Gritli's Children

by Johanna Spyri

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Coverpage

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI (Author of "Heidi" & "Cornelli.")

Translated by LOUISE BROOKS

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CONTENTS

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I. AT THE COUNTRY-HOUSE ON THE RHINE CHAPTER II. IN THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE AT BUCHBERG CHAPTER III. IN THE VILLAGE AND IN THE SCHOOL CHAPTER IV. FARTHER PROCEEDINGS AT BUCHBERG CHAPTER V. ON OAK-RIDGE CHAPTER VI. AUNTY IS IN DEMAND AGAIN CHAPTER VII. WHAT OSCAR FOUNDED AND WHAT EMMA PLANNED CHAPTER VIII. AT SUNSET CHAPTER IX. A LAST JOURNEY AND A FIRST

VOLUME II

CHAPTER I. THE NEW HOME CHAPTER II. A JOURNEY CHAPTER III. ON THE BEAUTIFUL RHINE CHAPTER IV. IN THE FISHERMAN'S HUT CHAPTER V. GREAT PREPARATIONS CHAPTER VI. ANXIETY AT ROSEMOUNT CHAPTER VII. AN UNEXPECTED TERMINATION CHAPTER VIII. THE HAPPY END

GRITLI'S CHILDREN

VOLUME ONE

CHAPTER I.

AT THE COUNTRY-HOUSE ON THE RHINE.

The golden sunshine of a glorious June morning flooded the roses of the beautiful garden that surrounded a handsome stone villa on the banks of the Rhine. A thousand sweet perfumes borne upon the gentle breeze mounted like incense to the open windows, and sought entrance there. From a great basin in the middle of the garden, a slender shaft of water rose straight up into the blue sky, and then fell plashing back, sprinkling the flowers and the grass with sparkling moisture. Gay butterflies fluttered hither and thither, sipping sweets from the honey-laden flowers. Under the trees stood marble statues gleaming white through the shadows; and seats in sheltered nooks invited the loiterer to rest and listen to the concert of the myriad birds that made their happy homes in this paradise of summer beauty.

At the closed window of one of the upper rooms of this delightful house sat a little maiden, pressing her pale face against the wide, clear glass, as she peered out with longing eyes over the roses, toward the wavering fountain, and into the depths of the trees, whose graceful branches stirred in the light breeze. Her gaze passed over the shining flowers and the green terraces of the sunny garden, and rested far away on the glistening waves of the fast-flowing Rhine, that ran past the foot of the garden, bathing caressingly the long over-hanging branches of the old linden trees as it passed along. The rich foliage of the trees by the river-side was visible from the windows of the house; but not the stone bench which stood in the cool shade, so close to the water that one could look from it directly down into the eddying waves, and watch the drooping branches dip and rise again and again, as if in pure delight. What a spot for summer dreaming and castle-building! The pale child at the window knew the place well; and as her eyes turned in that direction, the expression of longing grew more and more painful as she gazed.

"Oh, mamma!" she cried presently, with tears in her voice, "may I not go out soon

into the garden, and down to the seat under the lindens by the river?"

An hour before, the mother had brought her suffering little girl into this room, and placed her in her favorite resting-place in the window-seat, and her anxious gaze had scarcely left the pale little face, with its big eyes full of pain, that looked so longingly into the beautiful garden, which the poor child could not enjoy in any other way.

"Dear child," she said now, in a voice which trembled with anxiety and affection, "you know that you are too tired to go out in the morning; but this afternoon, perhaps, we will go down to the river. Will not that be better, my darling?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," sighed the child; but though she said no more, she did not turn her eyes away from the blooming roses and the waving leaves below her.

"Oh, it is so beautiful down there! Do let me go out, mamma!" she exclaimed again a little while afterwards. "Do let me go!" and her mother could not resist the beseeching tones. She arose, and at that moment an elderly woman entered the room—a woman who looked so exquisitely neat that one would have thought that she had no other business in life than that of keeping in perfect order her gray hair, with its snow-white cap, and her simple, spotless dress; but, on the contrary, she was the house-keeper, and had the whole charge of the big house, with all its complicated domestic arrangements. Both mother and daughter exclaimed on seeing her, "Oh, Clarissa, how glad I am that you've come!" And both began to ask her opinion as to the visit to the garden, which the invalid so longed for, but which her mother hesitated to grant.

Clarissa was a person of rare character, and a tower of strength in this household, where, from the lady of the house down to the lowest servant, her word was followed as law and obeyed with affection; and one look into the clear depths of her honest, loving eyes explained the secret of her power: they were "Mother's eyes."

"Say 'yes,' Clarissa, and let us go," begged the child, pathetically.

"The air is soft, all the birds are singing and calling us: why should we not try it to-day, dear Mrs. Stanhope?" said Clarissa.

"Yes; if you think best, we will," answered the mother. And Frederic, the tall footman, was summoned to carry the little girl down the long staircase and out of the house. Then, once out-of-doors, the two women, supporting the child tenderly between them, led her through the sunny garden.

"Nora, are you happy now?" asked the mother, tenderly.

"Yes; it is beautiful here," replied the child; "but I should like to go down to the stone bench by the river-side, where the branches dip into the water."

So they went on over the green terraces to the water-side, down to the seat almost hidden under the lindens, among the clusters of whose pendent, sweet-smelling blossoms the bees were busy, mingling their deep murmur with the song which the Rhine sang in passing. Nora's eyes followed the dancing waves that seemed like living, happy sprites.

"Oh! how I wish that I could leap and dance so, mamma! away! away! but I am so tired; I am always tired. I long to hop about as the birds do up in the trees there, and sing and be merry; but I am always so tired."

"My darling, when you are stronger you will dance," replied her mother, in a cheerful tone; but her looks belied her voice, for she was far from feeling the confidence which she tried to give.

"The doctor is coming to-day, and we will ask him what we can do this summer to make you stronger. Now we must go back to the house, Nora; you look pale and ill, my child. Is anything more than usual the matter with you?"

Nora assured her mother that she was only tired. After any unusual exertion, her face always grew paler and her expression more suffering. She reached the house with difficulty, and, when Frederic had carried her up to her bed-room, she lay on the sofa a long time without moving, thoroughly exhausted.

The doctor came towards noon, and declared that a complete change of air would be the best thing for the little Nora, who certainly seemed to be losing strength daily. He would write to a physician, a friend of his in Switzerland, to find a suitable place for her, and would come again as soon as he received an answer.

Towards evening, Nora sat once more in the window, gazing wearily at the long slanting rays of the setting sun that fell across the greensward in golden radiance, and lighted up the rose-leaves till they shone like lamps among the flowers. Clarissa sat at her work-table by Nora's side and from time to time, she raised her head and looked sadly at the frail form that lay so motionless in the window-seat.

"Clarissa," said the child, presently, "will you repeat the old song of Paradise to me?"

Clarissa laid aside her work.

"We will sing it together again some day, dear child, when you are strong enough; now I will say it to you if you wish" and she folded her hands and began:—

"A stream of water, crystal bright, Flows down through meadows green, Where lilies, shining in the light, Like twinkling starlets gleam.

"And roses blow, and roses glow, While birds in every tree Are singing loud, are singing low, 'In Paradise are we.'

"Here, gently blows the soft, sweet wind; Bright flowers grow all around; Men wake, as from a dream, to find They tread on holy ground.

"In blissful happiness they rove, At peace with each and all; United now in bonds of love, Freed from the grave's dark pall.

"All want and weariness are o'er, All sorrow and all pain; Their rapture gathers more and more; The sick are well again."

After Clarissa had finished her recitation, no sound broke the stillness for a long time; Nora seemed lost in thought. "Clarissa," she said at last, "that is a beautiful

poem, and makes me long to go."

"Yes; go willingly, go gladly, dear child," replied Clarissa, with tears in her eyes. "Then you can wander joyfully among the bright flowers, and sing:

"'Our rapture gathers more and more; The sick are well again.'

"And we shall soon join you there, your mamma and I—"

At this moment the mother entered, and Clarissa stopped suddenly; for she knew well that Mrs. Stanhope could not endure the thought of losing little Nora, even though her child were called to heaven; but the mother had heard enough of what had been said, and looked at the child with renewed anxiety. Nora certainly looked very pale and weary; and, at her mother's request, she let herself be carried at once to bed in Clarissa's strong and tender arms.

Later in the evening when Mrs. Stanhope sat alone with her old friend, she began anxiously to question the suitableness of talking to the child upon such topics.

"Surely there is no need of dwelling on such mournful things, Clarissa. Nora is not so ill that we need think the worst, much less talk about it."

"Nora likes to hear me repeat her favorite poem," replied Clarissa; "and, dear Mrs. Stanhope, let me say one thing to you. If our darling is to live only to suffer through long years of pain, can you wish for life for her? Why should we wish to keep her here, where she cannot enjoy the smallest part of the wealth and beauty about her, rather than let her go to that heavenly home, where there is no more sorrow nor pain?"

"I cannot bear the thought of parting from her; it must not, it cannot be. Why may not all yet go well, and Nora get strong again?" said the poor mother; and the heart within her was heavy with grief. She could say no more, and withdrew in silence to her own room.

The great stone mansion was soon wrapped in stillness; and as the light of the

summer moon shone down upon it, whoever had seen it standing there in stately beauty, its high white pillars gleaming through the dark trees, would surely have thought:

"How beautiful it must be to live there! No care nor sorrow can reach the inmates of that lovely dwelling!"

Mrs. Stanhope occupied her paternal home on the banks of the Rhine. She had married an English-man when very young, and had lived in England until his death, when she returned to the home of her childhood, unoccupied since the death of her parents, bringing with her two little children, the brown-eyed Philo, and his delicate, fair-haired sister, Nora. The faithful Clarissa, who had taken care of Mrs. Stanhope in her childhood and who had accompanied her to her foreign home, loved these children as if they were her own. The little family had now lived several years in this beautiful house on the Rhine; a very peaceful and regular life it was, one day like another; for the children were delicate and could bear no exciting pleasures. Two years ago a heavy sorrow dropped its dark shadow over the household. Little Philo closed his dark eyes forever, and was laid to rest under the old linden-tree in the garden, where the roses bloomed all summer long. Nora, who was only a year younger than her brother, was now in her eleventh year.

In about a week after his first visit, the doctor came again. He had heard from his friend, the physician, who had willingly offered to find a house for Mrs. Stanhope near his own, in the little village of Buchberg, among the mountains. Mrs. Stanhope might set out as soon as she pleased. He would answer for all being in readiness to receive her.

In a few days they were ready to start. Clarissa was to remain behind to put the house in order, and only a young maid-servant went with them. As the carriage rolled away, bearing Mrs. Stanhope and her little daughter on the way to Switzerland, Clarissa gave them many a God-speed, and, turning back into the

empty house, she wiped away the tears she could no longer repress, saying softly to herself:

"'Their rapture gathers more and more; The sick are well again.'"

CHAPTER II.

IN THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE AT BUCHBERG.

The kitchen-garden is the especial delight of the true German housewife; that is, of one who lives in the country where such a luxury is possible. The flower-garden is a source of pleasure to the whole family; but the vegetable-garden is her own, so to speak; she cares for it herself; she watches each little plant with her own eyes, and removes each encroaching weed with her own hands. Now this year the cauliflowers were of unusually fine promise, and they excited the hopes of their owner that a wonderful harvest would before long reward her care; not a trace of a noxious worm was as yet to be detected.

"Good evening," said some one from the other side of the hedge; "your vegetables are always the best and the most forward of any in the neighborhood; they show the care you take of them."

The doctor's wife came nearer to the hedge, and over the low barrier Heiri, the day-laborer, stretched his hand, stained and knotted with work, to clasp that of his old friend and schoolmate. How often had he been to her for counsel and aid since those school-days, and when had that willing and helpful hand ever failed him?

"How are you all at home, Heiri?" she asked heartily. "Have you plenty of work? Are your wife and children well?"

"Yes, yes, thank God!" replied Heiri, as he lifted his heavy tools from his shoulder and set them on the ground. "There is work enough; I am just taking these tools to be sharpened. I have to keep hard at it, for the family is growing big."

"The three little boys look finely; I saw them go by yesterday with Elsli," continued the doctor's wife. "But Elsli herself looks quite too pale and delicate. Do not forget how her mother died, Heiri. The little girl ought not to have too much to do; she is not strong, and she is growing too fast. Do take it in time, Heiri; you know by sad experience how rapidly disease gains ground when it has once got hold of a young girl."

"Yes, yes, I can never forget that. It was terrible to see how quickly Gritli sank,—and she so young, so young! Marget is a good wife and an industrious woman; but nothing will ever make me forget my poor Gritli"; and Heiri wiped away a few tears with his hard hand.

Tears were also in the eyes of the doctor's wife, as she said, "Neither can I ever forget her, nor how gladly she would have lived for you and the children, nor how quickly it was all over. Elsli is the very image of her mother, Heiri, and I cannot help fearing that she is working beyond her strength."

"She's a poor, thin little creature, to be sure," said Heiri; "and it strikes me, now and then, that she is delicate; but usually she is so quiet that I don't take much notice of her. Now, the boy is much more like his mother; he's always busy about something, especially about keeping things clean. He can't abide dirt, any more than Gritli could, and he is always at the little ones to make them come and be washed at the spout. Of course the little boys won't stand that, and they set up a scream, and then out comes their mother, and there's a grand row! I scarcely ever come home at night that Marget doesn't come complaining of the boy for plaguing the younger children. She wants me to punish him, but when the little fellow stands up before me, and looks straight into my eyes with such a look of his mother about him, I cannot bring myself to strike him. Then Marget is vexed and begins to scold, and I do not like to vex her, for she works hard and means all right. I have often thought that perhaps you, Mrs. Stein, would speak a word for me to Marget about punishing the boy; for

anything from you would have great weight with her."

"Certainly I will, with pleasure. But tell me about Elsli; is Marget kind to her?"

"Well, this is how it is,"—and Heiri drew a little nearer the hedge and spoke in a confidential tone—"the little girl is more like me, and gives in easily and is not obstinate about having her own way, as her poor mother was. She does what she is bid, and never answers back when Marget scolds, nor ever complains, though she has to work from the time she gets home from school till she goes to bed; always carrying the baby, or doing something about the house."

"But you must not let her do too much, Heiri," said Mrs. Stein seriously. "I am very anxious about her. Ask Marget to come over and see me: tell her I have some clothes which my children have out-grown, and I should like to give them to her if she will come for them."

"Thank you; I will certainly send her. Good-night I hope you will have good luck with the cauliflowers"; and, with another shake of his good friend's hand, Heiri went off to the smithy.

The doctor's wife stood lost in thought for several minutes. She was looking towards her vegetables, but she was thinking of neither beet nor cauliflower, though her eyes were resting on the neat rows before her. This talk with Heiri had brought the old days of her childhood forcibly back to her memory. She saw the pretty Gritli with her big brown eyes, as she used to sit weaving forget-me-nots into pretty wreaths with her skilful fingers; always putting a few into her belt and into her hair. Gritli was the child of poor parents, but she was always neatly dressed, and, though her clothes were of the coarsest stuff, yet there was a peculiar look of daintiness about her, which, with the bit of color in flower or ribbon that was never wanting in her costume, gave the impression that she had just been dressed by an artist, as a model for a picture. Many criticised this daintiness and many laughed at it, but it made no difference to Gritli; for indeed it was only the instinctive expression of the girl's

natural longing for the beautiful.

At eighteen, Gritli married Heiri, a good-hearted fellow who had long loved her. But after five years of married life she died, of a rapid consumption; leaving two children, Stefan and Elsli, four and three years old. It was not long before Heiri found that he needed help in the care of these little ones, and, taking the advice of friends and neighbors, he married Marget, who was recommended to him as specially capable of looking after his house and children. She proved indeed a good house-keeper; but for ornaments and flowers she had no taste, and she did not see the use of being over particular about neatness either, so that Heiri's household soon lost the air of refinement which had been noticeable during Gritli's life.

Marget's three children did not get by any means the nice care that Fani and Elsli had received from their own mother, and Gritli's children retained an air of distinction that was ineffaceable, and that marked them as quite different from the younger set.

The memories that passed almost like a vision before the eyes of the doctor's wife, as she stood apparently studying her kitchen-garden, were rudely dispelled by a piercing scream that resounded from the house; and presently an eight-year-old girl came running round the corner, pursued by her older brother; a big lad, who held a huge volume under his left arm, and had something tightly clutched in his right hand.

"Rikli! what a fearful noise! come here to me! what has happened now?"

The girl screamed louder and hid her face in the skirts of her mother's dress.

"Now, just look at the innocent cause of this ridiculous disturbance, mother," said Fred. "Only this pretty, dear little froggy, that I caught, and was holding out for Rikli to admire. Just let me read you this description, and you will see how exactly it agrees with Mr. Frog himself. Look, mamma, look!" and Fred opened his hand and showed a small green frog.

"Stand still, and be quiet, Rikli," said her mother to the crying girl, "and, Fred, why do you persist in showing the silly child these creatures, when you know how much she is afraid of them?"

"She was the only person near," answered Fred. "But do listen to this, mamma." Fred opened his book, and began to read:—

"'The green or water frog, esculenta, is about three inches in length, grass-green, with black spots. His eyes have a golden color, and the toes of his hind legs are webbed. His voice, which is often heard on warm summer nights, sounds Brekekex! He passes the winters hidden in the mud and slime. He feeds upon'—"

At this moment a carriage was heard approaching. "It is the lady with the sick child," said Mrs. Stein, putting Fred aside rather hastily, for he tried to detain her. He followed her, crying out:—

"Do listen, mamma; you do not know what he eats. He eats—"

The carriage was at the door. Hans came from the stable, and Kathri, in her best white apron, from the kitchen, to lift out the sick girl and carry her into the house. Fred and Rikli stood back by the hedge, as still as mice, watching the proceedings.

First, a lady alighted from the carriage, and beckoned to Kathri, who came forward, lifted out the pale child, and carried her up the steps into the house. The lady followed with Mrs. Stein.

