

FICTION

Johanna Spyri

Erick and Sally

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

ERICK AND SALLY

By the Swiss Writer

JOHANNA SPYRI

Author of Heidi, Chel, and many other stories

Translated by

HELENE H. BOLL

1921



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johanna Spyri".

Affectionately dedicated to

MRS. MARTHA C. BUHLER

PREFACE

To our Boys and Girls:

Years ago, in a little country called Switzerland, there lived a little girl who was the daughter of a doctor. This doctor sometimes had to climb up high mountains and sometimes he had to descend slowly to the deep valleys, always on horseback, to visit the sick people who had sent for him. Of course there were no telephones, electric lights, steam trains or automobiles, and so often this doctor was away from home for two or three days attending the people who needed his help. His trips took him into little villages where there were only a few hundred poor people who made a scant living from farming and sheep raising, but he knew them so well that he became very fond of them, and he shared their sorrows and joys. When he returned home he would tell his little daughter, who was Johanna Spyri, about what he had seen and heard. She became very much interested in the people whom her father told about, and when she grew up she visited many of the places that he had told her about when she was a child.

It was not until she was quite a grown woman that she wrote any books, but the children of Switzerland and Germany loved her stories so much, that we have decided to translate the story of Erick and Sally for the children of America. The author knew children and loved them, and wrote to them and not for them. Thus, every one who reads this story will follow the sorrows and pleasures of Erick just as if he were a personal living friend.

The translator understands American boys and girls, for she has been a teacher in our schools for many years. She also has an intimate knowledge of the country described in this story for she has often visited the places mentioned. Through her knowledge and love of the country about which Madame Spyri wrote, and speaking her language, the translator, Helene H. Boll, appreciates her thoughts, and has faithfully reproduced them in this absorbing little story.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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CHAPTER I

In the Parsonage of Upper Wood

The sun was shining so brightly through the foremost windows of the old schoolhouse in Upper Wood, that the children of the first and second classes appeared as if covered with gold. They looked at one another, all with beaming faces, partly because the sun made them appear so, and partly for joy; for when the sunshine came through the last window, then the moment approached that the closing word would be spoken, and the children could rush out into the evening sunshine. The teacher was still busy with the illuminated heads of the second class, and indeed with some zeal, for several sentences had still to be completed, before the school could be closed. The teacher was standing before a boy who looked well-fed and quite comfortable, and who was looking up into the teacher's face with eyes as round as two little balls.

"Well, Ritz, hurry, you surely must have thought of something by now. Now then! What can be made useful in a household? Do not forget to mention the three indispensable qualities of the object."

Ritz, the youngest son of the minister, was usually busy thinking of that which had just happened to him. So just now it had come to his mind, how this very morning Auntie had arrived. She was an older sister of his mother and had no home of her own; but made a home with her relatives. She was a frequent visitor at the parsonage for months at a time and would help the mother in governing the household. Ritz remembered especially, that Auntie was particularly inclined to have the children go to bed in good time--and they had to go--and he also remembered that they could not get the extra ten minutes from Mother, for Auntie was always against begging Mother. In fact, Auntie talked so much about going to bed, that Ritz felt the feared command of retiring during the whole day. So his thoughts were occupied with these experiences, and he said after some thinking: "One can make use of an aunt in a household. She must--she must--she must--"

"Well, what must she? That will be something different from a quality," the teacher interrupted the laborious speech of the boy.

"She must not always be reminding that it is time to go to bed," it now came out.

"Ritz," the teacher said now in a severe tone, "is the school the place to joke?"

But Ritz looked at the teacher with such unmistakable fright and astonishment, that the latter saw that it was an honest opinion which Ritz had made use of in his sentence. He therefore changed his mind and said more gently: "Your sentence is unfitting and incorrect, for your three qualities are not there. Do you understand that, Ritz? You will have to make three sentences at home, all alike; but do not forget the different qualities. Have you understood me?"

"Yes, teacher," answered Ritz in deepest dejection, for he already saw himself sitting alone in the evening thinking and thinking and gnawing on his slate pencil, while Sally and Edi could pursue their merry entertainments.

Now the end of school was announced. In a short time the door was opened, and the boys and girls hastened out toward the open place before the schoolhouse, where suddenly all were crowded together like a huge ball, from the midst of which came a tremendous noise and confused shoutings. Something out of the common must have happened.

"In the house of old Marianne"--"a tremendously rich lady"--"a piano, four men could not get it in, the door is too narrow"--"a small boy"--"before we went to school"--It was so confused, nothing could really be understood. Then a voice shouted: "All come along! Perhaps they are not through with it, come, all of you to the Middle Lot!" And suddenly the whole ball separated, and almost the whole crowd ran in the same direction.

Only two boys remained on the playground and looked at each other, quite perplexed. The one was stout little Ritz, who long since had forgotten his great trouble and had listened intently to the exciting, although incomprehensible story. The other was his brother Edi, a slender, tall fellow with a high forehead and serious grey eyes beneath. He was hardly two years older than his brother; but for his not quite nine years, he was tall, and appeared much older than the seven-year-old Ritz.

"We must run home quickly and ask whether we too may go; we must see that, Ritz, so hurry up!" With these words Edi pulled his brother along, and soon they turned round the corner and also disappeared.

Behind the schoolhouse, near the hawthorn hedge, stood the last of the crowd in animated conversation. It was Sally,

the ten-year-old sister of the two boys, with her friend Kaetheli, who with great excitement seemed to describe an occurrence.

"But Kaetheli, I do not know the beginning," said Sally. "Just you begin at the beginning, from where you saw everything with your own eyes, will you?"

"Very well, I will, but this time you must pay close attention," said Kaetheli. "You know that the old blind straw-plaiter lived with the little girl Meili at old Marianne's? Well, Meili went to school at Lower Wood. Two weeks ago her father died and Meili had to go to Lower Wood to her uncle. Then Marianne cleaned the bedroom and the sitting-room terribly clean, opened all the windows, and afterwards closed them all again and put on the shutters. She herself lives in the little room above. But this morning everything was open, and yet Marianne had said nothing about it to anyone and all people in Middle Lot were surprised at that. At half-past eleven, just when we were coming out of school, we saw a wagon coming up the hill from Lower Wood, and the horse could hardly pull the load, for there was a large piano on the wagon, a bed, and lots of other things, a table and a little box, and I think that was all. Now the wagon stopped at old Marianne's cottage, and all at once there came out of the cottage old Marianne and a woman, who was quite white in the face, and behind them came a little boy, and no one had seen them come up. Then four men of Middle Lot wanted to carry the piano into the cottage but it would not go through the door because the door was too narrow and the piano too wide. And all who stood around to look said she must be a very rich woman, because she had such a large piano. But no one knew from where she came, and when anyone asked old Marianne she snarled and said: 'I haven't any time.'

"All the people around are surprised that a rich lady should come to old Marianne in the wooden cottage; my father has said long since that the cottage would tumble over one of these days. And Sally! I wish you could see the woman, you too would be surprised that she should make her home there. Just think, she wears a black silk skirt on week-days!"

"And what about the boy, how does he look?" asked Sally, who had followed her friend's story with close attention.

"I had almost forgotten him," continued Kaetheli. "Just think, he wears velvet pants, quite short black velvet pants and a velvet jacket and a cap to match. Just imagine a boy with velvet pants!"

"I should think that would be quite pretty," observed Sally, "but what does he look like otherwise?"

"I have forgotten that, I had to watch the moving of the piano. He is nothing particular to look at."

"Kaetheli, do you know what?" Sally said, "you go home with me. I want to ask whether I may go home with you for a little while. I should like to see that too, and then afterwards we will both go to old Marianne's to call, will you?"

Kaetheli was ready at once to carry out the plan, and the children ran together toward the parsonage.

It was only a little while before, that Edi and Ritz had arrived home panting for breath. In the garden on the bench under the large apple-tree, Mother and Auntie were sitting mending and conversing over the bringing-up of the children; for Auntie knew many a good advice, quite new and not worn out. Now they heard hasty running, and Edi and Ritz came rushing along.

"May we--in the Middle Lot--to the Middle Lot--people have arrived--a wagon and a piano--a terribly rich woman and a--"

Both shouted in confusion, breathlessly and incomprehensibly.

"Now," the aunt cried into the noise, "if you behave like two canary birds who suddenly have become crazy, no human being can understand a word. One is to be silent and the other may talk, or still better both be silent."

But Ritz and Edi could do neither. If Edi began to report, then Ritz had to follow. It always had been so, and to be silent at this moment of excitement, that could not be expected; therefore both began afresh and would no doubt have continued thus for some time if Sally and Kaetheli had not arrived on the scene. They made everything clear in a short time.

But the mother did not like to have her children run to the Middle Lot for the sake of staring at strange people who had arrived there, and to increase the gaping crowd who, no doubt, were standing in front of Marianne's cottage. She did not give the longed-for permission, but she invited Kaetheli to stay at the parsonage and take afternoon coffee with the children and afterwards play in the garden.

That was at least something; Sally and Ritz were satisfied, and they ran at once with Kaetheli into the house. But Edi showed a dissatisfied face, for wherever something strange could be seen or found, he had to be there.

He stood there without saying a word. He was thinking whether he dared to work on his mother to get the desired permission. He feared, however, the auxiliary troops which his aunt would lead into battle to help his mother. But before he had weighed all sides his aunt said: "Well, Edi, have you not yet swallowed the defeat? Isn't there some old Roman, or Egyptian, who also could not always do what he wanted? Just you think that over and you will see that it will help you."

That helped, indeed, for Edi was a great searcher in history, and when he happened in that field, then all other interests were pushed into the background. He at once remembered that he had not finished reading about his old Egyptian, and with a smoothed brow he ran into the house.

The sun had set and it was growing dark among the bushes in the garden, where the children, with red cheeks, were seeking each other and hiding again. All of a sudden there came a loud, penetrating call: "To bed, to bed!" Ritz had just found a fine hiding-place in the henhouse, where he had comfortably settled, secure from being discovered, when this terrible call reached him. It struck him like a thunderbolt. Yes, it took his breath away so that he turned white and hadn't the strength to rise; for, with the call came the remembrance of the three sentences which he had to write: three whole sentences and nine different qualities, and he had forgotten everything, and now all the time had gone and he had to go to bed.

"Where are you, Ritz?" It sounded into his hiding-place. "Come, crawl out. I know you are in there and will be covered with feathers from head to foot."

The aunt stood before the henhouse, and Sally and Kaetheli beside her full of expectation, for they had sought Ritz for a long time in vain. But Auntie had experience in such things. Ritz actually came crawling out of the henhouse and stood now in a lamentable condition before his aunt.

"How you do look! You ought to have been in bed an hour ago, you haven't a drop of blood in your cheeks," the aunt exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, Ritz?"

"Where is Mamma?" asked Ritz in his fright.

"She is upstairs; come, she will put you to bed at once when I have got you finally together. Come, Sally, and you, Kaetheli, go home now."

With these words she took Ritz by the hand, and drew him up the stone steps into the house, and wanted to bring him up the stairs to the bedroom. Then everything was over and no rescue from going to bed at once. Now Ritz stopped his aunt and groaned: "I must--I must--I have to write three sentences for punishment."

"There we have it." But Ritz looked so miserable that Auntie felt great pity for him. "Come in here," she said, and shoved him into the living-room, "and take out your things."

Now she sat down beside him and the whole affair proceeded finely. Not that Auntie formed the sentences, no indeed, she was not going to cheat the teacher; but she knew well what was needed to form a sentence and she pushed and spurred Ritz and brought so many things before him, and reminded him how they looked, that he had his three sentences and his nine qualities together in no time. Now there came a feeling to Ritz that he had not acted right, when he said that an aunt must not always be reminding people, and when now Auntie asked: "Ritz, why had you to write the sentences?" then the feeling grew stronger in him, for he felt that he could not tell the cause of his punishment without making his aunt angry. He stuttered, "I have--I have--the teacher has said, that I made an unfitting sentence."

"Yes, I can imagine that," said Auntie. "Now quickly to bed."

Edi and Ritz slept in the same room and that was the place where the two boys, every evening after the mother had said evening prayer with them, and they were alone, exchanged their deepest thoughts and experiences with one another and talked them over. Ritz had the greatest respect for Edi, for although the latter was only a little older, yet he was already in the fourth class, and he himself was only in the second, and in history Edi knew more than the scholars in the fifth and some in the sixth class. When now the two were well tucked in their beds, Ritz said: "Edi, was it a sin that I said Auntie must not always remind?" Edi thought a bit, such a case had never come to him. After a while he said: "You see, Ritz, it goes thus: if you have done something that is a sin, then you must go at once to Daddy and confess, there is no help for it; but if you do that, then everything comes again in order and you feel happy again, and afterwards you

look out not to do the sinful thing again. I can tell you that, Ritz. But if you do not confess, then you are always full of fear when a door is slammed or a letter-carrier unexpectedly brings a letter, then you think at once: 'There now, everything will come out.' And so you are never sure nor safe and you feel a pressure in the chest. But there is another thing that presses so hard that you can think of nothing else, for example, if you have given away a rabbit, you regret it afterwards. But there is a remedy and I have tried it many a time, and it helps. You must think of something dreadful, like a large fire, when everything is burnt up, the fortress and the soldiers in it and all historical books, and--all at once you think everything backwards and you have everything; then you are so glad that you think: what difference does a rabbit make? You still have everything else. Now Ritz, try that and see if it helps you, then you can find out whether everything passes away or whether you have to tell Daddy tomorrow."

"Yes, I will try it," said Ritz somewhat indistinctly, and soon after he took such deep breaths that Edi knew what was going on. He heaved a sigh and said: "Oh, Ritz, you are asleep and I wanted to tell you so much about the old Egyptian."

A little while afterwards the whole peaceful parsonage of Upper Wood lay in deep sleep; only old 'Lizebeth went about the passage calling: "Bs, bs, bs." She wanted to get the old grey cat into the kitchen to catch the mice during the night. 'Lizebeth had been in the parsonage of Upper Wood as long as one could remember, for there had always been a son, and when the time had come, then he had become parson in Upper Wood. First 'Lizebeth had served the grandfather, then the father and now the son, and she had long since elected Edi as the future minister, and intended to look after his house when he should be the master here.

CHAPTER II

A Call in the Village

The friendly village Upper Wood lay on the top of the hill close by the fir wood; it had a beautiful white church with a high, slender tower. At a distance of three-quarters of an hour's walk, down in the valley, lay Lower Wood, a small community which, however, did not wish to be considered smaller. They had a new schoolhouse and a church of their own, but the church had no tower, only a little red dome. Therefore the people of Upper Wood were a little proud, because their church was much prettier and also because they learned much more in the old schoolhouse in Upper Wood than in the new one of Lower Wood; but that was the children's fault, not the teacher's. In the middle, between the two villages lay a hamlet consisting of a few farms and some small houses of little pretense. It was called the Middle Lot, and its people the Middle Lotters. They had the choice to what church and school they wished to belong, whether to Lower Wood or Upper Wood, and according to their choice they were judged by the people of Upper Wood; for whoever wanted to learn much and be decent, he must, according to the Upper Wooders, strive to belong to them. This was a fixed and general idea of the people on the top of the hill. In the Middle Lot there lived only two families who were generally respected; the Justice of Peace, who was obliged to live there because otherwise he would have to be called there, and that would have been inconvenient. This peace-making man was Kaetheli's father. And the other was old Marianne, who lived in her own house and pulled horse-hair for a living, and never did harm to anyone.

When on the next morning the three children of the parsonage passed Marianne's house on their way to school, Sally said: "It is fun to go to school to-day for the strange boy of yesterday will come too; if we only knew his name. Kaetheli described him to me; he wears velvet pants. Of course he will come to Upper Wood to school."

"Of course," said Edi with a dignified air; "who would think of going to Lower Wood to School?"

"Of course, who would go there to school?" observed Ritz.

Then the three in perfect harmony entered the schoolhouse. But no strange face was to be seen in the whole schoolroom; everything went on in the usual way to the end of the morning. Then everyone hurried away in different directions. Sally was standing there, somewhat undecided; she would like to have heard something new of the strange boy and his mother, for she loved to hear news, and now not even Kaetheli, with whom she talked things over, had been in school. But now she saw Edi soaring along like an arrow into the midst of a crowd of boys, and they all acted so strangely and they shouted so strangely that Sally thought that something particular must be in preparation there, and no doubt concerned the new-comers. Then she could hear something from Edi. She went slowly on and kept on turning round, but Edi did not come, and only after Sally had long since greeted the mother and was about to call her father out of his study for dinner, did the two brothers come running along, their faces red as fire, and breathless, for they had lingered to the last moment. The father was just leaving his study when both rushed toward him and now it began: "We have--the Middle Lotters--with the Lower Wooders--"

"Hush, hush," said the father. "First get your breath, then relate, one after the other; but before anything, first the soup." With these words the father took Ritz's hand, and Sally and Edi followed them into the dining-room. Sally pulled Edi a little back and whispered:

"Tell me quickly, what did they tell about the strange boy?"

"About him?" returned Edi in a somewhat scornful tone. "I had forgotten all about him! We have something else to do than to talk about a strange boy, of whom one does not even know whether he will come to Upper Wood to school."

This answer was somewhat unexpected to Sally and had a saddening effect; but she always could find a way out of an unpleasant situation. So she sat as still as a mouse during the whole time the soup was eaten, and her thoughts were hard at work.

Now the father turned to Edi and said: "Now you can relate your adventure, while Ritz remains quiet, and afterwards his turn will come." Ritz looked quite obedient for he had two large noodles on his plate to work with.

But Edi, in a moment, put down knife and fork and quickly began: "Just think, Papa, we have made three songs, one for each parish. First, the Lower Wooders began. The sixth class were angry because we laughed at them, that they only now have to *make* sentences, and we in the fourth class have begun to *write* them already. They made a song about us which runs:

"Of Upper Wood the boys
They in their minds rejoice
Because they think that they the cleverest are,
But if ever they must fight
They are in sorry plight
And they turn round and run for ever so far.'

"How do you like that song, Papa?"

"Well, that is such as Lower Wooders would make," said the father.

"And then," Edi continued, "we have made a song for an answer, that goes thus:

"And of Lower Wood the crowd
They always yell so loud
That they never, never stay within their den,
For all dispute and strife
They are much alive
For they use their fists when they ought to use their pen.'

"How do you like this one, Papa?"

"Just about the same. And who has sung about the Middle Lot?" asked the father.

"The Lower Wooders and we together; they too had to have a song, but the shortest, as it ought to be. It runs so:

"And they of Middle Lot
They all together plot
That they are striving zealously for peace,
But with quarrelling they never cease.'

"And how do you like that, Papa?"

"They are, all three of them, kind of fighting songs, Edi," answered the father, "and I should prefer that you keep busy with your history studies, instead of taking sides in these party-fights. One never knows where one comes out, and such poetry usually ends with lumps on the heads."

Edi seemed much disappointed as he attacked his noodles with a visibly spoiled appetite.

"And what has been your experience, Sally? Why are you so pensive?" the father continued.

"Kaetheli was not at school," reported Sally, "and I had so much to talk over with her. Perhaps she is sick; may I go to see her this afternoon? We have no school, you know."

