each other, and black snakes glided over the green, wet walks.

Anna Stina felt uneasy when she saw how neglected everything was, and went along mumbling to herself: 'What does all this mean? Is Stafva dead? How can she stand everything looking like this? Things were very different thirty years ago, when I was last here. What in the world can be the matter with Stafva?' She could not imagine that there could be such neglect in any place where Stafva lived.

Ingrid walked behind her, slowly and reluctantly. The moment she put her foot on the bridge she felt that there were not two walking there, but three. Someone had come to meet her

there, and had turned back to accompany her. Ingrid heard no footsteps, but he who accompanied them appeared indistinctly by her side. She could see there was someone.

She became terribly afraid. She was just going to beg Anna Stina to turn back and tell her that everything seemed so strange here that she dare not go any further. But before she had time to say anything, the stranger came quite close to her, and she recognised him. Before, she only saw him indistinctly; now she saw him so clearly that she could see it was the student.

It no longer seemed weird and ghost-like that he walked there. It was only strangely delightful that he came to receive her. It was as if it were he who had brought her there, and would, by coming to welcome her, show that it was.

He walked with her over the bridge, through the avenue, quite up to the main building.

She could not help turning her head every moment to the left. It was there she saw his face, quite close to her cheek. It was really not a face that she saw, only an unspeakably beautiful smile that drew tenderly near her. But if she turned her head quite round to see it properly, it was no longer there. No, there was nothing one could see distinctly. But as soon as she looked straight before her, it was there again, quite close to her.

Her invisible companion did not speak to her, he only smiled. But that was enough for her. It was more than enough to show her that there was one in the world who kept near her with tender love.

She felt his presence as something so real, that she firmly believed he protected her and watched over her. And before this happy consciousness vanished all the despair which her adopted mother's hard words had called forth.

Ingrid felt herself again given back to life. She had the right to live, as there was one who loved her.

And this was why she entered the kitchen at Munkhyttan with a faint blush on her cheeks, and with radiant eyes, fragile, weak, and transparent, but sweet as a newly-opened rose.

She still went about as if in a dream, and did not know much about where she was; but what surprised her so much that it nearly awakened her was to see a new Anna Stina standing by the fireplace. She stood there, little and broad, with a large, square face, exactly like the other. But why was she so fine, with a white cap with strings tied in a large bow under her chin, and with a black bombazine dress? Ingrid's head was so confused, that it was some time before it occurred to her that this must be Miss Stafva.

She felt that Anna Stina looked uneasily at her, and she tried to pull herself together and say 'Good-day.' But the only thing her mind could grasp was the thought that he had come to her.

Inside the kitchen there was a small room, with blue-checked covering on the furniture. They were taken into that room, and Miss Stafva gave them coffee and something to eat.

Anna Stina at once began to talk about their errand. She spoke for a long time; said that she knew her sister stood so high in her lady-

ship's favour that she left it to her to engage the servants. Miss Stafva said nothing, but she gave a look at Ingrid as much as to say that it would hardly have been left with her if she had chosen servants like her.

Anna Stina praised Ingrid, and said she was a good girl. She had hitherto served in a parsonage, but now that she was grown up she wanted really to learn something, and that was why Anna Stina had brought her to one who could teach her more than any other person she knew.

Miss Stafva did not reply to this remark either. But her glance plainly showed that she was surprised that anyone who had had a situation in a parsonage had no clothes of her own, but was obliged to borrow old Anna Stina's.

Then old Anna Stina began to tell how she lived quite alone in the forest, deserted by all her relatives. And this young girl had come running up the hill many an evening and many an early morning to see her. She had therefore thought and hoped that she could now help her to get a good situation.

Miss Stafva said it was a pity that they had gone such a long way to find a place. If she were a clever girl, she could surely get a situation in some good family in their own neighbourhood.

Anna Stina could now clearly see that Ingrid's prospects were not good, and therefore she began in a more solemn vein:

'Here you have lived, Stafva, and had a good, comfortable home all your life, and I have had to fight my way in great poverty. But I have never asked you for anything before to-day. And now

you will send me away like a beggar, to whom one gives a meal and nothing more.'

Miss Stafva smiled a little; then she said:

'Sister Anna Stina, you are not telling me the truth. I, too, come from Raglanda, and I should like to know at what peasant's house in that parish grow such eyes and such a face.'

And she pointed at Ingrid, and continued:

'I can quite understand, Anna Stina, that you would like to help one who looks like that. But I do not understand how you can think that your sister Stafva has not more sense than to believe the stories you choose to tell her.'

Anna Stina was so frightened that she could not say a word, but Ingrid made up her mind to confide in Miss Stafva, and began at once to tell her whole story in her soft, beautiful voice.

And Ingrid had hardly told of how she had been lying in the grave, and that a Dalar man had come and saved her, before old Miss Stafva grew red and quickly bent down to hide it. It was only a second, but there must have been some cause for it, for from that moment she looked so kind.

She soon began to ask full particulars about it; more especially she wanted to know about the crazy man, whether Ingrid had not been afraid of him. Oh no, he did no harm. He was not mad, Ingrid said; he could both buy and sell. He was only frightened of some things.

Ingrid thought the hardest of all was to tell what she had heard her adopted mother say. But she told everything, although there were tears in her voice.

Then Miss Stafva went up to her, drew back the

handkerchief from her head, and looked into her eyes. Then she patted her lightly on the cheek.

'Never mind that, little miss,' she said. 'There is no need for me to know about that. Now sister and Miss Ingrid must excuse me,' she said soon after, 'but I must take up her ladyship's coffee. I shall soon be down again, and you can tell me more.'

When she returned, she said she had told her ladyship about the young girl who had lain in the grave, and now her mistress wanted to see her.

They were taken upstairs, and shown into her ladyship's boudoir.

Anna Stina remained standing at the door of the fine room. But Ingrid was not shy; she went straight up to the old lady and put out her hand. She had often been shy with others who looked much less aristocratic; but here, in this house, she did not feel embarrassed. She only felt so wonderfully happy that she had come there.

'So it is you, my child, who have been buried,' said her ladyship, nodding friendlily to her. 'Do you mind telling me your story, my child? I sit here quite alone, and never hear anything, you know.'

Then Ingrid began again to tell her story. But she had not got very far before she was interrupted. Her ladyship did exactly the same as Miss Stafva had done. She rose, pushed the handkerchief back from Ingrid's forehead and looked into her eyes.

'Yes,' her ladyship said to herself, 'that I can understand. I can understand that he must obey those eyes.'

For the first time in her life Ingrid was praised for her courage. Her ladyship thought she had been very brave to place herself in the hands of a crazy fellow.

She *was* afraid, she said, but she was still more afraid of people seeing her in that state. And he did no harm; he was almost quite right, and then he was so good.

Her ladyship wanted to know his name, but Ingrid did not know it. She had never heard of any other name but the Goat. Her ladyship asked several times how he managed when he came to do business. Had she not laughed at him, and did she not think that he looked terrible—the Goat? It sounded so strange when her ladyship said 'the Goat.' There was so much bitterness in her voice when she said it, and yet she said it over and over again.

No; Ingrid did not think so, and she never laughed at unfortunate people. The old lady looked more gentle than her words sounded.

'It appears you know how to manage mad people, my child,' she said. 'That is a great gift. Most people are afraid of such poor creatures.' She listened to all Ingrid had to say, and sat meditating. 'As you have not any home, my child,' she said, 'will you not stay here with me? You see, I am an old woman living here by myself, and you can keep me company, and I shall take care that you have everything you want. What do you say to it, my child? There will come a time, I suppose,' continued her ladyship, 'when we shall have to inform your parents that you are still living; but for the present everything shall re-

main as it is, so that you can have time to rest both body and mind. And you shall call me "Aunt"; but what shall I call you?'

'Ingrid—Ingrid Berg.'

'Ingrid,' said her ladyship thoughtfully. 'I would rather have called you something else. As soon as you entered the room with those star-like eyes, I thought you ought to be called Mignon.'

When it dawned upon the young girl that here she would really find a home, she felt more sure than ever that she had been brought here in some supernatural manner, and she whispered her thanks to her invisible protector before she thanked her ladyship, Miss Stafva, and Anna Stina.

Ingrid slept in a four-poster, on luxurious featherbeds three feet high, and had hem-stitched sheets, and silken quilts embroidered with Swedish crowns and French lilies. The bed was so broad that she could lie as she liked either way, and so high that she must mount two steps to get into it. At the top sat a Cupid holding the brightly-coloured hangings, and on the posts sat other Cupids, which held them up in festoons.

In the same room where the bed stood was an old curved chest of drawers inlaid with olive-wood, and from it Ingrid might take as much sweetly-scented linen as she liked. There was also a wardrobe containing many gay and pretty silk and muslin gowns that only hung there and waited until it pleased her to put them on.

When she awoke in the morning there stood by her bedside a tray with a silver coffee-set and

old Indian china. And every morning she set her small white teeth in fine white bread and delicious almond-cakes; every day she was dressed in a fine muslin gown with a lace fichu. Her hair was dressed high at the back, but round her forehead there was a row of little light curls.

On the wall between the windows hung a mirror, with a narrow glass in a broad frame, where she could see herself, and nod to her picture, and ask:

'Is it you? Is it really you? How have you come here?'

In the daytime, when Ingrid had left the chamber with the four-poster, she sat in the drawing-room and embroidered or painted on silk, and when she was tired of that, she played a little on the guitar and sang, or talked with the old lady, who taught her French, and amused herself by training her to be a fine lady.

But she had come to an enchanted castle—she could not get away from that idea. She had had that feeling the first moment, and it was always coming back again. No one arrived at the house, no one left it. In this big house only two or three rooms were kept in order; in the others no one ever went. No one walked in the garden, no one looked after it. There was only one man-servant, and an old man who cut the firewood. And Miss Stafva had only two servants, who helped her in the kitchen and in the dairy.

But there was always dainty food on the table, and her ladyship and Ingrid were always waited upon and dressed like fine ladies of rank.

If nothing thrived on the old estate, there was,

at any rate, fertile soil for dreams, and even if they did not nurse and cultivate flowers there, Ingrid was not the one to neglect her dream-roses. They grew up around her whenever she was alone. It seemed to her then as if red dream-roses formed a canopy over her.

Round the island where the trees bent low over the water, and sent long branches in between the reeds, and where shrubs and lofty trees grew luxuriantly, was a pathway where Ingrid often walked. It looked so strange to see so many letters carved on the trees, to see the old seats and summer-houses; to see the old tumble-down pavilions, which were so worm-eaten that she dared not go into them; to think that real people had walked here, that here they had lived, and longed, and loved, and that this had not always been an enchanted castle.

Down here she felt even more the witchery of the place. Here the face with the smile came to her. Here she could thank him, the student, because he had brought her to a home where she was so happy, where they loved her, and made her forget how hardly others had treated her. If it had not been he who had arranged all this for her, she could not possibly have been allowed to remain here; it was quite impossible.

She knew that it must be he. She had never before had such wild fancies. She had always been thinking of him, but she had never felt that he was so near her that he took care of her. The only thing she longed for was that he himself should come, for of course he would come some day. It was impossible that he should not come.

In these avenues he had left behind part of his soul.

Summer went, and autumn; Christmas was drawing near.

'Miss Ingrid,' said the old housekeeper one day, in a rather mysterious manner, 'I think I ought to tell you that the young master who owns Munkhyttan is coming home for Christmas. In any case, he generally comes,' she added, with a sigh.

'And her ladyship, who has never even mentioned that she has a son,' said Ingrid.

But she was not really surprised. She might just as well have answered that she had known it all along.

'No one has spoken to you about him, Miss Ingrid,' said the housekeeper, 'for her ladyship has forbidden us to speak about him.'

And then Miss Stafva would not say any more.

Neither did Ingrid want to ask any more. Now she was afraid of hearing something definite. She had raised her expectations so high that she was herself afraid they would fail. The truth might be well worth hearing, but it might also be bitter, and destroy all her beautiful dreams. But from that day he was with her night and day. She had hardly time to speak to others. She must always be with him.

One day she saw that they had cleared the snow away from the avenue. She grew almost frightened. Was he coming now?

The next day her ladyship sat from early morn-

ing in the window looking down the avenue. Ingrid had gone further into the room. She was so restless that she could not remain at the window.

'Do you know whom I am expecting to-day, Ingrid?'

The young girl nodded; she dared not depend upon her voice to answer.

'Has Miss Stafva told you that my son is peculiar?'

Ingrid shook her head.

'He is very peculiar—he—I cannot speak about it. I cannot—you must see for yourself.'

It sounded heartrending. Ingrid grew very uneasy. What was there with this house that made everything so strange? Was it something terrible that she did not know about? Was her ladyship not on good terms with her son? What was it, what was it?

The one moment in an ecstasy of joy, the next in a fever of uncertainty, she was obliged to call forth the long row of visions in order again to feel that it must be he who came. She could not at all say why she so firmly believed that he must be the son just of this house. He might, for the matter of that, be quite another person. Oh, how hard it was that she had never heard his name!

It was a long day. They sat waiting in silence until evening came.

The man came driving a cartload of Christmas logs, and the horse remained in the yard whilst the wood was unloaded.

'Ingrid,' said her ladyship in a commanding

and hasty tone, 'run down to Anders and tell him that he must be quick and get the horse into the stable. Quick—quick!'

Ingrid ran down the stairs and on to the veranda; but when she came out she forgot to call to the man. Just behind the cart she saw a tall man in a sheepskin coat, and with a large pack on his back. It was not necessary for her to see him standing curtsying and curtsying to recognise him. But, but—— She put her hand to her head and drew a deep breath. How would all these things ever become clear to her? Was it for that fellow's sake her ladyship had sent her down? And the man, why did he pull the horse away in such great haste? And why did he take off his cap and salute? What had that crazy man to do with the people of this house?

All at once the truth flashed upon Ingrid so crushingly and overwhelmingly that she could have screamed. It was not her beloved who had watched over her; it was this crazy man. She had been allowed to remain here because she had spoken kindly of him, because his mother wanted to carry on the good work which he had commenced.

The Goat—that was the young master.

But to her no one came. No one had brought her here; no one had expected her. It was all dreams, fancies, illusions! Oh, how hard it was! If she had only never expected him!

But at night, when Ingrid lay in the big bed with the brightly-coloured hangings, she dreamt over and over again that she saw the student come home. 'It was not you who came,' she

said. ‘Yes, of course it was I,’ he replied. And in her dreams she believed him.

One day, the week after Christmas, Ingrid sat at the window in the boudoir embroidering. Her ladyship sat on the sofa knitting, as she always did now. There was silence in the room.

Young Hede had been at home for a week. During all that time Ingrid had never seen him. In his home, too, he lived like a peasant, slept in the men-servants' quarters, and had his meals in the kitchen. He never went to see his mother.

Ingrid knew that both her ladyship and Miss Stafva expected that she should do something for Hede, that at the least she would try and persuade him to remain at home. And it grieved her that it was impossible for her to do what they wished. She was in despair about herself and about the utter weakness that had come over her since her expectations had been so shattered.

To-day Miss Stafva had just come in to say that Hede was getting his pack ready to start. He was not even staying as long as he generally did at Christmas, she said with a reproachful look at Ingrid.

Ingrid understood all they had expected from her, but she could do nothing. She sewed and sewed without saying anything.

Miss Stafva went away, and there was again silence in the room. Ingrid quite forgot that she was not alone; a feeling of drowsiness suddenly came over her, whilst all her sad thoughts wove themselves into a strange fancy.

She thought she was walking up and down the

whole of the large house. She went through a number of rooms and salons; she saw them before her with gray covers over the furniture. The paintings and the chandeliers were covered with gauze, and on the floors was a layer of thick dust, which whirled about when she went through the rooms. But at last she came to a room where she had never been before; it was quite a small chamber, where both walls and ceiling were black. But when she came to look more closely at them, she saw that the chamber was neither painted black, nor covered with black material, but it was so dark on account of the walls and the ceiling being completely covered with bats. The whole room was nothing but a huge nest for bats. In one of the windows a pane was broken, so one could understand how the bats had got in in such incredible numbers that they covered the whole room. They hung there in their undisturbed winter sleep; not one moved when she entered. But she was seized by such terror at this sight that she began to shiver and shake all over. It was dreadful to see the quantity of bats she so distinctly saw hanging there. They all had black wings wrapped around them like cloaks; they all hung from the walls by a single long claw in undisturbable sleep. She saw it all so distinctly that she wondered if Miss Stafva knew that the bats had taken possession of a whole room. In her thoughts she then went to Miss Stafva and asked her whether she had been into that room and seen all the bats.

'Of course I have seen them,' said Miss Stafva. 'It is their own room. I suppose you know, Miss

Ingrid, that there is not a single old country house in all Sweden where they have not to give up a room to the bats?'

'I have never heard that before,' Ingrid said.

'When you have lived as long in the world as I have, Miss Ingrid, you will find out that I am speaking the truth,' said Miss Stafva.

'I cannot understand that people will put up with such a thing,' Ingrid said.

'We are obliged to,' said Miss Stafva. 'Those bats are Mistress Sorrow's birds, and she has commanded us to receive them.'

Ingrid saw that Miss Stafva did not wish to say anything more about that matter, and she began to sew again; but she could not help speculating over who that Mistress Sorrow could be who had so much power here that she could compel Miss Stafva to give up a whole room to the bats.

Just as she was thinking about all this, she saw a black sledge, drawn by black horses, pull up outside the veranda. She saw Miss Stafva come out and make a low curtsy. An old lady in a long black velvet cloak, with many small capes on the shoulders, alighted from the sledge. She was bent, and had difficulty in walking. She could hardly lift her feet sufficiently to walk up the steps.

'Ingrid,' said her ladyship, looking up from her knitting, 'I think I heard Mistress Sorrow arrive. It must have been her jingle I heard. Have you noticed that she never has sledge-bells on her horses, but only quite a small jingle? But one can hear it—one can hear it! Go down into

the hall, Ingrid, and bid Mistress Sorrow welcome.'

When Ingrid came down into the front hall, Mistress Sorrow stood talking with Miss Stafva on the veranda. They did not notice her.

Ingrid saw with surprise that the round-backed old lady had something hidden under all her capes which looked like crape; it was put well up and carefully hidden. Ingrid had to look very closely before she discovered that they were two large bat's wings which she tried to hide. The young girl grew still more curious and tried to see her face, but she stood and looked into the yard, so it was impossible. So much, however, Ingrid did see when she put out her hand to the housekeeper—that one of her fingers was much longer than the others, and at the end of it was a large, crooked claw.

'I suppose everything is as usual here?' she said.

'Yes, honoured Mistress Sorrow,' said Miss Stafva.

'You have not planted any flowers, nor pruned any trees? You have not mended the bridge, nor weeded the avenue?'

'No, honoured mistress.'

'This is quite as it should be,' said the honoured mistress. 'I suppose you have not had the audacity to search for the vein of ore, or to cut down the forest which is encroaching on the fields?'

'No, honoured mistress.'

'Or to clean the wells?'

'No, nor to clean the wells.'

'This is a nice place,' said Mistress Sorrow; 'I always like being here. In a few years things will be in such a state that my birds can live all over the house. You are really very good to my birds, Miss Stafva.'

At this praise the housekeeper made a deep curtsy.

'How are things otherwise at the house?' said Mistress Sorrow. 'What sort of a Christmas have you had?'

'We have kept Christmas as we always do,' said Miss Stafva. 'Her ladyship sits knitting in her room day after day, thinks of nothing but her son, and does not even know that it is a festival. Christmas Eve we allowed to pass like any other day—no presents and no candles.'

'No Christmas tree, no Christmas fare?'

'Nor any going to church; not so much as a candle in the windows on Christmas morning.'

'Why should her ladyship honour God's Son when God will not heal her son?' said Mistress Sorrow.

'No, why should she?'

'He is at home at present, I suppose? Perhaps he is better now?'

'No, he is no better. He is as much afraid of things as ever.'

'Does he still behave like a peasant? Does he never go into the rooms?'

'We cannot get him to go into the rooms; he is afraid of her ladyship, as the honoured mistress knows.'

'He has his meals in the kitchen, and sleeps in the men-servants' room?'

'Yes, he does.'

'And you have no idea how to cure him?'

'We know nothing, we understand nothing.'

Mistress Sorrow was silent for a moment; when she spoke again there was a hard, sharp ring in her voice:

'This is all right as far as it goes, Miss Stafva; but I am not quite satisfied with you, all the same.'

The same moment she turned round and looked sharply at Ingrid.

Ingrid shuddered. Mistress Sorrow had a little, wrinkled face, the under part of which was so doubled up that one could hardly see the lower jaw. She had teeth like a saw, and thick hair on the upper lip. Her eyebrows were one single tuft of hair, and her skin was quite brown.

Ingrid thought Miss Stafva could not see what she saw: Mistress Sorrow was not a human being; she was only an animal.

Mistress Sorrow opened her mouth and showed her glittering teeth when she looked at Ingrid.

'When this girl came here,' she said to Miss Stafva, 'you thought she had been sent by God. You thought you could see from her eyes that she had been sent by Our Lord to save him. She knew how to manage mad people. Well, how has it worked?'

'It has not worked at all. She has not done anything.'

'No, I have seen to that,' said Mistress Sorrow. 'It was my doing that you did not tell her

why she was allowed to stay here. Had she known that, she would not have indulged in such rosy dreams about seeing her beloved. If she had not had such expectations, she would not have had such a bitter disappointment. Had disappointment not paralyzed her, she could perhaps have done something for this mad fellow. But now she has not even been to see him. She hates him because he is not the one she expected him to be. That is my doing, Miss Stafva, my doing.'

'Yes; the honoured mistress knows her business,' said Miss Stafva.

Mistress Sorrow took her lace handkerchief and dried her red-rimmed eyes. It looked as if it were meant for an expression of joy.

'You need not make yourself out to be any better than you are, Miss Stafva,' she said. 'I know you do not like my having taken that room for my birds. You do not like the thought of my having the whole house soon. I know that. You and your mistress had intended to cheat me. But it is all over now.'

'Yes,' said Miss Stafva, 'the honoured mistress can be quite easy. It is all over. The young master is leaving to-day. He has packed up his pack, and then we always know he is about to leave. Everything her ladyship and I have been dreaming about the whole autumn is over. Nothing has been done. We thought she might at least have persuaded him to remain at home, but in spite of all we have done for her, she has not done anything for us.'

'No, she has only been a poor help, I know

that,' said Mistress Sorrow. 'But, all the same, she must be sent away now. That was really what I wanted to see her ladyship about.'

Mistress Sorrow began to drag herself up the steps on her tottering legs. At every step she raised her wings a little, as if they should help her. She would, no doubt, much rather have flown.

Ingrid went behind her. She felt strangely attracted and fascinated. If Mistress Sorrow had been the most beautiful woman in the world, she could not have felt a greater inclination to follow her.

When she went into the boudoir she saw Mistress Sorrow sitting on the sofa by the side of her ladyship, whispering confidentially with her, as if they were old friends.

'You must be able to see that you cannot keep her with you,' said Mistress Sorrow impressively. 'You, who cannot bear to see a flower growing in your garden, can surely not stand having a young girl about in the house. It always brings a certain amount of brightness and life, and that would not suit you.'

'No; that is just what I have been sitting and thinking about.'

'Get her a situation as lady's companion somewhere or other, but don't keep her here.'

She rose to say good-bye.

'That was all I wanted to see you about,' she said. 'But how are you yourself?'

'Knives and scissors cut my heart all day long,' said her ladyship. 'I only live in him as long as he is at home. It is worse than usual,

much worse this time. I cannot bear it much longer.' . . .

Ingrid started; it was her ladyship's bell that rang. She had been dreaming so vividly that she was quite surprised to see that her ladyship was alone, and that the black sledge was not waiting before the door.

Her ladyship had rung for Miss Stafva, but she did not come. She asked Ingrid to go down to her room and call her.

Ingrid went, but the little blue-checked room was empty. The young girl was going into the kitchen to ask for the housekeeper, but before she had time to open the door she heard Hede talking. She stopped outside; she could not persuade herself to go in and see him.

She tried, however, to argue with herself. It was not his fault that he was not the one she had been expecting. She must try to do something for him; she must persuade him to remain at home. Before, she had not had such a feeling against him. He was not so very bad.

She bent down and peeped through the keyhole. It was the same here as at other places. The servants tried to lead him on in order to amuse themselves by his strange talk. They asked him whom he was going to marry. Hede smiled; he liked to be asked about that kind of thing.

'She is called Grave-Lily—don't you know that?' he said.

The servant said she did not know that she had such a fine name.

'But where does she live?'

'Neither has she home nor has she farm,' Hede said. 'She lives in my pack.'

The servant said that was a queer home, and asked about her parents.

'Neither has she father nor has she mother,' Hede said. 'She is as fine as a flower; she has grown up in a garden.'

He said all this with a certain amount of clearness, but when he wanted to describe how beautiful his sweetheart was he could not get on at all. He said a number of words, but they were strangely mixed together. One could not follow his thoughts, but evidently he himself derived much pleasure from what he said. He sat smiling and happy.

Ingrid hurried away. She could not bear it any longer. She could not do anything for him. She was afraid of him. She disliked him. But she had not got further than the stairs before her conscience pricked her. Here she had received so much kindness, and she would not make any return.

In order to master her dislike she tried in her own mind to think of Hede as a gentleman. She wondered how he had looked when he wore good clothes, and had his hair brushed back. She closed her eyes for a moment and thought. No, it was impossible, she could not imagine him as being any different from what he was. The same moment she saw the outlines of a beloved face by her side. It appeared at her left side wonderfully distinct. This time the face did not smile. The lips trembled as if in pain, and unspeakable suffering was written in sharp lines round the mouth.

Ingrid stopped half-way up the stairs and looked at it. There it was, light and fleeting, as impossible to grasp and hold fast as a sun-spot reflected by the prism of a chandelier, but just as visible, just as real. She thought of her recent dream, but this was different—this was reality.

When she had looked a little at the face, the lips began to move; they spoke, but she could not hear a sound. Then she tried to see what they said, tried to read the words from the lips, as deaf people do, and she succeeded.

'Do not let me go,' the lips said; 'do not let me go.'

And the anguish with which it was said! If a fellow-creature had been lying at her feet begging for life, it could not have affected her more. She was so overcome that she shook. It was more heart-rending than anything she had ever heard in her whole life. Never had she thought that anyone could beg in such fearful anguish. Again and again the lips begged, 'Do not let me go!' And for every time the anguish was greater.

Ingrid did not understand it, but remained standing, filled with unspeakable pity. It seemed to her that more than life itself must be at stake for one who begged like this, that his very soul must be at stake.

The lips did not move any more; they stood half open in dull despair. When they assumed this expression she uttered a cry and stumbled. She recognised the face of the crazy fellow as she had just seen it.

'No, no, no!' she said. 'It cannot be so! It

must not! it cannot! It is not possible that it is he!'

The same moment the face vanished. She must have sat for a whole hour on the cold staircase, crying in helpless despair. But at last hope sprang up in her, strong and fair. She again took courage to raise her head. All that had happened seemed to show that she should save him. It was for that she had come here. She should have the great, great happiness of saving him.

In the little boudoir her ladyship was talking to Miss Stafva. It sounded so pitiful to hear her asking the housekeeper to persuade her son to remain a few days longer. Miss Stafva tried to appear hard and severe.

'Of course, I can ask him,' she said; 'but your ladyship knows that no one can make him stay longer than he wants.'

'We have money enough, you know. There is not the slightest necessity for him to go. Can you not tell him that?' said her ladyship.

At the same moment Ingrid came in. The door opened noiselessly. She glided through the room with light, airy steps; her eyes were radiant, as if she beheld something beautiful afar off.

When her ladyship saw her she frowned a little. She also felt an inclination to be cruel, to give pain.

'Ingrid,' she said, 'come here; I must speak with you about your future.'

The young girl had fetched her guitar and was about to leave the room. She turned round to her ladyship.

'My future?' she said, putting her hand to her forehead. 'My future is already decided, you know,' she continued, with the smile of a martyr; and without saying any more she left the room.

Her ladyship and Stafva looked in surprise at each other. They began to discuss where they should send the young girl. But when Miss Stafva came down to her room she found Ingrid sitting there, singing some little songs and playing on the guitar, and Hede sat opposite her, listening, his face all sunshine.

Ever since Ingrid had recognised the student in the poor crazy fellow, she had no other thought but that of trying to cure him; but this was a difficult task, and she had no idea whatever as to how she should set about it. To begin with, she only thought of how she could persuade him to remain at Munkhyttan; and this was easy enough. Only for the sake of hearing her play the violin or the guitar a little every day he would now sit patiently from morning till evening in Miss Stafva's room waiting for her.

She thought it would be a great thing if she could get him to go into the other rooms, but that she could not. She tried keeping in her room, and said she would not play any more for him if he did not come to her. But after she had remained there two days, he began to pack up his pack to go away, and then she was obliged to give in.

He showed great preference for her, and distinctly showed that he liked her better than others; but she did not make him less frightened. She begged him to leave off his sheep-

skin coat, and wear an ordinary coat. He consented at once, but the next day he had it on again. Then she hid it from him; but he then appeared in the man-servant's skin coat. So then they would rather let him keep his own. He was still as frightened as ever, and took great care no one came too near him. Even Ingrid was not allowed to sit quite close to him.

One day she said to him that now he must promise her something: he must give over curtsying to the cat. She would not ask him to do anything so difficult as give up curtsying to horses and dogs, but surely he could not be afraid of a little cat.

Yes, he said; the cat was a goat.

'It can't be a goat,' she said; 'it has no horns, you know.'

He was pleased to hear that. It seemed as if at last he had found something by which he could distinguish a goat from other animals.

The next day he met Miss Stafva's cat.

'That goat has no horns,' he said; and laughed quite proudly.

He went past it, and sat down on the sofa to listen to Ingrid playing. But after he had sat a little while he grew restless, and he rose, went up to the cat, and curtsied.

Ingrid was in despair. She took him by his arm and shook him. He ran straight out of the room, and did not appear until the next day.

'Child, child,' said her ladyship, 'you do exactly as I did; you try the same as I did. It will end by your frightening him so that he dare not see you any more. It is better to leave him in

peace. We are satisfied with things as they are if he will only remain at home.'

There was nothing else for Ingrid to do but wring her hands in sorrow that such a fine, lovable fellow should be concealed in this crazy man.

Ingrid thought again and again, had she really only come here to play her grandfather's tunes to him? Should they go on like that all through life? Would it never be otherwise?

She also told him many stories, and in the midst of a story his face would lighten up, and he would say something wonderfully subtle and beautiful. A sane person would never have thought of anything like it. And no more was needed to make her courage rise, and then she began again with these endless experiments.

It was late one afternoon, and the moon was just about to rise. White snow lay on the ground, and bright gray ice covered the lake. The trees were blackish-brown, and the sky was a flaming red after the sunset.

Ingrid was on her way to the lake to skate. She went along a narrow path where the snow was quite trodden down. Gunnar Hede went behind her. There was something cowed in his bearing that made one think of a dog following its master.

Ingrid looked tired; there was no brightness in her eyes, and her complexion was gray.

As she walked along she wondered whether the day, which was now so nearly over, was content with itself—if it were from joy it had

lighted the great flaming red sunset far away in the west.

She knew she could light no bonfire over this day, nor over any other day. In the whole month that had passed since she recognised Gunnar Hede she had gained nothing.

And to-day a great fear had come upon her. It seemed to her as if she might perhaps lose her love over all this. She was nearly forgetting the student, only for thinking of the poor fellow. All that was bright and beautiful and youthful vanished from her love. Nothing was left but dull, heavy earnest.

She was quite in despair as she walked towards the lake. She felt she did not know what ought to be done—felt that she must give it all up. Oh, God, to have him walking behind her apparently strong and hale, and yet so helplessly, incurably sick!

They had reached the lake, and she was putting on her skates. She also wanted him to skate, and helped him to put on his skates; but he fell as soon as he got on to the ice. He scrambled to the bank and sat down on a stone, and she skated away from him.

Just opposite the stone upon which Gunnar Hede was sitting was an islet overgrown with birches and poplars, and behind it the radiant evening sky, which was still flaming red. And the fine, light, leafless tops of the trees stood against the glorious sky with such beauty that it was impossible not to notice it.

Is it not a fact that one always recognises a place by a single feature? One does not exactly

know how even the most familiar spot looks from all sides. And Munkhyttan one always knew by the little islet. If one had not seen the place for many years, one would know it again by this islet, where the dark tree-tops were lifted towards the sunset.

Hede sat quite still, and looked at the islet and at the branches of the trees and at the gray ice which surrounded it.

This was the view he knew best of all; there was nothing on the whole estate he knew so well, for it was always this islet that attracted the eye. And soon he was sitting looking at the islet without thinking about it, just as one does with things one knows so well. He sat for a long time gazing. Nothing disturbed him, not a human being, not a gust of wind, no strange object. He could not see Ingrid; she had skated far away on the ice.

A rest and peace fell upon Gunnar Hede such as one only feels in home surroundings. Security and peace came to him from the little islet; it quieted the everlasting unrest that tormened him.

Hede always imagined he was amongst enemies, and always thought of defending himself. For many years he had not felt that peace which made it possible for him to forget himself. But now it came upon him.

Whilst Gunnar Hede was sitting thus and not thinking of anything, he happened mechanically to make a movement as one may do when one finds one's self in accustomed circumstances. As he sat there with the shining ice before him and

with skates on his feet, he got up and skated on to the lake, and he thought as little of what he was doing as one thinks of how one is holding fork or spoon when eating.

He glided over the ice; it was glorious skating. He was a long way off the shore before he realized what he was doing.

'Splendid ice!' he thought. 'I wonder why I did not come down earlier in the day. It is a good thing I was more here yesterday,' he said. 'I will really not waste a single day during the rest of my vacation.'

No doubt it was because Gunnar Hede happened to do something he was in the habit of doing before he was ill that his old self awakened within him.

Thoughts and associations connected with his former life began to force themselves upon his consciousness, and at the same time all the thoughts connected with his illness sank into oblivion.

It had been his habit when skating to take a wide turn on the lake in order to see beyond a certain point. He did so now without thinking, but when he had turned the point he knew he had skated there to see if there was a light in his mother's window.

'She thinks it is time I was coming home, but she must wait a little; the ice is too good.'

But it was mostly vague sensations of pleasure over the exercise and the beautiful evening that were awakened within him. A moonlight evening like this was just the time for skating; he was so fond of this peaceful transition from day

to night. It was still light, but the stillness of night was already there, the best both of day and of night.

There was another skater on the ice; it was a young girl. He was not sure if he knew her, but he skated towards her to find out. No; it was no one he knew, but he could not help making a remark when he passed her about the splendid ice.

The stranger was probably a young girl from the town. She was evidently not accustomed to be addressed in this unceremonious manner; she looked quite frightened when he spoke to her. He certainly was queerly dressed; he was dressed quite like a peasant.

Well, he did not want to frighten her away. He turned off and skated further up the lake; the ice was big enough for them both.

But Ingrid had nearly screamed with astonishment. He had come towards her skating elegantly, with his arms crossed, the brim of his hat turned up, and his hair thrown back, so that it did not fall over his ears.

He had spoken with the voice of a gentleman, almost without the slightest Dalar accent. She did not stop to think about it. She skated quickly towards the shore. She came breathless into the kitchen. She did not know how to say it shortly and quickly enough.

'Miss Stafva, the young master has come home!'

The kitchen was empty; neither the housekeeper nor the servants were there. Nor was there anybody in the housekeeper's room. In-

grid rushed through the whole house, went into rooms where no one ever went. The whole time she cried out, 'Miss Stafva, Miss Stafva! the young master has come home!'

She was quite beside herself, and went on calling out, even when she stood on the landing upstairs, surrounded by the servants, Miss Stafva, and her ladyship herself. She said it over and over again. She was too much excited to stop. They all understood what she meant. They stood there quite as much overcome as she was.

Ingrid turned restlessly from the one to the other. She ought to give explanations and orders, but about what? That she could so lose her presence of mind! She looked wildly questioning at her ladyship.

'What was it I wanted?'

The old lady gave some orders in a low, trembling voice. She almost whispered.

'Light the candles and make a fire in the young master's room. Lay out the young master's clothes.'

It was neither the place nor the time for Miss Stafva to be important. But there was all the same a certain superior ring in her voice as she answered:

'There is always a fire in the young master's room. The young master's clothes are always in readiness for him.'

'Ingrid had better go up to her room,' said her ladyship.

The young girl did just the opposite. She went into the drawing-room, placed herself at the window, sobbed and shook, but did not her-

self know that she was not still. She impatiently dried the tears from her eyes, so that she could see over the snowfield in front of the house. If only she did not cry, there was nothing she could miss seeing in the clear moonlight. At last he came.