"That girl is a great deal bigger than you are, if mother did say that she was only eight or nine years old," said Fred to Rikli. "She is more nearly Emma's age, and what do you suppose she would think to hear you screaming as you did just now? I don't think she'd like you for a friend."

"Well, at any rate, she wouldn't always have centipedes and frogs and spiders in her pockets, as you have, Fred," retorted Rikli; and she was about to add some farther excuse for her screams, when Fred opened his hand to see how his frog was getting on, and lo! the little creature made one big jump right towards Rikli's face! With a

piercing cry, the child flew into the house, but was instantly stopped by Kathri, with:

"Hush! hush! When there is that sick little girl in there, how can you make such a noise?"

"Where is aunty?" asked Rikli; a question that the maid answered before it was fairly uttered, for it was asked hundreds of times in that household every day.

"In the other room. The sick girl is in here, and you mustn't go in, your mother says. And as for screaming like a pig, you mustn't do that either, in a respectable house," added Kathri, on her own account.

Rikli hastened into the room where her aunt was, to tell her about Fred's horrid frog, and how it had jumped almost into her very face. Her aunt was listening to Oscar, the eldest brother, who was talking earnestly.

"You see, aunty," he was saying, "that if Feklitus does not object, we can put the two verses together; then ours could go here, and the other there, and both would be used. Won't that do?"

"Yes, that will be very nice indeed," said his aunt in a tone of conviction; "that will remove all difficulties; and the verses are really very suitable, as such verses ought to be."

"You will help Emma with the embroidery, won't you, aunty? You know she will never finish the banner by herself. She is always up to so many pranks, and she cannot keep at one thing half an hour at a time."

His aunt promised her assistance, and he ran off, well pleased, to tell his friends of their new ally. Rikli thought her chance had come now, but before she could begin her story Emma rushed in, crying, almost out of breath:—

"Aunty! aunty! They are all going to gather strawberries—a lot of boys and girls—may I go too? Say 'yes' quick, for I can't get at mamma and they won't wait."

"Strawberries to-day, violets yesterday, and blueberries to-morrow; always

something or other; that is the way with you, Emma. Well, go, but do not stay out too late."

"I want to go too," cried Rikli, and started after her sister.

But Emma, clearing the steps in two jumps, called back:—

"No, you can't go into the woods; there are red snails there and beetles and—"

But Rikli did not wait to hear more; she was reminded of the frog, and turned back to tell her story, when she saw Fred coming in with his book under his arm. He seated himself by his aunt and opened the book.

"How nice it is to find you, aunty," he began, "Mamma couldn't wait to hear the end of this description; and it was a pity, for I had found such a perfect specimen. But I'll find another to-morrow to show you."

"No! no!" cried Rikli. "Say 'no,' aunty; it will jump right into your face, and it has yellow eyes like a dragon's."

Fred had doubled up his fist as if he had something in it, and now he suddenly opened it into his sister's face. She sprang back with a cry, and away through the door.

"Now we can have a little peace," said Fred, well pleased at the success of his trick; and he began to read.

"'The green or water-frog, esculenta'—"

At this moment the house-door was opened, and they heard footsteps and voices in the passage-way.

"Come," said his aunt, "let us look out at the little sick girl who is going away; then we will come back to the frog."

They went to the window and looked out. A sad expression came into the good aunt's face as she saw the little girl lifted into the carriage.

"How sick and pale she looks, poor little thing! or, rather, poor sorrowful mother!"

she said, as her eyes fell on the face of the lady who was at this moment pressing Mrs. Stein's hand, while tears were running, unheeded, down her cheeks.

The carriage rolled away. Fred returned to his book; but he had no chance to go on with the description of the frog, for his mother, greatly excited over the sight of the suffering child and the anxious mother, came to talk it over with her sister, with whom she consulted about everything that took place in the family, so that the household would have been as much at a loss without "aunty" as without father or mother. Fred saw that this was not his opportunity; so, exacting a promise from his aunt that she would give him a chance with his frog just before bed-time, he took himself off.

Then Mrs. Stein told her sister all about her painful interview with Mrs. Stanhope. The child, she said, was so pale and transparent-looking that she seemed already to belong more to heaven than to earth; but the mother would not believe it, and had eagerly explained, in a burst of tears, that it was only the fatigue of the journey which made Nora look so ill, and that she was sure that the mountain air would soon restore her darling to health. Was she trying to deceive herself?

While Mrs. Stein was speaking, the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard, and she hurried out to meet her husband and to tell him of Mrs. Stanhope's arrival. The doctor hastened away on foot to pay a visit to his new patient. Not until late in the evening did he return; long after the children were safe in their beds. Fred, by the way, had persevered till he had secured his aunt long enough to give her a thorough account of the appearance of the "green or water-frog." It had been no easy task, for each of the children had some special need of her that evening, and his mother, too; and even Kathri asked for "one word"; but Fred was not to be cheated, and he came out triumphant at last.

The doctor sat down hungry at the supper-table, and not one word did he speak to his expectant wife and sister, until he had satisfied his appetite. He shook his head

doubtfully, in answer to their questions about Nora.

"There is nothing to build upon," he said; "the little plant has no strength. It is not a case of failing health, but of utter want of vitality from the very beginning. If our mountain air can work a miracle, we may see her restored; if not, there is no hope."

His wife and "aunty" were grieved at this reply, though they had expected nothing better; but they tried to take a more cheerful view.

"While there is life, there is hope," they said, "and our mountain air does certainly work wonders."

"I should like to have Emma go to see the little girl, and try to amuse her now and then," said the doctor presently; "Emma has too many schemes in her head; perhaps she will drop some of them if she gets interested in this child, and I am sure it would be a good thing; for her projects almost always end in some kind of mishap. Nora will be rather astonished, probably, at some of her suggestions, but it will do no harm to the poor child to have some new and interesting ideas introduced into her restricted life, and there is no chance of her being enticed into joining in Emma's wild pranks. It will be good for both of them to be together."

Mrs. Stein was pleased at the idea of a friendship between the girls. Nora's gentleness and delicacy might have a softening influence on her impulsive little daughter, while, on the other hand, Emma's active, happy spirits could not fail to attract Nora, and to draw her out of herself.

Later in the evening, while the doctor was busy with his arrangements for the next day's work, his wife and her sister sat together, as usual, over the great basket that stood always well supplied with mending and sewing of various kinds. They talked over the experiences of the day, the conduct of the children, and the general affairs of the household, and took counsel together for the day to come. This was the only time in the twenty-four hours that they could call their own, and they could hardly have got along without it; for their lives were so closely interwoven that they needed

this interchange of thoughts to help each other and themselves. Naturally, the children were first discussed, with their varied joys and sorrows, wants and wishes; next, the doctor's patients, who came to the house from far and near; and last, the many calls for sympathy and advice that reached their ears and their hearts from all the country round about; for many were those who brought their troubles of all kinds to this hospitable house, where they were always sure of help and encouragement, of support in word and deed. So the two sisters, on this, as on many another evening, had so many things of interest to discuss and decide, that, under their busy hands, the heap of unmended stockings in the work-basket melted away unobserved, while many a neighborly plan and kindly conspiracy were hatched by their warm hearts and busy heads; and it was very late when at last they separated to their well earned rest.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE VILLAGE AND IN THE SCHOOL.

The village of Buchberg consisted of several scattered farms, and of groups of houses and cottages that peeped out from among thriving fruit trees. Only a few houses stood near the church; the school-house, the sexton's house, the substantial old-fashioned dwelling of the mayor of the little community, and two or three peasants' cottages. Dr. Stein's house stood quite by itself at a little distance from the others, on a slight elevation, quite surrounded by trees. The biggest buildings in all Buchberg stood on the principal street of the town; these were the fine house and the enormous factory of Mr. Bickel, who had built them both.

Between the street and the dwelling lay a sunny flower-garden; not a tree nor a shrub was planted in it, lest the grandeur of the mansion should be concealed in the least from public view. Here lived the wealthy manufacturer, with his wife and their only son. The family occupied only the lower floor; upstairs the six great splendid

rooms were always closed and their shining green blinds always drawn down. No one ever entered there except Mrs. Bickel, who now and then came up to air and to dust and to admire them. Her little boy was allowed to go with her sometimes; but he had to leave his shoes at the door; and he stood just inside, half awe-struck in the gloom; staring at the unused chairs and the stiff furniture. Mr. Bickel was a very important person in the village, for in his factory he employed a great many persons, both young and old; he was very clever at finding out what people were good for, and knew just how much they could work, and what they could do best, and how much they were worth to him. It was said that whenever a child was born in Buchberg, Mr. Bickel began at once to calculate how many years would pass before it would be old enough to be put upon his pay-roll. And almost all the children knew that their future destiny would surely bring them under Mr. Bickel's management, and they learned early to stand respectfully aside when he came along the street, with his thick gold-headed cane, and his shining watch chain with the bunch of seals, that shook and glittered and jingled majestically from afar.

From this fine house every morning came young Feklitus, Mr. Bickel's son, and through the sunny garden and up the street he went on his way to school. Over his back was slung a leather satchel, wondrously embroidered with the big initials "F.B.," surrounded with a garland of beautiful roses; a Christmas gift from his mother.

"Feklitus" was only a nickname, and this is the way it originated. His grandfather was a tailor by trade; a person of very small stature and obscure position; altogether a very humble personage to be the father of a great man, such as his son afterwards became, and, because he was so diminutive in every way, he went, in the neighborhood, by the nickname of "Tailorkin." His only son was christened Felix, and as the common nickname of Felix is Fekli, the boy became universally known as "Tailorkin-Fekli." This was very displeasing to Felix, who early in life determined to make something of himself, and who soon began to rise and grow

rich. The Buchbergers, however, were not disposed to drop the name which amused them, merely because it vexed the owner; so even now, although when they met the great man they always addressed him with due respect as Mr. Bickel, yet behind his back he was still Tailorkin-Fekli. He suspected this underhand familiarity, and was not a little disturbed by it.

When, after he had become a great man, and had built himself a splendid new house, he had a son born to him, he determined to find a name for the child which could not be tampered with as his own had been; and he delayed the baptism as long as possible, while searching for one to suit his purpose. It so happened that about this time he was called upon in his capacity as School-Inspector to be present at the yearly examinations at the school-house; and he heard the teacher explain to the children the meaning of the name Fortunatus. No sooner did this name reach Mr. Bickel's ear, than he was struck with its appropriateness to his son. Was not the boy destined to be the fortunate heir to his father's wealth and position? He went home full of satisfaction and announced to his wife that the long-sought name was found, and the child might be taken to church for baptism. So Fortunatus he was christened; and Mr. Bickel felt sure now that the hated nickname would be dropped and soon forgotten.

Not so; for as soon as the boy went to school, his playmates decided that Fortunatus was far too long and pretentious a name for common use; so they peremptorily shortened it to "Tus"; then, adding it to the father's appellation, it became "Tailorkin-Fekli-Tus." The first word of this lengthy and awkward combination was soon dropped off, and the other two were combined into one word and became Feklitus. With this the critics were satisfied, and long usage fixed the name so completely on the boy that at last very few recalled the fine name Fortunatus, and almost every one supposed that he had been christened Feklitus.

Oscar Stein and Feklitus Bickel both sat at the head of the sixth class in the village

school. This odd arrangement came about in this way. When, six years before, both entered the school together, Oscar seated himself at once at the head of the bench; for he was a boy born to lead, and never thought of being second anywhere. But Feklitus came and stood in front of him, saying "That is my place"; for his father had told him that the first place was no more than his right. Oscar would not yield, and the case came before the teacher, who, finding that Oscar was the senior by two days, decided in his favor. Feklitus, however, was not to be put down so; he would not sit below Oscar, so he took the first place on the next bench, and, as the class was so large a one as to occupy both benches, the teacher allowed the affair to be settled so, and so it had continued ever since. And thus both boys were first.

Oscar was well pleased with this arrangement, because it brought next him a boy whom he much preferred to Feklitus; Fani, the son of Heiri, the day-laborer. Fani was a lively and courageous fellow, who was always ready to join Oscar in any undertaking he might have in view, no matter how bold it might be. Oscar even thought Fani far better looking than the broad-shouldered Feklitus; who, in his fine cloth suit with the high collar that made his short neck look as if it was no neck at all, was boxed up so stiff and tight that he could hardly move; while Fani was slender and nimble as a lizard, and, though he wore all summer long nothing more than a shirt and linen trousers, yet he looked so slight and so graceful that no one noticed how sparely he was clad. When with both hands he tossed his long dark brown locks back from his forehead, and looked about with great shining expectant eyes, then instantly some new plan of comradeship darted into Oscar's busy brain; some new play in which Fani would be of use, either in the rôle of Artist, or Noble Bandit, or Tragedy-King. Oscar was always planning the establishment of something grand; a Club, or Association, or Band of Fellowship of some kind; and he needed for carrying out his numerous and complicated projects, a skilful, intelligent, and enthusiastic assistant like Fani.

Feklitus, on the other hand, was nothing but a hindrance to these schemes, because

he would go into a thing only if he was allowed to take the principal part in it, and he always behaved as if he had devised the plan himself as much as Oscar. Still, it was necessary to take him in, and ensure his favor; as otherwise he would take his whole party into opposition, and ensure the failure of the enterprise. For the class was divided into two nearly equal parties, and indeed this party-spirit had spread so far that the whole school, even down to the primary class, was divided into two camps, the Oscarians and the Feklitusians. Oscar had on his side all the independent fellows, all the sons of well-to-do peasants, all the sons of mechanics who were to follow in their fathers' footsteps, and all those whose future vocation was decided on, from the coachman to the teacher.

All the other boys were followers of Feklitus; for he had a terrible phrase, which he used with great effect, when he wished to press them into his ranks; it was, "Just you wait till you come into our factory!" It was curious to see how this would work like a charm with the wavering boys; for the very indefiniteness of what would happen when they came to the factory, lent a mysterious force to this dark threat. But no threat, no promise, no hint had the slightest effect upon Fani. He was to enter the factory the coming Easter, at the close of the school-year; and this he knew very well; but he adhered firmly to Oscar's side, and when Feklitus would angrily call out to him, "Just you wait," he would turn on his heel, and answer laughing, "Oh yes! I'll wait! I'm not in the least hurry"; an answer which did not lessen Feklitus' anger, and which made him long for the time when the boy should be "in the factory," when he promised himself that things should not go too easily for him.

Still, in spite of all these little jealousies, the two parties generally worked peaceably together; for it was important for Oscar to be on the right side of Feklitus, as his plans required large numbers for their successful execution. Just now they were on a most cordial footing. Oscar had started the idea of a grand Musical Festival. Every one in the school who wished might take part, and after all necessary preparations they were to have a grand celebration. The assistance of Feklitus had been secured

by giving him a prominent place in the arrangements for the great occasion. The embroidered banner, which was to be a salient feature, was sure to be ready, since Oscar's aunt had undertaken it, which was quite a different thing from being dependent on Emma. Fani was to be the bearer. To-day the motto must be selected for it, and at the close of school several of the boys were stationed at the door, to summon the others, as they came out, to a meeting for the decision of this important matter. On a knoll in a field near by, the boys assembled; and then Oscar announced that he had found a pretty couplet, suitable to the occasion, which he proposed as a motto for the banner, and he read in a loud voice:—

"Music the truest pleasure gives, So sing we merrily."

But Feklitus did not approve. He said that he had often been present on occasions of this kind and had seen many prettier mottoes than this. He could recall one which he thought ought to be chosen.

"Our Fatherland shall ever live; May freedom never die!"

Oscar said that this motto would do very well for some patriotic occasion, but was not exactly the thing for a musical festival. Feklitus would not yield, and called on his followers to stand by him and his motto. Then followed loud discussion on both sides, which soon grew into an uproar. The Oscarians and Feklitusians screamed so loud that not one word could be distinguished from another. Presently Oscar seized Feklitus by the arm, and drew him aside out of the mob.

"Don't you see, you mar-plot, that this hubbub is all your fault? and that you are very provoking? What do you gain by it? Nothing. What do you lose? Everything. But to show you that I am not like you, I propose to you to put the two couplets together, and use both. Luckily they rhyme. See how this will do:—

"Music the truest pleasure gives; So sing we merrily— 'Our Fatherland shall ever live, And Freedom never die.'"

Feklitus was pacified; which was fortunate, for nothing would have induced him to

give up his verse, whose great merit in his eyes was just that it was his; he had remembered it, repeated it, proposed it; so it was naturally better than any other could be. The meeting was informed of the compromise, applauded it, and immediately adjourned, dispersing in all directions, and making the quiet summer evening resound with their merry shouts. Oscar alone went his way with an air of deep depression, and with anger in his heart. Fani had again disappeared directly after school, as he had often done before, and had not waited for the meeting, though he knew how much Oscar cared to have him there. Fani certainly took everything too lightly, Oscar thought; it was his only great fault; he went too easily from one thing to another; and Oscar knew too who aided him in this changeableness, and had indeed just the same failing herself; and that was his own sister Emma. Indeed, the girl was the worse of the two, for she was continually proposing new schemes, and urging Fani to help her carry them out. Oscar knew all this, and was very much vexed with Fani for yielding so easily to Emma's persuasions. And to think of his disappearing so this afternoon, when he had relied on his support at the meeting! It was too provoking!

As Oscar drew near home, he came suddenly upon his brother Fred, who was kneeling down in the vegetable garden and digging in the earth with both hands, as if seeking a hidden treasure.

"Where is Emma?" asked Oscar; adding hurriedly, "Oh, don't touch me with those hands!"

"Well, I should scarcely mistake you for a grub, and that's what I want to 'touch' with these hands," said Fred, rather scornfully. "As to Emma, I don't know where she is; but one thing I do know, and that is that one of you two has carried off all the paper again, so that when a fellow wants to do his exercises he may whistle for it! I know that much."

"I haven't used any," said Oscar; "but Emma is getting up some new scheme; I am

sure of that, and I suppose she has taken the paper. I don't know what will happen if somebody doesn't put a stop to her carrying-on!"