"Aha, Sally wants to see the strange boy," the sharp-witted Edi remarked.

"You may go, Sally," the mother said, answering a questioning look from the father. "But you will not go into any house where you have no business, just to look at strangers. I know you are capable of doing such things. You can start soon after dinner."

Sally was very happy. She quickly fetched her straw hat and took leave. But outside she did not run straight through the passage-way as she usually did in similar cases, but went to the kitchen door and peeped in, and when she saw Lizebeth at the sink, where the latter was scraping her pans, she went in very close to the old woman and said somewhat mysteriously: "Lizebeth, does Edi or Ritz perhaps have a torn mattress on their bed?"

Lizebeth stopped scraping and turned round. She looked at Sally from head to foot, put her hands on her hips and said very slowly and importantly: "May I ask what you mean by that question, Sally? Do you think this household is so carried on that one lies about on ragged mattresses and sleeps, until a little one, who is far from old enough to turn a mattress, thinks of coming to ask 'does not this one or that one have a ragged mattress' on his bed? Yes, Sally, what cobwebs you do have in your head."

"I do not care about the mattress, it is on account of Marianne that I ask," Sally explained. "Do you know, she now has

some new people in her house and I should so much like to see them, and therefore I wanted so much to know whether you could not sacrifice a mattress so that Marianne could pull the horsehair for a mattress, for Mother will not let me go into the house without a good excuse."

"Oh, so! that is different," said 'Lizebeth quite mildly, for she had also been wondering what kind of people her old friend had taken into her home, and now, perhaps, she could learn something about them through Sally.

"I can help you, Sally," she said. "You go to Marianne and tell her that I send my greetings, and I have long since intended to come and see her, but the likes of us cannot get away when we want to; we never know what may happen if we are out of the house for five minutes; but tell her that I will surely come some fine Sunday. Now then go, and give my message."

Sally ran with a joyous heart, first through the garden, then away over the meadow and down the hill as far as the fir wood, where the dry road lay for a long stretch in the shade. Here Sally slackened her pace a little. It was so beautiful to walk along in shade of the trees, where above in their tops the wind rustled so delightfully and all the birds sang in confusion. She also had to consider how she would arrange her calls, whether she would go first to Kaetheli or to Marianne; but this time old Marianne had a stronger attraction than Kaetheli and Sally felt that she must go there first and give her message. Now her thoughts fell on the strange people and she had to imagine how they looked and what she was going to say, and what they would say when she knocked and asked for Marianne. Thus she thought everything well out, for Sally had a great power of imagining things.

In this way she came to the first houses of Middle Lot. She turned away from the road and went toward Marianne's house, which stood a little way from the road and lay almost hidden behind a hedge. As Sally had been accustomed to do, she now ran right into the house, although the house door was also the kitchen door. After entering the front door she stood in the small kitchen and was at once before another door which led into the living-room. This door stood wide open and Sally found herself suddenly in the presence of a lady dressed in black, who sat in that room sewing and who lifted her head at Sally's noisy entrance, and with large sad eyes she looked at the child in silence.

Sally grew as red as fire and in her embarrassment remained standing near the door like one rooted to the floor.

Now the lady held out her hand and said in a friendly tone, "Come here, dear child, what brings you to me?"

Sally was quite confused. She did not remember why she had come, for she had really not come to see Marianne. She had invented that--to get into the house where she had arrived now so unexpectedly. She approached the lady and wanted to say something, but nothing came out. Sally grew crimson and stood there more helpless than ever before in her life.

The lady took the child's hand and stroked her glowing cheeks.

"Come, sit down beside me, dear child," she then said, with a voice so sweet that it went deep into Sally's heart. "Come, we shall come gradually to know each other a little."



"Now the lady held out her hand and said in a friendly tone, 'Come here, dear child,'..."

Now there came from out of a corner a quick noise of moving; Sally did not know what it was, for until now she had not dared to look around the room, but now she looked up.

A boy, a little taller than she, was carrying a small easy chair and placed it before Sally. He looked at her with such a merry face as the restrained laughter came so visibly out of his eyes, that the sight brought a complete reversion in Sally's feelings, and she, all at once, laughed right out; upon which, the boy too, relieved his feelings by a bright peal of laughter, for the rushing in and then the confusion of the unexpected guest had long since tempted him to laugh; but he was too well trained to dare to break out.

"Well, my child," said the mother with that winning voice, "and what has brought you to me?"

"I have--I ought to--I wanted," Sally began hesitatingly, "I wanted to give a message to Marianne--" Sally could not stop at half the truth. The sad, friendly eyes of the lady were penetratingly resting on hers, so everything had to come out as it was.

"That is lovely and friendly of you, that you want to see us, dear little girl. How did you hear of us?" asked the lady, and took off Sally's straw hat, while she put the question to the child. She placed the hat on the table and smoothed her hair with a mother's touch.

Now Sally related all in full confidence how it had happened, and that she and her two brothers had wanted to come yesterday to find out who was coming to live with Marianne, and to find out how the piano and all the other things could find room in the little house. Sally now, for the first time, looked around the room and she had to wonder a little, for she saw only the piano and four bare walls, and then there were the two easy chairs on which she and the lady were sitting, and the small table. She knew that besides this room there was a very small bedroom, where two beds could hardly find room. Sally could not set herself to rights; all was so different from what she had imagined. She had expected to see strange and foreign things standing about everywhere and now she saw nothing besides an old piano. And yet the lady who sat before her in a black silken dress looked more aristocratic than Sally could ever have imagined; and the boy in his velvet suit looked quite like the old knights in Edi's beautiful picture book, and he had brought her a seat without anyone telling him, and was more refined and courteous than she had ever before seen a boy.

When Sally turned her surprised eyes again to the lady, she saw such a painful expression in her face that it came involuntarily into her mind how the mother had said, that of course "she would not go there for the sake of staring at the people," and she felt that she was doing something very much like it. Sally rose. All at once she remembered to whom she really wanted to go, so she said hastily: "I must go to Kaetheli; she may be sick." With these words she quickly offered her hand to the lady.

The lady, too, had risen; she took the proffered hand, held it between both of hers, and looked once more so lovingly into the child's eyes, that her little heart was moved. Then she kissed her forehead and said: "You dear child, you were a friendly picture in our quiet room."

Then she let go of her hand, and Sally went through the open door into the small kitchen. The boy, meanwhile, had opened the house door and now he stood outside quite courteously, like a doorkeeper, to bid Sally good-bye.

"Are you not coming to school tomorrow?"

"Yes, indeed," was the answer.

That pleased Sally very much and she at once decided that he must become Edi's friend, for she had taken a great liking to the boy and when he was Edi's friend then he would be hers too, and he must come every Sunday afternoon and spend it with them and they would teach him all kinds of games; and many undertakings passed through her brain, for with this friend everything could be carried out; he was so entirely different from other boys and girls in the school. "Then you are coming to-morrow?" she asked with happy expectation.

"Where shall I come?" he questioned in return.

"To school, of course."

"Yes, indeed, I'll come to school."

"Well, then, good-bye," said Sally, giving her hand, "but I do not know your name."

"Erick--and yours?"

"Sally."

Now they shook hands, and Erick remained standing in the doorway until Sally had turned round the hedge, then he shut the door and Sally ran toward the house of the Justice of Peace. Before she reached it, old Marianne met her, panting under the large bundle of horsehair which she was carrying on her head. Sally was delighted to see her, for she had just remembered that she had not given 'Lizebeth's message. She rushed so quickly toward the old woman and with such force, that the latter went back some steps and almost lost her balance, and Sally cried out: "Marianne, you have such nice people in your rooms. Do you talk much with them? Do you cook for them? Do you buy the things they need? Have they no maid? Do you make their beds?"

"Gently, gently," said Marianne, who had recovered her balance, "else I lose my breath. But tell me, how did you get into the people's room? I hope you know how I am to be found."

Sally told her that she, for the shorter way, had not gone round the house, where, in the woodshed, a narrow stair went up to Marianne's small room; but that she had wanted to run in the front way, through the kitchen, and out the back door; but that she had stood suddenly before the open door of the room and under the eyes of the lady.

"You must never do that again," Marianne interrupted Sally, raising her finger warningly. "Do you hear that, Sally? Never do that again. They are not people into whose home you can rush, as if they were living on the highway."

"But the lady was quite friendly, Marianne," soothed Sally, "she was not at all offended."

"That makes no difference, she is always so, she could not be otherwise, and just on that account, and on account of many other things, do you hear, Sally? Promise that you never again go that way when you want to come to me. Will you promise?"

"Yes, indeed I will. I do not intend to do it again. Good night, Marianne! Now I have forgotten the main thing: 'Lizebeth sends her greetings and she will come to see you on a fine Sunday."

The last words came from some distance, for Sally had already started on a run while she gave the message, and when Marianne wanted to send her greetings, Sally was already far away. After a few more jumps Sally arrived at the house of the Justice of Peace, in front of which stood a large apple tree which shaded the stone well. Here stood Kaetheli who did not look sick at all, but splashed with two fat, red arms about the water in which she seemed to clean some object eagerly.

"Then you are not sick. Why didn't you come to school then?" Sally called out when she saw her.

"Oh, it is you? Good evening! I could not make out who was jumping about, and I hadn't the time to look," Kaetheli said with some importance. "That is also the reason why I did not go to school. I hadn't the time, for Mother has gone away today to see sick Grandmother, and then we got young chickens, twelve quite small ones, and that is why I have to wash a stocking, for I have run after the chicks everywhere and near the barn I stepped in the dirt quite deep. But come, I will show you the chickens. Never mind if I have only one stocking on."

But Sally had only very little time left and besides, her head was full of quite different things and she wanted to hear Kaetheli tell of something else than the new chickens, so she said quite decisively: "No, Kaetheli, I haven't time enough to see the chickens. I only wanted to know whether you were ill and I want to tell you something. I have seen the strange lady and the boy whom you know. He does look nice. Do you know his name?"

"He?" said Kaetheli, shrugging her shoulders. "Of course I know. His name is Erick and just think, he goes to school at Lower Wood; I have seen him myself today, with his school sack, going there."

That was a blow for Sally. He went to school at Lower Wood. What was now to come of her beautiful plans? Of all the planned Sundays which were to be so full of joy and delight, and the whole friendship with the prepossessing Erick? For how could Edi ever be brought to making friends with a fellow who went to Lower Wood to school, when he just as well might have gone to Upper Wood? Sally was very downcast, but she did not easily give up a pleasant intention. On the way home she wanted to think what could be done, therefore she stretched out her hand to the astonished Kaetheli, and this time the invitation, to at least come into the room and eat a piece of bread and butter, was not accepted; nor would she go with Kaetheli behind the barn where they could fetch down ripe cherries from the large cherry tree--it was all of no use.

"Another time, Kaetheli, it is already so late I must go home," and Sally ran away. Kaetheli stood there much surprised and looked after her, and in her bright mind she thought: "Sally has something new in her head, else I could have brought her to the cherry tree, for she is not always so anxious to go home; but I will find out what it is."

Meanwhile Sally ran for a long stretch, then she began to walk slower, for she had to think over so many things and she was so lost in her plans that she forgot when she arrived at the garden which stretched from her home far into the meadows. Ritz stood on the low wall and beckoned with wild gestures, for Sally had not seen him at first.

"Do come a little quicker so that you can tell something, else we will have to go to bed, for Auntie has already looked twice at her watch. Were you in the barn at Kaetheli's? How many cows are in it? Have you seen the young goat?"

But Sally had different things in her head. She hastily stepped into the house, while Ritz followed. The rest of the family were in the living-room. Mother and Auntie were mending stockings; Father was reading a large church paper. Edi, his head supported on both hands, sat lost in his history book. Sally had hardly opened the door when she cried out with much excitement: "Oh, Mother, you ought to have seen how friendly the lady was, and she is so beautiful and so gentle and so good, and quite an aristocratic lady; and Erick in his velvet suit is like a knight, and so fine and polite. Edi could not find a nicer friend."

They all looked surprised at Sally, and a pause followed this outburst. Sally had quite forgotten that she was not to go to the strange people, and that she had given, as the object of her walk, the call on Kaetheli. She now remembered everything and she grew very red.

"But, dear child," said the mother, "did you really, in spite of opposition from me, press into the home of the strange people? How could you enter the house without an excuse?"

"Not without an excuse, Mamma," said Sally, somewhat embarrassed. "Lizebeth had given me a message for old Marianne."

"Which the inquisitive Sally fetched in the kitchen for the purpose of carrying out her plan, that is clear," remarked Auntie. When the whole truth lay open to the light of day, Sally felt relieved and she returned with new zeal to her communication. She had much to describe: the empty room and the silk dress of the lady, and her sad glances, and then the knightly Erick with his joyous laughter and the merry eyes; but she could not describe it all so attractively as it seemed to her.

"So," said Edi, looking up from his book, "now you have another friend. It will go, no doubt, with him as with little Leopold!" After giving her this fling he bent again over his book and read on, taking no notice of anything.

Sally did not find the desired sympathy. She was so full of her impressions that she felt Mother and Aunt should be all afire and aflame for her new friendship. Instead of that, the two kept on mending the stockings; Father did not even look up from his paper and Edi had only a satirical remark for sympathy. Sally had rather a bad reputation for making friendships. Almost every week she saw some one who appealed to her so much, that she must make a friendship at once; but the friendships were mostly of short duration, for she had imagined something else than she often found on looking closer. This made her quite unhappy at the time, but the next week she had already found some one else who filled her thoughts.

The last unfortunate friendship had brought forth Edi's satire to a greater degree. The tailor of Upper Wood had three sons, and since the father on his wanderings had spent some time in Vienna he gave his sons, in remembrance of the beautiful days which he spent there, the names of three Austrian grand dukes. It was this strange name that had first attracted Sally; to that was added that Leopold, the oldest of the sons, who had lived with his grandfather until now, but had come recently to Upper Wood, always wore elegant jackets and pants after the latest cut. Leopold had entered Sally's class and his appearance had at once inspired her. But he was so small and dainty that he received the name Leopoldy from the whole school. The rumor had preceded Leopold, that he had staid three years in the same class in the town where his grandfather lived. So Edi looked down on Leopoldy from an elevation of a fourth class boy and noticed with scorn how Sally found pleasure in the little fellow and befriended him. But that did not last long for, after a trial of a week, Leopoldy was set back two classes, since he had been put in the fifth class on account of his years, but not his deserts. In these eight days Sally had discovered, with sorrow, that Leopoldy was unusually silly, and Sally was glad that the enormous gap that lies between the fifth and third class, made easier the rupture of this friendship which could not continue, for nothing could be done with Leopoldy. So it happened that no one listened with sympathy to the enthusiastic description which Sally gave of her new friends, for each one remembered Leopoldy, and that was not inspiring.

This general coolness angered Sally very much. She knew her new friends if they would only believe her. All ought to be so interested in this mother and her Erick, that they would want to know everything possible about them, and now no one asked a question and they hardly listened to her communication. That was too much; Sally had to relieve her tension. She suddenly broke forth to Edi, who was entirely lost in his book: "Although you read a thousand books one

after the other, and act as if one did not tell anything, and you think that one must have no friendship with any human being on this earth but only for the thousand-thousand-year-old Egyptians, yet you might be glad to have a friend like Erick."

Edi must have just read something that made him solemn, for he looked quite restrainedly up from his book and said quite seriously: "You see, Sally, you do not at all know what friendship is, for you believe that one can have a new friend every week. But one ought to have only one friend for the whole life, and one must drag his enemy three times around the walls of Troy."

"Then he will have to make a nice journey if he comes from Upper Wood," remarked Sally quickly.

The mother meanwhile had left the room, and Aunt rose from her work.

"You will get quite barbaric from pure historical research," she said, turning to Edi, "but now it is high time to go to bed, quick! But where is Ritz?"

Ritz had withdrawn behind the stove a full hour ago in the hope of there escaping his fate for some time. But sleep had overcome him in the dark corner.

"Now we have the trouble," the aunt cried, when the sleeper had been discovered, and only with the greatest difficulty she woke him.

While Auntie was pushing and shaking the sleepy Ritz, Edi had tried several times to get near her, but she had always escaped him. Now a quiet moment came. Ritz was at last awake. Edi quickly stepped up to his aunt and said: "I did not mean alive, only after his death, like Achilles did."

"Now he too is talking in his sleep and says all kinds of nonsense," the aunt cried quite excitedly, for she had long since forgotten Edi's judgment on the enemy and she did not know what he was talking about. "No, no, it cannot go on like this, children must go to bed in good time, else the whole household gets out of joint."

Edi wanted to explain once more, only to make it clear to her, and not to have to go to bed misunderstood, so he had followed her about, and now a greater misunderstanding had arisen. There was no more chance for explanation. Ritz and Edi were shoved into their room, the light put on the table, the door was closed, and away went Auntie.

"I am sure Mother will come to us. I must explain everything to her," Edi said to himself, for to be so misunderstood disquieted the thinking Edi exceedingly. And the mother came as she did every evening, and she promised to make everything clear to Auntie, so he could be pacified and find the sleep which Ritz long since had found again.

CHAPTER III

'Lizebeth on the Warpath

On the following morning 'Lizebeth stood full of expectation at the kitchen door, and made all kinds of signs when Sally came rushing into the living-room from breakfast. The signs were indeed understood by the child but she had no time to go to the kitchen. She waved her school-bag and shouted in rushing by 'Lizebeth: "When I come from school; it is too late now!" Followed by Edi and Ritz she continued her run.

Something very particular must be in preparation, for after school all the scholars were standing again in a dense circle, beating their hands in the air and shouting as loud as they could, to have their views heard. Sally, who had waited a few moments for her brothers, went on home for she knew how long such meetings were apt to last and that her brothers would only arrive home when the soup was being served. Sally stepped into the house and with her school-bag in her hand she went straight to the kitchen.

"Now I will tell you everything that happened yesterday, 'Lizebeth," she said.

'Lizebeth nodded encouragingly and Sally began, and became more and more excited the longer she talked. She was most excited when she came to telling about the lady and her little boy, describing the way she talked, how she and the boy were dressed, and her aristocratic way. But all at once 'Lizebeth jumped as if a wasp had stung her and she called out, "What do you say, Sally? This woman wears a silk dress in the middle of the week? Silk? And she lives at Marianne's? And the boy wears velvet pants and a jacket all of velvet? Well, well! I have lived ten years with your great-grandfather and thirty with your grandfather and twelve with your father, and I have seen your father grow up from the first day of his life and your little brothers. And I have known them since they were babies and none of them ever had velvet pants on their body, and yet they were all ministers, your great-grandfather, your grandfather, your father, and the little ones will be ministers too, and none of them ever had even a piece of velvet on them and this woman in the middle of the week walks about in silk, yes indeed! And then taking rooms at Marianne's and living where the basket mender has lived, I tell you, Sally, there is something behind that! But it has to come out, and if Marianne wants to help a hundred times to cover it up, I tell you, Sally, I will bring out what is behind it all. Yes, indeed, velvet pants? I wonder what we shall hear next!"

