

FICTION

Johanna Spyri

What Sami Sings with the Birds

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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**WHAT SAMI SINGS WITH THE
BIRDS**

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI

TRANSLATED BY HELEN B. DOLE

1917

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“Up in the ash-trees the birds piped and sang merrily together.”

WHAT SAMI SINGS WITH THE BIRDS

CHAPTER FIRST

OLD MARY ANN

For three days the Spring sun had been shining out of a clear sky and casting a gleaming, golden coverlet over the blue waters of Lake Geneva. Storm and rain had ceased. The breeze murmured softly and pleasantly up in the ash-trees, and all around in the green fields the yellow buttercups and snow-white daisies glistened in the bright sunshine. Under the ash-trees, the clear brook was running with the cool mountain water and feeding the gaily nodding primroses and pink anemones on the hillside, as they grew and bloomed down close to the water.

On the low wall by the brook, in the shadow of the ash-trees, an old woman was sitting. She was called "Old Mary Ann" throughout the whole neighborhood. Her big basket, the weight of which had become a little heavy, she had put down beside her. She was on her way back from La Tour, the little old town, with the vine-covered church tower and the ruined castle, the high turrets of which rose far across the blue lake. Old Mary Ann had taken her work there. This consisted in all kinds of mending which did not need to be done particularly well, for the woman was no longer able to do fine work, and never could do it.

Old Mary Ann had had a very changeable life. The place where she now found herself was not her home. The language of the country was not her own. From the shady seat on the low wall, she now looked contentedly at the sunny fields, then across the murmuring brook to the hillside where the big yellow primroses nodded, while the birds piped and sang in the green ash-trees above her, as if they had the greatest festival to celebrate.

"Every Spring, people think it never was so beautiful before, when they have already seen so many," she now said half aloud to herself, and as she gazed at the fields so rich in flowers, many of the past years rose up and passed before her, with all that she had experienced in them.

As a child she had lived far beyond the mountains. She knew so well how it must look over there now at her father's house, which stood in a field among white-blooming pear-trees. Over yonder the large village with its many houses could be seen. It was called Zweisimmen. Everybody called their house the sergeant's house, although her father quite peacefully tilled his fields. But that came from her grandfather. When quite a young fellow, he had gone over the mountains to Lake Geneva and then still farther to Savoy. Under a Duke of Savoy he had taken part in all sorts of military expeditions and had not returned home until he was an old man. He always wore an old uniform and allowed himself to be called sergeant. Then he married and Mary Ann's father was his only child. The old man lived to be a hundred years old, and every child in all the region round knew the old sergeant.

Mary Ann had three brothers, but as soon as one of them grew up he disappeared, she knew not where. Only this much she understood, that her mother mourned over them, but her father said quite resignedly every time: "We can't help it, they will go over the mountains; they take it from their grandfather." She had never heard anything more about her brothers.

When Mary Ann grew up and married, her young husband also came into the house among the pear-trees, for her father was old and could no longer do his work alone. But after a few years Mary Ann buried her young husband; a burning fever had taken him off. Then came hard times for the widow. She had her child, little Sami, to care for, besides her old, infirm parents to look after, and moreover there was all the work to be done in the house and in the fields which until now her husband had attended to. She did what she could, but it was of no use, the land had to be given up to a cousin. The house was mortgaged, and Mary Ann hardly knew how to keep her old parents from want. Gradually young Sami grew up and was able to help the cousin in the fields. Then the old parents died about the same time, and Mary Ann hoped now by hard work and her son's help little by little to pay up her debts and once more take possession of her fields and house. But as soon as her father and mother were buried, her son Sami, who was now eighteen years old, came to her and said he could no longer bear to stay at home, he must go over the mountains and so begin a new life. This was a great shock to the mother, but when she saw that persuasion, remonstrance and entreaty were all in vain her father's words came to her mind and she said resignedly, "It can't be helped; he takes it from his great-grandfather."

But she would not let the young man go away alone, and he was glad to have his mother go with him. So she wandered with him over the mountains. In the little village of Chailly, which lies high up on the mountain slope and looks down on the meadows rich in flowers and the blue Lake Geneva, they found work with the jolly wine-grower Malon. This man, with curly hair already turning grey and a kindly round face, lived alone with his son in the only house left standing, near a crooked maple-tree.

Mary Ann received a room for herself and was to keep house for Herr Malon, and keep everything in order for him and his son. Sami was to work for good pay in Malon's beautiful vineyard. The widow Mary Ann passed several years here in a more peaceful way than she had ever known before.

When the fourth Summer came to an end, Sami said to her one day:

"Mother, I must really marry young Marietta of St. Legier, for I am so lonely away from her."

His mother knew Marietta well and besides she liked the pretty, clever girl, for she was not only always happy but there were few girls so good and industrious. So she rejoiced with her son, although he would have to go away from her to live with Marietta and her aged father in St. Legier, for she was indispensable to him. Herr Malon's son also brought a young wife home, and so Mary Ann had no more duties there, and had to look out for herself. She kept her room for a small rent, and was able to earn enough to support herself. She now knew many people in the neighborhood, and obtained enough work.

Mary Ann pondered over all these things, and when her thoughts returned from the distant past to the present moment, and she still heard the birds above her singing and rejoicing untiringly, she said to herself:

"They always sing the same song and we should be able to sing with them. Only trust in the dear Lord! He always helps us, although we may often think there is no possible way."

Then Mary Ann left the low wall, took her basket up again on her arm and went through the fragrant meadows of Burier up towards Chailly. From time to time she cast an anxious look in the direction of St. Legier. She knew that young Marietta was lying sick up there and that her son Sami would now have hard work and care, for a much smaller Sami had just come into the world. Tomorrow Mary Ann would go over and see how things were going with her son and if she ought to stay with him and help.

Mary Ann had scarcely stepped into her little room and put on her house dress, to prepare her supper, when she heard some one coming along with hurried footsteps. The door was quickly thrown open and in stepped her son Sami with a very distressed face. Under his arm he carried a bundle wrapped up in one of Marietta's aprons. This he laid on the table, threw himself down and sobbed aloud, with his head in his arms:

"It is all over, mother, all over; Marietta is dead!"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, what are you saying?" cried his mother in the greatest horror. "Oh, Sami, is it possible?"

Then she lifted Sami gently and continued in a trembling voice:

"Come, sit down beside me and tell me all about it. Is she really dead? Oh, when did it happen? How did it come so quickly?"

Sami willingly dropped down on a chair beside his mother. But then he buried his face in his hands and went on sobbing again.

"Oh, I can't bear it, I must go away, mother, I can't bear it here any longer, it is all over!"

"Oh, Sami, where would you go?" said his mother, weeping. "We have already come over the mountains, where would you go from here?"

"I must go across the water, as far as I possibly can, I can't stay here any longer. I cannot, mother," declared Sami. "I must go across the great water as far as possible!"

"Oh, not that!" cried Mary Ann. "Don't be so rash! Wait a little, until you can think more calmly; it will seem different to you."

"No, mother, no, I must go away. I am forced to it; I can't do any different," cried Sami, almost wild.

His mother looked at him in terror, but she said nothing more. She seemed to hear her father saying: "It can't be helped. He takes it from his grandfather." And with a sigh she said:

"It will have to be so."

Then there sounded from the bundle a strange peeping, exactly as if a chicken were smothering inside. "What have you put in the bundle, Sami?" asked the mother, going towards it, to loosen the firmly tied apron.

"That's so, I had almost forgotten it, mother," replied Sami, wiping his eyes, "I have brought the little boy to you, I don't know what to do with it."

"Oh, how could you pack him up so! Yes, yes, you poor little thing," said the grandmother soothingly, taking the diminutive Sami out of one wrapping and then a second and a third.

The father Sami had wrapped the little baby first in its clothes, then in a shawl, and then in the apron as tight as possible, so that it couldn't slip out on the way, and fall on the ground. When little Sami was freed from the smothering wrappings and could move his arms and legs he fought with all his limbs in the air and screamed so pitifully that his grandmother thought it seemed exactly as if he already knew what a great misfortune had come to him.

But father Sami said perhaps he was hungry, for since the evening before no one had paid any attention to the little baby. This seemed to the sympathetic Mary Ann quite too cruel, and she realised that if she didn't care for the poor

little mite it would die. She wrapped him up again carefully in his blanket, but not around his head, and carried him upright on her arm, not under it, as one carries a bundle. Then she ran all around her room to collect milk, a dish and fire together, so that the starving little creature might have some nourishment. As she sat on her stool, and the little one eagerly sipped the milk, while his tiny little hand tightly clasped his grandmother's forefinger like a life-preserver, she said, greatly touched:

"Yes, indeed, you little Sami, you poor little orphan, I will do what I can for you and the dear Lord will not forsake us."