With which negative kind of a prophecy, Oscar went into the house.

CHAPTER IV.

FARTHER PROCEEDINGS IN BUCHBERG.

Oscar's suspicions were correct; as soon as the school-house door was opened, the nimble Fani had slipped out among the very first; and had joined Emma, who at once claimed his attention by saying:—

"Come, Fani, I know of a splendid tree for you to draw, and I have the paper and everything all ready."

Fani was more than willing; and off they scampered, first down the road, and then by a path across the meadow to a small green hill, known as Oak-ridge. As they slackened their pace in the ascent, Emma explained her plan. A short time before, the two higher classes in the school had begun to take drawing lessons, a new experiment. Emma and Elsli were in the fifth class, and so was the studious Fred, who, though more than a year younger, was so much in advance of those of his age that he had quite outstripped the fourth class to which he properly belonged, and was, indeed, more clever than most of the members of the fifth. Not in drawing, however. In that, Fani led the whole school, and he was, indeed, so successful with his pencil that the teacher often said to him:—

"Now, Fani, just see what you can do, if you only try! You could do far better than this, even, if you would only take pains, and not be so indifferent and light-minded."

On this very day the teacher had said that he should like to have the children sketch something from nature; a tree or a flower, perhaps; and he assured Fani that he copied trees remarkably well, and that he would, probably, succeed out-of-doors.

Emma was very much interested in Fani's drawing; and he had made several pictures especially for her, which she used for book-marks; a rose and a bunch of strawberries, a fisherman, rod in hand, seated by a stream under a tree.

So now Emma told Fani how excited she was when she heard what the teacher said, and how she instantly bethought herself of a splendid oak-tree that she had noticed a few days before when walking with her mother in the meadow, not far from the village; and how impatient she felt to carry Fani off, the moment school was over, that he might set to work that very day to copy it. Talking thus, they reached the top of the ridge and the tree was before them. It was, in truth, a magnificent sight, as it stood on the brow of the hill, and threw its heavy shadow far out all round on the short meadow grass. Fani stood gazing with wonder up into its rich foliage.

"Oh, how beautiful!" he exclaimed. "I'm so glad, Emma, that you thought of it; it is splendid to draw! I'll begin directly; not exactly here, but a little farther off." And Fani stepped slowly back till he had reached the right point of view. There he sat down on the ground, and Emma, placing herself at his side, drew out from her satchel a perfect wealth of paper and pencils.

"There's paper enough there to make a great many sketches," said the boy, as he looked with longing eyes at all this fine material.

"I will give you a lot of it to take home," said Emma. "I thought I would bring a good deal, because you might have to try several times before you got a good picture. Now pick out a pencil, Fani."

It seemed to Fani a wonderful mine of wealth; all this fresh paper, and such an assortment of pencils to choose from. He selected two pencils, and then, spreading a sheet of white paper before him, he began his sketch. Emma watched every stroke with silent intentness. But, as the picture grew under the boy's fingers, she could not control her excitement.

"Oh! oh! Now it looks exactly like the real oak! How nicely you make the branches

and all the dear little twigs! Oh! it is the very best thing you ever did, Fani! How pleased the teacher will be! I'm sure none of the others will do anything half so good! How can you do it, Fani? I never could in the world."

"I only just copy what I see," said Fani, whose eyes constantly moved back and forth between the tree and his paper, while his cheeks glowed and his eyes sparkled with excitement. "How lovely those twigs are! and then the leaves! I don't think any leaf is as handsome as an oak-leaf, and just look up there! see how perfectly round the shape of the tree stands out against the sky, as if it had been marked by a pair of compasses. Oh, I wish I could sit all day long drawing this tree; there isn't anything more beautiful in the whole world!"

"I know something!" cried Emma, suddenly; "you must be an artist, Fani. That's the way a painter begins, I'm sure; no one else would ever think of saying that he could sit all day long drawing one tree."

"It's all very well to say that I must be an artist," said Fani, sighing; "but next spring, when I leave school, I shall have to go into the factory and just work hard from morning till night; I couldn't learn to paint then, if I wanted to ever so much, could I?"

"But you do want to ever so much; don't you, Fani? Think how glorious it would be! Wouldn't you do anything in the world for the sake of being a painter?"

"Of course I would, but what can I do? How could I possibly manage it?"

"You just wait; I'll think and think till I can invent some way. Only imagine how fine it will be when you are a famous painter and have nothing to do but to paint and draw all the time. Won't that be just the very best thing you can think of, Fani?"

Emma's enthusiasm was infectious. The pencil dropped from the boy's hand, and he gazed up into the sky as if already looking upon the future canvases which he should cover with pictures when he was a great painter.

"Do you really believe it, Emma? Do you really think that I can ever do it? I should

like to begin directly; I feel as if I couldn't wait. But what can I do? How shall I begin?"

"I can't think exactly, but I'm sure I shall get hold of some plan; don't be in too great a hurry," said the girl; "I dare say I shall have something to propose when I go to school to-morrow. But now come; hurry up and finish the oak, and then take the paper and pencils home with you and do something else. You know your drawings will be shown at examination, and will need nice paper and pencils; you have nothing but brown paper; so take this."

Fani was delighted with the gift; it was for want of material that he had not drawn at home, and now there was nothing to prevent him from working to his heart's content. As he put the finishing touches to his sketch, while Emma looked on and admired, the sun went down, the shadows began to fall, and reminded the children that it was quite time to return home.

Fred had meanwhile finished his researches for grubs, and stood outside the hedge, looking up the road, in the hope of seeing his sister Emma, with whom he wished to have a very plain talk on the subject of the paper. On the inside of the hedge, in the garden, stood Oscar, with the same intentions, but in a more seriously displeased state of mind, for had not Emma robbed him of his friend? and just now, too, when he was so important to Oscar; for the preparations for the Festival could not go on without Fani.

Feklitus was of no real assistance, for he was so slow-witted that it was impossible to get an idea into his head; while Fani took every suggestion like a flash, and had things at his finger-ends in a moment. As Oscar thought and fretted over his injuries, his anger with Emma grew apace; he was sure that she had in hand some project, such as she was famous for; it was a shame, and he was determined to ferret it out, and spoil it for her; he would punish her for taking possession of his useful friend; and so on and so on, while Oscar, in growing excitement, paced to and fro with

hasty steps.

In the meantime, Fred was peering into the twilight, and along the road, awaiting the coming of the culprit. At last, he saw some one coming along the sidewalk; but it could hardly be Emma, for it was too wide, it took up the whole width of the path. He ran forward, and found that it was Elsli, who was toiling along, her brother Rudi hanging to her skirts on one side, and Heili on the other, while in her arms she was carrying Hans, a solid child of two years. The poor patient girl was quite weighed down under the burden of her three brothers.

"Oh, put that big boy down on his own feet!" cried Fred, who was shocked at the sight of such needless labor, "you are not fit to carry such a load."

"I can't put him down; he begins to scream as soon as I do, and he gets so naughty," said Elsli, as she walked painfully along.

"Are you going to our house?" asked Fred, following her.

"Yes, I am going to fetch something; I have brought a bag to put it into," and Elsli lifted her arm a little and showed a large bag hanging from it.

"You can't carry anything more; do put that fat child down; he will break you in two," said Fred indignantly.

By this time they had reached the house.

"Now I shall have to put you down a minute, Hanli," said Elsli wearily, "for my arm aches so that I cannot bear it any longer." With these words she put the child upon his feet; but he forthwith set up a shriek that brought all the women out of the house with a bound; Mrs. Stein and her sister and Kathri were on the spot in an instant.

"I should like to give you something to scream for!" cried the maid, suiting a significant gesture to her words with the open palm of her hand, as she turned away into the house again. Elsli snatched up the child hastily, and tried to quiet him.

"Mamma, do tell that big cry-baby to stand on his own legs. He'll kill Elsli at this

rate; he is far too much for her to lift." Fred spoke in great excitement.

This made the child cry louder than ever, and he clung to his slender sister with such increased force, that she staggered a little and seemed about to fall.

"You really ought to put him down, my child," said the mother; "he would soon get used to it. Come here!" and she tried to take the child from Elsli's arms. It was harder than she expected; for the little fellow clung tight with arms and legs, and kicked with his feet and pounded with his fists, and when at last Mrs. Stein succeeded in detaching him and placing him on the ground, he flung himself upon his sister's skirts, and screamed so lustily that she took him up again, saying resignedly:—

"It's of no use; he's a very naughty little boy; and begins to call to me to carry him as soon as I get home from school."

"Such a big boy as Hans ought to be able to go alone by this time, and then there is the baby besides; how do you manage to do it all, Elsli?"

"Oh, Hans is in a dreadful way if I take the baby; he screams and kicks as hard as he can, and then his mother hears him, and she comes running in, and says that she can't have such a noise, and I mustn't let the children scream so. So I have to put the baby into the cradle to quiet Hans, and then I rock the cradle with my foot to quiet the baby."

"Come into the house, Elsli," said the doctor's wife; "you look very tired. Hans, if you will get down and come into the house yourself, you shall have a piece of bread and an apple. Come."

"If you won't come," said her sister, "you can stay here, while Rudi and Heili come with me and get bread and apples. They can walk, without hanging on to Elsli's skirts and tearing her to pieces. Come, boys!"

The two boys did not need urging, but followed their kind friend into the house. And even obstinate little Hans understood what bread and apple meant; when his sister

put him down on his feet, he made no resistance, but, taking her hand, stumped along into the house without a word. Fred followed them, switching a willow wand, as if to suggest the most efficient method of teaching Hans to walk by himself. When they reached the dining-room, the boys opened their eyes wide to see the big loaf from which Mrs. Stein cut each a slice, and they were not slow in setting their teeth into the rosy apples, of which each had one for his own. Elsli too had an apple and a slice of bread.

Elsli explained that she had come to get the clothes which Mrs. Stein had told her father to send for.

"You cannot carry them, my child," said Mrs. Stein, "it is enough for you to take the boys home. Tell your mother that I have something to say to her; and when she comes to see me, she can carry the clothes home."

"Don't you care to eat the bread and apple, Elsli?" asked the aunt, noticing that the girl put the apple into her pocket, and held the bread in her hand.

Elsli blushed, as if she were guilty of a breach of good manners, and said, timidly:—

"I should like to take them home to Fani; he will not get any supper to-night."

"It is very nice of you to take it to him," said Mrs. Stein kindly, "but why will he not have his supper?"

"We have done supper at home, and we ate up everything, all the sour milk and potatoes, for there was not a great deal; and father said those who are not there at supper-time are not hungry, and can go without. But I know that Fani is hungry, only he is busy about something, and forgets that it is time for supper."

"Where is he? Does he never help you with all these heavy children?"

"No, he is never allowed to help with the children. Mother says he's of no use; he only makes the children naughtier, and he'd better keep out of the way. So he does keep out of the way, and half the time doesn't get any supper, and I can't keep any

for him. But he is always good and kind to me. When he does come home he writes my exercises for me; for I never can get time for my lessons, I am so busy all the evening, till mother comes and takes the lamp, and I go to bed."

"It's Fani's own fault if he doesn't come home in time for supper," said aunty. "And you never will learn anything, my child, if he always does your lessons for you."

Elsli turned very red, and her big blue eyes filled with tears.

"I know it. I am the stupidest and most backward scholar in the whole school."

"No, you're not stupid at all," cried Fred eagerly. "It is only that you never know the things that we have to learn by heart. And, now that I know why, I should just like to catch any one laughing at you again! They'd better try it!"

Elsli was seldom merry and lighthearted, like other girls of her age; she was too much weighed down with care and hard work. She looked gratefully at Fred for his kind confidence; but no real joy came into her worn face. She stood up presently and took up her burden again, for Hanseli had given several signs that he was ready to start for home, and wanted her to carry him. The two ladies stood at the door, and watched her as she walked away with slow and weary steps.

"Ah! how I wish that some ray of sunshine could come into that sweet girl's lot!" exclaimed the doctor's wife, and her sister was responding with the same thought, when the sound of noisy voices was heard, which became louder and louder, as Emma came running through the garden, a brother on each side, and both accosting her in vehement tones.

"What made you carry Fani off again?"

"What have you done with all the exercise-paper?"

"What are you and he up to now?"

"It's all your fault if we can't do our lessons."

"Where have you hidden him, so that he doesn't keep his promise and come to the

meeting?"

"Where have you put all the paper; I haven't even begun on my exercises!"

The angry questioners, with Emma between them, came up the steps. Their mother was just then called away; their aunt exclaimed:—

"Be still, boys; how can Emma answer either of you, if you both keep up such a fire of questions?"

Emma darted to her aunt's side, and eagerly whispered in her ear what she had done with the paper; adding:—

"Do help me, aunty; you know if Oscar knew that, it would only make him more angry."

Her aunt could not find it in her heart to blame Emma for the use she had made of the paper.

"Come in, boys," she said, "and learn your lessons, and be quiet for a while; I'll give you plenty of paper"; adding, as a farther argument, "your father will be at home directly, and you know he will not want a noise in the house."

They came in quietly enough, and soon the four brothers and sisters were industriously at work over their lessons, around the table; even Oscar forgetting Fani for the time, in the interest of his studies. It seemed as if peace and quiet were ensured for the rest of the evening. But suddenly the silence was disturbed by a harrowing cry from Rikli, who pushed her chair back from the table, and ran out of the room into the passage-way, as if some monster were after her. All looked up from their work and looked around in alarm for the cause of the outburst.

"Here, here!" cried Emma, pointing to the table, where a shining green gold-chafer was gravely walking over the white paper, evidently an escaped prisoner from the pocket of the indefatigable collector.

"Oh, Fred! you shouldn't carry live creatures about in your pockets," said his mother,

gently. "You have plenty of boxes for them. Just see what discomfort you give your neighbors, to say nothing of yourself and the poor little animals."

"Fred is nothing but a wandering menagerie-cage; and no decent person is safe anywhere near him," said Oscar, returning to his book.

"At any rate, my collections are not all the time falling through and coming to nothing, like your clubs," retorted Fred. "And see here, mamma, what a handsome and useful little fellow this is; let me read you what it says about him"; and Fred opened his book, which was always close at hand:—

"'The gold-chafer, Auratus, with its arched wing-coverings, and its strong pincers, lives upon caterpillars, larvae, and other injurious insects, and thus makes itself very useful. But instead of being protected on this account, as it deserves to be, it is everywhere persecuted and trodden upon.' So you see, mamma."

"We will not persecute your chafer, Fred; but his place is not in your pocket, nor on the study-table, my boy; take him away," said his mother; and at the same time his aunt called to Rikli through the open door:—

"Come back, dear little girl, and don't behave as if a little beetle could eat you up alive! If you go through life shrieking out over every trifle, you will some time or other be punished for it; for no one will pay any attention to your screams, even when there is something really the matter."

Rikli came back into the room just as Fred was carrying the beetle out, and, as they met in the door-way, Fred said:—

"I'll make up a poem about you. You are the musician with the sweet tones of your voice, and I am a brother-artist, a poet."

"Yes, yes! a lovely piece of poetry can be made about your pockets full of long-legged creatures, that come crawling out and stretch their horrid long legs all over the table!"

"Of course there could," said Fred stoutly, and went off to lodge his useful persecuted gold-chafer in his cabinet.

When the children were clearing away their work, before going to bed, their mother said:—

"To-morrow afternoon is a holiday, and I want you, Emma, to go and visit the little sick girl, Nora Stanhope; and it will be well for you to go every holiday and Sundays too. She will be very glad to see you."

"It will be a good thing for Emma to have a friend of her own; then perhaps she'll let other people's friends alone," said Oscar, in a tone of satisfaction.

Emma made no reply, but went quietly to bed; she had not the least idea of giving up her friendship for Fani, to please anybody.

As they were all going upstairs in a little family procession,—first Oscar, then Emma, then the aunt, and last the two younger children,—Fred turned to Rikli and said:—

"Haha, Rikli, this goes capitally!" and he sang in a loud voice to a tune of his own making:—

"Hanseli is a cry-baby, Rikli is another; She is so much like him, He must be her brother."

Rikli was breaking out into an indignant cry at this unflattering comparison, but her aunt turned and took her by the hand, saying:—

"Not again to-day, my dear, nor yet to-morrow, I hope. Show Fred that he is wholly wrong in likening you to that spoilt child."

It often happened, as to-night, that the mother was prevented by other duties from going up with the children to see them safe in their beds; and then the aunt had to go the rounds alone, and the children often came near quarrelling over her, for each one thought that the others had more than their fair share of her time and attention.

To-night Fred was the unlucky one, and when his turn came, at last, he said quite earnestly:—

"I wish, aunty, that you could be divided in two and then multiplied by four, so that we could have two of you apiece; and then we should all get our rights."

Aunty was all ready to give Fred his full rights now; but at that moment came Kathri with imperative need of her in the kitchen, so she had to rob him of his share to-night; but she promised to make it up by giving him a double portion before the others to-morrow night.

CHAPTER V.

ON OAK-RIDGE.

When Dr. Stein received from his medical brother on the Rhine a letter, asking him to look out for a suitable summer lodging for Mrs. Stanhope and her little invalid daughter, he naturally turned the matter over to his wife, who of course took her sister into consultation. The first thing that suggested itself was the unused second story of Mr. Bickel's great house. The doctor's wife immediately went to make inquiries, but she met with no encouragement. Mrs. Bickel declared that she could not spare any rooms; in the first place, she needed them herself; and then she wondered how any one could think of such a thing as that she should let strangers into her beautifully furnished apartments, which no one had ever yet occupied. Mrs. Stein hastened to apologize; she only asked for a friend, and meant no harm by asking; but it was so difficult to find lodgings in Buchberg, and this was a case of great need. Mrs. Bickel could not get over it, however, and long afterwards from time to time she would break out to her husband, "Do you suppose that doctor's wife thought we built this house to let?" and Mr. Bickel, equally indignant, would add, "And to people that we know nothing whatever about; nor even whether they would pay their rent!"