Sally stood quite astounded before the anger-spouting 'Lizebeth, and could not understand the cause of this outbreak. But she had enough of it, so she turned round and hastened into the sitting-room, where, according to her expectations, at the very last moment, just when 'Lizebeth came into the room with the soup tureen, the brothers appeared, in a peculiar way. At each side of 'Lizebeth one crawled into the room, then shot straight across the room, like the birds before a storm shoot through the air so that one fears they will run their heads against something. Fortunately the two boys did not run their heads against anything, but each landed quite safely on his chair, and at once 'Lizebeth placed the soup on the table; but so decidedly and with such an angry face, as if she wanted to say: "There! If you had to put up with what I have to, then you would not trouble about your soup."

When she was again out of the room the father said, looking at his wife: "There will be a thunder storm, sure signs are visible." Then turning to his sons he continued: "But what do boys deserve, who come so late to table and from pure bad conscience almost knock it over?"

Ritz looked crestfallen into his plate, and from there in a somewhat roundabout way past his mother's plate, slyly across to his aunt, to see whether it looked like an order to go to bed at once. And it was so beautiful today, how beautiful the running about this evening after school would be!

There was no order, for the general attention was claimed by 'Lizebeth, who with the same signs of snorting anger threw more than placed the rest of the meal on the table and then grumbled herself out again.

As soon as dinner was over the father put on his little velvet cap and went in perfect silence out into the garden. For the storms in the house were more unpleasant to him than those that come from the sky. As soon as he had left the room 'Lizebeth stood in the doorway, both arms akimbo and looking quite warlike; she said: "I should think it would make no difference if I were to make a call on Marianne. I should think it is fully four years since I went to see her in the Middle Lot."

The pastor's wife had listened with astonishment to this speech, which sounded very reproachful. Now she said soothingly: "But, 'Lizebeth, I should hope that you do not think that I would oppose your going to Marianne or anywhere else; or that I ever have done so. Do go as soon as you feel like it."

"Just as if nothing had to be done, and as if I were and had been on a visit in the parsonage at Upper Wood for fifty years and more," was the answer. "No, no, I know what has to be done if no one else does. I can wait until Sunday afternoon; that is a time when the likes of me may go out, and if it suits the lady then, then I go, and shall not stay away very long. Why? I know why if no one else knows it."

"Of course that suits me, too," the lady pacified again, "do just what you think best." She did not say more for she had already noticed that a fire of anger was kindled in 'Lizebeth which would blaze up if another word fell in it. She could not imagine what had struck 'Lizebeth, but she found it more advisable not to touch on it. So 'Lizebeth grumbled for a little while, then she went away, since no further chance for outbreaks was offered. But there was no peace during the whole week; all noticed that, and each went carefully by 'Lizebeth as if she were a powder magazine which, at a careless touch, might fly up in the air at any moment. At last Sunday came. 'Lizebeth, after dinner, rushed about the kitchen with such a great noise, one could notice that many thoughts were working in her which she tried to give vent to. But she went into her room only after everything was bright and in its place.

She dressed herself in her Sunday-best and entered the sitting-room to take leave, just as though she was going on a long journey, for it was an event for 'Lizebeth to leave the parsonage for several hours. Now she wandered with slow steps along the road and looked to the right and left on the way to see what was growing in the field belonging to this or that neighbor. But her thoughts began again to work in her; one could see that, for she began to walk quicker and quicker and to talk half aloud to herself. Now she had arrived. Marianne had seen her from her little window and was surprised that this time 'Lizebeth was so soon keeping her promise. For years she had promised, had sent the messages that she would soon come; but she had never come and now she was there after the message had been brought only three days ago. Marianne went to meet her friend with a pleasant smile and welcomed her near the hedge before the cottage; then she conducted her guest around the cottage and up the narrow, wooden stairs. 'Lizebeth did not like this way and before she had reached the top of the stairs she had to speak out.

"Listen, Marianne," she said, "formerly one dared to come in the front door and through the kitchen, but now your oldest friends have to come by the back way, which, no doubt, is on account of the strange people whom you have taken into your house. I have heard much of them and now I see for myself that they, from pure pride, do not know what to order next, that you dare not go through your own house."

"Dear me, 'Lizebeth, what queer thoughts you do have," said Marianne, quite frightened. "That is not true, no one has forbidden me anything. And the people are so good and not a bit proud, and so friendly, and so kind and humble."

"Catch your breath, Marianne," 'Lizebeth interrupted her; "with all your excitement you cannot prove that white is black, and when such people come along, no one knows whence, and take a living-room and a bedroom in such a hut, so hidden as yours is, Marianne, where they pay next to nothing, and the woman struts about in a silk skirt and her little son in velvet; then there is something behind it all, and if she has silk skirts then she must have other things too, and she must know why she hides all these things in a hut which really does not look larger than a large henhouse. I wanted only to warn you, Marianne; you surely will be the loser with such a crowd."

"'Lizebeth," Marianne said now more emphatically than she had ever been known to speak, "it would be well, if all people were as this woman is, and you and I could thank God if we were like her. I have never in this world seen a better and a more patient and a more amiable human being. And in regard to the silk skirt, please be still and do not talk about it, 'Lizebeth; many a thing looks different to what it really is, and it would be better for you, if you would not load your conscience with wrong against a suffering woman on whom God has His eye."

Marianne did not wish to tell what she knew, that the lady had only the one skirt and no other whatsoever, and so, of course, was obliged to wear it. She did not want to tell that to 'Lizebeth now she heard how the latter judged.

"I do not think of loading my conscience with anything," 'Lizebeth continued, "and that much is not as it looks, that I know; but when a little boy of whom no one knows from where he came, wears velvet pants on bright week-days and even a velvet jacket, then they are velvet pants and do not only look so, that is certain. There is something behind that and it will come out and it will not look the best. Yes indeed, wearing velvet pants, such a little tramp of whom no one knows from where he comes, yes indeed."

"Do not sin against the dear boy," Marianne said seriously. "Look at him and you will see that he looks like a little angel, and he is one."

"So, that too," 'Lizebeth continued, "and pray when did you see an angel, Marianne, that you know he looks just like them? I should like to know! But I have served over fifty years in a respectable house, and I have helped to bring up the old parson, and the present one and his two sons; but we have never known anything of velvet pants, no, never,

and we were, I should think, different people from these. That is what I wanted to tell you, Marianne, and that is the main reason why I came to you, so that you should know what one is forced to think. And with regard to the angels, I can tell you that we have a little boy that looks exactly like the angels that blow the trumpets in the picture; such fat, firm, red cheeks has our Moritzli, like painted, and such round arms and legs."

"Yes, it is true, little Ritz was always a splendid little fellow, I should like to see him again," Marianne answered good-naturedly.

This reconciled 'Lizebeth a little; in a much friendlier tone she said: "Then come again to Upper Wood, you will have time, more than I. Then you can look at the other, too, and can see what a pretty, straight nose he has, that no angel could have a prettier one, and in the whole school he is by far the brightest,—that the teacher himself says of Eduardi."

'Lizebeth always called the boys by their full names, for the shortening of the names, Ritz and Edi, seemed to her a degrading of their names and an injustice to her favorites.

"Yes, yes, I believe you. What a delight it must be to see such a well-ordered household and all so happy together and so joyous," Marianne said with a sigh, and she threw a glance at the room of the stranger, and now 'Lizebeth was completely pacified, for she felt the parsonage again on the top.

"What is the matter with the people?" she asked with compassion.

"I do not know what to say," was the answer, "I do not understand it all myself."

"I thought as much, with such strangers one is never secure."

"No, no, I did not mean anything like that," Marianne opposed. "I tell you they are the best people one could find. I would do anything for the woman."

Marianne did not like to tell her friend what she knew and to consult with her about things she could not comprehend, for 'Lizebeth had evidently no love for the two and was full of distrust, and Marianne had taken them both into her heart so that she could not bear sharp remarks about them even from her good friend. She therefore was silent and 'Lizebeth could get nothing more out of her concerning her lodgers.

During this long talk a good deal of time had passed. 'Lizebeth rose from the wooden bench behind the table where she and Marianne had been sitting and was about to bid good-bye. But Marianne would not allow that, for the friend must first drink a cup of coffee; then she was going to walk with her. So they did, and as the two friends wandered together through the evening, they had much to tell each other and were very talkative; only when 'Lizebeth began to talk about the strangers in Marianne's house, was the latter silent and hardly spoke. Where the road went into the woods, they parted, and Marianne had to promise to return the call as soon as possible. Then 'Lizebeth stepped out vigorously and arrived at home in such good spirits that the parson's wife resolved to send her often to Marianne on a visit.

When Marianne on her return came near her cottage, she heard lovely singing; she well knew the song. Every evening at twilight the stranger sat down at the piano and sang, and she sang so beautifully and with a voice that came from such depths that it touched Marianne's heart so that she could not tear herself away when she heard the song, until it was ended. But there was one song in particular which Marianne loved to hear and which the woman sang every day, either at the beginning or the end of her songs. It always seemed as if a great joy came into her voice and as if she wanted to make this joy appeal to all who listened. And yet this song touched Marianne's heart so deeply that she wept every time she heard it. So it happened this evening. There was a log lying before the house-door which served her for a resting-place when, in the evening, she wanted to get a little fresh air. She rolled it under the window so that she might look for a moment into the room. There sat the lady, and her large blue eyes looked up to the evening sky so seriously and sorrowfully, and yet there was something which sounded again like a great joy in the beautiful song she was singing. The little boy sat on a footstool beside her and looked at his mother with his joyful, bright eyes, and listened to the singing.

Marianne could not look long. A strange feeling came over her, and she stepped down from the log, put her apron to her eyes and wept and wept, until the singing had died away.

CHAPTER IV

The Same Night in Two Houses

When on this evening Edi and Ritz were lying in their bed and Mother had finished saying evening prayer with them and had closed the door after her, Edi began: "Have you noticed, Ritz, that Father is almost like God? He already knows the thing before one has told half of it."

"No, I have never noticed that," Ritz replied. "But it is all right, for then he can do everything he wants to and also make fine weather."

"Oh, Ritz, you only look at the profit! but just look at the other side." Here Edi rose up in bed from pure zeal and continued: "Do you remember, not long ago I recited our songs, which we made about the others, to Papa; then he knew at once that we were preparing a big fight and has forbidden us to take part in it. And this evening they all have talked it over that I should lead the boys of Upper Wood into battle, and I have thought it all over and prepared ahead. Then I would be Fabius Cunctator, and would lead my troops above on the hill round and round it and would not attack, for you must know that is much safer, and so Hannibal could do nothing and could not attack me."

"Is Hannibal still living then?" asked Ritz serenely.

"Oh, Ritz, how indescribably ignorant you are!" Edi remarked compassionately. "He died more than a thousand years ago. But big Churi, the leader of the Middle Lotters, our enemies, is Hannibal. But you see, I just remember something: Churi is not a real Hannibal, for he was a great and noble general, and Churi cannot represent him; but do you know what, we can take the strange boy Erick, for Hannibal!--he looks quite different from Churi,--shall we?"

"That is all the same to me since we cannot be in the fight," remarked Ritz.

"That is true, we dare not, I had quite forgotten that," lamented Edi. "If I only knew what we could do to be in this fight and yet not do anything that is forbidden."

"Don't you know an example in the world's history?" asked Ritz, to whom his brother presented so often, in cases of need, examples out of this rich fountain.

"No. If we only lived like the old Greeks," Edi answered with a deep sigh. "When they wanted to know anything of which no one knew the answer, they quickly drove to Delphi to the oracle and asked advice. Then there was an answer at once and they knew what was to be done. But now there are no more oracles, not even in Greece. Isn't that too bad?"

"Yes, that is too bad," said Ritz rather sleepily, "but I am sure you will think of another example."

Edi began at once to think, but however much he thought, and groped in his memory and upheaved what he had stored away in his brain, he could not find in the whole history of the world one single case where some one had carried out something that the father had forbidden, and yet stood afterwards with honor before him. For that was what Edi was trying to find; and he was sitting straight up in his bed in the dark, and in spite of all his endeavors he could find no way out. And when he now heard the deep breathing of the sweetly sleeping Ritz, he became too discouraged to try any more. He lay down on his pillow and was soon dreaming about the uniform of Fabius Cunctator.

Soon after this Marianne too lay down on her couch, but for a long time sleep would not come. The singing of the lady downstairs had made her very, very sad; this voice had never before touched her so deeply as it had done this evening, and she still heard the sound of weeping and rejoicing in confusion. So Marianne heard the old clock on the wall strike eleven, then twelve, and yet she could not go to sleep. Now it seemed to her as if she heard a gentle knocking below in the house. Who could want anything of her so late in the night? She must be mistaken, she said to herself. But no, she now heard it quite plainly, somebody was knocking somewhere. She quickly dressed herself and hastened down to the kitchen. She opened the front door--no one was there. But the knocking came again and now Marianne thought that it came from the sleeping room of her boarders. Softly she opened the door of the room. Within the pale lady sat on her bed, but she was much paler than usual, so that Marianne stepped quickly into the room, and much frightened, she exclaimed: "Dear me! What is the matter? Oh how bad you do look!"

"Yes, I feel very ill, my good Marianne," the lady answered with her friendly voice. "I am so sorry that I frightened you so in the middle of the night; but I had no rest, I was obliged to call you. I have a few things to tell you and it might have been too late."

"Dear, dear! what do you mean?" lamented Marianne. "I will get the doctor at once from Lower Wood,--he is the nearest."

"No, Marianne, I thank you, I know my condition," said the sick woman soothingly, "it is a cramp in my heart, which often comes and this time more terribly than usual, and so, my good Marianne, I wanted to tell you that if I am no longer here tomorrow, will you give this," (and she gave a small paper to Marianne), "to him who has to prepare for my last resting-place. It is the only thing that I leave, and which I have saved for a long time, so that I need not be buried in a pauper's grave. That must not be, for my father's sake," she added, very softly.

"Dear, dear Lord!" Marianne lamented, "grant that it may not be that! Do think of the dear little boy! Dear Mrs. Dorn, do not take it amiss, I have never before asked anything at all, but if you leave nothing, what have I to do with the dear boy? Has he no relatives? Has he no father?"

The mother looked at the sleeping Erick, who, with his golden curls encircling his rosy face, lay there so peacefully and so carefree. She put her hand on his forehead--for his narrow bed stood quite close to hers--and said softly: "On earth you have no father any more, my child, but above in heaven there lives a Father who will not forsake you. I have given you long since to Him. I know He will care for you and protect you, so I can go quietly and joyfully. Yes, my good Marianne," she turned again to the latter, "I have done a great wrong; I have hurt deeply the best of fathers through disobedience and selfishness. For that I have suffered much; but in my suffering it was permitted me to learn how great the love and compassion of our Father in heaven is for His children, and since then a song of deepest gratitude sounds ever and ever in my heart:

"I lay in heaviest fetters,
Thou com'st and set'st me free;
I stood in shame and sorrow,
Thou callest me to Thee;
And lift'st me up to honor
And giv'st me heavenly joys
Which cannot be diminished
By earthly scorn and noise."

The sick woman had folded her hands while she spoke, and in her eyes there was a wonderful light; but now she sank back on her pillows, exhausted and pale. Marianne stood there quietly and now and then had to wipe her eyes.

"But now I must run to the doctor,--it is high time," she said, frightened. "Mrs. Dorn, can I give you anything?"

"No, I thank you," the sick woman answered softly. "I thank you for everything, my good Marianne."

The latter now hastily left the house and ran as fast as she could through the silent night toward Lower Wood. From time to time she had to stop to get her breath. Then she looked up to the bright star-covered sky and prayed: "Dear God, help us all." She had great difficulty in awakening the doctor in Lower Wood at two o'clock in the night; but at last he heard her knocking and followed her soon after on the road to her house. When they entered together the room of the sick woman, the light had burned down and threw a faint light on the quiet, pale face. The mother had stretched out her arm upon the bed of her child. The boy had encircled her slender, white hand with both his plump hands, and held it firmly. The doctor approached and looked closer at the sleeper; he bent over her for some moments.

"Marianne," he said, "loosen the hand out of the little boy's. The woman is sleeping her eternal sleep, she will nevermore awaken on this earth. She must have died suddenly from heart failure, while you were away to fetch me."

The doctor left the quiet house at once, and Marianne did as he had told her. She folded the hands of the departed one on her breast, then she sat down on Erick's bed, looking now at the serious face of the dead mother, now at the care-free sleeping boy, and wept quietly, until the rays of the morning sun fell into the quiet room and roused Marianne to the consciousness that a new, sad day had begun--a day on which Erick had to be told that he never again on this earth could take hold of the loving hand of his mother.

CHAPTER V

Disturbance in School and Home

Never before had the schoolmaster of Upper Wood had such hard work with his schoolchildren as on the morning after this night. Of course there were times that some were more restless and more dense than usual; but there were usually a good many with whom he could work successfully. But today it seemed as though a crowd of excited spirits had taken possession of the children. All the boys cast uncanny, warlike glances at each other, even suppressed threatenings were thrust hither and thither, and when the teacher turned his back such threatening gestures were made to those who faced him, that they, one and all, rolled their eyes with wrath and gave the most ridiculous answers. They all were so eager for the battle, that they could no longer distinguish between friend and foe, and each shook his clenched fist at the other.

Sally and Kaetheli, those model scholars, kept putting their heads together and whispered continuously like the ripple of a brook. Yes, indeed, Kaetheli was so brim full of news that she even kept on whispering to Sally while the latter had to answer questions in arithmetic and of course got into the most inexplicable confusion. Even Edi, the very best scholar, forgot his studies and was staring sadly before him. For just now had come before his mind's eye, during the rest-period, the great bravery of his troops who, from want of a real enemy, had put each other in a sorry shape. And he was not allowed to lead these courageous soldiers against the boasting Churi, and to show this fellow how a great general does his work! The teacher was just standing before him and called on him, continuing in the geography lesson: "Edi, will you tell me the most important productions of Upper Italy?"

Italy! At the sound of that name, the whole war operation stood before Edi's eyes, for he had studied the minutest details of that region where the Romans had met their enemies, and Churi, as Hannibal, stood triumphant before him. Edi, heaving a deep sigh, answered nothing for the present.

"Edi," the master said when no answer came, "I cannot understand what sadness can be found in our topic, nor what can burden your mind, but one thing I can see, that today you all are like a herd of thoughtless sheep with whom nothing can be done. Kaetheli, you magpie, can you stop a moment and listen to what I am saying? You all are going home. I have had enough, and everyone--do you understand?--everyone takes home some home-work for punishment. As you go out, come to my desk, one after the other, and each will receive his special task."

So it was done, and at once the whole crowd rushed with joyous hearts into the open. For the home-work did not at all suppress the joy that school had closed a whole half-hour early. Outside on the playground, the groups who had common interests at once crowded together. The largest throng pressed around Edi, to listen with much shouting and noise to his battle plans.

At once after leaving the schoolroom Kaetheli took Sally by the hand and said: "I will go with you for a while, then I can finish telling you what Marianne told Mother this morning." With this Kaetheli continued her story, which she had begun in school, and told Sally everything that had happened last night in Marianne's cottage. Sally listened very quietly and never said a word. When they arrived at the garden, Kaetheli had just finished her sad tale; she stood still for a moment and was surprised that Sally did not say anything; then she said, "Good-bye!" and ran away.

