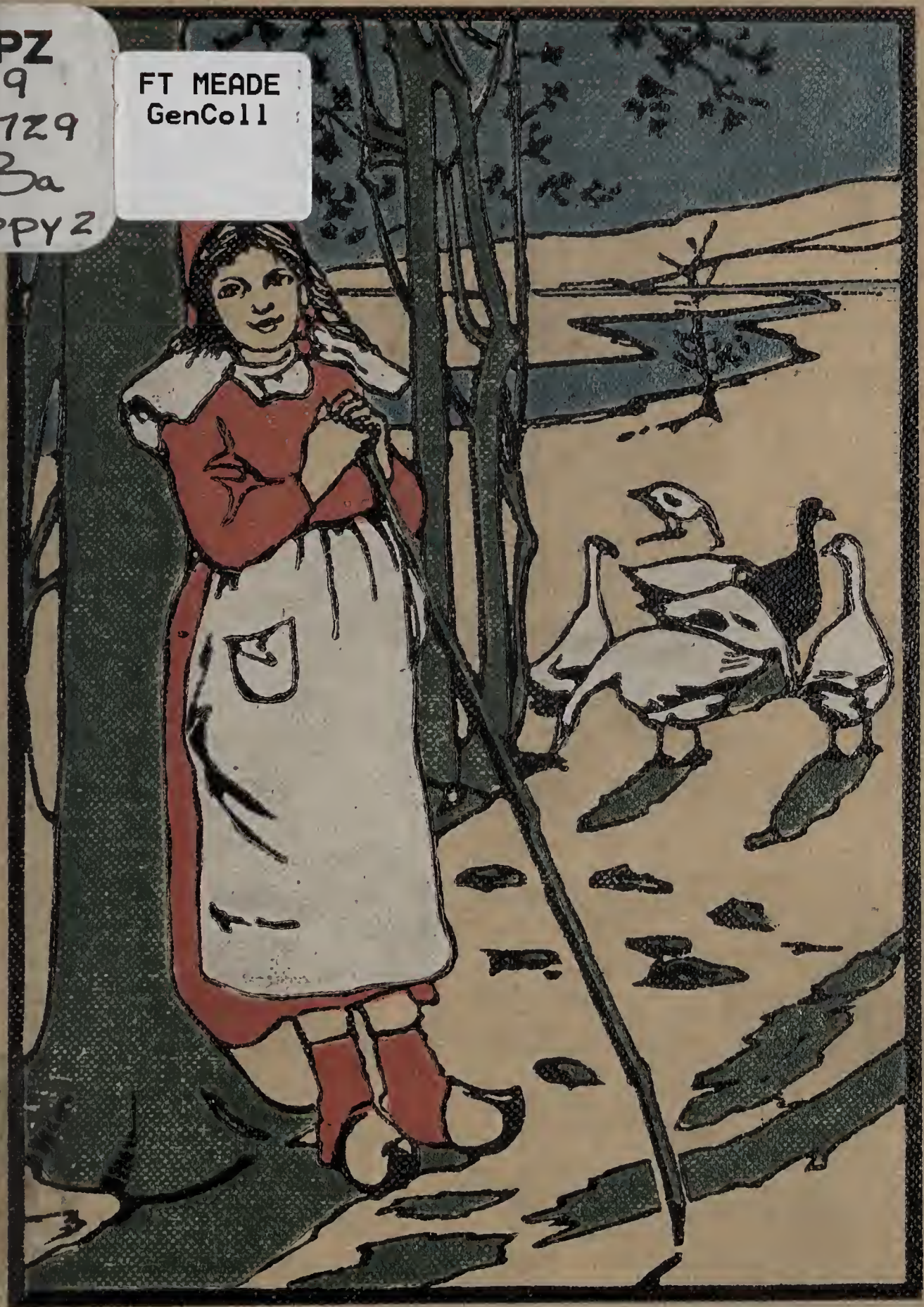
BARBORA OUR LITTLE BOHEMIAN COUSIN



CLARA VOSTROVSKY WINLOW

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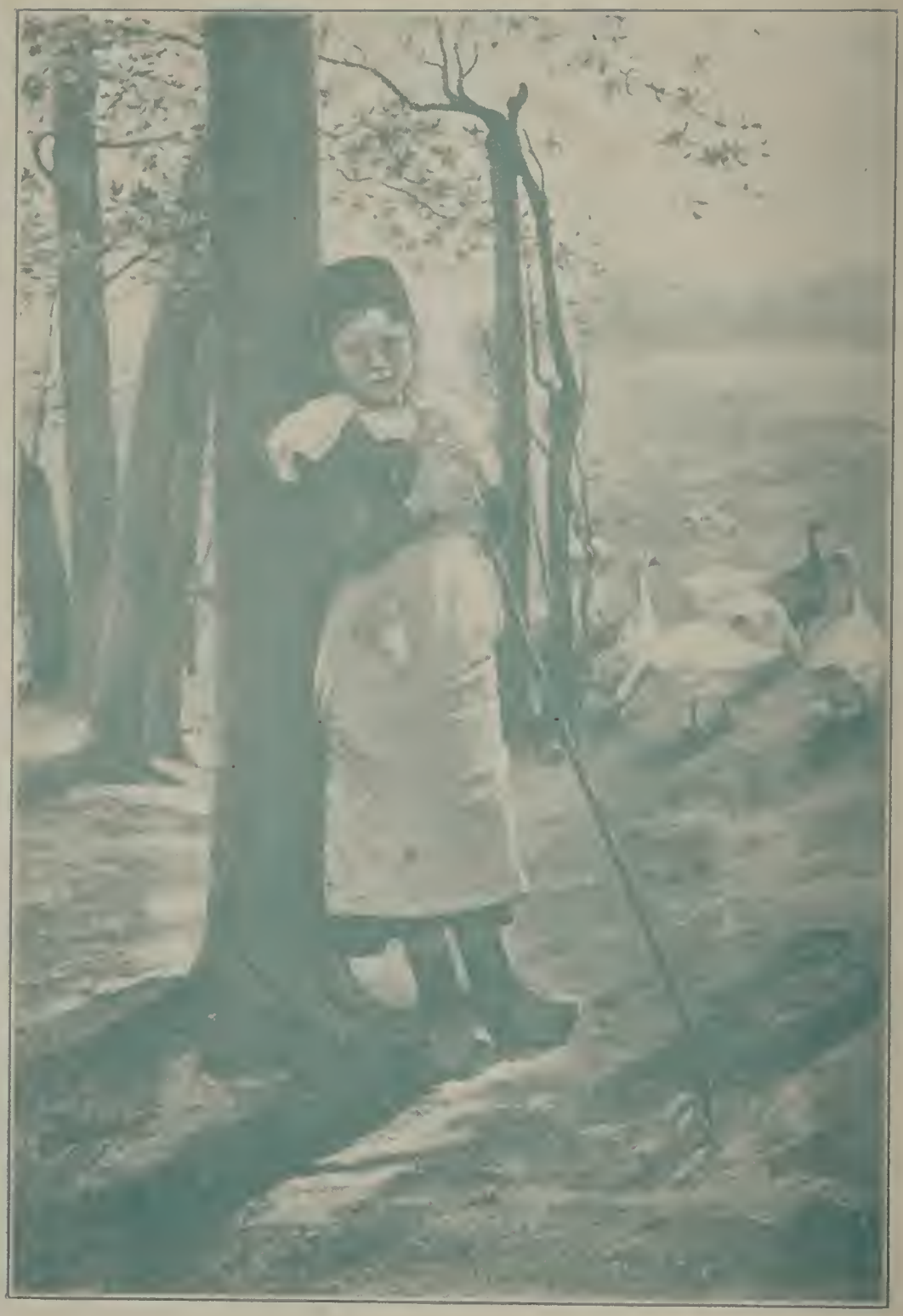

BARBORA, THE LITTLE GOOSE GIRL. (*See page 3.*)

Barbora: Our Little Bohemian Cousin

By
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TO
THE CHEERFUL COMPANION IN MY TRAVELS
THROUGH BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA
LITTLE DAUGHTER ANNA

A Letter from the Author

DEAR CHILDREN: — If you look carefully at the map you will find Bohemia, the country in which Barbora lives, in the very centre of Europe. It is now a state of the Empire of Austria-Hungary, but was once an important kingdom in whose dramatic history its inhabitants take great pride. This little country, only the size of our states of New Hampshire and Vermont combined, is surrounded by high chains of mountains which separate it from its German neighbors. Only where it joins the Slav state of Moravia, whose history has almost always been united with its own, are there no such barriers.

Bohemians, or Čechs as they are properly called, are one of the divisions of the great Slavic race, while the Germans, as you know,

belong to the Teutonic. To understand the history of Bohemia it is necessary to keep this in mind, for it is one of brave struggles, not only against religious oppression, but also against absorption by the more powerful Germans.

In this history certain characters stand out of an alluring charm. There is the warrior, King John, representing the pattern of the chivalry of the Middle Ages, who spent most of his time, like King Richard the Lion-hearted of England, in crusades and adventures away from home, and, when already blind, met death at Crécy, bravely fighting for his friend, the King of France. When the French were retreating, and he was urged to save himself, he uttered words that afterwards became a Bohemian proverb: "So will it God, it shall not be that a king of Bohemia flies from the battle-field." When King Edward of England, against whom he fought, heard of his death, tears, we are told, sprang to his eyes and he exclaimed, "The

crown of chivalry has fallen to-day; never was any one equal to this King of Bohemia."

There are many other heroes, — and heroines too, — some legendary and some real, as full of interest as any to be found elsewhere in the whole broad fields of history or romance.

King John's son was the Emperor Charles IV, called lovingly by the Bohemians "the father of his people." He founded the University of Prague (Praha), the first institution of higher learning in Central Europe, and made Bohemia one of the foremost countries of his time.

Then, too, we have the moral and religious reformer, Master John Huss, whose life was one of unusual beauty and high endeavor, and who, rather than swear falsely to what he did not believe, met death unflinchingly when, through the efforts of those whose evil lives he had exposed, he was burned at the stake. His death was the direct cause of the long and bloody Hussite Wars in which John Zižka, in-

flamed by the treachery through which Huss met death, became the leader of his indignant countrymen, and, through his genius and brilliant generalship, kept all of surprised Europe at bay.

This Hussite War was followed by the Thirty Years' War, during which, in the Battle of the White Mountain, Bohemia lost its political independence.

The country of Bohemia is one of natural beauty, with plenty of mountains, rivers, forests, and wide, highly cultivated plains of unusual fertility. Wherever there are mountains, castles are still to be seen, many of them partly built out of the rock on which they stand, emblems of a strange past glory. There, too, are beautiful churches, ancient monasteries, and old-time fortified cities that carry one back to an age long gone by.

In appearance the people are not unlike many other European types; they are both tall and

short, but with an average of more short people than has the Anglo-Saxon race; and both dark and fair, but seldom as fair as most of their German neighbors. In character they are independent, hard-headed, industrious and thrifty, with a great love for music, and considerable artistic talent.

While the hope of playing a more important part in the governing of their own country is by no means dead, they now believe that the best way to attain this is not through force of arms, but through the spread of education and industrial activity.

CLARA VOSTROVSKY WINLOW.

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Barbora: Our Little Bohemian Cousin

CHAPTER I

SPRING

It was the first warm day of spring; the grass was just getting green, and all the little goose-girls and goose-boys of the Bohemian village were out with their flocks. They had been talking of nothing else, and looking forward to nothing else, for a month past. Many of them appeared on the road at the same time, but it was necessary for each one to keep some distance away from his companions, since mama geese are apt to peck all goslings who do not belong to them.

How proud each child felt! Barbora, little

Jirka and Vlasta took their stand on different sides of the biggest pond — there is always at least one pond in a Bohemian village — and they eagerly discussed the merits of their respective goslings.

Vlasta's were the smallest, but she claimed that they were the youngest and that they would weigh the most by the time that the holidays came. The discussion grew quite heated.

"Why," said Jirka, at last, pointing to one of Vlasta's flock, and making use of a popular saying, "that one there is not worth a pinch of tobacco!"

Vlasta was indignant: she retaliated with an expression often used by her father: "You know as much about geese," she shouted, "as a goat does about parsley!"

Jirka could think of nothing worse to say, and was consequently silenced.

Barbora had not interfered; she was too

much interested in watching the fluffy yellow goslings. She made a pretty picture as she stood by the pond with a far-away look in her pleasing, intelligent face, which was encircled by a mass of light golden hair.