Mrs. Stein, disappointed in her first trial, bethought herself, as she turned away from the Bickel mansion, of a certain new house that had just been built on Oak-ridge by a man who occupied only the lower floor; the upper story standing empty, waiting for the owner's son, who was to be married in the autumn. There was a wonderfully beautiful view from the windows out and far away over the green hills, with a background of snow-covered mountains, and westward down the wooded valley, through which rushed the waters of a mountain stream. Mrs. Stein immediately turned her steps towards the Oak-ridge; and in a few moments' interview all was happily arranged, to the satisfaction of both parties; and in a few days, with her assistance, the rooms were nicely furnished and stood ready for the reception of the lodgers.

Mrs. Stanhope and her daughter had now been settled in these lodgings several days, and no one but the doctor and his wife had yet visited them; for Nora had been very much fatigued by the journey and could see no one. But to-day the doctor had promised that Emma should come to see her, and Nora was seated at the window that looked towards the west, her favorite view; for there she could see the foaming brook as it poured from the mountain-side down through the valley; and there too the sunset-clouds were painted each evening by the setting sun, and made glorious pictures that delighted her sick and weary eyes.

Presently Nora saw a young girl coming up the hill-side towards the house. Could it be Emma? Nora saw with amazement how she came springing up the steep path without once pausing to take breath. It was inconceivable! She would surely fall from sheer exhaustion! But the next moment there was a knock at the door, and in came Emma with bright red cheeks, and in her hand a bunch of red and blue wild-flowers, which she held out to the pale little invalid, displaying by the gesture a brown, well-rounded arm. Mrs. Stanhope greeted her kindly and gave her a seat near Nora, who took the flowers with grateful thanks. No two girls could have offered a greater contrast to each other than these two, as they sat side by side. Emma,

glowing, active, hearty, her every movement speaking of healthy energy; and Nora, pale, languid, like a broken lily, that would be wafted away by the next passing breeze. Mrs. Stanhope looked at them for a few moments, and then, as the tears rose to her eyes, she hastened away into the other room.

"Where did you find those beautiful flowers?" asked Nora.

"In the meadow, as I came along; it is full of them; red and white marguerites and forget-me-nots, such a quantity! you ought to see them! As soon as you are well enough, we will go and pick forget-me-nots, and later will come strawberries and then bilberries."

Nora shook her head. "I should not enjoy it."

Emma did not know what to make of this, for she could think of nothing more delightful, but immediately she bethought herself.

"Oh, of course you don't know how pleasant it is, because you don't have such flowers where you live, and strawberries don't grow wild there; but you will enjoy going out to pick them; you can't help it, it seems as if you could never pick enough; it's such fun that you hate to have it time to go home."

"Yes, I always think it must be beautiful to be out-of-doors," said Nora thoughtfully. "But when I go it tires me terribly, and there's not a bit of fun when I'm all tired out."

Emma looked at her companion as puzzled as if she were speaking in a foreign tongue. "Tired" was a word unknown to Emma's vocabulary. Her greatest sorrow when evening came, was that the day was done and she must go to bed. No day was long enough to tire her nimble feet, and her only regret was that she ever had to stop walking and running and climbing. She stared at Nora a moment, not knowing what to say, and then the very face at which she was gazing put a thought into her head, and she said cheerfully:—

"I see now what you mean, but that is only because you are not strong and well; pretty soon you will be well, and then you will feel very differently; you will be like

me, and I am never tired."

Nora shook her head. "I shall never be like you. I was always so, always tired. I can't bear even to think about running; the very thought tires me. I shall never enjoy it."

Emma began to feel very much worried.

"Oh, but there must be something that you enjoy doing; you must have something to think about at night that you are going to do the next day; some plan, some game, some fun or other! Oh, my father will make you well and strong, and you must believe that he will, or else you won't be happy and will grow worse and worse."

"I do have something that I love to think about and to look forward to. When I see other children jumping and running easily, as you did when you came up the hill just now, I think how much more beautiful it is in heaven than it is here; and how I shall not be sick or tired there, but can run about as much as I please among the beautiful flowers that grow there; roses and lilies that never fade. Sha'n't you be glad to go to heaven?"

Emma was nonplussed. She knew that it was beautiful in heaven, to be sure; but she did not want to go there now; the earth too was beautiful and she was happy enough here; she had not half exhausted the pleasures and delights of her life. Nora seemed waiting for an answer, and Emma stammered out:—

"I never thought about it at all!"

Nora looked disappointed.

"Oh! that is too bad that we cannot talk about heaven. There is no one but Clarissa whom I can speak to about it, and she did not come with us; I don't mention it to mamma, because she begins to cry directly. I thought when you came you would like it; I'm sorry you don't."

Emma did not answer. She was trying to think of something which Nora would like to talk about instead of heaven. A gleam of hope came to her.

"I know one thing you will enjoy," she said; "very soon they will begin to cut the grass on the meadow, and they will pile it into beautiful soft hay-cocks, and we will go and lie down upon them all day long; it cannot tire you to lie in the hay, and it's perfectly lovely."

But Nora only shook her head again, and said nothing; she had no belief in the power of hay to make her well again, and the prospect was not to be compared to the pleasures of a heavenly garden. Emma thought it time for her to say good-bye. Mrs. Stanhope came in, and begged her to stay a while longer; her mother knew where she was, and there was no reason for her hurrying away. Nora, however, did not second her mother's efforts, and Emma was anxious to go. It was getting late, she said, confusedly. She had better be at home; and she hastily took her leave. As soon as she stood outside the house, she made one big spring, and never stopped running, downhill and then up, till she stood on her own door-step; and then she suddenly reflected that she was not expected to come back so soon, and that her brothers were sure to make some unpleasant remarks on her quick return; so she tried to think what she could do with herself for a while. "I'll find aunty," was her speedy decision, "and I'll tell her all about my visit, and how different it was from what I expected, and how I had to come away because I couldn't think of anything more to say to Nora. Aunty'll understand, and she won't let the boys laugh at me."

She ran into the house, and at her aunt's door she ran plump into Fred, who was coming out.

"Oh, ho! what happened over there between you and your new friend, Emma? Something has gone wrong, or you wouldn't be at home so soon!" cried Fred, far too cleverly.

Emma did not answer, but went into the room, where her aunt was alone, sewing at her work-table. Emma sat down as close as she could to her, to show that she was in possession, and no one else could have aunty now.

In the kitchen, Marget was standing; Mrs. Stein offered her a chair and gave her a cup of coffee steaming hot, saying:—

"Do take a moment to rest, Marget; I've been for some time wanting a chance to talk with you. I sent for you not only to give you the clothes, but to talk with you a little about Elsli. I am worried about that child; she looks so pale and thin. Hanseli is far too heavy for her to carry, and then the other two boys are always hanging about her and pulling her down. She will soon break down at this rate; you must see for yourself how miserably she looks, and you ought not to let her be so overworked."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Stein, it's very easy to say that," interrupted Marget; "but what can people like us do? I have all I can do from morning till night to get the children clothed and fed; and how could I do it if I had to have all the little crybabies round me all the time? There's nobody but Elsli to help me with them. That big Fani might help her to be sure, but he always forgets; he means well enough, but he's thoughtless. Elsli does have to work pretty hard, I know; but she may as well get used to it, for it'll only be harder by and by."

"But, Marget," resumed Mrs. Stein, "I tell you Elsli will break down and be sick, and then where will you be?"

"Where shall I be? God only knows. Such as us can't afford to stop and think what's going to happen; it's all we can do to get along to-day, without thinking about to-morrow. All I know is, I can't spare Elsli from the children, and the older she grows the harder it will be for her; for she'll have to go into the factory as soon as she can earn wages, and that's harder work than looking after the children. Fani will go first. Old Cousin Fekli has his eye on him for Easter, and has said to me two or three times that he wanted the boy as soon as possible. Cousin Fekli wouldn't want him if he didn't think he could make something out of him; he doesn't forget to look out for his own profits."

"Are you really related to Mr. Bickel?"

"To be sure I am; we had the same great-grandfathers, so we are second cousins. He doesn't care to acknowledge us, but when he passes me, I always say distinctly, 'Good-day, cousin'; and I don't mind if he does look rather askance as if he didn't know who I was—that's his look-out. I'm glad he knows Fani and has his eye on him; if the boy can earn a trifle by working for him, it will be something to help keep the pot boiling."

Mrs. Stein now brought the bag which Elsli had left behind, which she had filled with clothing for Marget's children.

"Do try to remember about Elsli," she said. "I will do all I can to help you, if you will only spare the child as much as you can."

"Well, as much as I can, yes," said the woman. "But you must understand that I have my work to do, and the boys must be kept from under my feet while I am at work, and there's no one but Elsli to see to them. We are all well now; and yet I have to use both hands to keep things going, and feed all these mouths every day. How can I make things easier? If sickness comes, it will be time enough then to change our ways. It comes hardest on me, after all. No one knows what poverty is but those that have been through it; but I can't help thinking sometimes that the Lord God loves some of his children better than he does others."

"Try not to think that, Marget," said the doctor's wife in her kindest tones, for the hard lot of the poor was a sad trial to her tender heart. "There are many sufferings besides poverty, and some which are much harder to bear. Our Father in heaven knows why he sends them to us. Still, I know how hard poverty is, and it is a great grief to me that I cannot help the poor as I should like to."

Marget took up the bag and went away. Mrs. Stein went back into the sitting-room with a heavy heart; for she was fully convinced that Elsli's fate was to succumb under the heavy load that poverty pressed down upon her delicate frame; and, sighing deeply, she sat down by her sister's side, intending to lay the case before her,

and see what impression Marget's words would make upon her; for aunty had always a cheerful word to say and she took a bright view of possibilities. But, before Emma could get through her confidences and give her mother a chance to speak, Kathri put her head into the room with:—

"Here's another woman wants you; will you come out into the kitchen again?"

"Another? who is it now?" asked her mistress in a weary tone.

"Oh, as if I could pronounce or remember such an outlandish name!"

"It can't be Mrs. Stanhope that you've left standing out in the kitchen!" asked aunty, anxiously.

"Yes, that's it," said Kathri, adding impatiently: "If she'd only call herself hop-stand or hop-pole or something sensible, I could remember it; but to twist it upside down so, it's just nonsense."

However, Kathri thought she should never make a mistake in that name again; for the picture of a hop-pole standing upside down would always come up when she thought of it.

Mrs. Stein hastened out and asked her visitor to come into the parlor. Mrs. Stanhope had come to inquire if it would be possible to find a child to come between school-hours, twice a day, to do errands and small household chores, such as the maid-servant could not find time for.

In a moment Elsli's pale face came up before Mrs. Stein's mind's eye, and she thought how much better off the girl would be going on errands for Mrs. Stanhope than carrying her big little brother about in her arms. And she thought that if Marget could be sure of a little ready money every day, she would manage to let Elsli go.

"I know of a very neat, respectable young girl, who would please you, I am sure," she said; "only I am not quite sure whether her mother will let her go, because she needs the child so much at home."

"Promise her good pay," said Mrs. Stanhope, eagerly. "I will give the mother whatever she asks, if she will let me have the girl."

Mrs. Stein was so delighted with such a prospect for Elsli that she started out immediately to see what Marget would say to it, accompanying Mrs. Stanhope for some distance on her way home, and then turning off on the lane that led to Heiri's cottage. Marget was alone, at the wash-tub. It did not take much persuasion to obtain her consent, for of course the money was a great inducement.

"It will not be for long," she said, "and the children must manage to get along without Elsli." So it was settled that Elsli should go the next day, at eleven o'clock, to Mrs. Stanhope's, to begin her new duties.

Late that evening, when the two sisters sat down at the work-table together, after the children were in bed, aunty repeated Emma's confidences to her mother; how the visit to the sick girl had been a complete failure, for Emma was sure that Nora did not care to have her come again, any more than she herself cared to go; for she couldn't think of anything to say, and Nora didn't want to talk either, and they didn't like the same things at all.

Mrs. Stein was surprised and disappointed. Emma's stock of conversation had never been known to give out before, and her mother had been confident that her merry talk would be a real pleasure to the sick child, and help to pass happily many a tedious hour of her long day; and, on the other hand, she relied much on the benefit which her romping little girl would receive from the refined and gentle Nora. She saw, however, that there was nothing to be done about it, and that she could only trust to time, which often works wonders when things seem hopeless.

"By and by, perhaps, they will come together. Children often do, just when you least expect it," she said.

Her sister shook her head. "Emma and Nora were not made for each other, any more than fire and water," she said; and then they quitted the subject, and talked about

Elsli's prospects, and rejoiced at the thought that the days of servitude to her burdensome little brothers were over, at least for the present.

CHAPTER VI.

AUNTY IS IN DEMAND AGAIN.

On the following day, at eleven o'clock, Elsli entered the house at Oak-ridge as quietly as a little mouse; so quietly that Nora did not hear her come into the house, and was startled when she suddenly saw her standing just inside the door of the sitting-room. Elsli had brushed her light brown hair carefully back from her forehead, leaving only a few soft curls to wave about her eyes. Her mother had allowed her to put on a fresh white apron and a bright kerchief, as she was going among the gentry. The little pale face had a somewhat anxious look, and her big blue eyes had a timid expression as she glanced toward Nora, doubting whether she ought to come into the room or not.

"Come in," said Nora; "are you the girl who is coming to do our errands?"

Elsli answered in so gentle a voice, and her whole air was so winning, that Nora felt instantly drawn towards her, and she stretched out her hand, saying, "Come here, and sit down by me, and let us have a little talk. Isn't your name Elsli?" she continued; "mamma has some errands for you this morning; sewing-silk and pencils and eggs to get; but can't you sit down and talk with me a little first, or will that give you too little time for them, so that you'll have to hurry and so you'll get tired."

"Oh, no, the errands will not tire me," replied Elsli. "I get tired at home, because I have to carry the little boys about so much."

"Then you do know what it is to feel tired, very tired?"

"Yes, indeed, I know only too well. I am almost always tired, and sometimes I think I should like to lie down and never get up again. Hanseli is getting dreadfully heavy,

and I can scarcely carry him any longer, but he won't walk, and only screams and kicks if I put him down."

"I'm glad to find somebody who knows what it is to be tired; now we can talk about it, can't we? Don't you feel sometimes as if you never wanted to stand up again, and wouldn't you like to have something happen that would make you over new and take all the tired feelings away?"

"But nothing can happen; you only just have to get up again."

"I mean something different from usual; wouldn't you like to lie down and die, Elsli?"

"Why, no; I don't think I should like to die. I never thought of that. What makes you think of it?"

"I suppose you don't know what it will be like. Clarissa told me all about it, and we have talked it over a great many times together. I never talk to mamma about it, because she always begins to cry. But I will tell you, and then you will be glad too to think about going to heaven. I'll tell you the pretty song that Clarissa taught me. Would you like to hear it now?"

Elsli would have been glad to hear the song, but at that moment Mrs. Stanhope entered the room. She was much surprised to see the two little girls already on such good terms, and still more so when Nora said:—

"Mamma dear, there is really no hurry about the silk and the pencils, nor about the eggs either; I don't care for any of them just now; it will do as well by and by. I'd rather have Elsli stay here with me."

Her mother was well pleased, and answered,—

"Certainly; Elsli can stay with you now; it will be time enough for the errands when she comes in the afternoon."

The two children were equally delighted; Nora at the prospect of pleasant

intercourse to enliven her weary hours, and Elsli at the thought of sitting in peace and quiet by this friendly new acquaintance.

As Mrs. Stanhope sat down with them, nothing more could be said about the Song of Paradise, and Nora must put off till another time her account of all that Clarissa had told her about the happiness of the heavenly life. So at first there was silence between them, but then she asked Elsli about her life at home, and Elsli told about her little brothers and the baby, and then about Fani; and once started upon that topic she hardly knew where to stop. She told how kind he was to her, and how clever at his lessons, how he helped her with her exercises, and she did not know how she could live without him. If she was ever so tired and miserable, it always rested her and made her happy to have Fani come home; for he was so full of hope and courage that it seemed as if her burdens were lifted off, and she felt as gay as he did, while he described the delightful things that they would do and see together some day.

Mrs. Stanhope listened with pleasure to the soft-voiced child whose blue eyes grew more and more tender as she talked on about her brother. As for Nora, she did not lose a word of it all, and evidently lived it over in imagination with the deepest interest, and when her mother said:—

"Now, Elsli, it is time for you to go; we shall expect you back at four o'clock," Nora added:—

"And tell your mother that you will not be at home till eight; you will have supper here."

With a happy heart the little maiden went off to school, and as soon as school was over, she darted off, not even stopping to speak to Emma, lest she should be detained. As she was hurrying along the path towards Oak-ridge, she heard some one calling to her,—

"Wait, wait, I say; why don't you stop when I tell you to?" It was Feklitus who was

running after her:—

"I can't stop, I shall be late," called Elsli over her shoulder, and ran on; Feklitus followed for a while, very angry, and sending fearful threats after her; but he grew soon out of breath, and when he stopped to catch his breath and cough, he saw that she was quite beyond the reach of even his voice, and that farther chase was useless.

As for Elsli, she never drew a long breath till she had reached the house at Oak-ridge. Nora had been watching for her from the window, and she called out eagerly:—

"Come in, Elsli; come here and rest; you shouldn't run so hard." She found Nora alone, and Nora told her, with great satisfaction, that her mother had gone out for a walk at her request, and that they were to be left together for the whole evening.

"So now," she added, "I shall have a chance to tell you a great deal that you have never thought about; that is, how delightful it will be when we leave earth and go to heaven. Oh! oh!" she continued, growing more and more excited as she went on, "who can tell how beautiful it will be? Far more lovely than anything we have ever seen; and there will be no sick people there, and no one is tired there; everybody is happy, and there is a river with flowers growing along its banks, and—but wait; I will tell you Clarissa's song, and then you'll know about it."