'There he is! there he is!' she cried to her ladyship. 'He walks quickly! he runs! Do come and see!'

Her ladyship sat quite still before the fire. She did not move. She strained her ears to hear, just as much as the other strained her eyes to see. She asked Ingrid to be quiet, so that she could hear how he walked. Ah, yes, she would be quiet. Her ladyship should hear how he walked. She grasped the window-sill, as if that could help her.

'You *shall* be quiet,' she whispered, 'so that her ladyship can hear how he walks.'

Her ladyship sat bending forward, listening with all her soul. Did she already hear his steps in the court-yard? She probably thought he would go towards the kitchen. Did she hear that it was the front steps that creaked? Did she hear that it was the door to the front hall that opened? Did she hear how quickly he came up the stairs, two or three steps at a time? Had his mother heard that? It was not the dragging step of a peasant, as it had been when he left the house.

It was almost more than they could bear, to hear him coming towards the door of the drawing-room. Had he come in then, they would no doubt both have screamed. But he turned down the corridor to his own rooms.

Her ladyship fell back in her chair, and her eyes closed. Ingrid thought her ladyship would have liked to die at that moment. Without opening her eyes, she put out her hand. Ingrid went softly up and took it; the old lady drew her towards her.

'Mignon, Mignon,' she said; 'that was the right name after all. But,' she continued, 'we must not cry. We must not speak about it. Take a stool and come and sit down by the fire. We must be calm, my little friend. Let us speak about something else. We must be perfectly calm when he comes in.'

Half an hour afterwards Hede came in; the tea was on the table, and the chandelier was lighted. He had dressed; every trace of the peasant had disappeared. Ingrid and her ladyship pressed each other's hands.

They had been sitting trying to imagine how he would look when he came in. It was impossible to say what he might say or do, said her ladyship. One never had known what he might do. But in any case they would both be quite calm. A feeling of great happiness had come over her, and that had quieted her. She was resting, free from all sorrow, in the arms of angels carrying her upwards, upwards.

But when Hede came in, there was no sign of confusion about him.

'I have only come to tell you,' he said, 'that I have got such a headache, that I shall have to go to bed at once. I felt it already when I was on the ice.'

Her ladyship made no reply. Everything was

so simple; she had never thought it would be like that. It took her a few moments to realize that he did not know anything about his illness, that he was living somewhere in the past.

'But perhaps I can first drink a cup of tea,' he said, looking a little surprised at their silence.

Her ladyship went to the tea-tray. He looked at her.

'Have you been crying, mother? You are so quiet.'

'We have been sitting talking about a sad story, I and my young friend here,' said her ladyship, pointing to Ingrid.

'I beg your pardon,' he said. 'I did not see you had visitors.'

The young girl came forward towards the light, beautiful as one would be who knew that the gates of heaven the next moment would open before her.

He bowed a little stiffly. He evidently did not know who she was. Her ladyship introduced them to each other. He looked curiously at Ingrid.

'I think I saw Miss Berg on the ice,' he said.

He knew nothing about her—had never spoken to her before.

A short, happy time followed. Gunnar Hede was certainly not quite himself; but those around him were happy in the belief that he soon would be. His memory was partly gone. He knew nothing about certain periods of his life; he could not play the violin; he had almost forgotten all he knew; and his power of thinking was

weak; and he preferred neither to read nor to write. But still he was very much better. He was not frightened; he was fond of his mother; he had again assumed the manners and habits of a gentleman. One can easily understand that her ladyship and all her household were delighted.

Hede was in the best of spirits—bright and joyous all day long. He never speculated over anything, put to one side everything he could not understand, never spoke about anything that necessitated mental exertion, but talked merrily and cheerfully. He was most happy when he was engaged in bodily exercise. He took Ingrid out with him sledging and skating. He did not talk much to her, but she was happy to be with him. He was kind to Ingrid, as he was to everyone else, but not in the least in love with her. He often wondered about his *fiancée*—wondered why she never wrote. But after a short time that trouble, too, left him. He always put away from him anything that worried him.

Ingrid thought that he would never get really well by doing like this. He must some time be made to think—to face his own thoughts, which he was afraid of doing now. But she dared not compel him to do this, and there was no one else who dared. If he began to care for her a little, perhaps she might dare. She thought all they now wanted, every one of them, was a little happiness.

It was just at that time that a little child died at the Parsonage at Raglanda where Ingrid had

been brought up; and the grave-digger was about to dig the grave.

The man dug the grave quite close to the spot where the previous summer he had dug the grave for Ingrid. And when he had got a few feet into the ground he happened to lay bare a corner of her coffin. The grave-digger could not help smiling a little to himself. Of course he had heard that the dead girl lying in this coffin had appeared. She was supposed to have unscrewed her coffin-lid on the very day of her funeral, risen from the grave, and appeared at the Parsonage. The Pastor's wife was not so much liked but that people in the parish rather enjoyed telling this story about her. The grave-digger thought that people should only know how securely the dead were lying in the ground, and how fast the coffin-lids. . . .

He interrupted himself in the midst of this thought. On the corner of the coffin which was exposed the lid was not quite straight, and one of the screws was not quite fast. He did not say anything, he did not think anything, but stopped digging and whistled the whole reveille of the Vermland Regiment—for he was an old soldier. Then he thought he had better examine the thing properly. It would never do for a grave-digger to have thoughts about the dead which might come and trouble him during the dark autumn nights. He hastily removed some more earth. Then he began to hammer on the coffin with his shovel. The coffin answered quite distinctly that it was empty—empty.

Half an hour after the grave-digger was at the

Parsonage. There was no end to the questionings and surmises. So much they were all agreed upon—that the young girl had been in the Dalar man's pack. But what had become of her afterwards?

Anna Stina stood at the oven in the Parsonage and looked after the baking, for of course there was baking to be done for the new funeral. She stood for a long time listening to all this talk without saying a word. All she took care of was that the cakes were not burnt. She put sheet-tins in and took sheet-tins out, and it was dangerous to approach her as she stood there with the long baker's shovel. But suddenly she took off her kitchen-apron, wiped the worst of the sweat and the soot from her face, and was talking with the Pastor in his study almost before she knew how it had come about.

After this it was not so very wonderful that one day in March the Pastor's little red-painted sledge, ornamented with green tulips, and drawn by the Pastor's little red horse, pulled up at Munkhyttan. Ingrid was of course obliged to go back with the Pastor home to her mother. The Pastor had come to fetch her. He did not say much about their being glad that she was alive, but one could see how happy he was. He had never been able to forgive himself that they had not been more kind to their adopted daughter. And now he was radiant at the thought that he was allowed to make a new beginning and make everything good for her this time.

They did not speak a word about the reason why she had run away. It was of no use bring-

ing that up again so long after. But Ingrid understood that the Pastor's wife had had a hard time, and had suffered many pangs of conscience, and that they wanted to have her back again in order to be good to her. She felt that she was almost obliged to go back to the Parsonage to show that she had no ill-feeling against her adopted parents.

They all thought it was the most natural thing that she should go to the Parsonage for a week or two. And why should she not? She could not make the excuse that they needed her at Munkhyttan. She could surely be away for some weeks without it doing Gunnar Hede any harm. She felt it was hard, but it was best she should go away, as they all thought it was the right thing.

Perhaps she had hoped they would ask her not to go away. She took her seat in the sledge with the feeling that her ladyship or Miss Stafva would surely come and lift her out of it, and carry her into the house again. It was impossible to realize that she was actually driving down the avenue, that she was turning into the forest, and that Munkhyttan was disappearing behind her.

But supposing it was from pure goodness that they let her go? They thought, perhaps, that youth, with its craving for pleasure, wanted to get away from the loneliness of Munkhyttan. They thought, perhaps, she was tired of being the keeper of a crazy man. She raised her hand, and was on the point of seizing the reins and turning the horse. Now that she was several miles from the house it struck her that that was

why they had let her go. She would have liked so much to have gone back and asked them.

In her utter loneliness she felt as if she were groping about in the wild forest. There was not a single human being who answered her or advised her. She received just as much answer from fir and pine, and squirrel and owl, as she did from any human being.

It was really a matter of utter indifference to her how they treated her at the Parsonage. They were very kind to her, as far as she knew, but it really did not matter. If she had come to a palace full of everything one could most desire, that would likewise have been the same to her. No bed is soft enough to give rest unto one whose heart is full of longing.

In the beginning she had asked them every day, as modestly as she could, if they would not let her go home, now that she had had the great happiness of seeing her mother and her brothers and sisters. But the roads were really too bad. She must stay with them until the frost had disappeared. It was not a matter of life and death, they supposed, to go back to that place.

Ingrid could not understand why it annoyed people when she said she wanted to go back to Munkhyttan. But this seemed to be the case with her father and her mother and everybody else in the parish. One had no right, it appeared, to long for any other place in the world, when one was at Raglanda.

She soon saw it was best not to speak about her going away. There were so many difficulties in the way whenever she spoke about it. It

was not enough that the roads were still in the same bad condition; they surrounded her with walls and ramparts and moats. She would knit and weave, and plant out in the forcing-frames. And surely she would not go away until after the large birthday party at the Dean's? And she could not think of leaving till after Karin Landberg's wedding.

There was nothing for her to do but to lift her hands in supplication to the spring, and beg it to make haste with its work, beg for sunshine and warmth, beg the gentle sun to do its very best for the great border forest, send small piercing rays between the fir-trees, and melt the snow beneath them. Dear, dear sun! It did not matter if the snow were not melted in the valley, if only the snow would vanish from the mountains, if only the forest paths became passable, if only the Säter girls were able to go to their huts, if only the bogs became dry, if only it became possible to go by the forest road, which was half the distance of the highroad.

Ingrid knew one who would not wait for carriage, or ask for money to drive, if only the road through the forest became passable. She knew one who would leave the Parsonage some moonlight night, and who would do it without asking a single person's permission.

She thought she had waited for the spring before. That everybody does. But now Ingrid knew that she had never before longed for it. Oh no, no! She had never before known what it was to long. Before she had waited for green leaves and anemones, and the song of the thrush

and the cuckoo. But that was childishness—nothing more. They did not long for the spring who only thought of what was beautiful. One should take the first bit of earth that peeped through the snow, and kiss it. One should pluck the first coarse leaf of the nettle simply to burn into one that now the spring had come.

Everybody was very good to her. But although they did not say anything, they seemed to think that she was always thinking of leaving them.

'I can't understand why you want to go back to that place and look after that crazy fellow,' said Karin Landberg one day. It seemed as if she could read Ingrid's thoughts.

'Oh, she has given up thinking of that now,' said the Pastor's wife, before the young girl had time to answer.

When Karin was gone the Pastor's wife said:

'People wonder that you want to leave us.'

Ingrid was silent.

'They say that when Hede began to improve perhaps you fell in love with him.'

'Oh no! Not after he had begun to improve,' Ingrid said, feeling almost inclined to laugh.

'In any case, he is not the sort of person one could marry,' said her adopted mother. 'Father and I have been speaking about it, and we think it is best that you should remain with us.'

'It is very good of you that you want to keep me,' Ingrid said. And she was touched that now they wanted to be so kind to her.

They did not believe her, however obedient she was. She could not understand what little

bird it was that told them about her longing. Now her adopted mother had told her that she must not go back to Munkhyttan. But even then she could not leave the matter alone.

'If they really wanted you,' she said, 'they would write for you.'

Ingrid again felt inclined to laugh. That would be the strangest thing of all, should there be a letter from the enchanted castle. She would like to know if her adopted mother thought that the King of the Mountain wrote for the maiden who had been swallowed by the mountain to come back when she had gone to see her mother?

But if her adopted mother had known how many messages she had received she would probably have been even more uneasy. There came messages to her in her dreams by nights, and there came messages to her in her visions by day. He let Ingrid know that he was in need of her. He was so ill—so ill!

She knew that he was nearly going out of his mind again, and that she must go to him. If anyone had told her this, she would simply have answered that she knew it.

The large star-like eyes looked further and further away. Those who saw that look would never believe that she meant to stay quietly and patiently at home.

It is not very difficult either to see whether a person is content or full of longing. One only needs to see a little gleam of happiness in the eyes when he or she comes in from work and sits down by the fire. But in Ingrid's eyes there was

no gleam of happiness, except when she saw the mountain stream come down through the forest, broad and strong. It was that that should prepare the way for her.

It happened one day that Ingrid was sitting alone with Karin Landberg, and she began to tell her about her life at Munkhyttan. Karin was quite shocked. How could Ingrid stand such a life?

Karin Landberg was to be married very soon. And she was now at that stage when she could speak of nothing but her lover. She knew nothing but what he had taught her, and she could do nothing without first consulting him.

It occurred to her that Oluf had said something about Gunnar Hede which would help to frighten Ingrid if she had begun to like that crazy fellow. And then she began to tell her how mad he had really been. For Oluf had told her that when he was at the fair last autumn some gentlemen had said that they did not think the Goat was mad at all. He only pretended to be in order to attract customers. But Oluf had maintained that he was mad, and in order to prove it went to the market and bought a wretched little goat. And then it was plain enough to see that he was mad. Oluf had only put the goat in front of him on the counter where his knives and things lay, and he had run away and left both his pack and his wares, and they had all laughed so awfully when they saw how frightened he was. And it was impossible that Ingrid could care for anyone who had been so crazy.

It was, no doubt, unwise of Karin Landberg that she did not look at Ingrid whilst she told this story. If she had seen how she frowned, she would perhaps have taken warning.

'And you will marry anyone who could do such a thing!' Ingrid said. 'I think it would be better to marry the Goat himself.'

This Ingrid said in downright earnest, and it seemed so strange to Karin that she, who was always so gentle, should have said anything so unkind, that it quite worried her. For several days she was quite unhappy, because she feared Oluf was not what she would like him to be. It simply embittered Karin's life until she made up her mind to tell Oluf everything; but he was so nice and good, that he quite reassured her.

It is not an easy task to wait for the spring in Vermland. One can have sun and warmth in the evening, and the next morning find the ground white with snow. Gooseberry-bushes and lawns may be green, but the trees of the birch-forest are bare, and seem as if they will never spring out.

At Whitsuntide there was spring in the air, but Ingrid's prayers had been of no avail. Not a single Säter girl had taken up her abode in the forest, not a fen was dry; it was impossible to go through the forest.

On Whit-Sunday Ingrid and her adopted mother went to church. As it was such a great festival, they had driven to church. In olden days Ingrid had very much enjoyed driving up to the church in full gallop, whilst people along the roadside politely took off their hats, and

those who were standing on the road rushed to the side as if they were quite frightened. But at the present moment she could not enjoy anything. 'Longing takes the fragrance from the rose, and the light from the full moon,' says an old proverb.

But Ingrid was glad for what she heard in church. It did her good to hear how the disciples were comforted in their longing. She was glad that Jesus thought of comforting those who longed so greatly for Him.

Whilst Ingrid and the rest of the congregation were in church a tall Dalar man came walking down the road. He wore a sheepskin coat, and had a large pack on his back, like one who cannot tell winter from summer, or Sunday from any other day. He did not go into the church, but stole timidly past the horses that were tied to the railings, and went into the churchyard.

He sat down on a grave and thought of all the dead who were still sleeping, and of one of the dead who had awakened to life again. He was still sitting there when the people left the church. Karin Landberg's Oluf was one of the first to leave the church, and when he happened to look across the churchyard he discovered the Dalar man. It is hard to say whether it was curiosity or some other motive that prompted him, but he went up to talk to him. He wanted to see if it were possible that he who was supposed to have been cured had become mad again.

And it was possible. He told him at once that he sat there waiting for her who was called Grave-Lily. She was to come and play to

him. She played so beautifully that the sun and the stars danced.

Then Karin Landberg's Oluf told him that she for whom he was waiting was standing outside the church. If he stood up, he could see her. She would, no doubt, be glad to see him.

The Pastor's wife and Ingrid were just getting into the carriage, when a tall Dalar man came running up to them. He came at a great pace in spite of all the horses he must curtsy to, and he beckoned eagerly to the young girl.

As soon as Ingrid saw him she stood quite still. She could not have told whether she was most glad to see him again or most grieved that he had again gone out of his mind; she only forgot everything else in the world.

Her eyes began to sparkle. In that moment she saw nothing of the poor wretched man. She only felt that she was once again near the beautiful soul of the man for whom she had longed so terribly.

There were a great many people about, and they could not help looking at her. They could not take their eyes from her face. She did not move; she stood waiting for him. But those who saw how radiant she was with happiness must have thought that she was waiting for some great and noble man, instead of a poor, half-witted fellow.

They said afterwards that it almost seemed as if there were some affinity between his soul and hers—some secret affinity which lay so deeply hidden beneath their consciousness that no human being could understand it.

But when Hede was only a step or two from Ingrid her adopted mother took her resolutely round the waist and lifted her into the carriage. She would not have a scene between the two just outside the church, with so many people present. And as soon as they were in the carriage the man sent his horses off at full gallop.

A wild, terrified cry was heard as they drove away. The Pastor's wife thanked God that she had got the young girl into the carriage.

It was still early in the afternoon when a peasant came to the Parsonage to speak with the Pastor. He came to speak about the crazy Dalar man. He had now gone quite raving mad, and they had been obliged to bind him. What did the Pastor advise them to do? What should they do with him?

The Pastor could give them no other advice but to take him home. He told the peasant who he was, and where he lived.

Later on in the evening he told Ingrid everything. It was best to tell her the truth, and trust to her own common-sense.

But when night came it became clear to her that she had not time to wait for the spring. The poor girl set out for Munkhyttan by the highroad. She would no doubt be able to get there by that road, although she knew that it was twice as long as the way through the forest.

It was Whit-Monday, late in the afternoon. Ingrid walked along the highroad. There was a wide expanse of country, with low mountains and small patches of birch forest between the

fields. The mountain-ash and the bird-cherry were in bloom; the light, sticky leaves of the aspen were just out. The ditches were full of clear, rippling water which made the stones at the bottom glisten and sparkle.

Ingrid walked sorrowfully along, thinking of him whose mind had again given way, wondering whether she could do anything for him, whether it was of any use that she had left her home in this manner.

She was tired and hungry; her shoes had begun to go to pieces. Perhaps it would be better for her to turn back. She could never get to Munkhyttan.

The further she walked, the more sorrowful she became. She could not help thinking that it could be of no use her coming now that he had gone quite out of his mind. There was no doubt it was too late now; it was quite hopeless to do anything for him.

But as soon as she thought of turning back she saw Gunnar Hede's face close to her cheek, as she had so often seen it before. It gave her new courage; she felt as if he were calling for her. She again felt hopeful and confident of being able to help him.

Just as Ingrid raised her head, looking a little less downcast, a queer little procession came towards her.

There was a little horse, drawing a little cart; a fat woman sat in the cart, and a tall, thin man, with long, thin moustaches walked by the side of it.

In the country, where no one understood any-

thing about art, Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren always went in for looking like ordinary people. The little cart in which they travelled about was well covered over, and no one could suspect that it only contained fireworks and conjuring apparatus and marionettes.

No one could suspect that the fat woman who sat on the top of the load, looking like a well-to-do shopkeeper's wife, was formerly Miss Viola, who once sprang through the air, or that the man who walked by her side, and looked like a pensioned soldier, was the same Mr. Blomgren who occasionally, to break the monotony of the journey, took it into his head to turn a somersault over the horse, and play the ventriloquist with thrushes and siskins that sang in the trees by the roadside, so that he made them quite mad.

The horse was very small, and had formerly drawn a roundabout, and therefore it would never go unless it heard music. On that account Mrs. Blomgren generally sat playing the Jews'-harp, but as soon as they met anyone, she put it in her pocket, so that no one should discover they were artists, for whom country people have no respect whatever. Owing to this they did not travel very fast, but they were not in any hurry either.

The blind man, who played the violin, had to walk some little distance behind the others in order not to betray the fact of his belonging to the company. The blind man was led by a little dog; he was not allowed to have a child to lead him, for that would always have reminded Mr. and

Mrs. Blomgren of a little girl who was called Ingrid. That would have been too sad.

And now they were all in the country on account of the spring. For however much money Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren were making in the towns, they felt they *must* be in the country at that time of the year, for Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren were artists.

They did not recognise Ingrid, and she went past them without taking any notice of them, for she was in a hurry; she was afraid of their detaining her. But directly afterwards she felt that it was heartless and unkind of her, and turned back.

If Ingrid could have felt glad about anything, she would have been glad by seeing the old people's joy at meeting her. You may be sure they had plenty to talk about. The little horse turned its head time after time to see what was wrong with the roundabout.

Strangely enough, it was Ingrid who talked the most. The two old people saw at once that she had been crying, and they were so concerned that she was obliged to tell them everything that had happened to her.

But it was a relief to Ingrid to speak. The old people had their own way of taking things; they clapped their hands when she told them how she had got out of the grave and how she had frightened the Pastor's wife. They caressed her and praised her because she had run away from the Parsonage. For them nothing was dull or sad, but everything was bright and hopeful. They simply had no standard by which to measure

reality, and therefore its hardness could not affect them. They compared everything they heard with the pieces from marionette theatres and pantomimes. Of course, one also put a little sorrow and misery into the pantomime, but that was only done to heighten the effect. And, of course, everything would end well. In the pantomimes it always ended well.

There was something infectious in all this hopefulness. Ingrid knew they did not at all understand how great her trouble was, but it was cheering all the same to listen to them.

But they were also of real help to Ingrid. They told her that they had had dinner a short time since at the inn at Torsäker, and just as they were getting up from the table some peasants came driving up with a man who was mad. Mrs. Blomgren could not bear to see mad people, and wanted to go away at once, and Mr. Blomgren had consented. But supposing it was Ingrid's madman! And they had hardly said the words before Ingrid said that it was very likely, and wanted to set off at once.

Mr. Blomgren then asked his wife in his own ceremonious manner if they were not in the country solely on account of the spring, and if it were not just the same where they went. And old Mrs. Blomgren asked him equally ceremoniously in her turn if he thought she would leave her beloved Ingrid before she had reached the harbour of her happiness.

Then the old roundabout horse was turned, and conversation grew more difficult, because they again had to play on the Jews'-harp. As

soon as Mrs. Blomgren wished to say anything, she was obliged to hand the instrument to Mr. Blomgren, and when Mr. Blomgren wanted to speak, he gave it back again to his wife. And the little horse stood still every time the instrument passed from mouth to mouth.

The whole time they did their best to comfort Ingrid. They related all the fairy tales they had seen represented at the dolls' theatre. They comforted her with the 'Enchanted Princess,' they comforted her with 'Cinderella,' they comforted her with all the fairy tales under the sun.

Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren watched Ingrid when they saw that her eyes grew brighter. 'Artist's eyes,' they said, nodding contentedly to each other. 'What did we say? Artist's eyes!'

In some incomprehensible manner they had got the idea that Ingrid had become one of them, an artist. They thought she was playing a part in a drama. It was a triumph for them in their old age.

On they went as fast as they could. The old couple were only afraid that the madman would not be at the inn any longer. But he was there, and the worst of it was, no one knew how to get him away.

The two peasants from Raglanda who had brought him had taken him to one of the rooms and locked him in whilst they were waiting for fresh horses. When they left him his arms had been tied behind him, but he had somehow managed to free his hands from the cord, and when they came to fetch him he was free, and, beside himself with rage, had seized a chair, with which

he threatened to strike anyone who approached him. They could do nothing but beat a hasty retreat and lock the door. The peasants now only waited for the landlord and his men to return and help them to bind him again.

All the hope which Ingrid's old friends had reawakened within her was, however, not quenched. She quite saw that Gunnar Hede was worse than he had ever been before, but that was what she had expected. She still hoped. It was not their fairy tales, it was their great love that had given her new hope.

She asked the men to let her go to the madman. She said she knew him, and he would not do her any harm; but the peasants said they were not mad. The man in the room would kill anybody who went in.

Ingrid sat down to think. She thought how strange it was that she should meet Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren just to-day. Surely that meant something. She would never have met them if it had not been for some purpose. And Ingrid thought of how Hede had regained his senses the last time. Could she not again make him do something which would remind him of olden days, and drive away his mad thoughts? She thought and thought.

Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren sat on a seat outside the inn, looking more unhappy than one would have thought was possible. They were not far from crying.

Ingrid, their 'child,' came up to them with a smile—such a smile as only she could have—and

stroked their old, wrinkled cheeks, and said it would please her so much if they would let her see a performance like those she used to see every day in the olden time. It would be such a comfort to her.

At first they said no, for they were not at all in proper artist humour, but when she had expended a few smiles upon them they could not resist her. They went to their cart and unpacked their costumes.

When they were ready they called for the blind man, and Ingrid selected the place where the performance was to be held. She would not let them perform in the yard, but took them into the garden belonging to the inn, for there was a garden belonging to this inn. It was mostly full of beds for vegetables which had not yet come up, but here and there was an apple-tree in bloom. And Ingrid said she would like them to perform under one of the apple-trees in bloom.

Some lads and servant-girls came running when they heard the violin, so there was a small audience. But it was hard work for Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren to perform. Ingrid had asked too much of them; they were really much too sad.

And it was very unfortunate that Ingrid had taken them out into the garden. She had evidently not remembered that the rooms in the inn faced this way. Mrs. Blomgren was very nearly running away when she heard a window in one of the rooms quickly opened. Supposing the madman had heard the music, and supposing he jumped out of the window and came to them?

But Mrs. Blomgren was somewhat reassured

when she saw who had opened the window. It was a young gentleman with a pleasant face. He was in shirt-sleeves, but otherwise very decently dressed. His eye was quiet, his lips smiled, and he stroked his hair back from his forehead with his hand.

Mr. Blomgren was working, and was so taken up with the performance that he did not notice anything. Mrs. Blomgren, who had nothing else to do but kiss her hands in all directions, had time to observe everything.

It was astonishing how radiant Ingrid suddenly looked. Her eyes shone as never before, and her face was so white that light seemed to come from it. And all this radiancy was directed towards the man in the window.

He did not hesitate long. He stood up on the window-sill and jumped down to them, and he went up to the blind man and asked him to lend him his violin. Ingrid at once took the violin from the blind man and gave it to him.

'Play the waltz from "Freischütz,"' she said.

Then the man began to play, and Ingrid smiled, but she looked so unearthly that Mrs. Blomgren almost thought that she would dissolve into a sunbeam, and fly away from them. But as soon as Mrs. Blomgren heard the man play she knew him again.

'Is that how it is?' she said to herself. 'Is it he? That was why she wanted to see two old people perform.'

Gunnar Hede, who had been walking up and down his room in such a rage that he felt inclined

to kill someone, had suddenly heard a blind man playing outside his window, and that had taken him back to an incident in his former life.

He could not at first understand where his own violin was, but then he remembered that Alin had taken it away with him, and now the only thing left for him to do was to try and borrow the blind man's violin to play himself quiet again; he was so excited. And as soon as he had got the violin in his hand he began to play. It never occurred to him that he could not play. He had no idea that for several years he had only been able to play some poor little tunes.

He thought all the time he was in Upsala, outside the house with the Virginia-creepers, and he expected the acrobats would begin to dance as they had done last time. He endeavoured to play with more life to make them do so, but his fingers were stiff and awkward; the bow would not properly obey them. He exerted himself so much that the perspiration stood on his forehead.

At last, however, he got hold of the right tune —the same they had danced to the last time. He played it so enticingly, so temptingly, that it ought to have melted their hearts. But the old acrobats did not begin to dance. It was a long time since they had met the student at Upsala; they did not remember how enthusiastic they were then. They had no idea what he expected them to do.

Gunnar Hede looked at Ingrid for an explanation why they did not dance. When he looked at her there was such an unearthly radiance in her eyes that in his astonishment he gave up playing.

He stood a moment looking round the small crowd. They all looked at him with such strange, uneasy glances. It was impossible to play with people staring at him so. He simply went away from them. There were some apple-pears in bloom at the other end of the garden, so he went there.

He saw now that nothing fitted in with the ideas he had just had that Alin had locked him in, and that he was at Upsala. The garden was too large, and the house was not covered with red creepers. No, it could not be Upsala. But he did not mind very much where he was. It seemed to him as if he had not played for centuries, and now he had got hold of a violin. Now he would play. He placed the violin against his cheek, and began. But again he was stopped by the stiffness in his fingers. He could only play the very simplest things.

'I shall have to begin at the beginning,' he said.

And he smiled and played a little minuet. It was the first thing he had learnt. His father had played it to him, and he had afterwards played it from ear. He saw all at once the whole scene before him, and he heard the words:

'The little Prince should learn to dance, but he broke his little leg.'

Then he tried to play several other small dances. They were some he had played as a school boy. They had asked him to play at the dancing-lessons at the young ladies' boarding-school. He could see the girls dance and swing about, and could hear the dancing-mistress beat the time with her foot.

Then he grew bolder. He played first violin in one of Mozart's quartettes. When he learnt that, he was in the Sixth Form at the Latin school at Falun. Some old gentlemen had practised this quartette for a concert, but the first violin had been taken ill, and he was asked to take his part, young as he was. He remembered how proud he had been.

Gunnar Hede only thought of getting his fingers into practice when he played these childish exercises. But he soon noticed that something strange was happening to him. He had a distinct sensation that in his brain there was some great darkness that hid his past. As soon as he tried to remember anything, it was as if he were trying to find something in a dark room; but when he played, some of the darkness vanished. Without his having thought of it, the darkness had vanished so much that he could now remember his childhood and school life.

Then he made up his mind to let himself be led by the violin; perhaps it could drive away all the darkness. And so it did, for every piece he played the darkness vanished a little. The violin led him through the one year after the other, awoke in him memories of studies, friends and pleasures. The darkness stood like a wall before him, but when he advanced against it, armed with the violin, it vanished step by step. Now and then he looked round to see whether it closed again behind him. But behind him was bright day.

The violin came to a series of duets for piano and violin. He only played a bar or two of each.

But a large portion of the darkness vanished; he remembered his *fiancée* and his engagement. He would like to have dwelt a little over this, but there was still much darkness left to be played away. He had no time.

He glided into a hymn. He had heard it once when he was unhappy. He remembered he was sitting in a village church when he heard it. But why had be been unhappy? Because he went about the country selling goods like a poor pedlar. It was a hard life. It was sad to think about it.

The bow went over the strings like a whirlwind, and again cut through a large portion of the darkness. Now he saw the Fifty-Mile Forest, the snow-covered animals, the weird shapes, the drifts made of them. He remembered the journey to see his *fiancée*, remembered that she had broken the engagement. All this became clear to him at one time.

He really felt neither sorrow nor joy over anything he remembered. The most important thing was that he did remember. This of itself was an unspeakable pleasure. But all at once the bow stopped, as if of its own accord. It would not lead him any further. And yet there was more—much more—that he must remember. The darkness still stood like a solid wall before him.

He compelled the bow to go on. And it played two quite common tunes, the poorest he had ever heard. How could his bow have learned such tunes? The darkness did not vanish in the least for these tunes. They really taught him nothing; but from them came a terror which he could not

remember having ever felt before—an inconceivable, awful fear, the mad terror of a doomed soul.

He stopped playing; he could not bear it. What was there in these tunes—what was there? The darkness did not vanish for them, and the awful thing was, that it seemed to him that when he did not advance against the darkness with the violin and drive it before him, it came gliding towards him to overwhelm him.

He had been standing playing, with his eyes half closed; now he opened them and looked into the world of reality. He saw Ingrid, who had been standing listening to him the whole time. He asked her, not expecting an answer, but simply to keep back the darkness for a moment:

'When did I last play this tune?'

But Ingrid stood trembling. She had made up her mind, whatever happened, now he should hear the truth. Afraid she was, but at the same time full of courage, and quite decided as to what she meant to do. He should not again escape her, not be allowed to slip away from her. But in spite of her courage she did not dare to tell him straight out that these were the tunes he had played whilst he was out of his mind; she evaded the question.

'That was what you used to play at Munkhyttan last winter,' she said.

Hede felt as if he were surrounded by nothing but mysteries. Why did this young girl say '*du*' to him? She was not a peasant girl.* Her hair

* The peasants in the Dalar district used formerly to address everybody by the pronoun *du* (thou), even when speaking to the King; this custom is now, however, not so general.—I. B.

was dressed like other young ladies', on the top of the head and in small curls. Her dress was home-woven, but she wore a lace collar. She had small hands and a refined face. This face, with the large, dreamy eyes, could not belong to a peasant girl. Hede's memory could not tell him anything about her. Why did she, then, say '*du*' to him? How did she know that he had played these tunes at home?

'What is your name?' he said. 'Who are you?'

'I am Ingrid, whom you saw at Upsala many years ago, and whom you comforted because she could not learn to dance on the tight-rope.'

This went back to the time he could partly remember. Now he did remember her.

'How tall and pretty you have grown, Ingrid!' he said. 'And how fine you have become! What a beautiful brooch you have!'

He had been looking at her brooch for some time. He thought he knew it; it was like a brooch of enamel and pearls his mother used to wear. The young girl answered at once.

'Your mother gave it to me. You must have seen it before.'

Gunnar Hede put down the violin and went up to Ingrid. He asked her almost violently:

'How is it possible—how can you wear her brooch? How is it that I don't know anything about your knowing my mother?'

Ingrid was frightened. She grew almost gray with terror. She knew already what the next question would be.

'I know nothing, Ingrid. I don't know why

I am here. I don't know why you are here. Why don't I know all this?'

'Oh, don't ask me!'

She went back a step or two, and stretched out her hands as if to protect herself.

'Won't you tell me?'

'Don't ask! don't ask!'

He seized her roughly by the wrist to compel her to tell the truth.

'Tell me! I am in my full senses! Why is there so much I can't remember?'

She saw something wild and threatening in his eyes. She knew now that she would be obliged to tell him. But she felt as if it were impossible to tell a man that he had been mad. It was much more difficult than she had thought. It was impossible—impossible!

'Tell me!' he repeated.

But she could hear from his voice that he would not hear it. He was almost ready to kill her if she told him. Then she summoned up all her love, and looked straight into Gunnar Hede's eyes, and said:

'You have not been quite right.'

'Not for a long time?'

'I don't quite know—not for three or four years.'

'Have I been out of my mind?'

'No, no! You have bought and sold and gone to the fairs.'

'In what way have I been mad?'

'You were frightened.'

'Of whom was I frightened?'

'Of animals.'

'Of goats, perhaps?'

'Yes, mostly of goats.'

He had stood clutching her by the wrist the whole time. He now flung her hand away from him—simply flung it. He turned away from Ingrid in a rage, as if she had maliciously told him an infamous lie.

But this feeling gave way for something else which excited him still more. He saw before his eyes, as distinctly as if it had been a picture, a tall Dalar man, weighed down by a huge pack. He was going into a peasant's house, but a wretched little dog came rushing at him. He stopped and curtsied and curtsied, and did not dare to go in until a man came out of the house, laughing, and drove the dog away.

When he saw this he again felt that terrible fear. In this anguish the vision disappeared, but then he heard voices. They shouted and shrieked around him. They laughed. Derision was showered upon him. Worst and loudest were the shrill voices of children. One word, one name came over and over again: it was shouted, shrieked, whispered, wheezed into his ear—'The Goat! the Goat!' And that all meant him, Gunnar Hede. All that he had lived in. He felt in full consciousness the same unspeakable fear he had suffered whilst out of his mind. But now it was not fear for anything outside himself—now he was afraid of himself.

'It was I! it was I!' he said, wringing his hands. The next moment he was kneeling against a low seat. He laid his head down and cried, cried: 'It was I!' He moaned and

sobbed. 'It was I!' How could he have courage to bear this thought—a madman, scorned and laughed at by all? 'Ah! let me go mad again!' he said, hitting the seat with his fist. 'This is more than a human being can bear.'

He held his breath a moment. The darkness came towards him as the saviour he invoked. It came gliding towards him like a mist. A smile passed over his lips. He could feel the muscles of his face relax, feel that he again had the look of a madman. But that was better. The other he could not bear. To be pointed at, jeered at, scorned, mad! No, it was better to be so again and not to know it. Why should he come back to life? Everyone must loathe him. The first light, fleeting clouds of the great darkness began to enwrap him.

Ingrid stood there, seeing and hearing all his anguish, not knowing but that all would soon be lost again. She saw clearly that madness was again about to seize him. She was so frightened, so frightened, all her courage had gone. But before he again lost his senses, and became so scared that he allowed no one to come near him, she would at least take leave of him and of all her happiness.

Gunnar Hede felt that Ingrid came and knelt down beside him, laid her arm round his neck, put her cheek to his, and kissed him. She did not think herself too good to come near him, the madman, did not think herself too good to kiss him.

There was a faint hissing in the darkness. The mist lifted, and it was as if serpents had raised

their heads against him, and now wheezed with anger that they could not reach to sting him.

'Do not be so unhappy,' Ingrid said. 'Do not be so unhappy. No one thinks of the past, if you will only get well.'

