TOP OF THE WORLD STORIES

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

EMILIE POULSSON

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       Translated from the Scandinavian Languages

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Transcriber’s note

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected; hyphenation has been regularised. Close quotes have not been added at the end of paragraphs followed by more dialogue.

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STORIES

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

TRANSLATED FROM THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES

by

EMILIE POULSSON

and

LAURA E POULSSON

Illustrated by

FLORENCE LILEY YOUNG

LORTHROP LEE & SHEPARD CO.

BOSTON

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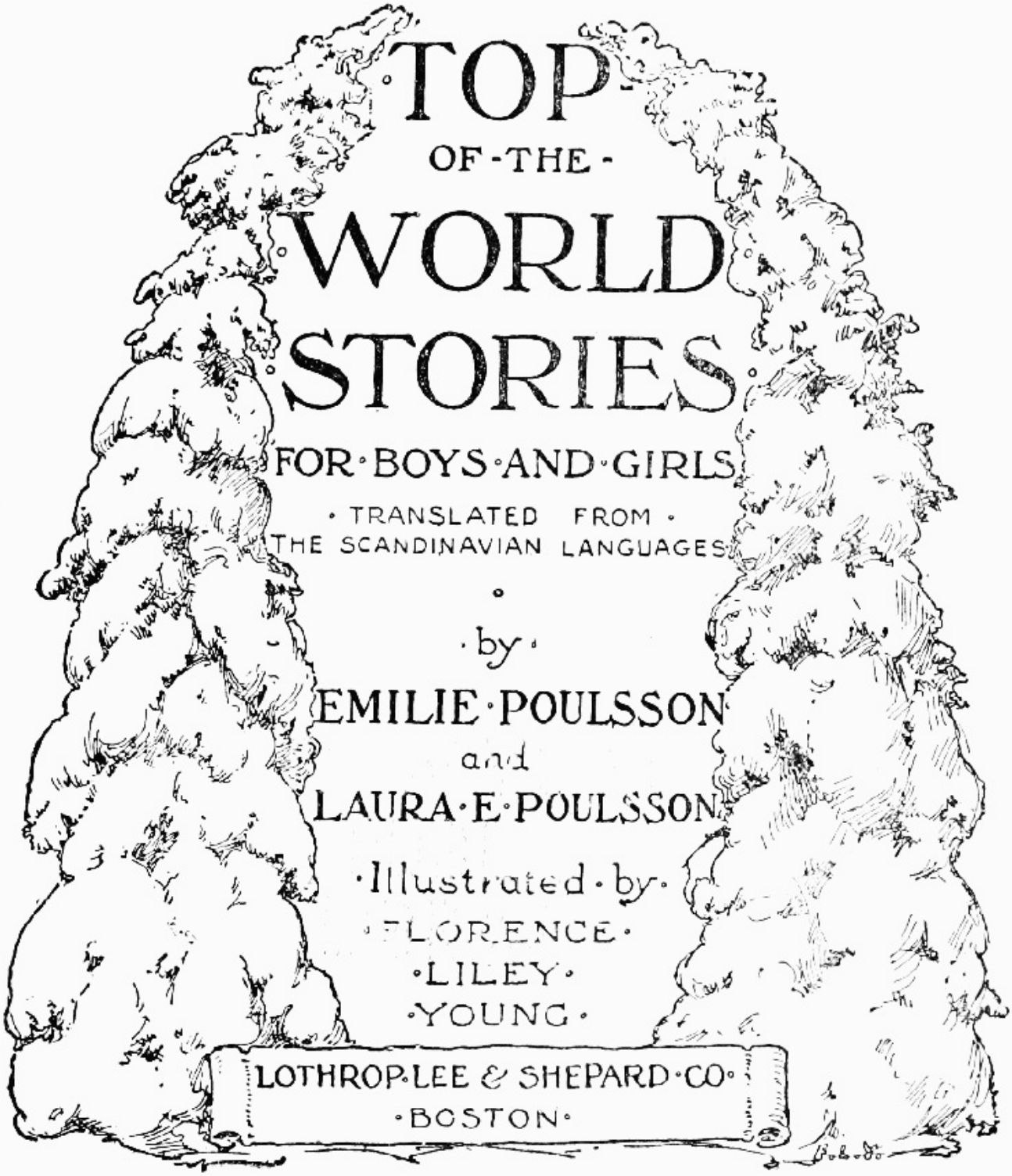
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IT WAS A LIFE AND DEATH RACE.

In memory of ten happy years,
this little book is dedicated to the
children of John, William, Anna, Martha, and George.

PREFACE

Not for my dear usual public of little children have I gathered these stories from Scandinavian authors, but for boys and girls who have reached a stage which warrants a rather free range in Story Land. For here are to be encountered creatures and events, deeds and ideas, unsuited to youngest readers, but which have legitimate attraction for boys and girls from nine to fourteen years old—the age varying according to the child's maturity and previous reading.

Five of these stories were written by the noted Finnish author, Zachris Topelius, who wrote them, and much else, for the children of Finland and Sweden more than fifty years ago. His loving sympathy for children, and his earnest desire to write only what was wholesome and good for them, shine through all his literary work for the young. His "Läsning för Barn" (Reading for Children) in several volumes, contains stories, true and imaginative, poems, songs, hymns, and many charming plays for children to act. Although a Finn, Topelius wrote in the Swedish language.

By the kind permission of Miss Margaret Böcher I have made use of her excellent rendering of *Sampo Lappelil*.

Of the other stories presented here, two (*The Forest Witch* and *The Testing of the Two Knights*) were translated from the Danish, and one (*Anton's Errand, or The Boy Who Made Friends by the Way*) from the Norwegian.

The translations are not strictly literal, neither are they, I am sure, unjustifiably free. The liberty exercised consists chiefly of omission. For example, in *Knut Spelevink*, extra incidents were omitted which dragged the story to a tedious length or marred it by the inartistic, outworn device of explaining Knut's adventures as a dream; in The *Princess Lindagull*, some details of the wild-beast fight were left out; in *A Legend of Mercy*, a hampering husk was stripped off from the good seed of the quaint little story. Most of the minor changes were made for the sake of smoothness and clarity.

In general, wherever I, as translator or editor, have varied from the original, I have done so to make the stories as directly appealing, as delightful, and as profitable as possible, for our boys and girls.

EMILIE POULSSON.

Boston, Ma

LIST OF STORIES

ILLUSTRATIONS

TOP-OF-THE-WORLD STORIES

KNUT SPELEVINK[1]

Knut was a poor orphan boy who lived with his grandmother at Perlebank in a little hut on the shore.

He had a shirt, a jacket, a pair of trousers and a cap; and what more does one need in summer? In winter he had woolen stockings and birch-bark shoes. That wasn't so little, after all. He was cheerful,—always happy indeed, though always hungry. It is a great art to know how to be happy and hungry at the same time!

His good grandmother was so poor that she seldom had enough food for the boy to eat all he wanted. She spun woolen yarn and sent Knut with it to Mr. Peterman's grand estate, The Ridge, several miles away, where he could always sell the yarn. When Knut returned with the money, Grandmother would buy flour and bake bread. She made it in big flat cakes with a hole in the middle, strung these cakes on a stick and hung the stick high up in the hut where the cakes would dry and harden, and could be kept for a long time. If the yarn brought a good price, she might even buy some sour milk, too. Potatoes they got from a tiny fenced-in field, no larger than the floor of a small room. Then, too, Grandmother owned a fish-net, so they had fresh fish sometimes,—when Fisher Jonas's boy could help Knut to put out the net.

It was indeed seldom, however, that Knut and his grandmother were well supplied with food, and the boy's little stomach often called for more; but even then he was as cheerful as ever.

One morning he sat on the beach, picking up yellowish stones that looked a little like soft, warm, boiled potatoes. Poor Knut! They would not do to eat, and he laughingly threw them away, but as he did so, he happened to see something that lay among the stones. Picking it up, he found that it was a little whistle or pipe made of reed, such as children often make for themselves when playing on the shore. There was nothing at all remarkable about it, but Knut thought he would see if it gave any sound. Good! It really did. You could play three tones upon it,—*pā*, *pȳ*, and *pū*. When Knut discovered that, he just for fun stuffed the whistle into his jacket pocket.

To-day happened to be a hungry day; Knut had had no breakfast. "Suppose I were sitting now in Mr. Peterman's kitchen at The Ridge," thought Knut; and at once he imagined he could smell herring being fried!

Well, he must do something; so he seated himself on a big rock near the water and began to fish, but the fish would not bite. There had been a storm the day before, but to-day the sea shone like a mirror under the bright sun, and its slow heaving waves swung clear as glass against the shore.

"I do wonder what Grandmother has for dinner," thought Knut to himself.

Just then a wave rolled up so high that it wet Knut's bare foot, and he heard a voice murmur from the wave, "Knut, have you found the magic pipe that belongs to the sea-princess? She left it on the shore and wishes she could find it. You can blow three tones on it, *pā*, *pȳ*, *pū*; and they all work magic,—*pā* makes the hearers sleep, *pȳ* makes the hearers

weep, but *pū* sets them to laughing."

"What?" exclaimed Knut. "Is it a magic pipe? Well, you may go your way, big wave. I found the pipe and I think I shall keep it for a while."

The wave murmured something,—no one knows what,—rolled slowly away and did not come back again.

Knut took the pipe from his pocket and looked closely at it. "So you are a magic pipe, are you? And can charm, can you? Well, charm a fish on to my hook, if you please." And with that he blew *pā, pā*.

He had not blown very long before a perch, then a pike, then a white fish floated up to the surface of the water, lying on their sides as if they were asleep.

"Here are fresh fish to be had," thought Knut; and he continued to blow. In a short time the whole surface of the water near the shore was covered with floating fish, more white fish, several kinds of perches, sticklebacks, bream, carp, pike, and salmon,—all the lively finny throng that live in the sea.

"This will be a great catch!" thought Knut, and he sprang up to the house to get a hand-net.

When he came back, the shore was crowded with water-birds. The sea-gulls were the greediest and shrieked "Grab! Grab! Grab!" so that they could be heard a mile away! But there were many others keeping them company,—ducks and wild geese, together with swans. All these ravenous visitors were hard at work devouring the floating fish; and in the midst of the throng was a great sea-eagle that had swooped down and seized a large salmon in his talons.

"Go away, you thieves!" called Knut, picking up stones from the beach and throwing them at the birds. Some were hit in the leg, others in the wing, but none seemed to think of dropping his prey.

Just then a shot sounded, then another and another, from a near-lying bay. Some of the birds fell to the water and floated, lying on their sides like the fish. The firing continued until all the birds had been either shot down or sent screaming away, scattering in every direction.

A boat containing three hunters now approached the beach. The men were Mr. Peterman and two friends of his, and it was they who had shot the birds. They stepped ashore in good humor to gather up their booty.

"Why, there is Knut!" said Mr. Peterman. "How in the world did you get so many birds together here at Perlebank?"

"I was playing on my pipe for the fish and the birds came to the party," answered Knut, jokingly.

"Then you must certainly be a wonderfully clever player," said Mr. Peterman. "And hereafter, your name shall be Knut Spelevink."[2]

"All right," said Knut. He had had no surname before and thought he might as well have Spelevink as Anderson, Söderlund or Mattsson.

“But listen, Knut Spelevink; why do you look so poorly to-day? You are as thin as a rail,” said Mr. Peterman.

“Why shouldn’t I look poorly, who see all this food and have not eaten anything since yesterday noon?” replied Knut, in his cheerful fashion.

“H’m,” said Mr. Peterman. “Well, come to The Ridge to dinner to-day, since you have provided us with such a good catch. But don’t come until four o’clock because the birds won’t be plucked and roasted before that.”

“Thank you most humbly,” answered Knut; but he thought to himself that four o’clock was rather late for any one who had eaten nothing since yesterday!

Mr. Peterman and his friends rowed away and Knut went home to his grandmother.

“Well, Knut, have you seen any fish to-day?”

“Oh, yes! I’ve seen plenty; but the birds ate the fish and Mr. Peterman shot the birds.”

“Too bad, Knut. We have nothing for dinner but two herring, four little potatoes and a half-slice of bread.”

“No matter, Grandmother; you eat that. I am invited to The Ridge for dinner and I shall bring you a bit of cheese in my pocket if I can.”

“Don’t take the short cut through Kiikkala Forest, Knut; there are elves there, and three troll-kings,—the Mountain King, the Snow King and the Forest King. Go, rather, along the shore,—that way is safer; only there you must look out for the mermaids.”

“But it is a long way around by the shore, Grandmother, and I haven’t had anything to eat since yesterday.”

“Well, go whichever way you will then, but don’t think about food. That leads one into temptation.”

“No, Grandmother. I shall think about the next Catechism examination, and study hard as I go along.”

Knut started on his way, thinking about the Catechism, but when he came to the beginning of the short cut, he thought: “Surely I should be a goose if I, with such an empty stomach, should walk seven miles instead of half that.”

And so he turned off into the short cut through Kiikkala Forest and determined to hear himself say the Catechism while he was going through the woods.

He had not gone far before he saw a thin little old man, dragging a cart loaded with twelve iron bars.

“Good-day, Knut Spelevink,” said the old man. “Why do you look so poorly to-day?”

“Why shouldn’t I look poorly, when I have eaten nothing but Catechism since yesterday noon? But how did you know my new name?”

“I know all names,” answered the old man, who was really a troll.

“Sha’n’t I help you?” asked good-natured Knut. “You are all out of breath with that heavy load.”

“Push away if you like, Spelevink.” So Knut pushed, and the old man pulled and they soon came to a big mountain in the forest.

“This is where I live,” said the old man. “Step in and I will give you something good to eat, because you helped me with my load.” So saying, he entered the mountain. Knut’s stomach said follow him, and Knut followed.

Soon they were in a great underground palace where everything glittered with gold, silver and precious stones.

“Do you live here?” asked Knut.

“I should say I did,” replied the old man. “I am the King of the Mountain. To-morrow I give the marriage feast for my daughter; and my servants are so driven with work that I myself had to bring my food from the forge where these bars are made.”

“Wasn’t that iron in the cart?” asked Knut.

“Bar iron, my lad, bar iron of the best sort. That is something far finer than simple iron ore. Bar iron is my favorite food, especially when it is at white heat. Have you ever eaten bar iron?”

“Not that I can remember,” said Knut.

“Then you shall be allowed to taste something extra fine for once. See, I lay two bars in the hot furnace fire. In three minutes they will be at white heat, and you shall creep into the furnace and eat of them hot,—fresh cooked!”

“Thank you very much,” said Knut. “But give me rather a bit of bread and a bowl of sour milk.”

“Oh, come now! You don’t know what is good! Get into the furnace there. Be quick! The iron is red hot already.”

“I believe you!” said Knut. “It is almost too hot for me.”

“What nonsense!” growled the old troll. And he tried with all his might to thrust Knut into the furnace.

But the one who took to his heels at that instant was Knut. He ran for dear life, was lucky enough to find the outside door and was soon again on the forest path.

“Grandmother was right,” thought Knut. “I really must hear myself the Catechism and keep my mind on it.”

While Knut was thinking of one of the long explanations following the oft-recurring question, “What does that mean?” he suddenly felt very cold. The cause was soon evident, for behold! although it was summer, there, at a turn in the path, stood a snow mountain!

“This is remarkable,” thought Knut. “How does any one here ever get warm food?”

With these words he climbed up on the snow, Catechism forgotten and thoughts of food uppermost in his mind; and at once he tumbled down into a deep hole, and found himself in a magnificent palace of glittering ice. Starlight and moonlight illuminated it. All the great rooms were ornamented with shining ice-mirrors, all the floors were strewn with diamonds of hoar frost. Clumsy snow men rolled about on their stomachs over the floor.

Presently one stood upright. He was a long-bodied stiff creature, with icicles in his hair, icicles in his beard, a robe of thin sheet-ice, and shoes of frozen berry-juice.

“Good-day, Knut Spelevink,” said the Snow King. “Why do you look so poorly to-day?”

“Why shouldn’t I look poorly when I have had nothing but Catechism and bar iron to eat since yesterday noon?” said Knut with chattering teeth.

“You are too hot, young man, you are too hot,—that is what is the matter with you. I am the Snow King and I bring up all my subjects to be ice-clad—turn them into regular lumps of ice,—and I will do the same for you. Chief Officer of the Snow Knights, dip this boy seven times in ice-cold water, hang him on a hook and let him freeze.”

“No,—thank you,—wait a little,” suggested Knut. “Give me instead a mug of hot posset. I am already a lump of ice!”

“Chief Officer of the Snow Knights, give him a bit of frozen quicksilver, and a mug of chipped ice before you dip him,” ordered the Snow King.

Knut wanted to run away but it was already too late. The Chief Officer had grabbed him by the collar, and it would have been all over with Knut if he had not chanced to get hold of his magic pipe. Knowing that there was not another thing he could do to try to save himself but to blow on his pipe, blow he did, right lustily; and this time the sound was *pū*, *pū*.

Instantly the long-bodied troll’s features were distorted by a grin that should have represented merriment, but he was far from merry. He was boiling with rage over the resistless desire to laugh that unexpectedly took possession of him. He laughed and laughed; yes, he laughed so hard that the icicles fell from his hair and chin, his knees doubled under him, and at last his very head burst into bits! All the snow men laughed so violently that they, too, fell to pieces; the Chief Officer sank to the floor, becoming only a pool of mushy, dirty water. The ice-mirrors broke into small fragments and the whole palace changed into a wild whirl of snow!

“GOOD-DAY, KNUT SPELEVINK,” SAID THE SNOW KING.

Knut himself was so overcome by laughter that it was only by the strongest effort he could hold his lips together on the pipe and keep on blowing.

While the snow still whirled about him, he suddenly noticed that he was again upon the forest path. And lo! the next instant the air cleared, the last of the snow disappeared in swift-running streams, and summer, high summer, ruled once more.

“Now I *will* look out for myself,” thought Knut as he tramped steadily forward; and he began again to pick out from his memory an answer to the question, “What does that mean?”

He had not walked far before he found himself beside the most beautiful little wooded hill, where strawberries gleamed red all through the grass. It could not be dangerous to pick a few strawberries to eat, when one was not to have dinner until four o’clock in the

afternoon, thought hungry Knut; and he climbed a little way up the hill.

No sooner was he there than he saw that what he had taken for strawberries was nothing else than many thousand charming little elves in red clothing. They were no taller than a strawberry stem, and were dancing merrily around a green hillock upon which sat their queen who was about three inches tall.

“Good-day, Knut Spelevink,” said the elf-queen. “Why do you look so poorly to-day?”

“Why shouldn’t I look poorly when I have had nothing to eat since yesterday noon except Catechism and bar iron and frozen quicksilver? I thought that you people were strawberries.”

“Poor thing, he is hungry,” said the queen to her lady-in-waiting. “Give him a dewdrop and the leg of a gnat so that he may for once eat until he is really satisfied.”

“Thank you very much,” answered Knut. “But might I perhaps have a dish of berries and a pail of milk instead?”

“What coarseness!” said the elf-queen, highly disgusted with such a gluttonous appetite. “Do you know, you human child, that you came into our kingdom without a pass, and that you trod to death three and thirty of our faithful subjects so that there is nothing left of them but a red stain? And you have refused our gracious offer of food and shown yourself to be disgustingly greedy, besides. Forest spinners of our court, do your duty.”

Scarcely were the words spoken before a legion of long-legged spiders swung down from the trees and began to spin around Knut a network of countless fine threads. Knut did not relish this, and thought it a very poor joke. He beat away the webspinners, and tried to return to the forest path, but could not stir from the spot. His feet were tangled in an all too strong net, his arms were glued to his sides, his eyes even were plastered shut, and at last down he fell in the grass.

He could see nothing but he could hear how the whole hill rang with laughter; the elves formed a ring around him, danced over him, nipped him on the cheeks like gnats, and were beside themselves with joy over their comical trick.

“Lie there and starve until you can be satisfied with a dewdrop and a gnat leg,” said the elves.

Knut fell to pleading with them. “Listen now, little elves,” said he. “I shall be content if I may bite on a small piece of reed I have in my jacket pocket. Will not some of you be so good as to stick it into my mouth?”

The elves thought it would be inexpressibly amusing to see this greedy human child eat a piece of reed; so four of them climbed into his jacket pocket and with their united strength drew forth the magic pipe, which, with great effort, they succeeded in putting into his mouth. Thereupon they danced more merrily than ever around and over him, and the hill resounded with their delicate laughter. It was like the humming of a million swarms of gnats.