At the noon meal Ritz related faithfully all that had happened in school: for now, since Sally and even Edi had received home-tasks, he found that to be more remarkable than sorrowful. Edi seemed somewhat dejected. When now the small, golden, roasted apples were placed on the table, Ritz stopped his report and applied himself thoroughly to the work of eating them. When he had cleared his plate, which was done very quickly, he looked slyly at the plates of his brother and sister, for he knew that the second supply of the things on the table came only after all three had finished their first. When he looked at Sally, his eyes stayed on her, and after he had watched her attentively for some time, he said: "Sally, you keep on swallowing as much as you can, but you see, nothing can go down, because you have put nothing into your mouth, and your plate stays filled."

Now Sally could not restrain her tears longer, for she had with great difficulty swallowed them, and had been very quiet. Now she burst out into loud sobbing and said through her tears: "Poor Erick, too, cannot eat today. Now he has neither father nor mother and is all alone in the world."

Sally's weeping grew louder and louder, for she could not stop, since she had restrained herself so long. Ritz looked, surprised and startled, from one to the other; he did not quite understand whether he was to blame for this. The mother rose, took Sally by the hand, and led her out of the room.

This incident caused a great disturbance at the midday meal. The father was annoyed and sat without saying a word. The aunt, with great animation, tried to point out to him with this proof, how excitable children become when they do not go to bed in good time. Edi, too, sat quite ill-humoredly before his plate, as if he had to swallow sorrel instead of little golden apples; for he felt much troubled that his father had heard of his inattention in the school. Ritz had expected a kind of admonishing speech from him, because the outburst had taken place right after he had spoken to Sally. Since it did not come and no one seemed to trouble about him, he settled himself firmly in his seat and ate everything that was on Sally's and his mother's plates.

When the father went out in the garden soon after, the mother followed him and led him to the small bench under the apple tree. Seated there she told him what Sally, continuously interrupted by loud sobbing, had told her: what had happened during the past night in Marianne's cottage. And she now asked her husband whether he did not think that some enquiries ought to be made about these strangers, and whether one ought not to do something for the little boy who, as it seemed, was standing all alone in the world. But the pastor was not of her opinion, and said that these people had turned to Lower Wood for school and church, therefore he could not interfere at present. His colleague in Lower Wood would no doubt take everything in hand and see what could be done with the boy. He was sure that the pastor in Lower Wood would find some relations of the boy, and he perhaps knew already more about the strangers, than was suspected. The woman, no doubt, had confided in his colleague about herself, since she would have had to do that as she had sent her boy to Lower Wood to school, and perhaps also to Sunday school. One could not possibly give in to Sally in all her manifold emotions and pay attention to them. The child had too vivid an imagination and was yet too young to have the gift of discrimination, and if one should give in to her fancies one soon would fill the house with Leopoldys and other creatures, who soon would be turned out of the house or, at least, be pushed aside by the same Sally, as soon as she saw that the good people were not as she had imagined them.

"I have to take Sally's part somewhat, dear husband," said the mother. "You are right, she feels very strongly, and she shows these feelings to everyone whom she meets; but I do not find that wrong, for, wherever she meets with a response, there she remains faithful to her feelings, and she loves her friends warmly and constantly. With what devotion has she adhered to Kaetheli from babyhood! And I much prefer that she go through life with her warm heart, and expect to find a friend in every human being, than that she should pass people indifferently, and have no conception of friendship, although she may meet with many a disappointment and many a condemnation through this trait."

"Both will be her share, in plenty," said the father. "In this direction we therefore will do our share in saving her from these things as much as she can be saved."

So the mother saw that the best that could be done was to pacify Sally and to explain to her that nothing could be done at present but something would be done later from another source.

When it became known that the strange woman had died, there was a great deal of talk, especially among the Middle Lotters, in whose midst the woman had lived, but had never been seen—a fact which had always caused suspicion. Since no one knew anything about her past life, then everyone had the more to say about who she might have been. At any rate, nothing very good, in that they all agreed, else she would have been friendly with them and would not have kept herself so apart. When now no relations appeared and she had to be buried without any mourners, then a number of stories began to circulate which became more and more mysterious. For the official of the community had said that, no doubt, she had been an exile, and the Justice of Peace had added that then she must have committed very great political crimes. 'Lizebeth was not loath to bring these stories to the pastor and his wife, for she had never been able to overcome the thought of the velvet pants. The pastor's wife shook her head incredulously and forbade 'Lizebeth to carry the stories further. The pastor said: "There must have been something crooked, but the woman is now buried, and we will say nothing more about it."

Marianne alone stood opposed to all and told them to their faces that it was an injustice and wickedness to talk as they did; none of them had known the woman, else they would know that there was nothing bad about her, but that she had been an angel of goodness, gentleness and kindly deeds. And although the lady had appeared as aristocratic as a princess, she had been more friendly with humble folk, such as Marianne, than many a Middle Lotter who ran about in tom stockings. But if Marianne was asked if she had known the woman well, who she was, and why not a single relative enquired after her, although the notice of her death was put into all the papers; then she too could give no explanation, since she did not know anything.

A few wicked people then said: "No doubt Marianne will have had her profit from it." But she had not, and never had looked for it. The woman had paid the low rent in advance for the month, which had just ended; it had been the month of August. When now, immediately after the funeral of the poor woman, the officials came and looked to see what the

inheritance of the little boy would be, then it was found that there was nothing but the piano and the black silk skirt. The officials decided to give the latter to Marianne, since she had rendered her the last services and put her in her last bed.

The dress had once been very beautiful, for the material was heavy and costly, but it was much worn, and yet Marianne thought: "It is too handsome for me. I will not wear it but it is a dear remembrance," for she had only seen the dear woman in that one dress. While they were still talking over what should be done with the piano, the landlord of the Krone in Lower Wood drove up with an empty wagon and took the piano, the beds, the table and the two easy chairs, for everything had been hired from him; but he had been paid in advance up to this time.

So nothing was left for the little boy but the velvet suit that he wore. Now they began to talk about what was to be done with the boy, and some propositions were made as to how he could be cared for. At this point Marianne stepped forth and said that she would keep the little boy until she was leaving. In three weeks she was going to move down to Oakwood to her cousin's, for her house was as good as sold. The officials were greatly pleased with this offer; many things could turn up in three weeks, and for the time being the little waif was cared for. So they parted from one another satisfied with their work.

CHAPTER VI

A Lost Hymn

The next morning, when the mother lay still and pale on her bed, Erick woke up; Marianne, who had watched for his wakening, came to his couch and said:

"Dear Erick, your mother has gone, last night, to heaven, and now she feels very happy, and looks down on you and watches to see whether you stay good and honest so that sometime you may come to her."

First he had answered quite quietly: "Yes, I know, Mother has told me that it would come so." But when he went to his mother and looked at her for a long, long time and she did not open her eyes, then he sat down on a footstool and cried quietly. As long as his mother lay there he could not be made to leave her, and when she was carried out, then he sat down in the spot where she always had sat, and did not go away the whole day. But he was quite still, and although he wept, he did it so quietly that no sound could be heard.

The day after the officials had been there and Marianne had taken Erick from the empty room upstairs to her little home, she thought that it would be best if he were to go to school and again come in contact with other children, so that he might become happy again and make a little noise with them; for this quiet weeping seemed sadder to Marianne than if he had sobbed aloud. So she told him on that morning, that it would be best for him if he were to go to school. In an instant Erick obeyed, took out his books, packed them in his bag and started on his way to school. So it went on from day to day, and gradually it seemed to Marianne that Erick grew more and more as he used to be; but the sunny, joyous face which he used to have had not yet returned, and something like shyness had come to him, which never before had been noticed in him. It seemed as if a safe, strong wall, which formerly had protected him, had fallen down, and as though he looked for the first time on things and people which surrounded him and which were strange to him. The safe wall had been the great love of his mother, which had encircled him everywhere.

Two weeks had passed since Erick had again gone to school. When lessons were over, he had never waited until the scholars of the Middle Lot had gathered to make a noisy journey home, but he had run away at once and had walked the long way alone. When he came home, he found his piece of bread and his cup of milk ready on the table if Marianne was not there to give it to him. When she was there, she often said: "Go out a little to play with the children, Erick, it will be good for you and you will have time afterwards to do your lessons." Erick had always gone out, as far as the hedge before the house, and had stopped and watched how here and there the children were running about and playing all kinds of games; but he had never joined them.

So also today, he stood there and looked with surprised eyes across at the freshly mown meadow, where a crowd of Middle Lot children were playing with much noise "Catch me if you can." Big Churi was running after Kaetheli and as she knew what heavy blows from those big fists would fall upon her back if she should be caught, she rushed over the field toward the hedge and into Marianne's little garden, almost throwing down Erick on her way. At this instant the quick-running Churi would have caught Kaetheli; but quick as a deer, Erick rushed forth, opened his arms wide and so stopped Churi until Kaetheli had shot around the cottage, fleet as an arrow, and again to her goal on the meadow, where she could get her breath without fear of being caught.

Churi grumbled: "Another time you leave me alone, or--" With this he shook his fist at Erick and then ran away, for he hoped to catch Kaetheli before she should reach her goal. When the latter had rested a little she came running back again, for she indeed had felt Erick's chivalrous service and she was very grateful to him. She therefore could not see him standing so alone, but ran up to him and said cheerily: "Come and play with us, you must not always stand so alone, that is lonesome."

"No," said Erick, "I cannot play with you. I do not want to shout so terribly."

"You need not scream, that does not belong to the game. Come along!" Saying this, Kaetheli took Erick's hand firmly in hers and pulled him along.

Erick played with the rest, and now he had begun he played with all his might. They had stopped the game of "Catch" and were playing a circle game. The children had formed a large circle and held each other's hands. In the middle of the circle stood the excluded child. This child had to strike someone's hand at random and then there was a race around the circle to see who would first get in the open space inside. This game was played with the greatest zeal; but suddenly Erick pulled his hands away from his neighbors' and ran away, so that great confusion arose.

"We will not let him play any more," cried Churi, much angered.

"Indeed we will," maintained Kaetheli firmly, "perhaps a wasp has stung him, or perhaps they play the same game where he used to live. When he returns he can take my hand. Now we will go on."

So it was done, and soon after they were playing again with great glee, and Erick was forgotten.

Not far from their playground stood a blind man with a barrel-organ playing his melodies. When Erick had heard the first notes, he had freed himself and had run away. Now he stood at a little distance from the organ grinder and listened with strained attention to all the melodies. When the man left, the boy went quietly toward the cottage, and when Marianne saw him come, she said to herself: "I had hoped that the children would make him merry again, and now it seems to me that he is sadder than he was before."

From that time on Kaetheli looked every evening, when the games began, to see whether Erick was standing near the hedge, and when she saw him there she ran to get him. Erick now played every day with the children and when he was in the spirit of the game, he looked quite happy. But almost every evening the same thing occurred as on the first. In the midst of the game Erick stopped, ran away and did not return. Once a number of wandering journeymen had passed by; they had sung loud and joyously their wander-songs, one after the other. Away was Erick, and one could see him far away, quietly following the singing men. Once trumpet blasts sounded across the meadow to the playing children--for one of Middle Lot was with the players in the army and was practising his marches--at once Erick ran away in the direction of the sounds. Another time a boy with a harmonica had approached the playing children; it was Erick's turn just then to seek the hidings, but threatenings and pleadings were of no avail, he did not seek any more. He placed himself in front of the boy and listened to him; there he remained standing and did not stir.

Churi in his hiding-place was about to burst with anger because Erick stopped seeking. He had hoped that Erick would exhaust himself looking for him, for Churi had climbed up the high pear-tree which stood in the centre of their playground, and from there he could overlook Erick's inactivity and his stubborn resistance to being moved. Kaetheli too had become impatient, for in the farthest corner of the goat-shed, whither she had crawled, she felt herself secure from being found, and now, all at once, she discovered that there was no more seeking, and she could easily guess the cause. With a good deal of trouble she crawled out again, with many signs of her hiding-place on her dress for she had been obliged to sit crouched. She ran to Erick, who was still in the same spot, near the harmonica player.

"I should like to know what is the matter with you," she called out. "Every evening, just when we have the greatest fun, all at once you run away like a hare, or you stand there like a statue and let everything go as it will. But that will not do! Come and seek us. But first I must hide again."

The tones of the harmonica had just stopped and the boy had gone. Erick took a deep breath and said: "I cannot play any more. I must go home."

He turned away and went; but that annoyed Kaetheli. She ran after him and talked angrily at him. "That is not nice of you, Erick; you need not have done that. You have spoiled the game now four or five times--that is surely not kind of you, do you think it is?" They had by this time arrived at Marianne's cottage. Erick stopped at the hedge and turned round. He said, quite friendly: "Do not be angry, Kaetheli, you see I have to act so."

"Yes, but why? Tell me now, what you do and why you have to spoil everything?" demanded Kaetheli, rather huffed, for she could not yet get over the fact that she had crawled all for nothing into the incomparable hiding-place in the goat-shed.

"I will tell you, Kaetheli, for you must not think that I purposely spoil everything for you. I did not think of that," said Erick, excusing himself. "Do you see, there is a beautiful song which my mother sang every day, and also on the last day, and I should so much like to hear that song again. But no one sings it, and I may listen wherever I like, I hear only other things. Oh, if I could only hear that song again, just once!"

Now Kaetheli saw how Erick's eyes filled with big tears, and in an instant her anger turned into pity. "You must not be sad on that account, for I can help you," she said readily. "I know so many songs; tell me what the name of yours is, then I will say it to you right away."

"I try to remember it all the time, but I cannot get the words together; but I remember well the melody. Do you think you could guess the words, if I sing the melody?"

"Of course I can, you just sing on," encouraged Kaetheli, with confidence.

Erick sang a line, and then another, and still a bit, then he could not go further. Kaetheli, surprised, shook her head. "I never have heard that song, but perhaps we sing it, only a little differently. I am sure I shall find it. Tell me what it is about, about people or animals?"

"At the beginning about flowers, green trees, you know, with those beautiful branches and--"

"Stop, I know all," Kaetheli interrupted him; "now I am going to sing it to you." And with a firm voice and full tones Kaetheli began seriously:

"Three roses in the garden,
Three birds are in the wood,
In summer it is lovely
In winter it is good."

"Is that it?" she now asked, full of confidence that it must be it. But Erick shook his head decidedly, and said:

"No, no, that is not my song, there is no similarity between it and what you sing."

Kaetheli was much surprised. "But the flowers and the trees are in the song," she said, "or perhaps, Erick, you have forgotten the song and do not know how it goes?"

"Indeed, indeed I know," the latter assured her. "You see, first there is a great feast, where they all come and throw down many flowers and wreaths because a great lord is coming and--"

"Perhaps a count," Kaetheli interposed.

"Perhaps so."

"Oh! now I know it! If you only had spoke of the count right away; now listen!" And again Kaetheli began with full tones:

"I stood on a high mountain
And looked into a vale,
A little ship came swimming
Three counts did hoist the sail."

"Well, Erick?"

But Erick shook his head even more and said sadly: "Not at all, not a bit like it! Perhaps the song is lost and no one knows anything about it."

"I know something else to help you," said helpful Kaetheli, whose tender heart was filled with compassion. "To be sure, it is a little late, but I can still do it."

Then she ran away, and Erick looked after her with great surprise, and wondered where she was going to look for the song.

Running all the way, Kaetheli had reached the bottom of the hill in a quarter of an hour. On the garden wall stood Ritz. "Get Sally, Ritz, but be quick," Kaetheli called up to him. That just suited Ritz, for he hoped that something particular was in store, and before Kaetheli reached the wall, Sally was brought out.

Breathlessly Kaetheli told her what she wanted and now expected, since Sally knew so many songs that she would bring out the desired one on the spot. But it was not accomplished so quickly and there followed a long explanation, for Sally must know all that was to be found in the song, whether it was joyous or sad, and then she began to guess and to try whether it could be this one or that, but none seemed to fit according to the descriptions, and suddenly Kaetheli jumped up and exclaimed: "The evening bells are ringing; I have to go home. I am afraid that father will be at supper before me and then he'll scold. I thought you would know it much quicker, Sally, such a simple song! Think it over and bring it to me at school, but sure, for else Erick will be sad again. Good night!"

Kaetheli was away like a shot, and Sally went thoughtfully back to the house. Very soon the sitting-room was lighted up, where mother and aunt were seated at the table, and now the father also sat down. Edi had long since waited with his book to see whether the lamp would be lighted in the room, for his mother had forbidden him to read in the twilight.

Ritz sat down to finish, with many a sigh, a delayed arithmetic lesson. Now Sally entered the room; under each arm she carried four or five books of different sizes and makeup. Panting under the heavy load she threw them on the table.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," cried Auntie, frightened, "now Sally will turn into a historical searcheress."

"No, no," cried Sally, "only give me a little room, I am obliged to look for something." She sat down at once behind the heap of books and began her work in earnest. But she did not remain undisturbed for long, for the large amount of reading material which she had brought in attracted the eyes of all, and all at once the father, who had looked at the books from over his paper, said:

"Sally, I see a book which is little suited for you to read. Where did you get the Niebelungen song?"

"I was just going to ask," said the mother, "what you intended to do with A.M. Arndt's war songs?"

Sally had taken along from all tables and book-cases what seemed to her a collection of songs. These two books she had found in her father's study and now she explained that she had to find Erick's lost song, and what Kaetheli had told her about what was in it.

"Aha," said Edi, and giggled a little, "on that account you took that book from the piano. Erick will be pleased with the words you will get from this."

He held the book before his sister and pointed with his finger to the title: "Songs Without Words". Sally was not as thorough in her thinking as her brother was. She had, in the zeal of her intention, thought that these were some particular kind of songs, and she now looked with some confusion at the book in which only black notes were to be found. Ritz, too, was now roused to interest in the doings. He too had taken up a book and read rather laboriously: "Battle Sonnets" from--

"What! You have also been to my table, Sally?" the aunt interrupted the reader. "You children are really terrible! At any rate you ought to have been in bed long ago; it is high time, pack together."

But this time Sally showed herself unusually obstinate. She assured them that she could not sleep, not for the whole night, if she had not found the song. She must bring it to Kaetheli, as she had promised to do so, and from fear that she should not find the song Sally worked herself into such a state of excitement that the mother interfered. She explained to the child that they were not the kind of books where such a song could be found, and that the descriptions which Kaetheli had given were much too uncertain to find any song. Sally herself should speak with Erick about what he still knew of his song, and then they would search for it together, for she too would gladly help the poor boy to keep in memory the song his mother had loved.

These words pacified Sally and so she willingly packed together her books and put each in its place.

CHAPTER VII

Erick Enlists in the Fighting Army

Meanwhile the sunny September had approached and everywhere the apples and pears were smiling down from the trees. Every morning one could see the Mayor of Upper Wood walk toward the hillside, where he had started a new vineyard where only reddish, sweet Alsatian grapes grew. The hillside lay toward the valley about a half-hour's walk below Upper Wood; but the walk was not too far for the Mayor to watch the growth of his grapes, for they were of the most delicious kind.