Dark-haired Vlasta was of a different type; she was only eight, a year younger than Barbora, and mischief and good nature beamed from her face. The difference in their dispositions drew the two girls together, for, while Barbora liked to dream, Vlasta was always brimming over with lively spirits and practical good sense.

All the children were barefoot, with kerchiefs tied around their heads, and all held switches in their hands.

Poor little Marketa, who lived in a hut (chalupa) on the outskirts of the village, looked on her schoolmates with envy. If there was one thing which would have made her happier than anything else in the world it would have

been to be a goose-girl. Sometimes the rich miller's wife let her tend their geese when her son was in town, but this did not happen often, and, besides, it was different from having a flock of her own. Often, very often, she begged her father and mother to buy just one goose, but they shook their heads, claiming it was too great a luxury.

After this first great day, the children were out daily with their flocks. It was not always easy work. Sometimes the geese ran away, sometimes they bit one another, sometimes they even got mixed up. Sometimes, when it rained, the goose-tenders had to run out to gather nettles to make into a mash for them, sometimes they had to hunt for grass in the night. Then, when the young grain and vegetables began to appear in the fields, the geese had a perverse fancy for going into the wrong patch, which occasionally resulted in the offending goose being caught by the angry owner, and kept to pay

for the damage done, and this resulted in scolding and whipping at home.

But, despite these drawbacks, it was a delightful life. As the geese grew bigger and the weather warmer, the children often had a chance to wade in the ponds, or to carefully throw in stones to see who could make the most water circles, "froggies" they called them. Sometimes, too, they would dreamily stand and sing to their geese, generally quaint old folk songs, but also impromptu verses of their own.

The houses of the village were built adjoining one another in irregular streets surrounding the church. Many of them were adorned with images of saints or pictures of the Virgin Mary. All were much alike, with thatched roofs which overhung; and most of them were old and had seen many generations of children. In front and behind each of their double windows, pots of flowers were to be found, the affection with

which they were regarded being shown by their luxuriant growth, which often, unfortunately, shut out much of the needed light. In most cases the entrance into the house was through a big stone gate which led into a covered court. In both sides were rooms, and there were also rooms under the rafters upstairs. Immediately adjoining the living-rooms were the store-houses and the stalls for the cattle and poultry. Back of each house, away from the road, was a small garden, with fruit trees; a few vegetables, among which chives and parsley for soup, and dill and horse-radish for sauce, were seldom wanting; and flowers for a sweet smelling posy, balsam, rosemary, sage, sweet marjoram, mignonette, geraniums, asters, violets, and pinks.

Barbora and Vlasta were neighbors living near the church, and both little maidens took a great interest in Jirka, who was Barbora's cousin, and only six. They were his instructors

in all the folk-lore and folk wisdom that they knew.

"Why, Jirka, you've lost the goose feather out of your cap," said Vlasta to the little fellow one day. "You'd better go back and look for it, or you'll never be a good manager."

So Jirka drove his flock back on the road until the precious feather was found and placed behind the band of his green cap. It was the very one he had lost; stray goose feathers were not often to be found, for the girls religiously gathered up every one seen as a sign of future good housekeeping.

Once, when Barbora was quite little, she had rebelled at the custom. "What difference does a single feather make?" she remarked to her mother.

"Don't you know," was her mother's reprimand, "that the biggest feather-bed is made up of single feathers; that one grain and then another satisfies the chicken's hunger; that the

ocean is made up of drops of water? Learn to save little things, my daughter," she added seriously, " and you will never know want."

If Marketa could not take geese to pasture she had plenty of other work to do. There was the house to put in order, the dishes to wash and wipe, and a little two year old brother to care for while her mother and father were away working in the fields. Marketa had an older brother, too, twelve year old Václav, who had to take their two goats out to pasture. Marketa did not envy him. To tend geese is an easy matter compared to herding goats, for the latter are of such an independent turn of mind that they do not allow one a minute's rest, and, besides, all the cowherds make fun of a goatherd and sing derisive songs about him. The villagers call goats the Devil's children, and they seem to deserve the name.

Václav generally took his goats some distance away to a little meadow just below a narrow

cliff, surrounded by deep ravines, on which stood the ruins of an ancient castle. This castle probably once belonged to some robber knight, and was built so that it seemed a part of the rock itself. The bare walls, stretching up to the sky, were accessible only from the back, so that the place must have been practically impregnable.

One day, Václav drove his goats up the steep pathway to the top, and, sitting down for a moment's rest on a piece of broken column, gazed at the grass-overgrown ruins. There was an arched passageway, still standing, which led into a courtyard; above the vaulted gate could yet be seen an ancient coat-of-arms and several letters, almost undecipherable, which no doubt gave the name of the noble family who built this stronghold. At one corner was a round watch-tower with very thick walls. Despite its crumbled condition, it still boasted three stories.

Václav recalled the tales told by his teacher

of that golden age of Bohemian history to which this castle belonged, when King Charles I, known also as Emperor Charles IV of Germany, reigned. He would have enjoyed climbing up the winding tower stairs and wandering through the underground dungeons to hunt for the treasures supposed to be buried there. The year before, on the eve of St. John, he had searched for the golden blossoms, supposed to be then, and then only, found on ferns, in the firm conviction that if he picked three of them, took them to the old castle and pressed them three times against the tower walls, the walls would open and the hidden treasure would be revealed.

"But don't speak," Marketa cautioned him, for he had taken her into his confidence, "or the rock spirits will rush out and kill you."

He escaped that danger, for the golden blossoms could not be found, which fact made him ever since pooh-pooh the superstition. To-day,

there was no time for meditating on this, for the goats were already half way down the path and he had to hasten after them.

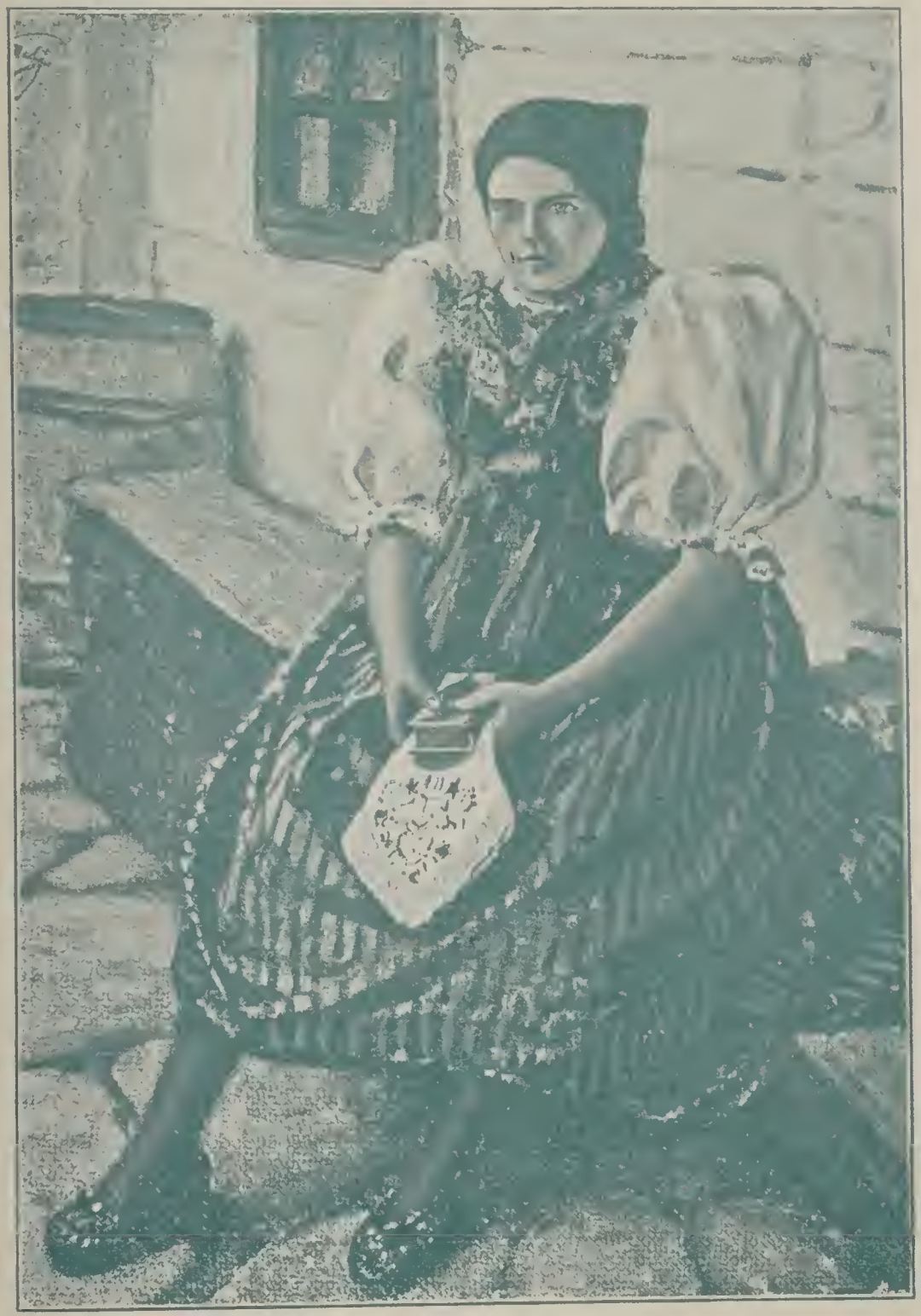
Sunday was always a quiet day in the village. No one worked, and all appeared in their Sunday clothes. Jirka, and even Václav, had to put on stockings and heavy clumsy shoes which tired their poor feet, unaccustomed to such luxuries. Everybody went to the old church, popularly supposed to date back to pagan times, and there were still quite a number of women who appeared in the national costume, which here consisted of a pleated skirt, generally pink in color and very full over numerous petticoats, reaching only to the knees, thus showing below the thick, brightly colored stockings, often red and green. Low shoes were worn and also a fancy apron, sometimes of flowered satin, and sometimes of richly embroidered snowy linen with two highly starched apron strings hanging down the back. One or two had white chemi-

settes with big puffed sleeves and long, colored kerchiefs crossed, in front, around the neck, but this was by no means general, for considerable variety in the style of the waists had somehow crept in. The men had long ago discarded the national costume and appeared in modern dress.

For the children the great event of each Sunday was the dinner, which usually consisted of soup, soup meat and dill gravy, and škubánky (potato pudding) or wheat flour dumplings, made light by beating alone. The children sang a song about

"Peas and barley,
That is stupid
And we have it every day,
But dumplings
Of snow white flour
Only come on Sabbath day."

Before the family began to eat, the mistress, or whoever served the meal, never forgot to wish those present "A good appetite." Not to do this would be not only discourteous, but



READY FOR CHURCH.

might, they believed, result in a spoiled stomach!

On Easter Sunday, Marketa's father and mother being at home, she was able to join some of the other girls for a walk. This Sunday the weather was delightful and they felt sure that they would find many wild flowers as they went singing and dancing along.

"Here's a seven beauty!" cried Marketa, picking a daisy.

"And here's another!" cried Jirka, who was with them. "Let's make a wreath."

So they sat down under a big linden tree, which is the beautiful national tree of Bohemia, and made a long daisy chain with which they afterwards decorated the image of the Virgin Mary at the cross roads. Then they gathered more flowers, for which they had all kinds of quaint names.

As they were crossing a brook, little Jirka fell down and bruised his knee.

"Never mind, little Jirka," said Barbora, soothingly, "we will find a May bug and he will cure you."

Then all started on a hunt for a May bug. Marketa knew just where to look, and led her companions to the meadow where they found him under a stone and applied some of the bitter matter, which he ejects from the knuckles of his foot, to the wound. It must have had some strange power, or else Jirka forgot all about his bruise, for he did not mention it again!

Then they hunted for other little creatures. They found the black musician, *tesařík* — which means carpenter's apprentice — in an old log and promised him that if he would sing to them they would sing to him.

Suddenly Barbora called out joyously, "Oh, here, here is God's little sheep," and she pointed to a ladybird, who is very, very dear to Bohemian children. They all ran quickly

up and gazed at the pretty beetle, and then began to call it by all the numerous pet names they have for it: coronet, sunlight, God's little cow, God's little sheep, and many others.