Knut no sooner felt the pipe between his lips than he began to blow; and this time the tone was *pȳ, pȳ*. At once the merry laughter came to an end, and sobbing was heard from every direction,—a sound as of a hundred thousand sobbing together, not unlike what one hears

in summer when the beating rain lashes the hill.

Knut could not see, but he knew that the elves were crying and he felt that it was a sin, no matter what they had done, to make such merry creatures sob so grievously.

“Set me free and you shall laugh again,” said Knut to the weeping elves.

Now it is the elves’ greatest joy to laugh. Indeed, they laugh away their short lives in the summer evenings knowing nothing of sorrow.

At Knut’s words, hundreds of elves began immediately to chase away the spiders, and to set free the prisoner, loosening his arms and his legs, and unplastering his eyelids. Knut could now see his tiny enemies and his anger rose again, so that he blew *pȳ* once more. Oh, how the poor little creatures grimaced and trembled! They wished so much to laugh and yet they must weep because of that frightful *pȳ*!

Knut had not the heart to tease them any longer. He changed the note to *pū* and the elves became almost crazy with joy. They leaped so high in the air that they nearly overtook the larks, and as they came down, some of them alighted upon Knut and he had to shake them off. He did not notice that one elf had fallen into his pocket and remained there.

“Good-bye, little elves,” said Knut as he hastily set off again on his way through the forest.

“I must watch out well for that other troll, the Forest King,” thought Knut. “He is said to be the worst of all. Where was I in the Catechism? Oh, yes. ‘What does that mean?’”

After a while Knut came to a swamp at the roadside where cloudberries grew in profusion.

“It can’t be wrong to pick a few of these berries as I pass by, since I sha’n’t have any food until four o’clock this afternoon,” thought Knut. To reach the swamp he had to climb over a huge fallen pine-tree, which lay in the way. Scarcely did he find himself clambering across its gnarly trunk and thick close branches than the pine-tree, to Knut’s great fright, raised itself high in air, and roared with a gruff voice:

“Good-day, Knut Spelevink. Why do you look so poorly to-day?”

Knut, hanging over the road in the pine-tree’s top, still found courage to answer:

“Why shouldn’t I look poorly when I have had nothing to eat since yesterday noon except Catechism, and bar iron, and frozen quicksilver and a gnat’s leg?”

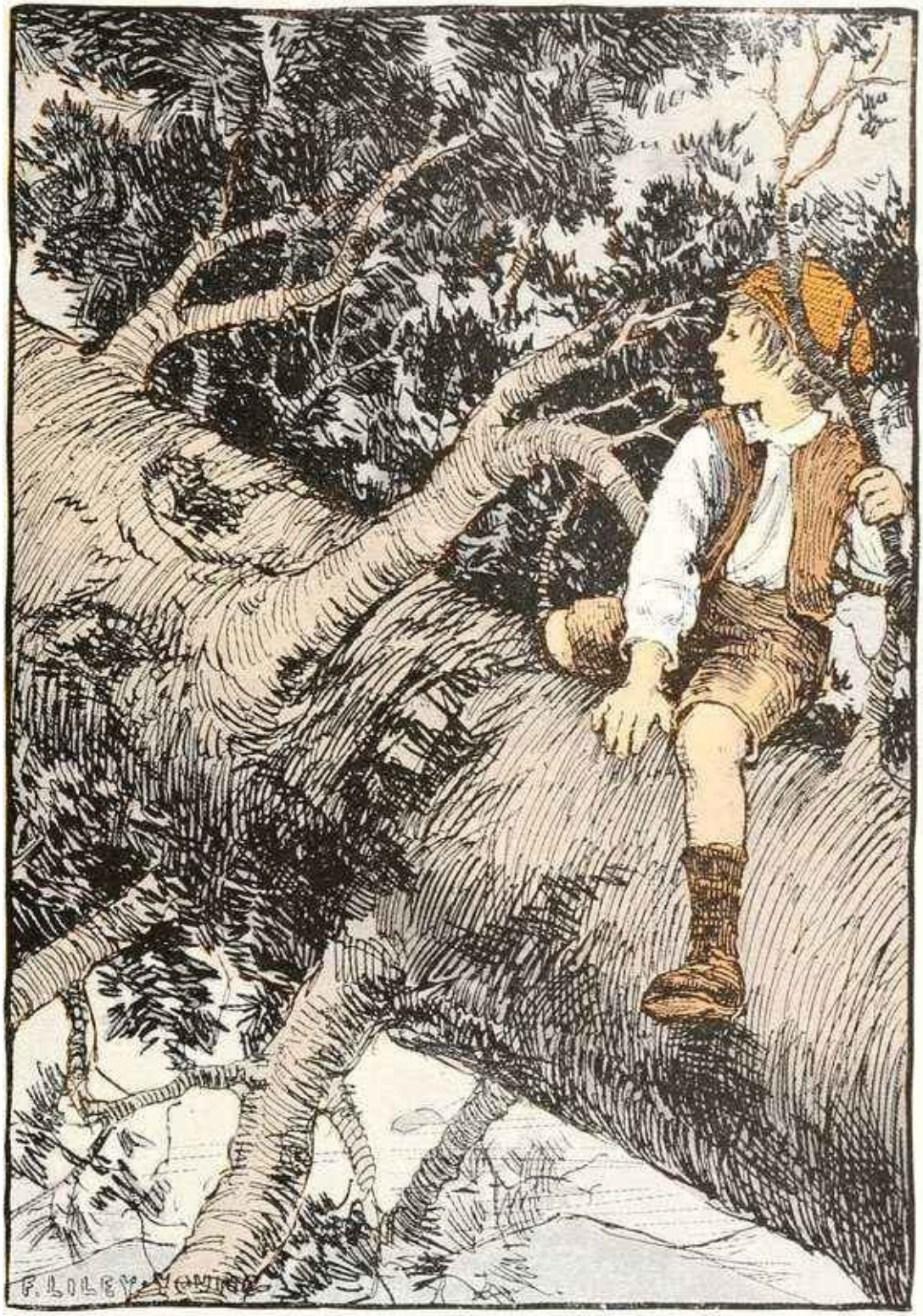
“Well, why did you interrupt my midday nap?” asked the pine-tree. “Don’t you know that I am the King of the Forest and rule over all the trees and swamps for seven times seven miles around! Here you see my palace. Haven’t I a fine place to live in?”

Knut saw nothing but a bleak wilderness, so did not answer the question but ventured to inquire most humbly if he might not get down and pick some cloudberries to eat.

“What is that? Cloudberries?” roared the Forest King. “Take a fir-tree for a ladle and ladle into yourself seven cartloads of swamp mud. That is what I call a regular meal. It is my favorite food.”

“Perhaps you would give me one load of apple marmalade, and a moderately big ditch full of wild honey instead!” suggested merry Knut.

“Apple marmalade? Humph! I shall make marmalade of you for disturbing me in my nap. My Lord Eagle, I give the boy to you. You can tear him into Scotch collops for your young ones.”



THE PINE-TREE RAISED ITSELF HIGH IN AIR.

Knut now became aware of an enormous eagle sitting in the top of the tree and staring at him with ravenous eyes. He could not jump down, for the pine-tree held him fast by his arms and legs. He should soon be torn into Scotch collops.

Knut Spelevink had never eaten collops, but however much he liked food, it seemed unbearable that he himself should become food for eagles.

The situation was indeed dangerous, but at this critical moment Knut felt something light as a flower creeping up his arm, up to his jacket collar, then to his chin and finally to his mouth. It was the little elf that had hidden in Knut's pocket, and was now creeping along and, with incredible difficulty, dragging after him the magic pipe which was seven times as long as himself.

"Blow!" said the elf.

Knut felt the pipe in his mouth and began to blow with a will. This time the tone was again *pā*.

The Forest King yawned, stretched out his branches, and mumbled something about having been disturbed in his midday nap. Then he threw himself down at full length beside the swamp, and in his fall crushed beneath his huge trunk the big ravenous eagle which the magic pipe had made too drowsy to fly away.

As Knut crept from among the branches, he heard a snoring through the forest as loud as if a hundred bears were growling their best for a wager; and he again took to his heels as nimbly as he could.

"I must certainly look out," thought Knut. "It is indeed dangerous here in the forest."

Without stopping for cloudberries or anything else, he continued to run and run while he could, but it was not easy, and by and by he had to walk slowly for the path was almost overgrown. The bramble-bushes seemed to have a spite against his trousers, tree branches caught hold of his jacket, and clung fast to it; the heather and the twigs of the blueberry-bushes pricked his bare feet But to The Ridge he meant to get and to The Ridge he did get without further adventure, arriving,—tired, hungry and blowsy,—at precisely four o'clock in the afternoon.

"Welcome, Knut Spelevink," said Mr. Peterman. "You look right cheerful this afternoon!"

"Why shouldn't I look cheerful when I have been offered feasts of hot bar iron, frozen quicksilver, a dewdrop and a gnat's leg, and seven cartloads of mud?" laughed Knut.

"Why, that is a good many courses for one day," said Mr. Peterman. "One ought not to think much about food. When any one constantly thinks of what he can get to eat, he is in danger of encountering trolls and such like, who only fool him. But perhaps you are hungry, my boy?"

Knut blinked in embarrassment, squeezed his cap between his hands and said that he was not yet exactly starved to death.

"Now that rejoices me!" exclaimed Mr. Peterman. "I ate a late breakfast and the servants have not yet had time to pluck all the birds. You just wait until eight o'clock and then you shall have some supper."

This was worse than hot bar iron and seven cartloads of mud, Knut thought; but he bit his nails and answered that he could wait, of course, adding to himself, however, "I had better say the Catechism over again to pass the time."

Now this Mr. Peterman was a great joker and was only teasing Knut. He had himself been a poor boy and knew well enough what it meant, when famished, to wait four hours more

for food.

“Knut Spelevink,” said he, “I perceive that you can do more than think about things to eat. Do you realize that conquering one’s self and being able to give up, even to the very necessities of life, what one craves here in this world is a kind of heroism? You can conquer yourself like a hero and keep your merry humor through everything. I like you, my boy, and I am sure you will make a fine man if you have enough to eat and go to school as I mean you shall; for I am going to look after you from this time on.

“But what does that mean?” continued Mr. Peterman, sniffing. “It seems to me I smell roast bird! Walk in, my boy. You shall sit with me, at my own table, and for once in your life eat all you want.”

When Mr. Peterman said “What does that mean?” Knut thought it sounded as if catechising were going to begin; but the door to the dining-room was thrown open at that moment, and there stood a dinner-table laden with smoking-hot savory food awaiting the hungry guests.

Mr. Peterman led Knut in by the hand and Knut sat at the table like a lord; and there he might have been sitting yet if he had not long since carried home the promised piece of cheese to his grandmother, and been sent to school.

As for the magic pipe, he had used that three times and once more, and it had served him well in Kiikkala Forest; but try as he might he could never again get the magic tones from it, and one day he lost it. The Catechism, however, stayed in his mind, and Knut could recite it from end to end any time he was asked.

—Z. Topelius.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Pronounced K’nūt Spā-lĕ-veenk.

[2] “Spelevink” may be translated “Merrymouth.”

THE PRINCESS LINDAGULL[1]

THE PRINCESS LINDAGULL[3]

Come, boys and girls, let us fly on the wings of the wind to the land of a thousand tales, to the home of roses and tulips! to the land where beautiful fairies build their castles in the red sunrise, and black gnomes flit around in the darkness of midnight; where the sun shines like fire over the blue mountains in Afghanistan, and the quiet water-lilies are reflected in the deep lakes; where tigers' eyes gleam between the reeds by the shore, and where sun-browned, dark-eyed people glow with hate and burn with love. Let us fly to Persia!

CHAPTER I

THE PALACE OF SHAH NADIR

There was once a Persian king whose name was Shah Nadir, and who was exceedingly rich. Large and beautiful countries with many millions of people were under his sway. Great rooms in his palace were filled with gold and precious stones; and his ships, laden with the riches of India, sailed over every sea. When he appeared in his capital city, Ispahan, he was surrounded by a life guard of a thousand men dressed in silver armor which glistened in the sun; and fifty thousand knights on most beautiful horses, with golden saddles and harnesses glittering with jewels, stood ready to speed away and conquer the world at his bidding.

But the mighty Shah Nadir was old and had no longer any desire for war and conquest. He had won many battles; many hostile cities had perished in ashes before his wrath; and many, many a knight had been pierced through by his sword in the days when his arm was young and none could withstand him.

But now he was old and weary, and liked best to recline on the luxurious purple divans of his gorgeous palace. Occasionally, however, when golden-edged clouds shielded the burning Persian sun, and a delightful breeze blew down from Mt. Zagrosch, the old Shah would seat himself in his richly ornamented palanquin borne by eight black slaves clad in silver tissue, and allow himself to be carried out that he might review his troops or watch the wild animals fighting in the arena.

Shah Nadir had many sons, because he had also many wives, as is the custom in eastern lands; but his sons brought him little joy. They were thankless and full of selfish ambition, thinking that their father lived too long, and plotting against his life and his throne. Therefore the king drove them all away from his court to distant provinces which they ruled over as viceroys. But he kept at home with himself his dear and only daughter, the Princess Lindagull, because he loved her more than all else on earth,—yes, more than all his treasures and all his riches.

Now it is well known that such a name as “Lindagull” had never before been heard in Persia, nor could it indeed be rightly pronounced by the Persians. The mother of the princess had come from the far North, no one knew exactly whence. She had been captured in her youth by African pirates, and after many adventures had been sold to the king of Persia, who, on account of her extreme beauty, took her in wedlock and loved her more than all his other wives.

This beautiful sultana, who was now dead, had called her only daughter “Lindagull,” signifying that the princess was as lovely and pure as the gold of the sun, shimmering through the lindens of the North.

And it is true that a more beautiful or purer being could not be found if you searched the wide world over than the Princess Lindagull. She had the royal bearing of her father; but in form and disposition she was like her mother. With a complexion as dazzling as Scandinavian snow and eyes as soft as August stars on a moonless night, she had also a heart noble, tender and good; and so there was no one in Shah Nadir’s whole kingdom who did not love the Princess Lindagull; for the fame of her beauty and goodness had spread through all Persia. This the old king knew full well, and his proud heart melted like wax every time he looked upon his lovely child. She was the delight of his eyes;—his comfort by day, his dream by night. One word of hers could quell his highest rage. He could not refuse her any request, even to the freedom of a slave.

When Shah Nadir thought upon his sons with their evil hearts, and of the trouble which they had made in the kingdom, he decided that none of them was fit for succession to his throne; and he made up his mind to choose for his daughter some good and noble man as a husband, and to leave to her and her descendants the inheritance of his riches and his kingdom.

The fatherly affection of Shah Nadir for the Princess Lindagull was right and beautiful; but he fell into the great error of allowing it to displace other loves and to lead him away from his duties to his subjects. So a heavy punishment came upon him.

No one could live in a more magnificent and delightful manner than did the Princess Lindagull. In a cool grove, under the shadow of high palm-trees, amid the music of rippling fountains and surrounded by the fragrance of a thousand flowers, stood the princess’s lovely castle. In its lofty apartments the sunbeams broke through windows of limpid rock-crystal. The princess rested on the most elegant couch at night; and when morning came she was led by her attendant ladies to bathe in a grand basin of mother-of-pearl into which a fountain poured forth its waters and made a deep pool, the water playfully rippling around her delicate figure as she bathed.

In the daytime she wrought exquisite embroideries with her maidens, or listened to the songs of the birds or the music of the zither, or wandered in the grove, playing like a child with the yellow butterflies and dark red roses.

The Princess Lindagull was not more than twelve years old; but in the Eastern countries twelve years makes one appear as old as sixteen in Northern countries.

It is not a good thing to live constantly in luxury, and to see one’s wishes fulfilled “at the least wink” as were those of Princess Lindagull. Many persons become proud and wilful under these circumstances; but this little princess did not. She merely became low-spirited. She did not know why it was, but the playing of the butterflies, the fragrance of the flowers, the rippling of the waters, and the zither’s sweet sounds pleased her no more. She realized that her heart was often empty, and noticed with surprise that she often had a desire to weep. She could not understand it at all, and still less could her ladies. She did not know, this little Lindagull, that as a dark frame enhances many a picture, so trial and sorrow give one’s happy days an added luster. With pleasures and naught but pleasures in her life, happiness was slipping from her. She must experience sorrow before she could know true joy.

Nevertheless, the princess believed that she had discovered the reason of her longings. It must be because she had always lived in the seclusion of her palace. She determined to go out, at least for once, into the rush and whirl of human life; and so, when her father next came to visit her, she asked that she might be allowed to see the great exhibition of wild beasts soon to be held at Ispahan in honor of the king’s sixtieth birthday. Since Shah Nadir could refuse her nothing, he granted her request; realizing, however, that it was the first time he had ever done so with absolute unwillingness.

Such a conqueror as Shah Nadir, to whom half Asia paid tribute, could not fail to have many enemies. This, however, troubled him but little, because he had long held them in complete subjection.

One of these enemies had fallen under the personal dislike of the king; and in addition to the usual ceremonies of submission Shah Nadir had required the captive foe to suffer one of the greatest indignities of the East,—that is, the shaving of his beard. Having thus contributed to the king’s vindictive amusement, the captive was set free.

SINCE SHAH NADIR COULD REFUSE HER NOTHING, HE GRANTED HER REQUEST.

This man was king of the giants in Turan (that vast, wild region of rock and desert north of Persia) and his name was Bom Bali. Once, when warring in the far, far North, Bom Bali had captured a wizard named Hirmu who could change himself into any animal whatever, and afterward resume his own natural shape.

Now when Bom Bali learned through his spies that a grand exhibition of wild beasts was to be held in Ispahan, he summoned Hirmu into his presence and said to him:

“Dog, dost thou wish to live?”

Hirmu answered, “My lord, may thy beard never grow less! Thou knowest that thy dog

desires greatly to live.”

Bom Bali said, “The first day of the month Moharrem there is to be an exhibition of wild beasts in Ispahan. Shah Nadir has sent his hunters into every mountain, even to mountains in our kingdom, to ensnare fierce creatures for the contests. Take upon thyself the form of a tiger. Be thou captured by the hunters. Steal and bring back to me the Princess Lindagull who is the pride of Shah Nadir and of all Asia.”

“Thy hound shall fulfil all thy commands,” said the Lappish wizard.

Soon after this conversation, the Persian hunters came to Turan, captured alive all the wild beasts they could from its mountains and deserts, and carried them in strong cages back to Ispahan.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] Pronounced Lin’dah-gōōl.

CHAPTER II

THE ARENA

The first day of the month Moharrem had now arrived and the arrangements had all been completed in the capital city. Many of the most dangerous and terrible wild animals from India, Arabia, Turan, and even from the Desert of Sahara, were held in readiness in the side rooms or stalls of the immense semi-circular arena which had been especially built for this occasion. More than sixty thousand spectators were seated on the numerous tiers of seats stretching all around the arena. For the safety of these a strong iron railing had been erected between the benches and the fighting-ground.

Early in the morning the whole town was in excitement. Princess Lindagull was as happy as a child. She was going to be allowed to fly as a bird out of its cage! She was going to see a play wherein the actors were real lions, real tigers;—not like those represented by men dressed in skins which they took off after they had finished the play.

The spectators were assembled and all things awaited the arrival of the king. At last he came, followed by his shining guard; and not he alone, but with him his daughter, the wondrously beautiful Princess Lindagull. According to the custom in Eastern lands she was veiled. The people could only admire her charming manners and royal carriage as she, followed by her attendants, rode in upon a little zebra which caprioled with pride at bearing such a burden.

Although no one could see her countenance every one knew by hearsay the loveliness of the young princess. All knew, too, that she by her intercession had saved the life of many an unhappy captive, and that she each day sent out her maidens with medicine and bread for the poor in Ispahan. Therefore, when she now for the first time showed herself before

the populace, there broke forth such a shout of joy from thousands of voices that its like had not been heard since the day when Shah Nadir celebrated his Day of Triumph after his grand conquest, with twenty captive kings in his train.

It is probable that the princess blushed; but no one saw it. She seated herself beside her father on the richly embroidered purple robe which was spread over the royal bench. And then began the exercises of the day.