Nora's great eyes grew more sparkling, and the red spot in her pale cheeks burned more than ever, as she recited the Song of Paradise; while Elsli listened with growing wonder to her excited tones. It seemed as if she saw the beauty that the song described, and her voice trembled with emotion. When she ceased with the last words, "The sick are well again," Elsli sat silent and motionless, oppressed with awe and with this wholly new experience, while Nora seemed absorbed in her own thoughts.

"Don't you like the song?" asked she at last.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Elsli decidedly.

"Wouldn't you like to go with me, where it is so beautiful?"

"Are you going?" asked Elsli.

"Oh, yes, very soon. Clarissa told me long ago about it; and how Philo went, and I should go too. She has talked to me again and again about it; and I long to go, because no one is ever sick or tired there. And, when I go, wouldn't you like to go with me, Elsli?"

"Yes, I should like it," said Elsli, catching the enthusiasm of the beautiful hope which shone in Nora's eyes. "But can we go whenever we want to?"

"Oh, no; the good God calls us when our turn comes. I only want to know if you want to go, as I do, so that we can talk about it together. And perhaps we shall be called at the same time; and how delightful it would be to go together and walk in the bright gardens, and pick the roses and lilies by the shining river, and never be sick or tired any more, but be happy forever!"

So Nora talked on about the heavenly land, and Elsli's eyes grew larger as the glories of the future life were pictured to her, and a wholly new world opened before her. Time flew rapidly by, and they did not notice its passage.

Meantime, in the house of Dr. Stein, life was moving on in a much more lively manner. After school, Oscar, Emma, and Fred had started off, each in a different direction. Each was occupied with his own plans. Fred took the road towards home. He had a very interesting description of a rare little animal to read to his aunt, and he was very glad that the others were bound elsewhere, and he had the way clear before him. When he saw Feklitus running after Elsli in hot haste, he called out, with a sarcastic laugh:—

"Hallo, Feklitus! it's a fine thing to have somebody like Elsli to make use of, isn't it?" For he had noticed that when Feklitus couldn't understand anything in his lessons, he always went to Elsli secretly for help, for he didn't want the big boys to know that he couldn't get along without it.

Content with this scathing sarcasm, Fred ran on to the house, where through the open door of the kitchen he saw his aunt standing by the table, stirring something in a pudding-bowl. She was reading aloud from a paper that lay on the table before her. "Take four large eggs, two spoonfuls of flour, and the rind of a lemon"; and she started back as Fred suddenly sprang in with a shout of delight at his good-fortune at finding her alone. "This is splendid, aunty! Now, just hear this!"

He seated himself on a high stool, spread his book upon his knees and began:—

"You know that papa once caught a bittern. Well, I want to read you a description of it. The 'bittern, Stellaris,'—are you listening, aunty?"

"Oh, yes, I'm listening. Go on."

"—'is of a reddish yellow color, with spots of black. It makes a strange noise in the night; usually Krawy! Krawy! but sometimes Uplumb! Uplumb! The hen lays four biggish eggs.' Do you know what I am reading, aunty? What was the last thing?"

"Yes, yes, I heard. 'The hen lays four biggish eggs,'—two spoonfuls of flour, and the rind of a lemon," said his aunt, unconsciously speaking out what was on her mind.

Fred looked up anxiously, for she had spoken quite seriously, without a trace of fun in her tones.

"Oh, I didn't mean that," she said, laughing, as she observed her mistake. "I was only thinking more of my receipt than of your bittern, Fred."

"I'm glad you don't really think that birds lay flour and lemon-peel," said Fred, and went on:—

"'The flesh tastes of—'"

But the description was interrupted. Oscar and Emma came bursting into the kitchen together, and while Oscar stood as close to his aunt, as he could, on the right, Emma pulled her head down on the left and began whispering into her ear. Between the two, she had hard work to keep on with her pudding.

"Only think, aunty," began Oscar, "Feklitus says now that he won't have our motto on the banner, that he has heard another that he likes a great deal better. What do you say, aunty? What shall we do about it? You know how cross he is when he is opposed, and he'll break off altogether."

"Emma, do be still a moment; I will listen to you presently. Now, Oscar, what is this verse that Feklitus proposes; let us hear it and see if it is a good one."

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; With song and the juice of the vine,"

repeated Oscar.

"Is that all?"

Oscar nodded.

"Well, we cannot put that on the banner, at any rate," said his aunt decidedly. "Tell Feklitus that there isn't even a verb in that motto, and it won't do. I advise you to ask him to make the speech at the festival, and then perhaps he'll drop the question of the motto."

"What a splendid idea! We never even thought of a speech! that's just the thing!" and Oscar rushed away in a state of great enthusiasm.

"Now, aunty," cried Emma, in a tone of relief as he disappeared, "it's my turn now. Don't you think I am right?"

"I didn't hear exactly what you said, Emma," said her aunt; "I haven't the gift of hearing different things with different ears at the same time."

"What I say is that it's a shame for Fani to have to go to work in that factory, and not have any time to paint and draw. I am sure he ought to be a painter, right away; and if he goes into the factory he can't get out till it's too late."

"But, Emma, it's not such an easy thing to become a painter as you seem to think. And, then, who knows whether Fani has really talent enough; it needs much more than merely to be able to copy nicely at school, you know."

"But, aunty, I only want you to say that it would be much better for Fani to be a painter, if he can, than to go into the factory. Now, don't you really and truly think so, aunty?"

Emma was so pressing that her aunt could not avoid answering her; so she said kindly, "If Fani had any real prospect of becoming a painter, I should certainly think well of it; but I do not see that he has any."

"May I go on now, aunty?" asked Fred; "it seems to me that Emma is talking a vast deal of nonsense, as usual."

But Emma was not to be put off so.

"Aunty," she said, "what is a decorator?"

"A person who decorates; that is, adorns or beautifies. Why do you ask, my child?"

"It means a scene-painter too; a man who paints scenery for the stage," said Fred.

"Yes, that's it," said Emma, and she scampered away.

Fred sat silent for a while, and then he said:—

"Aunty dear, did you notice how queerly Emma behaved? Do you suppose she is thinking of going on the stage?"

"No, indeed, my dear boy," said his aunt calmly; "she has no idea of that kind, you may be sure."

"Well, take my word for it, she has something out of the way in her head. She's not often very particular to know the meaning of a word; she's not very keen after knowledge. I'm sure there's something in the wind."

There was no time for more; for a sudden familiar shriek struck their ears.

"A snake! oh, a snake! a snake!"

Fred clapped his hand to his pocket, and then ran out-of-doors.

"Now I can finish the pudding," thought aunty; but another still wilder scream

betokened such dire alarm that she threw down her spoon and followed.

It was Rikli, of course, who was standing half-way down the steps leading up to the back door, looking down on a pretty little green snake on the step below, that was wriggling along as fast as possible, trying to make its escape. Fred was seated quietly on the top step, waiting for the noise to subside.

"How absurd you are, Rikli," said her aunt gently; "if you are so afraid of that harmless little creature, why don't you turn round and run away?"

"It will run after me, and catch me! it is a snake!" cried the child, jumping up and down.

"Fred, take the little thing away," said his aunt; "I suppose it belongs to you."

"Yes; I had it in my pocket, and I suppose it crept out while I was reading. But I think Rikli ought to be taught not to behave so ridiculously. I thought I'd wait a little while and see if she wouldn't get over it."

Their aunt agreed that it was high time for Rikli to conquer her foolish fears, but she doubted whether Fred's method was a very wise one. Something must be done about it, but not just this; so she bade Rikli to come up the steps, and Fred to carry off the offender, and let her finish her pudding.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT OSCAR FOUNDED AND WHAT EMMA PLANNED.

Feklitus took very kindly to the idea of making the speech at the Musical Festival, and told his parents at once of the coming event. This announcement made a great sensation in the household of Mr. Bickel, who at once ordered a new suit and a new pair of boots for the boy; and both parents determined to go and hear him speak. A change had come over the boy since this proposal had been made to him. He became very silent and went about with his head bowed and his brows knit as if oppressed

with heavy thoughts.

One afternoon he came out of school and made one great spring from the upper step to the ground. It was not from joyfulness of heart that he made this leap, but because the sudden pressure of those who came behind him gave him an irresistible impulse, and he could not stop for the single steps. He did not go on with the other boys, but turned round the corner of the school-house, and waited there till all the girls had passed out, in groups of two and three, and, last of all, Elsli came hurrying along alone; she had been delayed by waiting to write out her exercise for the next day. Suddenly she felt herself seized from behind and held fast.

"Let me go, Feklitus," she cried; "I am in a hurry; Nora is waiting for me."

"I want to ask you something first," said the boy, "and then you may go."

He spoke in a masterful voice, and held fast to the child's frock.

"Tell me this; if you were going to make a speech at a musical festival, how should you begin?"

"What a stupid question, Feklitus! when you know perfectly well that I should never do such a thing!" And Elsli tried to pull her dress away from the boy's hand; but he held her fast.

"I didn't say you would; but suppose you did,—you can suppose anything,—how would you begin?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; I never thought anything about it in my life."

"Come, now, if you don't tell me, I'll keep you here till after dark. Come; I'll just make a beginning, to start you. Begin: Highly respected gentlemen and brothers—now, what next?"

"Let me go; I really ought to go. I have no idea what to say next."

"What an obstinate girl you are!" cried Feklitus angrily; "I'll punish you for this before long; when you come into the factory, you'll catch it; you see if you don't!"

This vague threat frightened Elsli the more from its very vagueness; so she thought for a moment, and then began;—

"Highly respected gentlemen and brothers! Now that we have sung together, let us rejoice together; and enjoy a long, long festival!"

As Elsli spoke, Feklitus relaxed his hold of her, as she had hoped he would do; and instantly she darted away like an arrow shot from a bow; and before Feklitus had recovered from his surprise, she had gone beyond pursuit. The boy looked thoughtfully after her retreating figure for a few moments, and then went towards home.

On the next Sunday the great Musical Festival was to take place; and the banner would be ready but just in season. The day before, there was to be a rehearsal of the performance, so that Feklitus might try his speech, and the order of the procession be arranged. A table-cloth tied to a pole was to take the place of the unfinished banner.

It is needless to say that there was but little appetite for dinner at Dr. Stein's table on this Saturday; Oscar rose as soon as he could hope to be excused, and Emma did not remain any longer. She had scarcely taken her eyes from the clock since she sat down, and had answered at cross purposes all dinner-time.

"What are you children about now, that you are in such a tremendous hurry?" asked their father, as they were leaving the room. Emma did not wait to answer.

But Oscar said:—

"You will see to-morrow. To-day we are going to put up the stand for the speaker and to arrange the procession. You'll be surprised, I'm sure. Of course you'll come and hear Feklitus speak?"

"With pleasure. Your mother and aunt will go too, I'm sure. Are you one of the company, Fred?"

"No, indeed. I have more important things to interest me. It is of more use to find and to study the smallest common frog than to attend a thousand musical festivals."

Rikli started as if she thought he was going to produce a specimen of frog from his pocket at that moment. Oscar cast a look of pity upon his brother, and left the room.

That afternoon as Mrs. Stein and her sister sat out in the garden, with their work-basket on the table between them, the former said:—

"It is singular how things repeat themselves. When the children tell us how Feklitus is constantly running after Elsli, though no one can understand why, it reminds me of times long ago when his father, stout Fekli, used to pursue Gritli, and how she used to run on before him, looking back now and then and calling out with a laugh:—

"'Come and catch me if you dare, You big, heavy-footed bear,'"—

A piercing shriek broke in upon the laugh which followed the repetition of this long-forgotten couplet, and they both sprang to their feet; but immediately recognizing the voice, they sat quietly down again, and resumed their work.

"It is only Rikli," said her mother; "she is always in a fright about nothing."

"Fred is probably amusing himself at her expense with some beetle or frog," said the aunt. "I can't help being sorry for the child, and it's too bad of Fred; but it's useless to run to her every time she screams."

Just then the sound of singing arose from the other side of the garden, apparently trying to overpower the noise of the child's cry, and they heard the words:—

"Hanseli is a cry-baby, Rikli is another; She's so exactly like him That he must be her brother."

"That's Fred!" exclaimed Mrs. Stein. "So he is certainly not with Rikli." And as the little girl's shrieks grew louder she began to think something serious was the matter, and the two ladies started away in the direction of the sound. Poor Rikli was indeed

in a wretched plight. She was standing in a ditch, covered quite to her neck in the muddy water, and holding up her arms above her head, in an effort to protect it from the many little green frogs that were sporting about her. Aunty reached her first, and, taking the little girl by the arm, she quickly rescued her from her uncomfortable position. As soon as Rikli found herself in safety, she exclaimed reproachfully:—

"Why didn't you come when I called you first?"

They did not stop to answer her, but hurried her into the house, and forthwith into the bath-tub without delay. After the necessary scrubbing and cleansing were over, Rikli put her question again, and the explanation she received was likely to impress upon her the folly of unnecessary alarm, and the certainty that her cries would be unheeded as long as she persisted in uttering them so needlessly.

All this time Oscar was occupied with assembling his chorus in the place chosen for the festival, that the rehearsal might be conducted in due order, except the currant-wine and gingerbread, which naturally were reserved for the festival itself, which was to come off next day. The stage was made of four posts, stuck into the ground, and covered with boards.

The moment for beginning the performance arrived; Feklitus mounted the platform.

"Highly respected gentlemen and brothers! now that we have sung together so well, let us rejoice together; and celebrate the event with a great feast, and all touch glasses together."

With these words, spoken in a loud but rather hurried voice, Feklitus bowed to the company, and came down from the stage.

"Go on, go on with your speech!" shouted every one.

"Why, that's all; and then we must all touch glasses," said Feklitus, who was quite satisfied and elated at having got through so well.

But at his words arose a great uproar; the boys wanted more, and insisted on

Feklitus' going on. Oscar alone said not a word; he was transfixed with one thought, that had been suggested by the first words of this brief speech. "Now that we have sung!" To be sure, it had not occurred to him that to have a Musical Festival successful, there ought to be some music. But it was not too late yet to repair the oversight. Controlling his mortification at his blunder, he sprang to the platform, and tried to call the attention of the noisy crowd.

"Here, fellows, listen to me! Be quiet! I want to tell you something important!" and as the noise began to subside, he shouted:—

"We must have some singing! Who of you can sing? We'll find a song, and then learn it. Who can sing?"

But no one came forward; no one could sing! Feklitus declared that there was no need of singing; a speech, a procession, a banner, a collation; why did they want anything else? But Oscar was determined to have a song, and suddenly he thought of Fani. Where was Fani? He could sing, and should sing. But Fani was not to be found, and soon the assembly broke up; the members scattered, and the platform raised its head in solitary grandeur.

Oscar ran home in a state of tremendous excitement. What would become of his much-boasted festival if he could get no music for it? His father's jests, Fred's air of superiority, all the mortifying consequences rankled in his mind. Fani must be found, and if only he would lead, the rest must somehow be got to join in.

As he reached the house, he met Emma just coming home.

"Where is Fani?" he asked. "Have you been putting him up to something that has made him desert us and go off with you instead?"

Emma colored, but did not reply; she went on into the house, as if she did not hear a word that Oscar said. As she came into the sitting-room, Kathri opened the opposite door, saying:—

"Marget is here, asking if any one has seen Fani? she wants him in a hurry, and has

been hunting everywhere for him."

Emma's face and neck became flaming red; she seized her aunt's hand, and drew her out of the room. Mrs. Stein went into the kitchen to see what Marget's haste was. She learned that Mr. Bickel had just been to her house to say that he wanted Fani immediately in the factory; he had a place for him at once. He needn't leave school, but could come in the afternoon and on holidays, and he would earn quite a good bit of money directly. Marget had been trying in vain to find Fani, to come and talk to her cousin; she was very much afraid that the great man would be angry at being kept waiting, and Fani would lose the place.

Mrs. Stein told Marget that she would send Oscar to look everywhere for the missing boy, and Marget went home.

Meantime, Emma had drawn her aunt into her own room, and as soon as they were safely inside, with the door shut, she began in imploring tones:—

"Oh, aunty, help me! help me! so that no harm will come of it, and that papa may not be angry with me, and make Fani's mother understand how splendid it is going to be, and that Fani will be a great painter by and by. He has gone to Basel to-day!"

"To Basel! I hope you are not in earnest, Emma!" said her aunt, much disturbed.

"Yes, it is really true, aunty. Do go to Fani's mother and explain to her that it's all right, and don't let her come to papa about it. I'll tell you just how it was, and then you can tell Marget. I saw an advertisement in a newspaper the other day, like this, 'A decorator in Basel wants a lad, about twelve years of age, to do light work and learn the business.' Then the address was given. I showed it to Fani, and we both thought that it would be a good chance for him to learn to paint, and at the same time to earn something, so that he needn't go into the factory. Don't you remember that you said a decorator meant a beautifier, and Fred said it meant a scene-painter? Fani can paint roses and flowers and garlands, and he wanted awfully to go. At first he said he must ask his mother; but then he thought it would be no use, because she

said painting was no work at all, but only nonsense. So we planned that he should just go off; and then, if they asked where he was, I should tell them; and as soon as he can, he is to write and tell them that he is going to be a painter."

"This is terrible!" exclaimed her aunt.

"You've done great mischief, Emma. What will become of him, and how will he get to Basel without money?"

Emma said she had given him all her own money, and he could certainly reach Basel, and if only aunty would go and tell his mother about it, all would be right. Aunty lost no time. She went directly to Heiri's cottage, and met Mr. Bickel coming out from the door-way.

"As I have said," was his closing remark, "I will soon put a stop to his loafing; for I will cut off his wages every hour that he idles."

"You can't cut down his wages, Cousin Bickel, before he begins to have any," said Marget to herself as Mr. Bickel marched off with his most important air.