Then Barbora held it in her hand and asked, "Where, oh, where shall we go, God's sheep?" They watched to see where the ladybird flew, and then followed it as best they could. "If you are ever lost, Jirka," Barbora said to her cousin, "hunt for a ladybird and ask it to show you the way home."

For several days before this Sunday the children had helped to prepare the Easter eggs, which were boiled in onion water, or coffee, and then had designs scratched on them with a sharp knife or needle. Some of these were really artistic and beautiful.

Marketa and her baby brother joined the poorer children who went from door to door singing "If you have no red eggs, give at least

some white ones." All returned home with baskets well filled.

The young men in the meanwhile made switches of braided willow, with which they visited their sweethearts, whom they playfully whipped until they were induced to stop by being presented with beautifully embroidered handkerchiefs filled with brightly colored eggs.

Shortly after Easter, everybody began to get ready for May Day. For a week before it came, all careful housewives had to keep a close eye on their brooms or they would mysteriously disappear, every boy of the village considering it both a privilege and a duty to gather as many as he could to keep the witches from riding away on them. On May Day Eve the brooms were brought together on an adjoining hill, dipped into tar or rosin, lit, and then thrown into the air with a shout loud enough to frighten away any one.

Once Jirka was threatened — or so his com-

rades thought — with great danger, for he accidentally pointed his finger at a burning broom. "Put it down, down," shouted his friends excitedly. "Don't you know that the witches can shoot it off?"

The older boys, it is true, laughed as they said this, but the younger were quite serious, and one little fellow in his excitement fell over Jirka and they rolled down the hill together.

Before this great day, too, there was a general housecleaning. The men cleaned the stalls and granaries, the women the chicken coops, and cellars, and the house.

As the latter swept out the dust they repeated:

"From corner to corner,
From corner to corner,
From corner to corner,
And out from the chimney!"

At these last words, piling the dust carefully on the fire with as much reverence as if they were offering a sacrifice on an altar.

In the meantime the older daughters tidied up the courtyards, sweeping into a neat pile the inevitable manure, which is highly valued for the sake of the richer yield it brings to the fields and meadows. "Manure in the yard, gold in the field," is a popular saying.

When all was clean and orderly, Barbora's grandfather, a tall, smooth-faced smiling man with a long porcelain pipe always in his mouth, went to the woods himself to cut a branch of the birch tree and then planted it in the manure before the cow sheds, so that the witches, who are said to come around on the first of May, could not bewitch the cows and spoil their good milk. But, before he did this, he took the precaution to count all the leaves on the branch which he planted. Then, to still further protect himself from their ill offices, he made circles on the doors with consecrated chalk.

Barbora's father laughed heartily over these ceremonies, but Barbora, herself, who watched

her grandfather attentively as she followed him about, was much impressed with it all. To her the witches were very real and she would not have been at all surprised to have seen one any moment come riding along in a tall peaked cap.

On May first the village had quite a holiday air. The young men had gone to the woods in the night, each to select a fine May tree, which he planted before the window of his sweetheart. As a sign of the high regard in which he held her, he selected only one that was straight and strong, with a well rounded crown, to which he attached garlands of bright red ribbon.

Besides these trees, almost every window was decorated with a green branch, and the children, dressed in their Sunday finery, were on the streets with birch branches, with which they tapped each other on the back, repeating: "Here's good luck to you!"

A band of hired musicians played on the streets to the great joy of all who heard them, and, here and there, groups of the young people burst into song and even started a dance or two.

CHAPTER II

SUMMER

It was wash-day and women were gathered around the village ponds, with their skirts tucked up, finishing the weekly wash. Some, who were very particular, however, took their clothes to a pond, a half hour's distance away, where the grass was greener and the clothes would bleach to a purer white. Among these were Vlasta's and Barbora's mothers.

The two little girls accompanied their parents with their flocks of geese, and enjoyed the novelty of new quarters. When they returned home, they found a wire-worker (*drátenik*), from Slovak land, with a bundle of wire on his arm and a string of wire mouse traps over one

shoulder, going along the street. Barbora's mother called to him, and had him wire some of her pots and kettles, which he did with great ingenuity, so that they were stronger than when new.

The weather was now quite warm, and in the evenings the family would come together under the linden tree in the courtyard and listen to the father playing on the violin.

The Bohemians (Čechs) are natural musicians. Hans Andersen says that they can produce melodies on one string alone.

Sometimes, too, the family joined in singing the pleasing folk songs, or the beautiful national hymn "Where is my Home?"

"Where is my home?
Where is my home?
Waters through its meads are streaming,
Mounts with rustling woods are teeming,
Vales are bright with flow'rets rare,
Oh, Earth's Eden, thou art fair!
Thou art my home, my fatherland!
Thou art my home, my fatherland!

"Where is my home?
Where is my home?
By the towers of God 'tis bounded;
By the noblest sons surrounded;
True and light of heart are they,
Firm and bold in deadly fray,
Offspring grand of dear Bohemia,
Thou art my home, my fatherland,
Thou art my home, my fatherland."

If Vlasta or Jirka came over to see Barbora, the children would amuse themselves with little games of their own. Now and then they would repeat "Tři a třicet stříbrných křepelek letělo přes tři a třicet stříbrných střech" (three and thirty silvery quail flew over three and thirty silvery roofs). This is a difficult sentence to say in the original, like our "She sells sea shells; if she sells sea shells, where are the sea shells which he sells?" And how they did laugh at those who failed in this by no means easy ordeal. Often they added to the difficulty by insisting that it should all be repeated in one breath.

Václav now found the work of herding the goats a still harder task. He generally tried to take them to the edge of the woods, where he could get a bit of shade. There were big forests on the hills back of the village, mostly of silver fir and other evergreen trees, and there were rare treasures to be found in them.

Marketa used to trundle her little brother out, in a rude home-made cart, to gather berries, of which there was a great abundance, or mushrooms, which add an important article of diet to the plain food of the village folks. There were many kinds and she could tell the wholesome from the poisonous at a glance. In gathering mushrooms she never picked the first that she found, leaving that one for "luck." And she insisted that there was no use hunting for them when it was new moon, that they didn't grow. She tried to teach her baby brother, who could talk very little yet, to beg "Oh, mushrooms, little mushrooms, come jump into

my lap," claiming they like to be addressed in that fashion. Often, too, instead of berries and mushrooms she gathered twigs and branches, an immense bundle of which she managed to carry home on her back.

Occasionally Marketa saw Václav from a distance and shouted a greeting to him. Václav was always necessarily alone, but he, too, managed to find amusement. For instance, when lunch time arrived, he had a game which he played with himself. Holding a piece of bread in his hand, he would repeat: "Adam, Eve, who is there? Jacob, Esau, Abra-ham," and at the syllable *ham* he would quickly take a bite, repeating this until the food was gone. But Václav was only twelve, and would have preferred hunting berries and mushrooms with his sister; or lying under the trees and listening to the short song of the blackbird, or to the jay, screaming like an angry, cross old granny; or watching the yellow thrush, as it flew over the

young forest and planted acorns so as to have a store for winter. There were other thrushes in the forest, also, who imitated all the songs of the other birds and sometimes at night one could hear the inimitable song of the nightingale.

One day, Marketa found a bird's nest at the edge of the woods, and every day she visited it and looked at the speckled eggs, but carefully, without touching them, so as not to disturb the mother bird. She confided her secret to no one but Václav, and great was her pleasure one day when, instead of eggs, she saw a nestful of little birdies, all head and throat.

There was much hard work to be done in the summer, and whole families were daily in the fields, leaving the grandmothers and grandfathers, if there were any, to carry on the housekeeping. But the people did not seem to mind the hard work; there were songs and

jokes, especially among the unmarried. The white shirts of those cutting the grain, the glitter of the sickles and scythes, the wide rakes with which the women, with free graceful movements, raked over the grain to dry it, made a pretty sight. When the time came, the older children, also, helped to tie the grain into sheaves, and the smaller ones carried around water to the workers and brought dinner to those whose fields were too far away for them to go home. For the children it was a merry time, and they were not backward in joining in the shouting and laughter. Barbora and Vlasta helped in the meadows and proved the strength of their young shoulders by carrying home on them immense sacks of freshly cut grass.

On the last day, those who had helped Barbora's father piled into the wagon filled with grain and rode to his home for a big meal of the national cakes, called koláče, and coffee;

afterwards a harmonica was brought in, the floor cleared, and dancing indulged in until long past midnight. Barbora was especially happy, for she was allowed to sit up until eleven and help pass around the second helping of coffee and cakes.

After this the grain was thrashed out with hand flails, and in this work men, women, and even children helped. This was really hard, dusty and unpleasant toil, and hands and shoulders often ached at the close of day.

Then, when the potatoes ripened, and all went to work digging in the vegetable patches, the children got considerable enjoyment in making little bonfires in which they baked potatoes for their lunch, eating them afterwards with the burnt skin and all, and in consequence raising many a laugh because of their blackened faces.

Barbora also helped so diligently in drying

mushrooms at this season that her mother had a big store of them to add to the winter food supply.

As the summer advanced some of the children had to assume the role of watchmen, guarding the fruit on the trees planted in single file along the main roads. Marketa observed them as they built little huts of straw in which they could hide as well as sleep at night. Six year old Jirka, who liked to imagine himself fully grown up, begged his father to allow him to stay till morning with his brother in one of them. His father laughingly consented. "Now be sure that you keep good watch!" he called after him as he left for home. Jirka thought it great fun to lie on the straw piled on the floor of the hut until it grew dark, and to listen while his brother told him stories. The first for which he begged was an old favorite. Jan good-naturedly granted his wish and related the following:—

STORY OF A HEN AND A ROOSTER

"Once a rooster and a young hen went together into the woods to gather berries. The rooster proposed that they divide equally everything that they found, and the nice little hen gladly agreed. The hen discovered the first berry, and she gave half to her companion, as she had promised, then the rooster found one, and, in his eagerness to eat it all before the hen saw it, swallowed it whole, and it stuck in his throat and he fell over like dead.

"The little hen was frightened and ran to the spring and begged of it: 'Oh, spring, please give me some water that I may take it to the rooster. He is lying on the ground with his feet in the air and I fear he will die.'

"But the spring would not do so unless she brought it some leaves from the linden tree. The linden tree, however, wanted a handkerchief from a dressmaker; and, when the hen reached the dressmaker, she found that the

latter wanted shoes from a shoemaker; the shoemaker, in turn, wanted a bristle from a pig.

"'Oh, pig,' begged the hen, 'give me a bristle, that I may give it to the shoemaker, that the shoemaker may give me shoes for the dressmaker, that the dressmaker may make me a handkerchief for the linden tree, that the linden tree may give me some leaves for the spring. Then the spring will give me some water and I will take it to the rooster who is lying on the road with his feet in the air, and I fear he will die.'

"But the pig wanted milk from a cow; the cow, in turn, wanted grass from a meadow; the meadow wanted some dew.

"The poor hen looked in despair at the sky and sent up a fervent prayer for help. The sky felt sorry for the good little creature and let fall some dew. Then the meadow gave the hen grass for the cow; the cow gave her milk

for the pig; the pig gave her a bristle, she gave the bristle to the shoemaker; the shoemaker gave her some shoes, and she gave them to the dressmaker; the dressmaker made her a handkerchief and she gave it to the linden tree; the linden tree shed down some leaves and she gave these to the spring. Then the spring let her have water, with which she filled her mouth and throat, and then ran to where the rooster was lying on the road with his feet in the air. As soon as she poured the water into his throat the berry slipped down and the rooster jumped up and shouted 'Cock a doodle doo!'"

Little Jirka also jumped up and laughed. In his pleasure at this comfortable story he forgot how late it was getting; but, after Jan's next story of the Hastrman, a terrible water sprite, he was well aware it was night time. "Oh, Jan," he said, "I want to go home."

"But, Jirka," expostulated Jan, "they will laugh at you if you do!"

Jirka was standing at the opening into the hut. The moon was shining bright and clear on the road leading to his home. He looked longingly at it, and suddenly, before his brother knew what was happening, was running down the road, casting frightened glances back.

"Why, here is Jirka," said his mother, opening the door for him. "Just as I expected; but why did you run so fast?"

Jan teased him the next day, when he brought him his lunch, and wanted to know if he was not going to help him keep watch. Jirka accepted Jan's mockery with stolidity, only shaking his head. He had had enough of the one experience.