A strange strife between a wildcat and a pelican came first. One of the pelican's wings had been clipped so that it could not fly away, and though it fought fiercely, thrusting its beak into the cat's side, the wildcat scratched and bit the big bird so savagely that the end soon came and the cat was declared the winner in the fight. Almost every one thought this contest very entertaining, but the Princess Lindagull did not like it at all.

After this, two monstrous crocodiles were brought forth in long tanks of water, and a dead pig was thrown out in front of them. The crocodiles had not had meat for a whole month and were very hungry. Nevertheless, so sleepy were they that they continued to lie still in the tanks, warming themselves in the sun. Then a boy sprang boldly forward and tickled one of the crocodiles on the nose with a switch. The crocodile thrust up his ugly mouth and began to clamber clumsily out of the tank to devour the boy. But the boy saved himself by jumping hastily aside, the crocodile not being able to turn quickly enough to catch him. When the boy had thoroughly roused this crocodile he awoke the one in the other tank; and then, swift as a gazelle, escaped through a little gate in the fence. Soon the crocodiles caught sight of the dead pig and both started forward to seize it. Falling into a rage at the idea of sharing it, they fell upon each other in a frightful contest. Each tried to force his sharp teeth through the scaly skin of the other, but without success. At last, however, one fell on its back, and the conqueror mounted its breast and got the pig.

Next followed a strife between six large Arabian dogs and an equal number of jackals from the deserts of Turan. These two animals both belong to the wolf family and though the jackal is a cowardly creature, he is formidable when once engaged in a fray. This conflict was fierce indeed. Five dogs lay prone upon the ground and only one jackal had fallen when a whistling was heard from the bench where sat the brave young Arab prince Abderraman. He whistled to incite his favorite hound, Valledivau, to further effort. The dog heard his master's voice and tackled again. The jackals fell, one after another, before his prowess, and soon Valledivau was greeted with a loud cheer as conqueror.

Then came a fight between hyenas and wolves; another between an Indian elephant and a tiger; and then a leopard and a panther were led to opposite sides of the arena. A piece of fresh meat was thrown down before them, and immediately both rushed toward it and fought for its possession. But the panther, which was stronger and more agile, came off victor, having covered his adversary with deadly wounds.

This contest being finished, a royal tiger of unusual strength and beauty was brought forth. He was called Ahriman, after the Prince of Darkness. The tiger's adversary was an immense lion, called Ormuz, after the Prince of Light. A living lamb was cast down before the two, but this was more than Lindagull could endure. She gave a sign and the trembling little creature was snatched away; and in its stead one of the dead dogs was cast before the wild animals.

The lion was hungry and immediately rushed upon the prey. The tiger, jealous by nature, also darted forward furiously, eager to deprive the lion and to get the prey for himself.

This was the most terrible contest of all. The air echoed the dreadful roaring of the angry beasts, the sand was thrown up by their paws and colored red with their blood.

They fell over each other, they separated, they rushed against each other again. All the spectators trembled, entranced. Long was the strife undecided, but the tiger Ahriman finally succumbed and Ormuz was led from the arena in triumph.

And now the performances were about to close with a grand strife *en masse*, every wild animal taking part. But the heat of the sun being intense, there was a cessation in the sports, so that the spectators might refresh themselves with cooling drinks. Many then went down upon the arena to look at the dead animals which had been left there.

Even the Princess Lindagull became curious to view the animals at a nearer point. She, who until now had seen only blossoms and singing birds, had no idea of the aspect of these dead creatures. So down she went, followed by her ladies and the guard, into the arena; and slaves spread gold-embroidered mats before her feet, so that her dainty sandals should not be soiled by the blood-stained sands.

What could she fear? All the living animals were shut up in safe cages. The most dangerous of all, the great tiger Ahriman, lay dead upon the arena. The princess went toward him, admiring his beauty and marveling at his splendid striped skin which she determined to ask her father for, that she might use it as a rug in the marble castle.

Suddenly the tiger rose up, gave a leap, sprang upon the princess, seized her in his terrible jaws, and rushed away! Shrieks of horror flew from tier to tier among the spectators, but no one had the courage to try to snatch his booty from the tiger.

No one? Ah, one there was! The valiant Prince Abderraman dashed with the speed of the wind into the tiger’s path, grasped the monster’s gory breast and struggled with him for his precious booty.

Alas, unhappy prince! His right arm was in an instant bitten almost off by the tiger, and he was thrown bleeding and helpless upon the sand; and before any one could come to the aid of the vanquished hero, the tiger had leaped over the high iron railing and escaped with the Princess Lindagull in his mighty jaws!

The anguish of poor old Shah Nadir was great; and great was the grief of all Ispahan,—indeed, of all Persia. The king’s guard and the fifty thousand knights with gold saddles rode immediately away to seek the princess. They searched through every bush and cleft in Turan where a tiger’s lair might be. Hundreds of tigers and other wild beasts fell before their spears, but fruitlessly. After looking through all Turan and half of Asia, the guard returned sorrowing. No trace of the Princess or her strange captor was to be found.

Shah Nadir tore his gray hair and cursed his sixtieth birthday. He had lost what he held dearest on earth,—his Lindagull. He ordered his people to array themselves in mourning as if a sultana had died. He also commanded that prayers should be offered in all the mosques for the Princess Lindagull’s return. And the proclamation was made that whoever restored his daughter to him, living, should receive the hand of the princess and inherit the Persian crown; whoever brought her back dead should receive as a reward sixty asses

laden with gold and costly treasure. The hope of so rich a reward led many princes and noblemen to undertake the search for the lost daughter of the king. But sooner or later all came back without having found her. All except one; and that was Prince Abderraman. He had made a solemn vow to seek for the princess fifteen years; to find and rescue her, or die.

If the princess had been carried away by a real tiger, our tale would have ended with that; because nothing is sacred to a royal tiger, not even the noblest princess in the world. But this was not the case. The wizard, Hirmu, had availed himself of the exhibition of wild beasts in order that, transformed into a tiger, he might carry out his master's commands for his own advantage. He had exchanged hearts with the tiger; and so long as the heart was not destroyed or eaten up, Hirmu could not be killed. But such a treasure as a princess he preferred to keep for himself; so, instead of taking his captive to old King Bom Bali in Turan, he carried her away, with flying leaps, to his own far-away home in Lapland.

CHAPTER III

The Captivity

It was now autumn, and dark in Lapland.

The Lapp woman, Pimpedora, sat and cooked porridge over a blazing fire in the tent, while her son Pimpepanturi sat waiting for the porridge and looking idly at his reindeer shoes. Pimpepanturi was a good-natured boy; but he was stupid, and not a little lazy besides. His father, Hirmu, had wished very much to bring him up as a wizard, but it was of no use. Pimpepanturi thought more about eating and drinking than of learning anything, —whether sorcery or what not.

The Lapp woman turned toward the boy, and said, "Don't you hear something?"

"I hear the fire crackle and the porridge bubble in the pot," answered Pimpepanturi with a long yawn.

"Don't you hear something like a roar out in the autumn night?" asked the Lapp woman again.

"Yes," said Pimpepanturi; "that is a wolf taking some of our reindeer."

"No," said the Lapp woman; "that is Father coming back. He has now been away four winters, but I hear him growling like a wild animal. He must have hurried to have reached home so soon again!"

At that moment Hirmu entered in the semblance of a tiger with the Princess Lindagull hanging from his mouth. Placing her on a heap of moss in the corner of the tent, he quickly regained his own body (replacing his own heart in it now), at the same time calling out, "Mother, what food have you? I have run a long way."

The tiger fell dead upon the moss in the tent. The Lapp woman had nearly fallen into the

porridge-pot from fright; but she recognized her husband and promised him a good supper, if he would tell her where he had been these four winters, and what kind of a grand doll he had brought home with him.

“That is too long a story to tell,” grumbled the husband. “Take care of our grand doll and give her warm reindeer milk to restore her to life. She is a fine young lady from Persia. She will bring us good fortune.”

Princess Lindagull was not dead,—not even wounded. She had only fainted from fright. When she awoke she lay (in her rich clothing of pearls and silver tissue) on a reindeer skin spread over moss, in the Lapp tent. It was dark and cold. The firelight shone on the close walls of the tent and on the Lapp woman, who gave her reindeer milk to drink. Lindagull believed herself to be in death’s domain under the earth; and cried because she, so young, should be snatched away from Persia’s sun and Ispahan’s lovely rose gardens.

IN THE LAPP TENT.

The wizard, in the meantime, hit upon a happy plan for winning Persian treasure, and said to Lindagull:

“Weep not, beautiful princess. Thou art not dead. Thou hast only been stolen away by a horrid tiger and my son, the brave Knight Morus Pandorus von Pikkuluk’ulikuck’ulu, has saved thee at the greatest risk of his own precious life. We will be thy slaves and serve thee with the utmost zeal until it becomes possible to conduct thee back to Persia.”

“What lie is that, old man?” said the honest Lapp woman in her own language to the wizard.

The wizard continued: “My wife says that if thou wilt take our son, the surpassingly beautiful and brave knight, Morus Pandorus von Pikkuluk’ulikuck’ulu, for thy

bridegroom, we will immediately conduct thee back to Persia.”

Pimpepanturi did not understand Persian; so he made great eyes when his father pushed him forward toward the princess and pressed his stiff back down with both hands that it might appear as if Pimpepanturi were bowing.

Lindagull would not have been a princess and the daughter of proud Shah Nadir if she had not felt herself insulted by such an indignity. She gazed scornfully at the wizard, and at his clumsy lout of a son,—with *such* eyes! Nay! it was not a gaze; for her eyes flashed lightning! (And Persian eyes *can* flash lightning!) Father and son both flushed dark red.

“No, that won’t do,” said the wizard. “She must first be tamed.”

Then the wizard made a partition in the tent, three yards long and two yards wide. There he imprisoned Lindagull, and gave her half a reindeer cheese and a dipper of melted snow-water every day for food.

Thus day and night passed by in darkness, for winter came quickly; and the Northern Lights shone in through the cracks of the tent.

Poor, innocent little Lindagull! Her eyes had flashed lightning once; but as in thunder-storms it is not long between lightning gleams and showers of rain, so the tears of Princess Lindagull soon began to fall. Yes, she cried as one only can cry when one is twelve years old and has been a princess in Persia and lived in rose-gardens and marble castles, guarded by the friendliest attendants, and then suddenly finds herself hungry and freezing, alone, in a dark Lapland winter. Yes, she wept as one weeps over lost youth, health and beauty;—over a lost life; as the dew weeps over a beautiful extinguished day in Ispahan’s pleasure garden.

When she had done weeping she slept. But lo! while she slept, there stood by her side the friendly old fellow whom the Finns call Nukku Matti, whom the Swedes call Jon Blund, and whom the Danes and Norwegians call Ole Luköje,[4]—(I don’t know what they call him in Persia;) and he took her in his arms, bore her to Feather Islands and laid her on a bed of fragrant roses in a lovely grotto. There all was peaceful and good. The soft moon shone over date-palms and myrtle forests, just as in Persia’s fairest springtime. Small airy Dreams danced forth to her with silken shoes over velvet rugs, and led her back to her home; to her father the old Shah Nadir, to her friendly attendants and to all the places dear to her from birth. And so passed the long winter nights.

And so passed weeks and months in the Kingdom of Dreams; because it was now night altogether. But Lindagull was patient and wept no more. The Dreams had said to her, “Wait; thy deliverer will come——”

Who would deliver her? Who should discover a path where no path lay, far away in the snow?

The Lapp woman would willingly have set her free, but dared not on account of her husband. And Pimpepanturi also had thoughts of it, but was too lazy.

At length the winter was ended. The sun dared to shine, the snow melted and the gnats danced about. Then the wizard thought, “Now she is tamed!” Whereupon he went to Lindagull and asked if she wished to travel back to Persia. If so, she need only to accept

the grandly courageous and highly admired knight, Morus Pandorus von Pikkuluk'ulikuck'ulu for her bridegroom, and the reindeer would immediately stand harnessed at the door ready to travel southward.

Lindagull did not shoot glances of lightning this time. But she thought of the young Prince Abderraman who had once bled for her on Ispahan's sand; and remembering his face she could not possibly accept Pimpepanturi. She answered nothing.

At this the wizard became very angry. He shut the Princess Lindagull in a deep, dark grotto on a mountainside, and said to her (dropping the grandiloquent style he had heretofore used): "Soon the cloudberries will be ripe. You shall keep account of the days as they pass, in this way. The first day you shall have thirty cloudberries to eat and thirty dewdrops to drink; the next day twenty-nine cloudberries to eat and twenty-nine dewdrops to drink; and so on, for each day one berry and one drop less. On the last day you shall tell me what you have decided."

So Lindagull stayed there confined in the grotto. The time of year had now come when barren Lapland shone with light both day and night; but the grotto was dark. The cloudberries and dewdrops steadily lessened in number, but Lindagull's cheeks became no paler and her quiet patience continued the same as before. What she had to forego by day Nukku Matti and the Dreams made up to her every night. They lifted off the rocky roof by their magic power so that she could see the glowing midnight sun and hear the roar of the waterfall as it hurled itself over the edge of the rock. Drippings from this waterfall fell into the grotto in the form of a delicious honey-dew, which served the starving one as refreshing meat and drink.

The thoughts of Princess Lindagull dwelt often upon Prince Abderraman. She sang ballads of the Eastern lands, and it pleased her to hear a hundred clear-voiced echoes answer back from the mountain walls. On the thirtieth day, the wizard brought her the last berry and the last dewdrop laid upon a leaf of Lapland dwarf-birch.

"Well now," he asked, "have you decided?"

Lindagull covered her fair face and answered nothing.

"There is still one day's time for thought," said the wizard, "and you shall have some company to help hasten your decision." As he said this he opened the door of the grotto, and immediately something like a great cloud streamed in. It was a swarm of Lapland's starved-out gnats. There were thousands and thousands and thousands of them, and they filled the grotto like a thick cloud of smoke.

"I wish you much joy in your new acquaintances!" said the ugly wizard, shutting the door quickly as he went out.

Lindagull did not understand his meaning. She did not know the sting of the Lapland gnat. She had never been annoyed by the Persian firefly even, for a slave had always stood at her side night and day with a long waving peacock feather to protect her from all hurtful insects. The knowledge of such suffering as the horde of stinging gnats would have inflicted was kept from her now by the kindly Dreams; who, the instant the door was shut, threw around her a close-woven veil of finest texture, from the loom of the fairies. Through this veil the gnats could not make their way. Not a drop of royal blood did they

taste, day or night. They bit with all their little power at the hard granite rocks; but finding these too juiceless, the disappointed insects settled themselves like a gray web about all the cracks and corners of the grotto.

At midnight the door of the grotto was noiselessly opened and in walked the Lapp woman, Pimpedora, with a jar in her hand, followed by Pimpepanturi carrying a burning torch and some smoked reindeer meat.

“Poor child,” said the good-hearted Lapp woman, “it is a sin to keep you here; but I dare not let you out, for if I did my husband would change me to a mountain rat. See, I have brought you some pitch-oil in my jar. Spread it all over your body; that will keep you from being stung to death by the gnats.”

“And see here, I have brought you a smoked shoulder of reindeer so that you shall not starve to death,” said Pimpepanturi, good-naturedly. “It is somewhat nibbled, because I grew so very hungry on the way; but there is still a little meat on the bone. And I stole the key of the grotto while Father slept, but I dare not let you out, for if I did Father would change me into a wolverine. But you need not trouble yourself about taking me for your husband. I’ll wager that you cannot even cook a black pudding properly.”

“No, I know I cannot, truly,” answered Princess Lindagull, and she thanked them both for their good-will, but explained to them that she was neither hungry nor gnat-stung.

“Well! Keep the pitch-oil for safety’s sake,” said the Lapp woman.

“Yes, keep the shoulder of reindeer, too,” said Pimpepanturi.

“A thousand thanks,” replied Lindagull.

Then the door was closed and she was again alone.

The next morning the wizard came, expecting that now he should surely find his captive half stung to death by gnats and completely subdued. But when he saw Lindagull as blooming as before, and saw her again look thoughtfully into his face without speaking, his wrath knew no bounds.

“Come out!” he shouted.

Lindagull stepped forth in the clear day, as delicate and bright as a fairy in moonlight. When she threw back her veil to look about, the sun shone before her, warm and radiant as on a spring morning in the blue mountains of Afghanistan.

Then said the wizard: “I have a great mind to take you to old King Bom Bali in Turan. He would load six asses with gold to get hold of you for a single day! But no; I will not give up yet. Listen to what I have decided upon. You shall be turned into a heather blossom on a Lappish moor and live only as long as a heather blossom lives, unless you will yield to my wishes. Notice the sun: it now stands low in the sky. In two weeks and a day comes the first polar frost. Then the heather blossoms die. Just before the frost comes, I shall question you for the last time.”

LINDAGULL STEPPED FORTH IN THE CLEAR DAY.

Glaring at her, he waited, as if expecting the desired answer at once; but as Lindagull again only gazed thoughtfully up at him in silence, the wizard cried out in a voice trembling with anger:

"*Adáma donai Marrabataësan!*"

which meant, "Human life! sink into the likeness of a flower!"

The wizard had learned these magic words one autumn evening from the South Wind when it came from the African desert and laid itself to rest on a Lapland mountain. The wind understands all languages, for all words are spoken in its hearing.

As the magician uttered this frightful command, it seemed to Lindagull as if all the flower-stalks on the heath grew to trees and overshadowed her; but it was she herself who sank

down to the earth. The next moment a stranger's eye could no longer distinguish her from the thousands and thousands of pale purple-pink heather blossoms on the Lappish waste. "In one day and two weeks!" mumbled the wizard, casting a malignant glance behind him as he turned back to his tent.

FOOTNOTES:

[4] Ole Shut-Eye. (The Sandman.)

CHAPTER IV

THE RELEASE

While all this was taking place, Prince Abderraman was riding the wide world over, with his sword at his side and his staff in his hand. There was not a mountain in Asia, not a desert in Africa, nor a field, town or city in Southern or Middle Europe which he had not traversed in vain. But what had he to hope for in Europe? No tigers are found there except the tame ones exhibited in the city menageries; and among *them* there was no *Ahriman*! Sorrow drew the prince back on the way to Persia, and his trusty dog, Valledivau, accompanied him.

One day the dog hunted a wild duck among the reeds of a lake, captured it and carried it alive to his master. Just as the prince was about to kill it, the duck quacked out:

"Spare my life, and I will tell you something!"

"I *will* spare your life, wonderful bird," the prince exclaimed, astonished. "What have you to tell me?"

"Ride to Lapland!" quacked the duck, at the same time escaping into the water.

Lapland! The prince had never even heard of such a kingdom. When he inquired about it and how he should find it, people answered:

"Ride northward, steadily northward; and stop not until the road ends, the forest ends, and you no more find a human dwelling with builded hearth."

"Wonderful!" thought the prince, and he followed the advice. He rode northward, steadily northward; stopping not until the road came to an end, the forest came to an end, and no human dwelling was to be seen but one lone movable tent.

It was on the last day of August, after he had ridden many long and weary miles without seeing a single trace of man, that the prince suddenly discovered, at the foot of a high mountain, this lone tent of reindeer skin. The last day of August! The sun still shone and the heather still blossomed, but the sky had changed and a cool north wind blew. When the wind ceased, then would come the frost!

The prince drew nearer to the tent that he might once more repeat his fruitless query for

the lost princess, when to his indescribable astonishment he perceived in the distance an inscription on a rock on the mountainside. The characters were very legible. He read the name of

LINDAGULL!

The wizard had carved the name there, over the door of the mountain grotto, so that he could find the place again when he moved his tent away.

The prince had dismounted, and was just about to draw his sword and enter the tent when Hirmu came out on his way to the heath.

“Give me back the Princess Lindagull or I will send you to the Kingdom of the Prince of Darkness!” shouted Abderraman.

The wizard was a crafty fellow who knew many a trick by which to save himself when in a dilemma. But he lost his presence of mind at this unexpected encounter and could think of no better way out of the difficulty than to change himself instantly into a mountain fox. With a hasty spring he fled swiftly away into the mountain. He thought thus to be safe from the prince’s sword, but he forgot the dog by whom the prince was followed!

No sooner had Valledivau seen the fox spring away than he was off on the hunt after it. The fox hid in every cleft and jumped over the mountain ravines; but Valledivau, even more agile, chased him to the highest mountain top, tore him in pieces, and ate up his heart.