And to the big Sami she said:

"I will keep him, but don't take any rash steps! In the first great sorrow many a one does what he later regrets. See, you can't run away from sorrow, it runs with you. Stay and bear what the dear Lord sends. He is not angry with you. Hold to him still in time of sorrow, then the sun will shine tomorrow! It will be the same with you as it has been with so many others." Sami had listened in silence, but like one who does not understand what he hears.

"Good night, mother! May God reward you for what you do for the boy," he said then, after wiping his eyes again. Then he pressed his mother's hand, and went out of the door.

CHAPTER SECOND

AT THE GRANDMOTHER'S

Old Mary Ann had now to begin over again, where she had left off twenty-one years before, to bring up a little Sami. But then she was fresh and strong, she had her husband by her side, and lived at home among friends and acquaintances. Now she was in a strange land and was a worn-out woman, and felt that her strength would not last much longer. But little Sami did not realise all this. He was tended and cared for as if his grandmother wanted to make up to him every moment for what he had lost, and she was always saying to him, pityingly:

"You poor little thing, you have nobody in the world now but an old grandmother."

Moreover it was so. Father Sami could not be consoled. As soon as his young wife was buried he went away, and must have landed a long time ago in the far away country.

Little Sami grew finely, and as his grandmother talked with him a great deal, he began very early to imitate her. His words became more and more distinct, and when the end of his second year came, he talked very plainly and in whole sentences. His grandmother didn't know what to do for joy, when she realised that her little Sami spoke not a word of French, but pure Swiss-German, as she had heard it only in her native land. He spoke exactly like his grandmother, who was indeed the only one he had to talk with.

Now every day her baby gave her a new surprise. First he began to say after her the little prayer she repeated for him morning and evening; then he said it all alone. She had to weep for joy when the little one began to sing after her the little Summer song she had learned in her own childhood and had always sung to him, and one day suddenly knew the whole song from beginning to end and sang one verse after another without hesitation.

In spite of all the grandmother's trouble and work, the years passed so quickly to her, that one day when she began to reckon she discovered that Sami must be fully seven years old. Then she thought it was really time that he learned something. But suddenly to send the boy to a French school when he didn't understand a word of French seemed dreadful to her, for he would be as helpless as a chicken in water. She would rather try, as well as she possibly could, to teach him herself to read. She thought it would be very hard but it went quite easily. In a short time, the youngster knew all his letters, and could even put words together quite well. That something could be made out of this which he could understand and which he did not know before was very amusing to him, and he sat over his reading-book with great eagerness. But to go out with his grandmother to deliver her mending and to get new work was a still greater pleasure to him, for nothing pleased him better than roaming through the green meadows, then stopping at the brook to listen to the birds singing up in the ash-trees.

The changeable April days had just come to an end and the beaming May sun shone so warm and alluring that all the flowers looked up to it with wide-open petals. Mary Ann with Sami by the hand, her big basket on her arm, was coming along up from La Tour. The boy opened both his eyes as wide as he could, for the red and blue flowers in the green grass and the golden sunshine above them delighted him very much.

"Grandmother," he said taking a deep breath, "to-day we will sit on the low wall for twelve long hours, won't we, really?"

"Yes, indeed," assented his grandmother, "we will stay there long enough to get well rested and enjoy ourselves; but when the sun goes down and it grows dark, then we will go. Then all the little birds are silent in the trees and the old night-owl begins to hoot."

This seemed right to Sami, for he didn't want to hear the old owl hoot. Now they had reached the wall. A cool shadow was lying on it; below the fresh brook murmured, and up in the ash-trees the birds piped and sang merrily together and one kept singing very distinctly:

"Sing too! Sing too!"

Sami listened. Suddenly he lifted up his voice and sang as loud and lustily as the birds above, the whole song that his grandmother had taught him:

Last night Summer breezes blew:--
All the flowers awake anew,
Open wide their eyes to see,
Nodding, bowing in their glee.
All the merry birds we hear

Greet the sunshine bright and clear;
See them flitting thru the sky,
Singing low and singing high!

Flowers in Summer warmth delight:--
What of Winter and its blight?
Snowy fields and forests cold?
Flowers are by their faith consoled.

Songsters, all so blithe and gay,
Know ye what your carols say?
How will your sweet carols fare
When your nests the snow-storms tear?

All the birdlings everywhere
Now their loveliest songs prepare;
All the birdlings gayly sing:--
"Trust the Lord in everything!"

Then Sami listened very attentively, as if he wanted to hear whether the birds really sang so.

"Listen, listen, grandmother!" he said after a while. "Up there in the tree is one that doesn't sing like the others. At first he keeps singing 'Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust!' and then the rest comes after."

"Yes, yes, that is the finch, Sami," she replied. "See, he wants to impress it upon you, so that you will think about what will always keep you safe and happy. Just listen, now, he is calling again: Trust! trust! trust! trust! trust! Only trust the dear Lord."

Sami listened again. It was really wonderful, how the finch always sounded above the other birds with his emphatic "Trust! trust! trust!" "You must never forget what the finch calls," continued the grandmother. "See, Sami, perhaps I cannot stay with you much longer, and then you will have no one else, and will have to make your way alone. Then the little bird's song can oftentimes be a comfort to you. So don't forget it, and promise me too that you will say your little prayer every day, so that you will be God-fearing; then no matter what happens, it will be well with you."

Sami promised that he would never forget to pray. Then he became thoughtful and asked somewhat timidly:

"Must I always be afraid, grandmother?"

"No, no! Did you think so because I said God-fearing? It doesn't mean that: I will explain it to you as well as I can. You see to be God-fearing is when one has the dear Lord before his eyes in everything he does, and fears and hesitates to do what is not pleasing to Him, everything that is wicked and wrong. Whoever lives so before Him has no reason to fear what may happen to him, for such a man has the dear Lord's help everywhere, and if he has to meet hardship oftentimes, he knows that the dear Lord allows it so, in order that some good may come out of it for him, and then he can sing as happily as the little birds: 'Only trust the dear Lord!' Will you remember that well, Sami?"

"Yes, that I will," said Sami, decidedly, for this pleased him much better, than if he had to be always afraid.

Now the setting sun cast its last long rays across the meadows, and disappeared. The grandmother left the wall, took Sami by the hand and then the two wandered in the rosy twilight along the meadow path, then up the green vine-clad hill to the little village of Chailly up on the mountain.

CHAPTER THIRD

ANOTHER LIFE

One morning, a few days later, Mary Ann was so tired she couldn't get up. Sami sat beside her waiting for her to be fully awake in order to go into the kitchen and make the coffee. His grandmother opened her eyes once and fell asleep again. She had never done anything like this before. Now she was really awake. She tried to raise herself up a little, then took Sami by the hand and said in a low voice:

"Sami, listen to me, I must tell you something. See, when I am no longer with you, you have no one else here, and are an entire stranger. But there over the mountains you have relatives, and you must return to them. Malon will tell you how to get there. You must go to Zweisimmen. There ask for the sergeant, your cousin, who lives in the house with the big pear-trees near it. Tell him your grandmother was the sergeant's Mary Ann and your father was Sami. Work hard and willingly, you will have to earn your living. There in the chest is some money in the little bag; take it, it is yours; don't spend it foolishly. Sami, think of what you promised me. Don't neglect to pray, it will bring you comfort and happiness which you will need. Try to associate with God-fearing people and live with them, then you will learn only good. Go, now, Sami, and call Herr Malon. I must talk with him."

Sami went and came back with the man of the house. He stepped up to Mary Ann's bed, and tried to encourage her, as that was his way. But he was alarmed at her appearance and wanted to go for the doctor, as he told her. But she held him fast and tried with great difficulty to express herself in his language, for she had only a scanty knowledge of it. Malon nodded his head understandingly and then hurried away. When he returned to the room a couple of hours later with the doctor, Sami was still sitting in the same place by the bed, waiting very quietly for his grandmother to wake up again. The doctor drew near the bed. Then he spoke with Malon a while, and finally came to Sami. He told him his grandmother would never wake again, that she was dead.

Malon was a good man; he said he himself would go with Sami part of the way until he found some one who could talk with him and take him further; but he must put all his belongings together in a bundle. Then the two men went away.