Aunty went into the little house. The outer door opened into the kitchen, and beyond was the living-room. The door between stood open, and through it could be seen two very old cradles, and the wash-tub stood near the door in the kitchen, so that as she stood at her work Marget could watch the three little boys and the baby at the same time. Although Hans was now two years old, he still had a cradle, which served as a bed at night, and as a means of quieting him by day. Whenever he set up his accustomed scream, his mother laid him into the cradle, where, soothed by the rocking motion, he soon fell asleep. The two older brothers, Rudi and Heirli, standing one each side of the cradle, pushed it back and forth with great good-will.

Aunty sat down by the wash-tub, and, after begging Marget to go on with her work, she began gently to unfold her story, winding up with the offer of writing immediately to Basel, to find out how Fani was situated, and on what terms his master had taken him. Then, if everything was not satisfactory, he could be brought

home again. In Marget's ears still lingered her Cousin Bickel's threat about cutting down wages. Perhaps Fani wouldn't earn much at the factory after all. If he were in Basel, she should not have his food to provide, and if he could earn enough to clothe himself while learning a trade, it would probably be better than he could do at home, and no trouble to her either. As these calculations passed through Marget's mind, she concluded not to oppose the boy's wishes, and she assured her visitor that his father would be satisfied if the doctor's family thought it a good arrangement, and would some of them look after the boy a little. It was a great relief to Emma's kind aunt that so little blame was likely to attach to the girl for the consequences of her rash advice; and now she concluded her visit with some inquiries about Elsli. Marget's report was favorable. Elsli spent all her time out of school at Oak-ridge, and was very happy in her work. Marget got along very well with the children, and certainly the liberal pay which Elsli brought home every day was a great gain; to say nothing of many clothes which the sick child could not use, and which would clothe Elsli for a long time to come. All this was pleasant tidings, and aunty went home with a much lighter heart. About half-way home she met Oscar coming to meet her. He darted towards her, and at once began to pour out the story of the unlucky musical festival; how he had entirely forgotten that there must be music, and how he dreaded the ridicule he should encounter when the mistake was discovered. He saw but one means of escape; if he could change the name of the festival, so that no music need be expected; then, by altering the motto a little, and changing some words in the speech—didn't aunty think it could be done?

No; she did not think that idea practicable. "You see, Oscar," she said, "a celebration must celebrate something, an anniversary or some interesting event. As there is nothing of the kind in this case, I really think your only course, since you have no music ready, is to give up the festival entirely for the present, and wait till you have something to celebrate."

Poor Oscar! he was terribly disappointed; yet he could not but acknowledge that his

aunt was right, and he followed her into the house, dreading his father's questions and the discovery that was sure to follow. Supper was just ready as they entered the house, so that Emma could not satisfy her eager desire to know the result of her aunt's mission; so that she, as well as Oscar, sat at the table in troubled silence, both absorbed in secret fears, and both hoping, if they did not speak, that they should escape being spoken to. Fred noticed their unusual demeanor, and presently he remarked, slyly:

"There is a bird called the ostrich, Struthio which has a habit of hiding its head in the sand, believing that, in so doing, he conceals himself from the hunter. This bird is sometimes seen in this neighborhood, and his usual food is potato-salad."

Oscar took no notice of this bit of sarcasm, but remained intent on his potato-salad; but his father, who was watching him, laughed and said:—

"Is he overpowered by the pleasures of the approaching festival?"

As no farther questions followed, and the supper went on without any inquiries about Fani, both Oscar and Emma rose from the table with easier minds. The danger was not yet over, of blame for Emma and ridicule for Oscar; but they had gained time, and they breathed more freely as they turned again to their aunt for help and advice.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT SUNSET.

Elsli continued to go daily to the little invalid, and, from the first visit, she had been a dear friend and companion to the sick girl, who would not hear of her going on errands, but kept her by her own side from the moment she came, till it was time to go home. Mrs. Stanhope, whose only object in life was her little girl's happiness, was more than pleased with this arrangement; and watched with delight as Nora grew, from day to day, more cheerful and even lively in the companionship of a girl

of her own age. And Elsli, too, profited by the intercourse; she was of a yielding nature and easily took new impressions, and now that she passed all her time in refined society, she insensibly grew into its likeness; and her voice, her manners, her way of speaking, all seemed assimilated to those of a very different way of life from that to which she had been accustomed. Was it that this new way was really more suited to her nature than the old?

The two girls studied together every day Elsli's lessons for the morrow, greatly to the pleasure and advantage of both. To Elsli especially, it was a new and delightful sensation to go to her class with a perfectly prepared lesson, and to hear the praises which the teacher daily bestowed upon her improvement; while Nora, whose invalidism had long cut her off from her books, found a fresh zest in resuming her studies with her eager friend. After lessons came supper, and then the evening with its long talks. These were generally about the beautiful country, to which Nora hoped soon to go, and where Elsli followed her in sympathetic thought. One regret began to dim Nora's satisfaction at the prospect; the thought that they couldn't go together; and Elsli would say, sadly, "If you should go and leave me here alone, how could I bear it?"

At last September came, with its cool but sunny days. One evening, as the children sat at the window looking across the meadows towards the setting sun; from a dark cloud that hung in the western sky, a great flood of shining light suddenly poured down across the valley, illuminating the trees, the grass, and the shrubs with its dazzling radiance.

"Look! look!" cried Nora, "that is the crystal stream! there it comes rolling toward me! Oh, I wish I could go there now! It is certainly the promised land, where we all shall be so happy. Come nearer to me, Elsli. I feel so weak I cannot sit up alone."

Elsli sat close by her, and drew the tired head to rest upon her shoulder; and so the two friends sat, silently gazing at the wonderful sight, until at last the sun

disappeared behind the woods, and slowly the mists of evening filled the valley, and all the glory was over.

But for Nora it had only just begun. When her mother came in from the next room, she thought her little girl was asleep on Elsli's shoulder. She was asleep, indeed; but she would never awaken on earth. Mrs. Stanhope took her in her arms, and burst into tears.

"Run, Elsli, for the doctor, as fast as you can!" cried she, and Elsli ran. The doctor was not at home, but Mrs. Stein soon saw the truth, from Elsli's answers to her many questions.

"Dear little Nora!" she said sadly. "Her sufferings are over forever. She has gone to heaven to be at rest."

Elsli stood as if struck by lightning.

"Is she gone? Is Nora really gone to heaven?" she exclaimed, and then she burst into tears, and trembled so that she could scarcely stand.

"My dear child," said the doctor's wife tenderly, taking Elsli by the hand, "come and sit down with me a little while, till you feel better."

But Elsli could not. She covered her face with her apron, and ran out of the house, crying bitterly.

"Oh, how could she go and leave me behind?" she kept saying to herself as she hurried back to Oak-ridge. She found Mrs. Stanhope still bending over Nora, and sobbing as when she left her. Elsli seated herself on Nora's footstool, and wept in silence. It was not long before the doctor came. He bent over the child's form a moment, and then turned to the mother.

"Mrs. Stanhope," he said, and his tones were very tender, "I can do nothing. Your little girl is gone. I will send my wife to you."

Mrs. Stein came, but her words brought no comfort to the bereaved mother. She

heard nothing; she saw nothing but the quiet little form that lay lifeless before her. When Mrs. Stein was convinced that she could be of no use to her, she went across the room to Elsli, who sat weeping on the footstool by the window, and taking her by the hand, she led her out of the room, saying gently:—

"Now it is best for you to go home, my dear. We will not forget you, and remember that our Father in heaven never forgets his children. Think how well and happy Nora is! She will never be ill again, in that land where the weary are at rest."

"If she had only taken me with her," moaned poor Elsli, and when Mrs. Stein left her, as their ways parted, she could hear the sobbing child for a long time as she slowly walked, with her apron over her eyes, along the lane that led to her home.

At home, Mrs. Stein found the children grouped about their aunt, who was telling them about Nora. Fred had many questions to ask about death, and how people can die and come to life again. Emma was much depressed, for she felt, now that it was too late, that she had not done anything to make Nora's illness more cheerful.

That evening Mrs. Stein and her sister were full of anxious thought. They felt keen sympathy with the sorrowing mother at Oak-ridge, and they talked a great deal about the blow that had fallen upon poor little Elsli. She had not only lost a friend whose companionship had brought her new life, but she must now go back to the hard and uncongenial labor from which she had had a brief and blessed respite. Fani too, the only bright spot in her dark lot, was away now, and who could tell when she would have him again? Indeed, Fani's fate was also a source of anxiety, especially on account of Emma's share in his disappearance. Would all turn out right for the boy? Would he get a suitable education, and what sort of a future lay before him? The information they had obtained from Basel had not proved perfectly satisfactory. The scene-painter had, to be sure, taken Fani into his service, but the boy had nothing to do with the painting but to clean up the brushes and palettes, and grind the colors; and, although he had his board and lodging from his master, he must pay for his

clothes himself. It was not a very promising outlook for Fani. His parents were willing to have him stay away from home, but they expected him at least to support himself, if not to send them some money occasionally. Mrs. Stein could not decide what ought to be done, and all this new care would have been a very heavy burden to bear, if her sister had not lightened it by her sympathy and encouragement. Aunty's cheerful spirit always inspired hope and confidence.

The next morning, Emma, with a downcast air, asked leave to take some flowers over to lay upon the bed by Nora. Her mother was glad to let her go, and glad too that Fred offered to accompany his sister. The children were admitted to the house, and shown into the room where Nora lay upon a snow-white bed; herself as white and cold as marble.

Mrs. Stanhope was kneeling by the bedside, her face buried in the coverlet. Emma laid her flowers upon the bed, and, with fast flowing tears, looked upon the peaceful face, and remembered sadly that she had not done a friendly act for the little invalid, nor helped to wile away her lonely hours. She left the room sorry and ashamed, regretting her selfishness, when it was too late to do any good.

A little while after, Mrs. Stein came softly into the quiet room. Mrs. Stanhope raised her head, and, as she returned the kindly greeting, her grief broke out, and she exclaimed with sobs:—

"Oh, if you knew how miserable I am! Why—ah, why! does God take from me my only child? Fortune and lands, everything else he might have taken, if he would only have left me my child! This is the very hardest fate that could have befallen me! Why must I suffer more than any one else in the world?"

"Dear Mrs. Stanhope," said the doctor's wife, as she took the poor lady's hand and pressed it tenderly in her own; "I feel for your sorrow, but I beg you to think of what your child has gained. God has taken her to himself, and she is free from pain and weariness forevermore, in his sheltering arms. You do not know what poverty

means! Think of the many mothers who only see their children grow up to hard labor, and suffer for want of food and clothing. Take the sorrow that God has sent you; do not try to measure it with that of others; the sorrow that comes to each seems the heaviest for each to bear. But our Father knows why he has given each sorrow, and the road he leads us is the one best for us to follow."

Mrs. Stanhope became more tranquil as these words fell on her ear, but her face still wore an expression of inconsolable grief. She was silent a few moments, and then she told Mrs. Stein that she meant to take Nora home and lay her beside the little boy in the garden by the Rhine, and that she should send to her true friend and house-keeper Clarissa to come at once to Oak-ridge to make the preparations for their return, and accompany her on her painful journey. This arrangement was a great relief to Mrs. Stein, who returned home with an easier mind, and hastened to impart this bit of good news to her sister. But aunty was nowhere to be found, and Emma, who was sitting alone in an unusually subdued mood, told her mother that she was probably with Fred, who had been looking for her, "to show her a beetle or some such thing," she supposed! So Mrs. Stein sat down with her little girl, who wanted to ask her questions about Nora. Emma longed to hear that Nora had not suffered from her neglect, and had been contented and happy without her; for she had been feeling more and more how selfish she had been in never repeating her first visit, merely because she had not herself enjoyed it, never thinking what she might have done for poor sick Nora.

Fred had sought his aunt for a long time, and when he found her he carried her off to a remote part of the garden, where stood a lonely summer-house. There he drew her down beside him on a bench, and said he had something to say to her alone.

"Do you know, aunty, I saw Nora to-day, and she is dead; and I cannot see how she can come to life again, and go to heaven."

"You cannot understand that, Fred? Neither can I. But the good God does many

things which we cannot understand, and yet we know they are. And as we are told by One whom we can trust that we shall live again after our body dies, we must believe it. I believe it, Fred, with all my heart."

"But," argued Fred, "I have always thought that life is the same in men as in animals, and when an animal dies, it can never be made alive again. I have noticed that myself."

At this moment, the conversation was interrupted, for they saw the doctor in the garden, and aunty hastened to join him, as she had promised to visit his cauliflowers with him this evening.

Fred sat still lost in thought; he did not care for cauliflowers.

CHAPTER IX.

A LAST JOURNEY AND A FIRST.

A large travelling-carriage passed by the door of the doctor's house, in which sat alone, a lady clothed in black. It was Clarissa, who had come to carry little Nora to her home by the Rhine. The doctor's four children were standing in the garden, and they watched it as it passed, thinking what a sad journey its occupant must have had. Their aunt stood at an upper window watching it also, and as it disappeared round the corner she beckoned Fred to come up to her in his room. He came running up the stairs.

"See, Fred! I am clearing your room up a little. There are a great many useless things here; why should you keep them? See; in this box is a dead creature; let's begin with this, and throw it away"; and as she spoke she carried the box towards a window.

"What are you doing, aunty?" cried the boy. "That is my very best chrysalis; it will turn into a beautiful moth by and by; one of the finest of our butterflies, with wonderful marks on its wings."

"What nonsense!" said his aunt. "This little creature is utterly dead; don't you see it is stiff and motionless."

"Don't you know about caterpillars, aunty dear?" exclaimed the boy, holding fast to his box. "I'll tell you about it. This is a chrysalis; and it seems entirely dead, but it's only the outside that is dead. Inside, where we cannot see it, lies something that is alive; and by and by, when the time comes, this shell will be cast off, for there will be no farther use for it, and out will fly a new lovely creature with exquisite wings."

"But, Fred, I don't understand how that can be possible! How can a poor worm, that only crawls about all its life, die, and then suddenly turn into a beautiful new creature with wings, and fly away leaving its old body behind? Do you understand it, Fred?"

"No, I don't understand it, but I know it's so."

"Well, my dear boy," said his aunt, seriously, "what if there was something hidden within little Nora, which was alive too, and which, leaving the poor dead shell behind, has flown on shining wings away to distant heights, where it is entering on a new and happy life!"

Fred stood thoughtful a few moments, and then said, "I never thought of it in that way, aunty. Now I shall have a very different idea about Nora. How glad she must be to fly away on her new wings from the sick body in which she was imprisoned! Are not you glad, aunty, that you know about the chrysalis, and isn't it wonderful?"

"It certainly is; and it teaches us that there are many things about us that we cannot understand, and yet which are true, though no one can explain them. So by and by, Fred, when you are a learned man, as I hope you will be, when you come to something you cannot understand in nature, you must say modestly, 'This is beyond my powers of explanation; this is the work of God'; and so stand reverently before his greatness, that is about and above us all."

Fred handled his chrysalis with respect as he laid it away with his other treasures. A

new thought had come to him about that and about other things.

Clarissa had arrived; but her coming did not bring comfort to the sorrowing mother; on the contrary, it seemed only to renew her grief. Clarissa would have been glad to hear all about her darling's last days, and how the end came, but the mother could not bear any allusion to the subject, and Clarissa kept silence. She consoled herself by looking at Nora's peaceful face, that seemed to have a message of comfort for her. When she heard that Elsli had been alone with Nora when she died, she was very anxious to see the girl, and sent for her to come and speak with her. When Elsli came into the pleasant room where she had passed so many happy days, and glanced towards the empty window-seat, she was overcome with fresh grief. Clarissa took her by the hand, and, drawing her to a seat by her side, immediately began to ask about Nora; and soon Elsli was pouring out her whole heart; and she told Clarissa all that she and Nora had said to each other about the heavenly land, and she repeated the hymn that Nora had taught her. Then she told how quietly Nora had left her at last, and said that she hoped to follow her soon into her beautiful home.

Clarissa hung upon every word that fell from Elsli's lips with gratitude and satisfaction. It was she who had taught Nora that hymn as she sat upon her knees when she was a very little child, and as she heard it repeated now it was with the same tones, the same motions of hand and head that the child had used who learned it from her own lips; it seemed to Clarissa as if Nora lived again in Elsli. Weeping with mingled joy and sorrow, she went in search of Mrs. Stanhope.

"Surely," she exclaimed, "this child is the image of our darling; it is her sister, with her voice, her words, her very thought. This, too, is our child."

Mrs. Stanhope roused herself for a moment to listen to Clarissa's words, but she was not moved by them; she threw herself again on her bed and would not be comforted. Clarissa was not disheartened by this indifference; she was so completely impressed herself by the wonderful resemblance between the children that she led Elsli into the

room where the hopeless mother lay in full indulgence of her grief, and said:—

"I bring you this little girl, Mrs. Stanhope; for I look upon her as a legacy that our Nora has left us."

Mrs. Stanhope looked for a moment into the girl's face; then she suddenly kissed her and said:—

"Elsli, Nora loved you, and you loved her. You shall stay with me always"; and they all three wept together, but there was healing in the tears.

Like one in a dream Elsli went home that day. She understood, but not wholly, what had happened. She had believed that Nora would ask her heavenly Father to call her to heaven, and would come herself to meet her; and now it seemed as if she had already come to meet her to lead her elsewhere than to heaven.

Clarissa went to make the arrangements with Marget, about which there was no difficulty whatever. For as soon as Marget understood that not only was Elsli to be provided with a home for life, but that the help which she might have afforded her parents as she grew older was to be made good to them, she was overjoyed. She said that Elsli was not fit for hard work, and that the care of the little boys was quite beyond her, especially since Hans was growing more and more troublesome. So she gladly agreed to let her go, with the understanding that she should return home at least once a year for a visit.