As July drew to a close the children, as well as their parents, began to get ready for a great festival of the Čech Sokols (Gymnasts). These Sokols have played an important part in Bo-

hemian history, especially in binding together the Čech people. They had a political significance in the beginning, their organization, at a time when the government frowned on meetings of all kinds, being possible only because physical improvement was apparently their sole object. They still play a very important role, and everywhere, but particularly, perhaps, in the small villages, they stand for progress, their program including not only gymnastics but everything tending to the improvement of the nation. The young people of the village wore the falcon feather in their hats (*sokol* is the Bohemian for falcon), and all were looking forward to the celebration which was to take place in a neighboring town.

When the day came the sight was an unusually bright one. The Sokols, men, women, and children, paraded the streets, attired in the old picturesque national costumes of Bohemia, of its sister state, Moravia, and of the other Sla-

vonian states in Austria-Hungary. Later came the gymnastic feats, many of them in the open air. In the evening, they danced the charming national dance of Bohemia, the Beseda, with its Slavonic combination of slow, graceful, minuet-like figures and quick, passionate movements. Throughout it all there was a spirit of good-fellowship present, and only one simple greeting, "Na zdar!" (Success to you!) was exchanged by the members. Those who did not belong regretted it and were eager to join the ranks as soon as possible. For weeks afterwards Barbora and her village friends called themselves Sokols and risked breaking their necks in striving to perform gymnastic feats similar to those that they had seen.

The last great event of the summer was the pilgrimage to the Church on the Sacred Mountain. Whole families went, some riding, others walking, the latter as a rule carrying their shoes in their hands, both because those clumsily

made articles were uncomfortable and also to save them from the wear and tear to which they exposed their feet. Those who wore long skirts had them carefully tucked up.

It was still early when they gathered before the church door, waiting for the priest to welcome them. The pilgrimage was not purely a religious affair, but a social one as well. Old and young came, not only to be benefited and cured, perhaps, if they were ailing, but to meet others and to talk over the news of the day. The young people, arrayed in their gayest clothes, looked forward especially to this. To the children it was a wonderful treat. To eat of the delicacies offered, particularly of the gingerbread hearts and figures, pasted over with brightly colored pictures and inscriptions, and of the brilliantly colored, unhealthy looking candies, temptingly displayed in the numerous stalls; to spend their hoarded hellers for fragile

toys, even though greatly inferior to those which they themselves helped make at home; to live for a short while in a whirl of new excited feelings; was something which broke the monotony of village life.

Little Jirka steadfastly drew his grandmother towards a stall in which the shopkeeper played on an old harmonica and shouted to its music: "Come, gracious lady, make a choice, or you'll regret it when you reach home." But grandmother was more interested in the sacrifices for sale near by, which represented wax hands, feet, etc., by buying and offering which the pilgrims hoped to benefit themselves and those ailing at home.

Innumerable beggars followed the pilgrims and fared well. Some were blind, others lame; many were horribly deformed; they certainly looked repulsive and miserable enough to excite commiseration.

And how much there was to talk about when

one came home, with a picture of some saint hung on his neck, or a ring, that had been blessed, or an image, to remind him of this long remembered pleasure!

CHAPTER III

AUTUMN

THE children were now looking forward to the opening of school, but, before it began, Barbora was to have a great treat. She was to go for a few days' stay with an aunt in Prague, the beautiful historic capital of the ancient kingdom of Bohemia. Barbora had never been in Prague — Praha, the Čechs call it — and her eyes opened wide at the big city; she felt frightened at the noise and bustle, and kept tight hold of the hand of her father who accompanied her. She was somewhat reassured, however, when she looked at the faces and saw so many laughing eyes and smiling lips.

Her aunt lived in an apartment on Malá

Strana (Little Side), in one of the ancient palaces to be found in Prague. It was just below the beautiful terraced gardens of the Fürstenberg palace, above which towers the uninhabited Royal Castle, once the seat of the distinguished rulers of Bohemia, overtopped by the magnificent Cathedral of St. Vitus, with its cupola, and numerous steeples, pyramids, and turrets. Opposite her aunt's home were the walls of the extensive palace built in the seventeenth century by the great general in the Thirty Years' War, Count Albert of Waldstein, a strange, powerful personage who, to this day, is spoken of as a mystery. Her aunt, who came to meet them, pointed this and other things out, and told her some of the stories handed down about this great leader; of how, after the battle of the White Mountain, which signalized the end of Bohemian independence, he had had twenty-three houses levelled to the ground that this palace might take their place; how devoted

the soldiers were to him, and how the mere mention of his name excited terror in the ranks of the enemy, who believed that he had made a compact with the evil one; and how everything in the palace seemed most fitting for one whose power was so great that it was nearly equal to that of the emperor.

She used words altogether new to Barbora when speaking of the *Sala terrena,* the largest known in Europe, with its fine gallery, more splendid even than the famous "Loggia dei Lanzi" in Florence. In this gallery are frescoes representing scenes from the Trojan war, but with the heroes clothed in the costumes of Waldstein's time and Waldstein himself represented as the God of War. She also spoke of the grotto, which was formerly used as a bath-room, with its hidden staircase leading to the astrological observatory in which Waldstein, unsatisfied with the great successes life had already offered, passed many nights with his astrologer,

Ceni, trying to learn of something still greater awaiting him in the future.

Barbora would have liked to go right in to see these wonders with her own eyes, but her aunt led the way across the street and through an arched passageway up-stairs to her own rooms, where the usual *svačina* (afternoon lunch) of coffee, rolls, rye bread and sweet butter was served.

After Barbora parted with her father a new era dawned in her life. She seemed to be living in a past age, an age full of great and exciting events. She recalled the stories which her teacher had told his class of the time when Bohemia played an important role in the history of nations. She felt dazed at living in the midst of the reflection of so much ancient grandeur, and yet important to think that she belonged in some degree to it all.

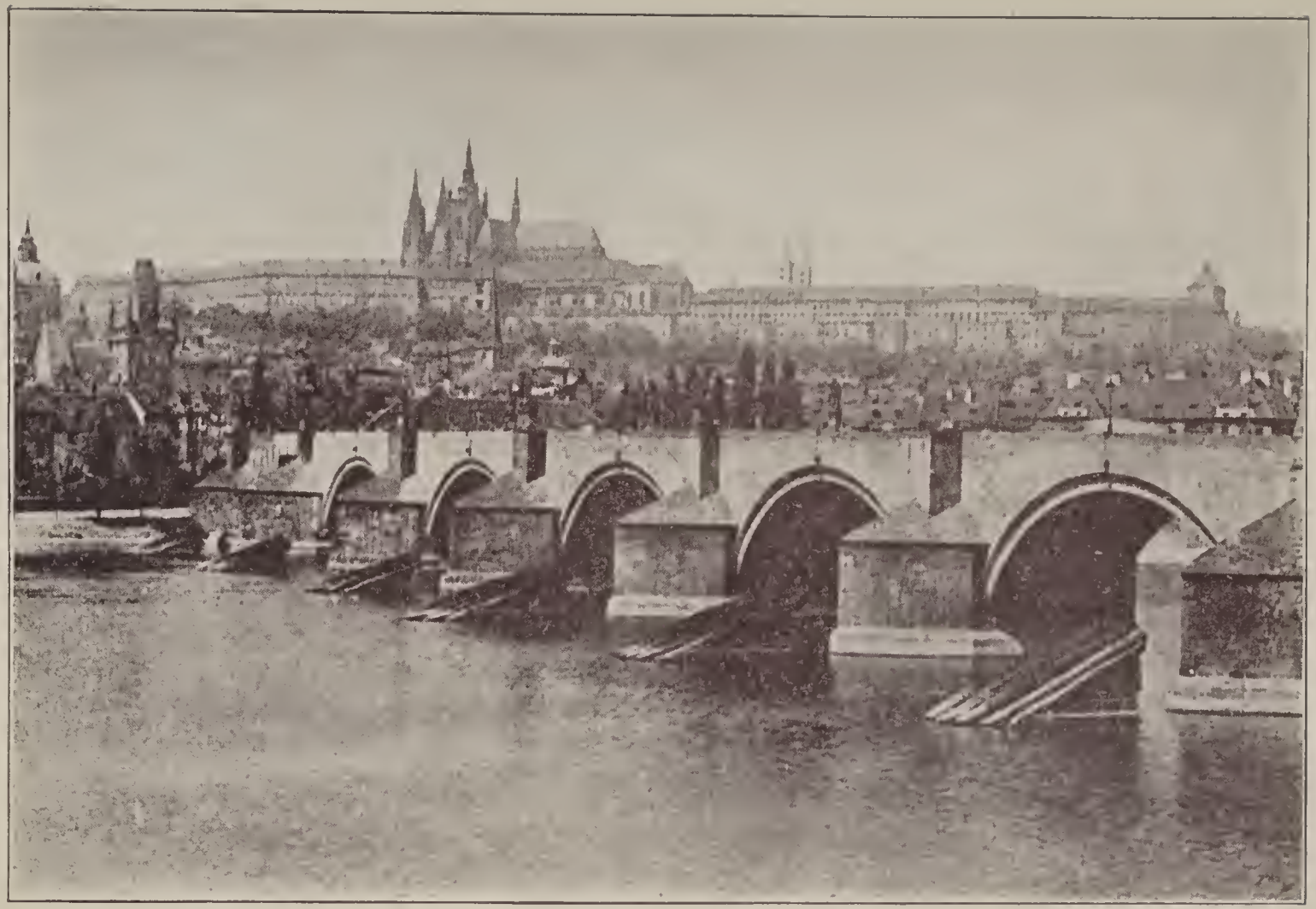
Her aunt was wise enough not to take her sight-seeing until the next day, when they went

up to the Hradčany (Castle Town). From here, through the blue mist and smoke, they had an excellent view of the whole of picturesque Prague, separated into two parts by the wide band of the Vltava (Moldau) River, one of the most beautiful cities of the world, with its mixture of old time and modern buildings, and numerous quaint, brightly colored roofs and steeples and spires. There was an excellent view here, also, of the hills of Prague, covered with parks and gardens, and even of the country beyond of forests and plains.

Through the beautiful porch, and the first court-yard of the Royal Palace, they passed into the second court-yard, which is dominated by the Cathedral of St. Vitus, through the building of which the great Emperor, Charles IV, who successfully strove to raise Bohemia to the rank of one of the great powers of Europe, expressed his religious aspirations. The Cathedral is still unfinished.

There was much of interest to be seen at Castle Town; they looked into some of the enormous banquet halls, and at the Lion Court, which is the scene of Schiller's "The Glove," and then walked in the midst of mediæval fortifications, bastions, and towers.

There seemed to be legends and stories connected with every inch of the ground. Barbora was most interested in the old dungeon and tower of Daliborka, where the knight Dalibor was imprisoned because he had seized the lands of a neighbor whose serfs had revolted. Stories of all kinds had spread regarding him, many of them unfounded. It was said that the neighbor was exceedingly cruel and that Dalibor had sided with the serfs because he was opposed to bondage, which was foreign to the ancient customs of the land. The most popular legend attributed to him a marvellous playing on the violin, which attracted people to the



CASTLE TOWN AND CHARLES BRIDGE.

tower from far and near. In return they sent up food and gifts to his cell. The music that he produced is supposed to still haunt this tower.