The Justice of Peace, Kaetheli's father, had also a small vineyard on that side, but of a much inferior kind, and when he sometimes went to see whether his grapes would ripen this year, he always found the Mayor there, and usually said, pointing to the latter's grapes: "A splendid plant."

And the Mayor answered: "I should think so. And this year will not be like last! Just let them come!" and with these words he held up his finger threateningly.

"If one only could get hold of one of that crowd," remarked the Justice of Peace, "so that one could make an example of him of what would happen to all the wicked fellows."

"I have prepared for that, Justice of Peace," the other answered, full of meaning. "The boldest of them will carry the reminder of the sweet grapes for weeks about with him and will be plainly marked."

This conversation had already been repeated several times, for both men had an especial interest in the topic. But they soon had to pass to more important things, for in these communities all kinds of things happen. At present all the inhabitants of the three places were in great tension and expectation about something which caused so much talk that they hardly found time to attend to their daily business. The Upper Wooders had bought an organ for their church, which was to be dedicated the following Sunday.

In the Middle Lot something was also taking place. Old Marianne was busy packing up, for she could no longer keep her cottage. Her work was not enough to pay the running expenses, so she was going down to Oakwood where she had a cousin who was glad to have her live with him. Now the question was, where the little stranger was to go, whom she had kept with her up till now. She wanted to stay over Sunday and attend the dedication, and on Monday she was going to lock up the house.

To the schoolchildren also the approaching festivity was an opportunity for much loud discussion. Two parties had naturally formed themselves, the church and the no-church party. For the one side wanted to attend church on Organ-Sunday, as they called the day for short, and listen to the organ; the other did not care anything about hearing the music, for they said they could hear the organ in the afternoon when they were obliged to go to Sunday school, and to attend church twice was too much. The main thing was that women would be sitting about everywhere with large baskets full of cake and unusually good cookies; these must be secured. The Middle Lotters especially were against the morning church service. To the surprise of all, big Churi voted for the church-going. He had brought it about that the great, long-prepared battle day was fixed for Organ-Sunday, although many voices voted against it, and there were still some that did not agree with the arrangement, for they were sure that on the feast-day much else was to be seen and heard. But Churi grew quite wild if anyone said a word against his plan, and they did not care to make him angry now, for no one could manage so many soldiers as he had to look after, and only thus could the victory be won. The Middle Lotters had naturally joined the Lower Wooders against the Upper Wooders and so they were now a large army. The Upper Wooders therefore made a new effort to get Edi for leader and to win the battle, for against such a large army only a well prepared battle-plan and a general well versed in war could save them, and Edi was the only one who knew how to do both.

But he remained steadfast, although it almost choked him, for all the brilliant examples of the small Greek army against the enormous hordes of Persians stood before him, and he had to swallow them all down, for he knew his father's aversion to such warlike doings and then--on Organ-Sunday!

Churi had ordered that his whole army should come together on the Friday before Organ-Sunday in the Middle Lot. So the whole crowd collected on the evening fixed, and there was an indescribable noise. But big Churi shouted the loudest and explained to them the arrangements of the day: first, all would go to church, and during that time, he and his officers would go to find out the best place for camping and for the battle.

"Ah, so, Churi!" a little fellow in the crowd shouted, "that is why you voted for church, that you might do outside what you want to!"

Churi cried, much vexed: "That must be on account of discipline; if you do not want to go, then don't, and the Upper Wooders will pay you for it." This threat was effective, just as Churi wanted it to be.

The whole army should not come together until after the organ dedication was over in the morning, and the midday meal which followed at once, was finished; and in the morning only Churi with his officers should march out to arrange all places and positions. So he had planned. The officers whom he had chosen were all his good friends, the toughest Middle Lotters that could be found.

About this time a year ago, he had, with the very same boys, broken into the Mayor's vineyard and stolen all his very best, fine Alsatian grapes. He intended to do this again with his confidential friends, for it had never been found out who had stolen the grapes, although they had tried in all the three communities to find the culprits, and this had greatly encouraged Churi and his allies. But he knew how careful the Mayor had been this year, and he knew very well of his daily walks and that in the afternoon his wife also took a walk in the direction of the vineyard, and in the evening they often took the same walk together; so that the culprits had not any day been sure of them. But on Organ-Sunday no one would be outside--of that Churi was convinced; therefore he had arranged everything in view of that, for although there would be an investigation, all the many Lower Wooders and Middle Lotters would be in that region, and the culprits would never be found out from among such a large crowd.

After Churi had told his army of his battle plans, they dispersed in all directions. A number of spectators had gathered around the warriors, every child in Middle Lot, down to the two-year-olds. Ahead of all was Kaetheli, who was always on the spot when something was to be seen or heard. When she left the meadow, she saw Erick standing near the hedge, where he had stood for a long time watching the tumultuous crowd. Kaetheli ran to him. "This will be such a fight as never before," she called to him with admiration. "Don't you want to be in it, Erick?"

"No," he answered drily.

"Why not?"

"Because they act as I do not care to act."

"Not? You are a peculiar boy, you are always alone. Do you know where you are going Monday when Marianne goes away from here?"

"No."

"You are going to be auctioned off. My father has said so."

"What is that?" asked Erick, who now listened more attentively to Kaetheli.

"Oh, there are a crowd of people in the room and they bid on you, and whoever bids the lowest gets you."

"That is stupid," said Erick.

"Why is it stupid?"

"Because they would get more money if they gave me to him who offers the most."

"No, you did not understand. You are not going to be sold, quite the reverse; he who gets you also gets the money--do you understand now?"

"Who gives him the money?"

"Well, that is not a person, as you think," Kaetheli explained. "Do you see, there is a money box with money in it for the people who are poor and miserable and homeless."

Erick grew purple.

"I am not going to be auctioned," he said defiantly.

"Yes, indeed, Erick, that cannot be helped. One has to obey before one is confirmed. If you do not obey, then someone

just puts you on his shoulder and takes you to the auction room."

After Kaetheli had instructed Erick in what was coming to him, she bade him good-night and went her way. Erick stayed on the same spot and did not move. He had become deathly pale and his blue eyes flashed defiance and indignation, which had never been seen in this sunny face. Thus Erick stood on the same spot when Churi came by on his way home.

"Have they made you angry, velvet panty? I never have seen you so mad," he exclaimed and stopped near the hedge.

He received no answer.

"You join us in the fight and strike hard; that will relieve your feelings."

Erick shook his head.

"Don't be such a sneak, and say something. The fellow who has made you wrathful will no doubt be there, then you can get at him."

"It is no boy," grumbled Erick.

"So, who then, perhaps Kaetheli?"

"I will not go to be auctioned," Erick burst out and his anger flashed as never before.

"Well, well, is that all. That is nothing," Churi thought. "You just come with us and you will forget the auction on the spot. Or are you afraid of the thrashing, you fine velvet pants? Do you know what? I could tell you something that would suit you?"

Churi had caught an idea: he had heard something of some danger that was lurking among the Mayor's grapes, and the others too knew something about it; so he reckoned that none of the others would go first and he himself would prefer to have some other fellow first find out whether a trap was laid somewhere, in which the first one would fall, while the rest would be warned. For this post of inspection Erick fitted splendidly.

"Well, will you?" he urged the silent Erick.

But the latter shook his head negatively.

"And if I help you so that you need not be auctioned, will you then?"

"How can you do that?" Erick asked doubtfully.

"As soon as I want to," boasted Churi. "Don't you know that my father is the sergeant here? He goes into every house along the whole mountain, far beyond Lower Wood, and he knows all the people and can place you where he likes. You only need to say what you want to do: take care of the cows, deliver letters, push little children along in their carriages--whatever you like best."

Erick had never heard lying, he did not know what it was. He believed word for word what the swaggering Churi told him. He considered a moment and then he asked: "What shall I have to do for that?"

"Something which you yourself will find more merry than anything you ever did. You can go with me and the officers in the morning. You are the scout and always go first to see whether the land is clear and safe for us and where we can best pitch our tents and give battle. But one thing I have to tell you: you have to obey me. I am the general, and if you do not do at once what I tell you, you suffer for it. First we go through a vineyard--"

"One cannot give battle there, nor camp," Erick interrupted.

"That makes no difference," Churi continued, "you listen to what I tell you. You have to go through the vineyard and not make a bit of noise, do you hear? And not run away, else--" Churi lifted his fist threateningly. "You must not tell anyone where we are going, do you hear?"

"I am not going," said Erick.

"Then go to the auction--that is the best thing for you; I am going now, good night."

But Churi nevertheless remained. The blood again rushed into Erick's cheeks. He hesitated a moment, then he asked: "If I go with you, are you sure that I can get there, where I deliver letters?"

"Of course you can," Churi grumbled.

"Then I will go."

"Give me your hand on it!"

Churi held out his hand and Erick laid his in it. Churi kept hold of the hand. "Promise that you will be there under the apple tree on the meadow at seven o'clock Sunday morning."

"I promise," said Erick.

Churi let go of his hand, said "Good night," and disappeared behind the cottage.

The news of the day spread with wonderful rapidity through the schools of the three parishes. The next evening, the evening before Organ-Sunday, every child in Upper and Lower Wood, and above all, in Middle Lot, knew that the quiet Erick all at once belonged to the rowdies; that he was not only going to fight with them in the Sunday battle, but that he was going with the worst rowdy, with Churi and his companions, early in the morning before church.

Sally came with swollen eyes to supper, for Kaetheli had informed her of everything: how the fine Erick, whom she would so gladly have taken into her home and her friendship, had fallen into the hands of the coarse and wicked Churi and would be ruined and led to do all kinds of wicked things by the bad boy. All this made her tender heart ache. She had gone, in the afternoon, to the solitary bench under the apple tree and had wept until supper time; for, in spite of deep thinking, she had not been able to find a way by which she could snatch Erick away from the bad companions.

Edi, too, wore a drawn face as though he lived on trouble and annoyance only, and his inner wrath goaded him to unpleasant speeches, for he hardly had taken his seat at table, when he looked across at Sally and said: "You can count to-morrow the blue bumps which your friend Erick will carry home with him, when he begins in the morning before church and serves under Churi."

Not much was needed to make Sally break out. "Yes, I know, Edi, that you would prefer to begin this evening and fight through the whole day to-morrow," she cried, half sobbing, half defiant, looking across the table, "if Papa had not forbidden it."

Edi became flushed, for it came into his mind how long he had searched for an example after which he might take part and yet hold his own before his father.

The latter looked earnestly at him and said: "Edi, Edi, I hope you will try not to be a Pharisee. It is a bad sign for the boy Erick that he has joined the fighters, moreover, and that he has made friends with the very worst rowdy. But, dear Sally, you need not knock your potatoes so roughly about your plate as if they were to blame for all the unpleasant things; eat them peacefully."

But Sally could not swallow anything more. When soon after Edi lay in his bed, he heaved a deep sigh and said: "Everything is over for me, but I will be glad for one thing, that tomorrow comes, because to-morrow is Sunday. You know what we get to-morrow, Ritz?"

"Sunday school."

"No, I don't mean that, I mean something nice."

"But Sunday school is nice."

"No, I don't mean that either, I mean something which one can use very well, when no other pleasure comes along."

"An oracle," Ritz said quickly, much contented with the delightful prospect.

"Ritz, you do guess such ridiculous things. I have told you that there are no more oracles. There will be apple-cake, that is what I meant," Edi said with a sigh, for now he saw again all the things for which he had wished so much more than apple-cake.

"And do you know, Edi," said Ritz, following his own train of thought, "to-morrow Sally will not be able to eat again

because Erick gets his bumps; then we will also get her share, and that will make three pieces for each." With these words Ritz turned happily on his side and went to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

What Happens on Organ-Sunday

Early in the morning, long before the nine o'clock church service, large crowds of people were walking toward Upper Wood, for everybody wanted to hear the new organ. It was a beautiful Sunday and everyone preferred to go to Upper Wood to church. The women all carried a few beautiful flowers on their hymnbooks, and when they had arrived at the open place before the church they stopped and greeted each other and stood talking in different groups. Gradually the men came along and did the same.

The Mayor was standing a little on one side with the Justice of Peace. They were in deep conversation in which many threats occurred, for the Mayor several times held up his finger and waved it threateningly in the air.

Kaetheli stood close beside her father and pricked up her ears. Now the church bells began to ring. Soon after the pastor's wife and Sally came out of their house door, and behind them quiet, devout Edi and Ritz with hymn-books under their arms. After a few steps they all stopped to wait for the pastor. Now the old wife of the sexton ran to the pastor's wife; she always had to report something as soon as she caught sight of her. Kaetheli took advantage of the opportunity. Like a flash she was from her father's side and whispered with the greatest rapidity in Sally's ear: "Just think what I know now. Last evening Neighbor Rudi, who belongs to Churi's officers, told me that it was not on account of the fight that they were going away in the morning; but that they were going into the Mayor's vineyard and were going to take his early grapes; that Churi had persuaded Erick to come along, because he wants to send him ahead through the vineyard, because a trap might be set there. Of course Erick would be caught and the others could be warned and pass by, without harm. But imagine what the Mayor has just told father: he has had something placed in the narrow pathway which leads through the grape vines which no one can see; but if anyone steps on it, it discharges a shot in the face and burns it so that no one could recognize him any more, for it would mar him so badly. Just think, Erick's curls will be burned off and his handsome face will be so marred that we shall not know him."

Sally had become as white as snow from fright. "Come quickly, Kaetheli," she said urgently, "we will run after Erick and tell him everything, come!"

"It is much too late, why, what do you think," Kaetheli said, "they started early this morning. Erick is already burned."

Now the pastor came out. The mother turned and took Sally's hand, who tried to stay behind. Kaetheli went toward the church, and Sally knew that she too had to go in; but she could hardly walk from fear and anguish, and as she sat on her bench within, she saw and heard nothing of the whole organ festivities, for she only saw the disfigured Erick before her, how he was sitting in the vineyard and moaning, and her tears fell so plentifully that she could no longer look up.

Churi and his officers had assembled at the set time. Erick also had kept his word and was there. Although the companions had started early, they met single churchgoers on their way to Upper Wood, for these people wanted to look around on their way to church, to see how things were in the fields and gardens, and so they had set off in good time.

Now Churi had commanded his officers that they must each bring a basket, for there was no time to eat the grapes in the vineyard; they must cut them quickly and throw them into their baskets, then they would go into the woods, to a safe place, and eat them in peace. But armed with baskets the officers appeared somewhat suspicious; Churi himself thought so and he now ordered, when they arrived at Upper Wood, that his officers should hide the baskets behind a barn, until all the church-goers had entered the church and the roads were safe.

Erick had already asked twice what the baskets were needed for on an inspection march, but he had received no answer. As now the warriors sat hidden behind the heap of straw and had time for questions and answers, Erick asked again: "What are you going to put in the baskets?"

"Grapes, if you insist on knowing!" Churi shouted at him, "and you too will find them good when you eat them."

After the bells had stopped ringing and all was quiet round about, Churi commanded them to start. "But you will be very quiet when you pass the church, do you hear?" he ordered; "for the doors are still open."

Full, bright organ tones came through the opened doors toward the boys when they silently approached the church, and now, suddenly, the whole congregation joined with the tones of the organ and sang in loud, full chorus:

"How shall I then receive Thee?
And how shall I then meet Thee?
Oh, Thou, the world's desire
Who set'st my heart on fire!"

Like lightning Erick was away out of the midst of his companions to the church-door and into the church.

Churi grew pale from fright; he believed nothing less than that Erick had rushed into the church to betray publicly to the whole congregation the intended grape-theft. Instantly he turned around and ran away like a madman, for he firmly believed that half the congregation was on his heels, since he heard a crowd running after him. But the runners were his companions, who followed him in greatest haste, for since they saw the brave Churi run like fire, they thought that there must be great danger, and they rushed with always longer and longer leaps after him.

Erick had run into the midst of a crowd of people, who all stood in the passage of the church because there were no more seats on the benches, so full was the church. Now the hymn, accompanied by the organ, rushed like a big, full stream on through the church:

"Thy Zion scatters palms
And greening twigs for Thee,
But I in glorious psalms
Will lift my soul to Thee!
My heart be overflowing
In constant love and praise
In service will be growing,
Will Thy dear name then grace."

In breathless attention Erick stood there, for it was his mother's song! He was trembling in every limb and large tears ran down his cheeks. A woman who sat near him noticed the trembling little fellow; she drew him compassionately close to her and made a little room for him, so that he could sit down.

The singing had stopped and the pastor began to preach. During the sermon Erick recovered a little from the strong emotion which had quite overpowered him when he suddenly heard in such powerful tones his lost song again.

He now looked round and saw that he was firmly wedged in and could not move, for two more women had forced themselves between the sitters, and the whole passage the full length of the church was densely thronged with people. So Erick sat, quiet as a mouse, and did not stir until the sermon and prayer were at an end. Then once more the full tones of the organ sounded and the congregation rose and sang:

"I lay in heaviest fetters,
Thou com'st and set'st me free;
I stood in shame and sorrow,
Thou callest me to Thee;
And lift'st me up to honor
And giv'st me heavenly joys
Which cannot be diminished
By earthly scorn and noise."

His mother had sung that at the very last. Erick saw her again before him, as she had sat the last evening at the piano and had spoken to him with words so full of love; and then, in the morning, she had lain there so still and pale. He laid his head on the arm of the bench and sobbed as if his heart would break. The people passed by him, and here and there one woman said to another: "The poor little fellow, he has no one on this earth," and then they went out.

The pastor in the pulpit had seen Erick rush into church. He now looked again in that direction, and noticed the little chap, how he sat there on the empty bench, so forsaken, his head resting on his arm. The pastor now walked behind the last of the congregation toward the bench. He stepped into the pew and put his hand on Erick's shoulder and asked kindly: "Why are you weeping so hard, my boy?"

"Because--because--because they sang Mother's song," sobbed Erick.

"What is your name?" the pastor asked again.

"Erick Dorn," was the answer.

Now the pastor knew what to do. He took the boy's hand in his fatherly hand, pulled him down from the high bench and said: "Come with me, my boy!"

At the parsonage the three children stood waiting for the father's return, as they did every Sunday. Sally had not said a word since they had left church; now she came close to her mother and said, quite excited: "Please, please, Mamma, may I go now at once to Kaetheli? I have to talk over something with her, really I must."

Sally had made up her mind to go out into the vineyards to look for Erick, but she did not know the way, so Kaetheli was to go with her. But the mother opposed Sally's urging and said: "You know, dear, that we have dinner at once, and father does not allow such running away on Sunday. There he comes now. Who is the little boy whose hand he is holding?"

Sally uttered a loud shout of joy and tore away. "Oh, Erick! you are not burnt!" she cried, beside herself with joy, when she now saw Erick before her with his abundant curls and bright eyes.

"Of course not," said Erick, politely lifting his little cap and offering his hand to her, a little surprised, for he did not know when he could have burned himself. Quickly she took his hand and so the three met the surprised mother who, however, at the sight of Erick, guessed at once who the fine boy in the velvet jacket was. She greeted him lovingly and stroked his tear-stained eyes and flushed cheeks.