'I want to be mad again,' he said. 'I cannot bear it. I cannot bear to think how I have been.'

'Yes, you can,' said Ingrid.

'No; that no one can forget,' he moaned. 'I was so dreadful! No one can love me.'

'I love you,' she said.

He looked up doubtfully.

'You kissed me in order that I should not go out of my mind again. You pity me.'

'I will kiss you again,' she said.

'You say that now because you think I am in need of hearing it.'

'Are you in need of hearing that someone loves you?'

'If I am—if I am? Ah, child,' he said, and tore himself away from her, 'how can I possibly bear it, when I know that everyone who sees me thinks: "That fellow has been mad; he has gone about curtsying for dogs and cats."'

Then he began again. He lay crying with his face in his hands.

'It is better to go out of one's mind again. I can hear them shouting after me, and I see myself, and the anguish, the anguish, the anguish——'

But then Ingrid's patience came to an end.

'Yes, that is right,' she cried; 'go out of your mind again. I call that manly to go mad in order to escape a little anguish.'

She sat biting her lips, struggling with her

tears, and as she could not get the words out quickly enough, she seized him by the shoulder and shook him. She was enraged and quite beside herself with anger because he would again escape her, because he did not struggle and fight.

'What do you care about me? What do you care about your mother? You go mad, and then you will have peace.' She shook him again by the arm. 'To be saved from anguish, you say, but you don't care about one who has been waiting for you all her life. If you had any thought for anyone but yourself, you would fight against this and get well; but you have no thought for others. You can come so touchingly in visions and dreams and beg for help, but in reality you will not have any help. You imagine that your sufferings are greater than anyone else's, but there are others who have suffered more than you.'

At last Gunnar Hede raised his eyes, and looked her straight in the face. She was anything but beautiful at this moment. Tears were streaming down her cheeks, and her lips trembled, whilst she tried to get out the words between her sobs. But in his eyes her emotion only made her more beautiful. A wonderful peace came over him, and a great and humble thankfulness. Something great and wonderful had come to him in his deepest humiliation. It must be a great love—a great love.

He had sat bemoaning his wretchedness, and Love came and knocked at his door. He would not merely be tolerated when he came back to

life; people would not only with difficulty refrain from laughing at him.

There was one who loved him and longed for him. She spoke hardly to him, but he heard love trembling in every single word. He felt as if she were offering him thrones and kingdoms. She told him that whilst he had been out of his mind he had saved her life. He had awakened her from the dead, had helped her, protected her. But this was not enough for her; she would possess him altogether.

When she kissed him he had felt a life-giving balm enter his sick soul, but he had hardly dared to think that it was love that made her. But he could not doubt her anger and her tears. He was beloved—he, poor wretched creature! he who had been held in derision by everybody! and before the great and humble bliss which now filled Gunnar Hede vanished the last darkness. It was drawn aside like a heavy curtain, and he saw plainly before him the region of terror through which he had wandered. But there, too, he had met Ingrid; there he had lifted her from the grave; there he had played for her at the hut in the forest; there she had striven to heal him.

But only the memory of her came back: the feelings with which she had formerly inspired him now awoke. Love filled his whole being; he felt the same burning longing that he had felt in the churchyard at Raglanda when she was taken from him.

In that region of terror, in that great desert, there had at any rate grown one flower that had comforted him with fragrance and beauty, and

now he felt that love would dwell with him forever. The wild flower of the desert had been transplanted into the garden of life, and had taken root and grown and thriven, and when he felt this he knew he was saved; he knew that the darkness had found its master.

Ingrid was silent. She was tired, as one is tired after hard work; but she was also content, for she felt she had carried out her work in the best possible manner. She knew she had conquered.

At last Gunnar Hede broke the silence.

'I promise you that I will not give in,' he said.

'Thank you,' Ingrid answered.

Nothing more was said.

Gunnar Hede thought he would never be able to tell her how much he loved her. It could never be told in words, only shown every day and every hour of his life.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

II

Queens at KUNGAHÄLLA

Queens at KUNGAHÄLLA

On the SITE *of the Great* KUNGAHÄLLA

SHOULD a stranger who had heard about the old city of Kungahälla ever visit the site on the northern river where it once lay, he would assuredly be much surprised. He would ask himself whether churches and fortifications could melt away like snow, or if the earth had opened and swallowed them up. He stands on a spot where formerly there was a mighty city, and he cannot find a street or a landing-stage. He sees neither ruins nor traces of devastating fires; he only sees a country seat, surrounded by green trees and red outbuildings. He sees nothing but broad meadows and fields, where the plough does its work year after year without being hindered either by brick foundations or old pavements.

He would probably first of all go down to the river. He would not expect to see anything of the great ships that went to the Baltic ports or to distant Spain, but he would in all likelihood think that he might find traces of the old ship-yards, of the large boat-houses and landing-stages. He presumes that he will find some of the old kilns where they used to refine salt; he will see the worn-out pavement on the main street that led to

the harbour. He will inquire about the German pier and the Swedish pier; he would like to see the Weeping Bridge where the women of Kungahälla took leave of their husbands and sons when they went to distant lands, but when he comes down to the river's edge he sees nothing but a forest of waving reeds. He sees a road full of holes leading down to the ferry; he sees a couple of common barges and a little flat-bottomed ferry-boat that is taking a peasant cart over to Hisingen, but no big ships come gliding up the river. He does not even see any dark hulls lying and rotting at the bottom of the river.

As he does not find anything remarkable down at the harbour, he will probably begin to look for the celebrated Convent Hill. He expects to see traces of the palisading and ramparts which in olden days surrounded it. He is hoping to see the ruins of the high walls and the long cloisters. He says to himself that anyhow there must be ruins of that magnificent church where the cross was kept—that miracle-working cross which had been brought from Jerusalem. He thinks of the number of monuments covering the holy hills which rise over other ancient cities, and his heart begins to beat with glad expectation. But when he comes to the old Convent Hill which rises above the fields, he finds nothing but clusters of murmuring trees; he finds neither walls, nor towers, nor gables perforated with pointed arched windows. Garden seats and benches he will find under the shadow of the trees, but no cloisters decorated with pillars, no hewn gravestones.

Well, if he has not found anything here, he will

in any case try to find the old King's Hall. He thinks about the large halls from which Kungahälla is supposed to have derived its name. It might be that there was something left of the timber—a yard thick—that formed the walls, or of the deep cellars under the great hall where the Norwegian kings celebrated their banquets. He thinks of the smooth green courtyard of the King's Hall, where the kings used to ride their silver-shod chargers, and where the queens used to milk the golden-horned cows. He thinks of the lofty ladies' bower; of the brewing-room, with its large boilers; of the huge kitchen, where half an ox at a time was placed in the pot, and where a whole hog was roasted on the spit. He thinks of the serfs' house, of the falcon's cages, of the great pantries—house by house all round the courtyard, moss-grown with age, decorated with dragons' heads. Of such a number of buildings there must be some traces left, he thinks.

But should he then inquire for the old King's Hall, he will be taken to a modern country-house, with glass veranda and conservatories. The King's seat has vanished, and with it all the drinking-horns, inlaid with silver, and the shields, covered with skin. One cannot even show him the well-kept courtyard, with its short, close grass, and with narrow paths of black earth. He sees strawberry-beds and hedges of rose-trees; he sees happy children and young girls dancing under apple and pear trees. But he does not see strong men wrestling, or knights playing at ball.

Perhaps he asks about the great oak on the Market Place, beneath which the Kings sat in

judgment, and where the twelve stones of judgment were set up. Or about the long street, which was said to be seven miles long! Or about the rich merchants' houses, separated by dark lanes, each having its own landing-stage and boathouse down by the river. Or about the Marie Church in the Market Place, where the seamen brought their offerings of small, full-rigged ships, and the sorrowful, small silver hearts.

But there is nothing left to show him of all these things. Cows and sheep graze where the long street used to be. Rye and barley grow on the Market Place, and stables and barns stand where people used to flock round the tempting market-stalls.

How can he help feeling disappointed? Is there not a single thing to be found, he says, not a single relic left? And he thinks perhaps that they have been deceiving him. The great Kungahälla can never have stood here, he says. It must have stood in some other place.

Then they take him down to the riverside, and show him a roughly-hewn stone block, and they scrape away the silver-gray lichen, so that he can see there are some figures hewn in the stone. He will not be able to understand what they represent; they will be as incomprehensible to him as the spots in the moon. But they will assure him that they represent a ship and an elk, and that they were cut in the stone in the olden days to commemorate the foundation of the city.

And should he still not be able to understand, they will tell him what is the meaning of the inscription on the stone.

The Forest QUEEN

MARCUS ANTONIUS POPPIUS was a Roman merchant of high standing. He traded with distant lands; and from the harbour at Ostia he sent well-equipped triremas to Spain, to Britain, and even to the north coast of Germany. Fortune favoured him, and he amassed immense riches, which he hoped to leave as an inheritance to his only son. Unfortunately, this only son had not inherited his father's ability. This happens, unfortunately, all the world over. A rich man's only son. Need one say more? It is, and always will be, the same story.

One would almost think that the gods give rich men these incorrigible idlers, these dull, pale, languid fools of sons, to show man what unutterable folly it is to amass riches. When will the eyes of mankind be opened? When will men listen to the warning voice of the gods?

Young Silvius Antonius Poppius, at the age of twenty, had already tried all the pleasures of life. He was also fond of letting people see that he was tired of them; but in spite of that, one did not notice any diminution in the eagerness with which he sought them. On the contrary, he was quite in despair when a singularly persistent ill-luck began to pursue him, and to interfere with all his pleasures. His Numidian horses fell lame the day before the great chariot race of the year; his

illicit love affairs were found out; his cleverest cook died from malaria. This was more than enough to crush a man whose strength had not been hardened by exertion and toil. Young Poppius felt so unhappy that he made up his mind to take his own life. He seemed to think that this was the only way in which he could cheat the God of Misfortune who pursued him and made his life a burden.

One can understand that an unhappy creature commits suicide in order to escape the persecution of man; but only a fool like Silvius Antonius could think of adopting such means to flee from the gods. One recalls involuntarily the story of the man who, to escape from the lion, sprang right into its open jaws.

Young Silvius was much too effeminate to choose a bloody death. Neither had he any inclination to die from a painful poison. After careful consideration, he resolved to die the gentle death of the waves.

But when he went down to the Tiber to drown himself he could not make up his mind to give his body to the dirty, sluggish water of the river. For a long time he stood undecided, staring into the stream. Then he was seized by the magic charm which lies dreamily over a river. He felt that great, holy longing which fills these never-resting wanderers of nature; he would see the sea.

'I will die in the clear blue sea, through which the sun's rays penetrate right to the bottom,' said Silvius Antonius. 'My body shall rest upon a couch of pink coral. The foamy waves which I set in motion when I sink into the deep shall be

snow-white and fresh; they shall not be like the sooty froth which lies quivering at the river-side.'

He immediately hurried home, had his horses harnessed and drove to Ostia. He knew that one of his father's ships was lying in the harbour ready to sail. Young Poppius drove his horses at a furious pace, and he succeeded in getting on board just as the anchor was being weighed. Of course he did not think it necessary to take any baggage with him. He did not even trouble to ask the skipper for what place the craft was bound. To the sea they were going, in any case —that was enough for him.

Nor was it very long before the young suicide reached the goal of his desire. The trirema passed the mouth of the Tiber, and the Mediterranean lay before Silvius Antonius, its sparkling waves bathed in sun. Its beauty made Silvius Antonius believe in the poet's assertion that the swelling ocean is but a thin veil which covers the most beautiful world. He felt bound to believe that he who boldly makes his way through this cover will immediately reach the sea-god's palace of pearls. The young man congratulated himself that he had chosen this manner of death. And one could scarcely call it that; it was impossible to believe that this beautiful water could kill. It was only the shortest road to a land where pleasure is not a delusion, leaving nothing but distaste and loathing. He could only with difficulty suppress his eagerness. But the whole deck was full of sailors. Even Silvius could understand that if he now sprang into the sea the consequence would simply be that one of his father's

sailors would quickly spring overboard and fish him out.

As soon as the sails were set and the oarsmen were well in swing, the skipper came up to him and saluted him with the greatest politeness.

'You intend, then, to go with me to Germany, my Silvius?' he said. 'You do me great honour.'

Young Poppius suddenly remembered that this man used never to return from a voyage without bringing him some curious thing or other from the barbarous countries he had visited. Sometimes it was a couple of pieces of wood with which the savages made fire; sometimes it was the black horn of an ox, which they used as a drinking-vessel; sometimes a necklace of bear's teeth, which had been a great chief's mark of distinction.

The good man beamed with joy at having his master's son on board his ship. He saw in it a new proof of the wisdom of old Poppius, in sending his son to distant lands, instead of letting him waste more time amongst the effeminate young Roman idlers.

Young Poppius did not wish to undeceive him. He was afraid that if he disclosed his intention the skipper would at once turn back with him.

'Verily, Galenus,' he said, 'I would gladly accompany you on this voyage, but I fear I must ask you to put me ashore at Bajæ. I made up my mind too late. I have neither clothes nor money.'

But Galenus assured him that that need was soon remedied. Was he not upon his father's well-appointed vessel? He should not want for anything—neither warm fur tunic when the

weather was cold, or light Syrian clothing of the kind that seamen wear when they cruise in fair weather in the friendly seas between the islands.

* * * * *

Three months after their departure from Ostia, Galenus's trirema rowed in amongst a cluster of rocky islands. Neither the skipper nor any of his crew were quite clear as to where they really were, but they were glad to take shelter for a time from the storms that raged on the open sea.

One could almost think that Silvius Antonius was right in his belief that some deity persecuted him. No one on the ship had ever before experienced such a voyage. The luckless sailors said to each other that they had not had fair weather for two days since they left Ostia. The one storm had followed upon the other. They had undergone the most terrible sufferings. They had suffered hunger and thirst, whilst they, day and night, exhausted and almost fainting from want of sleep, had had to manage sails and oars. The fact of the seamen being unable to trade had added to their despondency. How could they approach the coast and display their wares on the shore to effect an exchange in such weather? On the contrary, every time they saw the coast appear through the obstinate heavy mist that surrounded them, they had been compelled to put out to sea again for fear of the foam-decked rocks. One night, when they struck on a rock, they had been obliged to throw the half of their cargo into the sea. And as for the other half, they dared not think about it, as they feared it was completely

spoiled by the breakers which had rolled over the ship.

Certain it was that Silvius Antonius had proved himself not to be lucky at sea either. Silvius Antonius was still living; he had not drowned himself. It is difficult to say why he prolonged an existence which could not be of any more pleasure to him now than when he first made up his mind to cut it short. Perhaps he had hoped that the sea would have taken possession of him without he himself doing anything to bring it about. Perhaps his love for the sea had passed away during its bursts of anger; perhaps he had resolved to die in the opal-green perfumed water of his bath.

But had Galenus and his men known why the young man had come on board, they would assuredly have bitterly complained that he had not carried out his intention, for they were all convinced that it was his presence which had called forth their misfortunes. Many a dark night Galenus had feared that the sailors would throw him into the sea. More than one of them related that in the terrible stormy nights he had seen dark hands stretching out of the water, grasping after the ship. And they did not think it was necessary to cast lots to find out who it was that these hands wanted to draw down into the deep. Both the skipper and the crew did Silvius Antonius the special honour to think that it was for his sake these storms rent the air and scourged the sea.

If Silvius during this time had behaved like a man, if he had taken his share of their work and anxiety, then perhaps some of his companions

might have had pity upon him as a being who had brought upon himself the wrath of the gods. But the young man had not understood how to win their sympathy. He had only thought of seeking shelter for himself from the wind, and of sending them to fetch furs and rugs from the stores for his protection from the cold.

But for the moment all complaints over his presence had ceased. As soon as the storm had succeeded in driving the trirema into the quiet waters between the islands, its rage was spent. It behaved like a sheep-dog that becomes silent and keeps quiet as soon as it sees the sheep on the right way to the fold. The heavy clouds disappeared from the sky; the sun shone. For the first time during the voyage the sailors felt the joys of summer spreading over Nature.

Upon these storm-beaten men the sunshine and the warmth had almost an intoxicating effect. Instead of longing for rest and sleep, they became as merry as happy children in the morning. They expected they would find a large continent behind all these rocks and boulders. They hoped to find people, and—who could tell?—on this foreign coast, which had probably never before been visited by a Roman ship, their wares would no doubt find a ready sale. In that case they might after all do some good business, and bring back with them skins of bear and elk, and large quantities of white wax and golden amber.

Whilst the trirema slowly made its way between the rocks, which grew higher and higher and richer with verdure and trees, the crew made haste to decorate it so that it could attract the at-

tention of the barbarians. The ship, which, even without any decoration, was a beautiful specimen of human handiwork, soon rivalled in splendour the most gorgeous bird. Recently tossed about by storms and ravaged by tempests, it now bore on its topmast a golden sceptre and sails striped with purple. In the bows a resplendent figure of Neptune was raised, and in the stern a tent of many-coloured silken carpets. And do not think the sailors neglected to hang the sides of the ship with rugs, the fringes of which trailed in the water, or to wind the long oars of the ship with golden ribbons. Neither did the crew of the ship wear the clothes they had worn during the voyage, and which the sea and the storm had done their best to destroy. They arrayed themselves in white garments, wound purple scarves round their waists, and placed glittering bands in their hair.

Even Silvius Antonius roused himself from his apathy. It was as if he was glad of having at last found something to do which he thoroughly understood. He was shaved, had his hair trimmed, and his whole person rubbed over with fragrant scents. Then he put on a flowing robe, hung a mantle over his shoulders, and chose from the large casket of jewels which Galenus opened for him rings and bracelets, necklaces, and a golden belt. When he was ready he flung aside the purple curtains of the silken tent, and laid himself on a couch in the opening of the tent in order to be seen by the people on the shore.

During these preparations the sea became narrower and narrower, and the sailors dis-

covered that they were entering the mouth of a river. The water was fresh, and there was land on both sides. The trirema glided slowly onwards up the sparkling river. The weather was brilliant, and the whole of nature was gloriously peaceful. And how the magnificent merchantman enlivened the great solitude!

On both sides of the river primeval forests, high and thick, met their view. Pine-trees grew right to the water's edge. The river in its eternal course had washed away the earth from the roots, and the hearts of the seamen were moved with solemn awe at the sight, not only of these venerable trees, but even more by that of the naked roots, which resembled the mighty limbs of a giant. 'Here,' they thought, 'man will never succeed in planting corn; here the ground will never be cleared for the building of a city, or even a farmstead. For miles round the earth is woven through with this network of roots, hard as steel. This alone is sufficient to make the dominion of the forest everlasting and unchangeable.'

Along the river the trees grew so close, and their branches were so entangled, that they formed firm, impenetrable walls. These walls of prickly firs were so strong and high that no fortified city need wish for stronger defences. But here and there there was, all the same, an opening in this wall of firs. It was the paths the wild beasts had made on their way to the river to drink. Through these openings the strangers could obtain a glimpse of the interior of the forest. They had never seen anything like it. In

sunless twilight there grew trees with trunks of greater circumference than the gate-towers on the walls of Rome. There was a multitude of trees, fighting with each other for light and air. Trees strove and struggled, trees were crippled and weighed down by other trees. Trees took root in the branches of other trees. Trees strove and fought as if they had been human beings.

But if man or beast moved in this world of trees they must have other modes of making their way than those which the Romans knew, for from the ground right up to the top of the forest was a network of stiff bare branches. From these branches fluttered long tangles of gray lichen, transforming the trees into weird beings with hair and beard. And beneath them the ground was covered with rotten and rotting trunks, and one's feet would have sunk into the decayed wood as into melting snow.

The forest sent forth a fragrance which had a drowsy effect upon the men on board the ship. It was the strong odour of resin and wild honey that blended with the sickly smell from the decayed wood, and from innumerable gigantic red and yellow mushrooms.

There was no doubt something awe-inspiring in all this, but it was also elevating to see nature in all its power before man had yet interfered with its dominion. It was not long before one of the sailors began to sing a hymn to the God of the Forest, and involuntarily the whole crew joined in. They had quite given up all thought of meeting human beings in this forest-world. Their hearts were filled with pious thoughts;

they thought of the forest god and his nymphs. They said to themselves that when Pan was driven from the woods of Hellas he must have taken refuge here in the far north. With pious songs they entered his kingdom.

Every time there was a pause in the song they heard a gentle music from the forest. The tops of the fir-trees, vibrating in the noonday heat, sang and played. The sailors often discontinued their song in order to listen, if Pan was not playing upon his flute.

The oarsmen rowed slower and slower. The sailors gazed searchingly into the golden-green and black-violet water flowing under the fir-trees. They peered between the tall reeds which quivered and rustled in the wash of the ship. They were in such a state of expectation that they started at the sight of the white water-lilies that shone in the dark water between the reeds.

And again they sang the song, 'Pan, thou ruler of the forest!' They had given up all thoughts of trading. They felt that they stood at the entrance to the dwelling of the gods. All earthly cares had left them. Then, all of a sudden, at the outlet of one of the tracks, there stood an elk, a royal deer with broad forehead and a forest of antlers on its horns.

There was a breathless silence on the trirema. They stemmed the oars to slacken speed. Silvius Antonius arose from his purple couch.

All eyes were fixed upon the elk. They thought they could discern that it carried something on its back, but the darkness of the forest

and the drooping branches made it impossible to see distinctly.

The huge animal stood for a long time and scented the air, with its muzzle turned towards the trirema. At last it seemed to understand that there was no danger. It made a step towards the water. Behind the broad horns one could now discern more distinctly something light and white. They wondered if the elk carried on its back a harvest of wild roses.

The crew gently plied their oars. The trirema drew nearer to the animal, which gradually moved towards the edge of the reeds.

The elk strode slowly into the water, put down its feet carefully, so as not to be caught by the roots at the bottom. Behind the horns one could now distinctly see the face of a maiden, surrounded by fair hair. The elk carried on its back one of those nymphs whom they had been expectantly awaiting, and whom they felt sure would be found in this primeval world.

A holy enthusiasm filled the men on the trirema. One of them, who hailed from Sicily, remembered a song which he had heard in his youth, when he played on the flowery plains around Syracuse. He began to sing softly:

> 'Nymph, amongst flowers born, Arethusa by name,
> Thou who in sheltered wood wanders, white like the moon.'

And when the weather-beaten men understood the words, they tried to subdue the storm-like roar in their voices in order to sing:

> 'Nymph, amongst flowers born, Arethusa by name.'

They steered the ship nearer and nearer the reeds. They did not heed that it had already once or twice touched the bottom.

But the young forest maiden sat and played hide-and-seek between the horns. One moment she hid herself, the next she peeped out. She did not stop the elk; she drove it further into the river.

When the elk had gone some little distance, she stroked it to make it stop. Then she bent down and gathered two or three water-lilies. The men on the ship looked a little foolishly at each other. The nymph had, then, come solely for the purpose of plucking the white water-lilies that rocked on the waters of the river. She had not come for the sake of the Roman seamen.

Then Silvius Antonius drew a ring from off his finger, sent up a shout that made the nymph look up, and threw her the ring. She stretched out her hand and caught it. Her eyes sparkled. She stretched out her hands for more. Silvius Antonius again threw a ring.

Then she flung the water-lilies back into the river and drove the elk further into the water. Now and again she stopped, but then a ring came flying from Silvius Antonius, and enticed her further.

All at once she overcame her hesitation. The colour rose in her cheeks. She came nearer to the ship without it being necessary to tempt her. The water was already up to the shoulders of the elk. She came right under the side of the vessel.

The sailors hung over the gunwales to help

the beautiful nymph, should she wish to go on board the trirema.

But she saw only Silvius Antonius, as he stood there, decked with pearls and rings, and fair as the sunrise. And when the young Roman saw that the eyes of the nymph were fastened upon him, he leant over even further than the others. They cried to him that he should take care, lest he should lose his balance and fall into the sea. But this warning came too late. It is not known whether the nymph, with a quick movement, drew Silvius Antonius to her, or how it really happened, but before anyone thought of grasping him, he was overboard.

All the same, there was no danger of Silvius Antonius drowning. The nymph stretched forth her lovely arms and caught him in them. He hardly touched the surface of the water. At the same moment her steed turned, rushed through the water, and disappeared in the forest. And loudly rang the laugh of the wild rider as she carried off Silvius Antonius.

Galenus and his men stood for a moment horror-stricken. Then some of the men involuntarily threw off their clothes to swim to the shore; but Galenus stopped them.

'Without doubt this is the will of the gods,' he said. 'Now we see the reason why they have brought Silvius Antonius Poppius through a thousand storms to this unknown land. Let us be glad that we have been an instrument in their hands; and let us not seek to hinder their will.'

The seamen obediently took their oars and

rowed down the river, softly singing to their even stroke the song of Arethusa's flight.

* * * * *

When one has finished this story, surely the stranger must be able to understand the inscription on the old stone. He must be able to see both the elk with its many-antlered horns, and the trirema with its long oars. One does not expect that he shall be able to see Silvius Antonius Poppius and the beautiful queen of the primeval forest, for in order to see them he must have the eyes of the relaters of fairy-tales of bygone days. He will understand that the inscription hales from the young Roman himself, and that this also applies to the whole of the old story. Silvius Antonius has handed it down to his descendants word for word. He knew that it would gladden their hearts to know that they sprang from the world-famed Romans.

But the stranger, of course, need not believe that any of Pan's nymphs have wandered here by the river's side. He understands quite well that a tribe of wild men have wandered about in the primeval forest, and that the rider of the elk was the daughter of the King who ruled over these people; and that the maiden who carried off Silvius Antonius would only rob him of his jewels, and that she did not at all think of Silvius Antonius himself, scarcely knew, perhaps, that he was a human being like herself. And the stranger can also understand that the name of Silvius Antonius would have been forgotten long ago in this country had he remained the fool he

was. He will hear how misfortune and want roused the young Roman, so that from being the despised slave of the wild men he became their King. It was he who attacked the forest with fire and steel. He erected the first firmly-timbered house. He built vessels and planted corn. He laid the foundation of the power and glory of great Kungahälla.

And when the stranger hears this, he looks around the country with a more contented glance than before. For even if the site of the city has been turned into fields and meadows, and even if the river no longer boasts of busy craft, still, this is the ground that has enabled him to breathe the air of the land of dreams, and shown him visions of bygone days.

SIGRID STORRÄDE

ONCE upon a time there was an exceedingly beautiful spring. It was the very spring that the Swedish Queen Sigrid Storräde summoned the Norwegian King Olaf Trygveson to meet her at Kungahälla in order to settle about their marriage.

It was strange that King Olaf would marry Queen Sigrid; for although she was fair and well-gifted, she was a wicked heathen, whilst King Olaf was a Christian, who thought of nothing but building churches and compelling the people to be baptized. But maybe the King thought that God the Almighty would convert her.

But it was even more strange that when Storräde had announced to King Olaf's messenger that she would set out for Kungahälla as soon as the sea was no longer ice-bound, spring should come almost immediately. Cold and snow disappeared at the time when winter is usually at its height. And when Storräde made known that she would begin to equip her ships, the ice vanished from the fjords, the meadows became green, and although it was yet a long time to Lady-day, the cattle could already be put out to grass.

When the Queen rowed between the rocks of East Gothland into the Baltic, she heard the cuckoo's song, although it was so early in the

year that one could scarcely expect to hear the lark.

And great joy prevailed everywhere when Storräde proceeded on her way. All the trolls who had been obliged to flee from Norway during King Olaf's reign because they could not bear the sound of the church bells came on the rocks when they saw Storräde sailing past. They pulled up young birch-trees by the roots and waved them to the Queen, and then they went back to their rocky dwellings, where their wives were sitting, full of longing and anxiety, and said:

'Woman, thou shalt not be cast down any longer. Storräde is now sailing to King Olaf. Now we shall soon return to Norway.'

When the Queen sailed past Kullen, the Kulla troll came out of his cave, and he made the black mountain open, so that she saw the gold and silver veins which twisted through it, and it made the Queen happy to see his riches.

When Storräde went past the Holland rivers, the Nixie came down from his waterfall, swam right out to the mouth of the river, and played upon his harp, so that the ship danced upon the waves.

When she sailed past the Nidinge rocks, the mermen lay there and blew upon their seashell horns, and made the water splash in frothy pillars. And when the wind was against them, the most loathsome trolls came out of the deep to help Storräde's ship over the waves. Some lay at the stern and pushed, others took ropes of seaweed in their mouth and harnessed themselves before the ship like horses.

SIGRID STORRÄDE

The wild heathen, whom King Olaf would not allow to remain in the country on account of their great wickedness, came rowing towards the Queen's ship, with sails furled, and with their pole-axes raised as if for attack. But when they recognised the Queen, they allowed her to pass unhurt, and shouted after her:

'We empty a beaker to thy wedding, Storräde.'

All the heathen who lived along the coast laid firewood upon their stone altars, and sacrificed both sheep and goats to the old gods, in order that they should aid Storräde in her expedition to the Norwegian King.

When the Queen sailed up the northern river, a mermaid swam alongside the ship, stretched her white arm out of the water, and gave her a large clear pearl.

'Wear this, Storräde,' she said; 'then King Olaf will be so bewitched by thy beauty that he will never be able to forget thee.'

When the Queen had sailed a short distance up the river, she heard such a roar and such a rushing noise that she expected to find a waterfall. The further she proceeded, the louder grew the noise. But when she rowed past the Golden Isle, and passed into a broad bay, she saw at the riverside the great Kungahälla.

The town was so large, that as far as she could see up the river there was house after house, all imposing and well timbered, with many outhouses. Narrow lanes between the gray wooden walls led down to the river; there were large courtyards before the dwelling-houses, well-laid

pathways went from each house down to its boathouse and landing-stage.

Storräde commanded her men to row quite slowly. She herself stood on the poop of the ship and looked towards the shore.

'Never before have I seen the like of this,' she said.

She now understood that the roar she had heard was nothing but the noise of the work which went on at Kungahälla in the spring, when the ships were being made ready for their long cruises. She heard the smiths hammering with huge sledge-hammers, the baker's shovel clattered in the ovens; beams were hoisted on to heavy lighters with much crashing noise; young men planed oars and stripped the bark from the trees which were to be used for masts.

She saw green courtyards, where handmaidens were twining ropes for the seafaring men, and where old men sat mending the gray wadmal sails. She saw the boat-builders tarring the new boats. Enormous nails were driven into strong oaken planks. The hulls of the ships were hauled out of the boathouses to be tightened; old ships were done up with freshly-painted dragon-heads; goods were stowed away; people took a hurried leave of each other; heavily-filled ships' chests were carried on board. Ships that were ready to sail left the shore. Storräde saw that the vessels rowing up the river were heavily laden with herrings and salt, but those making for the open sea were laden high up the masts with costly oak timber, hides, and skins.

When the Queen saw all this she laughed with

joy. She thought that she would willingly marry King Olaf in order to rule over such a city. Storräde rowed up to the King's Landing-Stage. There King Olaf stood ready to receive her, and when she advanced to meet him he thought that she was the fairest woman he had ever seen.

They then proceeded to the King's Hall, and there was great harmony and friendship between them. When they went to table Storräde laughed and talked the whole time the Bishop was saying grace, and the King laughed and talked also, because he saw that it pleased Storräde. When the meal was finished, and they all folded their hands to listen to the Bishop's prayer, Storräde began to tell the King about her riches. She continued doing this as long as the prayer lasted, and the King listened to Storräde, and not to the Bishop.

The King placed Storräde in the seat of honour, whilst he sat at her feet; and Storräde told him how she had caused two minor kings to be burnt to death for having had the presumption to woo her. The King was glad at hearing this, and thought that all minor kings who had the audacity to woo a woman like Storräde should share the same fate.

When the bells rang for Evensong, the King rose to go to the Marie Church to pray, as was his wont. But then Storräde called for her bard, and he sang the lay of Brynhild Budles-dotter, who caused Sigurd Fofnersbane to be slain; and King Olaf did not go to church, but instead sat and looked into Storräde's radiant eyes, under the thick, black, arched eyebrows; and he under-

stood that Storråde was Brynhild, and that she would kill him if ever he forsook her. He also thought that she was no doubt a woman who would be willing to burn on the pile with him. And whilst the priests were saying Mass and praying in the Marie Church at Kungahälla, King Olaf sat thinking that he would ride to Valhalla with Sigrid Storråde before him on the horse.

That night the ferryman who conveyed people over the Göta River was busier than he had ever been before. Time after time he was called to the other side, but when he crossed over there was never anybody to be seen. But all the same he heard steps around him, and the boat was so full that it was nearly sinking. He rowed the whole night backwards and forwards, and did not know what it could all mean. But in the morning the whole shore was full of small footprints, and in the footprints the ferryman found small withered leaves, which on closer examination proved to be pure gold, and he understood they were the Brownies and Dwarfs who had fled from Norway when it became a Christian country, and who had now come back again. And the giant who lived in the Fortin mountain right to the east of Kungahälla threw one big stone after the other at the Marie Church the whole night through; and had not the giant been so strong that all the stones went too far and fell down at Hisingen, on the other side of the river, a great disaster would assuredly have happened.

Every morning King Olaf was in the habit

of going to Mass, but the day Storräde was at Kungahälla he thought he had not the time. As soon as he arose, he at once wanted to go down to the harbour, where her ship lay, in order to ask her if she would drink the wedding-cup with him before eventide.

The Bishop had caused the bells to be rung the whole morning, and when the King left the King's Hall, and went across the Market Place, the church doors were thrown open, and beautiful singing was heard from within. But the King went on as if he had not heard anything. The Bishop ordered the bells to be stopped, the singing ceased, and the candles were extinguished.

It all happened so suddenly that the King involuntarily stopped and looked towards the church, and it seemed to him that the church was more insignificant than he had ever before thought. It was smaller than the houses in the town; the peat roof hung heavily over its low walls without windows; the door was low, with a small projecting roof covered with fir-bark.

Whilst the King stood thinking, a slender young woman came out of the dark church door. She wore a red robe and a blue mantle, and she bore in her arms a child with fair locks. Her dress was poor, and yet it seemed to the King that he had never before seen a more noble-looking woman. She was tall, dignified, and fair of face.

The King saw with emotion that the young woman pressed the child close to her, and carried it with such care, that one could see it was

the most precious thing she possessed in the world.

As the woman stood in the doorway she turned her gentle face round and looked back, looked into the poor, dark little church with great longing in look and mien. When she again turned round towards the Market Place there were tears in her eyes. But just as she was about to step over the threshold into the Market Place her courage failed her. She leant against the door-posts and looked at the child with a troubled glance, as if to say:

'Where in all the wide world shall we find a roof over our heads?'

The King stood immovable, and looked at the homeless woman. What touched him the most was to see the child, who lay in her arms free from sorrow, stretch out his hand with a flower towards her, as if to win a smile from her. And then he saw she tried to drive away the sorrow from her face and smile at her son.

'Who can that woman be?' thought the King. 'It seems to me that I have seen her before. She is undoubtedly a high-born woman who is in trouble.'

However great a hurry the King was in to go to Storräde, he could not take his eyes away from the woman. It seemed to him that he had seen these tender eyes and this gentle face before, but where, he could not call to mind. The woman still stood in the church door, as if she could not tear herself away. Then the King went up to her and asked:

'Why art thou so sorrowful?'

'I am turned out of my home,' answered the woman, pointing to the little dark church.

The King thought she meant that she had taken refuge in the church because she had no other place to go to. He again asked:

'Who hath turned thee out?'

She looked at him with an unutterably sorrowful glance.

'Dost thou not know?' she asked.

But then the King turned away from her. He had no time to stand guessing riddles, he thought. It appeared as if the woman meant that it was he who had turned her out. He did not understand what she could mean.

The King went on quickly. He went down to the King's Landing-Stage, where Storräde's ship was lying. At the harbour the Queen's servants met the King. Their clothes were braided with gold, and they wore silver helmets on their heads.

Storräde stood on her ship looking towards Kungahälla, rejoicing in its power and wealth. She looked at the city as if she already regarded herself as its Queen. But when the King saw Storräde, he thought at once of the gentle woman who, poor and sorrowful, had been turned out of the church.

'What is this?' he thought. 'It seems to me as if she were fairer than Storräde.'

When Storräde greeted him with smiles, he thought of the tears that sparkled in the eyes of the other woman. The face of the strange woman was so clear to King Olaf that he could not help comparing it, feature for feature, with

Storräde's. And when he did that all Storräde's beauty vanished. He saw that Storräde's eyes were cruel and her mouth sensual. In each of her features he saw a sin. He could still see she was beautiful, but he no longer took pleasure in her countenance. He began to loathe her as if she were a beautiful poisonous snake.

When the Queen saw the King come a victorious smile passed over her lips.

'I did not expect thee so early, King Olaf,' she said. 'I thought thou wast at Mass.'