After a while the young woman of the house came, for the forsaken boy had deeply aroused her sympathy. She found Sami still sitting in the same place by the bed. He was looking steadfastly at his grandmother and weeping piteously. The woman spoke to him, but he did not understand her. Then she took everything out of the cupboard and drawers, packed them into a bundle and showed Sami that he was to eat the bread and milk on the table. Sami swallowed the milk obediently, but the woman put the bread in his pocket. Then she led the boy once more to the bed, that he might take his grandmother's hand in farewell.

Sami obeyed still sobbing, and let himself be led away by the woman. Herr Malon was already waiting beside his little cart in which lay Sami's bundle. The boy understood that he was to draw the cart, but he knew not where. He wept softly to himself for it seemed to him as if he were going out into the wilderness where he would be wholly alone. Malon went on ahead of him.

It was the same way Sami had often gone with his grandmother down to La Tour. When he came to the wall by the brook, he sobbed aloud. How lovely it had been there with his grandmother! He could not see the way because of his falling tears, but he heard Herr Malon's heavy step in front of him, and he followed after. At the little station house above the vine-covered church Malon stopped. Soon after the train came puffing along. Malon got in and pulled Sami after him, and they started away. Sami crouched in a corner and did not stir. They travelled thus for an hour. Sami did not understand a word that was spoken around him, although several times one and another tried to talk with him a little, for the softly weeping boy had indeed awakened their sympathy.

The train stopped again. Malon got out and Sami followed him. They went a short distance together and then Malon stepped to the left into a large garden and then into the house. Here he talked a while with the man of the house, who from time to time looked pityingly at Sami. Then Malon took Sami's hand, shook it and left him behind alone in the big room.

After some time the man of the house came back and a sturdy fellow behind him. The latter began to talk in Sami's own language. He wanted to console the boy and said he would soon go on in a carriage. Then Sami asked if he was his cousin, and if this was the village of Zweisimmen? But the fellow laughed loudly and said he was no cousin, but a servant here in the inn, and the place was called Aigle. Sami would have to travel an hour longer and would not reach Zweisimmen before twelve o'clock at night. But there was a coachman here from Interlaken, who had to go back and

would take him along.

The man of the house had bread and eggs brought for Sami and when he said he wasn't hungry, he put everything kindly into the boy's pocket. Then he led the boy out. Outside stood a large coach with two horses and high up on the top sat the driver. No one was inside. Sami was lifted up, the driver placed him next himself and drove away. At any other time this would have pleased Sami very much, but now he was too sad. He kept thinking of his grandmother, who could no longer talk with him and would never wake again. After some time the driver began to talk to him. Sami had to tell him where he came from and to whom he was going. He told him everything, how he had lived with his grandmother, how she had fallen asleep early that day, and did not wake up again; and that he was going to find a cousin in Zweisimmen and would have to live with him. Sami's childish description touched the driver so deeply that he finally said:

"It will be too late when we reach there, you must stay with me to-night."

Then when he saw Sami's eyes close with the approaching twilight and only open again when they went over a stone, and the two of them up on the box were jounced almost dangerously against each other, he grasped the boy firmly, lifted him up and slipped him backwards into the coach. Here he fell at once fast asleep and when he finally opened his eyes again, the sun was shining brightly in his face. He was lying in his clothes on a huge, big bed in a room with white walls. In all his life he had never seen such walls. He looked around in consternation. Then the coachman of the day before came in the door.



"Where have you come from with all your household goods?"

"Have you had your sleep out?" he said laughing. "Come and have some coffee with me. Then I will take you to

your cousin. Some one else must carry your bundle. It is too heavy for you."

Sami followed him into the coffee-room. Here the good man kept pouring out coffee for the boy, but Sami could neither eat nor drink.

When the coachman had finished his breakfast, he rose and started with Sami on the way to the sergeant's house. It was not far. At the house in the meadow among the pear-trees he laid Sami's bundle down, shook him by the hand and said:

"Well, good luck to you. I have nothing to do in there and have farther to go."

Sami thanked him for all his kindness, and gazed after his benefactor, until he disappeared behind the trees. Then he knocked on the door. A woman came out, looked in amazement first at the boy, then at his big bundle, and said rudely: "Where have you come from with all your household goods?"

Sami informed her where he had come from and that his grandmother was Mary Ann, and his father, Sami. Meanwhile three boys had come running up to them, placed themselves directly in front of him, and were looking at him from top to toe with wide-open eyes. This embarrassed Sami exceedingly.

"Bring your father out," said the mother to one of her boys. Their father was sitting inside at the table, eating his breakfast.

"What's the matter now?" he growled.

"There is someone here, who claims to be a relative of yours. He doesn't know where he is going," exclaimed his wife.

"He can come in to me, perhaps I can tell him, if I know," replied the man, without moving.

"Well, go in," directed the woman, giving Sami an assisting push. The boy went in and replied very timidly, where he had come from and to whom he had belonged. The peasant scratched his head.

"Make quick work of it," said the woman impatiently, who had followed with her three boys.

"I think we have enough with the three of them, and there are people who might need such a boy."

"This is quickly decided," said the peasant, thoughtfully cutting his piece of bread in two; "send all four boys out."

After this command had been carried out, he continued slowly: "There is no help for it. It was stipulated at the time the house was sold, that room must be made in the house if either Mary Ann, Sami or the child should come back. Besides, it is not so bad as it seems. Where three sleep together there is room for a fourth, and he can do some work for his food. The parish can do something for his clothes."

His wife had no desire to have a fourth added to her three boys, for her own made enough noise and trouble for her. She protested, saying she knew how it was with such stray children and they could expect to have a fine time!

But it was of no use; it was decided that Sami should have a place in the house. The farmer brought in the bundle and carried it up to the oldest boy's room, where until now the broad-shouldered Stoffi had slept in a bed alone. He could take Sami in with him, for he was smaller than the other two; Michael and Uli could stay together as before.

Then the woman opened the bundle. She was not a little surprised, when she found inside not only Sami's clothes, all in the best of order, but also two good dresses, aprons and neckerchiefs. She called Sami up to her, and showed him the corner in the chest where she had put his things. Then she said she would take the woman's clothes for herself, since he could surely make no use of them. The clothes which his grandmother had always worn were so dear to Sami, that he looked on with sad eyes, as they were carried away, but he thought it had to be so.

He had already made the acquaintance of the three boys. They had shown him below in front of the house how one of them could best throw down the others, and had demonstrated all sorts of useful tricks. But as each tried to outdo the others in showing off his knowledge, a struggle ensued and the tricks were immediately applied; one threw another over the third, Sami was knocked and thrown around by all three.

When he now came down from his room a voice from the barn called out: "Come here and help pull."

Sami ran along. There stood the two younger boys, Michael and Uli, with great hoes on their shoulders, and Stoffi beside a cart which had to be taken along. They waited for their father, and then all went out to the field. Here Stoffi and Sami had to rake together the grass, which the father cut, and load it on the cart, and bring home to the cows. Michael and Uli had to hoe the weeds in the next field near by. Now it appeared that Sami did not know at all how to use the rake, for he had never done such work.

"He shall weed with Uli, and Michael can do this work," said the farmer.

But when Sami tried to do this, the hoe was too heavy for him, and he could do nothing.

"Then kneel on the ground and pull them up with your hands," said the farmer.

Sami squatted down and pulled at the weeds with all his might. The ground was hard and the work very tiresome. But Sami did not forget how his grandmother had impressed it upon him to do all his work well and willingly.

At noon the two weeders took their hoes on their shoulders and Sami had to pull the cart, which was now much

heavier than on the way there. The boy had to use all his strength, for Stoffi showed him plainly that he would not take upon himself the larger part of the work.

Then when they passed by the field the father indicated to each one the piece he would have to weed that afternoon; for he himself would be obliged to go to the cattle market. They would find a smaller hoe at home for Sami to take with him in the afternoon, for pulling up the weeds was too slow work.

After the boys had worked several hours in the afternoon, they sat down in the shade of an old apple-tree to eat their luncheon, and the piece of black bread with pear juice tasted very good after the hot work.

"Have you ever seen a bear?" asked Stoffi of Sami.

He said he had not.

"Then you would be fearfully frightened if you should suddenly see one," continued Stoffi; "only those who know them are not afraid of them. This evening there is to be one in the village, and, as I am almost through with my piece in the field, you can finish it, so I can go early to see the bear."