Sally would have liked to ask at once how all had happened, and would have urged him to tell everything; but when she saw how he must have wept, she shrank from enquiring and held his hand quietly. Edi and Ritz also noticed at once the traces of tears and greeted him quite calmly.

The pastor left his family to go to his room and the mother took his place and conducted Erick, whom Sally on the other side held firmly by the hand, up the stairs; Ritz and Edi followed. When 'Lizebeth, who was standing in the kitchen door, saw the procession come and noticed that the mother held the little stranger so tenderly by his hand, as though he were her own small Ritz, then 'Lizebeth at once shut the kitchen door, and grumbled: "There is something wrong about this!"

Soon after, the whole family sat around the noonday table, and if Sally could not eat yesterday from sorrow, today she could not swallow anything from pure joy, not even the apple cake, which surprised Ritz very much. But he was glad that the sad Erick also got some, for he thought that that must comfort him.

In the evening of this Sunday, Erick sat in the midst of the pastor's family around the four-cornered sitting-room table, as snugly and familiarly as if he long since belonged there. He had been treated, the whole afternoon, with such kindness by all, that his whole heart, which had been accustomed to a mother's great love, opened, and he felt more happy than he had in all the sad days since he had had to miss this love. Sally did not know how she could do enough to give him pleasure. Now she had brought the most beautiful picture book that she owned, and Erick looked with her at the pictures, which she eagerly explained to him; all the time beaming with joy that everything, she had believed lost, had come to her; that Erick was in the midst of them at home like a near friend, and was to stay over the night, for the father had arranged that at once.

Edi sat over his history book and Ritz had a book of his own before him, but looked over it at Sally and listened to her explanation. Now Edi lifted his head--he must have come upon something very particular.

"Papa," he said, "now I know for certain what I want to be: a sea-captain. Then I can sail around the world, for *sometime* I must see all the lands where all these things have happened."

"So, I thought you wanted to be a professor of history," remarked the father, not much disturbed by this piece of news.

"I want to be that, too," said Ritz, "I, too, want to sail in ships."

"No, you see, Ritz, two brothers must not be the same thing, else they get in each other's way," instructed Edi.

"Then I will be a sea-robber, they too sail in ships," Ritz comforted himself.

"We will not hope anything of the kind," said the father behind his church paper.

"And do you remember, Ritz, what I once told you about Julius Caesar?" Edi reminded him. "If I were to catch you like

that, then I should be obliged to have you killed."

"No, I do not want that! But what can one be with ships?" Ritz asked plaintively, for if Edi expressed a thought, then it usually remained firmly in Ritz's head.

"One can be also something very good without ships, my dear Ritz," the mother said comfortingly, "and that is much safer; then one stays on firm land, and I should advise you to stay. And what does our Erick want to be? Has he too thought of that?"

"I must become an honorable man," answered Erick at once.

"That is no calling," instructed Edi.

But the father put down his book and said, nodding at the boy: "That is right, Erick, go toward that goal: first, and above all, an honorable man; after that, every calling is all right."

Now the mother rose, for it was time to go to bed. Edi and Ritz took Erick between them and thus marched ahead of the mother to conduct him to his little room which was beside their bedroom, so that the door between could be left open, with the advantage that Erick also could be drawn into the nightly conversation. Both Edi and Ritz were delighted with that.

So the Organ-Sunday, which had begun so hostilely, ended quite peacefully.

CHAPTER IX

A Secret that is Kept

When on the next morning the pastor's family was at breakfast, the pastor arranged that Erick should not go with the other three to school, since he belonged to the school in Lower Wood and it was now too far to go there. When the other three had gone, then Erick should come to him in his study. So it was decided, and when Erick came into the study the pastor pointed to a seat and said: "Now sit down in front of me"--for he himself sat on the large sofa--"look into my eyes, and tell me everything from the beginning and exactly what happened yesterday before you came into church, also what you intended to do, for I have heard all kinds of things."

Erick looked with his large, bright blue eyes straight into the pastor's, and told everything from the beginning: how he was going to be auctioned and did not want to be, what Churi had promised him, how he then had gone with them, also how the others had brought large baskets to put grapes in, but he did not know where they were to get the grapes. The pastor, however, now knew everything, for Sally had reported how the Mayor was expecting his grape-thieves again and how he was going to receive them. It was now quite plain, as one had always suspected, that the same crowd, the Middle Lotters, under Churi's lead, had plundered the vineyard.

"Erick," said the pastor earnestly, "you want to be an honorable man and you mean it seriously so far as you understand the word, I have seen that; but that is not the way which will lead you there. See, you can understand, that you have made friends with a crowd of boys who are on no good road; for, to run about wild on Sunday, when the bells call to church, and to be obliged to hide behind barns from nice people,--you did not learn that from your mother, did you, Erick?"

Erick had to lower his open eyes and answered very low: "No."

"But worse things turn up if one goes with bad boys," the pastor continued. "Through them, one often comes where one never wanted to come. See, if you had not been saved from it through your mother's song which you heard, you would have been caught with the others in the vineyard as a thief, and punished as such. Well, Erick, if your mother should have had to hear that!"

Erick had grown dark red in the face. He was silent for some time, visibly from fear and perplexity, then he asked timidly: "Can I no longer grow to be an honorable man?"

"Yes, indeed, Erick," said the pastor now kindly, "that you can. You know now on what road one cannot go; think of that and keep yourself far from bad companions. And now I will tell you how you can become a man of honor. Do you remember how the verse in your mother's song goes, which begins:

"Thy Zion scatters palms
And greening twigs for Thee,
But I in glorious psalms
Will lift my soul to Thee!"

In an instant Erick continued:

"My heart be overflowing
In constant love and praise,
In service will be growing,
Will Thy dear name then grace."

"Erick, you must never forget these words. If you bring all your deeds before the dear God and look to it before Him, whether you 'Will grace His dear name' as well as you know, then you will become a genuinely honorable man. Will you think on it?"

"Yes, I will," Erick promised gladly, as now he looked up again to the pastor freely and openly.

"Then," the latter said after a while, "there is still something else, Erick. Have you known your father?"

"No."

"Do you know if he is still alive, where he is?"

"Mother told me father had gone to America, to make a large fortune for himself and for us; but he has not yet returned."

"Do you know other relatives, sisters or brothers of your mother, or some close friends?"

"No."

"Don't you know of anyone to whom one could turn, who would look after you?"

"No, no," said Erick, quite anxiously.

But the pastor put his hand very kindly on Erick's head and said: "You must not be afraid, my boy, all will come out all right. You may go now."

Erick rose; he hesitated for a moment, then he asked somewhat falteringly: "Must I go now directly to be auctioned? I am afraid Marianne has gone by now."

"No, no," the pastor answered quickly, "you will not go there at all, not at all. Now you go down to Mamma, she will keep you for the present."

Erick's eyes shone for joy. He had thought up till now that he would be sent to the auction, away from the happy life in the parsonage, but now this threatening bugbear was done away with forever. When Erick entered the sitting-room he found old Marianne sitting there. They had sent word, the evening before, that Erick would not come back for the night, but Marianne could not have gone away without taking leave of him. With many tears she bade him good-bye, and Erick too felt sorry that good old Marianne was going away; but since he might stay in the parsonage, it was indeed a different thing for him than if he had had to remain behind alone.

The weeping Marianne had hardly left the door, when the stately Mayor came in and went with firm steps toward the pastor's study. Early in the morning, when he was going into the vineyard, he had met the Justice of Peace, and heard from him all the happenings of yesterday, how Erick had spoiled the game for the grape-thieves, and how they, the would-be thieves, had run far beyond the next two villages before they even became aware that it was only their allies who were chasing them. Kaetheli had learned all that, and had reported it to her father. The Mayor was quite satisfied with the outcome of the affair, and since he looked on Erick as the saver of his grapes, he now came to the pastor to talk over what could be done for the poor orphan.

The gentlemen held a long consultation, for both were anxious to find the most suitable plan for the boy; but they could not come to an agreement. The Mayor proposed that since the little fellow did not appear to be very strong, it would be best to apprentice him to an easy trade. He thought it would be best to put him to board at the tailor's, then he would grow into the trade without much trouble, and would have nice companions in the tailor's own boys; they were suited to each other, for the tailor's sons were also dressed as cleanly and carefully as he was. But the pastor had other thoughts; he had a good institute in his mind, where Erick could be cared for at once and later be educated for a teacher. This also suited the Mayor, and he took leave with the assurance that he would make Erick a nice little gift, for the little fellow had shown him a greater kindness than he could know, which the pastor verified.

When later the pastor told his wife of their transaction, she did not quite agree with it; she thought that she might keep the orphaned Erick for a while with her; in fact she should prefer to keep him altogether, for she had already taken this loving, trusting boy deep into her heart. But the pastor convinced her that the "keeping altogether" could not be done, since there were nearer obligations to all kinds of relatives, so that one could not give the little stranger preference in such a way. But he gladly granted the wish of his wife to keep Erick at least a few weeks in their home; for, he said, one could postpone his entrance into the institute until the beginning of the new year.

When the children were told of the decision there was great rejoicing, for Edi had put into Ritz's head a large number of splendid undertakings, which could be carried out only by three people, and Sally knew of nothing in the whole world that could have given her greater joy than that now she could be with the new friend from day to day; for he was in every way what she could wish, and in many ways he was much nicer than she could have imagined from the manners of her former friends.

Erick had such a happy, refined, thoughtful disposition, that it seemed to Sally as if she lived in continuous sunshine when she was with him. The aunt also agreed with the decision to keep the boy in the parsonage, although at first she had seen in it a disturbance in the order of the household, since the increasing of the number would mean that in the evening it would take even longer to get to a settlement. But when she noticed that Erick, on the first hint, rose at once

and did what was desired, then her fears turned to hopes that one might impress the others a little with this ever-ready boy, which impressed her very favorably. Lizebeth alone continued her dislike of the new-comer, and whenever she met him in the house she measured him with her eyes from his head to as far as the velvet reached.

Erick soon felt quite at home in the parsonage. He now went with the three children to the same school, shared Edi's historical interest as long as the latter entertained him with it, which was the case on every walk to school, and as often as possible besides, for Edi found large gaps in the historical knowledge of his new friend and felt himself called upon to fill them in. Erick was a good listener and often put questions which drove Edi to new, deep studies and which excited him so much that he had almost no other thoughts but Rome and Carthage.

With good-natured Ritz, Erick was also on good terms. The little fellow ran after him wherever he went, and looked delighted when he saw him from afar; then he rushed at him and was always sure of a pleasant reception and jocular conversation, for Erick was always friendly, talkative and in good humor, and never buried in history books which often made Edi unhappy. So Ritz spent all the time out of school either with Erick, or seeking him, which however sometimes cost him a good deal of time, for the very nearest friends, after all, were Erick and Sally. The two could not be separated. There was a great similarity in their temperaments, for what the one wanted the other liked also, and what the one did not like, did not please the other, and both liked nothing better than to go together up into the woods, where under the old fir-tree was the small bench on which they could sit and tell each other all they knew; or to go down to the foaming Woodbach and there, sitting on the stones near the bank, watch the tossing waves rush down. They never seemed to lack topics of conversation. Erick told about his mother, and how they had lived together, and of her beautiful singing; and Sally never grew weary of hearing again and again the same stories, and would keep on asking questions.

So they sat on their bench under the tree on the sunny Sunday afternoon in the first week in October, and Sally had just begun her questions. This time she wanted to know why the mother had sent Erick to Lower Wood to school and not to Upper Wood, where all good people from Middle Lot came--Kaetheli, for example. Then Erick told her that his mother had asked Marianne about the schools, and after Marianne had explained everything to her, and that fewer children went to Lower Wood and mostly children who were not so well-known, then his mother had at once decided that he should go there. "For you see, Sally, we were obliged to be alone and hide ourselves until I had become an honorable man."

"But why? I do not understand it at all," Sally said somewhat impatiently. "And then afterwards when you had become an honorable man, what did you want to do, if you did not know anyone?"

"I should very much like to tell it to you, Sally," Erick answered very seriously, "but you would have to promise me that you would tell it to no human being; never, not if it should take many, many years."

"Yes, yes, I will surely promise that," Sally said quickly, for she was very anxious to hear the secret.

"No, Sally, you must consider it well," said Erick, and held his hands behind his back, to let her have time, "then if you have decided that you will tell no human being one single word, then you must promise it to me with a firm handshake."

Sally had fully decided. "Just give me your hand, Erick," she urged. "So, I promise you that I will tell to no one a single word of that which you want to tell me."

Now Erick felt safe. "You see, Sally," he began, "in Denmark there is a very large, beautiful estate, with a beautiful lawn before the house to which one can go directly through large doors out of the halls, and in the middle of the lawn are the beautiful flower-beds just filled with roses; and on the other side of the house one goes across to the large, old oaks, where the horses graze--for there are many beautiful horses. And on the left side of the house one comes directly into the small forest; there is a pond quite surrounded by dense trees, and a small bench stands above and from there one descends three steps to the little boat that has two oars, and my mother liked best to sit there and row about the pond. For, you see, my mother lived there when she was a child, and also later when she was grown up. And there below, where the lawn stops, begin the large stables where the horses are when they are not grazing; and my mother had her own little white horse. She rode about on that with grandfather or with old John. Oh, that was so beautiful! But once Mother was disobedient to grandfather, for she wanted to go far away with my father, and grandfather would not have it; but she went, and then she was not allowed to come back, and everything was over."

Sally had listened with breathless attention. Now she burst out: "Dear, dear, what a pity! That is exactly like Adam and Eve in Paradise! But where did your mother go to? And who is now on that beautiful estate?"

"Mother went far away to Paris, then to many other places, and at last we came to Middle Lot. My grandfather still lives on the estate."

"Oh, Erick, we will write a letter at once to your grandfather and ask him whether you may now come home again?"

"Oh, no, no! I dare not do that," opposed Erick. "I must not go to my grandfather until I have become an honorable man, so that I may say to him: 'I will not bring shame on your name, Grandfather, but Mother would like to make up through me for what you have suffered through her!' I have promised that to my mother!"

"Oh, what a pity, what a pity!" lamented Sally, "you may never go to the beautiful estate until you are a man; that will be a terrible long time. And then you have to go away in the winter to quite strange people, to an institute. Oh, if you only could go to the beautiful estate, to Grandfather! Can it not be brought about, Erick? Can no one help you?"

"No, that is quite impossible," said Erick, thoroughly convinced. "But now, since you know all, I will tell you a good deal more about the estate, for I know much more, and Mother and I have talked so often about it," so Erick told more and more until they reached home, where both of them were much distracted, for both were wandering in thought about the beautiful estate far away. The mother looked several times now at the one, then at the other, for nothing unusual in her children ever escaped her motherly eye; but she said nothing. When later she had prayed with the children, and was now standing in her own bedroom, she heard how Sally, in her little bedroom beside hers, was praying loud and earnestly to God.

The mother wondered what could so occupy the thoughts of her little girl, who was usually so open and communicative. What had happened this evening, and what was urging her to such a pleading prayer, and why had she not said a word about it? Could the child have a secret trouble? She softly opened the door a little, and now heard how Sally several times in succession fervently prayed: "Oh, dear God, please bring it about that Erick may come to his grandfather on the beautiful estate."

Now the mother entered Sally's room. "My dear child," she said, "for what did you pray just now to the dear God? Will you explain it to me?"

But Sally made such an uproar that the mother stopped with surprise. "You did not hear it, Mother? I hope you have not understood it, Mother. Have you? You must not know it, Mother, no one must know it. It is a great secret."

"But, dear child, do be quiet and listen to me," said the mother kindly. "I heard that you prayed to the dear God for something for Erick. Perhaps we, too, could do something for him. Tell me what you know, for it may lead to something good for him."

"No, no," cried Sally in the greatest excitement, "I will say nothing, I have promised him, and I do not know anything else than for what I have prayed." And Sally threw herself on her pillow and began to sob.

Now the mother ordered her to be quiet and let the thing rest. She would not ask her any more, nor speak of it. Sally should do as she felt, and surrender everything to the dear God. But the mother put two things together in her mind. When Marianne had come to take leave, she had questioned her about Erick's mother and the latter's condition; also whether Marianne knew her maiden name. But Marianne did not know much, only once she had seen a strange name, but had not been able to read it. It was when Erick, at one time, had taken the cover from his mother's little Bible; then she saw a name written with golden letters. Erick must have the little Bible. The lady had seen the little black book in Erick's box and had taken off the close-fitting cover and had found written in fine gold letters the name, "Hilda von Væstentrop". She at once assumed that this must be the maiden name of Erick's mother; but she knew nothing further.

Now she had learned through Sally's prayer that Denmark had been her native land, and that a father was living there. All this she told to her husband the same evening, and proposed that he should write at once to this gentleman in Denmark.

The pastor leaned far back in his armchair and stared at his wife with astonishment. "Dear wife," he said at last, "do you really believe that I could send a letter addressed 'von Væstentrop, Denmark'? This address is no doubt enough for the dear God, but not for short-sighted human beings."

But the wife did not give in. She reminded her husband that he knew their countryman, the pastor of the French church in Copenhagen, and that he perhaps could help him onto the track of von Væstentrop; the latter must be the owner of an estate and such a gentleman could be found. And the wife spoke so long and so impressively to her husband that he finally sat down that very evening and wrote two letters. The one he addressed "To Mr. von Væstentrop in Denmark". This one he enclosed in the second and addressed that to his acquaintance, the pastor of the French church in Copenhagen. Then he laid the heavy letter on his writing-table so that early to-morrow morning 'Lizebeth would find it and carry it to the post office.

CHAPTER X

Surprising Things Happen

Weeks had passed by since Erick had become an inhabitant of the parsonage, but 'Lizebeth had not changed her mind. Just now she was standing in the kitchen-door, when Erick came running up the steps, and hastily asked: "Where are Ritz and Edi?"

'Lizebeth measured him with a long look and said: "I should have thought that a boy in velvet would utter the names in a strange house more politely, and that he might say, 'Where are Eduardi and Moritzli?'"

Much frightened, Erick looked up to 'Lizebeth. "I did not know that I ought to talk so in the parsonage; I have never done it and I am sorry for it; now I will always remember to say it," he promised assuringly.

Now that did not suit 'Lizebeth. She had believed that he would answer, "That is none of your business." For that remark she had prepared a fitting answer. And now he answered her so nicely that she was caught, but if he really was going to carry out his promise, then the lady of the house might find out how she had schoolmastered him and that might draw upon her some unpleasantness, for she knew how tenderly the former treated the boy Erick. She therefore changed her tactics and said: "Well, you see, I always say the names in the proper way; it is different with you, you are their comrade, and as far as I am concerned, you can call them as you like."

"I should like to ask something else, if I may," said Erick, and politely waited for permission.

'Lizebeth liked this mannerly way very well and said encouragingly: "Yes, indeed, ask on, as much as you like."

"I wanted to ask whether I may say 'Lizebeth' like the others, or whether I ought to say 'Mistress 'Lizebeth'."

Now Erick had won over 'Lizebeth's whole heart for the reason that he wanted to know what title she ought to have by rights, and that showed her what a fine boy he was. She patted his shoulder protectingly, and his curly hair, and said: "You just call me 'Lizebeth', and if you want to ask anything, then come into the kitchen, and I will tell you everything you want to know and--wait a moment!" With these words she turned round and chased about the kitchen, then she came to him with two splendid, bright red apples in her hand.