The King felt an irresistible inclination to contradict Storräde, and do everything she did not want.

'Mass has not yet begun,' he said. 'I have come to ask thee to go with me to the house of my God.'

When the King said this he saw an angry look in Storräde's eyes, but she continued to smile.

'Rather come to me on my ship,' she said, 'and I will show thee the presents I have brought for thee.'

She took up a sword inlaid with gold, as if to tempt him; but the King thought all the time that he could see the other woman at her side, and it appeared to him that Storräde stood amongst her treasures like a foul dragon.

'Answer me first,' said the King, 'if thou wilt go with me to church.'

'What have I to do in thy church?' she asked mockingly.

Then she saw that the King's brow darkened, and she perceived that he was not of the same mind as the day before. She immediately

changed her manner, and became gentle and submissive.

'Go thou to church as much as thou likest, even if I do not go. There shall be no discord between us on that account.'

The Queen came down from the ship and went up to the King. She held in her hand a sword and a mantle trimmed with fur which she would give him. But in the same moment the King happened to look towards the harbour. At some distance he saw the other woman; her head was bowed, and she walked with weary steps, but she still bore the child in her arms.

'What art thou looking so eagerly after, King Olaf?' Storräde asked.

Then the other woman turned round and looked at the King, and as she looked at him it appeared to him as if a ring of golden light surrounded her head and that of the child, more beautiful than the crown of any King or Queen. Then she immediately turned round and walked again towards the town, and he saw her no more.

'What art thou looking so eagerly after?' again asked Storräde.

But when King Olaf now turned to the Queen she appeared to him old and ugly, and full of the world's sin and wickedness, and he was terrified at the thought that he might have fallen into her snares.

He had taken off his glove to give her his hand; but he now took the glove and threw it in her face instead.

'I will not own thee, foul woman and heathen dog that thou art!' he said.

Then Storräde drew backwards. But she soon regained the command over herself, and answered:

'That blow may prove thy destruction, King Olaf Trygveson.'

And she was white as Hél when she turned away from him and went on board her ship.

Next night King Olaf had a strange dream. What he saw in his dream was not the earth, but the bottom of the sea. It was a grayish-green field, over which there were many fathoms of water. He saw fish swimming after their prey; he saw ships gliding past on the surface of the water, like dark clouds; and he saw the disc of the sun, dull as a pale moon.

Then he saw the woman he had seen at the church-door wandering along the bottom of the sea. She had the same stooping gait and the same worn garments as when he first saw her, and her face was still sorrowful. But as she wandered along the bottom of the sea the water divided before her. He saw that it rose into pillars, as if in deep reverence, forming itself into arches, so that she walked in the most glorious temple.

Suddenly the King saw that the water which surrounded the woman began to change colour. The pillars and the arches first became pale pink; but they soon assumed a darker colour. The whole sea around was also red, as if it had been changed into blood.

At the bottom of the sea, where the woman walked, the King saw broken swords and

arrows, and bows and spears in pieces. At first there were not many, but the longer she walked in the red water the more closely they were heaped together.

The King saw with emotion that the woman went to one side in order not to tread upon a dead man who lay stretched upon the bed of green seaweed. The man, who had a deep cut in his head, wore a coat of mail, and had a sword in his hand. It seemed to the King that the woman closed her eyes so as not to see the dead man. She moved towards a fixed goal without hesitation or doubt. But he who dreamt could not turn his eyes away.

He saw the bottom of the sea covered with wreckage. He saw heavy anchors, thick ropes twined about like snakes, ships with their sides riven asunder; golden dragon-heads from the bows of ships stared at him with red, threatening eyes.

'I should like to know who has fought a battle here and left all this as a prey to destruction,' thought the dreamer.

Everywhere he saw dead men. They were hanging on the ships' sides, or had sunk into the green seaweed. But he did not give himself time to look at them, for his eyes were obliged to follow the woman, who continued to walk onwards.

At last the King saw her stop at the side of a dead man. He was clothed in a red mantle, had a bright helmet on his head, a shield on his arm, and a naked sword in his hand.

The woman bent over him and whispered to him, as if awaking someone sleeping:

'King Olaf! King Olaf!'

Then he who was dreaming saw that the man at the bottom of the sea was himself. He could distinctly see that he was the dead man.

As the dead did not move, the woman knelt by his side and whispered into his ear:

'Now Storräde hath sent her fleet against thee and avenged herself. Dost thou repent what thou hast done, King Olaf?'

And again she asked:

'Now thou sufferest the bitterness of death because thou hast chosen me instead of Storräde. Dost thou repent? dost thou repent?'

Then at last the dead opened his eyes, and the woman helped him to rise. He leant upon her shoulder, and she walked slowly away with him.

Again King Olaf saw her wander and wander, through night and day, over sea and land. At last it seemed to him that they had gone further than the clouds and higher than the stars. Now they entered a garden, where the earth shone as light and the flowers were clear as dewdrops.

The King saw that when the woman entered the garden she raised her head, and her step grew lighter. When they had gone a little further into the garden her garments began to shine. He saw that they became, as of themselves, bordered with golden braid, and coloured with the hues of the rainbow. He saw also that a halo surrounded her head that cast a light over her countenance.

But the slain man who leant upon her shoulder raised his head, and asked:

'Who art thou?'

'Dost thou not know, King Olaf?' she answered; and an infinite majesty and glory encompassed her.

But in the dream King Olaf was filled with a great joy because he had chosen to serve the gentle Queen of Heaven. It was a joy so great that he had never before felt the like of it, and it was so strong that it awoke him.

When King Olaf awoke his face was bathed in tears, and he lay with his hands folded in prayer.

Astrid

I

In the midst of the low buildings forming the old Castle of the Kings at Upsala towered the Ladies' Bower. It was built on poles, like a dovecote. The staircase leading up to it was as steep as a ladder, and one entered it by a very low door. The walls inside were covered with runes, signifying love and longing; the sills of the small loopholes were worn by the maidens leaning on their elbows and looking down into the courtyard.

Old Hjalte, the bard, had been a guest at the King's Castle for some time, and he went up every day to the Ladies' Bower to see Princess Ingegerd, and talk with her about Olaf Haraldsson, the King of Norway, and every time Hjalte came Ingegerd's bondwoman Astrid sat and listened to his words with as much pleasure as the Princess. And whilst Hjalte talked, both the maidens listened so eagerly that they let their hands fall in their laps and their work rest.

Anyone seeing them would not think much spinning or weaving could be done in the Ladies' Bower. No one would have thought that they gathered all Hjalte's words as if they were silken threads, and that each of his listeners made from them her own picture of King Olaf.

No one could know that in their thoughts they wove the Bard's words each into her own radiant picture.

But so it was. And the Princess's picture was so beautiful that every time she saw it before her she felt as if she must fall on her knees and worship it. For she saw the King sitting on his throne, crowned and great; she saw a red, gold-embroidered mantle hanging from his shoulders to his feet. She saw no sword in his hand, but holy writings; and she also saw that his throne was supported by a chained troll. His face shone for her, white like wax, surrounded by long, soft locks, and his eyes beamed with piety and peace. Oh, she became nearly afraid when she saw the almost superhuman strength that shone from that pale face. She understood that King Olaf was not only a King, she saw that he was a saint, and the equal of the angels.

But quite different was the picture which Astrid had made of the King. The fair-haired bondwoman, who had experienced both hunger and cold and suffered much hardship, but who all the same was the one who filled the Ladies' Bower with merriment and laughter, had in her mind an entirely different picture of the King. She could not help that every time she heard him spoken about she saw before her the woodcutter's son who at eventide came out of the wood with the axe over his shoulder.

'I can see thee—I can see thee so well,' Astrid said to the picture, as if it were a living being. 'Tall thou art not, but broad of shoulders

and light and agile, and because thou hast walked about in the dark forest the whole long summer day thou takest the last few steps in one spring, and laughest when thou reachest the road. Then thy white teeth shine, and thy hair flies about, and that I love to see. I can see thee; thou hast a fair, ruddy face and freckles on thy nose, and thou hast blue eyes, which become dark and stern in the deep forest; but when thou comest so far that thou seest the valley and thy home, they become light and gentle. As soon as thou seest thine own hut down in the valley, thou raisest thy cap for a greeting, and then I see thy forehead. Is not that forehead befitting a King? Should not that broad forehead be able to wear both crown and helmet?'

But however different these two pictures were, one thing is certain: just as much as the Princess loved the holy picture she had conjured forth, so did the poor bondwoman love the bold swain whom she saw coming from the depths of the forest to meet her.

And had Hjalte the Bard been able to see these pictures he would have assuredly praised them both. He would assuredly have said that they both were like the King. For that is King Olaf's good fortune, he would have been sure to say, that he is a fresh and merry swain at the same time that he is God's holy warrior. For old Hjalte loved King Olaf, and although he had wandered from court to court he had never been able to find his equal.

'Where can I find anyone to make me forget

Olaf Haraldsson?' he was wont to say. 'Where shall I find a greater hero?'

Hjalte the Bard was a rough old man and severe of countenance. Old as he was, his hair was still black, he was dark of complexion, and his eyes were keen, and his song had always tallied with his appearance. His tongue never uttered other words than those of strife; he had never made other lays than songs of war.

Old Hjalte's heart had hitherto been like the stony waste outside the wood-cutter's hut; it had been like a rocky plain, where only poor ferns and dry mugworts could grow. But now Hjalte's roving life had brought him to the Court at Upsala, and he had seen the Princess Ingegerd. He had seen that she was the noblest of all the women he had met in his life—in truth, the Princess was just as much fairer than all other women as King Olaf was greater than all other men.

Then the thought suddenly arose within Hjalte that he would try to awaken love between the Swedish Princess and the Norwegian King. He asked himself why she, who was the best amongst women, should not be able to love King Olaf, the most glorious amongst men? And after that thought had taken root in Hjalte's heart he gave up making his stern war-songs. He gave up trying to win praise and honour from the rough warriors at the Court of Upsala, and sat for many hours with the women in the Ladies' Bower, and one would never have thought that it was Hjalte who spoke. One would never have believed that he possessed

such soft and fair and gentle words which he now used in speaking about King Olaf.

No one would have known Hjalte again; he was entirely transformed ever since the thought of the marriage had arisen within him. When the beautiful thought took root in Hjalte's soul, it was as if a blushing rose, with soft and fragrant petals, had sprung up in the midst of a wilderness.

* * * * *

One day Hjalte sat with the Princess in the Ladies' Bower. All the maidens were absent except Astrid. Hjalte thought that now he had spoken long enough about Olaf Haraldsson. He had said all the fair words he could about him, but had it been of any avail? What did the Princess think of the King? Then he began to lay snares for the Princess to find out what she thought of King Olaf.

'I can see from a look or a blush,' he thought.

But the Princess was a high-born lady; she knew how to conceal her thoughts. She neither blushed nor smiled, neither did her eyes betray her. She would not let Hjalte divine what she thought.

When the Bard looked into her noble face he was ashamed of himself.

'She is too good for anyone to take her by stealth,' he said; 'one must meet her in open warfare.' So Hjalte said straight out: 'Daughter of a King, if Olaf Haraldsson asked thee in marriage of thy father, what wouldst thou answer?'

Then the young Princess's face lit up, as does the face of a man when he reaches the mountain-top and discovers the ocean. Without hesitation she replied at once:

'If he be such a King and such a Christian as thou sayest, Hjalte, then I consider it would be a great happiness.'

But scarcely had she said this before the light faded from her eyes. It was as if a cloud rose between her and the beautiful far-off vision.

'Oh, Hjalte,' she said, 'thou forgettest one thing. King Olaf is our enemy. It is war and not wooing we may expect from him.'

'Do not let that trouble thee,' said Hjalte. 'If thou only wilt, all is well. I know King Olaf's mind in this matter.'

The Bard was so glad that he laughed when he said this; but the Princess grew more and more sorrowful.

'No,' she said, 'neither upon me nor King Olaf does it depend, but upon my father, Oluf Skötkonung, and you know that he hates Olaf Haraldsson, and cannot bear that anyone should even mention his name. Never will he let me leave my father's house with an enemy; never will he give his daughter to Olaf Haraldsson.'

When the Princess had said this, she laid aside all her pride and began to lament her fate.

'Of what good is it that I have now learnt to know Olaf Haraldsson,' she said, 'that I dream of him every night, and long for him every day? Would it not have been better if thou hadst never come hither and told me about him?'

When the Princess had spoken these words,

her eyes filled with tears; but when Hjalte saw her tears, he lifted his hand fervent and eager.

'God wills it,' he cried. 'Ye belong to one another. Strife must exchange its red mantle for the white robe of peace, that your happiness may give joy unto the earth.'

When Hjalte had said this, the Princess bowed her head before God's holy name, and when she raised it, it was with a newly awakened hope.

* * * * *

When old Hjalte stepped through the low door of the Ladies' Bower, and went down the narrow open corridor, Astrid followed him.

'Hjalte,' she cried, 'why dost thou not ask me what I would answer if Olaf Haraldsson asked for my hand?'

It was the first time Astrid had spoken to Hjalte; but Hjalte only cast a hurried glance at the fair bondwoman, whose golden hair curled on her temples and neck, who had the broadest bracelets and the heaviest ear-rings, whose dress was fastened with silken cords, and whose bodice was so embroidered with pearls that it was as stiff as armour, and went on without answering.

'Why dost thou only ask Princess Ingegerd?' continued Astrid. 'Why dost thou not also ask me? Dost thou not know that I, too, am the Svea-King's daughter? Dost thou not know,' she continued, when Hjalte did not answer, 'that although my mother was a bondwoman, she was the bride of the King's youth? Dost thou not know that whilst she lived no one dared to remind her of her birth? Oh, Hjalte, dost thou

not know that it was only after she was dead, when the King had taken to himself a Queen, that everyone remembered that she was a bondwoman? It was first after I had a stepmother that the King began to think I was not of free birth. But am I not a King's daughter, Hjalte, even if my father counts me for so little, that he has allowed me to fall into bondage? Am I not a King's daughter, even if my stepmother allowed me to go in rags, whilst my sister went in cloth of gold? Am I not a King's daughter, even if my stepmother has allowed me to tend the geese and taste the whip of the slave? And if I am a King's daughter, why dost thou not ask me whether I will wed Olaf Haraldsson? See, I have golden hair that shines round my head like the sun. See, I have sparkling eyes; I have roses in my cheeks. Why should not King Olaf woo me?'

She followed Hjalte across the courtyard all the way to the King's Hall; but Hjalte took no more heed of her words than a warrior clad in armour heeds a boy throwing stones. He took no more notice of her words than if she had been a chattering magpie in the top of a tree.

* * * * *

No one must think that Hjalte contented himself with having won Ingegerd for his King. The next day the old Icelander summoned up his courage and spoke to Oluf Skötkonung about Olaf Haraldsson. But he hardly had time to say a word; the King interrupted him as soon as he mentioned the name of his foe. Hjalte saw

that the Princess was right. He thought he had never before seen such bitter hatred.

'But that marriage will take place all the same,' said Hjalte. 'It is the will of God—the will of God.'

And it really seemed as if Hjalte were right. Two or three days later a messenger came from King Olaf of Norway to make peace with the Swedes. Hjalte sought the messenger, and told him that peace between the two countries could be most firmly established by a marriage taking place between Princess Ingegerd and Olaf Haraldsson.

The King's messenger hardly thought that old Hjalte was the man to incline a young maiden's heart to a stranger; but he thought, all the same, that the plan was a good one; and he promised Hjalte that he would lay the proposal of the marriage before King Oluf Skötkonung at the great Winter Ting.

Immediately afterwards Hjalte left Upsala. He went from farm to farm on the great plain; he went far into the forests; he went even to the borders of the sea. He never met either man or woman without speaking to them about Olaf Haraldsson and Princess Ingegerd. 'Hast thou ever heard of a greater man or of a fairer woman?' he said. 'It is assuredly the will of God that they shall wander through life together.'

Hjalte came upon old Vikings, who wintered at the seashore, and who had formerly carried off women from every coast. He talked to them about the beautiful Princess until they sprang

up and promised him, with their hand on the hilt of their sword, that they would do what they could to help her to happiness.

Hjalte went to stubborn old peasants who had never listened to the prayers of their own daughters, but had given them in marriage as shrewdness, family honour, and advantage required, and he spoke to them so wisely about the peace between the two countries and the marriage that they swore they would rather deprive the King of his kingdom than that this marriage should not come to pass.

But to the young women Hjalte spoke so many good words about Olaf Haraldsson that they vowed they would never look with kindly eyes at the swain who did not stand by the Norwegian King's messenger at the Ting and help to break down the King's opposition.

Thus Hjalte went about talking to people until the Winter Ting should assemble, and all the people, along snow-covered roads, proceeded to the great Ting Hills at Upsala.

When the Ting was opened, the eagerness of the people was so great that it seemed as if the stars would fall down from the sky were this marriage not decided upon. And although the King twice roughly said 'No' both to the peace and to the wooing, it was of no avail. It was of no avail that he would not hear the name of King Olaf mentioned. The people only shouted: 'We will not have war with Norway. We will that these two, who by all are accounted the greatest, shall wander through life together.'

What could old Oluf Skötkonung do when the

people rose against him with threats, strong words, and clashing of shields? What was he to do when he saw nothing but swords lifted and angry men before him? Was he not compelled to promise his daughter away if he would keep his life and his crown? Must he not swear to send the Princess to Kungahälla next summer to meet King Olaf there?

In this way the whole people helped to further Ingegerd's love. But no one helped Astrid to the attainment of her happiness; no one asked her about her love. And yet it lived—it lived like the child of the poor fisherman's widow, in want and need; but all the same it grew, happily and hopefully. It grew and thrived, for in Astrid's soul there were, as at the sea, fresh air and light and breezy waves.

II

In the rich city of Kungahälla, far away at the border, was the old castle of the kings. It was surrounded by green ramparts. Huge stones stood as sentinels outside the gates, and in the courtyard grew an oak large enough to shelter under its branches all the King's henchmen.

The whole space inside the ramparts was covered with long, low wooden houses. They were so old that grass grew on the ridges of the roofs. The beams in the walls were made from the thickest trees of the forest, silver-white with age.

In the beginning of the summer Olaf Haraldsson came to Kungahälla, and he gathered together in the castle everything necessary for the

celebration of his marriage. For several weeks peasants came crowding up the long street, bringing gifts: butter in tubs, cheese in sacks, hops and salt, roots and flour.

After the gifts had been brought to the castle, there was a continual procession of wedding guests through the street. There were great men and women on side-saddles, with a numerous retinue of servants and serfs. Then came hosts of players and singers, and the reciters of the Sagas. Merchants came all the way from Venderland and Gardarike, to tempt the King with bridal gifts.

When these processions for two whole weeks had filled the town with noise and bustle they only awaited the last procession, the bride's.

But the bridal procession was long in coming. Every day they expected that she would come ashore at the King's Landing-Stage, and from there, headed by drum and fife, and followed by merry swains and serious priests, proceed up the street to the King's Castle. But the bride's procession came not.

When the bride was so long in coming, everybody looked at King Olaf to see if he were uneasy. But the King always showed an undisturbed face.

'If it be the will of God,' the King said, 'that I shall possess this fair woman, she will assuredly come.'

And the King waited, whilst the grass fell for the scythe, and the cornflowers blossomed in the rye. The King still waited when the flax was pulled up, and the hops ripened on the poles. He was still waiting, when the bramble blackened on

the mountain-side, and the nip reddened on the naked branch of the hawthorn.

* * * * *

Hjalte had spent the whole summer at Kungahälla waiting for the marriage. No one awaited the arrival of the Princess more eagerly than he did. He assuredly awaited her with greater longing and anxiety than even King Olaf himself.

Hjalte no longer felt at his ease with the warriors in the King's Hall. But lower down the river there was a landing-stage where the women of Kungahälla were wont to assemble to see the last of their husbands and sons, when they sailed for distant lands. Here they were also in the habit of gathering during the summer, to watch for the vessels coming up the river, and to weep over those who had departed. To that bridge Hjalte wended his way every day. He liked best to be amongst those who longed and sorrowed.

Never had any of the women who sat waiting at Weeping Bridge gazed down the river with more anxious look than did Hjalte the Bard. No one looked more eagerly at every approaching sail. Sometimes Hjalte stole away to the Marie Church. He never prayed for anything for himself. He only came to remind the Saints about this marriage, which must come to pass, which God Himself had willed.

Most of all Hjalte liked to speak with King Olaf Haraldsson alone. It was his greatest happiness to sit and tell him of every word that had fallen from the lips of the King's daughter. He described her every feature.

'King Olaf,' he said to him, 'pray to God that she may come to thee. Every day I see thee warring against ancient heathendom which hides like an owl in the darkness of the forest, and in the mountain-clefts. But the falcon, King Olaf, will never be able to overcome the owl. Only a dove can do that, only a dove.'

The Bard asked the King whether it was not his desire to vanquish all his enemies. Was it not his intention to be alone master in the land? But in that he would never succeed. He would never succeed until he had won the crown which Hjalte had chosen for him, a crown so resplendent with brightness and glory that everyone must bow before him who owned it.

And last of all he asked the King if he were desirous of gaining the mastery over himself. But he would never succeed in overcoming the wilfulness of his own heart if he did not win a shield which Hjalte had seen in the Ladies' Bower at the King's Castle at Upsala. It was a shield from which shone the purity of heaven. It was a shield which protected from all sin and the lusts of the flesh.

* * * * *

But harvest came and they were still waiting for the Princess. One after the other the great men who had come to Kungahälla for the marriage festivities were obliged to depart. The last to take his leave was old Hjalte the Bard. It was with a heavy heart he set sail, but he was obliged to return to his home in distant Iceland before Christmas came.

Old Hjalte had not gone further than the rocky islands outside the mouth of the northern river before he met a galley. He immediately ordered his men to stop rowing. At the first glance he recognised the dragon-headed ship belonging to Princess Ingegerd. Without hesitation Hjalte told his men to row him to the galley. He gave up his place at the rudder to another, and placed himself with joyous face at the prow of the boat.

'It will make me happy to behold the fair maiden once more,' the Bard said. 'It gladdens my heart that her gentle face will be the last I shall see before sailing for Iceland.'

All the wrinkles had disappeared from Hjalte's face when he went on board the dragon-ship. He greeted the brave lads who plied the oars as friendlily as if they were his comrades, and he handed a golden ring to the maiden, who, with much deference, conducted him to the women's tent in the stern of the ship. Hjalte's hand trembled when he lifted the hangings that covered the entrance to the tent. He thought this was the most beautiful moment of his life.

'Never have I fought for a greater cause,' he said. 'Never have I longed so eagerly for anything as this marriage.'

But when Hjalte entered the tent, he drew back a step in great consternation. His face expressed the utmost confusion. He saw a tall, beautiful woman. She advanced to meet him with outstretched hand. But the woman was not Ingegerd.

Hjalte's eyes looked searchingly round the narrow tent to find the Princess. He certainly

saw that the woman who stood before him was a King's daughter. Only the daughter of a King could look at him with such a proud glance, and greet him with such dignity. And she wore the band of royalty on her forehead, and was attired like a Queen. But why was she not Ingegerd? Hjalte angrily asked the strange woman:

'Who art thou?'

'Dost thou not know me, Hjalte? I am the King's daughter, to whom thou hast spoken about Olaf Haraldsson.'

'I have spoken with a King's daughter about Olaf Haraldsson, but her name was Ingegerd.'

'Ingegerd is also my name.'

'Thy name can be what thou likest, but thou art not the Princess. What is the meaning of all this? Will the Svea-King deceive King Olaf?'

'He will not by any means deceive him. He sends him his daughter as he has promised.'

Hjalte was not far from drawing his sword to slay the strange woman. He had his hand already on the hilt, but he bethought himself it was not befitting a warrior to take the life of a woman. But he would not waste more words over this impostor. He turned round to go.

The stranger with gentle voice called him back.

'Where art thou going, Hjalte? Dost thou intend to go to Kungahälla to report this to Olaf Haraldsson?'

'That is my intention,' answered Hjalte, without looking at her.

'Why, then, dost thou leave me, Hjalte? Why

dost thou not remain with me? I, too, am going to Kungahälla.'

Hjalte now turned round and looked at her.

'Hast thou, then, no pity for an old man?' he said. 'I tell thee that my whole mind is set upon this marriage. Let me hear the full measure of my misfortune. Is Princess Ingegerd not coming?'

Then the Princess gave over fooling Hjalte.

'Come into my tent and sit down,' she said, 'and I will tell thee all that thou wouldest know. I see it is of no use to hide the truth from thee.'

Then she began to tell him everything:

'The summer was already drawing to a close. The blackcock's lively young ones had already strong feathers in their cloven tails and firmness in their rounded wings; they had already begun to flutter about amongst the close branches of the pine-forest with quick, noisy strokes.

'It happened one morning that the Svea-King came riding across the plain; he was returning from a successful chase. There hung from the pommel of his saddle a shining blue-black blackcock, a tough old fellow, with red eyebrows, as well as four of his half-grown young ones, which on account of their youth were still garbed in many-coloured hues. And the King was very proud; he thought it was not every man's luck to make such a bag with falcon and hawk in one morning.

'But that morning Princess Ingegerd and her maidens stood at the gates of the castle waiting for the King. And amongst the maidens was

one, Astrid by name; she was the daughter of the Svea-King just as much as Ingegerd, although her mother was not a free woman, and she was therefore treated as a bondmaiden. And this young maiden stood and showed her sister how the swallows gathered in the fields and chose the leaders for their long journey. She reminded her that the summer was soon over—the summer that should have witnessed the marriage of Ingegerd—and urged her to ask the King why she might not set out on her journey to King Olaf; for Astrid wished to accompany her sister on the journey. She thought that if she could but once see Olaf Haraldsson, she would have pleasure from it all her life.

'But when the Svea-King saw the Princess, he rode up to her.

'"Look, Ingegerd," he said, "here are five blackcocks hanging from my saddle. In one morning I have killed five blackcocks. Who dost thou think can boast of better luck? Have you ever heard of a King making a better capture?"

'But then the Princess was angered that he who barred the way for her happiness should come so proudly and praise his own good luck. And to make an end of the uncertainty that had tormented her for so many weeks, she replied:

'"Thou, father, hast with great honour killed five blackcocks, but I know of a King who in one morning captured five other Kings, and that was Olaf Haraldsson, the hero whom thou hast selected to be my husband."

'Then the Svea-King sprang off his horse in

great fury, and advanced towards the Princess with clenched hands.

'"What troll hath bewitched thee?" he asked. "What herb hath poisoned thee? How hath thy mind been turned to this man?"

'Ingegerd did not answer; she drew back, frightened. Then the King became quieter.

'"Fair daughter," he said to her, "dost thou not know how dear thou art to me? How should I, then, give thee to one whom I cannot endure? I should like my best wishes to go with thee on thy journey. I should like to sit as guest in thy hall. I tell thee thou must turn thy mind to the Kings of other lands, for Norway's King shall never own thee."

'At these words the Princess became so confused that she could find no other words than these with which to answer the King:

'"I did not ask thee; it was the will of the people."

'The King then asked her if she thought that the Svea-King was a slave, who could not dispose of his own offspring, or if there were a master over him who had the right to give away his daughters.

'"Will the Svea-King be content to hear himself called a breaker of oaths?" asked the Princess.

'Then the Svea-King laughed aloud.

'"Do not let that trouble thee. No one shall call me that. Why dost thou question about this, thou who art a woman? There are still men in my Council; they will find a way out of it."

'Then the King turned towards his henchmen who had been with him to the chase.

'"My will is bound by this promise," he said to them. "How shall I be released from it?"

'But none of the King's men answered a word; no one knew how to counsel him.

'Then Oluf Skötkonung became very wrath; he became like a madman.

'"So much for your wisdom," he shouted again and again to his men. "I will be free. Why do people laud your wisdom?"

'Whilst the King raged and shouted, and no one knew how to answer him, the maiden Astrid stepped forward from amongst the other women and made a proposal.

'Hjalte must really believe her when she told him that it was only because she found it so amusing that she could not help saying it, and not in the least because she thought it could really be done.

'"Why dost thou not send me?" she had said. "I am also thy daughter. Why dost thou not send me to the Norwegian King?"

'But when Ingegerd heard Astrid say these words, she grew pale.

'"Be silent, and go thy way!" she said angrily. "Go thy way, thou tattler, thou deceitful, wicked thing, to propose such a shameful thing to my father!"

'But the King would not allow Astrid to go. On the contrary! on the contrary! He stretched out his arms and drew her to his breast. He both laughed and cried, and was as wild with joy as a child.

'"Oh," he shouted, "what an idea! What a heathenish trick! Let us call Astrid Ingegerd, and entrap the King of Norway into marrying her. And afterwards when the rumour gets abroad that she is born of a bondwoman, many will rejoice in their hearts, and Olaf Haraldsson will be held in scorn and derision."

'But then Ingegerd went up to the King, and prayed:

'"Oh, father, father! do not do this thing. King Olaf is dear at heart to me. Surely thou wilt not grieve me by thus deceiving him."

'And she added that she would patiently do the bidding of her royal father, and give up all thought of marriage with Olaf Haraldsson, if he would only promise not to do him this injury.

'But the Svea-King would not listen to her prayers. He turned to Astrid and caressed her, just as if she were as beautiful as revenge itself.

'"Thou shalt go! thou shalt go soon—to-morrow!" he said. "All thy dowry, thy clothes, my dear daughter, and thy retinue, can all be collected in great haste. The Norwegian King will not think of such things; he is too taken up with joy at the thought of possessing the high-born daughter of the Svea-King."

'Then Ingegerd understood that she could hope for no mercy. And she went up to her sister, put her arm round her neck, and conducted her to the hall. Here she placed her in her own seat of honour, whilst she herself sat down on a low stool at her feet. And she said to Astrid that from henceforth she must sit there, in order to accustom herself to the place she

should take as Queen. For Ingegerd did not wish that King Olaf should have any occasion to be ashamed of his Queen.

'Then the Princess sent her maidens to the wardrobes and the pantries to fetch the dowry she had chosen for herself. And she gave everything to her sister, so that Astrid should not come to Norway's King as a poor bondwoman. She had also settled which of the serfs and maidens should accompany Astrid, and at last she made her a present of her own splendid galley.

'"Thou shalt certainly have my galley," she said. "Thou knowest there are many good men at the oars. For it is my will that thou shalt come well dowered to Norway's King, so that he may feel honoured with his Queen."

'And afterwards the Princess had sat a long time with her sister, and spoken with her about King Olaf. But she had spoken of him as one speaks of the Saints of God, and not of kings, and Astrid had not understood many of her words. But this much she did understand—that the King's daughter wished to give Astrid all the good thoughts that dwelt in her own heart, in order that King Olaf might not be so disappointed as her father wished. And then Astrid, who was not so bad as people thought her, forgot how often she had suffered for her sister's sake, and she wished that she had been able to say, "I will not go!" She had also spoken to her sister about this wish, and they had cried together, and for the first time felt like sisters.

'But it was not Astrid's nature to allow herself

to be weighed down by sorrow and scruples. By the time she was out at sea she had forgotten all her sorrow and fear. She travelled as a Princess, and was waited upon as a Princess. For the first time since her mother's death she was happy.'

When the King's beautiful daughter had told Hjalte all this she was silent for a moment, and looked at him. Hjalte had sat immovable whilst she was speaking, but the King's daughter grew pale when she saw the pain his face betrayed.

'Tell me what thou thinkest, Hjalte,' she exclaimed. 'Now, we are soon at Kungahälla. How shall I fare there? Will the King slay me? Will he brand me with red-hot irons, and send me back again? Tell me the truth, Hjalte.'

But Hjalte did not answer. He sat and talked to himself without knowing it. Astrid heard him murmur that at Kungahälla no one knew Ingegerd, and that he himself had but little inclination to turn back.

But now Hjalte's moody face fell upon Astrid, and he began to question her. She had wished, had she not, that she could have said 'No' to this journey. When she came to Kungahälla, the choice lay before her. What did she, then, mean to do! Would she tell King Olaf who she was?

This question caused Astrid not a little embarrassment. She was silent for a long while, but then she began to beg Hjalte to go with her to Kungahälla and tell the King the truth. She told Hjalte that her maidens and the men on board her ship had been bound to silence.

'And what I shall do myself I do not know,' she said. 'How can I know that? I have heard all thou hast told Ingegerd about Olaf Haraldsson.'

When Astrid said this she saw that Hjalte was again lost in thought. She heard him mutter to himself that he did not think she would confess how things were.

'But I must all the same tell her what awaits her,' he said.

Then Hjalte rose, and spoke to her with the utmost gravity.

'Let me tell thee yet another story, Astrid, about King Olaf, which I have not told thee before:

'It was at the time when King Olaf was a poor sea-king, when he only possessed a few good ships and some faithful warriors, but none of his forefathers' land. It was at the time when he fought with honour on distant seas, chastised vikings and protected merchants, and aided Christian princes with his sword.

'The King had a dream that one night an angel of God descended to his ship, set all the sails, and steered for the north. And it seemed to the King that they had not sailed for a longer time than it takes the dawn to extinguish a star before they came to a steep and rocky shore, cut up by narrow fjords and bordered with milk-white breakers. But when they reached the shore the angel stretched out his hand, and spoke in his silvery voice. It rang through the wind, which whistled in the sails, and through the waves surging round the keel.

'"Thou, King Olaf," were the angel's words, "shalt possess this land for all time."

'And when the angel had said this the dream was over.'

Hjalte now tried to explain to Astrid that like as the dawn tempers the transition from dark night to sunny day, so God had not willed that King Olaf should at once understand that the dream foretold him of superhuman honour. The King had not understood that it was the will of God that he from a heavenly throne should reign forever and ever over Norway's land, that kings should reign and kings should pass away, but holy King Olaf should continue to rule his kingdom for ever.

The King's humility did not let him see the heavenly message in its fulness of light, and he understood the words of the angel thus—that he and his seed should forever rule over the land the angel had shown him. And inasmuch as he thought he recognised in this land the kingdom of his forefathers, he steered his course for Norway, and, fortune helping him, he soon became King of that land.

'And thus it is still, Astrid. Although everything indicates that in King Olaf dwells a heavenly strength, he himself is still in doubt, and thinks that he is only called to be an earthly King. He does not yet stretch forth his hand for the crown of the saints. But now the time cannot be far distant when he must fully realize his mission. It cannot be far distant.'

And old Hjalte went on speaking, whilst the light of the seer shone in his soul and on his brow.

'Is there any other woman but Ingegerd who would not be rejected by Olaf Haraldsson and driven from his side when he fully understands the words of the angel, that he shall be Norway's King for all time? Is there anyone who can, then, follow him in his holy walk except Ingegerd?'

And again Hjalte turned to Astrid and asked with great severity:

'Answer me now and tell me whether thou wilt speak the truth to King Olaf?'

Astrid was now sore afraid. She answered humbly:

'Why wilt thou not go with me to Kungahälla? Then I shall be compelled to tell everything. Canst thou not see, Hjalte, that I do not know myself what I shall do? If it were my intention to deceive the King, could I not promise thee all thou wishest? All that I needed was to persuade thee to go on thy way. But I am weak; I only asked thee to go with me.'

But hardly had she said this before she saw Hjalte's face glow with fierce wrath.

'Why should I help thee to escape the fate that awaits thee?' he asked.

And then he said that he did not think he had any cause to show her mercy. He hated her for having sinned against her sister. The man that she would steal, thief as she was, belonged to Ingegerd. Even a hardened warrior like Hjalte must groan with pain when he thought of how Ingegerd had suffered. But Astrid had felt nothing. In the midst of all that young maiden's sorrow she had come with wicked and cruel cun-

ning, and had only sought her own happiness. Woe unto Astrid! woe unto her!

Hjalte had lowered his voice; it became heavy and dull; it sounded to Astrid as if he were murmuring an incantation.

'It is thou,' he said to her, 'who hast destroyed my most beautiful song.' For the most beautiful song Hjalte had made was the one in which he had joined the most pious of all women with the greatest of all men. 'But thou hast spoiled my song,' he said, 'and made a mockery of it; and I will punish thee, thou child of Hél. I will punish thee; as the Lord punisheth the tempter who brought sin into His world, I will punish thee. But do not ask me,' he continued, 'to protect thee against thine own self. I remember the Princess, and how she must suffer through the trick thou playest on King Olaf. For her sake thou shalt be punished, just as much as for mine. I will not go with thee to betray thee. That is my revenge, Astrid. I will not betray thee. Go thou to Kungahälla, Astrid; and if thou dost not speak of thine own accord, thou wilt become the King's bride. But then, thou serpent, punishment shall overtake thee! I know King Olaf, and I know thee. Thy life shall be such a burden that thou wilt wish for death every day that passes.'

When Hjalte had said this he turned away from her and went his way.