Sami agreed. When all four had begun to hoe again, Stoffi soon exclaimed:

"Well, you won't have much more to do now, Sami, but keep your promise, or--"

Stoffi doubled up his fist, and Sami understood what that meant.

He had hardly gone when Michael said:

"See, Sami, there isn't much left of mine, you can do that too; I am going to see the bear."

Whereupon Michael ran off.

"Me, too," cried Uli, throwing down his hoe. "You can finish that also, Sami."

When the twilight came on and the family put the sour milk and the steaming potatoes on the table, Sami was missing.

"I suppose he will keep us waiting," remarked the farmer's wife sharply. When all had finished and the milk mugs were empty, the woman cleared them away and placed the few potatoes left over on the kitchen table and growled:

"He can eat here, if he wants anything."

It was quite dark, and Sami still had not come. Just as the other three were being sent to bed, he came in, so tired he could hardly stand. The woman asked him harshly, if he couldn't come home with the others. The farmer assumed that the piece he had told Sami to weed had been too much for him to do, and he said consolingly:

"It is right that you wanted to finish your work, but you must work faster."

Sami understood the signs which Stoffi made behind his father's back, that he was to keep silent about the bear, and he was too much afraid of the three boys' fists to say anything about it.

He preferred to go straight to bed, for he was too tired to eat. But he couldn't go to sleep. He had received so many new impressions, he had borne so much anguish, and had to do so much work besides, he could think of nothing else. But now his grandmother came before his eyes again as she had prayed with him at evening and had been so kind to him, and everything she had told him. He wanted so much to pray, it seemed to him as if his grandmother was near and told him the dear Lord would always comfort him if he prayed, and that comfort he was so anxious to have.

He was so troubled, when he wondered if he could do his work the next day, so that the farmer would not be cross, and how his wife would be, for he was very much afraid of her, and how it would be with the boys, who forced him to make everything appear contrary to the truth.

Then Sami began to pray and prayed for a long time, for he already began to feel comforted, because he could take refuge with the dear Lord and ask Him to help him, now that he had no one left in the world to whom he could speak and who could assist him. When at last his eyes closed from great weariness he dreamed he was sitting with his grandmother on the wall and above them all the birds were singing so loud and so joyfully that he had to sing with them: "Only trust the dear Lord!"

CHAPTER FOURTH

HARD TIMES

The following morning Sami was awakened by loud tones, but it was no longer the birds singing; it was the farmer's wife ordering the boys harshly to get up right away. She had already called them three times, and if this time they didn't obey, their father would come. Then they all sprang out of bed and in a few minutes were down-stairs, where their father was already sitting at the table and would not have waited much longer.

The day did not pass very differently from the one before, and thus passed a long series of days. There was already a change in the work.

Sami, little by little, learned to do everything very well, for he took pains and followed his grandmother's advice carefully. He always had something to do for the other boys still, so that he never finished his work a moment before supper-time. But he was no longer late. A change had also come about in this. Stoffi had learned that there was one thing Sami could not or would not do which he himself could do very well: he could not tell a lie.

He had been late again a couple of times, but had never told the reason. Finally, however, the farmer had spoken harshly:

"Now speak out, and tell why you can't get through your work faster; you are quick enough when anyone is watching you."

Then Sami had accordingly told all the truth, and the father had threatened to beat the boys if they didn't do their work themselves. Afterwards Stoffi had thrashed Sami to punish him, and had warned him that he would do it every time Sami complained of him.

Sami had replied that he had never complained and didn't want to do so, but when his father questioned him he could only tell him the truth. Stoffi tried to explain to him that it didn't matter whether he told the truth or not, but here he found Sami more obstinate than he had expected, and no matter what fearful threats he hurled at him, he always said the same thing in the end:

"But I shall do it."

This firmness was the result of Sami's sure conviction that the dear Lord heard and knew everything and that lying was something wicked, which did not please Him.

So Stoffi had to find some other way to get off from his work early and make Sami finish what he left. He found that all three could never dare abandon their work and leave it for Sami, but one of them might do so each evening, and he threatened to punish his brothers severely if they would not agree to this. Then there would always be three or four evenings in succession when Stoffi wanted to go away early; then the brothers had to stay and work, and this led to many a quarrel, with heavy blows which regularly fell upon Sami.

So he never had any happy days. But every evening he could be alone with his thoughts of his grandmother, of all the beautiful bygone days and all the good words she had spoken to him. Nobody troubled him, or called to him, or pulled him then, as usually happened all day long.

Thus the Summer and Autumn passed away, and a cold Winter had come. There was no more work to be done in the fields and meadows, but there were all sorts of things to be done to help the farmer in the barn and his wife in the house and the kitchen. This Sami had to do.

Meanwhile their own three boys could go to school, which had now begun again, for they had to get some education. Sami could get that by and by. In the Summer he had acquired a good deal of quickness and now did his work so skilfully that the farmer said a couple of times:

"I would not have believed it, for in the Summer he was always the last."

Sami now thought that everything would go easier than in the Summer, but something came which was much harder to bear than the extra burden of work, which was too much for the others.

Every day the boys fought in the field outside, and Sami, as the smallest, always came off with the most blows. But that was the end of it, and when the boys came home at night no one thought any more about it. In the evening the three boys were assigned to the little room with the feeble light of a low oil lamp, to do their arithmetic for school, while Sami had to cut apples and pears for drying. From the first the three were angry because Sami had no arithmetic to do, and then one would accuse the other of taking the light away from him, and all three would scream that Sami didn't need any at all for his work. Then one would pull the lamp one way, and another the other way, until it was upset and

the oil would run over the table into Sami's apples. Then there would be a really murderous tumult in the darkness; all hands would grope in the oil and one would always outcry the others. Then the mother would come in very cross and want to know who was always starting such mischief. Then one would blame the other, and finally the blame would fall on Sami, because he made the least noise. Usually the farmer too came in then, and his angry wife would always reply that she had indeed said the boy would be an apple of discord in the house, and a Winter like this they had never experienced. Often Sami had to endure many hard words and undeserved punishment. On such evenings he remained sleepless for a long time sitting on his bed.

Then he would rack his brains as to how it could happen so, since his grandmother had told him that if he was God-fearing everything would happen for the best. That he should be so scolded and badly treated was not the best for him. He really wanted to be God-fearing and not forget that the dear Lord saw and heard everything. But Sami was still very young and could not know, what he later knew, that it is good for everyone if he learns early in life to bear hardship. Then when the evil days, which none escape, come again later on, he can cope with them bravely, because he knows them already and his strength has become hardened; and when the good days come he can enjoy them as no one else can who has never tasted the bad ones.

At this time Sami knew nothing about this and almost never went to sleep without tears; indeed, he often wondered whether the birds were still calling up in the ash-trees: "Only trust in the dear Lord!" and if it were still true that everything would come out right. The only comfort for him was that his grandmother had told him so positively, and he held fast to that.

It was a long, hard Winter. The snow lay so deep and immovable on the meadows and trees, that Sami often asked with anxiety in his heart, if it would ever entirely disappear, so that the meadows would be green again, and the flowers become alive. It was already April, and the cold white covering of snow still lay all around. Then a warm wind from the South blew all one night into the valley, and when on the next day a very warm rain fell, the obstinate snow melted into great brooks. Then came the sun and dried up all the brooks, and everywhere the new young grass sprang up over the meadows.

The four boys came across the big street of the village and turned into the meadow. They were pulling along the cart, on which lay the cooking utensils which the farmer's wife had just purchased at the annual fair in the village. The boys had followed their mother's command to go slowly and carefully, so that nothing would be broken, for they knew very well that their mother set great store by these things, and it was worth while to follow her instructions.

Now that they had come safely over the rough street and had turned into the meadow road, two pulling, two pushing, they wanted to rest a little while. They stopped under the first large pear-tree, stretched themselves out on the ground and looked up into the blue sky. In the pear-tree above, the birds were singing merrily together, and suddenly one piped up in the midst of the others, always the same note, exactly as if he had a special call to give.

"There he is," cried Sami, springing up from the ground with delight. Then he listened again, and again sounded the staccato call, clear and sharp above the singing of all the other birds.

"Do you hear it? Do you hear it?" cried Sami in his delight. "Now he is calling again: 'Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust!' And then they all sing together: 'Only trust the dear Lord!'"

"You are just talking nonsense!" exclaimed Stoffi to the happy Sami. "The bird is more knowing than you are. That is the rain bird; I know him well. He notices the rain-wind and is calling: 'Shower! Shower! Shower!' Then we know it is going to rain."