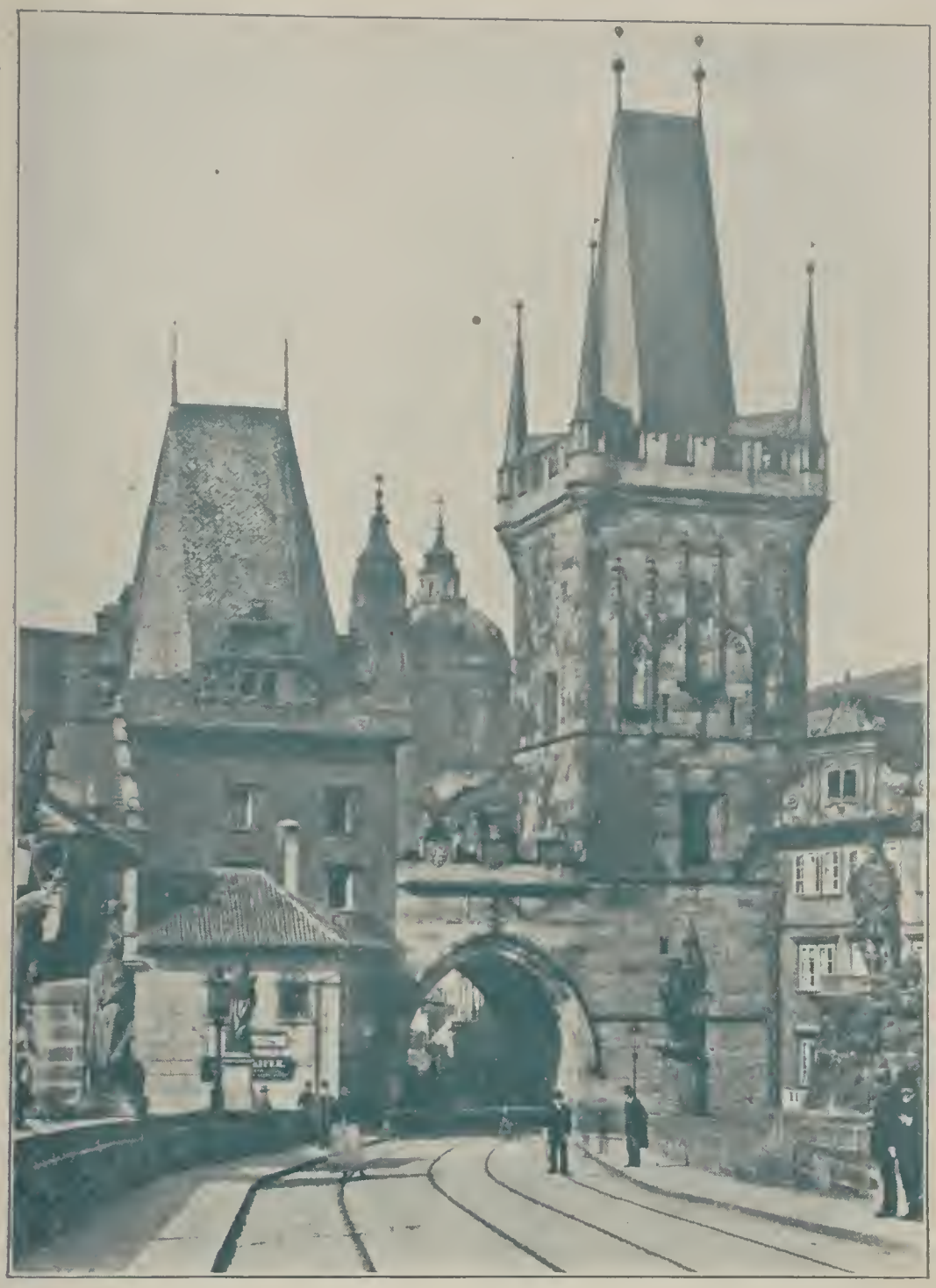
Before Barbora and her aunt left they stepped into Zlatá Ulice, a street of very quaint, tiny, brightly colored houses, just on the edge of the deep moat (Jelení příkop — the stag's ditch) surrounding the castle. They were built for the alchemists who thronged the brilliant court of the deposed emperor, Rudolph II, and hence the name, Zlatá Ulice, which means Street of Gold.

From here they made their way down a steep and sunny street, bordered by unusually high houses, with massive roofs, high peaked gables and projecting balconies. Before them, and below them, spread the endless succession of parks and gardens, with the famous "Wall of Famine," built by Charles IV that starving men might have employment, while high above

all of these soared the rich monastery of Strahov.

It was already getting dark when they reached Little Side. Here and there, on the streets grouped about public drinking pumps, were servant girls, with water pitchers in their hands, bare-headed or with kerchiefs on their heads, glad of a moment's gossip with acquaintances. They met several chimney-sweeps, also, blacker than the blackest negro, their heads covered with tightly drawn caps, and brushes, ropes, and ladders in their hands. Barbora was firmly persuaded that they never lived anywhere except in chimneys. After they reached home, and had the late supper customary in Bohemia, Barbora fell asleep to dream of the big empty palace she had seen, of princes, chimney-sweeps, alchemists and beggars.

The next morning, Aunt Anna sent Barbora, in charge of one of the servants, to visit a distant relative who lived in the Old Town



ENTRANCE FROM LITTLE SIDE TO CHARLES BRIDGE.

(Staré Město). They made their way over the remarkable old stone bridge, built by Charles IV in the fourteenth century, and later decorated with many statues. The servant, an intelligent young woman, named Fanny, from the neighboring state of Moravia, told Barbora the tradition that the strength of the bridge had come from the fact that the whites of eggs, instead of water, had been mixed with the mortar used in its construction.

"As there were not enough eggs in Prague and the vicinity for this purpose," she related, "King Charles ordered all the towns in the Bohemian kingdom to send a certain number of eggs. As wagon after wagon arrived, the eggs were broken into the lime. A full wagon also came from the town of Velvar. When the workmen began to break the eggs, they stared in amazement, and then began to laugh. Soon all Prague was laughing with them, for the

eggs sent by the good people of Velvar were all hard-boiled!"

They had passed over the bridge when the servant finished her story. She now pointed out to Barbora a whole mass of projecting steeples and towers, which made it easy to understand why Prague has received the name of the Hundred Towered City. Among these are the two unique slate belfries of the Týn Church, which was for two centuries the temple of the followers of Huss.

Then they walked through crooked winding streets, which often passed through houses and court-yards, under the numerous arcades, which are a characteristic feature of the old buildings in Bohemian cities, with their stalls, and piles of pots for sale, until they came to the Týn Square, once the centre of commerce not only of Prague but of the whole of Central Europe, and later the witness of the bloody scenes which extinguished the Protestant cause.

A few steps further, and they were in the Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí) and before the curious ancient Prague clock, on the tower of the old town hall, the delight of every passer-by. It was just a quarter after ten, and they had to wait twenty minutes for the clock to strike — for it does not strike exactly according to our present measure of time. When it did so, two little windows above the dial opened, and Barbora saw the twelve disciples of Christ walk past and bow with dignity to the people. On each side of this clock are movable statuettes, — of Death, who rings a bell; of a Turk, who shakes his head; of a miser, swinging a purse; and a spendthrift, holding a looking glass. After the last stroke a cock, placed above the dial, crows.

Barbora was not alone in admiring all these things. Next to her stood an old granny with short skirts and a kerchief on her head. On the other side were an elegantly attired man and

woman, holding a little girl by the hand. In the crowd was also a baker's apprentice, a soldier gaily decked out in blue and red, a bare-headed servant girl, a farmer, and two ladies out on a shopping tour.

"Now we must go on," said Fanny, after Barbora had stood for ten minutes longer admiring the figures and carvings, "for we must reach Mrs. Novotný's house by eleven, the proper time for a morning call."

They had not far to go, and were warmly greeted. Mrs. Novotný was a dear, motherly person and at once brought forth some of the round Bohemian national cakes called *koláče,* filled with prune-butter, ground and sweetened poppy seed, and sweetened cottage cheese. Nothing would satisfy her but that Barbora take a slice of each. Barbora's appetite was an unfailingly good one, and she did not refuse the tempting sections. She had very little to say, however, the impressions crowding on her brain

were too numerous. She had never dreamed that so many wonders could be gathered into one spot.

Before they started for home, Mrs. Novotný put on her own hat and coat and took them to a large store where she selected a warm winter hood for Barbora and a beautiful silk head kerchief for Barbora's mother as a present from herself. They also went with her to the big open market-place, where she bought fresh unsalted butter, cottage cheese, and also honey and poppy seed. "All for more koláčký," she remarked to Barbora.

Barbora spent the afternoon at home, for in the evening — it was some sort of a gala day — they were to go to the National Theatre to hear Smetana's beautiful opera of "Libuše," which, according to the composer's wish, is only presented on special occasions. As they sat in the pleasant sitting-room, looking out towards the pavilions of the Fürstenberg Garden, Barbora's

aunt told her the story of the great artist's sad life and also the story of "Libuše," that she might better understand and appreciate the opera.

"Libuše," said her aunt, "was, according to a tradition of that far away, misty past, the founder of the city of Prague, and an unusually upright and amiable queen, whom all loved. Once, however, she had to judge in a disagreement between two brothers — noblemen — as to how certain property, left to them by their father, was to be divided. The one against whom she decided remarked in her hearing that Bohemia was the only country that endured the shame of being ruled by a woman. She felt so grieved over this insult that she called her people together and begged them to choose a man strong enough to govern them. They insisted, instead, that she should select a husband and reign jointly with him.

"It is said that she answered: 'Beyond those

distant hills is a small river on whose banks is a village called Stadíce. Near this village is a farm, and on the fields of that farm is your future ruler, Přemysl, ploughing with spotted oxen. Follow my white horse; he will stop before your future king.' They did so, found the peasant, conducted him in his rude dress and rough shoes to the palace of Vyšehrad where he married Libuše."

"Where is Vyšehrad?" asked Barbora. "Is it a real place?"

"Yes," responded her aunt, "it is a rocky cliff on the opposite side of the river, with remains of old fortifications, and I regret that, since you will leave to-morrow, you will not have time to see it. But never mind, you are to come again, and it is only one of the many interesting things to be seen in this wonderful, historic old city."

"But, aunt," Barbora begged, as her aunt arose to leave the room, "please, please tell me

some more about Libuše. Did she always live at Vyšehrad?"

"Not according to the old stories," replied her aunt, seating herself for a few moments again. "Libuše is credited with having been a seeress, as well as a very wise ruler, and the legends relate that one day, while standing with Přemysl and a group of elders on the rock of Vyšehrad, she was suddenly inspired and, shading her eyes, she pointed into the distance towards the blue woods on the dim river banks, and exclaimed in a voice of prophecy:

"'I see a big city, whose glory will reach to the skies. In the woods surrounded by the River Vltava, and the stream of Brusnice, you will find a man who is building the threshold of a house. There erect a castle and call it Praha' (the Bohemian for threshold is *práh*).

"The people went where she had directed and found her vision true. A castle was erected

on the spot where Praha (Prague) now stands."

The next day was Saturday and Barbora returned to her village home. How proud she felt and how much she had to relate to her companions, with whom she was a great favorite, and who crowded around her, brimming over with questions. She pleased them all by humming some of the airs from the opera which she had heard and repeating some of the words. It was not only the big things that had made the deepest impression on her.

"Why, girls," she said, addressing a group of classmates, "Praha is so big that you have to ride a great deal in the cars, and, do you know, it costs lots of money, for every time you make a trip you must give one or two hellers" (a heller is one-fifth of one cent of our money), "besides the fare, as a tip to the street-car conductor. I saw everybody doing it!"

"I wish that I were a conductor," said Jirka,

turning a somersault. "Wouldn't I be rich! And I'd let you all ride without paying."

"Be quiet, Jirka," said Vlasta, "you don't know what you are talking about! I want to know if Praha is really as beautiful as they say."

"Oh, yes," answered Barbora. "It is, indeed. There are many parks with big trees and flowers and such smooth grass! But they won't let you pick the flowers," she added, "or go on the grass, and the walks are gravelled and raked over so carefully that they won't let children mark on them. I saw two little boys getting scolded by one of the caretakers because they had made some figures with a stick on the walk. They were only about four or five years old, and I felt angry at the man's talking to them as if they had done a lot of damage."

"One day, as we were going to the Staré Město (Old Town)," she remarked on another occasion, "I suddenly saw hundreds of big open

umbrellas in a square. I couldn't imagine what it meant until we came nearer and I found that it was a flower market. All sorts of beautiful flowers were for sale there."

Jirka was so glad to see Barbora that he became unusually boisterous.

"It's a good thing that you live in the country, Jirka," Barbora said to him. "You wouldn't be allowed to shout so loud in Praha; the people there are always saying 'Hush!' to the children, and the janitors of the houses won't even allow them to sing in the hallways!"

On Monday school opened, and, just as the children had longed for vacation, so did they welcome the return to their studies. The school-teacher, an earnest young man of about twenty-six, was a very important personage in the village, and the children all had great respect for him. As soon as the teacher enters the school-room all Čech (Bohemian) children

stand up to greet him. Politeness and religion are two important subjects taught at school. Greetings play an important part in all the affairs of every-day Bohemian life, whether one enters a store to buy a heller's worth of salt, or a post-office to buy a stamp, or a street-car for a ride down town. Our blunt habit of simply stating our demands or needs to strangers, without any salutation, would be considered a sign of almost inconceivable ill-breeding in Bohemia.