Astrid sat a long time silent, thinking of what she had heard. But then a smile came over her face. He forgot, did old Hjalte, that she had suffered many trials, that she had learnt to laugh

at pain. But happiness, happiness, that she had never tried.

And Astrid rose and went to the opening of the tent. She saw the angry Bard's ship. She thought that far, far away she could see Iceland, shrouded in mist, welcoming her much-travelled son with cold and darkness.

III

A SUNNY day late in the harvest, not a cloud in the sky; a day when one thinks the fair sun will give to the earth all the light she possesses! The fair sun is like a mother whose son is about to set out for a far-off land, and who, in the hour of the leave-taking, cannot take her eyes from the beloved.

In the long valley where Kungahälla lies there is a row of small hills covered with beech-wood. And now at harvest-time the trees have garbed themselves in such splendid raiment that one's heart is gladdened. One would almost think that the trees were going a-wooing. It looks as if they had clothed themselves in gold and scarlet to win a rich bride by their splendour.

The large island of Hisingen, on the other side of the river, had also adorned itself. But Hisingen is covered with golden-white birch-trees. At Hisingen the trees are clad in light colours, as if they are little maidens in bridal attire.

But up the river, which comes rushing down towards the ocean as proudly and wildly as if

the harvest rain had filled it with frothy wine, there passes the one ship after the other, rowing homewards. And when the ships approach Kungahälla they hoist new white sails, instead of the old ones of gray wadmal; and one cannot help thinking of old fairy-tales of kings' sons who go out seeking adventures clothed in rags, but who throw them off when they again enter the King's lofty hall.

But all the people of Kungahälla have assembled at the landing-stages. Old and young are busy unloading goods from the ships. They fill the storehouses with salt and train-oil, with costly weapons, and many-coloured rugs. They haul large and small vessels on to land, they question the returned seamen about their voyage. But suddenly all work ceases, and every eye is turned towards the river.

Right between the big merchant vessels a large galley is making its way, and people ask each other in astonishment who it can be that carries sails striped with purple and a golden device on the prow; they wonder what kind of ship it can be that comes flying over the waves like a bird. They praise the oarsmen, who handle the oars so evenly that they flash along the sides of the ship like an eagle's wings.

'It must be the Swedish Princess who is coming,' they say. 'It must be the beautiful Princess Ingegerd, for whom Olaf Haraldsson has been waiting the whole summer and harvest.'

And the women hasten down to the riverside to see the Princess when she rows past them on her way to the King's Landing-Stage. Men and

boys run to the ships, or climb the roofs of the boathouses.

When the women see the Princess standing in gorgeous apparel, they begin to shout to her, and to greet her with words of welcome; and every man who sees her radiant face tears his cap from his head and swings it high in the air. But on the King's Landing-Stage stands King Olaf himself, and when he sees the Princess his face beams with gladness, and his eyes light up with tender love.

And as it is now so late in the year that all the flowers are faded, the young maidens pluck the golden-red autumnal leaves from the trees and strew them on the bridge and in the street; and they hasten to deck their houses with the bright berries of the mountain-ash and the dark-red leaves of the poplar.

The Princess, who stands high on the ship, sees the people waving and greeting her in welcome. She sees the golden-red leaves over which she shall walk, and foremost on the landing-stage she sees the King awaiting her with smiles. And the Princess forgets everything she would have said and confessed. She forgets that she is not Ingegerd, she forgets everything except the one thing, that she is to be the wife of Olaf Haraldsson.

* * * * *

One Sunday Olaf Haraldsson was seated at table, and his beautiful Queen sat by his side. He was talking eagerly with her, resting his elbow on the table, and turning towards her, so

that he could see her face. But when Astrid spoke the King lowered his eyes in order not to think of anything but her lovely voice, and when she had been speaking for a long time he began to cut the table with his knife without thinking of what he was doing. All King Olaf's men knew that he would not have done this if he had remembered that it was Sunday; but they had far too great a respect for King Olaf to venture to remind him that he was committing a sin.

The longer Astrid talked, the more uneasy became his henchmen. The Queen saw that they exchanged troubled glances with each other, but she did not understand what was the matter.

All had finished eating, and the food had been removed, but King Olaf still sat and talked with Astrid and cut the top of the table. A whole little heap of chips lay in front of him. Then at last his friend Björn, the son of Ogur from Selö, spoke.

'What day is it to-morrow, Eilif?' he asked, turning to one of the torch-bearers.

'To-morrow is Monday,' answered Eilif in a loud and clear voice.

Then the King lifted his head and looked up at Eilif.

'Dost thou say that to-morrow is Monday?' he asked thoughtfully.

Without saying another word, the King gathered up all the chips he had cut off the table into his hand, went to the fireplace, seized a burning coal, and laid it on the chips, which soon caught fire. The King stood quite still and let them burn to ashes in his hand. Then all the hench-

men rejoiced, but the young Queen grew pale as death.

'What sentence will he pronounce over me when he one day finds out my sin,' she thought, 'he who punishes himself so hardly for so slight an offence?'

* * * * *

Agge from Gardarike lay sick on board his galley in Kungahälla harbour. He was lying in the narrow hold awaiting death. He had been suffering for a long time from pains in his foot, and now there was an open sore, and in the course of the last few hours it had begun to turn black.

'Thou needest not die, Agge,' said Lodulf from Kunghälla, who had come on board to see his sick friend. 'Dost thou not know that King Olaf is here in the town, and that God, on account of his piety and holiness, has given him power to heal the sick? Send a message to him and ask him to come and lay his hand upon thee, and thou wilt recover.'

'No, I cannot ask help from him,' answered Agge. 'Olaf Haraldsson hates me because I have slain his foster-brother, Reor the White. If he knew that my ship lay in the harbour, he would send his men to kill me.'

But when Lodulf had left Agge and gone into the town, he met the young Queen, who had been in the forest gathering nuts.

'Queen,' Lodulf cried to her, 'say this to King Olaf: "Agge from Gardarike, who has

slain thy foster-brother, lies at the point of death on his ship in the harbour." '

The young Queen hastened home and went immediately up to King Olaf, who stood in the courtyard smoothing the mane of his horse.

' Rejoice, King Olaf! ' she said. ' Agge from Gardarike, who slew thy foster-brother, lies sick on his ship in the harbour and is near death.'

Olaf Haraldsson at once led his horse into the stable; then he went out without sword or helmet. He went quickly down one of the narrow lanes between the houses until he reached the harbour. There he found the ship which belonged to Agge. The King was at the side of the sick man before Agge's men thought of stopping him.

'Agge,' said King Olaf, ' many a time I have pursued thee on the sea, and thou hast always escaped me. Now thou hast been struck down with sickness here in my city. This is a sign to me that God hath given thy life into my hands.'

Agge made no answer. He was utterly feeble, and death was very near. Olaf Haraldsson laid his hands upon his breast and prayed to God.

' Give me the life of this mine enemy,' he said.

But the Queen, who had seen the King hasten down to the harbour without helmet and sword, went into the hall, fetched his weapons and called for some of his men. Then she hurried after him down to the ship. But when she stood outside the narrow hold, she heard King Olaf praying for the sick man.

Astrid looked in and saw the King and Agge without betraying her presence. She saw that

whilst the King's hands rested upon the forehead and breast of the dying man, the deathly pallor vanished from his face; he began to breathe lightly and quietly; he ceased moaning, and at last he fell into a sound sleep.

Astrid went softly back to the King's Castle. She dragged the King's sword after her along the road. Her face was paler than the dying man's had been. Her breathing was heavy, like that of a dying person.

* * * * *

It was the morning of All Saints' Day, and King Olaf was ready to go to Mass. He came out of the King's Hall and went across the courtyard towards the gateway. Several of the King's henchmen stood in the courtyard to accompany him to Mass. When the King came towards them, they drew up in two rows, and the King passed between them.

Astrid stood in the narrow corridor outside the Women's Room and looked down at the King. He wore a broad golden band round his head, and was attired in a long mantle of red velvet. He went very quietly, and there was a holy peace over his face. Astrid was terrified to see how much he resembled the Saints and Kings that were carved in wood over the altar in the Marie Church.

At the gateway stood a man in a broad-brimmed hat, and wearing a big mantle. When the King approached him he threw off his mantle, lifted a drawn sword, which he had hidden under it, and rushed at the King. But when

he was quite close to him, the mild and gentle glance of the King fell upon him, and he suddenly stopped. He let his sword fall to the ground, and fell on his knees.

King Olaf stood still, and looked at the man with the same clear glance; the man tried to turn his eyes away from him, but he could not. At last he burst into tears and sobs.

'Oh, King Olaf! King Olaf!' he moaned. 'Thine enemies sent me hither to slay thee; but when I saw thy saintly face my sword fell from my hand. Thine eyes, King Olaf, have felled me to the ground.'

Astrid sank upon her knees where she stood. 'Oh God, have mercy upon me, a sinner!' she said. 'Woe unto me, because by lying and deceit I have become the wife of this man.'

IV

On the evening of All Saints' Day the moon shone bright and clear. The King had gone the round of the castle, had looked into stables and barns to see that all was well; he had even been to the house where the serfs dwelt to ascertain if they were well looked after. When he went back to the King's Hall, he saw a woman with a black kerchief over her head stealing towards the gateway. He thought he knew her, and therefore followed her. She went out of the gateway, over the Market Place, and stole down the narrow lanes to the river.

Olaf Haraldsson went after her as quietly as he could. He saw her go on to one of the landing-stages, stand still, and look down into the water. She stretched out her arms towards heaven, and, with a deep sigh, she went so near the edge that the King saw she meant to spring into the river.

The King approached her with the noiseless steps which a life full of danger had taught him. Twice the woman lifted her foot to make the spring, but she hesitated. Before she could make a new attempt, King Olaf had his arm round her waist and drew her back.

'Thou unhappy one!' he said. 'Thou wouldest do that which God hath prohibited.'

When the woman heard his voice she held her hands before her face as if to hide it. But King Olaf knew who she was. The rustle of her dress, the shape of her head, the golden rings on her arms had already told him that it was the Queen. The first moment Astrid had struggled to free herself, but she soon grew quiet, and tried to make the King believe that she had not intended to kill herself.

'King Olaf, why dost thou secretly come behind a poor woman who hath gone down to the river to see how she is mirrored in the water? What must I think of thee?'

Astrid's voice sounded composed and playful. The King stood silent.

'Thou hast frightened me so that I nearly fell into the river,' Astrid said. 'Didst thou think, perhaps, that I would drown myself?'

The King answered:

'I know not what to believe; God will enlighten me.'

Astrid laughed and kissed him.

'What woman would take her life who is as happy as I am? Doth one take one's life in Paradise?'

'I do not understand it,' said King Olaf, in his gentle manner. 'God will enlighten me. He will tell me if it be through any fault of mine that thou wouldest commit so great a sin.'

Astrid went up to him and stroked his cheek. The reverence she felt for King Olaf had hitherto deterred her from showing him the full tenderness of her love. Now she threw her arms passionately around him and kissed him countless times. Then she began to speak to him in gentle, bird-like tones.

'Wouldest thou know how truly my heart clings to thee?' she said.

She made the King sit down on an overturned boat. She knelt down at his feet.

'King Olaf,' she said, 'I will no longer be Queen. She who loves as greatly as I love thee cannot be a Queen. I wish thou wouldest go far into the forest, and let me be thy bondwoman. Then I should have leave to serve thee every day. Then I would prepare thy food, make thy bed, and watch over thy house whilst thou slept. None other should have leave to serve thee, except I. When thou returnest from the chase in the evening, I would go to meet thee, and kneel before thee on the road and say: "King Olaf, my life is thine." And thou wouldest laugh, and lower thy spear against my breast, and say:

" Yes, thy life is mine. Thou hast neither father nor mother; thou art mine, and thy life is mine." '

As Astrid said this, she drew, as if in play, King Olaf's sword out of its sheath. She laid the hilt in the King's hand, but the point she directed towards her own heart.

'Say these words to me, King Olaf,' she said, 'as if we were alone in the forest, and I were thy bondwoman. Say: " Thy life is mine." '

'Thy life is God's,' said the King.

Astrid laughed lightly.

'My life is thine,' she repeated, in the tenderest voice, and the same moment King Olaf felt that she pressed the point of the sword against her breast.

But the King held the sword with a firm hand, even when in play. He drew it to him before Astrid had time to do herself any harm. And he sprang up. For the first time in his life he trembled from fear. The Queen would die at his hand, and she had not been far from attaining her wish. At the same moment he had an inspiration, and he understood what was the cause of her despair.

'She has committed a sin,' he thought. 'She has a sin upon her conscience.'

He bent down over Astrid.

'Tell me in what manner thou hast sinned,' he said.

Astrid had thrown herself down on the rough planks of the bridge, crying in utter despair.

'No one free from guilt would weep like this,' thought the King. 'But how can the honourable daughter of the King have brought such a

heavy burden upon her?' he asked himself. 'How can the noble Ingegerd have a crime upon her conscience?'

'Ingegerd, tell me how thou hast sinned,' he asked again.

But Astrid was sobbing so violently that she could not answer, but instead she drew off her golden arm and finger rings, and handed them to the King with averted face. The King thought how unlike this was to the gentle King's daughter of whom Hjalte had spoken.

'Is this Hjalte's Ingegerd that lies sobbing at my feet?' he thought.

He bent down and seized Astrid by the shoulder.

'Who are thou? who art thou?' he said, shaking her arm. 'I see that thou canst not be Ingegerd. Who art thou?'

Astrid was still sobbing so violently that she could not speak. But in order to give the King the answer he asked for, she let down her long hair, twisted a lock of it round her arms, and held them towards the King, and sat thus bowed and with drooping head. The King thought:

'She wishes me to understand that she belongs to those who wear chains. She confesses that she is a bondwoman.'

A thought again struck the King; he now understood everything.

'Has not the Svea-King a daughter who is the child of a bondwoman?' he asked suddenly.

He received no answer to this question either, but he heard Astrid shudder as if from cold. King Olaf asked still one more question.

'Thou whom I have made my wife,' he said, 'hast thou so low a mind that thou wouldest allow thyself to be used as a means of spoiling a man's honour? Is thy mind so mean that thou rejoicest when his enemies laugh at his discomfiture?'

Astrid could hear from the King's voice how bitterly he suffered under the insult that had been offered him. She forgot her own sufferings, and wept no more.

'Take my life,' she said.

A great temptation came upon King Olaf.

'Slay this wicked bondwoman,' the old Adam said within him. 'Show the Svea-King what it costs to make a fool of the King of Norway.'

At that moment Olaf Haraldsson felt no love for Astrid. He hated her for having been the means of his humiliation. He knew everybody would think it right when he returned evil for evil, and if he did not avenge this insult, he would be held in derision by the Bards, and his enemies would no longer fear him. He had but one wish: to slay Astrid, to take her life. His anger was so violent that it craved for blood. If a fool had dared to put his fool's cap upon his head, would he not have torn it off, torn it to pieces, thrown it on the ground, trampled upon it? If he now laid Astrid a bloody corpse upon her ship, and sent her back to her father, people would say of King Olaf that he was a worthy descendant of Harald Haarfager.

But King Olaf still held his sword in his hand, and under his fingers he felt the hilt, upon which he had once had inscribed: 'Blessed are

the peacemakers,' 'Blessed are the meek,' 'Blessed are the merciful.' And every time he, in this hour of anguish, grasped his sword firmly in order to slay Astrid, he felt these words under his hand. He thought he could feel every letter. He remembered the day when he had first heard these words.

'This I will write in letters of gold on the hilt of my sword,' he had said, 'so that the words may burn in my hand every time I would swing my sword in fury, or for an unjust cause.'

He felt that the hilt of the sword now burnt in his hand. King Olaf said aloud to himself:

'Formerly thou wert the slave of many lusts; now thou hast but one master, and that is God.'

With these words he put back the sword into its sheath, and began to walk to and fro on the bridge. Astrid remained lying in the same position. King Olaf saw that she crouched in fear of death every time he went past her.

'I will not slay thee,' he said; but his voice sounded hard from hatred.

King Olaf continued for awhile to walk backwards and forwards on the bridge; then he went up to Astrid, and asked her in the same hard voice what her real name was, and that she was able to answer him. He looked at this woman whom he had so highly treasured, and who now lay at his feet like a wounded deer—he looked down upon her as a dead man's soul looks with pity at the poor body which was once its dwelling.

'Oh, thou my soul,' said King Olaf, 'it was there thou dwelt in love, and now thou art as

homeless as a beggar.' He drew nearer to Astrid, and spoke as if she were no longer living or could hear what he said. 'It was told me that there was a King's daughter whose heart was so pure and holy that she endued with peace all who came near her. They told me of her gentleness, that he who saw her felt as safe as a helpless child does with its mother, and when the beautiful woman who now lies here came to me, I thought that she was Ingegerd, and she became exceeding dear to me. She was so beautiful and glad, and she made my own heavy thoughts light. And did she sometimes act otherwise than I expected the proud Ingegerd to do, she was too dear to me to doubt her; she stole into my heart with her joyousness and beauty.'

He was silent for a time, and thought how dear Astrid had been to him and how happiness had with her come to his house.

'I could forgive her,' he said aloud. 'I could again make her my Queen, I could in love take her in my arms; but I *dare* not, for my soul would still be homeless. Ah, thou fair woman,' he said, 'why dost lying dwell within thee? With thee there is no security, no rest.'

The King went on bemoaning himself, but now Astrid stood up.

'King Olaf, do not speak thus to me,' she said; 'I will rather die. Understand, I am in earnest.'

Then she tried to say a few words to excuse herself. She told him that she had gone to Kungahälla not with the intention of deceiving

him, but in order to be a Princess for a few weeks, to be waited upon like a Queen, to sail on the sea. But she had intended to confess who she was as soon as she came to Kungahälla. There she expected to find Hjalte and the other great men who knew Ingegerd. She had never thought of deceiving him when she came, but an evil spirit had sent all those away who knew Ingegerd, and then the temptation had come to her.

'When I saw thee, King Olaf,' she said, 'I forgot everything to become thine, and I thought I would gladly suffer death at thine hand had I but for one day been thy wife.'

King Olaf answered her:

'I see that what was deadly earnest to me was but a pastime to thee. Never hast thou thought upon what it was to come and say to a man: "I am she whom thou most fervently desirest; I am that high-born maiden whom it is the greatest honour to win." And then thou art not that woman; thou art but a lying bondwoman.'

'I have loved thee from the first moment I heard thy name,' Astrid said softly.

The King clenched his hand in anger against her.

'Know, Astrid, that I have longed for Ingegerd as no man has ever longed for woman. I would have clung to her as the soul of the dead clings to the angel bearing him upwards. I thought she was so pure that she could have helped me to lead a sinless life.'

And he broke out into wild longings, and said that he longed for the power of the holy ones of

God, but that he was too weak and sinful to attain to perfection.

'But the King's daughter could have helped me,' he said; 'she the saintly and gentle one would have helped me. Oh, my God,' he said, 'whichever way I turn I see sinners, wherever I go I meet those who would entice me to sin. Why didst Thou not send me the King's daughter, who had not a single evil thought in her heart? Her gentle eye would have found the right path for my foot. Whenever I strayed from it her gentle hand would have led me back.'

A feeling of utter helplessness and the weariness of despair fell upon Olaf Haraldsson.

'It was this upon which I had set my hopes,' he said—'to have a good woman at my side, not to wander alone amongst wickedness and sin forever. Now I feel that I must succumb; I am unable to fight any longer. Have I not asked God,' he exclaimed, 'what place I shall have before His face? To what hast Thou chosen me, Thou Lord of souls? Is it appointed unto me to become the equal of apostles and martyrs? But now, Astrid, I need ask no longer; God hath not been willing to give me that woman who should have assisted me in my wandering. Now I know that I shall never win the crown of the Saints.'

The King was silent in inconsolable despair; then Astrid drew nearer to him.

'King Olaf,' she said, 'what thou now sayest both Hjalte and Ingegerd have told me long ago, but I would not believe that thou wert more than a good and brave knight and noble King. It is

only now that I have lived under thy roof that my soul has begun to fear thee. I have felt that it was worse than death to appear before thee with a lie upon my lips. Never have I been so terrified,' Astrid continued, 'as when I understood that thou wast a Saint. When I saw thee burn the chips in thine hand, when I saw sickness flee at thy bidding, and the sword fall out of thine enemy's hand when he met thee, I was terrified unto death when I saw that thou wast a Saint, and I resolved to die before thou knewest that I had deceived thee.'

King Olaf did not answer. Astrid looked up at him; she saw that his eyes were turned towards heaven. She did not know if he had heard her.

'Ah,' she said, 'this moment have I feared every day and every hour since I came hither. I would have died rather than live through it.'

Olaf Haraldsson was still silent.

'King Olaf,' she said, 'I would gladly give my life for thee; I would gladly throw myself into the gray river so that thou shouldst not live with a lying woman at thy side. The more I saw of thy holiness the better I understood that I must go from thee. A Saint of God cannot have a lying bondwoman at his side.'

The King was still silent, but now Astrid raised her eyes to his face; then she cried out, terror-stricken:

'King Olaf, thy face shines.'

Whilst Astrid spoke, God had shown King Olaf a vision. He saw all the stars of heaven leave their appointed places, and fly like swarm-

ing bees about the universe. But suddenly they all gathered above his head and formed a radiant crown.

'Astrid,' said he, with trembling voice, 'God hath spoken to me. It is true what thou sayest. I shall become a Saint of God.'

His voice trembled from emotion, and his face shone in the night. But when Astrid saw the light that surrounded his head, she arose. For her the last hope had faded.

'Now I will go,' she said. 'Now thou knowest whom thou art. Thou canst never more bear me at thy side. But think gently of me. Without joy or happiness have I lived all my life. In rags have I gone; blows have I endured. Forgive me when I am gone. My love has done thee no harm.'

When Astrid in silent despair crossed over the bridge, Olaf Haraldsson awoke from his ecstasy. He hastened after her.

'Why wilt thou go?' he said. 'Why wilt thou go?'

'*Must* I not go from thee when thou art a Saint?' she whispered scarcely audibly.

'Thou shalt not go. Now thou canst remain,' said King Olaf. 'Before, I was a lowly man and must fear all sin; a poor earthly King was I, too poor to bestow on thee my grace; but now all the glory of Heaven has been given to me. Art thou weak? I am the Lord's knight. Dost thou fall? I can lift thee up. God hath chosen me, Astrid. Thou canst not harm me, but I can help thee. Ah! what am I saying? In this hour God hath so wholly and fully shed the riches of His

love in my heart that I cannot even see thou hast done wrong.'

Gently and tenderly he lifted up the trembling form, and whilst lovingly supporting her, who was still sobbing and who could hardly stand upright, he and Astrid went back to the King's Castle.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

III
Old AGNETE

Old AGNETE

AN old woman went up the mountain-path with short, tripping steps. She was little and thin. Her face was pale and wizened, but neither hard nor furrowed. She wore a long cloak and a quilled cap. She had a Prayer-Book in her hand and a sprig of lavender in her handkerchief.

She lived in a hut far up the high mountain where no trees could grow. It was lying quite close to the edge of a broad glacier, which sent its river of ice from the snow-clad mountain peak into the depths of the valley. There she lived quite alone. All those who had belonged to her were dead.

It was Sunday, and she had been to church. But whatever might be the cause, her going there had not made her happy, but sorrowful. The clergyman had spoken about death and the doomed, and that had affected her. She had suddenly begun to think of how she had heard in her childhood that many of the doomed were tormented in the region of eternal cold on the mountain right above her dwelling. She could remember many tales about these wanderers of the glaciers—these indefatigable shadows which were hunted from place to place by the icy mountain winds.

All at once she felt a great terror of the

mountain, and thought that her hut was dreadfully high up. Supposing those who moved about invisibly there wandered down the glaciers! And she who was quite alone! The word 'alone' gave to her thoughts a still sadder turn. She again felt the full burden of that sorrow which never left her. She thought how hard it was to be so far away from human beings.

'Old Agnete,' she said aloud to herself, as she had got into the habit of doing in the lonely waste, 'you sit in your hut and spin, and spin. You work and toil all the hours of the day so as not to perish from hunger. But is there anyone to whom you give any pleasure by being alive? Is there anyone, old Agnete? If any of your own were living—— Yes, then, perhaps, if you lived nearer the village, you might be of some use to somebody. Poor as you are, you could neither take dog nor cat home to you, but you could probably now and then give a beggar shelter. You ought not to live so far away from the highroad, old Agnete. If you could only once in a while give a thirsty wayfarer a drink, then you would know that it was of some use your being alive.'

She sighed, and said to herself that not even the peasant women who gave her flax to spin would mourn her death. She had certainly striven to do her work honestly and well, but no doubt there were many who could have done it better. She began to cry bitterly, when the thought struck her that his reverence, who had seen her sitting in the same place in church for so many, many years, would perhaps think it a

matter of perfect indifference whether she was dead or not.

'It is as if I were dead,' she said. 'No one asks after me. I would just as well lie down and die. I am already frozen to death from cold and loneliness. I am frozen to the core of the heart, I am indeed. Ah me! ah me!' she said, now she had been set a-thinking; 'if there were only someone who really needed me, there might still be a little warmth left in old Agnete. But I cannot knit stockings for the mountain goats, or make the beds for the marmots, can I? I tell Thee,' she said, stretching our her hands towards heaven, 'something Thou must give me to do, or I shall lay me down and die.'

At the same moment a tall, stern monk came towards her. He walked by her side because he saw that she was sorrowful, and she told him about her troubles. She said that her heart was nearly frozen to death, and that she would become like one of the wanderers on the glacier if God did not give her something to live for.

'God will assuredly do that,' said the monk.

'Do you not see that God is powerless here?' old Agnete said. 'Here there is nothing but an empty, barren waste.'

They went higher and higher towards the snow mountains. The moss spread itself softly over the stones; the Alpine herbs, with their velvety leaves, grew along the pathway; the mountain, with its rifts and precipices, its glaciers and snowdrifts, towered above them, weighing them down. Then the monk discovered old Agnete's hut, right below the glacier.

'Oh,' he said, 'is it there you live? Then you are not alone there; you have company enough. Only look!'

The monk put his thumb and first finger together, held them before old Agnete's left eye, and bade her look through them towards the mountain. But old Agnete shuddered and closed her eyes.

'If there is anything to see up there, then I will not look on any account,' she said. 'The Lord preserve us! it is bad enough without that.'

'Good-bye, then,' said the monk; 'it is not certain that you will be permitted to see such a thing a second time.'

Old Agnete grew curious; she opened her eyes and looked towards the glacier. At first she saw nothing remarkable, but soon she began to discern things moving about. What she had taken to be mist and vapour, or bluish-white shadows on the ice, were multitudes of doomed souls, tormented in the eternal cold.

Poor old Agnete trembled like an aspen leaf. Everything was just as she had heard it described in days gone by. The dead wandered about there in endless anguish and pain. Most of them were shrouded in something long and white, but all had their faces and their hands bared.

They could not be counted, there was such a multitude. The longer she looked, the more there appeared. Some walked proud and erect, others seemed to dance over the glacier; but she saw that they all cut their feet on the sharp and jagged edges of the ice.

It was just as she had been told. She saw how

they constantly huddled close together, as if to warm themselves, but immediately drew back again, terrified by the deathly cold which emanated from their bodies.

It was as if the cold of the mountain came from them, as if it were they who prevented the snow from melting and made the mist so piercingly cold.

They were not all moving; some stood in icy stoniness, and it looked as if they had been standing thus for years, for ice and snow had gathered around them so that only the upper portion of their bodies could be seen.

The longer the little old woman gazed the quieter she grew. Fear left her, and she was only filled with sorrow for all these tormented beings. There was no abatement in their pain, no rest for their torn feet, hurrying over ice sharp as edged steel. And how cold they were! how they shivered! how their teeth chattered from cold! Those who were petrified and those who could move, all suffered alike from the snarling, biting, unbearable cold.

There were many young men and women; but there was no youth in their faces, blue with cold. It looked as if they were playing, but all joy was dead. They shivered, and were huddled up like old people.

But those who made the deepest impression on her were those frozen fast in the hard glacier, and those who were hanging from the mountain-side like great icicles.

Then the monk removed his hand, and old Agnete saw only the barren, empty glaciers.

Here and there were ice-mounds, but they did not surround any petrified ghosts. The blue light on the glacier did not proceed from frozen bodies; the wind chased the snowflakes before it, but not any ghosts.

Still old Agnete was certain that she had really seen all this, and she asked the monk:

'Is it permitted to do anything for these poor doomed ones?'

He answered:

'When has God forbidden Love to do good or Mercy to solace?'

Then the monk went his way, and old Agnete went to her hut and thought it all over. The whole evening she pondered how she could help the doomed who were wandering on the glaciers. For the first time in many years she had been too busy to think of her loneliness.

Next morning she again went down to the village. She smiled, and was well content. Old age was no longer so heavy a burden. 'The dead,' she said to herself, 'do not care so much about red cheeks and light steps. They only want one to think of them with a little warmth. But young people do not trouble to do that. Oh no, oh no. How should the dead protect themselves from the terrible coldness of death did not old people open their hearts to them?

When she came to the village shop she bought a large package of candles, and from a peasant she ordered a great load of firewood; but in order to pay for it she had to take in twice as much spinning as usual.

Towards evening, when she got home again,

she said many prayers, and tried to keep up her courage by singing hymns. But her courage sank more and more. All the same, she did what she had made up her mind to do.

She moved her bed into the inner room of her hut. In the front room she made a big fire and lighted it. In the window she placed two candles, and left the outer door wide open. Then she went to bed.

She lay in the darkness and listened.

Yes, there certainly was a step. It was as if someone had come gliding down the glacier. It came heavily, moaning. It crept round the hut as if it dared not come in. Close to the wall it stood and shivered.

Old Agnete could not bear it any longer. She sprang out of bed, went into the outer room and closed the door. It was too much; flesh and blood could not stand it.

Outside the hut she heard deep sighs and dragging steps, as of sore, wounded feet. They dragged themselves away further and further up the icy glacier. Now and again she also heard sobs; but soon everything was quiet.

Then old Agnete was beside herself with anxiety. 'You are a coward, you silly old thing,' she said. 'Both the fire and the lights, which cost so much, are burning out. Shall it all have been done in vain because you are such a miserable coward?' And when she had said this she got out of bed again, crying from fear, with chattering teeth, and shivering all over; but into the other room she went, and the door she opened.

Again she lay and waited. Now she was no longer frightened that they should come. She was only afraid lest she had scared them away, and that they dared not come back.

And as she lay there in the darkness she began to call just as she used to do in her young days when she was tending the sheep.

'My little white lambs, my lambs in the mountains, come, come! Come down from rift and precipice, my little white lambs!'

Then it seemed as if a cold wind from the mountain came rushing into the room. She heard neither step nor sob, only gusts of wind that came rushing along the walls of the hut into the room. And it sounded as if someone were continually saying:

'Hush, hush! Don't frighten her! don't frighten her! don't frighten her!'

She had a feeling as if the outside room was so overcrowded that they were being crushed against the walls, and that the walls were giving way. Sometimes it seemed as if they would lift the roof in order to gain more room. But the whole time there were whispers:

'Hush, hush! Don't frighten her! don't frighten her!'

Then old Agnete felt happy and peaceful. She folded her hands and fell asleep. In the morning it seemed as if the whole had been a dream. Everything looked as usual in the outer room; the fire had burnt out, and so had the candles. There was not a vestige of tallow left in the candlesticks.

As long as old Agnete lived she continued to

do this. She spun and worked so that she could keep her fire burning every night. And she was happy because someone needed her.

Then one Sunday she was not in her usual seat in the church. Two peasants went up to her hut to see if there was anything the matter. She was already dead, and they carried her body down to the village to bury it.

When, the following Sunday, her funeral took place, just before Mass, there were but few who followed, neither did one see grief on any face. But suddenly, just as the coffin was being lowered into the grave, a tall, stern monk came into the churchyard, and he stood still and pointed to the snow-clad mountains. Then they saw the whole mountain-ridge shining in a red light as if lighted with joy, and round it wound a procession of small yellow flames, looking like burning candles. And these flames numbered as many as the candles which old Agnete had burned for the doomed. Then people said: 'Praise the Lord! She whom no one mourns here below has all the same found friends in the solitude above'

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

IV

The Fisherman's RING

The Fisherman's RING

DURING the reign of the Doge Gradenigos there lived in Venice an old fisherman, Cecco by name. He had been an unusually strong man, and was still very strong for his age, but lately he had given up work and left it to his two sons to provide for him. He was very proud óf his sons, and he loved them—ah, signor, how he loved them!

Fate had so ordered it that their bringing up had been almost entirely left to him. Their mother had died early, and so Cecco had to take care of them. He had looked after their clothes and cooked their food; he had sat in the boat with needle and cotton and mended and darned. He had not cared in the least that people had laughed at him on that account. He had also, quite alone, taught them all it was necessary for them to know. He had made a couple of able fishermen of them, and taught them to honour God and San Marco.

'Always remember,' he said to them, 'that Venice will never be able to stand in her own strength. Look at her! Has she not been built on the waves? Look at the low islands close to land, where the sea plays amongst the seaweed. You would not venture to tread upon them, and yet it is upon such foundation that the whole city rests. And do you not know that the north wind has strength enough to throw both

churches and palaces into the sea? Do you not know that we have such powerful enemies, that all the princes in Christendom cannot vanquish them? Therefore you must always pray to San Marco, for in his strong hands rests the chains which hold Venice suspended over the depths of the sea.'

And in the evening, when the moon shed its light over Venice, greenish-blue from the sea-mist; when they quietly glided up the Canale Grande and the gondolas they met were full of singers; when the palaces shone in their white splendour, and thousands of lights mirrored themselves in the dark waters—then he always reminded them that they must thank San Marco for life and happiness.

But oh, signor! he did not forget him in the daytime either. When they returned from fishing and glided over the water of the lagoons, light-blue and golden; when the city lay before them, swimming on the waves; when the great ships passed in and out of the harbour, and the palace of the Doges shone like a huge jewel-casket, holding all the world's treasure—then he never forgot to tell them that all these things were the gift of San Marco, and that they would all vanish if a single Venetian were ungrateful enough to give up believing in and adoring him.

Then, one day, the sons went out fishing on the open sea, outside Lido. They were in company with several others, had a splendid vessel, and intended being away several days. The weather was fine, and they hoped for a goodly haul.

They left the Rialto, the large island where the city proper lies, one early morning, and as they passed through the lagoons they saw all the islands which, like fortifications, protect Venice against the sea, appear through the mist of the morning. There were La Gindecca and San Giorgio on the right, and San Michele, Muracco and San Lazzaro on the left. Then island followed upon island in a large circle, right on to the long Lido lying straight before them, and forming, as it were, the clasp of this string of pearls. And beyond Lido was the wide, infinite sea.

When they were well at sea, some of them got into a small boat and rowed out to set their nets. It was still fine weather, although the waves were higher here than inside the islands. None of them, however, dreamt of any danger. They had a good boat and were experienced men. But soon those left on the vessel saw that the sea and the sky suddenly grew darker in the north. They understood that a storm was coming on, and they at once shouted to their comrades, but they were already too far away to hear them.

The wind first reached the small boat. When the fishermen suddenly saw the waves rise around them, as herds of cattle on a large plain arise in the morning, one of the men in the boat stood up and beckoned to his comrades, but the same moment he fell backwards into the sea. Immediately afterwards a wave came which raised the boat on her bows, and one could see how the men, as it were, were shaken from off their seats and flung into the sea. It only lasted a moment,

and everything had disappeared. Then the boat again appeared, keel upwards. The men in the vessel tried to reach the spot, but could not tack against the wind.

It was a terrific storm which came rushing over the sea, and soon the fishermen in the vessel had their work set to save themselves. They succeeded in getting home safely, however, and brought with them the news of the disaster. It was Cecco's two sons and three others who had perished.

Ah me! how strangely things come about! The same morning Cecco had gone down to the Rialto to the fish-market. He went about amongst the stands and strutted about like a fine gentleman because he had no need to work. He even invited a couple of old Lido fishermen to an asteri and stood them a beaker of wine. He grew very important as he sat there and bragged and boasted about his sons. His spirits rose high, and he took out the zecchine—the one the Doge had given him when he had saved a child from drowning in Canale Grande. He was very proud of this large gold coin, carried it always about him, and showed it to people whenever there was an opportunity.

Suddenly a man entered the asteri and began to tell about the disaster, without noticing that Cecco was sitting there. But he had not been speaking long before Cecco threw himself over him and seized him by the throat.

'You do not dare to tell me that they are dead!' he shrieked—'not my sons!'

The man succeeded in getting away from him,

but Cecco for a long time went on as if he were out of his mind. People heard him shout and groan; they crowded into the asteri—as many as it could hold—and stood round him in a circle as if he were a juggler.