But Sami would not give up what was so dear to him and kept saying to himself:

"But he is singing: 'Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust!'"

"Keep quiet!" continued Stoffi sharply to him. "You are nothing but a little tramp, who can't do anything and doesn't know anything and twists everything he hears."

Then the blood rose to Sami's cheeks and the tears came into his eyes and, more courageously than usual towards Stoffi, he cried:

"I don't do that, but you have done it many times!"

Then Stoffi sprang up and seized hold of Sami to throw him down; but in his anger Sami turned quite differently from usual, so that Stoffi had to call the others to help him.

A great struggle ensued; the blows became more and more violent, first on one side and then on the other. Suddenly the cart was upset. A fearful cracking and crashing sounded, and a great heap of red, brown and white crockery lay on the ground. Dumb with fright, the boys stood and looked at the destruction.

Stoffi was the first to recover himself.

"We will say that a wheel came off the cart, and it suddenly fell down." He immediately picked up a big stone in order to pound out the nail and take the wheel off from the axle.

"I shall say just how it all happened, that we quarreled, and upset the wagon," said Sami calmly.

Then Steffi's wrath rose to its height.

"You traitor, you spy and mischief-maker!" he screamed. "You are nothing but a ragamuffin. We will force you."

"You cannot," said Sami, "and you are no good either! If you were God-fearing, you would not want to lie so."

"Well, well," they all screamed together, and shaking their fists in the most threatening way. "You needn't say that. We are just exactly as God-fearing as you, and even much more so!"

Suddenly a new thought came to Stoffi. He ran off with all his might, and Michael and Uli rushed after him. Sami saw that they were hurrying to the house; he followed slowly after. The farmer's wife had come back to the house by a shorter way, and the farmer was just returning home too from the field, when the three boys came rushing along. The whole family was standing in great excitement at the door and all were talking loudly together and making threatening gestures, when Sami came along. He was met by the farmer, shaking his fist, and his wife threw such harsh words at him that he stood quite dumfounded.

"That was the last straw," she said, "that after all the kindness he had received he should tell them they were not God-fearing people."

Then the farmer joined in. Such talk was insolent from Sami, and it had been known for a long time how upright they were in his house, before such a scamp had come there and tried to show them the way. Then his wife began again and said Sami would have nothing more to do in her house; for he had brought nothing but trouble since he stepped into it; he could go to his room, and she would come right along.

Sami was so surprised and confused by all the attacks and charges, that he had stood quite dumb until now. Now he wanted to explain how the cart had been upset, but the father said they knew everything already, and all he had to do was to go to his room. He obeyed.

Soon the farmer's wife came upstairs, packed Sami's things together and tied them up again into a bundle, which was now much smaller than when he had brought it there, for some pieces of his old things had been worn out and were not replaced, and his grandmother's clothes were no longer there.

While she was packing the woman kept on talking very angrily about Sami's wickedness and insolence, so that he now for the first time understood it all. The boys had stated that he had reproached them for not being God-fearing people; they had punished him for it, and through his resistance he had overturned the cart. Sami now tried to explain to the woman that it had not happened so, but she said she knew enough, threw his tied-up bundle beside his bed, and went out.

Now for the first time Sami was able to think over what had happened to him and what was going to come. Then he was angry because he had to bear such injustice and not once have a chance to speak. And now he was driven out, or perhaps he would be sent to people where it would be even worse for him. Then he was so overcome with anger and fear and anguish, that he began to cry aloud and called out:

"Yes, yes, Grandmother, you said if I was God-fearing everything would happen to me for the best; and I have been, and now it has happened this way!"

But with the thought of his grandmother, there rose in his heart all the memories of his life with her, how they had wandered so peacefully through the meadows, and how beautiful it had been under those trees, how the birds had sung and the brook murmured, and suddenly Sami was mightily overcome, and he exclaimed:

"Away! away! Over there! over there!"

From that moment on a bright light rose in his heart. It was hope in a new life as beautiful as the first had been. Then Sami said his evening prayer gladly and fell asleep.

CHAPTER FIFTH

THE BIRDS ARE STILL SINGING

The next morning when Sami sat at the table with the family, no one said a word to him. The farmer's wife pushed a piece of bread towards his coffee-cup and made up an unfriendly face. The farmer was no different. The three boys looked sourly down at their coffee-cups, for they had no good consciences, and all three feared that their lies of the day before might yet be found out, if Sami should happen to speak.

When they rose from the table, the farmer said shortly:

"Get your bundle! I shall have to lose more time with you, until I have found a place for you, for surely no one will want you."

Since the night before a change had taken place in Sami. He no longer hung his head, as he had done almost always before from fear; he lifted it up and said:

"I know already where I must go."

The farmer and his wife looked at each other in astonishment.

"I want to go over the mountains," he added.

"Yes, that is best, that he should go back there, where he came from," said the farmer's wife quickly; "there will no doubt be someone going over there from the inn. Go quickly with him up there."

This seemed right to the farmer also. The leave-taking was as short as possible, and Sami was light-hearted when he started with his little bundle on his back away from his cousins' house.

At the inn, sure enough, they found a driver who was going with a big wood-wagon to Chateau d'Aeux. He was ready to take the boy with him and thought he would be able to find someone to take him farther, if the boy knew his way down there on the French side. The farmer said Sami had been brought up there and wanted to go back, he knew where.

Now the driver was ready. Sami's bundle was thrown into the wagon and the boy seated on it.

"Good luck!" said the farmer, gave Sami his hand and went away.

Then the driver swung himself up on his seat and the two strong horses started off. Although the wood-wagon was far less handsome and easy than the coach in which Sami had come, still he sat much happier in his hard seat than when he had left his grandmother lying so alone and had to go away, without knowing where. Now he was going home, where he knew everything and where everything was dear to him, every tree and every wall by the way; and although he wouldn't see his grandmother any longer, he would find all the places where he had been with her and where it was more beautiful than anywhere else. With these thoughts a multitude of questions arose in Sami's mind: Would everything be still the same as before? Would the ash-trees still be standing there by the wall? and the red and yellow flowers be growing on the hillside? And Sami had so much to think about that he didn't notice how the time was passing. So he was very much astonished when the wagon stopped, for they had come to a large village, and the driver took firm hold of him, lifted him up and set him down on the street. Sami looked around him. They had stopped in front of an inn, above which a big brown bear stood for a sign and which was surrounded by all kinds of vehicles. But he couldn't look around any longer, for the driver had already seized him again and lifted him together with his bundle into another team and then went away. Soon he came back with a large piece of bread and said:

"There, eat; you still have far to go."

"Are we yet in Chateau d'Aeux?" asked Sami.

"Yes, to be sure, but you are going farther," was the reply; then the driver disappeared.

Sami was now sitting in a small country wagon to which an enormous horse was harnessed. No one was as yet up in the high seat, but Sami was seated with his bundle back in the empty space on the floor. Then two big, stout men climbed up on the high seat, and they started away. After a short time Sami's eyes closed involuntarily, he slipped off on the floor of the wagon, his head fell over on his bundle, and he sank into a deep sleep. When he woke again, he was still in the wagon on the floor, but everything was quiet around him; he did not hear the horse trotting; the wagon was no longer moving forward. It looked very strange all around him. He looked, and looked again, until he realized what had happened. The wagon was standing without horse or driver in a shed; they had forgotten Sami and left him lying there.

"Where can I be?" Sami asked himself. The door of the shed stood open, and outside there was bright sunshine. Sami climbed down from his sleeping-place, stepped outside and went a little way farther around the house, which stood directly in front of the shed. Then he knew everything about it--there stood the house with the garden, where he had taken the beautiful coach; right before him was the railway station--he was in Aigle again. Only a little way farther in the train and he would be at home!

Then it came to Sami that here he could no longer talk with the people, for now he was among the French. But he knew what to do. He still had the little bag with his grandmother's money. He ran to the place where the people were getting their tickets, laid a piece of money in front of the little window, and said: "La Tour!"