In an incredibly short time the whole village was in possession of the news that the wealthy Mrs. Stanhope had offered to take Elsli home with her, and to keep her as her own child always; and that they were to start for the villa on the Rhine the very next day. The excitement produced by this news was intense. Wherever two neighbors met on the road, they stopped to talk over the good-luck that had happened to Elsli. In the school, the children could not keep quiet, so great was their interest in the event. Even Mr. Bickel was moved to make an unheard-of effort. He took his big stick in his hand, saying:—

"Wife, we ought to go and call on Mrs. Stanhope, and apprise her of our relationship with that girl Elsli. If she needs any advice about the child, I am the proper person to give it. Perhaps we shall be asked to make our cousin a visit, when she is settled there by the Rhine; there are great factories of all kinds there, and perhaps Mrs. Stanhope may have some connection with them, and that may help us in our business."

But Mr. Bickel had to lay aside his stick again, for his wife was not ready to go to make so important a visit at so short notice.

If there was excitement elsewhere, at the doctor's house there was a real jubilee. The mother and the aunt were filled with thankfulness that the delicate girl had fallen into such good hands, where she would be loved and cared for, and where her natural refinement would have every chance of development. All the family were full of pleasure and anticipations of great things in the future.

Oscar went about all day, lost in thought. He was trying to turn this new state of things to account; for it was a great trial to him that the beautiful embroidered banner had had to be laid aside; and he was determined, if possible, to find some use to put it to. Emma, too, was evidently preoccupied, and Fred said to himself, as he saw her knitted brows, "She's got some scheme working in her brain." As for Fred himself, he sat deeply engaged in making long lists of all the caterpillars, beetles, snails, and other similar creatures that he knew were to be found in the neighborhood of the Rhine. To make assurance doubly sure, he put the Latin name under the common name of each.

That evening Elsli was sitting on the long bench at home, quite hidden by the three little brothers, who had taken complete possession of her. She bore the infliction patiently, for she knew it was the last time, at least for many months. She had begun to realize her good fortune, and to rejoice in the prospect before her. Clarissa had completely won her heart; and the child could talk to her freely and without reserve,

as she had never spoken to any one before, except Nora. She did not feel so much at ease with Mrs. Stanhope, but she loved her as Nora's mother, and Mrs. Stanhope was kind to her, but not like Clarissa. Elsli puzzled her mind a good deal about the sort of life she was to lead in her new home; and as to whether she should be able to do all that was required of her, and to do it properly. But more than all, she was worried about Fani, from whom she was now so completely separated, and whom she might not see again for long years. As she sat pondering on these problems, she was totally unconscious that Hanseli was pulling and kicking her in the old style, when Emma suddenly came into the room.

"Elsli," she cried, breathlessly, before she had fairly passed the threshold, "you are going away to-morrow, and I have something very important to say to you. Put the boys down, and come with me; do."

"Hanseli will scream if I do," said Elsli, and he did scream; but Emma took him without ceremony from his sister's arms, setting him on the ground with no gentle hand; and before the frightened child had recovered from his surprise, she had dragged Elsli away round the corner of the house to a secluded place behind the big apple-tree.

"Here, I want you to take this with you," she began, holding out a thick roll of paper, "and I want to tell you that you are going to pass through Basel on your way."

"Are you sure?" asked Elsli, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, yes, I am sure; and now listen. Tell Mrs. Clarissa that Fani is in Basel, and that you want to see him. I know she will take you, she is so kind. Then you give him this roll, and tell him that I sent it, and that I hope he is well. Here is his address."

"Oh, how glad I am!" cried Elsli. "Do you really think I ought to ask Mrs. Clarissa to take me to Fani?"

"Of course you ought; only think how pleased he will be to see you. Promise, Elsli,—" but before Elsli could answer, Oscar came round the corner; and, spying

Elsli, he seized her by the hand, exclaiming:—

"I've been hunting for you everywhere; and I've found you at last! Come with me; I want to tell you something!"

He drew her away to the other side of the house, and stopped by the hazelnut hedge; Emma did not follow them, for fear of vexing her brother. She had sent to Fani, by Elsli, all the white paper and all the pencils that she could collect in the children's room at home, and she thought it but prudent to keep out of Oscar's way.

"Now, attend to what I am going to say, Elsli," began Oscar, seriously; "it is something very important for you to know. You are going to foreign parts, where you will have no friends; I mean no acquaintances among people in general. But no doubt there will be some Swiss there, and you can form a society of our countrymen, that can meet every week, and talk over all the news from their own country."

"Yes, but I shouldn't know what to say," said Elsli, very much perplexed.

"Never mind, the others can do the talking," said the boy, eagerly; "but now comes the really important part of it. Next summer, when you are coming home again, you must agree upon some convenient place where all the members of the society shall meet. Then crowds of people will collect from all sides, and I will be there with my beautiful banner, and we will have a procession and a great celebration of the first anniversary. Be sure to write me the date of the foundation, Elsli!"

"Yes, I will certainly," assented Elsli, but her tone was less decided than her words, for she was anything but clear as to how the society could be formed, or why it should be formed at all. Further questions were, however, impossible, for at this moment Fred appeared with Rikli in his wake, and a long strip of paper in his hand. Oscar vanished.

"Now, Elsli, read this," said Fred.

"Here are the names of all the beautiful caterpillars, and rare beetles and snails, that you are likely to find where you are going. I want you to hunt in all the hedges, and

stir up the earth now and then in your walks. Then the fellows will turn up, and you can collect them, and send me the finest specimens. You will, won't you? I'll send you something pretty in return. You can put them right into your pocket, you know, until you get home from your walk, and hold the pocket together so,—; so that they won't crawl out"; and Fred pinched up his pocket-hole so that no kind of a crawling thing could have escaped from it. Rikli shuddered all over.

Elsli was very willing to do Fred this service, but she did not really see how, any more than in Oscar's case; but she said, modestly:—

"I will do my best, Fred; but how am I to know the creatures whose names are on your list?"

This was a sensible question, and Fred could not help seeing the importance of it; but he was not to be deterred by a slight obstacle. He looked again at his lists.

"Suppose I should draw a figure of each creature against its name!" he said to himself. "I will come to see you to-morrow morning, before you go away," he said to Elsli, and was off.

Little Rikli, whose lesson had been learned at such a severe cost, was quite cured of her foolish screaming whenever Fred came near her with his dear little insects; but she watched his every motion, lest his fist or his pockets should disgorge some green-eyed frog or other equally unpleasant treasure. Her big brother had, however, a great fascination for the child, who followed him everywhere like his shadow. She now came nearer to Elsli, and said, entreatingly:—

"Don't send the nasty things alive, will you, Elsli, dear? You'll stuff them first, won't you?"

Just then, who should make his appearance but Feklitus, in his very best Sunday suit, and at the same moment Marget's voice was heard from the cottage, calling in a tone loud enough to sound above Hans' screams:—

"Elsli, where are you? It's strange that you can't stay in the house two minutes at a

time to-day."

Rikli ran away; but Feklitus seized Elsli by the arm and held her fast.

"I want to go to see the lady at Oak-ridge," he said, roughly. "I am your cousin, and I want to tell her so, and that some time or other we mean to come and visit you down there by the Rhine; but I'm not going alone, and you've just got to come with me."

"Let me alone; don't you hear that I am wanted in the house!" And Elsli tried to free herself from his hold.

"You shall come," said the boy; and he grasped Elsli still more firmly, and dragged her away with him.

Oscar, Emma, Fred, and Rikli all met with the same reception from Kathri on their return home; she stood on the front porch, and said to one after another as they came up, in a warning whisper:—

"Hush, hush! don't make a noise! Mrs. Stickhop is in the parlor, come to say good-bye."

Poor Elsli did not sleep much that last night at home. She was excited by all the last words and commissions and leave-takings of her friends, and oppressed by the thought of what was before her on the morrow, and it was in a half-dreamy state that early on the following morning she began her journey, with Mrs. Stanhope and Clarissa, in the large carriage, along the high road, through the country that lay still in the dawning light. Suddenly a folded paper, weighted with a small stone, flew through the air into the carriage window.

"Good-bye, Elsli. I wish I could go with you," cried a voice from the road-side. It was Fred, who had not been able to finish his work before, and who had only painted his last snail just in season to throw his now illustrated list after Elsli.

This last greeting brought the tears to Elsli's eyes. She seemed now fully to realize that she was leaving home, leaving all who had ever known and loved her. Clarissa

saw it all, and, taking Elsli's hand in hers, she expressed, by the warm grasp that she gave her, a mother's sympathy and love.

For the next week the doctor's family were busy talking over and over all the events of the past few weeks, from the arrival of little Nora to Elsli's final departure. On the tenth day came a long letter from Elsli, which gave food for farther conversation. The mother and the aunt and the four brothers and sisters were all equally impatient to know the contents. The letter was addressed to Emma, who knew it from its envelope, opened it out, and exclaimed with delight:—

"It is eight pages long! I will read it aloud to you."

ROSEMOUNT ON THE RHINE, Sept. 28, 18—.

DEAR FRIEND,—Thank you a thousand times for your good advice, for without it I should never have dared to say a word about Fani.

But I will begin at the beginning and tell you everything as it has happened. When Fred said good-bye and I drove away from you all, I had to cry a little! But Aunt Clarissa—this is what I am to call her always—was very kind, and talked to me, and bade me tell her everything that troubled me. Mrs. Stanhope shut her eyes and lay back in the carriage, so still that I thought she was asleep, so I thought it was a good time to tell Aunt Clarissa all about Fani, as you advised. She didn't even know that there was such a person, so I had to tell her everything that had happened, and how long it was since I had seen him. She said of course I must see him in Basel, and that we should have plenty of time, as we were not going farther than that, that day. She said she would go with me to find him, and that Mrs. Stanhope would be perfectly willing. When we reached Basel we went to a big hotel. I never saw anything like it before. I could scarcely eat my dinner for joy that I was going to see Fani again. Directly after dinner Aunt Clarissa told Mrs. Stanhope that we wanted to go to see my brother, and Mrs. Stanhope said she would go with us, as she did not want to stay alone.

We went across a long bridge, over a river, and quite a distance further. At last we came to some small houses, and we began to inquire for the painter Schulz. There we were right before his house. Mrs. Stanhope opened the door and went right into the work-shop, and we followed her. Fani sprang up with a great cry of joy, and threw his arms round Mrs. Stanhope, and his eyes were full of tears, for he was terribly homesick, and had never seen any one from home since he went away. Then he caught sight of me, and he was gladder still; and he wasn't the least shy with Mrs. Stanhope—you know he never is—but he put his arms round her again, and exclaimed:—

"Oh, you don't know how glad I am to see some one from home!"

You can't imagine how kind she was to him. At last she told Fani to call his master, and when the man came she went out into another room to talk with him. After a while she came back, and then, what do you think? She asked Fani if he would not like to go and live with me at her house! I can't begin to tell you how I felt. At first I could scarcely breathe for joy, and then I began to think I must have made a mistake; it couldn't be true. But Fani cried out with delight, and he seized Mrs. Stanhope's hand and looked at her so beseechingly, and he promised to work as hard as he could, and do everything to please her if he might only go. "You shall," she said; and then she told him when to meet us at the railroad next day. What a promise for Fani and me!

As we were going back to the hotel, Mrs. Stanhope said to Aunt Clarissa, "Did you notice the resemblance? Doesn't he look at you out of his big brown eyes just as my Philo did?" Aunt Clarissa saw the likeness too, and said that was the reason that she took a fancy to Fani the moment she saw him. You see, Philo was Nora's little brother. In the evening, Mrs. Stanhope spoke several times about the likeness, and it was the first time that she had talked with us at all. All that night I kept thinking it was too good to be true; it must be a dream; but the next morning, when we got to

the railroad station, there was Fani, and he had been waiting three hours, ever since six o'clock. Mrs. Stanhope laughed a little at his impatience—it was the first time she had laughed at all.

All day long we travelled in the railway carriage, and Fani was as happy as he could be. When we stopped at a station, and Aunt Clarissa was going to get out and fetch us something to eat, Mrs. Stanhope stopped her and said: "No, no; we have an escort now, he must wait upon us." Then she explained to Fani what he was to do, and you ought to have seen how he ran about and did it all so handily, and he kept looking at Mrs. Stanhope to see if she was pleased; and she was pleased, that was plain enough. In the evening we stopped at Mainz on the Rhine, and Mrs. Stanhope said we should see the river in the morning. And the next day, what do you think? we went on a splendid steamboat; no one can possibly understand it without seeing it. Fani was like a crazy creature all day, he was so wild with delight; and Mrs. Stanhope let him run about all over the boat and look at everything. Sometimes I didn't see him for an hour at a time! By and by he came and took your present, and said he was going to draw everything that he had seen, and just how the whole boat was arranged, so that he should never forget it. And he wants me to thank you a great deal for the beautiful present. I forgot to say that before.

In the evening, when we left the boat, we found a carriage and a wagon waiting for us. We drove for half an hour or more, and then we came to Mrs. Stanhope's house. It is a large house, standing in the middle of a garden, and with large trees about it. When we got out of the carriage, Fani whispered to me, "Do you suppose I shall work in the stables or in the garden?" Of course I couldn't tell him; I did not even know what I was to do myself. But nothing has turned out as we thought it would. At first Mrs. Stanhope was so sad that we did not see her at all for three days. Aunt Clarissa was just as kind as she could be. She took us all about the garden and showed us the place where Philo was buried; a white cross stands there with his name on it. And Nora was buried by his side, under a big linden.

On the fourth day Mrs. Stanhope came to table with us, and after dinner she talked very kindly with us, and said that now it was time for us to begin to work. Oh, how surprised Fani and I were when we found out what we were to do! What kind of hard work do you guess it is? No work at all! You won't believe it, but it is true. We just sit all the morning in the school-room and study! The teacher comes at nine o'clock and stays till one, and Fani and I are the only scholars! Of course Fani is much cleverer than I am; but the teacher is very kind, and when I cannot do my lessons he only says: "Come, be brave, and you'll soon do as well as your brother!" I get along very well, and I am not so ashamed as I was when all the children in school were ahead of me. It is one o'clock before we know it, and we are glad when school-time comes the next day. After dinner we all go into the garden; and Mrs. Stanhope takes Fani with her, and he talks with her about his lessons and his ideas about all sorts of things; and it is easy to see that she likes him very much, better of course than she does me; you know how frank he is. He tells her just how he feels and how glad he is to be here with her, and he thanks her over and over again for all her kindness, and he holds her hand tight; and, when he looks up at her so beaming with happiness, she strokes his hair, and seems more fond of him than I have ever seen her of any one except Nora. But I can never do as Fani does; though I have just the same feelings, I cannot speak them out; and I'm afraid she does not think that I am so grateful, and I can quite understand that she cannot care as much for me as for Fani. But Aunt Clarissa is very good to me, and, when we come in out of the garden, I go into a room with her and she teaches me to sew and to embroider as you do. Tell Oscar that, even if I don't succeed in finding people to form a society, I will at any rate work him a beautiful banner,—Aunt Clarissa says that I may,—so he must be sure to write me what he wants for a motto. While I am working, Fani has a lesson in drawing; a teacher comes for two hours. Mrs. Stanhope almost always sits with him during this lesson, for she is delighted that Fani learns so quickly, and draws such beautiful things already.

After that Fani and I go into the garden by ourselves and play about as much as we like. We run into every corner of it, for all about are stone seats to rest on, and white marble statues, and the garden is large and beautiful and stretches way down to the river; and there stand the great lindens, and it is all the most splendid and beautiful place in the world. Please tell Fred that I am looking all the time after beetles and such things, but I haven't been able to catch any; he mustn't be vexed with me, perhaps I shall succeed better by and by.

After supper Aunt Clarissa sits down at the piano, and we sing Nora's favorite song and several others that she has taught me. Generally Fani sits in the other room and draws by himself; but when he sings with us it sounds much better, and it's only when he sings, too, that Mrs. Stanhope comes in to listen. After this, we get our lessons ready for the next day. But time passes much too quickly here; and Fani and I are always sorry when the day is over and we have to go to bed. I am almost never tired now; and, oh, it is so lovely to live here and to be with Fani. When we go in to our meals, Aunt Clarissa always says, "Thank God that we have children again with us at table!" And yesterday Mrs. Stanhope answered: "I think you would like to have the house full of children." And Aunt Clarissa replied, "I should never have too many of them." Then Mrs. Stanhope said: "Next year we must invite our friends from Switzerland to visit us; all four of the doctor's children; and you can take little Rikli under your special charge." At these words Fani shouted for joy; but I couldn't utter a sound; I could scarcely swallow, I was so delighted. Aunt Clarissa clapped her hands and said, "Elsli must write directly and invite them, so that we may make sure of them"; and, afterwards, she said to me again, "What a splendid plan that is of Mrs. Stanhope's!" In the evening Fani and I went all round the garden to pick out all the places that we particularly want to show you. Fred will be able to catch his own insects. Fani is going to write you a long letter, and then one to Oscar; but first he wants to draw a picture of the linden trees and the little spot under them, to send you for a present. We send our love to you all a thousand times, and beg you to give it to

our father and mother and the little boys.

Fani sends his special love to you.

Your true friend,

ELSLI.

When the letter was finished, there came a burst of shouting and hand-clapping that seemed as if it would never stop. Such good news for the children! What a prospect of delights! The mother and aunt sympathized in their pleasure; but they took the greatest satisfaction in the thought that their anxiety for Fani was forever relieved, and that God had led the two children whose welfare lay so near their hearts, by such unlooked-for ways, into a happy and hopeful life.

Which of the four children was most pleased with the prospect of the visit to the villa on the Rhine, it would be impossible to say. They could talk of nothing else, and think of nothing else. Oscar saw in imagination whole armies of Swiss collected there, and united in one fraternal society by his efforts, with Fani's help. He began at once to employ every spare moment in searching for a motto for the promised banner. Emma was in a condition of almost feverish joy. Fani was really on the road to become a painter, and her long-cherished wish was being accomplished. Now that Mrs. Stanhope was evidently so fond of him, surely everything would be done for his improvement. But she could hardly wait for the time to come for their visit, for every day she had some new idea for his future that she longed to tell him. Fred had his hands full of preparations. He looked forward to making such an increase of his collections that he was afraid he should not have room to contain them all. He induced his aunt to promise him all the useless boxes in the house, and all winter long he stored them away in his room in readiness for the expected occupants.