Cecco sat on the floor and moaned. He hit the hard stone floor with his fist, and said over and over again:

'It is San Marco, San Marco, San Marco!'

'Cecco, you have taken leave of your senses from grief,' they said to him.

'I knew it would happen on the open sea,' Cecco said; 'outside Lido and Malamocco, there, I knew it would happen. There San Marco would take them. He bore them a grudge. I have feared it, boy. Yes,' he said, without hearing what they said to quiet him, 'they once laughed at him, once when we were lying outside Lido. He has not forgotten it; he will not stand being laughed at.'

He looked with confused glances at the bystanders, as if to seek help.

'Look here, Beppo from Malamocca,' he said, stretching out his hand towards a big fisherman, 'don't you believe it was San Marco?'

'Don't imagine any such thing, Cecco.'

'Now you shall hear, Beppo, how it happened. You see, we were lying out at sea, and to while away the time I told them how San Marco had come to Venice. The evangelist San Marco was first buried in a beautiful cathedral at Alexandria in Egypt. But the town got into the possession of unbelievers, and one day the Khalifa ordered that they should build him a

magnificent palace at Alexandria, and take some columns from the Christian churches for its decoration. But just at that time there were two Venetian merchants at Alexandria who had ten heavily-laden vessels lying in the harbour. When these men entered the church where San Marco was buried and heard the command of the Khalifa, they said to the sorrowful priests: "The precious body which you have in your church may be desecrated by the Saracens. Give it to us; we will honour it, for San Marco was the first to preach on the Lagoon, and the Doge will reward you." And the priests gave their consent, and in order that the Christians of Alexandria should not object, the body of another holy man was placed in the Evangelist's coffin. But to prevent the Saracens from getting any news of the removal of the body, it was placed at the bottom of a large chest, and above it were packed hams and smoked bacon, which the Saracens could not endure. So when the Custom-house officers opened the lid of the chest, they at once hurried away. The two merchants, however, brought San Marco safely to Venice; you know, Beppo, that this is what they say.'

'I do, Cecco.'

'Yes; but just listen now,' and Cecco half arose, and in his fear spoke in a low voice. 'Something terrible now happened. When I told the boys that the holy man had been hidden underneath the bacon, they burst out laughing. I tried to hush them, but they only laughed the louder. Giacomo was lying on his stomach in the bows, and Pietro sat with his legs dangling

outside the boat, and they both laughed so that it could be heard far out over the sea.'

'But, Cecco, surely two children may be allowed to laugh.'

'But don't you understand that is where they have perished to-day—on the very spot? Or can you understand why they should have lost their lives on that spot?'

Now they all began to talk to him and comfort him. It was his grief which made him lose his senses. This was not like San Marco. He would not revenge himself upon two children. Was it not natural that when a boat was caught in a storm this would happen on the open sea and not in the harbour?

Surely his sons had not lived in enmity with San Marco. They had heard them shout, '*Eviva San Marco!*' as eagerly as all the others, and had he not protected them to this very day. He had never, during the years that had passed, shown any sign of being angry with them.

'But, Cecco,' they said, 'you will bring misfortune upon us with your talk about San Marco. You, who are an old man and a wise man, should know better than to raise his anger against the Venetians. What are we without him?'

Cecco sat and looked at them bewildered.

'Then you don't believe it?'

'No one in his senses would believe such a thing.'

It looked as if they had succeeded in quieting him.

'I will also try not to believe it,' he said. He rose and walked towards the door. 'It would be

too cruel, would it not?' he said. 'They were too handsome and too brave for anyone to hate them; I will not believe it.'

He went home, and in the narrow street outside his door he met an old woman, one of his neighbours.

'They are reading a Mass in the cathedral for the souls of the dead,' she said to Cecco, and hurried away. She was afraid of him; he looked so strange.

Cecco took his boat and made his way through the small canals down to Riva degli Schiavoni. There was a wide view from there; he looked towards Lido and the sea. Yes, it was a hard wind, but not a storm by any means; there were hardly any waves. And his sons had perished in weather like this! It was inconceivable.

He fastened his boat, and went across the Piazetta and the Market Place into San Marco. There were many people in the church, and they were all kneeling and praying in great fear; for it is much more terrible for the Venetians, you know, than any other people when there is a disaster at sea. They do not get their living from vineyards or fields, but they are all, everyone of them, dependent on the sea. Whenever the sea rose against any one of them they were all afraid, and hurried to San Marco to pray to him for protection.

As soon as Cecco entered the cathedral he stopped. He thought of how he had brought his little sons there, and taught them to pray to San Marco. 'It is he who carries us over the sea, who opens the gates of Byzance for us and

gives us the supremacy over the islands of the East,' he said to them. Out of gratitude for all this the Venetians had built San Marco the most beautiful temple in the world, and no vessel ever returned from a foreign port without bringing a gift for San Marco.

Then they had admired the red marble walls of the cathedral and the golden mosaic ceiling. It was as if no misfortune could befall a city that had such a sanctuary for her patron Saint.

Cecco quickly knelt down and began to pray, the one *Paternoster* after the other. It came back, he felt. He would send it away by prayers. He would not believe anything bad about San Marco.

But it had been no storm at all. And so much was certain, that even if the Saint had not sent the storm, he had, in any case, not done anything to help Cecco's sons, but had allowed them to perish as if by accident. When this thought came upon him he began to pray; but the thought would not leave him.

And to think that San Marco had a treasury in this cathedral full of all the glories of fairyland! To think that he had himself prayed to him all his life, and had never rowed past the Piazetta without going into the cathedral to invoke him!

Surely it was not by a mere accident that his sons had to-day perished on the sea! Oh, it was miserable for the Venetians to have no one better to depend upon! Just fancy a Saint who revenged himself upon two children—a patron Saint who could not protect against a gust of wind!

He stood up, and he shrugged his shoulders, and disparagingly waved his hand when he looked towards the tomb of the Saint in the chancel.

A verger was going about with a large chased silver-gilt dish, collecting gifts for San Marco. He went from the one person to the other, and also came to Cecco.

Cecco drew back as if it were the Evil One himself who handed him the plate. Did San Marco ask for gifts from him? Did he think he deserved gifts from him?

All at once he seized the large golden zecchine he had in his belt, and flung it into the plate with such violence that the ring of it could be heard all over the church. It disturbed those who were praying, and made them turn round. And all who saw Cecco's face were terrified; he looked as if he were possessed of evil spirits.

Cecco immediately left the church, and at first felt it as a great relief that he had been revenged upon the Saint. He had treated him as one treats a usurer who demands more than he is entitled to. 'Take this too,' one says, and throws his last gold piece in the fellow's face so that the blood runs down over his eyes. But the usurer does not strike again—simply stoops and picks up the zecchine. So, too, had San Marco done. He had accepted Cecco's zecchine, having first robbed him of his sons. Cecco had made him accept a gift which had been tendered with such bitter hatred. Would an honourable man have put up with such treatment? But San Marco was a coward—both cowardly and revengeful. But he was not likely

to revenge himself upon Cecco. He was, no doubt, pleased and thankful he had got the zecchine. He simply accepted it and pretended that it had been given as piously as could be.

When Cecco stood at the entrance, two vergers quickly passed him.

'It rises—it rises terribly!' the one said.

'What rises?' asked Cecco.

'The water in the crypt. It has risen a foot in the last two or three minutes.'

When Cecco went down the steps, he saw a small pool of water on the Market Place close to the bottom step. It was sea-water, which had splashed up from the Piazetta. He was surprised that the sea had risen so high, and he hurried down to the Riva, where his boat lay. Everything was as he had left it, only the water had risen considerably. It came rolling in broad waves through the five sea-gates; but the wind was not very strong. At the Riva there were already pools of sea-water, and the canals rose so that the doors in the houses facing the water had to be closed. The sky was all gray like the sea.

It never struck Cecco that it might grow into a serious storm. He would not believe any such thing. San Marco had allowed his sons to perish without cause. He felt sure this was no real storm. He would just like to see if it would be a storm, and he sat down beside his boat and waited.

Then suddenly rifts appeared in the dull-gray clouds which covered the sky. The clouds were torn asunder and flung aside, and large storm-clouds came rushing, black like warships, and

from them scourging rain and hail fell upon the city. And something like quite a new sea came surging in from Lido. Ah, signor! they were not the swan-necked waves you have seen out there, the waves that bend their transparent necks and hasten towards the shore, and which, when they are pitilessly repulsed, float away again with their white foam-hair dispersed over the surface of the sea. These were dark waves, chasing each other in furious rage, and over their tops the bitter froth of the sea was whipped into mist.

The wind was now so strong that the seagulls could no longer continue their quiet flight, but, shrieking, were thrust from their course. Cecco soon saw them with much trouble making their way towards the sea, so as not to be caught by the storm and flung against the walls. Hundreds of pigeons on San Marco's square flew up, beating their wings, so that it sounded like a new storm, and hid themselves away in all the nooks and corners of the church roof.

But it was not the birds alone that were frightened by the storm. A couple of gondolas had already got loose, and were thrown against the shore, and were nearly shattered. And now all the gondoliers came rushing to pull their boats into the boathouses, or place them in shelter in the small canals.

The sailors on the ships lying in the harbour worked with the anchor-chains to make the vessels fast, in order to prevent them drifting on to the shore. They took down the clothes hanging up to dry, pulled their long caps well over their foreheads, and began to collect all the loose

articles lying about in order to bring them below deck. Outside Canale Grande a whole fishing-fleet came hurrying home. All the people from Lido and Malamocco who had sold their goods at the Rialto were rushing homewards, before the storm grew too violent.

Cecco laughed when he saw the fishermen bending over their oars and straining themselves as if they were fleeing from death itself. Could they not see that it was only a gust of wind? They could very well have remained and given the Venetian women time to buy all their cattle, fish, and crabs.

He was certainly not going to pull his boat into shelter, although the storm was now violent enough for any ordinary man to have taken notice of it. The floating bridges were lifted up high and cast on to the shore, whilst the washerwomen hurried home shrieking. The broad-brimmed hats of the signors were blown off into the canals, from whence the street-boys fished them out with great glee. Sails were torn from the masts, and fluttered in the air with a cracking sound; children were knocked down by the strong wind; and the clothes hanging on the lines in the narrow streets were torn to rags and carried far away.

Cecco laughed at the storm—a storm which drove the birds away, and played all sorts of pranks in the street, like a boy. But, all the same, he pulled his boat under one of the arches of the bridge. One could really not allow what that wind might take it into its head to do.

In the evening Cecco thought that it would have been fun to have been out at sea. It would

have been splendid sailing with such a fresh wind. But on shore it was unpleasant. Chimneys were blown down; the roofs of the boathouses were lifted right off; it rained tiles from the houses into the canals; the wind shook the doors and the window-shutters, rushed in under the open loggias of the palaces and tore off the decorations.

Cecco held out bravely, but he did not go home to bed. He could not take the boat home with him, so it was better to remain and look after it. But when anyone went by and said that it was terrible weather he would not admit it. He had experienced very different weather in his young days.

'Storm!' he said to himself—'call this a storm? And they think, perhaps, that it began the same moment I threw the zecchine to San Marco. As if he can command a real storm!'

When night came the wind and the sea grew still more violent, so that Venice trembled in her foundations. Doge Gradenigo and the Gentlemen of the High Council went in the darkness of the night to San Marco to pray for the city. Torch-bearers went before them, and the flames were spread out by the wind, so that they lay flat, like pennants. The wind tore the Doge's heavy brocade gown, so that two men were obliged to hold it.

Cecco thought this was the most remarkable thing he had ever seen—Doge Gradenigo going himself to the cathedral on account of this bit of a wind! What would those people have done if there had been a real storm?

The waves beat incessantly against the bulwarks. In the darkness of the night it was as if white-headed wresters sprang up from the deep, and with teeth and claws clung fast to the piles to tear them loose from the shore. Cecco fancied he could hear their angry snorts when they were hurled back again. But he shuddered when he heard them come again and again, and tear in the bulwarks.

It seemed to him that the storm was far more terrible in the night. He heard shouts in the air, and that was not the wind. Sometimes black clouds came drifting like a whole row of heavy galleys, and it seemed as if they advanced to make an assault on the city. Then he heard distinctly someone speaking in one of the riven clouds over his head.

'Things look bad for Venice now,' it said from the one cloud. 'Soon our brothers the evil spirits will come and overthrow the city.'

'I am afraid San Marco will not allow it to happen,' came as a response from the other cloud.

'San Marco has been knocked down by a Venetian, so he lies powerless, and cannot help anyone,' said the first.

The storm carried the words down to old Cecco, and from that moment he was on his knees, praying San Marco for grace and forgiveness. For the evil spirits had spoken the truth. It did indeed look bad for Venice. The fair Queen of the Isles was near destruction. A Venetian had mocked San Marco, and therefore Venice was in danger of being carried away by the sea. There would be no more moonlight sails or her sea and

in her canals, and no more barcaroles would be heard from her black gondolas. The sea would wash over the golden-haired signoras, over the proud palaces, over San Marco, resplendent with gold.

If there was no one to protect these islands, they were doomed to destruction. Before San Marco came to Venice it had often happened that large portions of them had been washed away by the waves.

At early dawn San Marco's Church bells began to ring. People crept to the church, their clothes being nearly torn off them.

The storm went on increasing. The priests had resolved to go out and adjure the storm and the sea. The main doors of the cathedral were opened, and the long procession streamed out of the church. Foremost the cross was carried, then came the choir-boys with wax candles, and last in the procession were carried the banner of San Marco and the Sacred Host.

But the storm did not allow itself to be cowed; on the contrary, it was as if it wished for nothing better to play with. It upset the choir-boys, blew out the wax candles, and flung the baldachin, which was carried over the Host, on to the top of the Doge's palace. It was with the utmost trouble that they saved San Marco's banner, with the winged lion, from being carried away.

Cecco saw all this, and stole down to his boat moaning loudly. The whole day he lay near the shore, often wet by the waves and in danger of being washed into the sea. The whole day he was praying incessantly to God and San Marco.

He felt that the fate of the whole city depended upon his prayers.

There were not many people about that day, but some few went moaning along the Riva. All spoke about the immeasurable damage the storm had wrought. One could see the houses tumbling down on the Murano. It was as if the whole island were under water. And also on the Rialto one or two houses had fallen.

The storm continued the whole day with unabated violence. In the evening a large multitude of people assembled at the Market Place and the Piazetta, although these were nearly covered with water. People dared not remain in their houses, which shook in their very foundations. And the cries of those who feared disaster mingled with the lamentations of those whom it had already overtaken. Whole dwellings were under water; children were drowned in their cradles. The old and the sick had been swept with the overturned houses into the waves.

Cecco was still lying and praying to San Marco. Oh, how could the crime of a poor fisherman be taken in such earnest? Surely it was not his fault that the saint was so powerless! He would let the demons take him and his boat; he deserved no better fate. But not the whole city!—oh, God in heaven, not the whole city!

'My sons!' Cecco said to San Marco. 'What do I care about my sons when Venice is at stake! I would willingly give a son for each tile in danger of being blown into the canal if I could keep them in their place at that price. Oh, San Marco, each little stone of Venice is worth as much as a promising son.'

At times he saw terrible things. There was a large galley which had torn itself from its moorings and now came drifting towards the shore. It went straight against the bulwark, and struck it with the ram's head in her bows, just as if it had been an enemy's ship. It gave blow after blow, and the attack was so violent that the vessel immediately sprang a leak. The water rushed in, the leak grew larger, and the proud ship went to pieces. But the whole time one could see the captain and two or three of the crew, who would not leave the vessel, cling to the deck and meet death without attempting to escape it.

The second night came, and Cecco's prayers continued to knock at the gate of heaven.

'Let me alone suffer!' he cried. 'San Marco, it is more than a man can bear, thus to drag others with him to destruction. Only send thy lion and kill me; I shall not attempt to escape. Everything that thou wilt have me give up for the city, that will I willingly sacrifice.'

Just as he had uttered these words he looked towards the Piazetta, and he thought he could no longer see San Marco's lion on the granite pillar. Had San Marco permitted his lion to be overthrown? old Cecco cried. He was nearly giving up Venice.

Whilst he was lying there he saw visions and heard voices all the time. The demons talked and moved to and fro. He heard them wheeze like wild beasts every time they made their assaults on the bulwarks. He did not mind them much; it was worse about Venice.

Then he heard in the air above him the beating

of strong wings; this was surely San Marco's lion flying overhead. It moved backwards and forwards in the air; he saw and yet he did not see it. Then it seemed to him as if it descended on Riva degli Schiavoni, where he was lying, and prowled about there. He was on the point of jumping into the sea from fear, but he remained sitting where he was. It was no doubt he whom the lion sought. If that could only save Venice, then he was quite willing to let San Marco avenge himself upon him.

Then the lion came crawling along the ground like a cat. He saw it making ready to spring. He noticed that it beat its wings and screwed its large carbuncle eyes together till they were only small fiery slits.

Then old Cecco certainly did think of creeping down to his boat and hiding himself under the arch of the bridge, but he pulled himself together and remained where he was. The same moment a tall, imposing figure stood by his side.

'Good-evening, Cecco,' said the man; 'take your boat and row me across to San Giorgio Maggiore.'

'Yes, signor,' immediately replied the old fisherman.

It was as if he had awakened from a dream. The lion had disappeared, and the man must be somebody who knew him, although Cecco could not quite remember where he had seen him before. He was glad to have company. The terrible heaviness and anguish that had been over him since he had revolted against the Saint suddenly vanished. As to rowing across to San

Giorgio, he did not for a moment think that it could be done.

'I don't believe we can even get the boat out,' he said to himself.

But there was something about the man at his side that made him feel he must do all he possibly could to serve him; and he did succeed in getting out the boat. He helped the stranger into the boat and took the oars.

Cecco could not help laughing to himself.

'What are you thinking about? Don't go out further in any case,' he said. 'Have you ever seen the like of these waves? Do tell him that it is not within the power of man.'

But he felt as if he could not tell the stranger that it was impossible. He was sitting there as quietly as if he were sailing to the Lido on a summer's eve. And Cecco began to row to San Giorgio Maggiore.

It was a terrible row. Time after time the waves washed over them.

'Oh, stop him!' Cecco said under his breath; 'do stop the man who goes to sea in such weather! Otherwise he is a sensible old fisherman. Do stop him!'

Now the boat was up a steep mountain, and then it went down into a valley. The foam splashed down on Cecco from the waves that rushed past him like runaway horses, but in spite of everything he approached San Giorgio.

'For whom are you doing all this, risking boat and life?' he said. 'You don't even know whether he can pay you. He does not look like a fine gentleman. He is no better dressed than you are.'

But he only said this to keep up his courage, and not to be ashamed of his tractability. He was simply compelled to do everything the man in the boat wanted.

'But in any case not right to San Giorgio, you foolhardy old man,' he said. 'The wind is even worse there than at the Rialto.'

But he went there, nevertheless, and made the boat fast whilst the stranger went on shore. He thought the wisest thing he could do would be to slip away and leave his boat, but he did not do it. He would rather die than deceive the stranger. He saw the latter go into the Church of San Giorgio. Soon afterwards he returned, accompanied by a knight in full armour.

'Row us now to San Nicolo in Lido,' said the stranger.

'Ay, ay,' Cecco thought; 'why not to Lido?' They had already, in constant anguish and death, rowed to San Giorgio; why should they not set out for Lido?

And Cecco was shocked at himself that he obeyed the stranger even unto death, for he now actually steered for the Lido.

Being now three in the boat, it was still heavier work. He had no idea how he should be able to do it. 'You might have lived many years yet,' he said sorrowfully to himself. But the strange thing was that he was not sorrowful, all the same. He was so glad that he could have laughed aloud. And then he was proud that he could make headway. 'He knows how to use his oars, does old Cecco,' he said.

They laid-to at Lido, and the two strangers went on shore. They walked towards San Nicolo

in Lido, and soon returned accompanied by an old Bishop, with robe and stole, crosier in hand, and mitre on head.

'Now row out to the open sea,' said the first stranger.

Old Cecco shuddered. Should he row out to the sea, where his sons perished? Now he had not a single cheerful word to say to himself. He did not think so much of the storm, but of the terror it was to have to go out to the graves of his sons. If he rowed out there, he felt that he gave the stranger more than his life.

The three men sat silently in the boat as if they were on watch. Cecco saw them bend forward and gaze into the night. They had reached the gate of the sea at Lido, and the great storm-ridden sea lay before them.

Cecco sobbed within himself. He thought of two dead bodies rolling about in these waves. He gazed into the water for two familiar faces. But onward the boat went. Cecco did not give in.

Then suddenly the three men rose up in the boat; and Cecco fell upon his knees, although he still went on holding the oars. A big ship steered straight against them.

Cecco could not quite tell whether it was a ship or only drifting mist. The sails were large, spread out, as it were, towards the four corners of heaven; and the hull was gigantic, but it looked as if it were built of the lightest sea-mist. He thought he saw men on board and heard shouting; but the crew were like deep darkness, and the shouting was like the roar of the storm.

However it was, it was far too terrible to see the ship steer straight upon them, and Cecco closed his eyes.

But the three men in the boat must have averted the collision, for the boat was not upset. When Cecco looked up the ship had fled out to sea, and loud wailings pierced the night.

He rose, trembling to row further. He felt so tired that he could hardly hold the oars. But now there was no longer any danger. The storm had gone down, and the waves speedily laïd themselves to rest.

'Now row us back to Venice,' said the stranger to the fisherman.

Cecco rowed the boat to Lido, where the Bishop went on shore, and to San Giorgio, where the knight left them. The first powerful stranger went with him all the way to the Rialto.

When they had landed at Riva degli Schiavoni he said to the fisherman:

'When it is daylight thou shalt go to the Doge and tell him what thou hast seen this night. Tell him that San Marco and San Giorgio and San Nicolo have to-night fought the evil spirits that would destroy Venice, and have put them to flight.'

'Yes, signor,' the fisherman answered, 'I will tell everything. But how shall I speak so that the Doge will believe me?'

Then San Marco handed him a ring with a precious stone possessed of a wonderful lustre.

'Show this to the Doge,' he said, 'then he will understand that it brings a message from me. He knows my ring, which is kept in San Marco's treasury in the cathedral.'

The fisherman took the ring, and kissed it reverently.

'Further, thou shalt tell the Doge,' said the holy man, 'that this is a sign that I shall never forsake Venice. Even when the last Doge has left Palazzo Ducali I will live and preserve Venice. Even if Venice lose her islands in the East and the supremacy of the sea, and no Doge ever again sets out on the Bucintoro, even then I will preserve the city beautiful and resplendent. It shall always be rich and beloved, always be lauded and its praises sung, always a place of joy for men to live in. Say this, Cecco, and the Doge will not forsake thee in thine old age.'

Then he disappeared; and soon the sun rose above the gate of the sea at Torcello. With its first beautiful rays it shed a rosy light over the white city and over the sea that shone in many colours. A red glow lay over San Giorgio and San Marco, and over the whole shore, studded with palaces. And in the lovely morning radiant Venetian ladies came out on to the loggias and greeted with smiles the rising day.

Venice was once again the beautiful goddess, rising from the sea in her shell of rose-coloured pearl. Beautiful as never before, she combed her golden hair, and threw the purple robe around her, to begin one of her happiest days. For a transport of bliss filled her when the old fisherman brought San Marco's ring to the Doge, and she heard how the Saint, now, and until the end of time. would hold his protecting hand over her.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

V

Santa CATERINA *of* SIENA

Santa CATERINA *of* SIENA

AT Santa Caterina's house in Siena, on a day towards the end of April, in the week when her fête is being celebrated, people come to the old house in the Street of the Dyers, to the house with the pretty loggia and with the many small chambers, which have now been converted into chapels and sanctuaries, bringing bouquets of white lilies; and the rooms are fragrant with incense and violets.

Walking through these rooms, one cannot help thinking that it is just as if she were dead yesterday, as if all those who go in and out of her home to-day had seen and known her.

But, on the other hand, no one could really think that she had died recently, for then there would be more grief and tears, and not only a quiet sense of loss. It is more as if a beloved daughter had been recently married, and had left the parental home.

Look only at the nearest houses. The old walls are still decorated as if for a fête. And in her own home garlands of flowers are still hanging beneath the portico and loggia, green leaves are strewn on the staircase and the doorstep, and large bouquets of flowers fill the rooms with their scent.

She cannot possibly have been dead five hundred years. It looks much more as if she had celebrated her marriage, and had gone away to

a country from which she would not return for many years, perhaps never. Are not the houses decorated with nothing but red table-cloths, red trappings, and red silken banners, and are there not stuck red-paper roses in the dark garlands of oak-leaves? and the hangings over the doors and the windows, are they not red with golden fringes? Can one imagine anything more cheerful?

And notice how the old women go about in the house and examine her small belongings. It is as if they had seen her wear that very veil and that very shirt of hair. They inspect the room in which she lived, and point to the bedstead and the packets of letters, and they tell how at first she could not at all learn to write, but that it came to her all at once without her having learnt it. And only look at her writing—how good and distinct! And then they point to the little bottle she used to carry at her belt, so as always to have a little medicine at hand in case she met a sick person, and they utter a blessing over the old lantern she held in her hand when she went and visited the sick in the long weary nights. It is just as if they would say: 'Dear me—dear me! that our little Caterina Benincasa should be gone, that she will never come any more and look after us old people!' And they kiss her picture, and take a flower from the bouquets to keep as a remembrance.

It looks as if those who were left in the home had long ago prepared themselves for the separation, and tried to do everything possible to keep alive the memory of the one who had gone away.

See, there they have painted her on the wall; there is the whole of her little history represented in every detail. There she is when she cut off her beautiful long hair so that no man could ever fall in love with her, for she would never marry. Oh dear—oh dear! how much ridicule and scoffing she had suffered on that account! It is dreadful to think how her mother tormented her and treated her like a servant, and made her sleep on the stone floor in the hall, and would not give her any food, all because of her being so obstinate about that hair. But what was she to do when they continually tried to get her married—she who would have no other bridegroom than Christ? And there she is when she was kneeling in prayer, and her father coming into the room without her knowing it saw a beautiful white dove hovering over her head whilst she was praying. And there she is on that Christmas Eve when she had gone secretly to the Madonna's altar in order the more fully to rejoice over the birth of the Son of God, and the beautiful Madonna leaned out of her picture and handed the Child to her that she might be allowed to hold it for a moment in her arms. Oh, what a joy it had been for her!

Oh dear, no; it is not at all necessary to say that our little Caterina Benincasa is dead. One need only say that she has gone away with the Bridegroom.

In her home one will never forget her pious ways and doings. All the poor of Siena come and knock at her door because they know that it is the marriage-day of the little virgin, and large piles

of bread lie in readiness for them as if she were still there. They have their pockets and baskets filled; had she herself been there, she could not have sent them away more heavily laden. She who had gone away had left so great a want that one almost wonders the Bridegroom had the heart to take her away with him.

In the small chapels which have been arranged in every corner of the house they read Mass the whole day, and they invoke the bride and sing hymns in her praise.

'Holy Caterina,' they say, 'on this the day of thy death, which is thine heavenly wedding-day, pray for us!'

'Holy Caterina, thou who hadst no other love but Christ, thou who in life wert His affianced bride, and who in death wast received by Him in Paradise, pray for us!'

'Holy Caterina, thou radiant heavenly bride, thou most blessed of virgins, thou whom the mother of God exalted to her Son's side, thou who on this day wast carried by angels to the kingdom of glory, pray for us!'

It is strange how one comes to love her, how the home and the pictures and the love of the old and the poor seem to make her living, and one begins to wonder how she really was, whether she was only a saint, only a heavenly bride, and if it is true that she was unable to love any other than Christ. And then comes to one's mind an old story which warmed one's heart long ago, at first quite vague and without shape, but whilst one is sitting there under the loggia in the festively deco-

rated home and watching the poor wander away with their full baskets, and hearing the subdued murmur from the chapels, the story becomes more and more distinct, and suddenly it is vivid and clear.

Nicola Tungo was a young nobleman of Perugia, who often came to Siena on account of the races. He soon found out how badly Siena was governed, and often said, both at the festive gatherings of the great and when he sat drinking in the inns, that Siena ought to rise against the Signoria and procure other rulers.

The Signoria had not been in power for more than half a year; they did not feel particularly firm in their office, and did not like the Perugian stirring up the people. In order promptly to put a stop to it, they had him imprisoned, and after a short trial he was sentenced to death. He was placed in a cell in the Palazzo Publico whilst preparations were being made for his execution, which was to take place the next morning in the Market Place.

At first he was strangely affected. To-morrow he would no more wear his green velvet doublet and his beautiful sword; he would no more walk down the street in his cap with the ostrich-feather and attract the glances of the young maidens, and he had a feeling of painful disappointment that he would never ride the new horse which he bought yesterday, and which he had only tried once.

Suddenly he called the gaoler, and asked him to go to the gentlemen of the Signoria and tell them that he could not possibly allow himself to

be killed; he had no time. He had far too much to do. Life could not do without him. His father was old, and he was the only son; it was through his descendants that the family should be continued. It was he who should give away his sisters in marriage, he who should build the new palace, he who should plant the new vineyard.

He was a strong young man; he did not know what sickness was, had nothing but life in his veins. His hair was dark and his cheeks red. He could not realize that he should die.

When he thought of their wanting to take him away from pleasure and dancing, and the carnival, and from the races next Sunday, and from the serenade he was going to sing to the beautiful Guilietta Lombardi, he became furiously angry, and his wrath was roused against the councillors as though they were thieves and robbers. The scoundrels—the scoundrels that would take his life from him!

But as time went on his longings grew deeper; he longed for air and water and heaven and earth. He felt he would not mind being a beggar by the wayside; he would gladly suffer sickness and hunger and cold if only he were allowed to live.

He wished that everything might die with him, that nothing would be left when he was gone; that would have been a great consolation.

But that people should go to the Market Place and buy and sell, and that the women would fetch water from the well, and that the children would run in the streets the next day and all days, and that he would not be there to see, that he could not bear. He envied not only those who could

live in luxury and pleasure, and were happy; he envied quite as much the most miserable cripple. What he wanted was life, solely life.

Then the priests and the monks came to see him. It made him almost happy, for now he had someone upon whom he could wreak his anger. He first allowed them to talk a little. It amused him to hear what they had to say to a man so deeply wronged as he was, but when they said that he ought to rejoice that he was permitted to leave this life and gain the bliss of heaven in the fulness of his youth, then he started up and poured forth his wrath upon them. He scoffed at God and the joys of heaven—he did not want them. He would have life, and the world, and its pomps and vanities. He regretted every day in which he had not revelled in earthly enjoyment; he regretted every temptation he had resisted. God need not trouble Himself in the least about him; he felt no longing for His heaven.

The priests continued to speak; he seized one of them by the throat, and would have killed him had not the gaoler thrown himself between them. They now bound and gagged him, and then preached to him; but as soon as he was allowed to speak he raged as before. They talked to him for many hours, but they saw that it was of no avail.

When they could think of nothing else to do, one of them suggested they should send for the young Caterina Benincasa, who had shown great power in subduing defiant spirits. When the Perugian heard the name he suddenly ceased his abuse. In truth, it pleased him. It was some-

thing quite different, having to do with a young, beautiful maiden.

'By all means send for the maiden,' he said.

He knew that she was the young daughter of a dyer, and that she went about alone and preached in the lanes and streets of the town. Some thought she was mad, others said that she had visions. For him she might, anyhow, be better company than these dirty monks, who made him completely beside himself.

The monks then went their way, and he was alone. Shortly afterwards the door was again opened, but if she for whom they had sent had really entered the cell, she must have walked with very light footsteps, for he heard nothing. He lay on the floor just as he had thrown himself down in his great anger; now he was too tired to raise himself, or make a movement, or even to look up. His arms were tied together with ropes, which cut deep into his flesh.

He now felt that someone began to loosen his bands; a warm hand touched his arm, and he looked up. Beside him lay a little figure in the white dress of the Dominicans, with head and neck so shrouded in a white veil that there was not more of her face to be seen than of that of a knight in helmet and closed visor.

She did not look so meek by any means; she was evidently a little annoyed. He heard her murmur something about the gaolers who had tightened the bands. It did not appear as if she had come for any other purpose than these knots. She was only taken up with loosening them so that they did not hurt. At last she had to bite

in them, and then she succeeded. She untied the cord with a light hand, and then took the little bottle which was suspended from her belt and poured a few drops upon the chafed skin.

He lay the whole time and looked at her, but she did not meet his glance; it appeared as if she could think of nothing else but what she had between her hands. It was as if nothing were further from her thoughts than that she was there to prepare him for death. He felt so exhausted after his passion, and at the same time so quieted by her presence, that he only said:

'I think I will sleep.'

'It is a great shame that they have not given you any straw,' she said.

For a moment she looked about undecided. Then she sat down upon the floor, and placed his head in her lap.

'Are you better now?' she said.

Never in his whole life had he felt such a rest. Yet sleep he could not, but he lay and looked up in her face, which was like wax, and transparent. Such eyes he had never seen before. They were always looking far, far away, gazing into another world, whilst she sat quite motionless, so as not to disturb his sleep.

'You are not sleeping, Nicola Tungo,' she said, and looked uneasy.

'I cannot sleep,' he replied, 'because I am wondering who you can be.'

'I am a daughter of Luca Benincasa the dyer, and his wife Lapa,' she said.

'I know that,' he said, 'and I also know that you go about and preach in the streets. And I

know that you have attired yourself in the dress of a nun, and have taken the vows of chastity. But yet I don't know who you are.'

She turned her head away a little. Then she said, whispering like one who confesses her first love:

'I am the Bride of Christ.'

He did not laugh. On the contrary, he felt quite a pang in his heart, as from jealousy.

'Oh, Christ!' he said, as if she had thrown herself away.

She heard that his tone was contemptuous, but she thought he meant that she had spoken too presumptuously.

'I do not understand it myself,' she said, 'but so it is.'

'Is it an imagination or a dream?' he said.

She turned her face towards him. The blood rose red behind the transparent skin. He saw suddenly that she was fair as a flower, and she became dear to him. He moved his lips as if to speak, but at first no sound came.

'How can you expect me to believe that?' he said defiantly.

'Is it not enough for you that I am here in the prison with you?' she asked, raising her voice. 'Is it any pleasure for a young girl like me to go to you and other evil-doers in their gloomy dungeons? Is it usual for a woman to stand and preach at the street corners as I do, and to be held in derision? Do I not require sleep as other people? And yet I must rise every night and go to the sick in the hospitals. Am I not timid as other women? And yet I must go to the high-born

gentlemen at their castles and reason with them, I must go to the plague-smitten, I must see all vice and sin. When have you seen another maiden do all this? But I am obliged to do it.'

'Poor thing!' he said, and stroked her hand gently—'poor thing!'

'For I am not braver, or wiser, or stronger than others,' she said. 'It is just as hard for me as for other maidens. You can see that. I have come here to speak with you about your soul, but I do not at all know what I shall say to you.'

It was strange how reluctantly he would allow himself to be convinced.

'You may be mistaken all the same,' he said. 'How do you know that you can call yourself the Bride of Christ?'

Her voice trembled, and it was as if she should tear out her heart when she replied:

'It began when I was quite young; I was not more than six years old. It was one evening when I was walking with my brother in the meadow below the church of the Dominicans, and just as I looked up at the church I saw Christ sitting on a throne, surrounded by all His power and glory. He was attired in shining white garments like the Holy Father in Rome. His head was surrounded by all the splendour of Paradise, and around Him stood Pietro Paolo and the Evangelist Giovanni. And whilst I gazed upon Him my heart was filled with such a love and holy joy that I could hardly bear it. He lifted His hand and blessed me, and I sank down on the meadow, and was so overcome with bliss, that my brother had to take me in his arms and shake me. And ever

since that time, Nicola Tungo, I have loved Jesus as a bridegroom.'

He again objected.

'You were a child then. You had fallen asleep in the meadow and were dreaming.'

'Dreaming?' she repeated. 'Have I been dreaming all the time I have seen Him? Was it a dream when He came to me in the church in the likeness of a beggar and asked for alms? Then I was wide awake, at any rate. And do you think that for the sake of a dream only I could have borne all the worries I have had to bear as a young girl because I would not marry?'

Nicola went on contradicting her because he could not bear the thought that her heart was filled with love to another.

'But even if you do love Christ, maiden, how do you know that He loves you?'

She smiled her very happiest smile and clapped her hands like a child.