Immediately he had his ticket; he sprang into the train, which was already standing outside, and crouched down quickly in his corner, the very same corner where he had sat before with Herr Malon. He knew all the names which were called out at the stations; nearer and nearer he came--now--"La Tour!" He jumped down and ran to the right across the fields, then to the left up the hill. He knew every tree along the way. Now--there stood the wall, there stood the ash-trees and their tops were waving to and fro. Underneath, the clear brook was murmuring, and above, on the hillside, the bright sun was shining on the big golden primroses and the red anemones. It was all exactly as it had been before! Moreover, above--oh, that was the most beautiful of all!--up in the ash-trees the birds were piping and singing as loudly and as merrily as ever and, to be sure, there was the chief singer, the finch. "Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust!" sounded his clear song, and all the birds joined in with their warbling and rejoiced loudly:

"Only trust the dear Lord!"

Sami was so overcome because everything was still exactly the same as he had known it before, that he stood speechless for a long time and listened, looking around him and listening again. It seemed so good to him and he had never felt such happiness in his heart since that evening when he had sat there with his grandmother. Now his grandmother rose so vividly before him, that he suddenly threw himself down on the wall and wept. She was no longer there, and would come back to him no more. But all the good words she had spoken to him here that evening rose vividly in his heart, and it seemed as if he distinctly heard her talking again, and as if she must really be quite near and see him.

Sami straightened himself up again, sat a while longer listening, and then began to think what he should do. At first he wanted to go to Malon and ask him if he could work for him, perhaps get out the weeds in his vineyard. But he could not explain to him why he was there again; they would not understand each other and Malon might think he had done something wrong and had been sent away for it by his cousin. But perhaps the woman who always gave mending to his grandmother would set him to work in her garden. She lived down below, near the Lake. He jumped down from the wall. Once more he looked at the hillside, and up into the tree, but he could come here again; he was here and could stay here.

On the way he thought how he could explain to the woman what he wanted to do for her. He would bend down and show her how he could pull up the weeds; then he would show her by a gesture that he knew how to hoe.

There stood already the old castle of La Tour before him, with its two high, weather-beaten towers, which he had looked at so many times. All around and high up thick ivy covered the old walls, and above them multitudes of merry birds were chirping. Sami had to stop and listen to their happy singing for a while, then he went along by the high old wall around the courtyard, for he wanted to see if it was still the same as before down below in the lonely place where the water kept falling on the old stones and singing a gentle song. He had once stood there a long time with his grandmother. There lay the place before him, but it was not lonely. A big wagon was standing there, with a grey cover stretched over it. No horse stood in front of it, but a thin nag was nibbling the hedge, and this evidently belonged to the wagon. Near the old castle tower a fire was blazing merrily; a man was sitting by it, hammering with all his might. Close by him four little children were crawling around on the ground. Sami stood still at this unexpected sight, then came slowly a little nearer. Then he heard the man warning the children not to come so near the fire. This he was doing in Sami's own language, exactly as all the people in Zweisimmen had spoken. This gave courage to Sami; he came along quite near, and watched the man mend a hole in an old pan.

"Does it please you?" asked the man, after Sami had looked on attentively for some time. The boy answered by nodding his head.

"Are you French, that you can't talk?" asked the man again.

Sami then said he could talk, but not at all in French, but he was glad that the tinker spoke German, because otherwise he would not be able to understand anyone there.

"Whom do you belong to?" asked the man again.

"Nobody," answered Sami.

Then the man wanted to know where he had come from and why he had come among the French. Sami told him his history, and how he had only come there again that morning.

"And now don't you know at all what you are going to do, and where you are going?" asked the man.

Sami said he did not.

"If I knew that you would do something, and not just stand around and look in the air, I would give you work," continued the man, "but such stray waifs as you are not willing to do anything."

Meanwhile a woman had come from the wagon. She had heard her husband's last words.

"Take him," she said. "What work is there for him? He might run errands; all boys can do that. I never get through with the running about and the four bawlers, and the cooking besides; take him!"

"Well, stay here," said the man; "you can carry the pan back; it is very good that you know the way."

Sami had suddenly found a place; he did not himself know how, but he was very glad about it. Quite content, he started out with his pan and did exactly as the tinker had told him. He wandered through the long street of La Tour, went into every house and showed his mended pan. He made significant gestures, to make the people understand that he would like to get more articles to mend. This he did so eagerly and earnestly that most of the people burst out laughing, and this put them in such good humor that they always found a pan or a kettle with a hole in it which they handed him to be repaired.

Thus in a short time Sami had collected as much old stuff as he was able to carry, and could now take his pan to the house pointed out to him, where it belonged. Then he turned back.



“Such stray waifs as you are not willing to do anything.”

The tinker was very much pleased with Sami's harvest and his wife said very kindly, if he kept on doing like that, he would get along all right, but he must sit down at once and have some supper. The four little children were no longer there. Sami guessed that they were lying out in the wagon asleep. On the fire a pot was now standing. It was bubbling merrily inside and from under the cover came forth a very inviting odor. Sami had never been so hungry in his life before, for he had had nothing the whole day but the rest of the piece of bread which the driver had given him the day before in Chateau d'Aeux.

The woman took the cover off the pot and filled three dishes with the good-smelling soup. Each of the three now placed his dish before him on the ground, and the meal began.

Nothing had ever tasted so good to Sami in all his life as this soup. It was not a thin soup, it was as thick as pulp, of cooked peas and potatoes, and with this quite large lumps of meat came into his spoon.

When he had finished, the woman said:

"You can go to sleep whenever you want to. In the back of the wagon there is room, and your bundle will make a good pillow."

This seemed a little strange to Sami, and he said:

"Must I sleep in my clothes?"

The woman thought he would find that he would not be too warm in the night. He would be ready all the sooner in the morning. Then he could wash his face quickly down in the lake and be all in order again for the next day.

Sami was tired. He went immediately to the wagon and climbed up from the back, and was able to slip in under the big cover. There was a little room where he could lie down, and next him came the four little children, one after another. Sami sat down and said his evening prayer. Then he thought of his grandmother for a while, and what she would say if she could see him thus in the wagon, and know that he would have to sleep all the time in his clothes, and if only she could see how it looked in the wagon, so dirty and in disorder. She had been so neat and orderly about everything and had kept him so clean from a baby up. But she had never spoken to him about this, as about other things which he must avoid, and perhaps the people were quite God-fearing; then he ought to stay with them. That would be as his grandmother wished. Then he placed his bundle under his head, and went peacefully to sleep.

CHAPTER SIXTH

SAMI SINGS TOO

Sami had now been working five days for the tinker, and had passed his nights in the wagon. He was well treated, for the man and his wife were pleased with him. Every day Sami dragged along such a pile of old pans, pots and kettles, that they both wondered where he found them. His grandmother had not charged him in vain to do everything he had to do as well as he possibly could, because the dear Lord always saw what he was doing.

He never loitered on the way, and if a woman was going to send him away quickly and would not listen to him, then he looked at her so beseechingly that she would find an old pan somewhere and bring it out. From morning till night he ran with the greatest zeal, in order to get as much work as possible for his master, and the praise he won every evening he enjoyed as much as the savoury soup which followed.

Nevertheless Sami was not very well contented. Every evening as he sat in the wagon, he had to think what his grandmother would say to all the dirt around him, and things pleased him less and less. The woman did not do for the little children as his grandmother had done for him. All four crawled around in the dirt and looked so that Sami didn't care to have anything to do with them. If they cried they were knocked this way and that, and at night the woman took up one after another from the ground, put it in the wagon, pulled the dirty grey blanket over them and went away again.

The largest boy could talk quite well. He could have learned a little prayer long before this, but the woman never taught him any.

Such a homesickness for his grandmother now arose in Sami's heart every evening that he had to bury his head deep in his bundle, so that no one would hear him sob.

Often on his expeditions he would come near the wall, under the ash-trees, but he never went over to it, for he had to work and did not dare sit idle and listen to the birds. But every time he had looked longingly there and sent a whistle from a distance as greeting to the birds.

From the old house on the hillside, from which one could look down at the ash-trees and the wall, he had brought a little kettle to the tinker, and was delighted at the thought of taking it back again, for then he could look down there for a moment and perhaps hear the birds.

Two days had passed, and Sami hoped that on the following day the little kettle would be ready. When he returned that evening to the fire with his last collection, the tinker was sitting thoughtfully there, turning the little kettle round and round in his hands. His wife was looking over his shoulders and both were scrutinizing the old kettle as if it were something unusual.

"It is as like the other as if it were its brother," said the wife. "You know how the man said you must not spoil the pictures scratched on it, and on that account he gave you so much more for it. Here are exactly the same figures on this, and the nose in front has just the same curve as the other, which he would not have mended for fear it would be spoiled."