"Oh, what beautiful apples! Thank you ever so much, 'Lizebeth!" he cried delightedly, and now ran out.

'Lizebeth looked after him with such pride as if she were his grandmother, and said to herself: "Let anyone come now and show me three finer little boys in the whole world than our three are." With this challenge, and the proud consciousness that no one could accept it, she turned to her pans and kettles.

So Erick had won over everyone, but there was still one who looked at him from the corner of his eyes and always with a look of wrath, for a few days after Organ-Sunday, the Mayor had ordered that Churi should appear before him, and the bold Churi could hardly keep on his feet when he had to appear before the judicial tribunal, for he expected to receive the well-earned punishment from the strong hand of the Mayor. But the latter only pinched his ear a little and said: "Churi, Churi! this time you get off better than you deserve, for I know now who got the grapes last year, and I also know who wanted to get them again a few days ago. If from now on, even one single little bunch is missing, I shall hold you responsible, and you will be surprised at what will happen to you, think of that! Now go."

Churi did not need to be told that twice; he was gone as if his life was at stake; but from that time on he thought of revenge on Erick, and when he met him, he shook his fist at him and said: "You wait! I will get you sometime." But so far he had never met Erick alone, and had never been able to do him the slightest harm. This secretly embittered Churi still more.

Now winter had set in. Upper Wood lay deeply buried in snow, and everyone was busy thinking of Christmas and New Year. In these days the pastor gave a gentle hint to his wife, that the time for Erick's change to the institute, for which the Mayor also had offered his help, was fast approaching. But the lady hardly let him finish his sentence for excitement, and answered at once: "How can you even think of such a thing! In the first place; we must wait for the answer from Denmark, before we do anything; and secondly, the whole Christmas joy would be spoiled completely for the children, through such news; thirdly, we ourselves, you and I, could not separate ourselves so suddenly and unprepared from a child who is as dear to us as one of our own--"

"Fourthly, 'Lizebeth will give notice at once," continued the pastor, "for she now is the worst of all, from all that I see. One thing is sure, dear wife, if the little fellow was not so guileless and had not such an exceptionally good disposition, you women would have ruined him so that he never could get straightened again, for you, one and all, spoil him quite terribly."

"It is just this harmless and exceptionally well-disposed character of the child which wins all hearts, so that one cannot help treating him with peculiar love. No talk of sending Erick away before Easter can be considered, and much can happen before then, my dear husband."

"Oh, yes," the latter agreed, "only do not look for an answer from Denmark, for it would be in vain. The guilelessness in that address went a little too far."

But the pastor's wife was contented that another respite had been granted, and she hoped on.

The winter passed, Easter was approaching, but no answer came. This time the pastor's wife got ahead of her husband. When shortly before Easter a belated April frost set in, she explained to him that new winter wraps had to be made for all the children, and before one could think of sending Erick away, summer clothing had to be prepared for him; his good velvet suit looked, indeed, still very fine, and would last some time yet, but her husband knew it was his only suit, and for mid-summer another must absolutely be procured for him, and for that, time and leisure were needed.

The pastor gave his consent to the postponement without opposition. In his heart he was heartily glad for the good excuse; for he, like all the rest, had learned to love Erick so much that the thought of his departure was very painful to him.

His wife was contented again and thought in her heart: "Who knows what may happen before summer."

But something did happen which seemed to destroy with one blow all her hopes. The warm June had come and on the sunny hillsides around Upper Wood the strawberries, which grew there in plenty, were beginning to give out most delightful fragrance, and to turn red. That was a glorious time for all children round about. The children of the parsonage, too, undertook daily strawberry-expeditions and every evening belated they returned home. The order-devoted aunt, who, after a winter's absence, had returned with the summer to the parsonage, did not leave any remedy untried to restore at least the usual condition of things.

Below near the Woodbach the berries grew largest and most plentifully. But to go there they had to wait till Saturday afternoon, when they had no school, for it was too far to take the walk after afternoon school. When Saturday came and the sun was shining brightly in the sky, then the whole company in joyous mood left the parsonage, Sally and Erick ahead, Ritz and Edi following. All were armed with baskets, for to-day, so they had decided, Mother was to receive a great quantity of strawberries instead of their eating all on the spot as usually happened. Having arrived on the hillside over the Woodbach, the best spots were sought; if one was found which was plentifully sprinkled over with strawberries, then the whole company was called together and the place cleared, and afterwards each went out again for new discoveries.

Erick was a good climber; without any trouble he swung himself down over the steepest hillsides, and jumped up the high rocks like a squirrel. Sally saw him, how he swung himself down a rock where he had espied on the lowest end a spot that shone bright red in the sun, as if covered with rubies. Were they berries or flowers which were growing there so beautifully? Erick must see them nearer. Sally shouted after him: "Call us if you find something, but be careful, it is steep there."

Erick answered with a yodel and disappeared. Having arrived below, he met the Middle Lotters, who were bending in groups here and there, or lying on the ground, eating the berries which they picked. Erick could not find the red spot which he had seen from above; but not far away from him stood Churi, who had seen him coming down. Churi called to him:

"Come here, velvet pants, here are berries such as you have never seen."

Erick went quite calmly to him and when he now had stepped quite close to Churi, the latter unexpectedly gave him such a severe push that Erick rolled down the rest of the mountain side and right into the gray waves of the Woodbach.



"Churi ... unexpectedly gave him such a severe push that Erick rolled down the rest of the mountain side...."

When Churi saw that, he was frightened. For a moment he stared at the gray waves; but Erick had disappeared, not a speck of him could be seen. Then Churi softly turned round and ran away as quickly as he could, without looking round, for his conscience bit him and drove him along, and he dared not look anyone in the face for fear that someone could read there what he had done. The other Middle Lotters had not paid attention to what was going on. Perhaps once in a while one of the crowd would ask, "What has become of Churi all of a sudden?" and another would answer, "He can go, wherever he likes," and they would turn again to their berries and think no more of him.

Meanwhile Sally had remained standing in the same spot and had waited for Erick's call. When it did not come, she began to call, but received no answer. She now called to Edi, and he came running with Ritz, and all three called together for Erick, but in vain. The sun had long since set, and it was beginning to grow dark. All children, even the Middle Lotters, went past them on their homeward way, and they were always the very last. "Show me once more, and be quite sure, the very spot where he began to climb down," said Edi, "I will go down, in the same path."

Sally showed the exact spot, where Erick had descended over the rock, and Edi began the descent a little timidly. But he arrived safely down below and ran hither and thither, calling with a loud voice: "Erick! Erick!" But only the echo from the rocks, round about, answered mockingly: "Rick! Rick!"

Now it really began to be dark, and round about not a human sound, only the rushing of the Woodbach, sounded through the stillness. Edi began to feel a little uncomfortable; he climbed as quickly as possible up the rock and said hastily: "Come, we will go home. Perhaps Erick is already at home, he may have gone by another road."

But Sally opposed this proposition with all her power, and assured him firmly that Erick had not gone home; that he would have first come back to her; and she was not going a step away from where he had left her, until Erick came, for if he were to come and she was not there, then he would wait for her again, if he had to wait the whole night, she was sure of that.

"We must go home, you know it," declared Edi. "Come, Sally, you know we must."

"I cannot, I cannot!" lamented Sally. "You go with Ritz and tell them at home how it is; perhaps Erick cannot find the road again." At this conjecture which, only now after she had uttered it, Sally saw plainly, she began to weep and sob piteously, while Edi took Ritz by the hand and ran toward home as quickly as possible.

Mother and Aunt were standing before the parsonage, looking in all directions to see if the children would not make their appearance somewhere. Lizabeth ran to and fro, hither and thither, and asked of the returning children of the neighborhood, where the parsonage children were. She received the same answer from all: the three were still below by the Woodbach, and were waiting for Erick, who had gone alone. At last Ritz and Edi came running through the darkness. Both panted in confusion, one interrupting the other. They shouted: "Sally sits--" "Erick is over"-- "Yes, Erick is over"-- "But Sally still sits and"--

"Sally sits and Erick is over!" cried the aunt. "Now let anyone make sense of that!" But the mother drew Edi aside and said; "Come, tell me quietly what has happened."

Then Edi told everything, how Erick had climbed over the rock and how Sally now was sitting alone below near the Woodbach, and Erick gave no answer to all his calling.

"For heaven's sake," the mother cried, now thoroughly frightened, "I hope that nothing has happened to Erick! Or could he have lost his way?" She ran into the house to ask her husband what was to be done. At once 'Lizebeth ran to seven or eight neighbors and brought them together with a good deal of noise, all armed with staves and lanterns, as 'Lizebeth had ordered. Also several women hastened up, they too wanted to help in the seeking. Now the pastor had come out and joined them, for he himself wanted to do everything to find Erick, and at any rate to bring Sally home. 'Lizebeth came last in the procession, with a large basket hanging from her arm, for without a basket, 'Lizebeth could not leave the house.

Two long hours went by, while the mother walked ceaselessly to and fro, now to the window, then to the house door, now up and down the sitting-room; for the longer no news came the greater grew her fear. At last the house-door was opened and in came the father, holding the weeping Sally by the hand, for he had not been able to comfort her. They had at that time not been able to get a trace of Erick; but the neighbors were still seeking for him and had promised not to stop seeking until he was found. 'Lizebeth was still with them, and she was the most energetic of all the seekers.

Only after many comforting words from the mother, and after she had prayed with her whole heart with the child to the dear God, that He would protect the lost Erick and bring him home again, could Sally at last be quieted. She fell then into a deep sleep, and slept so soundly that she did not wake until late the next morning, and the mother was glad to know that her daughter was sleeping, as her grief would be awakened again, when she woke up.

Sunday morning passed quietly and sadly in the parsonage. Father and Mother came out of church, before which the people of Upper Wood and Lower Wood, from Middle Lot, and the whole neighborhood round about, had assembled to talk over the calamity.

So far Ritz and Edi had kept very quiet, each busy with his own occupation. Edi, a large book on his knees, was reading. Ritz was very busy with breaking off the guns from all his tin soldiers, as now, having peace in the land, they did not need them.

"So," Edi, who had looked now and then over his book, said quite seriously: "if war breaks out again, then the whole company can stay at home, for they have no more guns; with what are they supposed to fight?"

Ritz had not thought of that. Quickly he threw all the gunless soldiers into the box and said: "I do not care to play any more today," no doubt with the unexpressed hope that the guns, by the time he should open the box again, might be somehow mended. But now he became restless and asked to go out, and Edi, who had seen the large gathering by the church, also decided to go out doors, for he too wanted to hear what was going on.

The aunt opposed their going out for some time, but finally gave her consent for half an hour, to which the mother, who had just come in, agreed. Now Sally appeared and rushed at once to her mother, to hear about Erick, whether he had come home and how, where and when, or whether news had come. But before the mother had time to tell her child gently that no news had come from Erick, but that more people had gone out, early in the morning, to seek him, the two brothers came rushing in with unusual bluster and shouted in confusion:

"There comes a large, large"--"A very tall gentleman"--"A gentleman who walks very straight out of a coach with two horses."

"I believe it is a general," Edi brought out finally and very importantly.

"No doubt," laughed the aunt. "Next you will see nothing but old Carthaginians walking about Upper Wood and the whole neighborhood."

But the mother did not laugh. "Could it not be someone who might bring news of Erick?" she asked. She ran to the window. At the entrance of the house was an open traveling coach, to which were harnessed two bay horses which pawed the ground impatiently, and shook their heads so that the bright harness rattled loudly. Ritz and Edi disappeared again. These sounds were irresistible to them.

Now 'Lizebeth rushed in. "There is a strange gentleman below with the master," she reported. "I have directed him to the pastor's study, so that the table can be set here, for I must go out again to the little boy. The gentleman has snow-white hair but he has a fresh, ruddy face and walks straight like an army man or a commander."

"And he came alone?" asked the mistress. "Then he does not bring Erick? Who may he be?"

Meanwhile the tall, strange gentleman had entered the pastor's study below, with the words: "Colonel von Vestentrop,

of Denmark. The gentleman will excuse me if I interrupt him."

The pastor was so surprised that for a moment he could not collect his wits. Erick's grandfather! There stood the man bodily before him, whose existence had been to him a mere fairy tale, and the man looked so stately and so commanding, that everyone who beheld him must be inspired with respect. But at the same time there was something winning in his expression, which was familiar to the reverend gentleman from Erick's dear face. And this gentleman had traveled so far to fetch his grandson, and Erick had disappeared.

All this passed through the pastor's head with lightning speed; he stood for a moment like one paralyzed. But the colonel did not give much time to the surprised man to recover himself. He quickly took the offered easy chair, drew the pastor down on another, looked straight into his eyes and said: "Dear Sir, you sent through the French pastor in Copenhagen a letter addressed to me, in which you inform me of things of which I do not believe one single word."

The surprise of the pastor increased and was reflected in his face.

"Please understand me rightly, dear Sir," the speaker continued, "not that I mean that you would make an incorrect statement; but you yourself have been duped, your kindness has been shamefully misused. Because I knew that, I did not wish to answer your letter in writing, for we would have exchanged many letters uselessly and yet would never have come to an understanding. Behind all this is a clever fellow, who wants to trick you and me for the sake of gain. So I have let everything rest until I could combine the present explanation with a journey to Switzerland. So here I am, and I will tell you, in as few words as possible, the unfortunate story which led to this deception. But let me look at once at the object in question. I want to see what the boy is like, whom the man dares to place before my eyes as my grandson."

The pastor had now to tell of the unfortunate accident of Erick's disappearance, how they had searched so far in vain, but how everything was being done to find the dear boy; therefore he might make his appearance at any moment.

The colonel only smiled a little, but that smile was a little sarcastic and he said: "My good Sir, let us stop the seeking. The boy will not return. The fellow who has placed him in your hands has calculated wrongly this time. He, no doubt, hoped that I, at such a distance, would credulously accept everything that he wanted, and would do what he wished. Now he has found out that I myself was on the way to see you; and to bring before my eyes some foundling as my daughter's child, that he did not dare to do. On that account the child has disappeared, Reverend Sir; that man knows me."

However much the pastor might assure the colonel that no one had interfered in the case, that the boy, after his mother's death, without anyone's intercession had come into the parsonage, and that from the boy himself, without himself knowing it, had come the suggestions about the country and the name of the grandfather,—all explanation of the pastor did no good, the sturdy gentleman adhered to his firm opinion that the whole thing was the invented trick of a man who wished to make money, and that the disappearance of the boy at the necessary moment confirmed it.

"But how should, how could the man of whom you speak--"

The colonel did not listen to the end of the sentence. "You do not know this man," he threw in, "you do not know his knavery, Sir! I had a daughter, an only child; I had lost my wife soon after marriage; the child was all in all to me. She was the sunshine of my house, beautiful as few, always joyous, amiable to everyone and full of talents. She had a voice which delighted everyone; it was my joy. I had her instructed in the house, also in music. Then, a young teacher came and settled in the town, near which my estate lies. People talked much about the young musician, and of his artistic skill. He was engaged to teach on all our neighboring estates. I did the same. I had him come to my house every day and had no suspicion of misfortune. After a few months, my daughter, who was hardly eighteen years old, told me that she wanted to marry that man. I answered her that that never would happen; she should never again speak of such a thing. She did not say another word, nor did she complain—that was not her way. I thought all was past and settled, but found it safer to stop the lessons, and I dismissed the instructor. The same evening my daughter asked me, whether I could ever in my life change my opinion. 'Never in my life,' I said, 'that is as sure as my military honor'. The next morning, she had disappeared. A letter left for me told me that she was going away with that man and would become his wife. From that time on,—it is now twelve years ago,—I have never heard anything from my child, till your letter came.

"That my daughter is dead, I can well believe, but that she has left a helpless little boy, that I do not believe, for she would have sent such a boy, of whom she had a right to dispose, to me; she knows me, she would have known that I would give him my name, and the remembrance would be wiped away. But this boy, who has disappeared again at the right time, has been substituted by the music-teacher, who no doubt lives somewhere in this neighborhood, and has

done it for the purpose of receiving a sum of money from me. And now, dear Sir, we are through. The only thing left for me is to express my regret that, your kindness has been misused through my name; good-bye."

With these words the colonel rose and offered his hand to the pastor. The latter held it firmly, saying: "Only one more word, Colonel! Consider one thing: you know your daughter's character. After she had done you the great wrong, she might have decided not to send the boy to you before he in some way could make good the mother's wrongdoing--perhaps not until the time when he would do honor to your name, when he should prove to you through his own character that he was worthy of your name."

"You are a splendid man, who means well with me; but you have not had the experience I have had. You know no distrust, I can see that, and that is why you have been imposed upon. Let us part."

Saying this the colonel again shook the pastor's hand and opened the door. There the lady of the house met him, who for some time with impatience had been walking up and down in the garden, for she was sure that this caller, who stayed so long, was somehow connected with the lost Erick, and she could not understand why her husband did not call her. Sally, from the same expectation and greater impatience, followed her every step. When now the mother had seen from the garden, that the strange gentleman had risen, she could bear it no longer; she must know what was going on. When she stepped on the threshold at the moment when the stranger opened the door, then politeness demanded that the parson introduce his wife, and the stranger from politeness was obliged to step back into the room when the master of the house introduced his wife to him with the words: "Colonel von Vestentrop from Denmark. You indeed will be delighted to hear this name."

The lady stepped toward the colonel with visible delight and said excitedly: "Is it possible? But at what a moment! But you will stay with us, Colonel, for your dear grandchild must be found. The sweet boy cannot be lost, he must have lost his way."

"Pardon me, my gracious lady," the colonel here interrupted her politely, but somewhat stiffly, "I shall start at once. You are under a delusion; I have no grandchild, and I must bid you good-bye."

At mention of the name "Vestentrop", Sally had grown very red; and she trembled all over, during the conversation that followed. Now she restrained herself no longer. Tears poured from her eyes, and with the greatest agitation she sobbed: "Indeed, indeed, he is, I know it, he has told me himself; but I dared not tell it to anyone."

"Well, the boy has found at least one good friend and defender," said the colonel well-pleased, and wanted to pat Sally's cheeks, but she withdrew quickly, for she first wanted to know whether the gentleman would believe and recognize Erick, before she would let him touch her.

The mother too was struck to the core by this incredulity. Her husband had whispered a few words to her, so she understood at once the whole situation.

"Colonel," she now said, placing herself before him, "do not act in such haste. Let me prevail on you to stay a few days, yes, even this one day! The dear child must, and will be found, please God! See him first. Learn to know the treasure which you are about to give up so lightly. If you could know what sunshine you want to withhold from your house, you could never be happy again. Do not think, sir, that I would give the child away; how shall I, how shall we all be able to bear it, when the dear, sunny face shall have disappeared forever from among our children." The tears came into the mother's eyes also, and she could say no more.

"Well, I have to declare that the little wanderer has fallen into good hands," said the colonel, giving his hand to the pastor's wife in an approving way. "You will allow me now to depart."