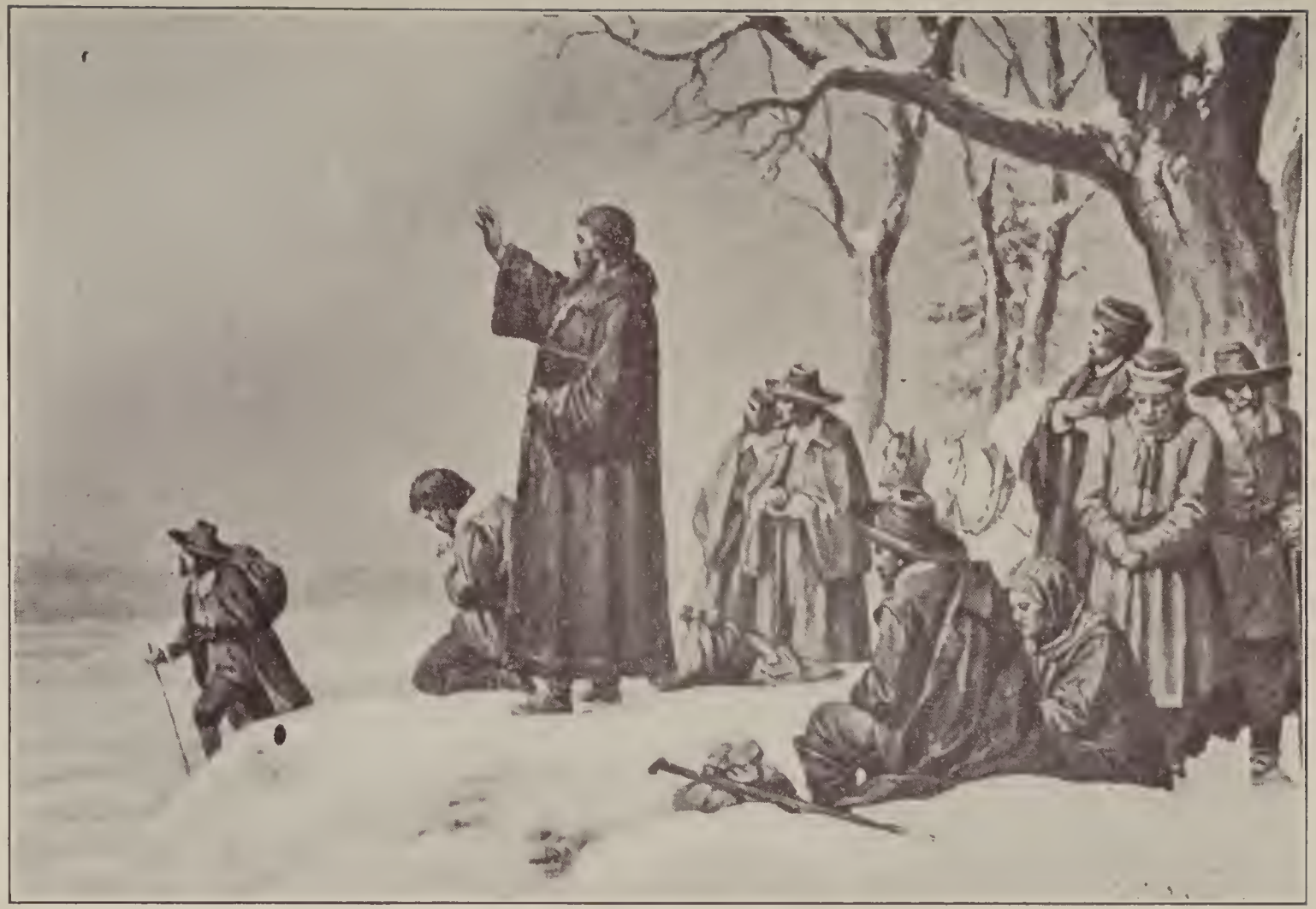
The greetings taught to village school children are particularly long. Little Barbora had to repeat "Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ!" every time she met an older acquaintance, and it would have greatly surprised her had she not received the answer "Forever and forever, Amen!"

Little Jirka was very happy at being old enough to enter school. He had on a new, high, green peaked hat which his father had bought

for him at a fair, and of which he was very proud and conscious. As soon as Barbora and Vlasta came he ran up to them, shouting "See my new hat; mama told me not to get it dirty." Some of the older children laughed at him, for which they were sharply reprimanded by Vlasta; but, later in the day, she could not help joining in the general laugh when the little boy suddenly arose from his seat in the school-room, while one of the older classes was having a recitation in reading, and, walking up to the teacher, said in a voice loud enough to be heard in every corner, "My grandmother is going to bake koláče to-morrow."

On the front wall of the school-room hung a large map of Europe, in the literal centre of which Bohemia was clearly outlined; so too were the high chains of mountains separating it from the neighboring German countries of Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, and Austria, which give it a geographic independence and make one

understand easily why it has proved possible for it to remain a Slavic state despite all efforts to Germanize it. On a blackboard near were a list of the principal exports, which, among other things, comprise sugar, hops, navy beans, gloves, Bohemian glass and garnets, porcelain, human hair, and mineral waters (the Carlsbad, Marienbad, etc.). On another portion of the board were a list of the Slavic nations of the world (which includes the Russians and the Poles), among which the Bohemians (Čechs) take a high rank. The teacher was an ardent patriot and always had something of interest to tell or show the children. To-day he had a large picture of the great Moravian educator Comenius (Komenský) and a copy of his book, "The Orbis Pictus," the first picture reading book ever used in school. The children were amused at its rude wood-cuts and quaint language. He also had a copy of the Bohemian artist Brožík's famous picture of "Komenský



KOMENSKÝ'S FAREWELL TO HIS NATIVE LAND.

teaching at Amsterdam," representing a scene in the great educator's life when exiled for religious reasons from his native land.

The children bent over their school tasks with a will, and at recess likewise entered with spirit into their games, for, during the summer their numerous duties, like tending geese, goats, or sheep, or helping in the fields and meadows, had kept them a good deal apart.

"Let's play Blind Granny," said Marketa, as soon as they entered the yard, and so one of the girls began to count out, just as American children do, to see who was to be "it." There is no more sense in their counting-out rhymes than in our "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe." They said "Aneda, fimfeda, aneciky, cvanciky, sosoda," which doesn't mean anything at all!

The lot fell to Vlasta, and one of the children tied a handkerchief over her eyes, and the others made a ring and circled around her.

Then she was led a short distance away, and

asked: "Blind Granny, where am I leading you?"

To which she answered: "Into a corner."

"What do you see there?"

"A rooster."

"What else?"

"A shoe."

"What's in the shoe?"

"A ball" (of yarn).

"What's in the ball?"

"A needle."

"What's in the needle?"

"Thread."

The questioner now called out "Then catch me, Blind Granny!" All let go hands and ran while the Blind Granny tried to catch some one. After a while Barbora was caught, tapped on the back, "One, two, three," and she was "it."

After this first day many other games were played, a favorite being "Hide and Seek," like our own. Another game, introduced by a little

schoolmate whose family had lately moved from Moravia into their village, was "Wolf." In playing this the children formed two sides and counted out who was to be "Wolf." This "Wolf" then stood between the sides and called out,

Wolf: "Come home!"

Children: "We daren't."

Wolf: "Why?"

Children: "Because of the wolf."

Wolf: "Where is the wolf?"

Children: "In the woods."

Wolf: "What is he doing there?"

Children: "Watching for us."

Wolf: "Come home."

As soon as the second "Come home" was uttered the two divisions exchanged sides, while the "Wolf" tried to catch one of them who was then to be "Wolf."

A quieter game, preferred at certain seasons, was "The Witch's Ring," in which lines were

drawn or stamped with the feet on the ground. The players were obliged to stay on the lines, with the privilege, however, of jumping from one to another, while the "Witch" tried to catch them. Whoever was caught became "Witch."

After school hours the children had home tasks to do.

Those who tended geese now used to take them to the stubble fields to grow fat on the dropped grain. The geese were not always satisfied and, when they found a chance to get at the gathered and piled up grain, would not hesitate to do so. Each goose girl or boy now claimed that his geese were the fattest, and not a day passed without a friendly squabble over this momentous question.

The fields had become bright with flowers and, when the children could, they would stop to weave garlands of the bright red poppies, Bohemia's national flower, found in great quan-

tities on the hillsides and fields and along the banks of rivers; or to decorate themselves with the bright blue corn flower which was nearly as great a favorite.

The first of October was a lively day in the village. The place was trying the experiment of having a public fish pond and the water was to be let out. Everybody came to see and buy, for the fish were to be sold at a nominal price. Big vessels, filled with water, had been prepared, into which the fish were to be put as soon as taken out, for the Bohemians have a prejudice against buying any but live fish. As the water began to go out there was quite a contest among the children as to who would see the fish first.

"I see one," cried Jirka, whose imagination was very vivid.

"No, you don't, really, do you, Jirka? But I think I do," cried Vlasta, not to be outdone.

Barbora was too honest to claim anything not

really true, for, as a matter of fact, none were to be seen until half of the water was out.

The pike were the first to be caught, for they are very sensitive to dirty water. As the children were examining them, and wondering at the size of their heads, Barbora exclaimed, "I wonder what kind of teeth they have!"

Jirka at once put his finger into the mouth of one to examine it. The next minute he was running up and down, along the edge of the pond, crying and holding his hand to his mouth, for the fish had bitten him so hard that the blood came.

His teacher came up and, tearing off a piece of a clean linen handkerchief, bound it around the hand, saying as he did so, "In another minute, Jirka, I'll show you a fish without any teeth."

And sure enough, the very next fish taken out was a carp, whose funny, immense head with its tiny mouth made even Jirka laugh. When the

teacher fearlessly opened its mouth no teeth were to be seen.

"How can he live without teeth?" asked Barbora, with her arm around Jirka's neck.

"It feeds only on tiny insects for which no teeth are needed," answered the teacher. "As to our savage friend here," pointing to the pike, "what will you say when I tell you that he has teeth not only on his palate but also on the tongue, and very sharp ones, too, as Jirka knows. The pike eats everything it can get hold of — fish half its size, frogs, mice, and even little goslings."

At this a murmur of anger arose from the children. "I'd like to see one of them eat my baby geese!" threatened Vlasta.

Just then Jirka gave another scream, for a big crab had crawled out and caught hold of one of his bare toes. It was easily loosened, and the boys began to help gather up others that were appearing out of the mud. None of

the girls, except Marketa, would touch them. Instead, they gave little screams whenever the boys came near with one.

At last the pond was empty and all started for their homes with full pails. For many days afterwards fish was the chief article of food; the mothers also potted considerable quantities to be used as luxuries on special feast days during the winter.

A month later, as Barbora and her grandfather were out digging the last crop of potatoes, they saw a flock of storks, with necks far outstretched, flying towards the woods.

"Ah," remarked the grandfather, calling the little girl's attention to them, "see! it won't be long now before cold weather is here."

And the very next day, sure enough, a light fall of snow lay on the ground, which indicated not only a change of season but also a change in occupation and in almost the whole manner of life.

CHAPTER IV

WINTER

WINTER came early and it was not long before snow-balling frolics became a matter of course. As soon as the ponds were frozen over they were filled with merry, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed boys and girls. When the cold began to get too severe, their hands went under their armpits and they stamped their feet, but no one thought of returning home until the village bell sounded the angelus hour.

Indoors, outside of school hours, there was plenty to do. Barbora's home was quite cozy. The floors were of wood and brick, the walls roughly plastered and stencilled. In the living-room there was a stove of green tiles, orna-

mented with birds, with a big oven, the top of which served as Barbora's bed at night. Three big steps led up to this bed, and Barbora would not have exchanged it for any other sleeping place.

The most important piece of furniture in the room was the table, which was of natural oak with carved legs. This was a heavy piece of furniture and was never moved. Whenever the priest or schoolmaster visited them he was seated at the table to signify the respect in which he was held. Ordinary guests generally sat on the benches around the stove. There were also benches, with carved backs, around the wall, and three old, hand-carved chairs, which generally stood next to the bed, being placed by the table only at meal-time. This bed was piled during the day almost up to the ceiling with feather-mattresses and pillows, the pride of every Bohemian housewife. How would you like to sleep in a semi-sitting posi-

tion, with three big pillows under your head? That is what Barbora was supposed to do.