'Now you shall hear,' she said. 'Now I will tell you the most important of all. It was the last night before Lent. It was after my parents and I had been reconciled, and I had obtained their permission to take the vow of chastity and wear the dress of a nun, although I continued to live in their house; and it was night, as I told you, the last night of the carnival, when everybody turns night into day. There were fêtes in every street. On the walls of the big palaces hung balconies like cages, completely covered with silken hangings and banners, and filled with noble ladies. I saw all their beauty by the light of the red torches in their bronze-holders, the one row over the

other quite up to the roof; and in the gaily decorated streets there was a train of carriages, with golden towers, and all the gods and goddesses, and all the virtues and beauties went by in a long procession. And everywhere there was such a play of masks and so much merriment that I am sure that you, sir, have never taken part in anything more gay. And I took refuge in my chamber, but still I heard laughter from the street, and never before have I heard people laugh like that; it was so clear and bell-like that everyone was obliged to join in it. And they sang songs which, I suppose, were wicked, but they sounded so innocent, and caused such pleasure, that one's heart trembled. Then, in the middle of my prayers, I suddenly began to wonder why I was not out amongst them, and the thought fascinated and tempted me, as if I were dragged along by a runaway horse; but never before have I prayed so intensely to Christ to show me what was His will with me. Suddenly all the noise ceased, a great and wonderful silence surrounded me, and I saw a great meadow, where the Mother of God sat amongst the flowers, and on her lap lay the Child Jesus, playing with lilies. But I hurried thither in great joy, and knelt before the Child, and was at the same moment filled with peace and quietness, and then the Holy Child placed a ring on my finger, and said to me, " Know, Caterina, that to-day I celebrate My betrothal with thee, and bind thee to Me by the strongest faith." '

' Oh, Caterina! '

The young Perugian had turned himself on the floor, so that he could bury his face in her lap. It

was as if he could not bear to see how radiant she was whilst she was speaking, and now her eyes became bright as stars. A shadow of pain passed over him. For whilst she spoke a great sorrow had sprung up in his heart. This little maiden, this little white maiden, he could never win. Her love belonged to another; it could never be his. It was of no use even to tell her that he loved her; but he suffered; his whole being groaned in love's agony. How could he bear to live without her? It almost became a consolation to remember that he was sentenced to death. It was not necessary for him to live and do without her.

Then the little woman beside him sighed deeply, and came back from the joys of heaven in order to think of poor human beings.

'I forgot to speak to you about your soul,' she said.

Then, he thought: 'This burden, at any rate, I can lighten for her.'

'Sister Caterina,' he said, 'I do not know how it is, but heavenly consolation has come to me. In God's name I will prepare for death. Now you may send for the priests and monks; now I will confess to them. But one thing you must promise me before you go: you must come to me to-morrow, when I shall die, and hold my head between your hands as you are doing now.'

When he said this she burst into tears, from a great feeling of relief, and an unspeakable joy filled her.

'How happy you must be, Nicola Tungo!' she said. 'You will be in Paradise before I am;' and she stroked his face gently.

He said again:

'You will come to me to-morrow in the Market Place? Perhaps I shall otherwise be afraid; perhaps I cannot otherwise die with steadfastness. But when you are there I shall feel nothing but joy, and all fear will leave me.'

'You do not seem to me any more as a poor mortal,' she said, 'but as a dweller of Paradise. You appear to me radiant with life, surrounded by incense. Bliss comes to me from you, who shall so soon meet my beloved Bridegroom. Be assured I shall come.'

She then led him to confession and the Communion. He felt the whole time as if he were asleep. All the fear of death and the longing for life had passed away from him. He longed for the morning, when he should see her again; he thought only of her, and of the love with which she had inspired him. Death seemed to him now but a slight thing compared with the pain of the thought that she would never love him.

The young maiden did not sleep much during the night, and early in the morning she went to the place of execution, to be there when he came. She invoked Jesu, Mother, Marie, and the Holy Caterina of Egypt, virgin and martyr, incessantly with prayers to save his soul. Incessantly she repeated: 'I will that he shall be saved—I will, I will.' But she was afraid that her prayers were unavailing, for she did not feel any longer that ecstasy which had filled her the evening before; she only felt an infinite pity for him who should die. She was quite overcome with grief and sorrow.

Little by little the Market Place filled with people. The soldiers marched up, the executioner arrived, and much noise and talking went on around her; but she saw and heard nothing. She felt as if she were quite alone.

When Nicola Tungo arrived, it was just the same with him. He had no thought for all the others, but saw only her. When he saw at the first glance that she was entirely overcome with sorrow, his face beamed, and he felt almost happy. He called loudly to her:

'You have not slept much this night, maiden?'

'No,' she said; 'I have watched in prayer for you; but now I am in despair, for my prayers have no power.'

He knelt down before the block, and she knelt so that she could hold his head in her hands.

'Now I am going to your Bridegroom, Caterina.'

She sobbed more and more.

'I can comfort you so badly,' she said.

He looked at her with a strange smile.

'Your tears are my best comfort.'

The executioner stood with his sword drawn, but she bade him with a movement stand on one side, for she would speak a few words with the doomed man.

'Before you came,' she said, 'I laid my head down on the block to try if I could bear it; and then I felt that I was still afraid of death, that I do not love Jesus enough to be willing to die in this hour; and I do not wish you to die either, and my prayers have no power.'

When he heard this he thought: 'Had I lived

I should have won her'; and he was glad he should die before he had succeeded in drawing the radiant heavenly bride down to earth. But when he had laid his head in her hands, a great consolation came to them both.

'Nicola Tungo,' she said, 'I see heaven open. The angels descend to receive your soul.'

A wondering smile passed over his face. Could what he had done for her sake make him worthy of heaven? He lifted his eyes to see what she saw; the same moment the sword fell.

But Caterina saw the angels descend lower and lower, saw them lift his soul, saw them carry it to heaven.

All at once it seemed so natural that Caterina Benincasa has lived all these five hundred years. How could one forget that gentle little maiden, that great loving heart? Again and again they must sing in her praise, as they are now singing in the small chapels:

'Pia Mater et humilis,
Naturæ memor fragilis,
In hujus vitæ fluctibus
Nos rege tuis precibus.
Quem vidi, quem amavi,
In quem credidi, quem dilexi,
Ora pro nobis.
Ut digni efficiamur promessionibus Christi!
Santa Caterina, ora pro nobis!' *

* Pious and gentle Mother, thou who knowest our weak nature, guide us by thy prayers through this life's vicissitudes. Thou, whom I saw and loved, in whom I believed and whom I adored, pray for us, that we may be worthy of Christ's promises. Holy Caterina, pray for us!

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

VI

The Empress's MONEY-CHEST

The Empress's Money-Chest

THE Bishop had summoned Father Verneau to appear before him. It was on account of a somewhat unpleasant matter. Father Verneau had been sent to preach in the manufacturing districts around Charleroi, but he had arrived there in the midst of a strike, when the workmen were rather excited and unmanageable. He informed the Bishop that he had immediately on his arrival in the Black Country received a letter from one of the leaders of the men to the effect that they were quite willing to hear him preach, but if he ventured to mention the name of God either directly or indirectly, there would be a disturbance in the church.

'And when I went up into the pulpit and saw the congregation to whom I should preach,' said the Father, 'I felt no doubt but that the threat would be carried out.'

Father Verneau was a little dried-up monk. The Bishop looked down upon him as being of a lower order. Such an unshaven, not too clean monk, with the most insignificant face, was, of course, a coward. He was, probably, also afraid of the Bishop.

'I have been informed,' said the Bishop, 'that you carried out the workmen's wishes. But I need not point out——'

'Monseigneur,' interrupted Father Verneau in all humility, 'I thought the Church, if possible,

would avoid everything that might lead to a disturbance.'

'But a Church that dare not mention the name of God——'

'Has Monseigneur heard my sermon?'

The Bishop walked up and down the floor to calm himself.

'You know it by heart, of course?' he said.

'Of course, Monseigneur.'

'Let me hear it, then, as it was delivered, Father Verneau, word for word, exactly as you preached it.'

The Bishop sat down in his arm-chair. Father Verneau remained standing.

'"Citizens and citizenesses," he began in the tone of a lecturer.

The Bishop started.

'Yes, that is how they will be addressed, Monseigneur.'

'Never mind, Father Verneau, only proceed.'

The Bishop shuddered slightly; these two words had suddenly shown him the whole situation. He saw before him this gathering of the children of the Black Country, to whom Father Verneau had preached. He saw many wild faces, many rags, much coarse merriment. He saw these people for whom nothing had been done.

'"Citizens and citizenesses," began Father Verneau afresh, "there is in this country an Empress called Maria Theresa. She is an excellent ruler, the best and wisest Belgium has ever had. Other rulers, my fellow-citizens, other rulers have successors when they die, and lose all power over their people. Not so the great Empress Maria

Theresa. She may have lost the throne of Austria and Hungary; Brabant and Limburg may now be under other rulers, but not her good province of West Flanders. In West Flanders, where I have lived the last few years, no other ruler is known to this very day than Maria Theresa. We know King Leopold lives in Brussels, but that has nothing to do with us. It is Maria Theresa who still reigns here by the sea, more especially in the fishing villages. The nearer one gets to the sea, the mightier becomes her power. Neither the great Revolution, nor the Empire, nor the Dutch have had the power to overthrow her. How could they? They have done nothing for the children of the sea that can compare with what she has done. But what has she not done for the people on the dunes! What an invaluable treasure, my fellow-citizens, has she not bestowed upon them!

'"About one hundred and fifty years ago, in the early part of her reign, she made a journey through Belgium. She visited Brussels and Bruges, she went to Liege and Louvain, and when she had at last seen enough of large cities and profusely ornamented town-halls, she went to the coast to see the sea and the dunes.

'"It was not a very cheering sight for her. She saw the ocean, so vast and mighty that no man can fight against it. She saw the coast, helpless and unprotected. There lay the dunes, but the sea had washed over them before, and might do so again. There were also dams, but they had fallen down and were neglected.

'"She saw harbours filled with sand; she saw

marshes overgrown with rushes and weeds; she saw, below the dunes, fishing-huts ravaged by the wind—huts looking as if they had been thrown there, a prey for the sea; she saw poor old churches that had been moved away from the sea, lying between quicksands and lyme-grass, in desolate wastes.

'"The great Empress sat a whole day by the sea. She was told all about the floods and the towns that had been washed away; she was shown the spot where a whole district had sunk under the sea; she was rowed out to the place where an old church stood at the bottom of the sea; and she was told about all the people who had been drowned, and of all the cattle that had been lost, the last time the sea had overflowed the dunes.

'"The whole day through the Empress sat thinking: 'How shall I help these poor people on the dunes? I cannot forbid the sea to rise and fall; I cannot forbid it to undermine the shore; nor can I stay the storm, or prevent it from upsetting the fishermen's boats; and still less can I lead the fish into their nets, or transform the lyme-grass into nutritious wheat. There is no monarch in the world so mighty that he can help these poor people in their need.'

'"The next day it was Sunday, and the Empress heard Mass at Blankenberghe. All the people from Dunkirk to Sluis had come to see her. But before Mass the Empress went about and spoke with the people.

'"The first person she addressed was the harbour-master from Nieuport. 'What news is there from your town?' asked the Empress. 'Noth-

ing new,' answered the harbour-master, 'except that Cornelis Aertsen's boat was upset in the storm yesterday; and we found him this morning riding on the keel.' 'It was a good thing his life was saved,' said the Empress. 'Well, I don't know,' said the harbour-master, 'for he was out of his mind when he came on shore.' 'Was it from fear?' asked the Empress. 'Yes,' said the harbour-master; 'it is because we in Nieuport have nothing to depend upon in the hour of need. Cornelis knew that his wife and his small children would starve to death if he perished; and it was this thought, I suppose, that drove him out of his mind.' 'Then that is what you need here on the dunes—something to depend upon?' 'Yes, that is it,' said the harbour-master. 'The sea is uncertain, the harvest is uncertain, the fishing and the earnings are uncertain. Something to depend upon, that is what we need.'

'"The Empress then went on, and the next she spoke to was the priest from Heyst. 'What news from Heyst?' said she to him. 'Nothing new,' he answered, 'except that Jacob van Ravesteyn has given up making ditches in the marshes, and dredging the harbour, and attending to the lighthouses, and all other useful work he had to do.' 'How is that?' said the Empress. 'He has inherited a sum of money,' said the priest; 'but it was less than he had expected.' 'But now he has something certain,' said the Empress. 'Yes,' said the priest; 'but now he has got the money he dare not venture to do anything great for fear it will not be sufficient.' 'It is something infinitely great, then, that is needed to help you at

Heyst?' said the Empress. 'It is,' said the priest; 'there is infinitely much to do. And nothing can be done until we know that we have something infinitely great to fall back upon.'

'"The Empress then went on until she came to the master-pilot from Middelkerke, whom she began to question about the news from his town. 'I do not know of anything new,' said the master-pilot, 'but that Ian van der Meer has quarrelled with Luca Neerwinden.' 'Indeed!' said the Empress. 'Yes, they have found the cod-bank they have both been looking for all their lives. They had heard about it from old people, and they had hunted for it all over the sea, and they have been the best of friends the whole time, but now they have found it they have fallen out.' 'Then it would have been better if they had never found it?' said the Empress. 'Yes,' answered the master-pilot, 'it would indeed have been better.' 'So, then, that which is to help you in Middelkerke,' said the Empress, 'must be hidden so well that no one can find it?' 'Just so,' said the master-pilot; 'well hidden it must be, for if anyone should find it, there would be nothing but quarrelling and strife over it, or else it would be all spent, and then it would be of no further use.'

'"The Empress sighed, and felt she could do nothing.

'"She then went to Mass, and the whole time she knelt and prayed that power might be given her to help the people. And—you must excuse me, citizens—when the Mass was finished, it had become clear to her that it was better to do a little than to do nothing. When all the people had

come out of the church, she stood on the steps in order to address them.

'"No man or woman of West Flanders will ever forget how she looked. She was beautiful, like an Empress, and she was attired like an Empress. She wore her crown and her ermine mantle, and held the sceptre in her hand. Her hair was dressed high and powdered, and a string of large pearls was entwined amongst the curls. She wore a robe of red silk, which was entirely covered with Flemish lace, and red, high-heeled shoes, with large diamond buckles. That is how she appears, she who to this day still reigns over our West Flanders.

'"She spoke to the people of the coast, and told them her will. She told them of how she had thought of every way in which to help them. She said that they knew she could not compel the sea to quietness or chain the storm, that she could not lead the fish-shoals to the coast, or transform the lyme-grass into wheat; but what a poor mortal could do for them, that should be done.

'"They all knelt before her whilst she spoke. Never before had they felt such a gentle and motherly heart beat for them. The Empress spoke to them in such a manner about their hard and toilsome life that tears came into their eyes over her pity.

'"But now the Empress said she had decided to leave with them her Imperial money-chest, with all the treasures which it contained. That should be her gift to all those who lived on the dunes. That was the only assistance she could

render them, and she asked them to forgive her that it was so poor; and the Empress herself had tears in her eyes when she said this.

'" She now asked them if they would promise and swear not to use any of the treasure until the need amongst them was so great that it could not become any greater. Next, if they would swear to leave it as an inheritance for their descendants, if they did not require it themselves. And, lastly, she asked every man singly to swear that he would not try to take possession of the treasure for his own use without having first asked the consent of all his fellow-fishermen.

'" If they were willing to swear? That they all were. And they blessed the Empress and cried from gratitude. And she cried and told them that she knew that what they needed was a support that would never fail them, a treasure that could never be exhausted, and a happiness that was unattainable, but that she could not give them. She had never been so powerless as here on the dunes.

'" My fellow-citizens, without her knowing it, solely by force of the royal wisdom with which this great Queen was endowed, the power was given her to attain far more than she had intended, and it is therefore one can say that to this day she reigns over West Flanders.

'" What a happiness, is it not, to hear of all the blessings which have been spread over West Flanders by the Empress's gift! The people there have now something to depend upon which they needed so badly, and which we all need. However bad things may be, there is never any despair.

'"They have told me at the dunes what the Empress's money-chest is like. They say it is like the holy shrine of Saint Ursula at Bruges, only more beautiful. It is a copy of the cathedral at Vienna, and it is of pure gold; but on the sides the whole history of the Empress is depicted in the whitest alabaster. On the small side-towers are the four diamonds which the Empress took from the crown of the Sultan of Turkey, and in the gable are her initials inlaid with rubies. But when I ask them whether they have seen the money-chest, they reply that shipwrecked sailors when in peril always see it swimming before them on the waves as a sign that they shall not be in despair for their wives and children, should they be compelled to leave them. But they are the only ones who have seen the treasure, otherwise no one has been near enough to count it. And you know, citizens, that the Empress never told anyone how great it was. But if any of you doubt how much use it has been and is, then I will ask you to go to the dunes and see for yourself. There has been digging and building ever since that time, and the sea now lies cowed by bulwarks and dams, and no longer does harm. And there are green meadows inside the dunes, and there are flourishing towns and watering-places near the shore. But for every lighthouse that has been built, for every harbour that has been deepened, for every ship of which the keel has been laid, for every dam that has been raised, they have always thought: 'If our own money should not be sufficient, we shall receive help from our Gracious Empress Maria Theresa.' But this has been but

a spur to them: their own money has always sufficed.

'"You know, also, that the Empress did not say where the treasure was. Was not this well considered, citizens? There is one who has it in his keeping, but only, when all are agreed upon dividing it, will he who keeps the treasure come forward and reveal where it is. Therefore one is certain that neither now nor in the future will it be unfairly divided. It is the same for all. Everyone knows that the Empress thinks as much of him as of his neighbour. There can be no strife or envy amongst the people of the dunes as there is amongst other men, for they all share alike in the treasure."'

The Bishop interrupted Father Verneau.

'That is enough,' he said. 'How did you continue?'

'I said,' continued the monk, 'that it was very bad the good Empress had not also come to Charleroi. I pitied them because they did not own her money-chest. Considering the great things they had to accomplish, considering the sea which they had to tame, the quicksands which they had to bind, considering all this, I said to them surely there was nothing they needed so much.'

'And then?' asked the Bishop.

'One or two cabbages, your Eminence, a little hissing; but then I was already out of the pulpit. That was all.'

'They had understood that you had spoken to them about the providence of God?'

The monk bowed.

'They had understood that you would show

them that the power which they deride because they do not see it must be kept hidden? that it will be abused immediately it assumes a visible form? I congratulate you, Father Verneau.'

The monk retired towards the door, bowing. The Bishop followed him, beaming benevolently.

'But the money-chest—do they still believe in it at the dunes?'

'As much as ever, Monseigneur.'

'And the treasure—has there ever been a treasure?'

'Monseigneur, I have sworn.'

'But for me,' said the Bishop.

'It is the priest at Blankenberghe, who has it in his keeping. He allowed me to see it. It is an old wooden chest with iron mountings.'

'And?'

'And at the bottom lie twenty bright Maria Theresa gold pieces.'

The Bishop smiled, but became grave at once.

'Is it right to compare such a wooden chest with God's providence?'

'All comparisons are incomplete, Monseigneur; all human thoughts are vain.'

Father Verneau bowed once again, and quietly withdrew from the audience-room.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

VII

The PEACE *of* GOD

The PEACE *of* GOD

ONCE upon a time there was an old farm-house. It was Christmas-eve, the sky was heavy with snow, and the north wind was biting. It was just that time in the afternoon when everybody was busy finishing their work before they went to the bath-house to have their Christmas bath. There they had made such a fire that the flames went right up the chimney, and sparks and soot were whirled about by the wind, and fell down on the snow-decked roofs of the outhouses. And as the flames appeared above the chimney of the bath-house, and rose like a fiery pillar above the farm, everyone suddenly felt that Christmas was at hand. The girl that was scrubbing the entrance floor began to hum, although the water was freezing in the bucket beside her. The men in the wood-shed who were cutting Christmas logs began to cut two at a time, and swung their axes as merrily as if log-cutting were a mere pastime.

An old woman came out of the pantry with a large pile of cakes in her arms. She went slowly across the yard into the large red-painted dwelling-house, and carried them carefully into the best room, and put them down on the long seat. Then she spread the tablecloth on the table, and arranged the cakes in heaps, a large and a small cake in each heap. She was a singularly ugly old woman, with reddish hair, heavy drooping eye-

lids, and with a peculiar strained look about the mouth and chin, as if the muscles were too short. But being Christmas-eve, there was such a joy and peace over her that one did not notice how ugly she was.

But there was one person on the farm who was not happy, and that was the girl who was tying up the whisks made of birch twigs that were to be used for the baths. She sat near the fireplace, and had a whole armful of fine birch twigs lying beside her on the floor, but the withes with which she was to bind the twigs would not keep knotted. The best room had a narrow, low window, with small panes, and through them the light from the bath-house shone into the room, playing on the floor and gilding the birch twigs. But the higher the fire burned the more unhappy was the girl. She knew that the whisks would fall to pieces as soon as one touched them, and that she would never hear the last of it until the next Christmas fire was lighted.

Just as she sat there bemoaning herself, the person of whom she was most afraid came into the room. It was her master, Ingmar Ingmarson. He was sure to have been to the bath-house to see if the stove was hot enough, and now he wanted to see how the whisks were getting on. He was old, was Ingmar Ingmarson, and he was fond of everything old, and just because people were beginning to leave off bathing in the bath-houses and being whipped with birch twigs, he made a great point of having it done on his farm, and having it done properly.

Ingmar Ingmarson wore an old coat of sheep's-

skin, skin trousers, and shoes smeared over with pitch. He was dirty and unshaven, slow in all his movements, and came in so softly that one might very well have mistaken him for a beggar. His features resembled his wife's features and his ugliness resembled his wife's ugliness, for they were relations, and from the time the girl first began to notice anything she had learned to feel a wholesome reverence for anybody who looked like that; for it was a great thing to belong to the old family of the Ingmars, which had always been the first in the village. But the highest to which a man could attain was to be Ingmar Ingmarson himself, and be the richest, the wisest, and the mightiest in the whole parish.

Ingmar Ingmarson went up to the girl, took one of the whisks, and swung it in the air. It immediately fell to pieces; one of the twigs landed on the Christmas table, another on the big four-poster.

'I say, my girl,' said old Ingmar, laughing, 'do you think one uses that kind of whisk when one takes a bath at the Ingmar's, or are you very tender, my girl?'

When the girl saw that her master did not take it more seriously than that, she took heart, and answered that she could certainly make whisks that would not go to pieces if she could get proper withes to bind them with.

'Then I suppose I must try to get some for you, my girl,' said old Ingmar, for he was in a real Christmas humour.

He went out of the room, stepped over the girl who was scouring the floor, and remained stand-

ing on the doorstep, to see if there were anyone about whom he could send to the birch-wood for some withes. The farm hands were still busy cutting Yule logs; his son came out of the barn with the Christmas sheaf; his two sons-in-law were putting the carts into the shed so that the yard could be tidy for the Christmas festival. None of them had time to leave their work.

The old man then quietly made up his mind to go himself. He went across the yard as if he were going into the cowshed, looked cautiously round to make sure no one noticed him, and stole along outside the barn where there was a fairly good road to the wood. The old man thought it was better not to let anyone know where he was going, for either his son or his sons-in-law might then have begged him to remain at home, and old people like to have their own way.

He went down the road, across the fields, through the small pine-forest into the birch-wood. Here he left the road, and waded in the snow to find some young birches.

About the same time the wind at last accomplished what it had been busy with the whole day: it tore the snow from the clouds, and now came rushing through the wood with a long train of snow after it.

Ingmar Ingmarson had just stooped down and cut off a birch twig, when the wind came tearing along laden with snow. Just as the old man was getting up the wind blew a whole heap of snow in his face. His eyes were full of snow, and the wind whirled so violently around him that he was obliged to turn round once or twice.

The whole misfortune, no doubt, arose from Ingmar Ingmarson being so old. In his young days a snowstorm would certainly not have made him dizzy. But now everything danced round him as if he had joined in a Christmas polka, and when he wanted to go home he went in the wrong direction. He went straight into the large pine-forest behind the birch-wood instead of going towards the fields.

It soon grew dark, and the storm continued to howl and whirl around him amongst the young trees on the outskirts of the forest. The old man saw quite well that he was walking amongst fir-trees, but he did not understand that this was wrong, for there were also fir-trees on the other side of the birch-wood nearest the farm. But by-and-by he got so far into the forest that everything was quiet and still—one could not feel the storm, and the trees were high with thick stems—then he found out that he had mistaken the road, and would turn back.

He became excited and upset at the thought that he *could* lose his way, and as he stood there in the midst of the pathless wood he was not sufficiently clear-headed to know in which direction to turn. He first went to the one side and then to the other. At last it occurred to him to retrace his way in his own footprints, but darkness came on, and he could no longer follow them. The trees around him grew higher and higher. Whichever way he went, it was evident to him that he got further and further into the forest.

It was like witchcraft and sorcery, he thought, that he should be running about the woods like

this all the evening and be too late for the bathing. He turned his cap and rebound his garter, but his head was no clearer. It had become quite dark, and he began to think that he would have to remain the whole night in the woods.

He leant against a tree, stood still for a little, and tried to collect his thoughts. He knew this forest so well, and had walked in it so much, that he ought to know every single tree. As a boy he had gone there and tended sheep. He had gone there and laid snares for the birds. In his young days he had helped to fell trees there. He had seen old trees cut down and new ones grow up. At last he thought he had an idea where he was, and fancied if he went that and that way he must come upon the right road; but all the same, he only went deeper and deeper into the forest.

Once he felt smooth, firm ground under his feet, and knew from that, that he had at last come to some road. He tried now to follow this, for a road, he thought, was bound to lead to some place or other; but then the road ended at an open space in the forest, and there the snowstorm had it all its own way; there was neither road nor path, only drifts and loose snow. Then the old man's courage failed him; he felt like some poor creature destined to die a lonely death in the wilderness.

He began to grow tired of dragging himself through the snow, and time after time he sat down on a stone to rest; but as soon as he sat down he felt he was on the point of falling asleep, and he knew he would be frozen to death if he did fall asleep, therefore he tried to walk and walk; that

was the only thing that could save him. But all at once he could not resist the inclination to sit down. He thought if he could only rest, it did not matter if it did cost him his life.

It was so delightful to sit down that the thought of death did not in the least frighten him. He felt a kind of happiness at the thought that when he was dead the account of his whole life would be read aloud in the church. He thought of how beautifully the old Dean had spoken about his father, and how something equally beautiful would be sure to be said about him. The Dean would say that he had owned the oldest farm in the district, and he would speak about the honour it was to belong to such a distinguished family, and then something would be said about responsibility. Of course there was responsibility in the matter; that he had always known. One must endure to the very last when one was an Ingmar.

The thought rushed through him that it was not befitting for him to be found frozen to death in the wild forest. He would not have that handed down to posterity; and he stood up again and began to walk. He had been sitting so long that masses of snow fell from his fur coat when he moved. But soon he sat down again and began to dream.

The thought of death now came quite gently to him. He thought about the whole of the funeral and all the honour they would show his dead body. He could see the table laid for the great funeral feast in the large room on the first floor, the Dean and his wife in the seats of honour, the Justice of the Peace, with the white frill spread

over his narrow chest; the Major's wife in full dress, with a low silk bodice, and her neck covered with pearls and gold; he saw all the best rooms draped in white—white sheets before the windows, white over the furniture; branches of fir strewn the whole way from the entrance-hall to the church; house-cleaning and butchering, brewing and baking for a fortnight before the funeral; the corpse on a bier in the inmost room; smoke from the newly-lighted fires in the rooms; the whole house crowded with guests; singing over the body whilst the lid of the coffin was being screwed on; silver plates on the coffin; twenty loads of wood burned in a fortnight; the whole village busy cooking food to take to the funeral; all the tall hats newly ironed; all the corn-brandy from the autumn drunk up during the funeral feast; all the roads crowded with people as at fair-time.

Again the old man started up. He had heard them sitting and talking about him during the feast.

'But how did he manage to go and get frozen to death?' asked the Justice of the Peace. 'What could he have been doing in the large forest?'

And the Captain would say that it was probably from Christmas ale and corn-brandy. And that roused him again. The Ingmars had never been drunkards. It should never be said of him that he was muddled in his last moments. And he began again to walk and walk; but he was so tired that he could scarcely stand on his legs. It was quite clear to him now that he had got far into the forest, for there were no paths anywhere, but

many large rocks, of which he knew there were none lower down. His foot caught between two stones, so that he had difficulty in getting it out, and he stood and moaned. He was quite done for.

Suddenly he fell over a heap of fagots. He fell softly on to the snow and branches, so he was not hurt, but he did not take the trouble to get up again. He had no other desire in the world than to sleep. He pushed the fagots to one side and crept under them as if they were a rug; but when he pushed himself under the branches he felt that underneath there was something warm and soft. This must be a bear, he thought.

He felt the animal move, and heard it sniff; but he lay still. The bear might eat him if it liked, he thought. He had not strength enough to move a single step to get out of its way.

But it seemed as if the bear did not want to harm anyone who sought its protection on such a night as this. It moved a little further into its lair, as if to make room for its visitor, and directly afterwards it slept again with even, snorting breath.

* * * * *

In the meantime there was but scanty Christmas joy in the old farm of the Ingmars. The whole of Christmas-eve they were looking for Ingmar Ingmarson. First they went all over the dwelling-house and all the outhouses. They searched high and low, from loft to cellar. Then they went to the neighbouring farms and inquired for Ingmar Ingmarson.

As they did not find him, his sons and his sons-in-law went into the fields and roads. They used the torches which should have lighted the way for people going to early service on Christmas morning in the search for him. The terrible snowstorm had hidden all traces, and the howling of the wind drowned the sound of their voices when they called and shouted. They were out and about until long after midnight, but then they saw that it was useless to continue the search, and that they must wait until daylight to find the old man.

At the first pale streak of dawn everybody was up at Ingmar's farm, and the men stood about the yard ready to set out for the wood. But before they started the old housewife came and called them into the best room. She told them to sit down on the long benches; she herself sat down by the Christmas table with the Bible in front of her and began to read. She tried her best to find something suitable for the occasion, and chose the story of the man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.

She read slowly and monotonously about the unfortunate man who was succoured by the good Samaritan. Her sons and sons-in-law, her daughters and daughters-in-law, sat around her on the benches. They all resembled her and each other, big and clumsy, with plain, old-fashioned faces, for they all belonged to the old race of the Ingmars. They had all reddish hair, freckled skin, and light-blue eyes with white eyelashes. They might be different enough from each other in some ways, but they had all a stern look about the mouth, dull eyes, and heavy movements, as if

everything were a trouble to them. But one could see that they all, every one of them, belonged to the first people in the neighbourhood, and that they knew themselves to be better than other people.

All the sons and daughters of the house of Ingmar sighed deeply during the reading of the Bible. They wondered if some good Samaritan had found the master of the house and taken care of him, for all the Ingmars felt as if they had lost part of their own soul when a misfortune happened to anyone belonging to the family.

The old woman read and read, and came to the question: 'Who was neighbour unto him that fell amongst thieves?' But before she had read the answer the door opened and old Ingmar came into the room.

'Mother, here is father,' said one of the daughters; and the answer, that the man's neighbour was he who had shown mercy unto him, was never read.

* * * * *

Later in the day the housewife sat again in the same place, and read her Bible. She was alone; the women had gone to church, and the men were bear-hunting in the forest. As soon as Ingmar Ingmarson had eaten and drunk, he took his sons with him and went out to the forest; for it is every man's duty to kill a bear wherever and whenever he comes across one. It does not do to spare a bear, for sooner or later it will get a taste for flesh, and then it will spare neither man nor beast.

But after they were gone a great feeling of fear

came over the old housewife, and she began to read her Bible. She read the lesson for the day, which was also the text for the Pastor's sermon; but she did not get further than this: 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.' She remained sitting and staring at these words with her dull eyes, now and again sighing deeply. She did not read any further, but she repeated time after time in her slow, drawling voice, 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.'

The eldest son came into the room just as she was going to repeat the words afresh.

'Mother!' he said softly.

She heard him, but did not take her eyes from the book whilst she asked:

'Are you not with the others in the forest?'

'Yes,' said he, still more softly, 'I have been there.'

'Come to the table,' she said, 'so that I can see you.'

He came nearer, but when she looked at him she saw that he was trembling. He had to press his hands hard against the edge of the table in order to keep them still.

'Have you got the bear?' she asked again.

He could not answer; he only shook his head.

The old woman got up and did what she had not done since her son was a child. She went up to him, laid her hand on his arm, and drew him to the bench. She sat down beside him and took his hand in hers.

'Tell me now what has happened, my boy.'

The young man recognised the caress which had comforted him in bygone days when he had

been in trouble and unhappy, and he was so overcome that he began to weep.

'I suppose it is something about father?' she said.

'It is worse than that,' the son sobbed.

'Worse than that?'

The young man cried more and more violently; he did not know how to control his voice. At last he lifted his rough hand, with the broad fingers, and pointed to what she had just read: 'Peace on earth. . . .'

'Is it anything about that?' she asked.

'Yes,' he answered.

'Is it anything about the peace of Christmas?'

'Yes.'

'You wished to do an evil deed this morning?'

'Yes.'

'And God has punished us?'

'God has punished us.'

So at last she was told how it had happened. They had with some trouble found the lair of the bear, and when they had got near enough to see the heap of fagots, they stopped in order to load their guns. But before they were ready the bear rushed out of its lair straight against them. It went neither to the right nor to the left, but straight for old Ingmar Ingmarson, and struck him a blow on the top of the head that felled him to the ground as if he had been struck by lightning. It did not attack any of the others, but rushed past them into the forest.

* * * * *

In the afternoon Ingmar Ingmarson's wife and son drove to the Dean's house to announce his

death. The son was spokesman, and the old housewife sat and listened with a face as immovable as a stone figure.

The Dean sat in his easy-chair near his writing-table. He had entered the death in the register. He had done it rather slowly; he wanted time to consider what he should say to the widow and the son, for this was, indeed, an unusual case. The son had frankly told him how it had all happened, but the Dean was anxious to know how they themselves looked at it. They were peculiar people, the Ingmars.

When the Dean had closed the book, the son said:

'We wanted to tell you, sir, that we do not wish any account of father's life to be read in church.'

The Dean pushed his spectacles over his forehead and looked searchingly at the old woman. She sat just as immovable as before. She only crumpled the handkerchief a little which she held in her hand.

'We wish to have him buried on a week day,' continued the son.

'Indeed!' said the Dean.

He could hardly believe his own ears. Old Ingmar Ingmarson to be buried without anyone taking any notice of it! The congregation not to stand on railings and mounds in order to see the display when he was being carried to the grave!

'There will not be any funeral feast. We have let the neighbours know that they need not think of preparing anything for the funeral.'

'Indeed, indeed!' said the Dean again.

He could think of nothing else to say. He

knew quite well what it meant for such people to forego the funeral feast. He had seen both widows and fatherless comforted by giving a splendid funeral feast.

'There will be no funeral procession, only I and my brothers.'

The Dean looked almost appealingly at the old woman. Could she really be a party to all this? He asked himself if it could be her wishes to which the son had given expression. She was sitting there and allowing herself to be robbed of what must be dearer to her than gold and silver.

'We will not have the bells rung, or any silver plates on the coffin. Mother and I wish it to be done in this way, but we tell you all this, sir, in order to hear, sir, if you think we are wronging father.'

Now the old woman spoke:

'We should like to hear if your Reverence thinks we are doing father a wrong.'

The Dean remained silent, and the old woman continued, more eagerly:

'I must tell your Reverence that if my husband had sinned against the King or the authorities, or if I had been obliged to cut him down from the gallows, he should all the same have had an honourable funeral, as his father before him, for the Ingmars are not afraid of anyone, and they need not go out of their way for anybody. But at Christmas God has made peace between man and beast, and the poor beast kept God's commandment, whilst we broke it, and therefore we now suffer God's punishment; and it is not becoming for us to show any ostentatious display.'

The Dean rose and went up to the old woman. 'What you say is right,' he said, 'and you shall follow the dictates of your own conscience.' And involuntarily he added, perhaps most to himself: 'The Ingmars are a grand family.'

The old woman straightened herself a little at these words. At that moment the Dean saw in her the symbol of her whole race. He understood what it was that had made these heavy, silent people, century after century, the leaders of the whole parish.

'It behooves the Ingmars to set the people a good example,' she said. 'It behooves us to show that we humble ourselves before God.'

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

VIII

A STORY *from* HALSTANÄS

A Story *from* Halstanäs

IN olden times there stood by the roadside an old country-house called Halstanäs. It comprised a long row of red-painted houses, which were of low structure, and right behind them lay the forest. Close to the dwelling-house was a large wild cherry-tree, which showered its black fruit over the red-tiled roof. A bell under a small belfry hung over the gable of the stables.

Just outside the kitchen-door was a dovecote, with a neat little trelliswork outside the holes. From the attic a cage for squirrels was hanging; it consisted of two small green houses and a large wheel, and in front of a big hedge of lilacs stood a long row of beehives covered with bark.