This time the gentleman was determined to go. He went out and walked along the long corridor with head lifted proudly, followed by the pastor, who tried in vain to overtake him so that he could open the door for his guest. But before the door could be opened from within, it was pushed open with great force from outside, and like an arrow the slender Edi shot straight into the tall colonel, who had been standing directly behind the closed door; and at once after Edi, Ritz rushed into Edi, and the tall gentleman received the second push, and in his ears rang confused screamings of mixed words: "They are coming--they come--Marianne--Erick--Marianne--they come--they come." And really! In the house door appeared Marianne, quite broad in her Sunday best, holding Erick, of whom she kept a firm grasp, as if he might fall from there down again into the Woodbach. Behind both the partaking scholars of the parishes pressed in with shouts of rejoicing.

There was no possibility for the military gentleman to get out; the crowd pressed into the house with great force. He

gave in and did what he had never done before in his life--he retreated, step by step, until he had arrived, backwards, over the threshold of the study, together with the whole of the pastor's family, old and young; and at last the fighting Sally pressed in. She had taken Erick by the hand and did not want to let go of him, and on the other side Marianne held his hand as in a clamp, and she herself was held back from all sides, for the schoolfellows wanted to know first the story of how Erick was lost and found again.

It was an indescribable uproar. Only after the efforts of Sally had succeeded in pulling Erick and Marianne out of the human ball and into the study, was there sufficient calm so that one could understand the other, for the school friends had stayed respectfully before the door; they did not dare to press into the study-room of their pastor.

Now only could the information be understood, which Erick and Marianne--each relieving the other--gave about the whole occurrence. Erick told how he, after a strong push, had fallen into the water and then had known nothing more, and had wakened again when somebody was rubbing him firmly. That had been Marianne, who now related further. She had gone yesterday afternoon from Oakwood, where she was living now, upward along the Woodbach, to the place where the berries grew the most plentifully, as she knew these many years that she had sought and sold them in the taverns of Upper and Lower Wood. As she was seeking for berries close by the water, bending down behind the willow bush, she saw how the bush was being shaken and how something had remained hanging to it. She bent around the bush to find out what it might be, and saw the black velvet jacket on the water! "Oh, dear God!" she then cried out with unutterable horror, and never stopped crying until, under her desperate rubbing with skirt and apron, Erick opened his eyes and looked with surprise at Marianne. Now she quickly took the large market-basket in which she intended to put the many small baskets, when they were filled; threw the latter all in a heap, put the dripping Erick in it, and carried him, as quickly as she could, toward her small cottage, far beyond Oakwood, in which she lived together with her cousin. Here she at once undressed the wet boy, wound him closely in a large blanket so that nothing was to be seen of him besides a tuft of yellow, curly hair, put him in bed with the heavy cover far above his head, for, "getting him warm is the principal thing for the little boy," she kept on saying to herself. Then she went into her kitchen and soon came back with a cup of steaming hot milk, lifted Erick's head from under the covers, so that his mouth became free, and poured the hot milk in it to make the little fellow warm. When she now had packed him in the blanket again, and the fright at finding the unconscious Erick and the fear of his taking cold had passed a little, then it came into her mind that the people of the parsonage did not know what had become of him, and that they too would be anxious about him. She went again to the bed and tried to bring the deeply hidden Erick up again. But Erick was already half asleep, and when Marianne told him her thoughts, he said comfortingly: "No, no, they will know that I will come back again, and if they are anxious, then 'Lizebeth will come and look for me.'"

Of that Marianne was sure: 'Lizebeth would come and take him home. No doubt Erick had started to come and see Marianne, his friend in Oakwood, and on his way there had fallen into the Woodbach by accident, Marianne thought, for in her anxiety for his welfare, she had not spoken a word with Erick about the accident. Now he was fast asleep.

Marianne sat down beside him and lifted the cover now and then to listen whether he was breathing properly. After she had sat thus a while and noticed how the little fellow's cheeks began to glow like the reddest strawberries, then she feared no longer that he would catch cold, and she also felt sure that 'Lizebeth would not come and thought that the people in the parsonage would assume that he was going to spend the night at the cottage. So Marianne had peacefully locked her cottage and gone to sleep.

The next morning Marianne first had to brush and press the velvet suit, for she would not bring the boy back to the parsonage in disorder; she would not have done that for the sake of his blessed mother. Then she too must dress in her Sunday best, and so the morning had almost passed before they both had started on their way, quite contented and without any suspicion of the enormous fear and excitement which had been in the parsonage and had spread over the whole of Upper Wood. At the church they had been greeted by the assembled crowd with great noise and much confused talking, and then they were accompanied to the parsonage by the schoolmates, who were crazed with joy at seeing Erick.

In the general excitement and joy, the colonel had been quite forgotten. He had sat down unnoticed on a chair, and had listened attentively to the reports, following with his eyes the lively gestures which the excited Erick was making in the zeal of telling his story. Now the reports were finished and for the first time Erick's eyes beheld the stranger in the crowd. The latter beckoned him to come to him; Erick obeyed at once.

"Come here, my boy, hither," and the colonel placed him right before him. "So, just look straight in my eyes. What is your name?"

Erick with his bright eyes looked directly into those of the strange gentleman, and without hesitation he said: "Erick

Dom."

The gentleman looked at him still more directly. "After whom were you called, boy, do you know?"

Erick hesitated a moment with the answer, but he did not divert his glance. It seemed as if the eyes of the stranger attracted and conquered him. "After my grandfather," he now said with a clear voice.

"My boy--your mother used to look at me just so,--I am your grandfather--" and now big tears ran down the austere gentleman's cheeks. Erick must have been seized by the attraction of kinship, for without the least shyness, he threw both arms around the old gentleman's neck and rejoicingly exclaimed: "Oh, Grandfather, is it really you? I know you well! And I have so much to tell you from Mother, so much."



"He threw both arms around the old gentleman's neck and rejoicingly exclaimed: "Oh, Grandfather, is it really you?"..."

"Have you? Have you, my boy?" But the grandfather could say no more.

When Erick noticed that his grandfather kept on wiping away the tears, then sad thoughts gained the upper hand in him and all at once the rejoicing expression disappeared, and he said quite sadly: "Oh, Grandfather, I was not to come to you now, and not for a long time. Only when I had become an honorable man, was I to step before you and say to you: 'My mother sends me to you, that you may be proud of me, and that I may make good the sorrow, which my mother has caused you.'"

The grandfather put his arms lovingly around Erick and said: "Now everything is all right. It is enough that your mother has sent you to me. She meant it well with the 'honorable man', in this I recognize my child; and you do not disobey her, my boy, for you see, you did not come to me, but I came to you. And an honorable man you will also become with me."

"Yes, that I will, and I know too, how one becomes one, for the reverend pastor has told me how."

"That is lovely of him, we will thank him for it. And now we start, this very day, on our journey to Denmark."

"To Denmark, Grandfather, to the beautiful estate, right now?" Erick's eyes grew larger and larger with astonishment and expectation, for he only now comprehended, what he was going to meet: all that had stood before his mental eyes as the highest and most splendid, ever since he could think, and that his mother had painted for him in the bright coloring of her childhood's remembrances, again and again, the distant, beautiful estate, the handsome horses, the pond with the barge, the large house with the winter-garden,--everything he was now to see, and live there with this grandfather, for whom his mother had planted such a love and reverence in her boy's heart, that he saw in him the highest of what could be found on this earth,--all this over-powered Erick so much that he was not able to comprehend his good fortune, and with a deep breath he asked: "Are you sure, Grandfather?"

"Yes, yes, my boy," the grandfather assured him, laughing. "Come, I hope you can start at once. You will not have much to pack?"

"Oh, no," said Erick. "You see,"--and he counted on his fingers: "three writing-books, three school-books, the pen-box and the beautiful Christmas present that I received here in the parsonage."

"That is well, that will make a small bundle," but the old gentleman looked at his grandson, rather surprised, and said: "I

am astonished, little waif, that you look so fine."

"Yes, I believe you, Grandfather," answered Erick. "That is good stuff that I am wearing; it comes from you. You see, when in the old suit which I had worn so long, the patches became holes, then Mother brought out the beautiful velvet cloak, with the broad lace, and said: 'That is good, that comes from Grandfather, you can wear that a long time.' And then she cut everything apart and sewed everything together again, and so there came out what I am now wearing. And Mother received a great deal of money for the broad lace. But only when all was finished and I was wearing it, she became glad again; during the cutting and the sewing together, she was very quiet."

The grandfather too had become still, and he turned away for a while. No doubt he too thought of the time and what happy days they were when he had hung around his beloved child the rich mantle, and how sweetly she stood before him, she whom he was never to see again.

"Come, my boy," he said, turning again to Erick. "What has become of your foster-parents? It is time that we thank them."

The pastor's wife had seen at once that the grandfather had recognized his grandson, and as the latter was standing before him, she gently urged her husband and children, as well as Marianne, out of the room and closed the door after her; and outside, in the long passage, she let the interested crowd ask their loud questions, and give their loudest answers, undisturbed. But when the colonel, holding Erick by the hand, came out of the study, she at once made an open path for them through the assembled people, to bring them upstairs to the quiet reception room, where at last the family and their guest could be among themselves. Here the beaming grandfather went first to the lady of the house, and then to the master and then again to the lady, and every time he took each by both their hands with indescribable heartiness and kept on saying: "I have no words, but thanks, eternal thanks!" And all at once he saw Sally's head peeping out from behind her mother. He suddenly took it between his two hands and cried: "There is, I believe, the great friend and defender of my boy. Well, now will you forgive me?"

Sally pulled one of his hands down and pressed a hearty kiss on it, and now the colonel tenderly stroked her hair and said: "Such good friends are worth a great deal!"

But when he expressed his intention to start at once with Erick, there arose great opposition, and this time the mother distinguished herself in opposition against such quick separation. The grandfather of her Erick ought to spend at least one night beneath her roof, and give the family the chance of learning to know him a little better and to have Erick another day in their midst.

All the children as well as Erick supported, louder and always louder, the mother's request, and the beleaguered grandfather had to give in. Ritz and Edi ran with much delight and noise down the stairs to seat themselves proudly in the coach, and thus drive to the inn, where both must tell to the guests present, who had changed their consultation place from the church to the inn, what they knew of the strange gentleman. And so it came about that on the same Sunday afternoon, all Upper and Lower Wooders, as well as the Middle Lotters, knew Erick's family and fate, and they had to talk loud and zealously before every door, over this change of luck that had come to Erick.

In the parsonage, too, the evening was spent with unusually animated conversation. How much had to be told to the grandfather of the happenings of the last and all former days, and Erick had to throw in a question now and then, which referred to the distant estate, for his thoughts always travelled back to that spot.

"Is Mother's white pony still alive, Grandfather?" he once suddenly asked.

The beautiful pony had long been put away, was the answer. "But you shall have one just like your mother's, my boy. I can now bear the sight of it again," the grandfather said.

"Does old John still live, who made the barge and scraped the pebble-walks so nicely?" Erick asked another time.

"What, you know of that too? Yes, indeed, he is still living, but the joy of seeing my daughter's son whom I am bringing home will almost kill him," said the colonel, smiling contentedly at the prospect.

When Sally and Erick told of their first meeting and Sally's call in Marianne's cottage, and now it came out that it was the same Marianne who had pulled Erick out of the water, and who had stuck so faithfully to his mother, the colonel suddenly jumped up and demanded that Erick should go with him at once to Marianne for, from pure joy, they both had not thanked her as they ought to. But the lady had foreseen such a request, and had not let Marianne go home. And so she was called into the room and the colonel quickly took a chair and placed it in front of him. Marianne had to sit

down there and tell everything that she knew of his daughter, and what she herself had heard and seen. Marianne was very glad to do that, and she spoke with such love and reverence of the dear one, that at the end of her story, the colonel took her hand and shook it heartily, but he could not speak. He rose and walked a few times up and down the room, then he beckoned to Erick, took out of his wallet two papers and said: "Give this to the good old woman, my boy; she shall have a few good days, she deserves it."

Erick had never before enjoyed the happiness of giving; never had he been able to give anything to anyone, for he himself had never owned anything. An enormous joy rose up in his heart and with bright eyes he stepped to Marianne and said: "Marianne, here is something for you, for which you can buy whatever you like."

But when Marianne saw that on the paper was a number and several zeros after it, she struck her hands together from astonishment and fright, and cried: "Dear God, I have not earned that, this is riches!" And when she still kept her hands away from the money, Erick stuck the papers deep into her pocket and said:

"Do you remember, Marianne, how you have said that you were growing old and could no longer work as you used to, and therefore you had to give up the little house and go to your old cousin? Now you can have your cottage again, with that money, and live in it happily."

"That I can, that I can," cried Marianne, forgetting in her joy that she did not want to take the large present. Tears of joy ran down her cheeks, and from happiness and emotion she could not utter a word of thanks, but kept on pressing the colonel's hand and then Erick's, and all were glad with Marianne that she could move again into the cottage and keep it for always. When at last they must separate for the night, the colonel pressed the house-mother's hand once more and said: "My dear friend, you will understand with what gratitude my heart is full, when I tell you that this is the first happy evening which I have had for the last twelve years."

Parting had to come the next morning. The mother took Erick in her arms and after she pressed him to her heart, she said: "My dear Erick, never forget your mother's song! It has already brought you once from the wrong road into the right one; it will guide you well as long as you live. Keep it in your heart, my Erick."

When Erick noticed tears in the mother's eyes, then his grew wet, and when Sally noticed that, she put both hands to her face and began to sob. Then Erick ran to his grandfather and pleadingly cried: "Oh, Grandfather, can we not take Sally along? Don't you think we could?"

The grandfather smiled and answered: "I could not wish anything I should like better, my boy, but we cannot rob the parsonage of all its children, all at once. But come, perhaps we can make some arrangement. What does the mother think about it, if we were to take our little friend next summer and bring her back for the winter, and do so every year?"

"Yes, yes," shouted Erick, "every, every year as long as we live! Will you give me your word on it, Grandfather, now, right away?"

"To give you my word on it that it shall be so long as we live, that is asking much, my boy," said the grandfather smiling. "If now you, both of you, should wish, all at once, to have things different--what then?"

"Oh, no, we are not so stupid," said Erick, "are we, Sally? Just you promise right away, Grandfather."

The latter held out his hand to the mother and said: "If it suits Mamma, then we both will promise, that it shall continue, as long as it pleases our children."

The mother gave her hand on it, and now the two hands were pressed most heartily.

And the pastor said: "So, so! Agreements are made between the colonel and the parson's wife behind my back, and I have nothing to do with it but say yes. Well, then, I will say at once a firm *yes* and *Amen*."

With these words he too shook his guest's hand firmly and there remained only to take leave from Ritz and Edi, both of whom he heartily invited to Denmark, wherein Erick strongly supported him, adding: "And you know, Edi, when you are in Denmark, then you can go on ships, and study there all about them. That will be a good thing for your calling." For Erick had not forgotten that Edi intended to sail around the whole world, and that Ritz too wanted to be something on the sea.

The grandfather was already entering the travelling coach, when Erick was held back by 'Lizebeth; he had pressed into her hand a valuable paper, but she had put her apron to her eyes and had begun to sob aloud behind it, and now she was holding Erick and said: "I think the Sir Grandfather, he means it well as far as he sees things; but that he takes the

dear boy away from us,--to take one's little boy simply away--"

"I will come back again, 'Lizebeth, every year when the storks return. Therefore, good-bye, 'Lizebeth, until I come again."

Saying this, Erick quickly jumped into the carriage, and he wore the same velvet suit in which he had come. For a long, long time he saw the white handkerchiefs wave, and he waved his in answer, until the carriage, down below at the foot of the hill, turned around the corner and disappeared into the woods. But when the fleet horses, soon after, reached the first houses of the Middle Lot, there was another halt.

From the moment that Erick had disappeared, Churi had looked like a picture of horror. He had grown white and grayish looking, and at every sound that he heard, he trembled, for he thought: "Now they are coming to fetch you, to put you into prison." Churi had heard that someone who had thrown another boy into the water had been fetched by two gendarmes and had been put into prison, where he had been kept for twenty years in chains. Churi saw this picture always before him and for fear, he could no longer eat nor sleep; and he dared look at no one. And when the report came that Erick had turned up again, then his fear increased. For now, so he thought, it would surely come out that he had done the deed; and now he was sure that the police would come to get him. But when on Sunday, the story went round like lightning that Erick, in looking for berries, had fallen into the water, then it all at once was clear to Churi, that Erick had not told about him and that he again could go about quite free and without fear. A great, oppressive weight fell from Churi's heart, and he was so touched by Erick's kindness and generosity that he did not sleep from thinking what he could possibly do for Erick to show him his gratitude.

It had really been so. Erick had thought that Churi had not meant to push him into the water, so he had felt sorry for him, if he should be punished for what he did not mean to do, and so Erick had only said that he had received a push when looking for berries, and had fallen into the water. And they had assumed that the boys had knocked each other about as usual, and Erick had been pushed accidentally.

Churi had thought out his reward, and had arranged the following program. All the scholars of Middle Lot had to place themselves in a long line along the street, and when now the carriage with Erick came driving along, they, the scholars, all together must shout, "Hurrah for Erick."

As they one and all now shouted with all their might, there was a terrible noise, so that the horses jumped and shied. But the coachman had them well in hand and brought them in a short time to stand quietly. At this moment one of the boys shot out of the line and onto the carriage step. It was Churi. He bent to Erick's ear and whispered: "I will never again hurt you as long as I live, Erick, and when you come back again, you just reckon on me; no one shall ever touch you, and you shall have all the crabs and strawberries and hazel nuts which I can find."

But on the other side someone else had sprung on the carriage step and clamored for Erick's attention. He felt something under his nose from which came various odors. It was an enormous bunch of fire-red and yellow flowers, which Kaetheli held out to him, who with one foot on the step was balancing over the colonel, and called to Erick: "Here, Erick, you must take a nosegay from the garden with you, and when you come back, be sure you come and see us, do not forget."

"Thank you, Kaetheli," Erick called back, "I shall certainly come to see you, a year from now. Good-bye, Kaetheli, good-bye, Churi!"

Both jumped down, and the horses started.

"Look, look, Grandfather," cried Erick quickly, and pulled the grandfather in front of him, so that he could see better. "Look, there is Marianne's little house. Do you see the small window? There Mother always sat and sewed, and you see, close beside it stood the piano, where Mother sat the very last time and sang."

The grandfather looked at the little window and he frowned as though he were in pain.

"What did your mother sing last, my boy?" he then asked.

"I lay in heaviest fetters,
Thou com'st and set'st me free;
I stood in shame and sorrow,
Thou callest me to Thee;
And lift'st me up to honor

And giv'st me heavenly joys
Which cannot be diminished
By earthly scorn and noise."

When Erick had ended, the grandfather sat for a while quiet and lost in thought; then he said: "Your mother must have found a treasure when in misery, which is worth more than all the good luck and possessions which she had lost. The dear God sent that to her, and we will thank Him for it, my boy. That, too, can make me happy again, else the sight of that little window would crush my heart forever. But that your mother could sing like that, and that you, my boy, come into my home with me, that wipes away my suffering and makes me again a happy father."

The grandfather took Erick's hand lovingly in his, and so they drove toward the distant home.