Above the table hung a lamp, while in one corner, near it, was a crucifix, on both sides of which, way up by the ceiling, arranged side by side in a very straight row, were several pictures of saints in simple dark frames. Chief among these was Václav, the patron saint of Bohemia. There was one other picture in the room, that of the beloved patriot, Karel Havlíček, poet, journalist and editor, who suffered for freedom's sake.

Besides these, the walls were also decorated with a clock and a rack of gaily painted dishes, while, from the rafters, were suspended bunches of herbs to be used for medicinal tea in case of illness. The most interesting piece of furniture, however, in Barbora's eyes, was an old chest which had belonged to her great-great-grandmother. It was painted with big blossoming trees, surrounded by many brightly colored

birds, red roses, and red, yellow, and blue flowers. Barbora thought it beautiful. Inside, it was no less interesting, for on the cover were pasted pictures of saints brought home from many pilgrimages.

Sometimes Barbora accompanied her grandfather to the woods in search of firewood. It was possible now to catch glimpses of the deer, who lost much of their shyness under the influence of cold and hunger. The little crested wren was to be seen on the trees untiringly flitting about, and close to the edge of the woods was found its near relative, the hedge sparrow, quite as little and leading the same kind of life. Sometimes, in a pine tree, they came across the warm nest of the cross-bill, pasted over with rosin, and with a very narrow opening to keep out the cold from the little winter birdies. Then, by the ice-bound brook, which ran through the woods, they saw hundreds of green finches, attracted by the nut-

filled cones on the alder trees bordering it — store-houses so well filled as to last all winter. These nuts must have had a fiery taste, for the birds descended in clouds to a little fall of the brook, where they drank greedily.

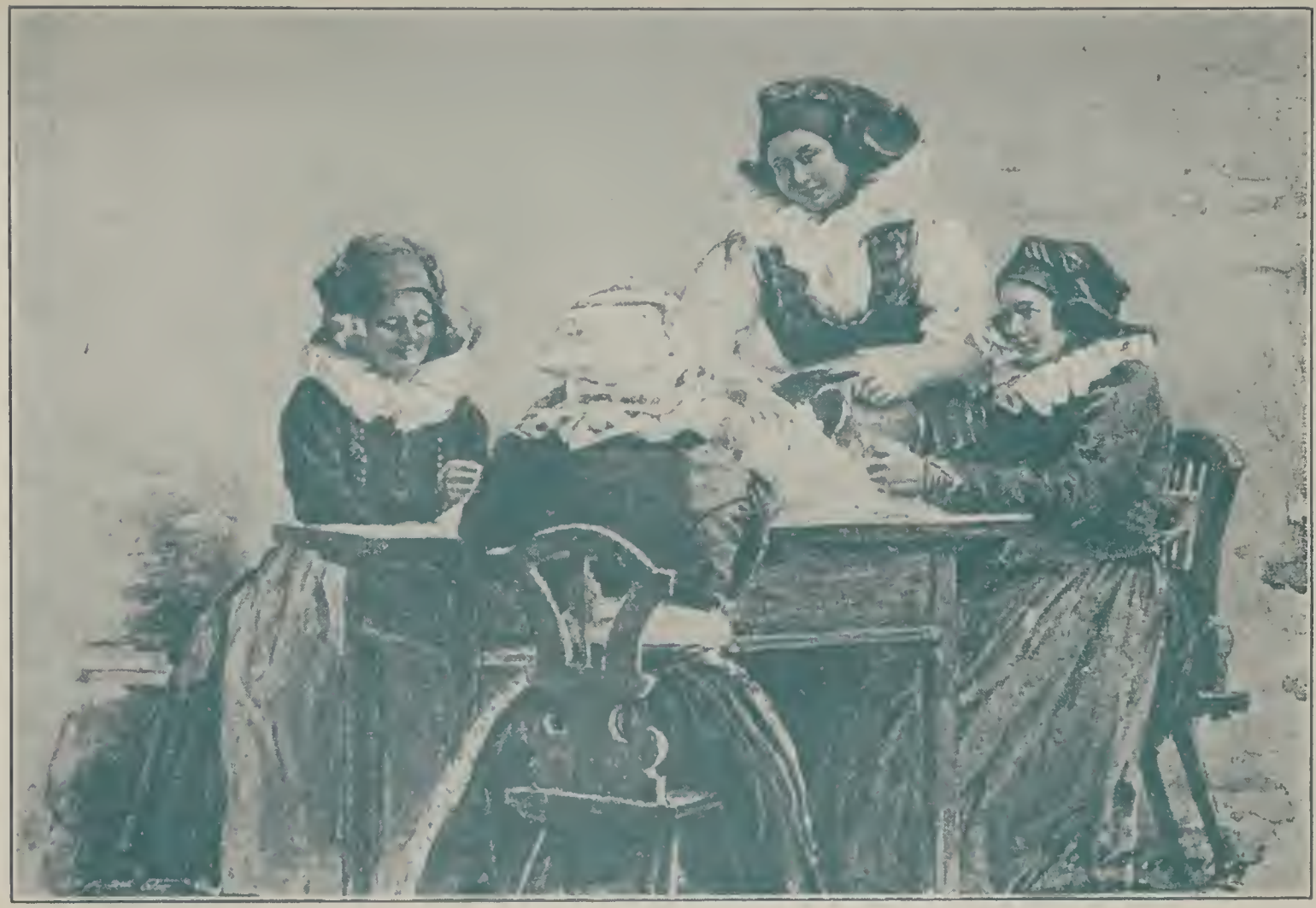
This brook ran into the mill stream, where Barbora always looked for a water sprite (Vodník). Her grandfather told her that the miller's great-grandfather had once seen a sprite looking into the mill by the light of the moon; that he was of medium height, with his tail always wet, and that he was grimacing sourly.

There was much frost and snow that month, and the next, but, according to Barbora's grandfather, it was a good sign. "When there is frost and snow in December," he would say, "the coming year will be fruitful."

Many of the people added a little to their small incomes by all the members of the family helping in the making of toys. In Barbora's

they made only doll cupboards, chests, and other tiny household furniture; in Vlasta's, wooden dishes; the specialty in Jirka's home was animals. All of these were often stained and painted. In Marketa's family they devoted most of their spare time to the making of St. Nicholas and the devil, in both of which the children of the country believe. During the holiday season they realized quite a little from their sale. Marketa herself used to make the beard and hair of St. Nicholas out of cotton, while Václav was quite clever in making a devil out of dried fruit, the body of prunes and the head a dried pear or apple. In one hand he held a fork and a bundle of switches, while a chain of paper was fastened to one leg.

There were other duties, too. The older daughters had their sewing, for each endeavored to have ready, as her dowry, a good array of linen clothes, neatly embroidered with her initials in one corner.



PICKING GOOSE FEATHERS.

Then there were goose feathers to be picked for the feather beds universal throughout the country. Sometimes for this latter work neighbors would come to help each other, and then it was not work at all, but play enlivened by stories and songs. The children heard some of the stories many times, particularly those connected with the old castle and the neighboring woods. The favorite story in regard to this last was about the "Fiery Man." Old man Spalek used to delight in relating it.

THE STORY OF THE FIERY MAN

"I know it from my own grandfather," he would begin. "Long ago, this forest extended far beyond what it does now, and in it, for many years, lived the Fiery Man. Sometimes he appeared like a fiery barrel, sometimes like a burning sheaf, and sometimes like a burning man. And in this last shape he was awful to behold, for he complained with such bitterness

that all who heard him were seized with terror. Nobody would go through the wood at night, no matter how much time could be saved in doing so. Once, a peasant, whose name was Moták, went to a neighboring town to make some purchases. He stayed very late with comrades and when he started for home it was so dark that he couldn't see where he was going, and lost his way. Thus he came into the deep forest. Hardly had he entered it than he heard loud complaints and lamentations, and, suddenly, right before him stood the Fiery Man. Flames were flashing forth from all sides and cinders were flying. On his shoulders the creature carried a huge boulder; he wailed: 'Where shall I put it? oh, where shall I put it?'

"As soon as the peasant heard the human voice he lost all fear: 'Why, put it,' he said, 'where you got it!' and started to leave. 'Thank God, you have been my salvation!'

sighed the Fiery Man with relief, and, as he spoke, the boulder rolled off of his shoulders and a white dove flew out from his body. At the same time the Fiery Man disappeared and was never seen again."

Mr. Spalek always ended his story here, and Jirka's grandmother, whenever she was present, invariably added: "You must know, good people, that this Fiery Man was supposed to be a peasant who died during a lawsuit with a neighbor, who claimed that he had removed a boulder which separated their properties in order to lay claim to more land than was really his. I think it is true, and it is certainly no wonder that he was punished so severely. I have, also, always heard that he was not freed until he had carried the stone to the true boundary line, which sounds more probable than that it merely rolled off of his shoulders."

Mr. Spalek always expected this addition and pretended to be asleep during its recital.

The children listened with mouths wide open to stories such as this. Barbora's father, however, a very well-informed peasant, used to laugh at them and call them "stuff and nonsense." He preferred that the children hear of Bohemia's great heroes; of the pure life of the great religious reformer and martyr, John Huss; of Karel Havlíček, whose picture hung on his wall; of Joseph Kajetán Tyl, author, actor, and theatrical manager, who had once visited their village with his travelling theatrical company, a patriotic organization mainly for the presentation of stirring historical plays which would remind the people of their brilliant past and help keep alive national sentiment; and of the wonderful general, one-eyed Žižka.

His neighbors sometimes shook their heads over his heretical tendencies, but, nevertheless, they liked very well to listen to him, and shared his pride in the nation's heroes.

"Now, father," Barbora often begged, "tell us about Žižka!" And then her father would describe how, in the wars following close on the burning of Master John Huss, in Constance, the great leader, already blind in one eye, with untrained soldiers, chiefly peasants and tradesmen, conquered the bravest knights and greatest warriors in Europe.

"He taught his followers how to fortify themselves strongly with the aid of the battle wagons alone, and how to fight with weapons with which they were familiar, — clubs, short spears, and flails. These flails were terrible weapons; they consisted of long staffs at the end of which were shorter staffs bound with iron and spiked. Another fearful weapon for hand combat, called the morning star, was a long stave with a spiked iron ball near the sharp end. The battle wagons were covered with iron and the best marksman was placed next to the driver in each of them. These marksmen

through the certainty of their aim invariably spread terror in the ranks of the enemy.

"Žižka's skill and inventiveness was extraordinary," he would continue. "He mastered every difficult or unusual situation. He made use of every possible stratagem. Thus, at one time, when the enemy had to cross water to get to him, he had the women place some of their garments and veils in the soft mud at the bottom, so that the horses and followers of the Hungarian king were entangled in them. When all was confusion he charged and drove back the forces with great loss. At another time, when encamped on top of a hill and threatened by a superior force, he had the wagons filled with stones, and, as the enemy were about to charge, sent these wagons down pell-mell, smashing into the mounted soldiers and entirely demoralizing them. Then, just at the right moment, he again charged. Sometimes he misled the enemy by putting the

horses' shoes on backwards; sometimes he had three-cornered hooks, with sharp points, scattered over the ground; these entered the feet of the enemy's horses, which became frightened and uncontrollable, so that Žižka easily won the day."

"I would like to have seen him!" Old Man Spalek would exclaim, with eyes flashing. "My son has a picture of him in a book, riding on a white horse, with a flap over one eye. Ah, he looks every inch a general! And to think that he was still able to command when he lost the use of his other eye."

"How was that?" asked Barbora.

"It was in 1421," answered her father, "when he was besieging a castle. Here, some people say, his sound eye was injured during the shooting by the glancing of an arrow from a pear tree. The injury was so serious that he was not expected to live. He was obliged to go to Prague for treatment. There the doc-

tors managed to cure him, but could not save his sight. He was now blind in both eyes, and could not lead his forces any longer on horseback; nevertheless, he still directed them. He would sit high on a wagon surrounded by a select few who described everything minutely to him, and according to these descriptions he gave orders, and continued to win battles. He has the unusual record of never having lost a battle in his life. For years after his death, Hungarian mothers used his name to frighten their children. Many of them firmly believed that he had been possessed of fiendish powers. Would that we had such men today!"

When stories were not told, or the beautiful touching folk songs sung, Barbora and the younger folk liked to amuse themselves with riddles: —

"What is it that falls into water and makes no splash?" Answer. — Shadow.

"It's red when it's living and black when it's dead." Answer. — Coal.

"When does a chicken have the fewest feathers?" Answer. — In the baking pan.