This proved the death of Hirmu the wizard; for his heart had entered the fox just as it had before gone into the tiger; and when the heart was eaten up, that was the end of the wizard.

When the dog returned with his nose covered with blood, his master understood that now their common enemy had met his destruction. But where was Lindagull to be found?

The prince went to the door of the tent. The Lapp woman, Pimpedora, was cooking reindeer meat; and her boy, Pimpepanturi, stretched lazily on the soft moss, was sleeping instead of doing something useful while he was waiting for dinner.

“Woman,” said the prince, “your husband is dead. Give me back the Princess Lindagull, and no harm shall come to you.”

“O mercy! And is he dead?” exclaimed the Lapp woman, coming out of the tent, but not appearing very much distressed. “Ah, well! It’s time there should come an end to his evil arts. As for Lindagull, we must seek her out there among the heather blossoms. My husband has changed her into a heather blossom, exactly like many thousands of others; and to-night the frost will come and then all will be over with her!”

“Ah! dearest little Lindagull! Must you die to-night and I not be able to discover the stalk on which you wither?” cried the prince, throwing himself down among the heather on the boundless moor, where a thousand times a thousand pale, purple-pink blossoms, exactly like each other, awaited death.

“Hold!” said the Lapp woman. “Despair not! Now occurs to me the saying with which Lindagull was enchanted! I thought he planned a wrong against the child, and crept back of a big stone to see what my husband was going to do. Then I heard him say:

“*Adáma donai Marrabataësan!*”

“Ah!” sighed the prince, “how can that help us when we do not know the words which loosen the enchantment?”

Pimpepanturi, waking and thinking that the dinner had been long enough deferred, walked out of the tent to look for his mother. When he heard the prince’s words, he scratched his forehead thoughtfully a few times and said, “Father used to change the saying around when he wanted to disenchant any one.”

“Yes, so he did!” said the Lapp woman.

Prince Abderraman, with terrified eagerness, gave a great leap, landed on a rock, and shouted as loudly as he could over the limitless heath:

“*Marrabataësan donai Adáma!*”

The words rang out through the air without effect. No blossom arose. The sun was sinking rapidly toward the horizon and the wind was growing still.

The prince, fearing he should not give the right turn to the magic command, repeated it time after time saying the words in different order and with different expression. But in vain.

At last, at a certain way of saying the words, it seemed to him that a bit of heather on a distant mound had lifted itself up to listen, but sunk immediately back, undistinguishable among the multitudinous blossoms.

“The sun is going down,” said the Lapp woman. “If we do not quickly find the right manner of saying the words, the frost will come, and then it will be too late.”

By this time the sun’s red beams had sunk quite down to the horizon. All nature was silent. A cool and damp evening mist, the forerunner of the frost, spread itself like a veil over moor and mound. All living things which had ventured to bloom for a short time in Lapland were now doomed to death.

Prince Abderraman was pallid with terror. His voice choked, and he could scarcely articulate the one untried arrangement of the magical words:

“*Marraba donai Adáma taësan.*”

Behold! On the distant hillock, a heather blossom raised itself on its stalk. It grew as rapidly as does the lily which the Afghanistan fairies cause to spring forth in the red dawn, when they tap on the blue mountains with their magic wands.

The mist lay all around the mound. Out of the mist arose a slender figure, and as the prince approached the mound, running breathlessly, Lindagull came toward him pale with the escape of death. Prince Abderraman had found the right order for the words just in time to save her life.

The Princess Lindagull was borne to the tent in the arms of Abderraman, and her strength

soon returned under the Lappish woman’s kind care. Pimpedora was happy; and Pimpepanturi in his gladness forgot his longed-for dinner, which was sadly burnt in the pot.

OUT OF THE MIST AROSE A SLENDER FIGURE.

The hero-prince, picturing to himself the perils of the princess and the wonder of her recovery, swooned with rapture. His first words as he recovered were a prayer to Allah; and then he asked Lindagull:

“How did it feel to be changed into a heather blossom?”

“Just as if one sank back into the cradle of childhood and knew no more of the world than to eat, drink, and be happy in God’s love,” answered Lindagull.

“And how did it feel when you came back to life again?”

“Just as when one awakes on a clear morning after a deep and pleasant slumber.”

“To-morrow shall we go back to Persia?”

“Yes,” answered Lindagull. “But the good woman and her son have had a share in saving the poor captive Lindagull. We will take them with us and they shall have a palace in Ispahan.”

“No; many, many thanks,” answered Pimpedora; “I like my reindeer tent in Lapland better.”

“Are there snow and reindeer in Persia?” asked Pimpepanturi.

“Snow is found only on the highest mountains,” said the princess; “and instead of reindeer we have horses, antelopes, and gazelles.”

“No, thank you heartily, then,” said Pimpepanturi. “You can go with pleasure, and marry whom you wish. Nowhere in the world is there to be found so good a land as Lapland!”

It was of no use trying to dispute that question with the Laplanders, so the prince and princess set out the following day without them. Before departing they presented the Lapp woman and her son with their gold-embroidered clothes and with many jewels; receiving in return gifts of Lappish garments made from reindeer skin.

The Lapp woman put the costly Persian robes carefully away in birch bark, and rejoiced because with them she could buy a whole field of grain.

Shah Nadir sat alone in Ispahan’s golden palace and groaned with grief. He could not forget his lost daughter. His wicked and ungrateful sons had raised a rebellion against him, and were marching with a large army toward the capital to cast their father from the throne.

While affairs were at this juncture the Grand Vizier announced that a young foreign couple, dressed in reindeer skin and followed by a dog, wished to prostrate themselves at the king’s feet.

Shah Nadir never refused audience to a stranger,—(perhaps such a traveler would know something of his dear lost child!)—and so the two foreigners were led into his presence.

The young man cast himself down before the feet of the Shah; but the young woman, without ado, threw her arms around his neck; at which proceeding the Grand Vizier’s beard became green with consternation!

But Shah Nadir, under her Lappish hood of reindeer skin, recognized his child so long sought and so hopelessly bewailed. “Allah! Allah!” cried he in joy; “now I am willing to die!”

“No, my lord king,” broke out Prince Abderraman. “Now shall you live to rejoice with us, and to win back your kingdom again.”

When Shah Nadir learned about his daughter’s captivity and of the loyal service which the prince had shown her, he immediately proclaimed Prince Abderraman successor to his throne, promised him the Princess Lindagull in marriage, and sent him in command of the fifty thousand knights with gold saddles to fight the rebellious army.

It was not long before the prince won a glorious battle, took the rebel sons prisoners, and came back victorious to the rejoicing people of Ispahan.

Then was the wedding of Prince Abderraman and Princess Lindagull celebrated with great state (but without a wild beast fight!) and they lived long and happily after. But one day every year,—and that was the thirty-first of August, the date of Princess Lindagull’s deliverance,—the royal pair showed themselves (to the great wonderment of magnificent Persia) in the Lapps’ outlandish clothes of reindeer skin, so that in their prosperity they should not forget the great escape and blessing of the past.

In his old age, Shah Nadir had happy little grandchildren to sit upon his knee. The wicked sons ended their careers as swineherds for old King Bom Bali in Turan. The dog, Valledivau, lived to be thirty years old and died of the toothache (!); his skin was stuffed and kept in great honor. But about Pimpedora, and Pimpepanturi who bore for a season the proud name of Morus Pandorus von Pikkuluk´ulikuck´ulu, nothing has since been heard in Persia. Probably they have never found a better land on the earth’s broad expanse than Lapland.

—Z. Topelius.

SIKKU AND THE TROLLS

In the time of Charles the Twelfth there lived, in North Finland, a poor herd-boy called Sikku. His name should have been Sixtus, but the tongue of the Finn is so unmanageable that some names baffle it, and in that case he simply makes them over to suit himself,—to the form that he can best pronounce; so for that reason, Sixtus became Sikku.

Sikku was so poor that he had neither cap nor shirt nor shoes; but not in the least did this trouble him. He was always gay and happy, and while tending his cows at the foot of Sipuri Mountain, sang songs from morning till evening or blew on his wooden horn, taking great delight in hearing the mountain echoes mimic him.

Sikku had an old jack-knife, which counted for riches to him; and besides that he rejoiced in a comrade named Kettu, a long-nosed, long-tailed yellow dog, faithful to Sikku, but with a testy temper toward other folk.

The two stood by each other in plenty and in need, through weal and through woe. Kettu drove the cows together when they strayed, Kettu watched them while Sikku took his midday nap, and Sikku shared with Kettu the hard bread that was, for both, the usual breakfast and dinner. With the bread, they always had a fine soup of clear spring water, and almost every day a delicious dessert,—strawberries, raspberries, Arctic blackberries, blueberries, red whortleberries, wild cherries, or berries from the mountain-ash.

Kettu scorned such things, but Sikku enjoyed them all in the course of the summer, and thought he fared like a prince. When the weather was very rainy and cold, however, he would begin, toward evening, to long for the porridge pot. Oh, that nice warm porridge pot, that he could scrape and scrape, eating all the porridge there was left anywhere in it! Kettu got the porridge ladle to lick, and stole Miss Pussy’s milk from the broken earthen dish which stood on the floor near the water-tub, though he seldom got the milk without a battle!

The master of Anttilla Farm was stingy and grasping and his wife was like him, but what mattered that to Sikku? He had his freedom, and the only thing he was responsible for was that all the fifteen cows returned to the farm every evening to be milked. Not another care in the world had Sikku, and for a time all went well and happily.

One day he climbed up the highest peak of the mountain while Kettu watched the cows in the valley. There was a wide beautiful view over forests, marshes, and small lonely lakes, but no houses were in sight. Sikku had never in his life thought that the world could be so big! His heart warmed within him as he saw the sun sparkle on the lakes between the dark branches of the pines. When a cloud sailed over the sky, one gleam after another flashed, vanished in shadow and shone out anew in another spot. Sikku sang and sang, blowing his wooden horn between times. The sounds rang out merrily up there on the mountain and turned into a little song:

“Oh, Sipuri Mountain! Tu-tu´! Falidu´!
Tu-tu´! Falidu´!
In all the whole world not a boy can be found

Who is tending his cows, with such grandeur around.
Tu-tu´! Falidu´!”

While he was singing, there suddenly appeared before him a hideous little old woman who said to him, “All the land that you see shall be yours if you will be my boy and obey me.”

“Oh, ho!” exclaimed Sikku, observing the woman closely and recognizing her as the troll woman from Allis Farm.

“Give me the white cow, Kimmo,” continued she, “and say when you go home that the wolf caught her.”

Sikku’s eyes grew big and he answered: “Indeed I will not. I am no such rascal as that!”

“Then blame yourself for what happens,” said the troll woman; and with that she hopped, crow fashion, down the mountain.

Kettu began to howl from the valley. Sikku sprang down and found that Kimmo had sunk in the wet marsh so that only her horn stood up above the soft, yielding ground. He tried to drag her out, but he was not strong enough, and when he had worked over her until he was worn out, he had to give up and go home driving only fourteen cows, while the bell cow lowed and Kettu howled.

Poor Sikku told of the disaster and got a hard thrashing; and the next morning was sent to his work without anything to eat, not even the dry bread usually given to him for the noon meal.

He sang no songs that day but sat hungry and sorrowful at the foot of the mountain. By and by, the long-bearded old troll man from Allis came to him and said:

“Give me the black cow, Mustikka, and say that the wolf tore her to pieces, and I will give you all the land you can see from Sipuri Peak.”

“OH, HO!” EXCLAIMED SIKKU, RECOGNIZING HER AS THE TROLL WOMAN.

“Indeed I will not. I am no such rascal as that!” answered Sikku, offended.

“Blame yourself then for what happens,” said the troll; and with that off he went, turning somersaults all the way.

Kettu began to bark. Sikku ran at once to the herd and found Mustikka lying dead among the trees on a hillside. She had eaten some poisonous plant and could not be restored to life. Sikku, distressed and crying, made a birch-bark cone, in which he brought water from the spring and dashed over her head; but it was of no use. He must go home with only thirteen cows and report the misfortune. This time he was shut up in the cellar without food for three days. The fourth day he was sent out with the thirteen cows and the usual

lunch-bag. Being very hungry he no sooner reached the gate than he opened the bag, but found in it only a gray stone!

Sikku drove the cows toward the mountain, ate berries in the forest, and sat down, full of grief, on a stump right in the midst of the herd, so that no further ill might befall. Then there came to him the pretty little troll maiden from Allis, who held out toward him a fresh wheaten roll, patted his thin cheek, and said:

“Give me the red cow, Mansikka, and tell them when you go home that a bear tore her to pieces, and you shall have this nice fresh roll and all the land you can see from the top of Sipuri besides.”

Sikku was so hungry that he could have swallowed a roll of moss! He looked at the wheaten roll, he looked at the pretty little troll maiden and had to bite his tongue to keep from instantly answering yes. But the troll maiden laughed and that offended Sikku, and he answered:

“Indeed I will not. I am no such rascal as that!”

“Blame yourself then for what happens!” said the troll maiden; and with that, fluttering like a magpie, away she went into the forest.

Sikku, fearing a new misfortune, turned at once to Mansikka who had been grazing right near him. She now lay stretched at full length upon the grass with a snake hanging fast to her nose; and in a short time she was dead from the poisonous bite. What did it matter that Sikku killed the snake? Its bite had killed the cow, and home must he go with only twelve cows, and tell of this new disaster.

“Decide yourself what punishment you deserve!” said the angry farmer. “Shall I roast you in the bath-house furnace or would you rather be thrown into the deep well?”

“I couldn’t help it,—it wasn’t my fault!” said Sikku, weeping bitterly. “Three times they offered me all the land I could see from Sipuri Peak if I would steal a cow for them and then lie to you; but that of course I would not do.”

“They did, did they?” said the farmer. “Very well. That is my land that you see from Sipuri Peak and I will promise it to you, if you, before the next full moon, lead to my farm nine beautiful cows in the place of Kimmo, Mustikka, and Mansikka, lying dead over there by the mountain. But what shall I do with you now? You must have some kind of punishment.”

“Bind him hand and foot, lay him on the highest peak of Sipuri Mountain, and let him eat his fill of the view of the land you promise him,” said the farm mistress, who could not forgive Sikku for the loss of the three cows.

This suggestion pleased the farmer. Sikku was bound hand and foot, and placed on the tip top of the mountain; and everybody was forbidden to give him anything to eat or drink. The remaining twelve cows were driven by another boy to graze in fields the other side of the farm, far away from the mountain.

There lay Sikku, bound hand and foot, and half dead from hunger. The forest wafted fragrance, the lakes glittered in the sunshine, twilight came, night came, the dew fell, the thrushes sang, the stars twinkled, and the moon looked down upon the poor boy; and it

seemed as if no one in the whole world thought or cared about him.

But high over mountain and forest, over the lakes, the dew, the thrushes and even the stars and the moon, there is nevertheless One who sees all the oppressed and miserable upon earth; and He saw even poor forsaken Sikku and sent to him a faithful friend. Who was the faithful friend? Who should it be but Kettu?

Kettu could have porridge to eat at the farm; he could steal milk, as was his custom, from the cat's broken dish by the water-tub; but though he was hungry, Kettu chose rather to dash up the mountain in search of Sikku, to lie at Sikku's bound feet, and lick his bound hands. Sikku was so glad to have his dog with him that he once more felt happy and content; and soon both fell asleep in the moonlight.

Now there was at this time,—in the reign of Charles the Twelfth,—a great war going on in the southern part of the land. The people in North Finland did not know much about this war, but lived in peace behind their thick forests. Suddenly an enemy's fleet appeared on their seacoast and bands of warriors were put ashore. They spread over the land, fighting and plundering everywhere.

On this very night, one of these fierce warrior bands had come to the region near Sipuri. They attacked, burned and plundered Anttilla Farm, took the master himself prisoner, and drove forth all his cattle as part of their booty.

Afterward the warriors separated into smaller groups, to continue their plundering in other places. And certain Cossacks were left behind to guard the prisoners and the stolen cattle, until it was convenient to put them on board the ship.

Early in the morning, Sikku awoke to find that Kettu was biting a man in the leg. Two wild-looking, heavily-bearded men had climbed to the mountain top to get a good view of the land and see whither they should now betake themselves. Finding a young boy, tied and helpless, they pitied him,—hostile though they were,—freed him, gave him bread from their knapsacks and took him along with them.

Reaching their horses, which had been left tied to trees at the foot of the mountain, one of the men lifted Sikku to his horse's back, the other drove Kettu away so that he should not follow them, and off they galloped, not stopping until the riders neared the shore of a large lake.

Much booty and many prisoners had been brought here, but the Cossacks were so eager to continue their raids that they left only six men to guard what they had already taken, the others riding forth again immediately.

When night came on, the six Cossacks began to be afraid lest some of the land's own people should attack them in the dark. Therefore, they got into a small boat, taking Sikku with them, and rowed out to an island in the lake, so that they might pass the night in safety. They left the cattle to graze on the shore, while the prisoners and even the six horses were still securely bound to the trees.

Sikku lay among the Cossacks on the barren island. The night was dark, the great waves

dashed against the island's pebbly beach, and a strong wind blew toward the mainland. Sikku was wakeful, and heard the long-drawn, regular breathing of the weary Cossacks as they slept beside him. Five of them lay there, but the sixth had stayed on guard in the boat.

Sikku raised himself slowly and listened. One of the Cossacks began talking in his sleep and tossed his arms about, so Sikku lay down again; but still he could not sleep.

After a while he sat up once more, and since everything was quiet, he stole out from among the sleeping Cossacks and went silently down to the boat at the shore. Here the trusted guard was also asleep, and slept so heavily that he knew nothing of Sikku's doings, although Sikku shoved the boat gently out into the water, sat down in the stern and let the wind drive the boat toward the mainland.

Still the Cossack watchman slept as the boat sped quietly on. He had ridden hard, many, many miles. Little wonder that he slept like a log!

When Sikku felt the boat grate against the land, he climbed softly out, took his old knife from his pocket, and cut the ropes that bound the prisoners. The Cossack still slept. The released prisoners could scarcely believe that they were free. They followed Sikku to the boat, and bound their enemy with the same ropes by which a moment ago they themselves had been bound.

Now at last the Cossack was awake, but too late. He had been made his captives' captive.

"Kill him at once! And then let us row to the island and kill the others while they sleep!" shouted one of the newly freed men.

"No," said Sikku, who recognized his master's voice. "Let us rather take their booty and hurry it and ourselves to safety."

"They have burnt my house and barns, and stolen everything I had," said the farmer savagely.

"They freed me and gave me food," said Sikku, who seemed suddenly like a grown man.

Most of the men agreed with Sikku. The Cossacks were not killed, some of the land's folk rode away on the enemy's horses, others drove herds of cattle off to safe hiding-places in the forest, and each person carried away as much as he could of the enemy's plunder. Sikku had chosen his share and was well pleased with it.

Several days after, the warrior bands returned from their raids and took to their ships again.

Then the folk came out from the depths of the forest and from the mountain caves where they had sought refuge in the hour of danger, and many came from their burnt farms. They gathered at the church to consult together as to what was best to be done now. For one thing, they must decide the fate of the six captive Cossacks,—the five on the island having also been captured.

"Kill them! Kill them!" shouted several.

"No, give them to Sikku," said others. "He captured them."

So the six Cossacks were given to Sikku who exacted the promise from them that they would not fight against Finland any more. Then he let them go, free and unharmed.

The farmer of Anttilla and his wife had settled themselves in a tiny hut on their estate which the enemy, in their headlong haste, had not burned.

“Alas!” said the wife, the first evening they sat in their new poor home. “If we only had our beautiful cows now!”

“If we only had!” said the farmer.

At that moment they saw a little bareheaded, barefooted boy come from the hillside grove toward the hut, driving before him, with the help of a long-nosed, yellow dog, a herd of nine beautiful cows.

“Isn’t that Sikku? And Kettu?” exclaimed the farmer.

“And are not those our cows?” cried the farm mistress.

Yes, it was Sikku; and Kettu; and those were the Anttilla Farm cows that the robbers had taken away with them. Three had been slain, but the nine that were left, Sikku had asked for as his share of the booty.

“Here I come, bringing you nine beautiful cows!” shouted Sikku. He would fain have swung his cap for joy, only he had no cap.

“Darling boy!” “Is it really you?” exclaimed the farmer and his wife at the same time. Then they embraced Sikku, and patted the cows again and again in their delight.