"I see it all, surely," said the man, "but I don't know what can be done about it. With the other one I could say, it couldn't be mended any more, for it looked much worse than this, and the people didn't know that the old stuff was worth anything, and I wouldn't have believed it was myself."

"They won't know either. The boy brought the kettle from the old house up there. They only know the ground they hoe, but not such a thing as this. Just say it can't be mended any more, it is not good for anything, and give them something for the copper. They will be satisfied enough. If we go back to Bern we will take it to the man, who will give eighty francs for it."

"That is true. We can do that," said the man, delighted; "perhaps they won't want anything for the kettle when they know they can't use it any more. Come, Sami," he called to the boy, who stood staring at them on the other side of the fire, and had heard and understood everything--"come here, I want to tell you something."

Sami obeyed.

"Run quickly up to the old house, where you brought the little kettle from, and say it isn't good for anything, that it can't be mended any more."

Sami, filled with horror, stared at the man. "Now hurry up and go along," said his wife, who was still standing there; "you understand well enough what you have to do."

Sami continued looking at the man without moving, as if he really had not understood his words.

"What is the matter with you? Why don't you hurry along?" snarled the man to him.

"I can't do that. You are not God-fearing if you do such a thing as that," said Sami.

"What is it to you, what I do? Be quick and go along!" commanded the tinker, and his wife screamed angrily:

"Do you think a little beggar like you is going to tell us what is God-fearing? We ought to know much better than you! Will you do at once what you are told, or not?"

Sami did not stir.

"Will you go and do what I told you, or--"

The man raised his hand high up. Sami was pale with fright. Suddenly he turned around, ran to the wagon, took his bundle out, and ran with all his might up the road, turned to the right between the high walls and rushed on into the open field. Not a moment did he stop running, until he had reached the ash-trees. The spot was like a place of refuge to him. Breathless, he sat down on the wall. The twilight was already coming on and it was perfectly still all around. No one had run after him as he feared. He was quite alone.

Now he began to think. It was all done so quickly that he had only now come to his senses. Yes, it was right that he had run away, for what he had to do was something wrong, and he had to come away because they were not God-fearing. It surely would seem right to his grandmother that he had done this. But where should he go now? The people had all gone home from the fields, perhaps were already asleep. Up in the ash-trees not one little bird made a single sound. They were surely all in their nests and fast asleep. If the dear Lord kept them up there in the trees safe from all harm, so that they could sleep so well, He would surely protect him too under the trees. In this spot he always had the feeling that his grandmother was nearer to him than anywhere else, and this gave him confidence. So he laid himself down under the tree quite trustfully and immediately after he had ended his evening prayer, his eyes closed, for the brook was murmuring such a beautiful slumber song under the ash-trees there.

Golden sunshine was streaming in Sami's eyes when he awoke. Above him all the birds were warbling their morning song up into the blue sky. It sounded like pure thanksgiving and delight. It awakened in Sami's heart the same tones, and he had to sing praise and thanksgiving, for the dear Lord had protected him too so well through the night and let His golden sun shine on him again. With a clear voice Sami joined in the glad chorus and sang a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the only one he knew:

"Last night Summer breezes blew:-- All the flowers awake anew,"

And when he had come to the end, he sang like the merry finch with all his might:

"Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust! Only trust the dear Lord!"

The song had awakened in Sami new assurance that he would find a piece of bread and some worthy work. This he wanted to look for now, for his grandmother had not impressed it upon him in vain from his earliest days, that in the morning after praying one should immediately go to work. So Sami started off.

He did not go down to the Lake this day, lest he should come near the tinker. With his bundle under his arm he wandered up the gradually rising field road. Where this crossed the narrow street, leading over to Clarens, Sami met a child's carriage which a girl was pushing in front of her. She wore a spotless white cap and a white apron. Over the carriage, too, was spread a snow-white cover, and out from under it peeped a little head with bright golden hair and a little white hat on it.

This unusual neatness and the smart appearance of the carriage attracted Sami very much and he followed along the same way. On the white carriage robe was worked a wreath of blue silk, but not of flowers. It was of strange figures. The shining blue silk on the white cloth looked so beautiful that Sami could not keep his eyes away from it. Suddenly it became plain to him that the strange figures were letters, but he had never seen any like them in his life. Their appearance captivated him more and more. Then he began to try to see if he couldn't spell them out and perhaps read the words. He tried as hard as he could, but it was difficult. Sami kept beginning over again from the first. Finally he made out all the words. It was a proverb which read thus:

"So let the little angels sing:
This child is safe beneath our wing."

This proverb reminded him so much of his grandmother; he didn't know why, but it seemed to him as if she had prayed exactly like this over his bed. The tears came to his eyes, and yet it seemed so good, just as if he had found his home again. The girl now turned suddenly to the left from the road, and went through the high iron gate which stood open, and led into a wide courtyard. Great, ancient plane-trees stood inside and cast their broad shade over the sunny courtyard. A large flower garden surrounded the high stone house, which looked forth from behind the trees.

Sami followed the carriage into the courtyard. It stopped under the trees.

"What do you want here? That is the way out," said the girl impatiently to Sami, pointing so plainly to the gate that Sami would have understood the meaning of her words even if her language had been foreign. But it was surely

German, and he had understood it all very well, although he could not speak like that himself. His grandmother had told him that there were people who spoke just like the reading in the books.

Sami did not reply, and the girl did not wait for him. She snatched the child quickly out of the carriage, took the beautiful robe over her arm, and went into the house.

Meanwhile a little girl had come out of the house and was standing at some distance gazing at Sami with two big eyes. Now she came quickly forward, jumped nimbly into the empty carriage, and said:

"Come, give me a ride!"

"Where?" asked Sami.

"Out there along the road, and far, far away!"

Sami obeyed immediately. For a long while he trotted along without stopping. The little girl seemed to enjoy the ride. She looked so eagerly around with her bright eyes on every side, as if she couldn't see enough. Then they came to a meadow thick with flowers.

"Hold still! Hold still!" cried the little one suddenly, and sprang with a big jump out of the low carriage.

"Now we must have all the flowers, every single one! Come!"

And the little girl was already in the midst of the grass, stamping bravely forward. But Sami said quite prudently:

"You mustn't go so into the grass. It is forbidden. But see, if we go around outside and take all the flowers you can reach, there will be a big bunch."

The little one came out, for she knew that she ought not to do what was forbidden. Then the flowers were gathered according to Sami's advice, but the little companion soon had enough of such exertion, seated herself on the ground and said:

"Come, sit down by me. But you must not speak French to me. I have to learn that with Madame Laurent, but I would rather speak German, and you must do so too."

"I don't speak French, I don't know how," replied Sami; "but I can't speak like you either."

"Where do you come from then, if you don't speak German and don't speak French?" the little one wanted to know.

Sami thought for a moment, then he said:

"First I came from Chailly and then from Zweisimmen."

"No, no," interrupted the little one warmly. "People are never from two places, only from one. I am from Berlin, in Germany, you see. Then Papa bought an estate and now we are living on Lake Geneva. What is your name?"

Sami told her.

"And my name is Betti. Why did you come into the courtyard when Tina wanted to send you out?"

Sami had to think for a while, then he said:

"Because those words were on the robe, I knew they were God-fearing people where it belonged, and my grandmother told me I must stay with such people and never go away, for I should learn nothing but good from them."

"Must you stay with us now, and never go away again?" asked little Betti eagerly.

"Yes, I think so," answered Sami. "Perhaps I can weed the garden."

"That is right," said Betti, delighted. "You see, Tina will not take me in the carriage; she says I am too big. Will you take me every day in the carriage to the meadow for ever so many hours?"

"Yes, indeed, I will do that gladly," promised Sami, "and you shall have all the flowers. Then I will take you besides to the trees where all the birds sing 'Only trust the dear Lord!' and where the finch cries so loud above them all: 'Trust! Trust! Trust! Trust!' Have you heard him too?"

At this description little Betti's eyes grew bigger and brighter with expectation.

"Come now, let's go right away to the birds," she exclaimed, jumped up and ran in haste to the carriage.

Sami followed.

At this moment Tina, with a very red face, came running up from below. Her looks did not portend anything good.

"So I have found you at last," she cried angrily from a distance. "Everybody is running around looking for you--your three brothers, the servants, the coachman--everybody! I have run myself half dead for you. Sit down in the carriage, you naughty little thing. The little tramp can go where he likes. No, he must come back again; his bundle is lying in the courtyard. So he can pull the carriage if he has to come with us."