Barbora was very fond of this one: — "Two fathers and two sons caught three rabbits and each received one. Explain the division." Answer. — They were grandfather, father, and son.

And also "A brother and a sister, and a husband and a wife, were journeying together. They were given three apples, which they divided so that each person received one apple. Explain." Answer. — They were brother, sister, and the sister's husband.

Sometimes, when they were home alone, and Barbora would beg for a story, her father would tell her a teasing one about Red Riding Hood, in just the same way as it had been told to him by his own father when he was a child.

"I will tell you a story about Red Riding

Hood," he would begin, seriously. "Now, pay close attention so that you will remember the story of Red Riding Hood, about whom a great many stories have been told. One person told a story about Red Riding Hood, another told a story about Red Riding Hood, a third told a story about Red Riding Hood, and each told a different one. And, do you know why Red Riding Hood was called by that name? Everybody called her that, nothing else. Everybody shouted after her, 'Where are you going, Red Riding Hood?'"

And Barbora's father would continue this rigmarole until Barbora would beg for the promised story, when he would say: "Why, Baruška," Baruška being his favorite diminutive for Barbora, "that's so, I promised to tell you about Red Riding Hood; then, listen!" and he would repeat the whole thing from the beginning until Barbora's patience would be exhausted and she would insist on a real story.

Sometimes he would vary this by telling about a herdsman who had three hundred sheep and several rams.

"This herdsman," he would begin, "always took his flock to pasture over a certain river which had spanning it a bridge so narrow that only one sheep could cross at a time. Now, imagine that he has reached this bridge; one sheep is crossing, but it has to go very slowly so as not to fall in." Then her father would become silent.

Barbora would wait a while and then urge him to continue.

"Now it is near the bank; it will soon be over — ah, now! it is in the pasture. It is time for the second to start, but that one is especially slow."

"Well, what happens when they all get over?" Barbora would ask, when the silence remained unbroken.

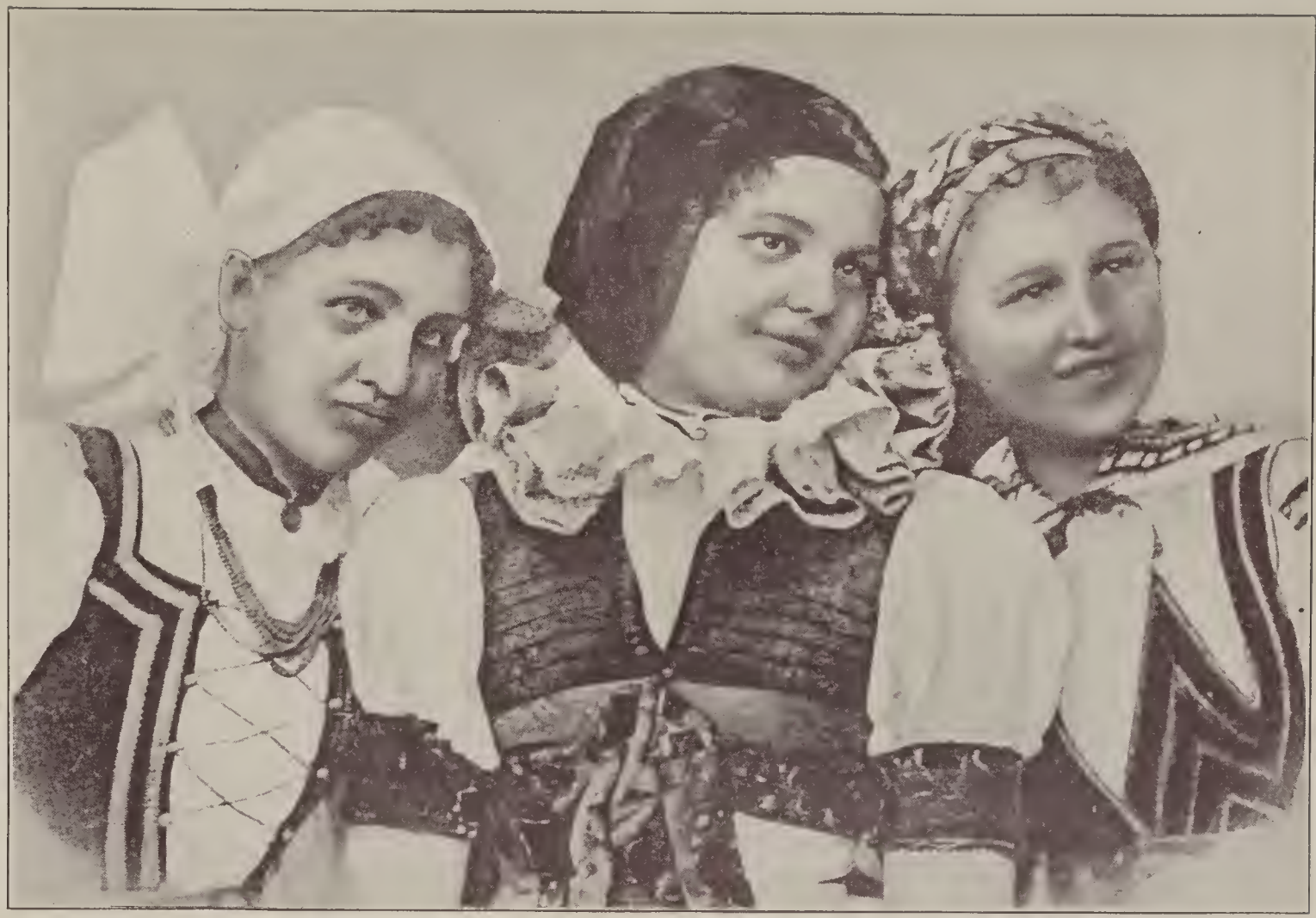
"Ah, but only two are over," her father

would reply, with a very serious face, "you must wait until all have reached the pasture." He would then continue with the third and the fourth; but generally, by that time, Barbora would place her hand over his mouth and declare that she wouldn't be teased any longer.

The most exciting time of the year in the little village was on December sixth, the day on which St. Nicholas makes his yearly visit. A few days before this holiday Barbora received the following letter from her aunt: —

"BRNO, MORAVIA, Dec. 3.

"MY DEAR LITTLE NIECE: — Here I am in Brno (the Germans call it Brünn), the capital and chief city of our sister land, Moravia. To-day I wished that you were with me for I was taken all through a delightful girls' school, thoroughly Slavonian in character. How would you like to go to boarding school? The dormitory is charmingly furnished, the old



Bohemian. *Moravian.* *Silesian.*

SLAVONIAN GIRLS.

Moravian and Bohemian styles of furniture having been carefully reproduced. The pretty artistic coverlets on the beds were designed and embroidered by the Slovak peasant women here, and the walls were also painted by them.

"Almost every Slavonian country is represented in the pupils: besides many Bohemians and Moravians, there are several Slovaks from Moravia and Hungary, one girl from Croatia, two Servians, one Dalmatian, and one Ruthenian and two Polish girls from Galicia. They all look happy. The teachers are not only enthusiastic in their work but full of ardent love for their country's history and hope for its future. When you finish your home school we must consider sending you here.

"I am to spend St. Nicholas Day in the country near Olomouc, the ancient capital of Moravia, where I am hoping to renew my acquaintance with the Moravian dialect, and to see some of the old, picturesque national costumes. I

did see a tall, slender Moravian at the railroad station when I arrived, who had on a white shirt, a very short bright waistcoat embroidered with red and gold, and over these a dark sleeveless jacket with, oh, so many shining rows of buttons. His low crowned hat was decorated with a bunch of rooster feathers.

"How full our country is of interesting historical material! Yesterday, in the little Protestant village of Vanovice, the pastor showed me a building in the cellar of which the people used to meet to read the Bible at a time when their being discovered doing this meant arrest and punishment. Worthy followers of Huss!

"Here, in Brno, the streets are now gay with people and the confectionery stores are filled with figures of St. Nicholas and the devil which remind me of those made by some of your village friends.

"Give my hearty holiday wishes to your dear

father and mother and accept many for yourself. May St. Nicholas be good to you!

"Lovingly,

"Aunt Anna."

On the eve of St. Nicholas the children were all in a state of great expectation and the younger ones were not a little afraid. Barbora's grandmother spent the evening with them, and related how St. Nicholas comes down from the sky in a carriage of gold, attended by an angel with a bag of gifts, to reward the good, and by a devil with a bundle of switches, for the naughty.

The parents had all agreed on the teacher playing the part of St. Nicholas, for he was well acquainted with the little folks and would know just whom to reprimand and whom to praise.

At seven o'clock it was already dark, and, shortly after, there was a clatter of chains out-

side of Barbora's door and then a loud knock. Barbora's cousin, Jirka, who had come with grandmother, crept behind her chair and hid in her skirts. But he managed to peep out when St. Nicholas, in bishop cap and gown, came striding in, accompanied by an angel, all in white and silver, carrying a bag, and a terror-inspiring devil, hoofed, horned, and tailed, with a big bundle of switches. This devil jumped about and tried to catch some of the children, but was prevented by Santa Claus, who held him firmly by a chain.

St. Nicholas seemed to know everything that had happened that year. Barbora's record was good, on the whole, although St. Nicholas did not omit to mention the time when she forgot her geese to wade in the pond, and they strayed into a neighbor's vegetable patch. Little Jirka gradually came out and lost his fear of the devil. He laughed merrily when the angel emptied the bag of goodies on the table.

Then St. Nicholas and his company disappeared, and those remaining sat down to feast on the sweets before bedtime.

The excitement of St. Nicholas Eve had hardly died away when Christmas was at hand. Barbora helped her mother pick and clean the Christmas goose, which was to be served with sour-kraut and potatoes. It was a big, fine, fat one at which the mother rejoiced, for the rendered fat would serve instead of butter, on bread and potatoes for a long time to come. Two or three pieces of Bohemian glass — family heirlooms — were taken down from the wall to receive an extra polish for the occasion.

The day before, the whole family fasted, the children in the firm expectation of seeing the "Golden Pig," which always proved to be, to the disappointed youngsters, only the reflection of the candles on the ceiling. But there was a big supper, served on a table cloth of red roses on a white background, of fish soup, carp,

boiled barley and mushrooms, and several varieties of Christmas bread, filled with nuts and raisins. Then came the Christmas tree, with the main gifts of the year. Barbora's aunt remembered her with a beautiful bound book, "Babička" (The Grandmother), a story of country life in Bohemia, by Božena Němec, the favorite and best work of that great authoress.

The poor of the village were never forgotten on this day. The miller's wife sent Marketa's mother the half of a goose, so that Marketa could feast on goose, even though unable to tend one. Barbora gave her an apron which she had made with her own hands. The cattle and poultry were likewise not forgotten, but received their share of holiday cakes.

Barbora always strove to be good on Christmas Day, for it had been firmly impressed on her that that day was to determine every day of the following year; that, if she were cross and naughty, she would be cross and naughty

all the year; if good, that she would be good all the year. Her father laid great stress on no one in the family being late for meals, that all might be orderly throughout the year.

After Christmas, for a while there were other great doings in the village, the most important in the eyes of Jirka and Václav being those of the Three Kings. The two boys, together with a schoolmate, with white shirts over their clothes and their heads ornamented with crowns of stiff gold paper, went from house to house, singing a song, and begging for donations.

Jirka, with his crown ornamented by a star cut out of red paper, walked first; while Václav, with a blackened face and a dish of burning incense in his hands, came last. When the door was opened in answer to their knock, they greeted the assembled family with "Blessed be the Lord," and then sang their song. At each house they received something, whether Christ-

mas cakes in the form of hearts, birds, or wreaths, or an apple or an orange, and rarely a heller or two. If permitted, they swung the incense through the rooms, which they sprinkled with holy water. Before leaving they never failed to write on the outer door the letters K + M + B + , the initials of the three wise men who came from the East to adore the infant Jesus — Kaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, and these were suffered to remain until erased by sun and rain.

The evening before the Three Kings, the young people of both sexes gathered at Barbora's home to tell their fortunes. A large quantity of lead had been provided, and this was melted by each of those present and poured into a pan of water. As soon as cool the forms assumed by the melted lead were studied to foretell the future. This was accompanied by much joking and laughter, all sorts of amusing fates being seen. When all had had their turn

supper was announced, after which they departed for their various homes.

And so the vacation time passed quickly until school reopened and studies began again.

THE END.

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