Kettu had already disappeared in the hut to see whether Miss Pussy’s broken dish still stood by the water-tub. Miss Pussy hissed and spat at him and so there was again war in the land.

“Are you hungry, Sikku?” asked the mistress. Her conscience was very uneasy.

“No, I thank you,” answered Sikku. “I was thinking of something else. It is not yet full moon.”

At these words, the farmer fumbled with his big ears in embarrassment and distress, remembering his rash promise. Here was Sikku with nine cows, and true enough, the moon was not yet full. Well, Sikku had proved himself a fine fellow;—a promise was a promise;—they needed the cows sadly. One might as well make the best of the situation.

“Listen now, Sikku,” said he. “Let us be good friends. What could you do with so much land while you are so little? Serve me faithfully for seven years, and I will then keep my promise and give you all the land you can see from Sipuri Mountain.”

“Done!” said Sikku.

So Sikku served faithfully for seven years at Anttilla Farm, grew tall and strong, got shirts and caps and shoes, married the farmer’s daughter, the kind Greta, and received with her not only all the land to be seen from Sipuri Mountain, but a fine new farmhouse besides.

Kettu and Miss Pussy lived many years and, when they died, were both buried at the foot of Sipuri Mountain.

And the three trolls? Oh, yes. Well, there is a big crows’ nest at Allis Farm, in which live three crows. They can give you news of the trolls, if any one can; but people say, you know, that crows are not to be relied upon in the least.

—Z. Topelius.

SAMPO LAPPELIL

There was once a Lapp and a Lapp woman. The Lapps are a people who live north of the Swedes, the Norwegians, and the Finns, far, far up in the north. They have neither fields, nor real forests, nor regular houses, but only great barren bogs and high mountains, and small huts, which they crawl into through a hole. The country of the Lapps is strange. Half the year it is light most of the time, for the sun never sets in the middle of summer, and the other half of the year it is dark most of the time, and the stars shine all day in winter.

Ten months of the year it is winter, and then the little Lapp men and the little Lapp women drive over the snow in small boats, which are called pulks. There is no horse harnessed before the pulk, but a reindeer. Have you ever seen a reindeer? It is as large as a little horse, is gray in color, has high branching horns, a stooping neck, and a pretty little head with great clear eyes. When it runs at full speed, it goes flying over mountains and hills like a rushing wild wind, and its hoofs snap as it dashes along.

There was, as I have said, a Lapp and a Lapp woman. They lived far up in Lapland, in Aimio, which lies near Tenojoki or the Tana River. (You can see it on the map of Finland, where Lapland can be found like a great nightcap on Finland's high head.) The place was barren and wild, but the Lapp and his wife felt sure that nowhere on the whole earth could you see such white snow, such clear stars, and such beautiful Northern Lights as at Aimio. There they had built themselves a hut such as Lapps usually live in. No large trees grew in that region,—only slender birches, that were more like bushes than trees—so where could they get wood for a house? Instead, they took long, thin sticks, stuck them into the snow, in a circle, tied the upper ends together, hung reindeer skins over the sticks, so that altogether it looked like a gray sugar-loaf, and then the hut was finished. In the top of the sugar-loaf they left a hole, through which the smoke could escape if they lighted a fire, and there was another hole in the southern side through which they could crawl in and out. The Lapps thought it was pretty and warm and were very happy in it, though they had no other bed and no other floor than the white snow.

The man and the woman had a little boy whose name was Sampo, and that means "luck" in Lapland. But Sampo had two names. Once some strange gentlemen in great fur coats had come and stayed in the hut. They had with them little hard, white pieces of snow, such as the Lapp woman had never seen before, which they called "sugar." They gave Sampo a few pieces of the sweet snow, and they patted him on the cheek and said: "Lappelil! Lappelil!" which means "little Lapp." They could not say anything else, for they could not talk Lapp. And then they traveled away farther north, to the Arctic Ocean and the northernmost point of Europe which is called the North Cape. The Lapp woman liked the strange gentlemen and their sweet snow, and she began from that time to call her boy "Lappelil."

"I think Sampo a much better name," said the man, rather vexed. "Sampo means 'riches,' and I tell you, Mother, don't spoil the name! For, some time, Sampo will become the king of the Lapps, and reign over thousands of reindeer and fifty Lapp huts."

"Yes, but Lappelil sounds so pretty," said the woman. And she called the boy "Lappelil,"

and the man called him “Sampo.” He was, however, not christened yet, for at that time there was no priest within a hundred miles. “Next year we will go to the priest and let him christen the boy,” the man used to say. But next year something came in the way, and the journey did not take place, and the boy did not get christened.

Sampo Lappelil was now a fat little fellow seven or eight years old, with black hair and brown eyes; he had a snub nose and a broad mouth just like his papa’s; in Lapland a face must have such features if it is to be thought really fine. Sampo was not a stupid boy for his age; he had his own little snow-shoes and on them he danced over the high hills near the Tana; and his own little reindeer which he harnessed before his own pulk. You should have seen how the snow blew about him, as he rushed off over the ice and the high snow-drifts, so that nothing of the boy was to be seen but a tuft of his black hair!

“I shall never feel quite safe until the boy is christened,” the Lapp woman often said. “The wolves may get him some fine day here on the mountains, or he may meet Hiisi’s reindeer with the golden horns—and then may God protect the poor creature who is not christened!”

Sampo, hearing this, began to wonder what kind of a reindeer it could be that had golden horns. “That must be a beautiful reindeer,” said he. “I should like to drive it once; then I would travel to Rastekais!”

Rastekais is a very wild, high mountain that may be seen from twenty-five or thirty miles away.

“Don’t you dare to talk so, naughty boy!” said the mother, and scolded him. “It is just on Rastekais that the trolls are, and there lives Hiisi.”

“Hiisi—who is that?” asked Sampo.

The woman became confused. “Now, he must ask about everything, that boy,” she thought to herself. “Why do I stand here and talk about such things so that he can hear? But at least I will frighten him away from Rastekais!”

And so she said: “Dear Lappelil, never go to Rastekais, for there lives Hiisi, the great mountain king who eats a reindeer in a mouthful, and swallows boys like gnats.”

Sampo began to wonder when he heard this; but he said nothing. He thought to himself: “It must be good fun to see such a horrid creature as the mountain king,—but only from a long way off!”

It was now already three or four weeks after Christmas, and it was still dark in Lapland. There was no morning, noon, nor evening. It was always night; and the moon shone, and the Northern Lights crackled, and the stars twinkled brightly all the time. Sampo began to feel dull. It was so long since he had seen the sun that he had almost forgotten what it looked like; and when any one talked of summer Sampo only remembered it was the time when the gnats were so bad and tried to eat him up. Therefore he did not care if the summer stayed away forever, if only it would grow light enough to go about easily on snow-shoes.

One day about noon the Lapp said: “Come here, and you shall see something!” Sampo crept out of the hut in the dark, and looked toward the south, for it was in that direction

that his father pointed. There he saw a little red streak way down on the horizon.

“Do you know what that is?” asked the Lapp.

“That is Southern Lights,” said the boy. He had a good idea of the points of the compass, and knew very well that you could not see Northern Lights in the south.

“No,” said his father, “that is the forerunner of the sun. To-morrow or the day after we shall see the sun itself. Only look how strangely the red light shines on the top of Rastekais.”

Sampo turned to the west and saw how the snow was colored red far away on the dark, wild top of Rastekais. Immediately it came into his mind how very pleasant it would be to see the mountain king—from a long way off.

Sampo thought about this all day and half the night. He tried to sleep, but could not. “Yes,” he thought, “it would be fun to see the mountain king once!” He kept thinking about it, until at last he crept quite softly out from the reindeer-skin under which he lay, and out through the door. It was so cold that the stars snapped and the snow crackled under his feet. But Sampo Lappelil was not afraid of cold. Besides he had a leather jacket, leather trousers, Lapp shoes, and a fur cap and mittens. Thus fortified, he looked at the stars, and did not know exactly what he should do next.

Then he heard his little reindeer scratching in the snow not far off. “What if I took a drive?” thought Sampo.

No sooner said than done. Sampo harnessed the reindeer before the pulk as he usually did, and started off over the great bare snow-field. “I will drive a little way toward Rastekais, only a little way,” he thought to himself. So he drove down over the frozen river and up on the other side of the Tana, and then was in the kingdom of Norway, for the Tana River is the boundary. But that Sampo did not know.

You, who are reading this story of Sampo Lappelil, did you ever sing: “Run, my brave reindeer”? Do you know the beautiful songs of the dear, good Bishop Franzén, whom all Sweden and all Finland love, and have you ever seen the title-page of the fourth volume of his songs? There you can see a Lapp boy driving with his reindeer over the snow, and that is just Sampo Lappelil. So he sat and sang to himself:

“So short is the day,
The road is so long,
Oh! hark to my song:
Let us hurry away!
The wolf pack lives here,
Rest not, little deer!”

As he sang he saw in the dark the wolves running like gray dogs around the pulk, and barking after the reindeer; but he did not mind that; he knew that no wolf could run as fast as his swift reindeer. Ha, how they went over stones and hills! The wind whistled in their ears! Sampo Lappelil only rushed on. The reindeer’s hoofs snapped, and the moon in the sky raced with him, and the high mountains seemed to rebound, but Sampo Lappelil only rushed on. It was pleasant to drive; he thought of nothing else. Then it happened that in a sudden turn over a hill, the pulk upset and Sampo fell out and was left lying in a snow-

drift.

But the reindeer did not notice that; it thought that he still sat in the pulk, and so ran on, and Sampo had got his mouth so full of snow that he could not call. There he lay, like a lemming that had lost a foot, in the dark night, in the midst of the desolate wilderness where no one lived for many miles around.

SAMPO WAS LEFT LYING IN A SNOW-DRIFT.

Sampo was frightened at first—that you cannot wonder at. He worked himself out of the snow, and found he was not hurt in the least, but what good would that do? As far as he could see in the pale moonlight, there were only snow-drifts and snow-fields and high mountains. But one mountain reached high above all the others, and Sampo guessed that

he was now near Rastekais. Here lived the horrible mountain king, who ate a reindeer in one mouthful, and swallowed boys like gnats! Now Sampo Lappelil grew frightened indeed. Ah! how gladly would he have been at home with his father and mother in the warm hut. But how should he get there? Would not the mountain king come and swallow him with his trousers and mittens, as if he were but a poor little gnat?

Well, there sat Sampo Lappelil in the snow and the dark, on Lapland's barren mountain. It was so strange, so frightful to see the high black shadow of Rastekais, where the mountain king lived! But it did not help him to sit there and cry, for his tears froze in a moment, and ran like peas down on his furry reindeer-skin jacket. So Sampo got up from the snow-drift to run himself warm.

"If I stand here I shall freeze," said he to himself. "No, rather will I go to the mountain king. If he eat me, then he will eat me. But I will tell him that it would be better that he should eat the wolves here on the mountain; they are fatter than I, and he will have less trouble with their skin than he would with my furs."

Sampo began to climb up the high mountain. He had not gone far before he heard something come stealthily over the snow, and immediately afterward a great furry wolf sprang out close to his side. Sampo started, his little Lapp heart beat loud, but he determined to behave as if he were not afraid. "Don't jump in my way," he called to the wolf. "I have an errand to the mountain king, and if you wish to keep your skin don't do me any harm!"

"Well, well, take it easy," said the wolf, for on Rastekais all the animals could talk. "Who are you, little fellow, working yourself through the snow?"

"My name is Sampo Lappelil," answered the boy. "And who are you?"

"I am the mountain king's highest master-wolf," answered the monster, "and have been running from mountain to mountain to bring his people to the great Sun Festival. Since you are coming my way, you can sit up on my back and ride to the king."

Sampo climbed up on the wolf's furry coat, and they rushed away over clefts and precipices.

"Sun Festival—what does that mean?" asked Sampo.

"Don't you know?" said the wolf. "After it has been dark in Lapland all winter, and the sun for the first time rises in the sky, then we celebrate. All the animals and all the trolls collect here on Rastekais, and on that day no one is allowed to do any harm. That is lucky for you, Sampo Lappelil, for otherwise, you see, I should have eaten you up a long time ago."

"Is there the same law for the king, too?" asked Sampo.

"Of course," said the wolf. "For one hour before the sun rises and for one hour after it sets, the mountain king dare not touch a hair of your head; but you must take care, after that time; for if you are still on the mountain, then a hundred thousand wolves and a thousand bears will rush upon you, and the mountain king will seize the first one he can get hold of, and then it will soon be over with Sampo Lappelil."

"Perhaps you will be so kind as to help me back, as soon as there is danger?" asked Sampo

with a beating heart.

The wolf began to laugh, for on Rastekais the wolves can laugh. “Don’t imagine that, dear Sampo,” said he; “I will be the first to stick my claws into you. You are a fine fat boy; I see that you have been fattened on reindeer’s milk and reindeer cheese. You will taste very good for an early breakfast.”

Sampo wondered if it would not be as well to jump down from the wolfs back immediately, but it was too late; they had come to the top of the mountain, and he saw a wonderful sight. There sat the great mountain king on his throne of sky-high rocks, looking far out over mountains and valleys into the dark night. On his head he wore a cap of white snow-clouds; his eyes were like the full moon when it rises over the woods, his nose like a mountain top, his mouth like a mountain cleft, his beard like long icicles; his arms were as thick as the thickest fir-tree, his hands were like pine branches, his legs were like coasting-hills in winter, and his great fur coat like a snow mountain. If you ask how any one could see the mountain king and his people in the middle of the night, then you must know that the snow cast a light upon everything, and that over the sky the most beautiful Northern Lights played.

Around the mountain king sat millions of gray mountain trolls and brownies, so small that when they ran on the frozen snow they left no more trace after them than a squirrel leaves. They had collected here from the farthest ends of the earth, from Nova Zembla and Spitsbergen and Greenland and Iceland—yes, from the North Pole itself, to worship the sun, as savages from fear worship the devil; for the trolls do not like the sun and would prefer that it should never rise again after it has once set behind the barren mountains. Farther away stood all the animals of Lapland in long close rows—a thousand and again a thousand bears, wolves, and lynxes, the good reindeer, the little lemming, and the lively reindeer-fleas; but the gnats had not been able to come—they were frozen to death.

All this Sampo Lappelil saw with wonder. He climbed down quietly from the master-wolf’s back and hid himself behind a great stone to see what would happen.

The mountain king raised his high head so that the snow flew around him; and the beautiful Northern Lights stood like a halo about his forehead, and shot in long star-shaped, pale-red rays out over the blue night sky; there was a crackling and a roaring like that a forest fire makes when its flames leap up against the crowns of the pine-trees; now the Lights spread themselves out, now they drew together again; now the brightness was very dazzling, now it grew pale, then one gleam of light after another shot like a sudden shower out over the snow-covered mountain. This pleased the mountain king. He clapped his icy hands, and the echo from the mountains sounded like thunder, and the trolls whistled with joy, and the animals round about screamed with fear. This pleased the mountain king still more, so that he called out, loud, over the wilderness:

“So shall it be! So shall it be! Forever winter and forever night! That is what I like.”

“Yes, so shall it be, so shall it be!” cried the trolls as loud as they could, for they all liked winter and night better than summer and sunshine.

But among the animals there arose a murmur of talking, for all the beasts of prey and the lemmings thought as the trolls did, while the reindeer and the other animals would have found no fault with the summer, if they had not suddenly happened to think of the gnats in

Lapland. It was only the little reindeer-flea who really wanted the summer; he cried as loud as he could: “Your Majesty, we came here to wait for the sun!”

“Will you be quiet, you wretched insect!” growled the white bear, close beside it. “It is only an old custom that makes us collect together here. But it will be pleasant; the sun will stay away forever. The sun is put out! The sun is dead!”

“The sun is put out! The sun is dead!” murmured all the animals, and a shiver went through all nature.

The trolls from the North Pole laughed so that their caps flew off, and the great mountain king raised his voice of thunder and called out over the wilderness: “So shall it be! So shall it be! The sun is dead. The whole earth shall fall down and worship me, Hiisi, the king of everlasting winter and of everlasting night.”

That provoked Sampo Lappelil, as he sat behind the stone, and he came out and shouted with his little saucy voice: “You are lying, mountain king! you are lying, as tall as you are! Yesterday I saw the forerunner of the sun in the sky, and the sun is not dead! Your beard will still melt when it comes midsummer.”

At these words the mountain king’s brow grew as dark as a black cloud, and he forgot the law and stretched out his terrible long arm to crush Sampo Lappelil. But at that moment the Northern Lights grew pale, and a red ray sprang up in the sky and shone straight into the mountain king’s ice-cold face, so that he was suddenly dazzled and let his arm fall.

And now the sun’s golden rim could be seen lifting itself slowly and majestically up over the horizon, and it lighted up the mountains and wildernesses, the snow-drifts and clefts, the trolls and beasts and the brave little Sampo Lappelil. Then all at once a glow spread over the snow, as if many million of roses had rained down upon it, and the sun shone into all their eyes, yes, and into all their hearts, too. Even those who had rejoiced because the sun was dead were now really glad to see it again. It was funny to witness the trolls’ surprise. They stared at the sun with their little gray eyes, from under their red caps, and while it stayed they became against their will so beside themselves with joy that they stood on their heads in the snow. The terrible mountain king’s beard began to melt and to drip down like a running brook over his great white coat.

While they all stood looking at the sun with feelings so different, the first hour had almost slipped away, and Sampo Lappelil heard one of the reindeer say to its little one: “Come, come, dear child! We must go now or we shall be eaten up by the wolves!”

Then Sampo, too, remembered what he had to expect if he waited there any longer. And as he saw by his side a reindeer with beautiful golden horns, he jumped up on its back, and they rushed off at a gallop over the steep mountain.

“What can that strange noise be that we hear behind us?” asked Sampo after a while, when he had got a little used to the violent ride.

“That is the thousand bears who are coming after us to eat us,” answered the reindeer. “But don’t be afraid; I am the mountain king’s own magic reindeer, and no bear has ever gnawed my heels.”

When they had ridden a while longer, Sampo asked: “What can that be that breathes and

moans so strangely behind us?”

The reindeer answered: “That is the hundred thousand wolves who are coming after us at full gallop to tear you and me to pieces. But don’t be afraid; no wolf has ever beaten me in a race here in the wilderness.”

They rode on a while longer; then Sampo asked: “Is it thundering in the mountains there behind us?”

“No,” said the reindeer, and began to shake in all his limbs. “That is Hiisi, the mountain king himself, who is coming with giant steps after us; and now it is all over with both of us, for him it is impossible to escape.”

“Is there no help?” asked Sampo.

“No,” said the reindeer, “there is nothing to do now but to try to get to the parsonage off there near Enare Lake. If we get there we are saved, for the mountain king has no power over Christians.”

“Oh,” said Sampo, “run now, my brave reindeer, over mountain and valley, and I will give you golden oats in a silver manger!”

The reindeer ran and ran; it was a life-and-death race! And they had but just reached the priest’s house when the mountain king came up outside and knocked so hard on the door that every one thought the whole house would fall down. “Who is that?” asked the priest.

“It is I!” answered a voice of thunder outside.

ON THE BACK OF THE REINDEER WITH GOLDEN HORNS.

“Open the door for Hiisi, the mountain king. There is an unchristened child within, and all heathen belong to me!”

“Wait a minute, until I put on my surplice and collar, so that I can receive so distinguished a guest with proper dignity,” answered the priest.

“Hurry, then!” growled the mountain king; “hurry, or I will kick the walls down.”

“Immediately, immediately, sir,” answered the priest.

But at the same time he took a bowl of water and christened Sampo Lappelil with all proper ceremony.

“Well, are you not ready yet?” growled the mountain king, and he lifted his terrible foot to kick the house down.

But the priest opened the door and said: “Begone, you king of night and winter, for with this child you have nothing to do! The sun of God’s grace shines over Sampo Lappelil, and he belongs not to you but to God’s kingdom!”

Then the mountain king grew so furious that he burst on the spot and turned into a terrible snow-cloud, and it snowed so hard that the snow reached up over the roof of the parsonage and they all expected to be buried alive. But when the morning came the sun shone on the snow, the snow melted away, and the parsonage and all in it were saved; and there was no sign of the mountain king. Every one thinks, however, that he still lives and reigns on Rastekais.