Little Betti did not seem very much frightened by this lively speech. She climbed quickly into the carriage and said gaily: "Go ahead, Sami!"

He obeyed quite crushed, for now he could only return for his bundle; then he would have to go away again, and he had so firmly believed this was the place where he was to stay according to his grandmother's advice, and it had

pleased him so much. He had started out in the morning full of trust from the song of the birds, and now he was returning very down-hearted the same way.

When the three on their way home came to the courtyard, a tall man was standing there, looking out up and down the road; a lady was coming out of the house and going in again very restlessly, and three young boys were running first one way and then another, screaming at the top of their voices:

"She is nowhere to be seen! She is nowhere to be seen!"

But there she was, drawn by Sami, just coming into the courtyard. Before any question, reproach or accusation could be heard in regard to the unlawful expedition, Betti had run straight to her Papa, and in his delight that she was safely there again, he had taken her in his arms, and with the greatest eagerness she said:

"He will take me every day in the carriage, Papa, the whole day long, if I like, and bring all the flowers to me, because I must not go in the high grass. And he must always stay with us, because his grandmother knew about it, and, Papa, think, he knows birds that sing a whole song, and the finch sings above them all: 'Trust! Trust!' We were going right to see them when Tina came and we had to come home. But now we can go, can't we, Papa, right away? Sami will take me there again; he isn't tired yet. Only say yes, Papa."

"Your story is wonderful," said her Papa, laughing. "Where is the little coachman whom you have engaged and who, according to his grandmother's advice, must stay with us?"

Meanwhile the three brothers had come running along and, together with their mother, stood near their father under the gateway, so that Sami, who with his bundle on his arm was trying to go out, could not pass through, and had betaken himself very quietly to a corner of the courtyard. The master of the house now placed his daughter on the ground and looked towards the boy. But he was already surrounded, for during their little sister's story the three brothers had made their examination and calculation and then had turned to the boy. Nine-year-old Edward had decided with satisfaction that Sami was the one he had for a long time needed, for since the donkey, which had been given to him at Christmas, had overturned him and his little cart three times running, his father had forbidden him to drive out again without the coachman, Johann. But when Edward wanted to go out driving Johann was always occupied some other way, and when Johann announced that he could go it didn't suit Edward at all. Now Sami was found, an attendant whom he could call whenever he wanted him.

Eleven-year-old Karl was an enthusiastic archer, but to have to be always running after his arrows after they were shot and to hunt for them was very irksome to him. Suddenly someone was found whom he could make use of to hunt for his arrows.

Fourteen-year-old Arthur had permission to sail in his boat on the lake, but he needed some one to steer for him. Now here was a satisfactory boy, on the spot, whom he could teach, and have to steer for him. So it happened that there was a great uproar when their Papa drew near the group in the corner of the courtyard.

"Keep him, Papa, I have enough work for him to do!" cried Arthur, while Karl's voice was heard above his screaming:

"Let him stay here, Papa, please, I need him so much!"

But Edward's piercing voice was heard above the other two:

"Papa, he can drive the donkey, he must stay with us, then Johann won't need to come with me any longer!"

And in the midst of all sounded Betti's high little voice, untiringly:

"Can we go to see the birds now, Papa? Can we go now to the birds?"

Then Papa turned away from the noisy group and said, laughing:

"My dear wife, what do you say to this whole story?"

The lady addressed had until now listened silently and watched Sami, whose eyes grew brighter and brighter the louder the children begged for him to stay. She looked at him kindly and said first of all she would like to know from him where he came from, and what the story which Betti told about his grandmother meant; he ought to tell where he had been living hitherto, who his parents were and who his grandmother was.

The kind lady had inspired Sami with great confidence and he now told from the beginning all that he knew about his life up to the present moment, and also how he had come into the courtyard, on account of the proverb, which led him to believe that here lived the people with whom he should stay.

When Sami came to an end, the lady turned to her husband and said:

"It is the dear Lord who has led him here. We cannot send him away!"

The children all shouted together for joy.

"Can we go to the birds now, Papa? Right away?" repeated Betti with irrepressible eagerness.

"By and by, by and by," said her father, soothingly. "Sami is going with me first up to Chailly, to show me where Herr Malon lives. I want to talk with him. When we come back, we will see what to do first."

The mother understood that her husband wanted to have Herr Malon's assurance that everything Sami had told was

true, and held back the children, who all four were anxious to explain immediately to Sami what they desired of him.

"But bring him back again, Papa!" cried Betti following after them as they started away.

Herr Malon was very much surprised to see Sami again, and moreover in such company, for he recognized the master of the plane-tree estate at once. After the first greeting Sami was sent out doors for a little, and this delighted him very much, for now he could look at the garden again and the crooked maple-tree, under which he had so often sat with his grandmother.

Herr Malon assured his guest that all Sami's words were correct and besides gave a description of Old Mary Ann, her fidelity and conscientiousness, so that the gentleman was very glad to have such good news to carry to his wife.

A loud shout of delight welcomed them on their return, and still louder was the applause, when their father announced that Sami was henceforth to remain in the house and be the children's playmate.

Sami did not know what to make of it. Since his grandmother's death, no one had shown the slightest pleasure in his presence; on the contrary everywhere he had felt as if he were tolerated only out of pity, and now he was received with loud rejoicing by the children of a house to which he had been more attracted than anywhere else before, and where his grandmother would be glad to see him; of that he was sure. His heart was so overflowing with joy that he wanted to sing aloud and give praise and thanksgiving evermore like the finch:

"Trust! Trust! Only trust the dear Lord!"

* * * * *

It is now ten years since Sami entered the plane-tree estate. Whoever passes by there on a beautiful Spring day will surely stand still at the high iron gateway and listen for a little, for there is seldom heard such a merry song as sounds from the thick branches of the planetrees. Up in the tree sits the young gardener pruning the branches. At the same time he sings continually, like the merriest finch, and carols loudest the end of his song, accompanied by all the birds:

"Only trust the dear Lord!"

The young gardener is Sami. At first he received a good knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic with the children of the house; later, according to his great wish, he was trained as a gardener of the estate. But he is now not only gardener, he has much more to oversee about the estate than any one would imagine. Arthur, who has just finished his studies, is still an ardent sailor. Without Sami, no trip is possible, and Arthur is apt to say:

"Without God's help and Sami's assistance I should have been drowned twenty times."

When Karl comes from the university in his vacation, his first question is, "Where is Sami?" and this he asks numberless times every day, for without him he can never get ready. He alone knows where to find everything Karl needs in vacation-time for his amusements, from his old bow and quiver up to his riding whip and gun.

Edward has now given up his donkey cart and instead is interested in strange animals, which have their dwelling-place in the back of the courtyard and often make a great spectacle there. He owns two marmots, two parrots and a monkey. No one could manage these and keep them in order but Sami, and he does it so well and so successfully that Edward often exclaims:

"Without Sami everything we have would go to ruin, animals and people, the animals for want of proper care and the people from anger over it."

But Betti still remains Sami's greatest friend. She can call him at any hour of the day she pleases, Sami is immediately on the spot, and Betti knows he is more devoted than any one else and besides can keep secrets like a stone. No one knows how many little notes he has to carry every week to the neighbouring estates. Sami will not tell, for her brothers would laugh at their sister Betti's endless correspondence which she has with numerous girl friends around on all the estates. Sami is her most devoted friend, for he would run through fire and water for her without hesitation. He never forgets what persuasive words in his behalf Betti used with her father, when, broken-hearted, he was going to fetch his bundle and go away again.

The youngest, Ella, with golden curls, who has taken over the donkey and cart from her brother Edward, is entrusted to Sami's especial care when she desires to go for a drive. Whenever she brings out her white robe to spread over her knees, Sami's eyes sparkle with delight and thankfulness as he remembers how the proverb led him to his good fortune, and still more at the memory of his grandmother, who brought about all this good, and whom he never forgets.

When, recently, a lady, owning one of the neighbouring estates, proposed to Herr von K. to transfer his merry gardener to her, merely because the servants in her house had sullen faces, he replied:

"You can have him, just as much as you can have one of my own children, if you should try to entice one away. Sami is the most faithful, trustworthy, conscientious person who has ever come in my way. I can leave my whole house and go wherever I will, I know that everything will be taken care of, as if I stood by. This is so because Sami has another Master besides me, before whose eyes he performs all his work. The dear Lord himself sent my glad-hearted Sami to me, and I esteem him. He belongs to my house, and it shall remain his home!"