There was a pond belonging to the farm, full of fat carp and slim water-snakes; there was also a kennel at the entrance; there were white gates at the end of the avenue, and at the garden walks, and in every place where they could possibly have a gate. There were big lofts with dark lumber-rooms, where old-fashioned uniforms and ladies' head-gear a hundred years old were stored away; there were large chests full of silk gowns and bridal finery; there were old pianos and violins, guitars and bassoons. In bureaus and cabinets were manuscript songs and old yellow letters; on the walls of the entrance-hall hung guns, pistols and hunting-bags; on the floor were rugs, in which patches of old silken gowns were woven

together with pieces of threadbare cotton curtains. There was a large porch, where the deadly nightshade summer after summer grew up a thin trelliswork; there were large, yellow front-doors, which were fastened with bolts and catches; the hall was strewn with sprigs of juniper, and the windows had small panes and heavy wooden shutters.

One summer old Colonel Beerencreutz came on a visit to this house. It is supposed to have been the very year after he left Ekeby. At that time he had taken rooms at a farm at Svartsjö, and it was only on rare occasions that he went visiting. He still had his horse and gig, but he scarcely ever used them. He said that he had grown old in earnest now, and that home was the best place for old people.

Beerencreutz was also loath to leave the work he had in hand. He was weaving rugs for his two rooms—large, many-coloured rugs in a rich and strangely-thought-out pattern. It took him an endless time, because he had his own way of weaving, for he used no loom, but stretched his wool from the one wall to the other right across the one room. He did this in order to see the whole rug at one time; but to cross the woof and afterwards bring the threads together to a firm web was no easy matter. And then there was the pattern, which he himself thought out, and the colours which should match. This took the Colonel more time than anyone would have imagined; for whilst Beerencreutz was busy getting the pattern right, and whilst he was working with warp and woof, he often sat and thought of God. Our Lord, he

thought, was likewise sitting at a loom, still larger, and with an even more peculiar pattern to weave. And he knew that there must be both light and dark shades in that weaving. But Beerencreutz would at times sit and think so long about this, until he fancied he saw before him his own life and the life of the people whom he had known, and with whom he had lived, forming a small portion of God's great weaving; and he seemed to see that piece so distinctly that he could discern both outlines and colouring. And if one asked Beerencreutz what the pattern in his work really meant, he would be obliged to confess that it was the life of himself and his friends which he wove into the rug as a faint imitation of what he thought he had seen represented on God's loom.

The Colonel, however, was accustomed to pay a little visit to some old friends every year just after midsummer. He had always liked best to travel through the country when the fields were still scented with clover, and blue and yellow flowers grew along the roadside in two long straight rows.

This year the Colonel had hardly got to the great highroad before he met his old friend Ensign von Örneclou. And the Ensign, who was travelling about all the year round, and who knew all the country houses in Värmland, gave him some good advice.

'Go to Halstanäs and call upon Ensign Vestblad,' he said to the Colonel. 'I can only tell you, old man, I don't know a house in the whole country where one fares better.'

'What Vestblad are you speaking about?'

asked the Colonel. 'I suppose you don't mean the old Ensign whom the Major's wife showed the door?'

'The very man,' said the Ensign. 'But Vestblad is not the same man he was. He has married a fine lady—a real stunning woman, Colonel—who has made a man of him. It was a wonderful piece of good luck for Vestblad that such a splendid girl should take a fancy to him. She was not exactly young any longer; but no more was he. You should go to Halstanäs, Colonel, and see what wonders love can work.'

And the Colonel went to Halstanäs to see if Örneclou spoke the truth. He had, as a matter of fact, now and then wondered what had become of Vestblad; in his young days he had kicked so recklessly over the traces that even the Major's wife at Ekeby could not put up with him. She had not been able to keep him at Ekeby more than a couple of years before she was obliged to turn him out. Vestblad had become such a heavy drinker that a Cavalier could hardly associate with him. And now Örneclou declared that he owned a country house, and had made an excellent match.

The Colonel consequently went to Halstanäs, and saw at the first glance that it was a real old country-seat. He had only to look at the avenue of birches with all the names cut on the fine old trees. Such birches he had only seen at good old country-houses. The Colonel drove slowly up to the house, and every moment his pleasure increased. He saw lime hedges of the proper kind, so close that one could walk on the top of them,

and there were a couple of terraces with stone steps so old that they were half buried in the ground. When the Colonel drove past the pond, he saw indistinctly the dark carp in the yellowish water. The pigeons flew up from the road flapping their wings; the squirrel stopped its wheel; the watch-dog lay with its head on its paws, wagging its tail, and at the same time faintly growling. Close to the porch the Colonel saw an ant-hill, where the ants, unmolested, went to and fro —to and fro. He looked at the flower-beds inside the grass border. There they grew, all the old flowers: narcissus and pyrola, sempervivum and marigold; and on the bank grew small white daisies, which had been there so long that they now sowed themselves like weeds. Beerencreutz again said to himself that this was indeed a real old country-house, where both plants and animals and human beings throve as well as could be.

When at last he drove up to the front-door he had as good a reception as he could wish for, and as soon as he had brushed the dust off him he was taken to the dining-room, and he was offered plenty of good old-fashioned food—the same old cakes for dessert that his mother used to give him when he came home from school; and any so good he had never tasted elsewhere.

Beerencreutz looked with surprise at Ensign Vestblad. He went about quiet and content, with a long pipe in his mouth and a skull-cap on his head. He wore an old morning-coat, which he had difficulty in getting out of when it was time to dress for dinner. That was the only sign of the Bohemian left, as far as Beerencreutz could see,

He went about and looked after his men, calculated their wages, saw how things were getting on in the fields and meadows, gathered a rose for his wife when he went through the garden, and he indulged no longer in either swearing or spitting. But what astonished the Colonel most of all was the discovery that old Ensign Vestblad kept his books. He took the Colonel into his office and showed him large books with red backs. And those he kept himself. He had lined them with red ink and black ink, written the headings with large letters, and put down everything, even to a stamp.

But Ensign Vestblad's wife, who was a born lady, called Beerencreutz cousin, and they soon found out the relationship between them; and they talked all their relatives over. At last Beerencreutz became so intimate with Mrs. Vestblad that he consulted her about the rug he was weaving.

It was a matter of course that the Colonel should stay the night. He was taken to the best spare room to the right of the hall and close to his host's bedroom, and his bed was a large four-poster, with heaps of eiderdowns.

The Colonel fell asleep as soon as he got into bed, but awoke later on in the night. He immediately got out of bed and went and opened the window-shutters. He had a view over the garden, and in the light summer night he could see all the gnarled old apple-trees, with their worm-eaten leaves, and with numerous props under the decayed branches. He saw the large wild apple-tree, which in the autumn would give barrels of

uneatable fruit; he saw the strawberries, which had just begun to ripen under their profusion of green leaves.

The Colonel stood and looked at it as if he could not afford to waste his time in sleeping. Outside his window at the peasant farm where he lived all he could see was a stony hill and a couple of juniper-bushes; and it was natural that a man like Beerencreutz should feel more at home amongst well-trimmed hedges and roses in bloom.

When in the ,quiet stillness of the night one looks out upon a garden, one often has a feeling that it is not real and natural. It can be so still that one can almost fancy one's self in the theatre; one imagines that the trees are painted and the roses made of paper. And it was something like this the Colonel felt as he stood there. 'It cannot be possible,' he thought, 'that all this is real. It can only be a dream.' But then a few rose-leaves fell softly to the ground from the big rose-tree just outside his window, and then he realized that everything was genuine. Everything was real and genuine; both day and night the same peace and contentment everywhere.

When he went and laid down again he left the window-shutters open. He lay in the high bed and looked time after time at the rose-tree; it is impossible to describe his pleasure in looking at it. He thought what a strange thing it was that such a man as Vestblad should have this flower of Paradise outside his window.

The more the Colonel thought of Vestblad the more surprised he became that such a foal should

end his days in such a stable. He was not good for much at the time he was turned away from Ekeby. Who would have thought he would have become a staid and well-to-do man?

The Colonel lay and laughed to himself, and wondered whether Vestblad still remembered how he used to amuse himself in the olden days when he was living at Ekeby. On dark and stormy nights he used to rub himself over with phosphorus, mount a black horse, and ride over the hills to the ironworks, where the smiths and the workmen lived; and if anyone happened to look out of his window and saw a horseman shining with a bluish-white light tearing past, he hastened to bar and bolt everywhere, saying it was best to say one's prayers twice that night, for the devil was abroad.

Oh yes, to frighten simple folks by such tricks was a favourite amusement in olden days; but Vestblad had carried his jokes further than anyone else the Colonel knew of.

An old woman on the parish had died at Viksta, which belonged to Ekeby. Vestblad happened to hear about this. He also heard that the corpse had been taken from the house and placed in a barn. At night Vestblad put on his fiery array, mounted his black horse, and rode to the farmstead; and people there who were about had seen a fiery horseman ride up to the barn, where the corpse lay, ride three times round it and disappear through the door. They had also seen the horseman come out again, ride three times round the house and then disappear. But in the morning, when they went into the barn to see the corpse, it

was gone, and they thought the devil had been there and carried her off. This supposition had been enough for them. But a couple of weeks later they found the body, which had been thrown on to a hay-loft in the barn, and then there was a great outcry. They found out who the fiery horseman was, and the peasants were on the watch to give Vestblad a good hiding. But the Major's wife would not have him at her table or in her house any longer; she packed his knapsack and asked him to betake himself elsewhere. And Vestblad went out into the world and made his fortune.

A strange feeling of uneasiness came over the Colonel as he lay in bed. He felt as if something were going to happen. He had hardly realized before what an ugly story it was. He had no doubt even laughed at it at the time. They had not been in the habit of taking much notice of what happened to a poor old pauper in those days; but, great God! how furious one would have been if anybody had done that to one's own mother!

A suffocating feeling came over the Colonel; he breathed heavily. The thought of what Vestblad had done appeared so vile and hateful to him, it weighed him down like a nightmare. He was half afraid of seeing the dead woman, of seeing her appear from behind the bed. He felt as if she must be quite near. And from the four corners of the room the Colonel heard terrible words: 'God will not forgive it! God has never forgotten it!'

The Colonel closed his eyes, but then he suddenly saw before him God's great loom, where

the web was woven with the fates of men; and he thought he saw Ensign Vestblad's square, and it was dark on three sides; and he, who understood something about weaving and patterns, knew that the fourth side would also have to be covered with the dark shade. It could not be done in any other way, otherwise there would be a mistake in the weaving.

A cold sweat broke out on his forehead; it seemed to him that he looked upon what was the hardest and the most immovable in all the world. He saw how the fate which a man has worked out in his past life will pursue him to the end. And to think there were actually people who thought they could escape it!

Escape it! escape! All was noted and written down; the one colour and the one figure necessitated the other, and everything came about as it was bound to come about.

Suddenly Colonel Beerencreutz sat up in bed; he would look at the flowers and the roses, and think that perhaps our Lord could forget after all. But at the moment Beerencreutz sat up in bed the bedroom door opened, and one of the farm-labourers—a stranger to him—put his head in and nodded to the Colonel.

It was now so light that the Colonel saw the man quite distinctly. It was the most hideous face he had ever seen. He had small gray eyes like a pig, a flat nose, and a thin, bristly beard. One could not say that the man looked like an animal, for animals have nearly always good faces, but still, he had something of the animal about him. His lower jaw projected, his neck was

thick, and his forehead was quite hidden by his rough, unkempt hair.

He nodded three times to the Colonel, and every time his mouth opened with a broad grin; and he put out his hand, red with blood, and showed it triumphantly. Up to this moment the Colonel had sat up in bed as if paralyzed, but now he jumped up and was at the door in two steps. But when he reached the door, the fellow was gone and the door closed.

The Colonel was just on the point of raising the alarm, when it struck him that the door must be fastened on the inside, on his side, as he had himself locked it the night before; and on examining it, he found that it had not been unlocked.

The Colonel felt almost ashamed to think that in his old age he had begun to see ghosts. He went straight back to bed again.

When the morning came, and he had breakfasted, the Colonel felt still more ashamed. He had excited himself to such an extent that he had trembled all over and perspired from fear. He said not a word about it. But later on in the day he and Vestblad went over the estate. As they passed a labourer who was cutting sods on a bank Beerencreutz recognised him again. It was the man he had seen in the night. He recognised feature for feature.

'I would not keep that man a day longer in my service, my friend,' said Beerencreutz, when they had walked a short distance. And he told Vestblad what he had seen in the night. 'I tell you this simply to warn you, in order that you may dismiss the man.'

But Vestblad would not; he was just the man he would not dismiss. And when Beerencreutz pressed him more and more, he at last confessed that he would not do anything to the man, because he was the son of an old pauper woman who had died at Viksta close to Ekeby.

'You no doubt remember the story?' he added.

'If that's the case, I would rather go to the end of the world than live another day with that man about the place,' said Beerencreutz. An hour after he left, and was almost angry that his warning was not heeded. 'Some misfortune will happen before I come here again,' said the Colonel to Vestblad, as he took leave.

Next year, at the same time, the Colonel was preparing for another visit to Halstanäs. But before he got so far, he heard some sad news about his friends. As the clock struck one, a year after the very night he had slept there, Ensign Vestblad and his wife had been murdered in their bedroom by one of their labourers—a man with a neck like a bull, a flat nose, and eyes like a pig.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

IX

The INSCRIPTION *on the* GRAVE

The Inscription *on the* Grave

NOWADAYS no one ever takes any notice of the little cross standing in the corner of Svartsjö Churchyard. People on their way to and from church go past it without giving it a glance. This is not so very wonderful, because it is so low and small that clover and bluebells grow right up to the arms of the cross, and timothy-grass to the very top of it. Neither does anyone think of reading the inscription which stands on the cross. The white letters are almost entirely washed out by the rain, and it never occurs to anyone to try and decipher what is still left, and try to make it out. But so it has not always been. The little cross in its time has been the cause of much surprise and curiosity. There was a time when not a person put his foot inside Svartsjö Churchyard without going up to look at it. And when one of the old people from those days now happens to see it, a whole story comes back to him of people and events that have been long forgotten. He sees before him the whole of Svartsjö parish in the lethargic sleep of winter, covered by even white snow, quite a yard deep, so that it is impossible to discern road or pathway, or to know where one is going. It is almost as necessary to have a compass here as at sea. There is no difference between sea and shore. The roughest ground is as even as the field which in the autumn yielded such a harvest

of oats. The charcoal-burner living near the great bogs might imagine himself possessed of as much cultivated land as the richest peasant.

The roads have left their secure course between the gray fences, and are running at random across the meadows and along the river. Even on one's own farm one may lose one's way, and suddenly discover that on one's way to the well one has walked over the spirea-hedge and round the little rose-bed.

But nowhere is it so impossible to find one's way as in the churchyard. In the first place, the stone wall which separates it from the pastor's field is entirely buried under the snow, so with that it is all one; and secondly, the churchyard itself is only a simple large, white plain, where not even the smallest unevenness in the snow-cover betrays the many small mounds and tufts of the garden of the dead.

On most of the graves are iron crosses, from which hang small, thin hearts of tin, which the summer wind sets in motion. These little hearts are now all hidden under the snow, and cannot tinkle their sad songs of sorrow and longing.

People who work in the towns have brought back with them to their dead wreaths with flowers of beads and leaves of painted tin; and these wreaths are so highly treasured that they are kept in small glass cases on the graves. But now all this is hidden and buried under the snow, and the grave that possesses such an ornament is in no way more remarkable than any of the other graves.

One or two lilac bushes raise their heads above

the snow-cover, but their little stiff branches look so alike, that it is impossible to tell one from the other, and they are of no use whatever to anyone trying to find his way in the churchyard. Old women who are in the habit of going on Sundays to visit their graves can only get a little way down the main walk on account of the snow. There they stand, trying to make out where their own grave lies—is it near that bush, or that?—and they begin to long for the snow to melt. It is as if the one for whom they are sorrowing has gone so far away from them, now that they cannot see the spot where he lies.

There are also a few large gravestones and crosses that are higher than the snow, but they are not many; and as these are also covered with snow, they cannot be distinguished either.

There is only one pathway kept clear in the churchyard. It is the one leading from the entrance to the small mortuary. When anyone is to be buried the coffin is carried into the mortuary, and there the pastor reads the service and casts the earth upon the coffin. It is impossible to place the coffin in the ground as long as such a winter lasts. It must remain standing in the mortuary until God sees fit to thaw the earth, and the ground can be digged and made ready.

* * * * *

Just when the winter was at its hardest, and the churchyard quite inaccessible, a child died at Sander's, the ironmaster at Lerum ironworks.

The ironworks at Lerum were large, and

Sander, the ironmaster, was a great man in that part of the country. He had recently had a family grave made in the churchyard—a splendid grave, the position of which one could not easily forget, although the snow had laid its thinck carpet over it. It was surrounded by heavy, hewn stones, with a massive chain between them, and in the middle of the grave stood a huge granite block, with their name inscribed upon it. There was only the one word 'Sander,' engraved in large letters, but it could be seen over the whole churchyard. But now that the child was dead, and was to be buried, the ironmaster said to his wife:

'I will not allow this child to lie in my grave.'

One can picture them both at that moment. It was in their dining-room at Lerum. The ironmaster was sitting at the breakfast-table alone, as was his wont. His wife, Ebba Sander, was sitting in a rocking-chair at the window, from where she had a wide view of the lake, with its small islands covered with birches.

She had been weeping, but when her husband said this, her eyes became immediately dry. Her little figure seemed to shrink from fear, and she began to tremble.

'What do you say? What are you saying?' she asked, and her voice sounded as if she were shivering from cold.

'I object to it,' he said. 'My father and my mother lie there, and the name "Sander" stands on the stone. I will not allow that child to lie there.'

'Oh,' she said, still trembling, 'is that what you have been thinking about? I always did

think that some day you would have your revenge.'

He threw down his serviette, rose from the table, and stood before her, broad and big. It was not his intention to assert his will with many words, but she could see, as he stood there, that nothing could make him change his mind. Stern, immovable, obstinate he was from top to toe.

'I will not revenge myself,' he said, 'only I will not have it.'

'You speak as if it were only a question of removing him from one bed to the other,' she said. 'He is dead. It does not matter to him where he lies, I suppose; but for me it is ruin, you know.'

'I have also thought of that,' he said, 'but I cannot.'

When two people have been married, and have lived together for some years, they do not require many words to understand one another. She knew it would be quite useless to try and move him.

'Why did you forgive me, then?' she said, wringing her hands. 'Why did you let me stay with you as your wife and promise to forgive me?'

He knew that he would not do her any harm. It was not his fault that he had now reached the limit of his forbearance.

'Say to people what you like,' he said; 'I shall not say anything. You can say, if you like, that there is water in the vault, or that there is only room for father and mother and you and me.'

'And you imagine that they will believe that!'

'Well, you must manage that as best you can.'

He was not angry; she knew that he was not. It was only as he said: on that point he could not give way.

She went further into the room, put her hands at the back of her head, and sat gazing out of the window without saying anything. The terrible thing is that so much happens to one in life over which one has no control, and, above all, that something may spring up within one's self over which one is entirely powerless. Some years ago, when she was already a staid married woman, love came to her; and what a love—so violent that it was quite impossible for her to resist.

Was not the feeling which now mastered her husband—was not that, after all, a desire to be revenged?

He had never been angry with her. He forgave her at once when she came and confessed her sin.

'You have been out of your senses,' he said, and allowed her to remain with him at Lerum as if nothing had happened.

But although it is easy enough to say one forgives, it may be hard to do so, especially for one whose mind is slow and heavy, who ponders over but never forgets or gives vent to his feelings. Whatever he may say, and however much he may have made up his mind, something is always left within his heart which gnaws and longs to be satisfied with someone else's suffering. She had always had a strange feeling that it would have been better for her if he had been so enraged that

he had struck her. Then, perhaps, things could have come right between them. All these years he had been morose and irritable, and she had become frightened. She was like a horse between the traces. She knew that behind her was one who held a whip over her, even if he did not use it; and now he had used it. He had not been able to refrain any longer. And now it was all over with her.

Those who were about her said they had never seen such sorrow as hers. She seemed to be petrified. The whole time before the funeral it was as if there were no real life in her. One could not tell if she heard what was said to her, if she had any idea who was speaking to her. She did not eat; it was as if she felt no hunger. She went out in the bitterest cold; she did not feel it. But it was not grief that petrified her—it was fear.

It never struck her for a moment to stay at home on the day of the funeral. She must go to the churchyard, she must walk in the funeral procession—must go there, feeling that all who were present expected that the body would be laid in the family vault of the Sanders. She thought she would sink into the ground at all the surprise and scorn which would rise up against her when the grave-digger, who headed the procession, led the way to an out-of-the-way grave. An outburst of astonishment would be heard from everybody, although it was a funeral procession: 'Why is the child not going to be buried in the Sanders' family vault?' Thoughts would go back to the vague rumours which were once circulated about her. 'There must have been something

in them, after all,' people will whisper to each other. And before the mourners left the churchyard she would be condemned and lost. The only thing for her to do was to be present herself. She would go there with a quiet face, as if everything was as it ought to be. Then, perhaps, they might believe what she said to explain the matter. . . .

Her husband went with her to the church; he had looked after everything, invited people, ordered the coffin, and arranged who should be the bearers. He was kind and good now that he had got his own way.

It was on a Sunday. The service was over, and the mourners had assembled outside the porch, where the coffin was standing. The bearers had placed the white bands over their shoulders; all people of any position had joined in the procession, as did also many of the congregation. She had a feeling as if they had all gathered together in order to accompany a criminal to the scaffold.

How they would all look at her when they came back from the funeral! She was there to prepare them for what was to happen, but she had not been able to utter a single word. She felt quite unable to speak quietly and sensibly. There was only one thing she wanted: to scream and moan so violently and loudly that it could be heard all over the churchyard; and she had to bite her lips so as not to cry out.

The bells commenced to ring in the tower, and the procession began to move. Now all these people would find it out without the slightest preparation. Oh, why had she not spoken in time? She had to restrain herself to the utmost

from shouting out and telling them that they must not go to the grave with the dead child. Those who are dead are dead and gone. Why should her whole life be spoiled for the sake of this dead child? They could put him in the earth, where they liked, only not in the churchyard. She had a confused idea that she would frighten them away from the churchyard; it was risky to go there; it was plague-smitten; there were marks of a wolf in the snow; she would frighten them as one frightens children.

She did not know where they had digged the child's grave. She would know soon enough, she thought; and when the procession entered the churchyard, she glanced around the snow-covered ground to see where there was a new grave; but she saw neither path nor grave—nothing but the white snow. And the procession advanced towards the small mortuary. As many as possibly could pressed into the building and saw the earth cast on to the coffin. There was no question whatever about this or that grave. No one found out that the little one which was now laid to rest was never to be taken to the family vault.

Had she but thought of that, had she not forgotten everything else in her fear and terror, then she need not have been afraid, not for a single moment.

'In the spring,' she thought, 'when the coffin has to be placed in the ground, there will probably be no one there except the grave-digger; everybody will think that the child is lying in the Sanders' vault.' And she felt that she was saved.

She sank down sobbing violently. People looked at her with sympathy. 'How terribly she felt it!' they said. But she herself knew that she cried like one who has escaped from a mortal danger.

A day or two after the funeral she was sitting in the twilight in her accustomed place in the dining-room, and as it grew darker she caught herself waiting and longing. She sat and listened for the child; that was the time when he always used to come in and play with her. Why did he not come that day? Then she started. 'Oh, he is dead, he is dead!'

The next day she sat again in the twilight, and longed for him, and day by day this longing grew. It grew as the light does in the springtime, until at last it filled all the hours both of day and night.

It almost goes without saying that a child like hers was more loved after death than whilst it was living. While it was living its mother had thought of nothing but regaining the trust and the love of her husband. And for him the child could never be a source of happiness. It was necessary to keep it away from him as much as possible; and the child had often felt he was in the way.

She, who had failed in and neglected her duty, would show her husband that she was worth something after all. She was always about in the kitchen and in the weaving-room. Where could there be any room, then, for the little boy?

But now, afterwards, she remembered how his eyes could beg and beseech. In the evening he liked so much to have her sitting at his bedside.

He said he was afraid to lie in the dark; but now it struck her that that had probably only been an excuse to get her to stay with him. She remembered how he lay and tried not to fall asleep. Now she knew that he kept himself awake in order that he might lie a little longer and feel his hand in hers. He had been a shrewd little fellow, young as he was. He had exerted all his little brain to find out how he could get a little share of her love. It is incomprehensible that children can love so deeply. She never understood it whilst he was alive.

It was really first now that she had begun to love the child. It was first now that she was really impressed by his beauty. She would sit and dream of his big, strange eyes. He had never been robust and ruddy like most children, but delicate and slender. But how sweet he had been! He seemed to her now as something wonderfully beautiful—more and more beautiful for every day that went. Children were indeed the best of all in this world. To think that there were little beings stretching out their hands to everybody, and thinking good of all; that never ask if a face be plain or pretty, but are equally willing to kiss either, loving equally old and young, rich and poor. And yet they were real little people.

For every day that went she was drawn nearer and nearer to the child. She wished that the child had been still alive; but, on the other hand, she was not sure that in that case she would have been drawn so near to it. At times she was quite in despair at the thought that she had not done more for the child whilst he was alive. That was

probably why he had been taken from her, she thought.

But it was not often that she sorrowed like this. Earlier in life she had always been afraid lest some great sorrow should overtake her, but now it seemed to her that sorrow was not what she had then thought it to be. Sorrow was only to live over and over again through something which was no more. Sorrow in her case was to become familiar with her child's whole being, and to seek to understand him. And that sorrow had made her life so rich.

What she was most afraid of now was that time would take him from her and wipe out the memory of him. She had no picture of him; perhaps his features little by little would fade for her. She sat every day and tried to think how he looked. 'Do I see him exactly as he was?' she said.

Week by week, as the winter wore away, she began to long for the time when he would be taken from the mortuary and buried in the ground, so that she could go to his grave and speak with him. He should lie towards the west, that was the most beautiful, and she would deck the grave with roses. There should also be a hedge round the grave, and a seat where she could sit often and often. People would perhaps wonder at it; but they were not to know that her child did not lie in the family grave; and they were sure to think it strange that she placed flowers on an unknown grave and sat there for hours. What could she say to explain it?

Sometimes she thought that she could, perhaps, do it in this way: First she would go to the big

grave and place a large bouquet of flowers on it, and remain sitting there for some time, and afterwards she would steal away to the little grave; and he would be sure to be content with the little flower she would secretly give him. But even if he were satisfied with the one little flower, could she be? Could she really come quite near to him in this way? Would he not notice that she was ashamed of him? Would he not understand what a disgrace his birth had been to her? No, she would have to protect him from that. He must only think that the joy of having possessed him weighed against all the rest.

At last the winter was giving way. One could see the spring was coming. The snow-cover began to melt, and the earth to peep out. It would still be a week or two before the ground was thawed, but it would not be long now before the dead could be taken away from the mortuary. And she longed—she longed so exceedingly for it.

Could she still picture to herself how he looked? She tried every day; but it was easier when it was winter. Now, when the spring was coming, it seemed as if he faded away from her. She was filled with despair. If she were only soon able to sit by his grave and be near to him again, then she would be able to see him again, to love him. Would he never be laid in his little grave? She must be able to see him again, see him through her whole life; she had no one else to love.

At last all her fears and scruples vanished before this great longing. She loved, she loved;

she could not live without the dead! She knew now that she could not consider anybody or anything but him—him alone. And when the spring came in earnest, when mounds and graves once again appeared all over the churchyard, when the little hearts of the iron crosses again began to tinkle in the wind, and the beaded wreaths to sparkle in their glass cases, and when the earth at last was ready to receive the little coffin, she had ready a black cross to place on his grave. On the cross from arm to arm was written in plain white letters,

'HERE RESTS MY CHILD,'

and underneath, on the stem of the cross, stood her name.

She did not mind that the whole world would know how she had sinned. Other things were of no consequence to her; all she thought about was that she would now be able to pray at the grave of her child.

From a Swedish
HOMESTEAD

X

The BROTHERS

The BROTHERS

IT is very possible that I am mistaken, but it seems to me that an astonishing number of people die this year. I have a feeling that I cannot go down the street without meeting a hearse. One cannot help thinking about all those who are carried to the churchyard. I always feel as if it were so sad for the dead who have to be buried in towns. I can hear how they moan in their coffins. Some complain that they have not had plumes on the hearse; some count up the wreaths, and are not satisfied; and then there are some who have only been followed by two or three carriages, and who are hurt by it.

The dead ought never to know and experience such things; but people in towns do not at all understand how they ought to honour those who have entered into eternal rest.

When I really think over it I do not know any place where they understand it better than at home in Svartsjö. If you die in the parish of Svartsjö you know you will have a coffin like that of everyone else—an honest black coffin which is like the coffins in which the country judge and the local magistrate were buried a year or two ago. For the same joiner makes all the coffins, and he has only one pattern; the one is made neither better nor worse than the other. And you know also, for you have seen it so many times, that you will be carried to the church on a

waggon which has been painted black for the occasion. You need not trouble yourself at all about any plumes. And you know that the whole village will follow you to the church, and that they will drive as slowly and as solemnly for you as for a landed proprietor.

But you will have no occasion to feel annoyed because you have not enough wreaths, for they do not place a single flower on the coffin; it shall stand out black and shining, and nothing must cover it; and it is not necessary for you to think whether you will have a sufficiently large number of people to follow you, for those who live in your town will be sure to follow you, every one. Nor will you be obliged to lie and listen if there is lamenting and weeping around your coffin. They never weep over the dead when they stand on the church hill outside Svartsjö Church. No, they weep as little over a strong young fellow who falls a prey to death just as he is beginning to provide for his old people as they will for you. You will be placed on a couple of black trestles outside the door of the parish room, and a whole crowd of people will gradually gather round you, and all the women will have handkerchiefs in their hands. But no one will cry; all the handkerchiefs will be kept tightly rolled up; not one will be applied to the eyes. You need not speculate as to whether people will shed as many tears over you as they would over others. They would cry if it were the proper thing, but it is not the proper thing.

You can understand that if there were much sorrowing over one grave, it would not look well for those over whom no one sorrowed. They

know what they were about at Svartsjö. They do as it has been the custom to do there for many hundred years. But whilst you stand there, on the church hill, you are a great and important personage, although you receive neither flowers nor tears. No one comes to church without asking who you are, and then they go quietly up to you and stand and gaze at you; and it never occurs to anyone to wound the dead by pitying him. No one says anything but that it is well for him that it is all over.

It is not at all as it is in a town, where you can be buried any day. At Svartsjö you must be buried on a Sunday, so that you can have the whole parish around you. There you will have standing near your coffin both the girl with whom you danced at the last midsummer night's festival and the man with whom you exchanged horses at the last fair. You will have the schoolmaster who took so much trouble with you when you were a little lad, and who had forgotten you, although you remembered him so well; and you will have the old Member of Parliament who never before thought it worth his while to bow to you. This is not as in a town, where people hardly turn round when you are carried past. When they bring the long bands and place them under the coffin, there is not one who does not watch the proceedings.

You cannot imagine what a churchwarden we have at Svartsjö. He is an old soldier, and he looks like a Field-Marshal. He has short white hair and twisted moustaches, and a pointed imperial; he is slim and tall and straight, with a

light and firm step. On Sundays he wears a well-brushed frock-coat of fine cloth. He really looks a very fine old gentleman, and it is he who walks at the head of the procession. Then comes the verger. Not that the verger is to be compared with the churchwarden. It is more than probable that his Sunday hat is too large and old-fashioned; as likely as not he is awkward—but when is a verger not awkward?

Then you come next in your coffin, with the six bearers, and then follow the clergyman and the clerk and the Town Council and the whole parish. All the congregation will follow you to the churchyard, you may be sure of that. But I will tell you something: All those who follow you look so small and poor. They are not fine town's-people, you know—only plain, simple Svartsjö folk. There is only one who is great and important, and that is you in your coffin—you who are dead.

The others the next day will have to resume their heavy and toilsome work. They will have to live in poor old cottages and wear old, patched clothes; the others will always be plagued and worried, and dragged down and humbled by poverty.

Those who follow you to your grave become far more sad by looking at the living than by thinking of you who are dead. You need not look any more at the velvet collar of your coat to see if it is not getting worn at the edges; you need not make a special fold of your silk handkerchief to hide that it is beginning to fray; you will never more be compelled to ask the village

shopkeeper to let you have goods on credit; you will not find out that your strength is failing; you will not have to wait for the day when you must go on the parish.

While they are following you to the grave everyone will be thinking that it is best to be dead—better to soar heavenwards, carried on the white clouds of the morning—than to be always experiencing life's manifold troubles. When they come to the wall of the churchyard, where the grave has been made, the bands are exchanged for strong ropes, and people get on to the loose earth and lower you down. And when this has been done the clerk advances to the grave and begins to sing: 'I walk towards death.'

He sings the hymn quite alone; neither the clergyman nor any of the congregation help him. But the clerk must sing; however keen the north wind and however glaring the sun which shines straight in his face, sing he does.

The clerk, however, is getting old now, and he has not much voice left; he is quite aware that it does not sound as well now as formerly when he sang people into their graves; but he does it all the same—it is part of his duty. For the day, you understand, when his voice quite fails him, so that he cannot sing any more, he must resign his office, and this means downright poverty for him. Therefore the whole gathering stands in apprehension while the old clerk sings, wondering whether his voice will last through the whole verse. But no one joins him, not a single person, for that would not do; it is not the custom. People never sing at a grave at Svartsjö. People do

not sing in the church either, except the first hymn on Christmas Day morning.

Still, if one listened very attentively, one could hear that the clerk does not sing alone. There really is another voice, but it sounds so exactly the same that the two voices blend as if they were only one. The other who sings is a little old man in a long, coarse gray coat. He is still older than the clerk, but he gives out all the voice he has to help him. And the voice, as I have told you, is exactly the same kind as the clerk's; they are so alike one cannot help wondering at it.

But when one looks closer, the little gray old man is also exactly like the clerk; he has the same nose and chin and mouth, only somewhat older, and, as it were, more hardly dealt with in life. And then one understands that the little gray man is the clerk's brother; and then one knows why he helps him. For, you see, things have never gone well with him in this world, and he has always had bad luck; and once he was made a bankrupt, and brought the clerk into his misfortunes. He knows that it is his fault that his brother has always had to struggle. And the clerk, you know, has tried to help him on to his legs again, but with no avail, for he has not been one of those one can help. He has always been unfortunate; and then, he has had no strength of purpose.

But the clerk has been the shining light in the family; and for the other it has been a case of receiving and receiving, and he has never been able to make any return at all. Great God! even to talk of making any return—he who is so poor!

You should only see the little hut in the forest where he lives. He knows that he has always been dull and sad, only a burden—only a burden for his brother and for others. But now of late he has become a great man; now he is able to give some return. And that he does. Now he helps his brother, the clerk, who has been the sunshine and life and joy for him all his days. Now he helps him to sing, so that he may keep his office.

He does not go to church, for he thinks that everyone looks at him because he has no black Sunday clothes; but every Sunday he goes up to the church to see whether there is a coffin on the black trestles outside the parish room; and if there is one he goes to the grave, in spite of his old gray coat, and helps his brother with his pitiful old voice.

The little old man knows very well how badly he sings; he places himself behind the others, and does not push forward to the grave. But sing he does; it would not matter so much if the clerk's voice should fail on one or other note, his brother is there and helps him.

At the churchyard no one laughs at the singing; but when people go home and have thrown off their devoutness, then they speak about the service, and then they laugh at the clerk's singing—laugh both at his and his brother's. The clerk does not mind it, it is the same to him; but his brother thinks about it and suffers from it; he dreads the Sunday the whole week, but still he comes punctually to the churchyard and does his duty. But you in your coffin, you do not think so

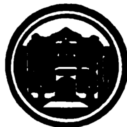
badly of the singing. You think that it is good music. Is it not true that one would like to be buried in Svartsjö, if only for the sake of that singing?

It says in the hymn that life is but a walk towards death, and when the two old men sing this—the two who have suffered for each other during their whole life—then one understands better than ever before how wearisome it is to live, and one is so entirely satisfied with being dead.

And then the singing stops, and the clergyman throws earth on the coffin and says a prayer over you. Then the two old voices sing: 'I walk towards heaven.' And they do not sing this verse any better than the former; their voices grow more feeble and querulous the longer they sing. But for you a great and wide expanse opens, and you soar upwards with tremulous joy, and everything earthly fades and disappears.

But still the last which you hear of things earthly tells of faithfulness and love. And in the midst of your trembling flight the poor song will awake memories of all the faithfulness and love you have met with here below, and this will bear you upwards. This will fill you with radiance and make you beautiful as an angel.

THE END.



THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

3 2044 010 131 498