Sampo Lappelil thanked the priest and borrowed a pulk from him. Then he harnessed to it the reindeer with the golden horns and went home to his father in Aimio. There was great joy when Sampo Lappelil came back so unexpectedly. But how he became a great man and fed his reindeer with golden oats from a silver manger, that is another story, which it would take too long to tell now. It is said that since that time when Sampo had such a narrow escape, the Lapps have never, as before, put off from year to year having their little children christened—for who would like to see his child eaten up by the terrible mountain king? Sampo Lappelil knows what it means to run that risk! And having heard Hiisi’s mighty footsteps, he knows, too, precisely what it is when thunder resounds in the mountains.

—Z. Topelius.

Translated by Margaret Böcher.

A LEGEND OF MERCY.

A LEGEND OF MERCY

On one side of the lake there was a large town; on the opposite shore stood a little lone cottage. The snow whirled over the frozen lake in great clouds and the wind was very keen; for it was winter and Christmastide in the world.

At the cottage there was poverty inside, but riches on the roof. Up there stood the great golden sheaf of grain about which the birds of heaven gathered joyfully for their Christmas feast, while inside the cottage food was scanty, as usual. The peasants' little children, however, listened happily to the birds' joyous twitter from the housetop, and took great delight in seeing the fine prints of the sparrow's tiny feet in the smooth snow roundabout.

"If we had threshed that grain, instead of giving it to the sparrows, we might have had fresh wheaten rolls for the children for Christmas," sighed the peasant's wife.

"Don't you know that the merciful are blessed?" asked the gentle old peasant with a kind glance at his dissatisfied wife.

"But to let the birds of the air eat our bread," she sighed again.

"Yes, the birds. Furthermore, what matter, even if it were the wild beasts of the forest? Should we not show mercy? Besides, I have saved enough to be able to buy four fresh rolls and a can of milk for Christmas. Let us send the children across the lake to the town with their sled. They will easily get back with the things before evening."

"But suppose they meet a wolf on the ice," suggested the mother.

"I will give Arvid a big club," said the father. "He will get along all right, having that."

So it happened that Arvid and his sister Hanna went to town to buy the treat of white rolls and milk. By this time the snow was piled in great drifts on the ice, and the children had difficulty in dragging the sled, so that when they turned toward home the early darkness was already beginning to settle down. They trudged through the snow as fast as they could, but the drifts were much higher than before, and darkness came on in earnest while they still had quite a long distance to go.

As they struggled on, something black moved in the darkness. When it came nearer, the children saw that it was a wolf.

"Don't be afraid, Hanna," said Arvid. "I have a good club." And with these words, he raised it threateningly.

The wolf was now close beside the children but made no attempt to harm them. He only howled, but the howling was extraordinary for it sounded as if he uttered words in it,—words that the children could understand. "It is so cold, so cold," howled the wolf. "And my little ones have nothing to eat. Give me some bread for them in the name of mercy."

"Poor little things!" said Hanna. "We will give you *our* two rolls for them, and we ourselves will eat hard bread to-night, but father and mother must have their Christmas treat."

“Many thanks,” said the wolf as he took the two fresh rolls and glided away.

The children strove on through deeper and deeper snow, but in a little while they heard some creature treading heavily behind them. It proved to be a bear.

The bear growled out something in his own language, and at first the children could not find out what he meant although they tried hard; but the bear kept on growling and finally, strangely enough, the children understood. The bear, too, desired a Christmas gift.

“It is so cold, so cold,” growled the big creature. “All the water everywhere is frozen and my poor little ones have nothing to drink. Be merciful and give me a little milk for them.”

“How is this?” asked Arvid. “Why are you not asleep in your den for the winter, as other bears are? But that is your affair. We will give you our half of the milk for your little ones. Hanna and I can very well drink water to-night, if only father and mother have something good for Christmas.”

“Many thanks,” said the bear, as he took the milk in a birch-bark cone which he carried in his fore-paws. Then with slow, pompous steps, he lumbered away into the darkness.

The children waded along through the drifts still more eagerly now, for they could see the Christmas lights shining through the windows of their home; but they had not gone far before an ugly owl came flapping along beside them.

“I will have bread and milk! I will have bread and milk!” screamed the owl, stretching out her long claws to scratch the children.

“Oh, ho!” said Arvid. “If that is the kind you are, I shall have to teach you to be polite.” So saying, he gave the owl such a clever blow on the wings with his club that she flew screaming away.

Soon after this the children were at home, gaily beating the snow from their clothes in the little entry.

“We have met a wolf!” shouted Hanna.

“And given a bear some milk!” added Arvid.

“But the owl got a taste of the club!” laughed Hanna. Then they told all their adventures.

The parents looked thoughtfully at each other. How wonderful! To think that their children had shown mercy even to the wild beasts of the forest! What would happen next? What did it all mean?

It was now supper-time. The peasant family gathered at the table upon which, besides the usual poor fare, was the half portion of the expected treat—all that the children had brought home.

Arvid and Hanna wished to eat only dry bread and drink only water, so that their parents might have the Christmas goodies; but the parents would not allow that. They joyfully shared with the children the two rolls and the half-tankard of milk which were such luxuries.

But as they ate, they noticed something very marvelous. However often they broke and broke pieces from either of the rolls, the fresh delicious wheaten rolls never grew smaller;

and however often they poured milk from the tankard into one bowl after another the milk never grew less!

While they were wondering greatly over this, they heard a scratching at the little window, and behold! there stood the wolf and the bear with their fore-paws against the window pane. Both animals grinned and nodded in a knowing, friendly way. An owl could be heard flapping behind them in the darkness, and calling out in a hoarse voice to Arvid:

“Sometimes hits
Sharpen wits.
Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!
Not from need
But from greed
I begged of you.
Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!”

THERE STOOD THE WOLF AND THE BEAR.

Then her hoarse cries died away in the distance, and the two beasts, after a little more grinning and nodding, disappeared from the window.

The peasant and his wife and the children understood now that a blessing rested upon their Christmas food because it had been shared in mercy with those that needed it; and they finished their meal in wonder and thankfulness.

On Christmas morning when they went to get their breakfast of dry bread and water, not expecting to have anything else, they found to their amazement that both rolls and milk were as fresh as when the children bought them,—and with no sign that the rolls had ever been broken or any milk used! And all that day it was the same! There were not only

riches on the roof, but joy and plenty inside the peasants' cottage, where the children feasted and sang as gaily as did the sparrows, fluttering about their Christmas sheaf of golden grain.

—Z. Topelius.

ANTON'S ERRAND

OR

THE BOY WHO MADE FRIENDS BY THE WAY

ANTON’S ERRAND

OR
THE BOY WHO MADE FRIENDS BY THE WAY

Far to the South lies a beautiful land. High forest-clad mountains lift themselves toward the sky, and between them spreads a wide fruitful valley. A mighty river rushes southward singing of courage and joy, and from the mountains the merry brooks come hurrying along, the one faster than the other, as if racing to see which would get down first.

In the fields, the grass is tall and full of flowers, the grain waves like a billowy sea, and the fruit trees bend beneath the weight of rich fruits. But more than all else, grapevines grow here. The vines twine themselves in an endless wreath through the valley; and in the long arcades hang millions of clusters of grapes cooking themselves ripe in the sun’s heat.

From olden times, an industrious folk lived in this valley cultivating their fields and pruning their vines. They gathered themselves together into small towns which were dotted here and there in the valley’s green expanse like birds’ nests in a spreading tree. On the surrounding heights rose the proud castles where the nobles lived. They tyrannized over the farmers in the valley, and if the poor peasants made the least complaint, down from the cliffs came the barons, like eagles from their eyries, and dug their claws into their defenseless prey.

Many, many years ago, a powerful baron named Rudolf Reinhold Rynkebryn lived in one of the largest of the mountain castles. He had, by force and violence, made himself Lord over one of the cities in the valley, and all who lived there must toil and moil for the hard master on Falkensten.

When the grain was ripe and the meal ground, many hundred bags of it must be carried on horses’ backs up to the mountain castle; and when the grapes were ripe and the wine pressed out, many hundred barrels must go the same way.

So had it been for many years, but at last the peasants grew tired of this state of things, and gathered together for consultation.

“There is no sense in it,” said an old man. “Here we plow and sow and reap and grind so that Rynkebryn can swallow the bread that belongs to us and our children.”

“Yes. Isn’t that the truth?” said another. “Isn’t it a sin and a shame, also? We plant vines and prune them in the sweat of our brows and when the grapes are ripe, the wine we make must go to Falkensten so that Rynkebryn and his men may drink themselves crazy and descend like birds of prey upon us poor peasants. We should not endure it any longer.”

“No, we *will* not endure it any longer!” shouted all in chorus. Then it was determined that they should send Rynkebryn a letter, in which they renounced their allegiance to him.

For the future he might get his bread and his wine wherever he chose. Neither bag nor barrel should go from the valley to Falkensten.

Oh, yes! To come to this decision was easy. Nor was there any great difficulty about getting the letter written. The Mayor himself wrote it; and upon the letter he set the city's great seal which bore a sheaf pierced by a sword.

The difficulty was to find a messenger to deliver the letter, for every one well knew that he who carried such a message to the Baron of Falkensten would not return alive to the valley.

All to whom the mission was proposed immediately raised objections. One had no clothes, another had pains in his legs, another could by no means be spared from home, and another was sure he could never find the way up there. Oh, there were many difficulties about taking that particular letter to the Baron!

Finally someone said, "Why not send little Anton?" And immediately all shouted, "Yes, that is an excellent plan. Anton can go with the letter."

Anton was a poor boy, usually called "little Anton." He had neither father nor mother nor sister nor brother, but had been brought up among other poor children of the town in the Cloister School. Now that he was twelve or thirteen years old, he must take care of himself, and since he could do small jobs of all sorts, people made use of him, here, there and everywhere.

He helped to dig in the vineyards, to lay stone and mortar when a house was to be built; he ran with messages and letters out to the country roundabout; and as he could manage the most spirited horse, he drove, too, if there were no other driver to be had. He often took care of the babies while their mothers were out at work; he carded wool and picked hops; he sang at funerals and played at weddings.

Indeed, there was scarcely anything for which they did not use little Anton. He was quick of foot and light of hand, true as gold and silent as a locked box, so every one liked him and gave him plenty to do.

The Mayor himself went to little Anton and told him that the whole city had decided to entrust to him a very important errand. He was to go to Falkensten with a letter to Baron Rynkebryn. Of what was in the letter the Mayor said nothing, for if he had, little Anton would have realized that he was risking his life.

The others realized it very decidedly, but they reasoned thus: "Little Anton is a poor lone child, with no parents to mourn him, and if anything happens to him,—well!—we must hope that all is for the best. It is surely better that he should perish than that we who have wives and children should. Besides, the town is full of these little poor boys whom we can get to help us when we need them."

Anton took the big letter, turned it over and over in his hands, and asked if there would be any answer.

The Mayor became a little embarrassed and took a pinch of snuff. He could not look Anton straight in the face as he replied, "Answer? No, I do not think there will be any answer."

“So I can come right back?” queried little Anton.

“Yes, indeed. Deliver the letter and take to your heels as soon as you can.”

The next day, early in the morning, Anton put on his thickest shoes, stuffed a couple of rolls and a small bottle of wine into his pocket, slung an old gun over his shoulder and started on his long tramp from the valley to Falkensten. He could see the castle high, high up like an eagle’s nest, on the top of a cliff from which it looked out over three different valleys, many, many miles away.

It was a hot August day. The sky was without a cloud and the sun stood and smiled its broadest on the vineyards where the grapes steamed and cooked in the heat. Vines were planted on the lowest slopes of the mountain, so here Anton could walk up the stone steps between the walls. He turned and saw the city which looked shining and gay in the sunlight. The church was white as snow, and the hands on the clock glittered like gold.

By and by the vineyards ended and Anton came to some fields. The grass had already been cut for the second time and the fields were deserted. Not a person was to be seen.

Next he came to the forest of chestnut-trees. From here everything in the valley looked very small; houses and farms, and even the church, looked like toys spread out on a green carpet. The sun glowed hotter and hotter, and Anton took off his jacket, and walked on, in his shirt-sleeves. The road grew steeper and steeper. He was hot and thirsty so he sat down in the shade of a rock and took out his bottle of wine.

When he had refreshed himself, he leaned back, humming a little song and idly striking the ground with a switch he had broken from a bush.

As he sat there, he heard a soft rustling at his side and saw a little lizard come from the wall of rock and creep forth among the ferns. It wriggled its supple little body out into the sunshine and then lay perfectly still in front of Anton, gazing at him with its clear eyes.

“That was a beautiful song you sang,” said the lizard. “Would you be so kind as to sing it once more? I am foolishly crazy over music.”

“I can certainly do that much for you,” answered Anton, and hummed the song again. He kept the switch behind him now, not wishing the lizard to see that he had it.

The lizard lay perfectly still, listening, but when the song was finished the little creature said to Anton, “Come, Anton, what are you really thinking of? I think your dark eyes have a sly look in them. Surely you are not, by any chance, intending to harm me?”

“Oh, I don’t know!” said Anton, smacking his whip. “But I do think it might be amusing to give you a hit with this so that you snapped in two like a piece of glass.”

“Do you think so?” asked the lizard drawing its tail close. “Well, well! How strange! It seems to me that would not be at all amusing. I think it is much more amusing to live, to lie here and enjoy myself in the sunshine.”

THE LIZARD LAY PERFECTLY STILL, LISTENING.

Anton began to laugh, but continued to beat the ground with his switch.

“Listen, Anton,” said the lizard. “I have really such a very short time to live. Let me go in peace. Don’t do me any harm. Perhaps I can be of use to you some day. You may be sure you will never regret it if you let me go.”

“What could such a forlorn little creature as you ever do for me?” asked Anton, as he got up. “But since you ask me so prettily, I will let you run. Suppose we see which of us will get to Falkensten first.”

“Oh, I shall, I shall!” hissed the lizard; and it hurried away through the grass, calling back, however, “Farewell, Anton; you may be sure I shall not lose sight of you.” With that, the

lizard disappeared and Anton resumed his toilsome journey.

The sun mounted higher and higher and the whole sky was like a sea of burning light. The houses and churches in the valley looked now like many tiny white stones scattered over the ground. The path, steeper and steeper, led through a grove of larches, and here little Anton must again rest. He took two big swallows from his bottle, and wiped his hot face with his shirt-sleeves.

Hearing a strange cracking sound over his head and looking up, he saw a little squirrel that sat on the branch of a neighboring larch, eating the seeds from a cone. Between the mouthfuls he spat the shells down, chattering softly meanwhile as if to say, “What an excellent breakfast this is! Truly a delicious breakfast!”

Anton took his old gun quietly from his shoulder, got down on his knees, and crept carefully along. He held the gun by its barrel. With the butt end he could easily enough hit the little squirrel. But the alert creature, which was watching him with keen, anxious eyes, saw him before he had raised the butt end, and with a couple of big leaps, reached a higher branch of the tree.

“What are you going to do to me?” asked the frightened squirrel, poking his little head out. “What is it you really want to do to me?”

“Oh, I should just like to have your tail!” said Anton. “It would be a nice fur collar for me when the autumn storms howl from the mountain tops.”

“But I would so much rather keep my tail myself,” said the squirrel, raising it as high as he could in the air. “You see I was born with this tail, and therefore it is mine; and so, if you kill me and take it away from me, you are a thief,—a thief,—a real little tail-stealer!”

“You must stop saying such rude words,” said Anton, lifting the gun. “If I can only catch you, your tail will be mine.”

“No, stop, stop!” shrieked the squirrel, springing about in the branches. “It is horrid and ugly and disgusting of you. I don’t want to be crushed with the butt end of a gun. It is ugly of you to think of it, ugly, ugly! And to be broken off in the middle of my nice breakfast to be murdered is truly most unpleasant. Would you like that, little Anton?”

The squirrel still leaped and sprang from branch to branch in fright. Anton laid his gun on the ground.

“Oh, little Anton!” piped the squirrel. “Let me alone! Let me hop around, a happy living squirrel. That is so much better and pleasanter!”

“Well, hop then,” said Anton, throwing the gun over his shoulder again. “I am afraid I should dream of the frightened look in your eyes. And now we might see which of us can get to Falkensten first.”

“Oh, I shall, I shall!” called the squirrel, wild with joy. “If you are going to Falkensten, I shall go, too. No harm shall happen to you while I am able to hop.” With that, the squirrel set off with long leaps from tree to tree, and soon disappeared; and Anton walked on up the mountain.

The air became more and more sultry. The sky, which had been bright blue, grew white in

some places, and the white ran together like thick milk and heaped itself in close masses. The sun was no longer to be seen. The clouds changed to gray and violet and dark-blue, with glowing edges, and thunder began to roll among the mountains. Anton could not see the valley now at all. The lofty peaks towered one behind another, and there seemed to be nothing else in the world. The path grew steeper and yet steeper.

Little Anton began to be frightfully tired. He had to lie down again and again on the ground, groaning with weariness. Not a drop more of the refreshing sour wine did he have to quench his thirst,—the bottle had been drained long ago.

Suddenly he heard a rushing sound, and lo! from the rock bubbled a white foaming stream of water, so fresh and living that one could not understand how it could gush forth from the dead stones. Anton knelt down and drank eagerly from his hands. Never had he found any draught so wonderfully reviving.

When he had quenched his thirst, he thought he would resume his journey, but at that instant he caught sight of a dove flying toward him. It was a charming wood-dove, with blue-flecked wings and a little round head. The dove must, like him, have been thirsty, for she flew directly to the foaming water and bent over it to drink. “That is a lovely bird,” thought Anton; and he took his gun noiselessly from his shoulder. “I can surely hit her.”

He had laid the gun to his cheek and was taking aim, when the dove lifted her head from the water and fluttered her wings.

“Why should you shoot me, little Anton?” she asked. “You have quenched your thirst and I have quenched mine. The spring has been good to both of us. Why should you do evil to me?”

“You have such beautiful wings,” said Anton. “It would look fine if I stretched you out flat and fastened you on the barn door.”

“It looks much finer when I float upward toward the sunlight,” said the dove. “The mountain path is difficult for you, little Anton; but you are at least free to pursue your way. Let me fly mine. Here in these solitudes no one should do another harm.”

The dove looked so gentle and talked in such friendly tones that Anton felt thoroughly ashamed of himself.

“Yes, fly away, little dove, fly wherever you will,” said he, waving his hands. “We might see which of us two will get to Falkensten first.”

“Oh, I shall!” responded the dove, lifting her wings. “But if it is to that fierce Baron you are taking a message, I prefer to wait outside on the tower.” Then up she flew.

The sky was now one dark mass of thunder-clouds. The thunder rumbled among the mountains; the green fields on the heights shone out like emeralds against the dark blue haze beyond. All creatures had become wonderfully silent; not a bird sang, not an insect hummed. Anton went forward with dragging step, and the dove floated silently above him,—a white speck against the dark sky.

But what was that high up there on the cliff? It was a little chamois that stood with all its four feet close together on a point of rock, and looked about.

“Hurrah! I shall get you!” thought Anton as he cocked his gun; but the chamois with a couple of nimble bounds sprang farther up the mountain.

“Ho, ho! That won’t help you any!” said Anton, running nearer to the rocks where the chamois stood. “I am a good shot, let me tell you; and I must have prey of some sort to take with me from the mountain.”

“But why should you kill me?” asked the chamois, bounding a little farther away. “What harm have I ever done to you? Does it annoy you that I stand here and look at the view?”

“No, but you have such handsome little horns. I should like to put them up over my door as a sign that I had conquered you.”

“For you to conquer me would be easy,” said the chamois. “You have a gun, and I have nothing. But I had always believed that the mountain was made for us both.”

Anton made no reply but scrambled hastily up the rocks to get nearer the chamois.

“Oh, Anton, little Anton! let me alone!” called the chamois, making the longest leap it could. “I would truly rather have my horns on my head than over your door! Cannot you understand that? If you love your freedom, let me keep mine.”

At that moment the thunder pealed with a frightful crash among the mountains. Anton became altogether uncomfortable and put his gun down. “Leap where you will, then,” he called to the chamois. “Perhaps we might see which of us can get to Falkensten first.”

“Oh, I shall, surely,” said the chamois, starting off with a big leap. “But I will wait for you outside the castle wall, and if you need my help you will know where to find me.” And with these words the chamois vanished.

“Shall I never, never reach Falkensten?” groaned Anton. He was dead tired and began to think he had gone astray, but suddenly, at a turn in the path, the castle stood before him as if it had sprung up out of the earth.

It was of the same color as the rocks upon which it was built, and how big and high and thick-walled it was! It had but few windows scattered here and there on the side toward the path. From the tower waved Rynkebryn’s banner,—a fiery red flag on which was a black falcon. The drawbridge that led over to the castle was drawn up, and over the chasm that was between the rocks on which the castle was built and the other rocks, there was only a rough narrow bridge, made of slender branches placed side by side.

Anton stood still. It would be dangerous to go over such a bridge without any kind of a railing to hold fast to; but he must deliver the letter. Just then he heard something whispering at his feet:

“Since you can’t glide like me, and creep,
Be wise; cross not the chasm deep.”

It was the little lizard that came hurrying toward him with this warning.

“But how should I then get the message to Baron Rynkebryn?” said Anton. He had already started across the bridge.

And now something came hopping along at his side. It was the squirrel with his red tail high in the air like a flag, and with wide-open eyes; and while he hopped about Anton’s

feet he chattered:

“Since you can’t hop like me, and climb,
That castle shun; be warned in time!”

“But how then should I attend to my errand?” Anton was now half-way across the bridge.

As he stood there, the dove came flying and floating on her wings above the abyss.

“Since you can’t float and fly like me,
Turn back, turn back and homeward flee,”

said the dove, flying near Anton’s cheek.

“Yes, that I will do when once I have given the Baron his letter,” said Anton, “but I don’t turn back when I am half-way over the bridge, nor flee homeward until my errand is done.”

So he proceeded. The thin branches in the loosely-made bridge creaked and bent under his feet. On both sides of him was the dizzy chasm. He had a queer pain in his heart and everything turned black before his eyes; but he pressed his hands against his breast where he had hidden the letter, kept his gaze straight ahead, and walked on with firm step. There! Now he could draw a long breath, a sigh of relief; for he was at last safely across the frail bridge,—on the other side of the chasm, and under the castle wall.

At first he could see no opening in the wall; it stretched up as hard and impenetrable as the rock upon which it stood, but when Anton stole around it, he found a small door,—an iron door with many locks and fastenings. He picked up a stone and knocked hard on the door, but no one answered. Everything around him was still as death.

Suddenly he heard a strange rumbling sound, which he thought at first might be the echo of the thunder among the rocks; but no. The sound came from the hall where Baron Rynkebryn and his men sat and drank, and roared with laughter loud enough to make the castle tremble.

“TURN BACK, TURN BACK,” SAID THE DOVE.

Since no one seemed to hear Anton, he lost patience, took his gun which was still loaded and shot it off. He could hear the echoes answer from mountain to mountain and at last die away; but now there were signs of life in the castle. A man opened a shutter high up in the tower and called, “Who shoots under Falkensten Castle? Is it friend or foe?”

Anton put both hands to his mouth and shouted back, “A friend! A friend! A messenger from the valley!” Then he heard the man slam the shutter to, come with a clatter down the stairs, trudge across the courtyard, and begin to rattle the locks and bolts of the iron door. At last the door opened slowly and a gruff-looking warrior stood before little Anton.

“What do you want?” asked the warrior. His voice sounded like a bear’s. “What have you

to say to the Lord of Falkensten?”

“That I must tell to Baron Rynkebryn himself,” answered Anton. “The message is to him and none other.”

“Listen to the young sparrow that dares to come into the falcon’s nest!” said the warrior, but he opened the door just wide enough for Anton to slip in.

As the boy turned in the doorway, he caught sight of the chamois which stood on a stone beside the chasm, stretching its head forward.

“Yes, here I am!” called the chamois. “I will keep on the watch by the wall, so you will know where to find me!”

At that instant the heavy iron door clanged shut after Anton, and he was at last inside the walls of Falkensten. His steps echoed with a hollow sound in the small courtyard; and it was dark and damp as a cellar, inside the castle on the great winding stairs that led to the baronial hall. Little Anton felt his heart beating like a hammer and choking him, when the warrior opened the door to the hall and let him pass in.

At the end of a long oaken table sat Baron Rynkebryn and his retainers, drinking. Their eyes were bloodshot like those of an angry bull, and they laughed and shouted so that the high rafters shook. Little Anton squeezed himself into a corner near the door and stood, hat in hand, waiting until Rynkebryn should speak to him.

Long did he wait, for the Baron was wholly absorbed in his carousing. The wine flowed over his beard; he sat with both arms leaning on the table and laughed till his bones rattled. Suddenly his eye fell upon Anton.

“Who is that little whipper-snapper shivering there by the door?” he asked, pointing with his big finger. So Anton had to go forward. He bowed many times as he crossed the room, each bow deeper than the last, and when he reached the Baron, he took the letter from his breast and presented it.

The Baron snatched it from him and began to read it, Anton meanwhile standing still and looking out of the tower window. Never before had he seen so far out into the world. One mountain chain after another gleamed forth, lit by the sun; streams lay like narrow white ribbons in the valley; and the boundless sky arched over all, its big thunder-clouds looking like mountains above the other mountains. Anton forgot entirely where he was while gazing at all this glory; but he was awakened to reality by a roar from Rynkebryn.

“So this is the kind of message you bring me, is it?” he screamed, and he struck his fist on the table so violently that the wine bottles tumbled over, and the rich red wine ran in streams across the white cloth, like blood. “How dare you bring such a letter to the Lord of Falkensten?”

“How should I know what was in the letter?” asked Anton. He trembled like an aspen leaf. “I do not read the letters people trust me with.”

“Oh, you don’t, don’t you?” roared Rynkebryn. He had first grown red as the wine he drank, but now he was as white as the table-cloth. “It might have been well for you if you had peeped into this letter. If you had, I think you would have turned back with it. Herein”—he shook the letter till it rattled—“herein those traitors of the valley renounce

their allegiance to me; and he who goes on errands for traitors is a traitor himself and shall die a traitor's death. Do you understand that, you miserable little worm?"

Anton tried to speak, but could not get a word over his lips. He grew icy cold and shook as if he had the ague.

"But I shall revenge myself on that pack," shouted Rynkebryn. "I shall descend upon them like an overwhelming horror, like a thief in the night, and lay their land waste. Sure as death, before three nights have passed there shall be neither stick nor stone left of their city in the valley."

"Shall I tell them that?" asked Anton, in a low, frightened voice.

"No, you can spare yourself the trouble!" shouted Rynkebryn, laughing. "I shall say it to them myself with a drawn sword. No, my little friend,"—his eyes glared horribly, "you shall have a night's lodging at Falkensten. Your guest-chamber is ready. You shall march down to the castle prison, and there you can lie and amuse yourself guessing what death you are to die in the morning. Let me see. I must think of something very fine. I might, for instance, hit you with a club so that you broke in two like a piece of glass. That might be very amusing to see. Ha! ha! ha!"

Anton shuddered. He remembered that he had threatened the little lizard with this very treatment, and had had the same idea that it would be amusing to see.

"Or," continued the Baron, "I could crush you with one whack of my gun, so!—That would be very quickly done."

The icy shivers ran down Anton's back. Just this kind of terror that he was feeling must the squirrel have felt when Anton threatened him with the butt of his gun.

"Or I could fasten you out on the castle wall, as one fastens a bird that has been shot upon a barn door. There you could hang as a warning to traitors, until you fell to pieces," growled Rynkebryn, stroking his beard.

Things turned black before Anton's eyes. "Oh!" he thought with anguish. "This is just the way I threatened the dove, the innocent little creature!"

"Or I could chop your head off!" roared Rynkebryn, rushing toward Anton with clenched fists. "Then I could put your head on top of the tower where there is a glorious view. What a treat that would be for you!" All the men laughed so hard at this that they had to hold their sides.

But little Anton did not laugh. He stood there thinking, with deep remorse, how he had threatened to take the life of the harmless chamois, and put its horns over the door. "Oh, God be praised that I let it run!" he thought; but just then Rynkebryn's men caught hold of him, tied him securely, hand and foot, with strong rope, and took him to the castle prison.

Dark and damp indeed was the prison cell. It had no windows except, high up in the wall, a little opening with strong iron bars across it. The men threw Anton on the floor and then went out, locking the door after them with so many locks that Anton knew he could never open that door, even if he had both his hands free.

There he lay, looking up at the barred window. The sunset glowed through it still, but

faded little by little, and darkness came on. High in the sky the stars twinkled out, one after another. And Anton lay and thought that when their light was quenched again, his life was to be put out, as if it were but a spark. What made him most unhappy was the thought that he could not get a message to the city in the valley, so that some one might know that Rynkebryn, the next night, was going to creep upon them like a thief, burn their city and devastate their land.

He laid his head on the damp floor of the cell and began to cry. All at once he heard something rustle,—a queer little sound. He thought it might be a rat that would bite him, and drew his legs up close; but something small came creeping lightly over him right up to his cheek. “Don’t be afraid,” it whispered. “It is only I, the little lizard you met on your way. I have hurried at your heels the whole time, until you disappeared through the castle door. But how have you brought yourself to this? You should have followed my advice and turned back in time,—you who can neither creep nor glide.”

“Perhaps,” sighed poor Anton. “But it is too late to think of that, and no one in the world can help me now.”

“Oh,” answered the lizard, “one should never give up hope. Since I could get into the castle prison, we shall manage to get you out.” And with that the tiny creature rustled away in the darkness.

A minute or two after, little Anton saw something black against the barred window. It squeezed itself between the bars and dropped with a thump to the floor.

“Here am I,” chattered the squirrel, hopping to Anton. “What foolishness has been going on here?”

“As you see,” replied Anton, “I am captured and bound, and in the morning I am to die.”

“Oh, in the morning!” said the squirrel. “It is a long time to morning. Much can happen before the sun gets up again.”

“But I cannot stir hand or foot,” said Anton. “Don’t you see how they have tied my hands behind my back?”

“Oh, yes! I see that well enough,” replied the squirrel, opening his big eyes wider than ever. “Where are the knots?” And with one jump he was on Anton’s back, beginning immediately to gnaw at the knots with his small pointed teeth. He bit and pulled at the rope so that his little body shook with the effort; and it was not long before Anton felt the loosening at his wrists and afterward at his ankles. All at once the ropes fell off and he was free.

“Oh, you blessed little animal!” said Anton, hugging and kissing the squirrel. “Now I am a free person again, and not a tied-up bundle!”

“Yes, but there is still the high, barred window,” said the squirrel. “We must have the dove’s help now.” And he sprang up to the window and vanished through it.

Little Anton stood looking after him, but suddenly he could no longer see the stars and the sky as before, for they were blotted out by something that filled the whole window. He soon saw that it was the dove flapping her out-spread wings against the bars. She could not get in, but she had something in her bill which she let fall through the window. It

clanged as it hit the floor, and when Anton stooped to pick it up, he saw that it was a file.

“I found that in Rynkebryn’s own window where it lay, ready to be used for his evil purposes; but now it shall help you out of prison,” said the dove.

No one would have imagined they could do it, but the squirrel and the dove helped Anton to get the ropes he had been tied with up to the window, and to fasten them there so firmly that he could climb up the ropes. Then he filed and filed at the iron bars till his hands bled, while the lizard ran up and down the wall saying: “Make haste! Make haste! It will soon be morning!”

But the sun had not yet risen when little Anton stood, rescued and free, on the rocks outside the castle wall.

And there was the chamois waiting for him!

“Seat yourself on my back, little Anton!” said the chamois. “And hold tight! for we are going to gallop down the mountain so fast that straps and buckles would not keep you on!”

So Anton got on the chamois’ back and held tight. This was necessary indeed; for slow as it had been trudging up the mountain, he now went down with a speed like that of a stone which, being tossed, bounds from rock to rock as it strikes them on its downward-flying way.

“I shall fall! I shall fall!” shouted Anton, clinging for dear life to the chamois’ neck. “I shall pitch off head first!”

“Oh, no! You won’t fall,” said the chamois; “nor I, either. I am very sure-footed,” and on it leaped as fast as ever.

Just as the sun rose, Anton stood at the Mayor’s door and knocked. The Mayor himself came to open it, and was overwhelmed with wonder when he saw little Anton standing there as alive as ever, and without so much as a hair of his head hurt!

“I come with bad tidings,” said Anton. “If you don’t look out, you will have Rynkebryn and his men after you before you know it; and he is not going to spare any of you,—yourselves or your property. Every one had better be armed and ready.”

The next night, Baron Rynkebryn with all his warriors came sneaking down the mountain expecting to take the peasants by surprise, and to catch them all as one catches rats in a trap; and he felt himself completely fooled when he found the peasants on the alert and prepared to give him a warm welcome! From all the country round had the town folk summoned help, and the men were armed with lances and javelins, with scythes and pitchforks; and there was nothing for Rynkebryn to do but to hasten up the mountain again as fast as his legs could carry him. But the peasants followed him all the way to Falkensten, gathered brushwood and branches which they heaped about the castle, and then set on fire, determined to destroy that den of thieves. It blazed and flamed like a bonfire and sent ruddy light far and near. The wicked Baron Rynkebryn and his men were forced to flee and to hide like wild eagles high up in desolate clefts of the mountains.

And now there was nothing good that the people did not wish to do for little Anton! They would have him to be Mayor, and a great festival should be held in his honor in the

palatial hall of the Council House. But little Anton only thanked them over and over. He had not the least desire in the world to be Mayor, neither did he care to sit and feast and sing with those who had recently sent him out on that dangerous errand without troubling themselves at all as to what would happen to him.

Therefore, he asked only that he might have what he needed in order to give a party to his nearest and dearest friends. Oh, yes! The people would gladly give him anything; he need only say what he wished for.

THE MAYOR WAS OVERWHELMED WITH WONDER.

Then Anton said he would like one vest-pocket full of grain, and the other full of small snails; and one trousers-pocket full of nuts, and the other full of salt. He would like also a loaf of white bread, a bottle of wine and a handful of fresh peaches.

The people thought his wishes were very peculiar indeed; but he received what he had asked for and then started toward the mountain.

A little later, as he sat under a chestnut-tree and looked out over the valley, he heard the drums and trumpets from the festival in the Council House, where the people sat and feasted, and shouted hurrahs for their old Mayor. A spring bubbled near him; the chestnut-tree shaded him; the sun shone on the vineyards below, while high up at the top of the mountain, smoke was still rising from the ruins of Falkensten.

He had spread his table on the fresh green grass. There lay the bread and the peaches and beside them stood the flask of wine; but before he began to eat, he invited his guests to take their food. The lizard had all the little snails; the dove ate grain from Anton's one hand, while the chamois licked salt from the other; but the little squirrel sat above in the chestnut-tree and stuffed himself up to his throat with nuts, throwing all the shells down upon little Anton's head.

—Helena Nyblom.

THE FOREST WITCH

It was in the earliest springtime. In the shade the air was still quite cold; but where the clear and strong sunshine streamed down, one could see that spring had come, for there the blossoms were beginning to stretch upward on their tiny stalks.

A couple of children were walking through the forest: a ten-year-old girl, named Nina, and her little brother Johannes.

They were seeking flowers. Nina had to find them because the flowers were too tiny and too much hidden for so small a child as Johannes to discover them for himself, but she always let him have the pleasure of picking them.

It was such a joyous spring walk that Nina did not notice how far they were straying away from their grandmother's hut, back of the hill. This little hut had been their home only for

a short time. When their dear father and mother died, their grandmother had kindly taken them to live with her; and this was their first walk in the forest.

At last Nina thought they ought to go back, but just as she turned around with Johannes by the hand, who should stand before them but a hideous old creature, more glaring and frightful than you can imagine!

“What are you doing here, you wretched children?” she shrieked; “are you plucking flowers in my forest? Then shall I pluck you, you may believe!”

“Oh, pardon us,” cried Nina; “we did not know that we must not pick flowers here. We are strangers in this forest. Pray, pray pardon us.”

“*Snikkesnak!*” (fiddlestick!) answered the terrific old Witch, for such the creature was. “Don’t talk to me! I never pay any attention to what children say; nor to old folks’ talk either, for that matter. Indeed I don’t! *Snikkesnak! snikkesnak!* But it is not you that I want, silly girl. It is the boy there who has offended me. The little rascal! It is he who picked the flowers. Now I shall take him!”

“Oh! take me, take me instead,” cried Nina in terror, flinging her arms around her brother. “It is my fault! I showed him the flowers, and let him pick them. You’ve no right to take him! Oh! do take me; he is too little.”

“*Snikkesnak!*” answered the Witch; “what a lot of talk! But you are right; the boy is small to come into my service, so I suppose I shall have to take you. Now listen well to what I say. Spring and summer are coming and I shall have no work for you then; so I shall not trouble myself about you for the present. But when autumn has come and gone, and all the leaves and flowers have disappeared, then are we very busy in the underground world. Then you may believe that I shall teach you how to work! and I live deep down, very, very deep! Now you may go; but I will make a bargain with you. When the last flower is faded —listen!—when the last flower is faded, meet me here on this spot—or—or——”

The old Witch stopped to think what she could best threaten Nina with. Her wicked eyes glared around for an instant till she noticed that Nina stood, with her arms about her little brother, ready to ward off any evil that might come upon him.

“Or I shall come and catch this little rascal, and twist his arms and legs all out of joint!” screamed the Witch, shaking her knotty stick at little Johannes.

Then, after a dark glance at Nina, she shuffled off through the forest, with the crows shrieking after her, and the leaves and flowers trembling on every side.

As soon as the Witch was out of sight, Nina hastened home with Johannes. Like a kind sister she suited her frightened pace to his, so that he should not stumble and fall.

The poor little boy had been so terrified at the Witch that he had not in the least under stood the cruel threats she had used against him, or the dreadful fate which was in store for Nina.

NINA STOOD WITH ARMS AROUND HER LITTLE BROTHER.

Nina was rejoiced that this was so; for then he could not tell their grandmother what the Witch had said, and she herself would not disclose the dreadful doom hanging over her. She was determined that the poor grandmother should not be made anxious and sorrowful as long as it could be helped.

Shortly after this, the spring burst forth in all its power and beauty, and the blossoms shot up everywhere—in the woods, the fields, the meadows, and the gardens. Nina welcomed them as her dearest friends. They would protect her against the Forest Witch. So long as she had a single one of these, she would not have to go down into the dark earth to serve the hideous creature.

Nina had always loved flowers, but never had she thought so much about them as now.

Yet, alas! Spring soon turned into summer, and summer went faster than ever before, it seemed to poor Nina. The tears streamed down her cheeks, as she saw the blue cornflowers fall before the reaper's scythe, when the grain was cut in harvest-time.

But Nina could still hope, even then; for the roses continued to bloom on Grandmother's old rose-bush outside the door of the hut. Nina kissed them and begged them to last as long as ever they could! And so they did—the dear, friendly roses!

When the last little rose had at length withered, autumn had almost passed and the many-colored leaves were dropping from the trees by thousands. Yet Nina discovered to her joy and comfort that there were flowers still. Along the roadside stood the simple, hardy wild aster, which blossomed on and on, although the autumn winds and rains destroyed everything else.

Winter began; but so mildly that it seemed as if it were still autumn. When the asters finally disappeared, other help came to Nina; for the hazel-bush was completely hoaxed by the mild weather and thought it was spring; so it began to unfold its yellow catkins, standing beautiful and bright, as one saw it between the bare trees over the hedges.

So, even when the winter was far advanced, Nina was still saved from going to the Witch; but this could not long continue. Cold weather must soon come, because Grandmother had said that Christmas was near.

And suddenly winter did come in earnest, with its icy frosts and drifting snows. For five days it was impossible to get out of the hut, because the wind kept whirling the snow into high drifts all about it. But when the sixth day came the wind abated and the snow lay peacefully on the ground.

Now Nina dared no longer to stay in the house, for surely all the flowers were dead, and buried under the cold snow, after this bitter storm. She must go and keep her compact with the Witch. So gathering together all her courage, she stole out of the house without being seen by any one.

Outside, she stood still for an instant, took a last look at the hut, which now seemed so cozy and dear, whispered "Farewell," and started on her way to the forest.

But she had gathered too little courage, after all; for it melted away immediately when she discovered the Witch a few steps from the door, standing in the little roadside garden, waiting for her.

"You've been rather slow about keeping to your bargain!" exclaimed the Witch angrily. "I was just coming after you."

"Oh! do not make me go with you!" cried Nina.

In her agony she fell down upon the snow at the Witch's great feet, and besought her wildly: "Let me be free! Oh, do let me be free!"

"*Snikkesnak!*" snapped the Witch. "Up with you! No nonsense!"

"Is there not a single flower to save me?" wailed Nina. She half rose, and, fairly beside herself with fright and despair, began to scrape the snow away from the garden-bed at the side of the path, trying to find a flower.

“Oh, yes, look if you like! *Snikkesnak! snikkesnak!*” laughed the Witch, her face glowing with exultation at Nina’s trouble.

But an instant after, her countenance became filled with fury, for where Nina had cleared the snow away, there appeared a plant with fresh dark-green leaves and white flower buds!

Nina clasped her hands together in great joy and thankfulness; then, breaking off a bud, she lifted it up high toward the Witch and rushed away into the hut. The Witch, in her disappointment and vexation, sprang about so wildly in the snow that it rose in a cloud all about her, and Nina never saw her again.

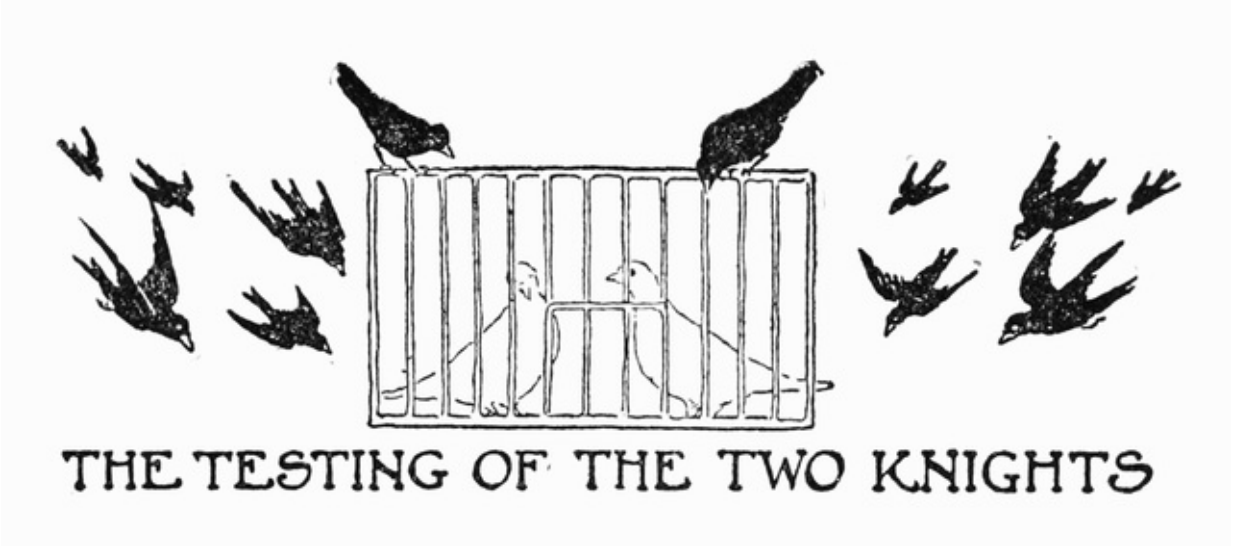
Safe at home in the little hut, Nina now told all her adventure; and the grandmother took the little girl’s sweet, frightened face between her two old hands, and kissed her forehead many times.

Faithfully every day Nina went to pay a loving visit to the little “Christmas Rose” in the garden (*helleborus niger*); for that was the flower which had saved her; and the whole winter long, it could be found fresh and beautiful, here and there under the snow.

Though no other blossoms dare come forth to face the snows and frosts of deep winter, the Christmas Rose ventures bravely out into the bleak weather, and with modest and serene courage holds her own against its powers. The snow lying over it keeps it from freezing; and if one brushes away this beautiful covering, the Christmas Rose appears with its lovely, white, gold-centered blossoms, laughing at the frost. It blooms steadily on until it can say “Good-day” to spring’s first blossom—the little snowdrop; and so, through all the year, there are flowers blooming in our dear Northern land, Denmark.

Thus it was that Nina escaped the Witch, who, being a Forest Witch, did not know of the Christmas Rose, because that is a garden flower.

—J. Krohn.



THE TESTING OF THE TWO KNIGHTS

Down in the town all was laughter, dancing and jollity. Banners were flying from housetops and windows, flowers were wreathed about poles and arches, and green branches decorated every gateway and door. Clearly, a great festival was in progress.

High on a hill overlooking the town, towered the old red castle of a duke. In front of the castle, on a beautiful green mound, stood gilded cannon, which at intervals sent thunderous peals through the town and over the near-lying hills.

Inside the castle, speeches were being made and toasts given, and many were the eager shouts of “Hail to the Princess!” and “Long life to the Princess!” for this was the birthday of the Duke’s only daughter, Princess Inga, and the festival was in her honor. At the conclusion of each speech and chorus of joyous shouts up at the castle, the cannon sent forth their signaling volley; and at each volley the people in the town took up the rejoicing and heartily echoed “Hail! hail! Long life to the Princess!” for they had loved the beautiful daughter of their good Duke ever since that first day when she had appeared among them, a tiny smiling child, in her little carriage drawn by a pair of white goats.

After the feasting was over, the guests dispersed from the stately hall and strolled about the terraces and gardens to enjoy the summer night and its sweet refreshing air.

Down one of the shadowy garden walks paced the Duke, and with him a man conspicuous among the richly adorned guests for the dull simplicity of his attire. He was no other than the Wise One from Fir Forest who wore now, as at all times, his plain dark robe of brown, —against which flowed in sharp contrast his long snow-white wavy beard.

“The day has passed right merrily,” said the Duke, “and there has been no lack of congratulations and speeches; and all the speeches were to no other end than to wish happiness and good fortune to my beloved daughter. What showers of good wishes have been poured upon her to-day! If she receives but a quarter of all these blessings, her life will overflow with happiness.”

“I pray that it may,” said the Wise One gravely. “But the Princess, like all others, must win her own happiness.”

“What say you?” asked the Duke.

The Wise One answered slowly, “Happiness comes from forgetting self and living for the joy of others. In no other way can one be truly happy.”

“Yet I am happy,” said the Duke.

“You, dear Duke, yes!” answered the Wise One. “And well may you be happy, for you never think of yourself. You take kindliest care of all in your dukedom, ever doing good among the poor and the sick, and giving pleasure to all those about you, especially to the Princess. To gladden her is your greatest pleasure.”

“That is true,” assented the Duke, with evident gratification. He could not but be pleased at the Wise One’s praise, never lightly given.

“And now, my good friend,” continued the Duke, “since we speak of the Princess, I would fain ask your good counsel concerning her. Suitors will come to strive to win her hand. Indeed, two have already asked to appear before me, and I receive them in the morning. Many will seek her for the dukedom’s sake, since the one she weds will become duke after me; and among all the suitors how shall we know which is a true and worthy knight? She should have the best of all,—only the very best.”

“The best, like the happiest, is the person who thinks last of himself and first of all others, he who is wholly free from selfishness and envy. Only to such a one,” said the Wise One earnestly, “only to such a one should we give our dear Princess.”

“Oh, yes!” responded the Duke. “That is right, and very well conceived and stated, too. But how am I to test the hearts of those who come? Their hearts are not of glass, so that one may peep into them! How shall I discover, for instance, the true character of the rivals who seek audience to-morrow?”

The Wise One pondered for some minutes and then inquired slowly, “Who is the most despised, the meanest in station, of all the castle servitors?”

“Oh, that is easily said,” responded the Duke, laughingly. “It could be no other than that stupid, good-natured Klaus Klodrian. He is but the fourth groom’s under stable-boy, and yet he will never rise higher, poor, dull-witted fellow!”

“Good,” said the Wise One. “He will serve our present purpose well. Let the rivals each take his turn dwelling one day as honored guest at the castle, and one day in the poor hut of Klaus Klodrian, and perhaps this will disclose the true knight to us. If not, there are other tests, but let us try this first.”

“Yes, let us try it,” said the Duke. “Glad am I to rely on your help, and most grateful for your counsel.”

After arranging the plan a little more in detail, the Wise One said farewell and started on his homeward way. He was glad to leave behind the festivities and excitement of the castle, and longed to reach his peaceful little log hut in the midst of the great Fir Forest. Seldom were other sounds heard there than the whispering of the wind in the tree-tops, the glad twitter of birds and the whirring of their wings.

Just as he was turning from the roadside into the forest, two knights came galloping past,

and he knew that they must be the expected suitors for Princess Inga's hand. Both were young and stately and sat proudly upon their beautiful horses. The one knight was clad in green velvet, with graceful hat and waving plume of the same color, and the trappings of his horse shone with gold. The other knight was richly dressed also, but in blue velvet and with a snowy plume in his blue hat, and silver on the trappings of his horse.

As they rode gaily along, looking so happy and handsome, and exchanging friendly words and glances, it would be hard indeed to wish success to one at the expense of the other.

The Wise One went hastily into the forest, directing his steps to its densest part, where was sequestered his lonely home. Soon after, a great blackbird stole forth from the woods, turned its yellow beak toward the road which the two knights had taken and flew after them. The knights quickly reached the town and rode to "The Golden Fish," an inn not far below the castle.

Before they went to their sleeping-rooms, the Blue Knight opened one of the windows and leaned far out, looking up into the high, dark-blue heavens, where the stars gleamed in myriads.

"What are you doing?" asked the Green Knight.

"Looking at the stars," answered the other.

"But why, pray?" asked the Green Knight.

"Oh, it is but a fancy of mine," answered the Blue Knight. "I like to look up there every evening. The stars shine down upon us with such benign watchfulness, that I would fain render some return; and to enjoy their beauty seems all I can do."

The next morning the two knights started in good-fellowship riding at leisurely pace, side by side, through the streets and up the castle hill. Many eyes peeped out at them through windows and door cracks, and the host of "The Golden Fish" rubbed his fat hands together with pleasure. He saw that he should have a profitable day in his tavern, for the town folk would soon come flocking in and out, to hear what they could of the suitors.

In the great gilded hall of the castle, the Duke sat in state to give audience to the knights. Princess Inga stood by his side. White-robed and with a cluster of dewy roses in her hand, she looked so fair, so gracious and lovely, that both the cavaliers were enraptured.

After the salutations were over, the Duke, in a straightforward manner, gave them his friendly permission to make further acquaintance with the Princess, provided they would yield to his wishes in one respect.

To prevent either suitor from interfering with or standing in the way of the other, the Duke would have each knight in turn spend one day with the Princess and one day with Klaus Klodrian, a humble servitor of the castle, who dwelt in a hut on the borders of the estate.

If they had any disinclination to do this, the matter was at an end; for this was the plan he had fixed upon, and it was unalterable.

“Have the goodness, my honored guests,” then continued the Duke, “to agree between yourselves which of you shall remain here to-day, and which shall now go to Klaus Klodrian.”

Since the Green Knight sat in silence with the evident intention of awaiting what the other might say, the Blue Knight politely offered to give his fellow-suitor the first day with the Princess. The offer was accepted with much pleasure, and while the Green Knight bowed before the Princess and began to talk with her, the Blue Knight was conducted out of the audience hall, down a broad staircase, across a great courtyard, and thence on and on, through garden and park, through barnyards and stables, into the lane at the end of which stood the hut of the stable-boy, Klaus Klodrian.

Poor Klaus sat inside, being just about to begin his frugal noonday meal. He jumped up in great confusion at the sudden entrance of a grand gentleman.

Holding a long loaf of black bread in his hands, he stood startled and bewildered, his round eyes staring, his great mouth wide open; but when the Blue Knight gave him a gentle greeting, courteously asked permission to spend the day with him, and began to talk to him in a friendly manner, Klaus gradually recovered from his confusion and became his quiet, simple self again. He clattered clumsily about on his heavy wooden shoes, with long straws from the stable dangling from his clothes and littering the floor. Always good-natured and unused to any attention save ridicule, he soon glowed with happiness because of the Blue Knight’s kind treatment.

“I will show you something,” said Klaus with joy and pride, though shyly; and he brought forth his only treasure—two white doves in a cage,—and began to talk eagerly about them. It seemed as if he could reiterate the praises of these doves endlessly. To him there was nothing equal to them in the whole world.

That day would have been long and tedious, indeed, to the knight, if he had not found something with which to occupy himself. With his ready sympathy toward all, he soon discovered that Klaus Klodrian was not altogether a hopeless dullard. If only one would tell him a thing twelve or fourteen times, he could then understand most of it; but no one heretofore had found this out, because no one had taken pains enough, or been patient enough with him.

The Blue Knight, feeling sorry for the poor witless fellow, labored earnestly with him, giving him long explanations, telling him the same things again and again, and showing him better ways of doing his work with the horses and about the stalls.

And Klaus Klodrian, as the day wore on, really began to show a little comprehension. He laughed so heartily over it all, that it seemed as if his wide mouth really did stretch from ear to ear.

As for the Blue Knight, he became so absorbed in trying to teach Klaus, that the long summer day was neither tiresome nor unhappy. Twice during the day had he seen the Princess and the Green Knight walking together in the castle garden. They talked and laughed, and seemed, he thought, to have become exceedingly good friends. So also thought the Duke, and he remarked upon it to the Wise One who, in his evening walk, came past the castle.

“Ah, but this Green Knight is a magnificent fellow,” said the Duke. “And he is very talented. He will gain the Princess. They are already excellent friends, and I am greatly prejudiced in his favor. He is really charming! You should have heard the good stories he told to-day when we were dining. Yes, he will certainly gain the Princess.”

KLAUS BROUGHT FORTH HIS ONLY TREASURE.

“To-day he is sailing with the wind,” said the Wise One. “Let us see him to-morrow when the wind is against him.”

The sun had gone down and darkness had spread itself all around, but the castle was brilliantly illuminated, and from its windows the light streamed out, while soft strains of music floated through the halls and into the summer air. There was a ball at the castle.

Thoughts of the lovely Princess had been present with the Blue Knight all the day long, no matter how intently he was laboring with Klaus; so when evening came he sought to get just a glimpse of her through the castle window.

Yes—there she was. The Green Knight held her hand and danced with her. She danced more gaily than any other in the merry company, and oh! how proud and happy she looked! And the Duke nodded and smiled at the handsome pair as they glided past him.

The Blue Knight had seen enough. He turned away and walked sadly back to the stable-boy's hut.

Klaus Klodrian had also been out,—to hear the dance music. He could remember a little of one of the airs, and now sat down upon the edge of his straw bed, and tried to play it by striking one wooden shoe against the other.

"Good-night and sleep well," said Klaus, as the knight entered. "And thanks for the day."

"Good-night, and best thanks to yourself, my good Klaus Klodrian," was the answer. "If I gain nothing more by my journey hither, I have learned from you how little a man need have in order to be content, and that is good. When men learn to be content with little, there will be less trouble in the world."

"Yes, yes," said Klaus Klodrian. "If one owns a pair of fine doves, one can hold out against anything." And therewith he settled himself in the bed and slept. The Blue Knight, however, went out under the summer sky and gazed long at the stars. He was convinced that he had lost the Princess, and that the Green Knight had won her; but as he stood there, looking at the stars, a sense of peace stole over him, and in his heart were none but good wishes for the Princess and the Green Knight. The stars seemed to tell him that this was right, for never before had they sparkled down upon him with such friendly rays.

The next morning he awoke refreshed, and led out his horse, thinking it was useless to press his suit after having seen the success which his rival had met with the previous day. But before he had mounted, a courteous message came from the Duke, requesting that he should now come to the castle in his turn, according to their agreement.

Likewise according to agreement, came the Green Knight down to Klaus Klodrian; but though he came, he felt that he was being subjected to great indignity, and showed his ill-humor plainly.

Simple Klaus began at once to try to entertain him by showing his precious doves, but the Green Knight sullenly told him to hold his tongue; and when, a little after, poor Klaus, stupid and forgetful, began again his rambling talk in praise of the doves, the Green Knight impatiently kicked over their cage, and the terrified doves flew away.

They took their flight through the Fir Forest, and when the Wise One saw them, speeding with fear-quickened wings over the tree-tops, he said, "Aha! The Green Knight likes not to sail against the wind!"

Then he gave a call, and out flocked the blackbirds from the trees near the Wise One's hut. These gloomy-looking, swift-flying birds were his messengers. Daily they took their flight out into the world, far and near, and when they came back to the forest, they told their master all they had seen and heard. Thus he received much strange and minute

information, but so secretly, that no one guessed how he gained his knowledge.

This morning he gave some of the birds special directions, and the result was that all day long, blackbirds hovered in unusual swarms near the hut of Klaus Klodrian, and over the castle gardens. They had hovered there, keeping watch, the day before also, but no one had remarked it. Who notices a few blackbirds more or less?

That was a hard day for Klaus Klodrian. He missed his kind instructor of the previous day sadly, and had no gentle doves to cheer his heavy spirit. The harsh treatment of the Green Knight made him so excited and unhappy, that though he strove hard to hold fast to all that the Blue Knight had taught him, he felt only confusion of mind, and in his bewilderment made more stupid blunders than ever before. But worst of all, it was impossible for the poor witless fellow to understand the gathering wrath of the Green Knight, and so, now and again throughout the day, he made attempts at friendly conversation. At last it ended in his receiving a thrashing from the ill-tempered cavalier, so that when evening closed in, poor Klaus was fain to stretch his bruised body on the soft cool meadow grass, not daring to seek his straw bed.

Who can tell how miserably the hours dragged by for the Green Knight, with his jealous, uncontrolled temper? He could not endure to think of the Blue Knight up at the castle, walking in the garden with the Princess. And when he went near enough to see her pluck roses for her companion, he thought that the roses the Blue Knight received were much richer and redder than those which she had given him the day before from the same bush!

Venting his anger upon poor Klaus had not cooled it in the least. Rage boiled within him hotter than ever, after he had given the thrashing. And when the day was at last ended and the darkness fell, his bitter envious thoughts drove him to the castle. Here were music and dancing and feasting again, this time in honor of the Blue Knight.

The Green Knight stole cautiously up to the balcony, hid himself in the shadow of its twining vines, and looked at the gay scene within the hall. Ah! There were the Princess and the Blue Knight. His heart burned with envy; he forgot that the Blue Knight was having no more opportunity and enjoyment than he himself had had. “Never shall that fellow become Duke, never!” he muttered.

Full of evil thoughts, the Green Knight drew his sword; but he did not notice that as he did so, a bird rustled out from the vines above, and flew swiftly away.

The music ceased at last with prolonged, rapturous trill. The Princess, however, was enjoying the ball so much that she asked the Duke if she might not have just one single dance more. And well it was that her request was granted.

After this very last dance was finished, the Blue Knight turned toward the balcony door, drawn by a great desire to greet the stars, so happy and thankful did he feel.

Just at this moment the Wise One strode into the hall. The Duke and all the guests were greatly astonished, for never before had the revered counselor visited the castle at such a late hour.

The Wise One placed himself before the Blue Knight, gave a sign to the liveried torch-bearers standing near, then threw wide open the large doors leading to the balcony. There stood the Green Knight, with his naked sword in his hand. His guilty gaze sought the

ground—and his limbs refused to flee.

“What means this?” asked the Duke.

“There stand Envy and Jealousy disclosed,” answered the Wise One. Then he turned and with gentle step approached the Princess. In her terror she had grasped the Blue Knight’s arm and was still clinging to him, while tears shone in her tender eyes.

The Wise One looked toward the Duke an instant and then said:

“There stands the true knight! and I believe that the heart of the Princess has chosen him.”

“And to him shall she be given,” said the Duke. “The day with Klaus Klodrian has indeed brought to light the true character of the suitors. Your wise counsel has served us well, good friend. Will you not honor us now by coming to the banqueting hall and being the first to offer congratulations and good wishes to the Princess and to her proven knight?”

Then the music began again,—the musicians playing gladdest melodies with all their hearts.

The Green Knight plunged into the darkness and ran to his horse. Hastily mounting, he sped his steed mercilessly forward, with whip and spur, into the murky night.

Some days later the Blue Knight rode forth from the castle with face as radiant as the morning. He was to ride to his home, bearing thither the news of his good fortune, but he was soon to wend his way back. The Princess watched as long as her eyes could see him, while he bowed and waved fond adieus. Behind the Blue Knight rode, rather awkwardly, his new squire,—none other than Klaus Klodrian! He was proudly conscious of his fine long riding-boots and other new attire, and happier than ever before; for not only was he now to serve the knight whose kindness had won his heart, but his precious doves had been restored to him. The Wise One had recovered them for him through the aid of the watchful blackbirds.

—J. Krohn.

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