Little Rikli enjoyed the anticipation of the summer with pure delight. She was never so happy as when with Fred, yet her pleasure in being with him had been always mixed with fright; but she was sure that under the protection of good Aunt Clarissa

there would be no danger that frogs or beetles should be allowed to annoy her, or that any unpleasant creatures would crawl out upon her under the shady lindens by the river.

Fani and Elsli grew better and happier every day; they had but one unsatisfied wish—that the summer would come; so that they might welcome their dear old friends to their new home, and show them its beauties and share its blessings with them.

Aunt Clarissa took great pains that the two children committed to her care should not forget the good Father in heaven who had provided such a home for them. She led them often to the spot where Philo and Nora lay buried, and reminded them how quickly and unexpectedly sorrow may be changed into joy, as they had themselves experienced; then she told them that just so quickly joy may be changed to sorrow, and that into the brightest sunshine the shadow of death may fall; so that only those can live happy and secure who have full trust in God, who holds all life in his hand, and who makes both joy and sorrow work together for good to those who love him.

GRITLI'S CHILDREN

VOLUME TWO

DINO AND CORNELLI HAD UNDERTAKEN A GREAT WORK; THEY WERE LAYING OUT MARTHA'S GARDEN

DINO AND CORNELLI HAD UNDERTAKEN A GREAT WORK; THEY WERE LAYING OUT MARTHA'S GARDEN

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW HOME.

Winter was over and gone. The early summer roses had opened again, and raised their heads high about the villa on the Rhine. They glowed and blossomed in all the garden-beds, and glistened in the sunshine, and sent their sweet perfume far and near on every breeze. On the pebbly path that led down from the splashing fountain to the lindens by the river, Fani and Elsli scampered back and forth, drinking in the fragrant air.

"Do you know where Mrs. Stanhope's house gets its name?" asked Fani, as he stood by a bed of flowers, watching with delight the airy butterflies flitting from blossom to blossom, and then floating away as in ecstacy up into the blue air.

"Of course I do," answered Elsli; "it is called Rosemount because there are so many rose-bushes stretching from up here way down to the lindens."

"Well, that's true; but there's nothing melancholy about it," said Fani, reproachfully. "What makes you look so sad, Elsli? You almost always look sad nowadays, and it isn't right, for I'm sure there's no reason for it. And Mrs. Stanhope notices it, too, and she doesn't like it very well; she must think that you are horribly ungrateful, and that you don't realize how well off we are. And yet you can't help realizing it when you think how it used to be at home."

"Yes; I do think of it, and I realize it all perfectly, Fani; and I am not a bit ungrateful. But you see I can't express it to Mrs. Stanhope; I wish I could. And then, besides, Fani," she added, after a pause, "Aunt Clarissa has often told me that when we are well off ourselves, and have everything we need, and more, too, we ought to think all the more about the poor, and do what we can to help them. And I am always thinking about them, and wishing that I could share some of the good things we enjoy with those who have none."

"What do you mean, Elsli?" cried Fani; "there is no one about here who is poor; even the men and women-servants live like gentlefolk. Have you never noticed that Lina, the chambermaid, wears a hat when she goes out, and a red and yellow shawl,

just like Mrs. Bickel? And what red cheeks the cook has! She has enough to eat, I'm sure; and the coachman wears gloves when he drives."

"Yes, I know; but I mean—well, you see we have a great deal of time to ourselves, and can run round in the garden and amuse ourselves, and I can't help thinking that I might be doing something useful. I might knit some stockings for the children at home if I had some yarn, but I don't like to ask for any; I have so many things."

"Why, of course you can't ask for it, Elsli; what are you thinking of? And you know how many clothes and things Mrs. Stanhope is always sending to mother? Only last week a big bundle went off; don't you remember, Elsli?"

"Yes, I know all that; but what I mean is that I want to do something myself, and not go on taking my own comfort and enjoyment when so many other people are suffering."

"But you know the doctor said you must take comfort; and he told Mrs. Stanhope not to let you sit at your books and study all the time, but to keep you a great deal in the open air. Come, let's run all round the big rose-bed, and draw in long breaths of that delicious perfume. How strong it is! I can smell it way off here. Come!" and Fani took hold of his sister's hand and began to run. But she held back.

"I can't run as you do, Fani," she said, breathing heavily; "I would rather go down to the stone seat under the lindens by the river and sit a while."

"Now you see, Elsli," said Fani, as he walked slowly by her side down towards the river, "now you see how soon you get tired. It is a good thing for you that you have this garden to stay in. And how lovely it is down here, too! do you notice? there's quite a different smell here, and its delicious!"

Fani was already seated on the bench, and he leaned back against the trunk of the old linden, whose head was crowned with flowers that diffused a sweet perfume through the air. The fresh foaming waves of the river ran below, bathing the low hanging branches as they flowed along.

"Oh, how beautiful it is here! It will do you good to shout as loud as you can, Elsli. I'm sure it would make you feel better."

"Yes, indeed," said the girl assentingly, but no joyous look came into her pale face, such as shone from Fani's eyes. "When I sit here I always think of Nora. There's such a beautiful view of the sunset from here. And then I think of the evening when she went away, how the whole sky was golden, as if the heavens were open, and you could look right into them and see the crystal river flowing there forever. Whenever it is a clear evening, and the red clouds come in the west, I always think that Nora is looking down at me and beckoning me to come to her. How dearly I should love to go!"

Fani sprang to his feet in great distress.

"How can you talk so, Elsli? Here we are living so happily together. Nobody was ever so happy as we are, and yet you talk as if it was all nothing, and all you want is to die! I'm sure I don't want to die, and you ought not to. And if you were to talk in this way to Mrs. Stanhope just once, what do you suppose would happen? I can tell you—she'd just send us straight home, I know; and how would you like that? And I'm certain that she means to have us stay here always; for several times when I've said something about being a painter she has begun to talk about the future, and she takes it for granted that you and I are to live with her. Just think of that! Then I shall be a gentleman and you a lady like Mrs. Stanhope, and then—"

"Oh, Fani, you trouble me still more when you talk so," interrupted Elsli, sadly. "I see more plainly every day that I can never be what Mrs. Stanhope wants me to be. I am afraid she will be more and more vexed about it, and will like me less and less. And you too will be ashamed of me by and by, because I cannot be what you would like to have me."

Fani had seated himself again at Elsli's side, but at these words he sprang again to his feet, crying out reproachfully:—

"Oh, Elsli, what strange notions have you taken into your head? It isn't pleasant in you to talk so. Why don't you think of all the nice things there are, and what good times we have together, and let all these melancholy ideas go?"

"I don't think of melancholy things on purpose, Fani, and I wish I did not at all," said Elsli, pleadingly. "It is this way. Whenever I begin to think of something very pleasant, then sad thoughts come into my mind, and I keep wondering whether there isn't something that I can do for those in trouble, and then I am unhappy because I can't think of anything. I see so many things that you don't see, and I can't get them out of my head all day long."

"What sort of things?" asked the boy in surprise.

"Well, for instance, twice when we have been coming home from our afternoon walk, we have met a man with a heavy shovel on his shoulder, and you didn't notice him because you were so busy talking with Mrs. Stanhope. The man looked down on the ground, just as father does when he comes home at night all tired out and says, 'We shall hardly pull through, if I work ever so hard; I'm afraid we can't keep out of debt.' I'm sure that man is worried just as father was, and I keep thinking if I could only go after him and find out where he lives, I might do him some good, perhaps."

"But you mustn't do that," cried Fani, much horrified. "Don't you remember how Mrs. Stanhope told us in the very beginning that we must never go into any house where we didn't know the people? and that we mustn't speak first to people we don't know, as we do at home? You must not go and talk to that man. Do you hear, Elsli? Mrs. Stanhope would be very angry with you."

Elsli thought for a while. Presently she said, "I do not believe that Mrs. Stanhope meant that I should not speak to a poor man who is in trouble, as this man is. She only meant that we mustn't talk with people who ask us questions about where we came from and how we live at home. I don't believe she meant people like this man

at all."

"Oh, Elsli, you can't make distinctions, that way," said Fani, impatiently. "All we have to do is to mind what we are told, and not speak to strange people or go to their houses. Now let's talk about something else; this sort of talk is tiresome. Come here; I'll show you something."

The children sat down again side by side on the stone bench, with their heads close together, and Fani took something out of his pocket which they both examined carefully. It was a small, nicely painted landscape, in fresh bright colors. Elsli studied it silently.

"Do you see what it is?" asked Fani.

"Yes, indeed, I knew it at the first glance. It is Rosemount; there are the roses and the linden trees. How beautifully you have done it, Fani! Won't Emma be delighted when she sees it, and surprised too? I'm sure she has no idea that you can paint so well!"

"I'm so glad she is coming," cried the lad, and his face glowed with pleasure. "There is no one that I can talk with about being a painter as I can with her. She understands just how I feel, and is as much interested in it as I am myself."

"Are you still bent on being an artist?" asked Elsli.

"Yes, indeed, more and more. Every day, and after every drawing lesson, I care about it more than ever before. I don't say anything about it, because I see that Mrs. Stanhope doesn't like the idea. You see, Elsli, she means to keep us with her all our lives, just as if we were her own children. I'm sure of it, from a great many things that she has said. We can stay here just as long as we don't do anything to displease her, and of course we sha'n't do that. Several times when I've said that I should like to be a painter, Mrs. Stanhope has said that it was a very good profession for persons who had no home, and were obliged to live alone, and could travel as much as they pleased in foreign countries. She said I might paint at Rosemount as much as I

chose, but that I must not make it my business, because then I should have to go away to live. So you see that she is quite decided that we are to stay here."

Elsli shook her head.

"I don't know, Fani. It seems to me that we don't belong here in this beautiful house. Don't you feel so too, Fani? Somehow as if we were only here on a visit, and that to-morrow we might be going away again."

"There you are again with the old story," said Fani, rather vexed, for this doubt was very distasteful to him.

The time which they had to spend in the garden was now over, and hand in hand they passed back up the white pebbly path, and by the sweet-scented rose-beds, and entered the hall, which stood with wide-open doors on the garden side.

CHAPTER II.

A JOURNEY.

Great was the excitement in the doctor's house at Buchberg. July had come at last, and the long-looked-for journey was at hand. Only one more day! The big trunk was packed and locked and placed in the lower hall, ready to go. Now there were only the hand-bags and satchels to be filled with the last needful articles. This task was not so easy as one might expect, however. On the contrary, mother and aunty found it the most difficult part of the whole. For the three older children had received permission to choose each the things which he wanted most to fill up his own bag, with the express understanding that these must be useful things. But the three had their own definitions of "useful." So they worked with all their might, running, breathless, up stairs and down, loaded with most extraordinary articles, most of which were rejected by the packers as utterly unsuitable, and consigned to the places whence they came.

Fred came first with four great boxes under each arm, which were tied up with so many strings, that no accident could have opened them if they had gone all the way round the world. These he brought to his aunt, while Emma was, at the same time, pressing upon her mother a heavy roll, which she had brought under one arm, and an enormous package which she could scarcely carry.

"Those can't go, Fred," said his aunt, decidedly. "I couldn't possibly get those eight boxes into this bag, and what's the use? You certainly can't need whatever there is in them."

"Yes, I do, aunty; six of them are full of living creatures which I must carry with me to take care of them, or they would all die. The other two have in them specimens of beetles and snails and other things of the same kinds as those I expect to find near the Rhine, but, of course, they are somewhat different, and I want to carry these to compare with those, don't you see, aunty? Perhaps if we squeeze the boxes with all our might we can get them in, except those that have the live creatures."

"No, Fred, it can't be done," said his aunt, kindly. "Take them back into your room; and you needn't be in the least anxious. I'll take care of the live ones while you are gone, and, as to the others, when you want to compare any of them with what you find, write to me about it, and I will send you as good a description as I can make."

Meantime, Mrs. Stein had been gazing in despair at the two huge, misshapen packages which Emma had placed upon the table to be put into her hand-bag.

"What have you in that big roll? It is too large to go even into the trunk! What are you thinking about?" she cried.

"Oh, mamma, can't they be tied on the outside of the bag? I could carry them all together myself. I do want to take them with me so much. In the roll are ever so many drawing-copies, such as we had at school, and some that were given us on the Christmas-tree. Fani spoke of them in one of his letters, and I'm sure he'll be delighted to have them. I put in all ours, and I borrowed some from the master, who

said I could have them if I would take great care of them and bring them safely back again."

"What foolishness, Emma! You seem to forget that, for the last year, Fani has had his own drawing-teacher, who gives his pupils what he thinks best for them to copy, and, doubtless, has plenty of patterns of all kinds. So take the roll away; it would be absurd to carry it. And that hideous bundle, what is in it? It is twice too big to go in here."

"I was afraid it would be," said Emma, rather crestfallen. "But I thought I could carry it in my lap, and, really, I must take it, mamma. It is that book which I chose for a Christmas present, you know; the 'Lives of Distinguished Painters.' I want to carry it for Fani to read; and, for fear of hurting the handsome binding, I wrapped it up in two petticoats and a waterproof cloak and a small table-cloth, and then I put some enamel-cloth outside the whole."

"You do get hold of most unfortunate ideas, my child! we shall never get ready at this rate. Come, we'll take the book out of all these wrappings, and then perhaps we can get it in. But you haven't brought anything that you really need, though you have had such a long time to think about it all. And here aunty and I are standing waiting and can't get through, because you have nothing ready for us."

At this moment aunty exclaimed, in a tone of alarm:—

"For pity's sake, Oscar! what is that that you are tugging along?"

With a tremendous racket Oscar came into the room, dragging behind him a drum, which he could not carry, because in one hand he had a large bunch of bells and in the other a harmonica and a flute.

"Oscar dear, your own good-sense can tell you that you can't get a drum into this bag; to say nothing of the other instruments. What in the world do you want with them? Mrs. Stanhope wouldn't thank you for such music!"

"It isn't for the house, aunty," answered the boy. "It is for the festival out-of-doors.

I've taken only Fred's small drum, because mine is too large. See if it won't go in here!" and Oscar measured the drum against his travelling-bag, only to be compelled to acknowledge that it was too large by half. The bells, too, had to be laid aside, though the boy complained that they were absolutely needed to call the guests together at the festival.

"Whose flute is that?" asked the aunt; "it is a beauty."

"It belongs to Feklitus. He is learning to play on it; and he was glad enough to lend it to me, because while it's gone he can't be made to practise!"

Mother and aunt agreed that the flute must not be packed without the consent of Feklitus' parents.

Fred came now with an armful of articles of various kinds for his bag, and behind him appeared Kathri, saying:—

"Mrs. Bickel wants to see Mrs. Stein."

"This isn't a very good time to choose," said Mrs. Stein, with a sigh. "I shall have to leave this all to you," she added, turning to her sister; "and, children, you really must make up your minds what is necessary to take, and not bring all sorts of useless stuff, that only has to be carried back again."

With these words Mrs. Stein went into the room where her guest was sitting. It was easy to see that Mrs. Bickel had something very important on her mind. She had on her fine red and yellow shawl, and on her hat a bunch of large white feathers, higher and bushier than Mrs. Stein had ever seen in her life. The doctor's wife greeted her guest with the fervent though unspoken hope that that lady would immediately unfold the object of her coming, so that the visit might speedily come to a close, and she herself go back to her children's packing. Not so; Mrs. Bickel opened the conversation with a remark upon the weather, which she thought was growing worse and worse. Mrs. Stein agreed with her. Then followed "the cherries"; they had not ripened well this summer. From "cherries" she came to "apples," a natural

association of ideas. Mrs. Stein burned with impatience. Her mind would run on the travelling-bags. Could aunty pack them alone? Would not the most important things be left out, after all, and a great many useless ones put in? That reminded her of the flute, and she hastened to ask whether Feklitus had his parents' permission to lend it. This gave Mrs. Bickel the opening she had been wanting. She said that it was a good thing that Oscar wanted to take the flute; for her husband had decided to let Feklitus take the trip to the Rhine; and he could play on the flute to Mrs. Stanhope; all the more, because none of the doctor's children were musical.

She and Mr. Bickel thought, too, that it would be pleasant for their son to be there with the others, and that it would show people that the doctor's children had other and better acquaintances at home than the two poor children whom Mrs. Stanhope had taken with her.

But here Mrs. Stein interrupted the stream of words to say that there was no occasion for that, as Mrs. Stanhope had seen for herself that Fani and Elsli were her children's most intimate friends. She then inquired whether Mrs. Bickel wished Feklitus to go with her children.

Mrs. Bickel declared that she should not think of such a thing as that. In that case Mrs. Stanhope would naturally ask him to stay at her house, which of course they would not allow; as if he could not afford to pay for his lodging! But she would be glad if Oscar would write as soon as convenient and tell Feklitus the best way to go, and also find out the chief hotel in the neighborhood. Then, if Oscar would meet him on his arrival, and show him the way to it, Feklitus would take a room there, and spend the time between meals with the children at Mrs. Stanhope's. His father meant to go himself very soon to visit his young relatives, as it was only proper that he should do; and he would bring the boy home.

Mrs. Stein listened patiently to this long discourse, but her thoughts often wandered away into the next room, to aunty and the bags. How were they getting on all this

time?

She promised Mrs. Bickel that Oscar would do what she asked, and now she hoped the visit was coming to a close. But there was more to ask. How many suits of clothes did she think needed for such a journey? Would six new ones be enough? Wouldn't it be well to fill one trunk entirely with new shirts, so that they needn't be washed away from home; hotel laundry work was so bad. Mrs. Stein only replied that she had not so many suits to give her children, and that Mrs. Bickel must decide such questions for herself.

It was growing dark before the visit came to an end, and Mrs. Stein hastened back into the other room. The packing was done, and aunty had gone away with Oscar. The other children were complaining that they wanted her, and they didn't see why Oscar should keep her all to himself.

Little Rikli had been watching all the preparations with the keenest interest, and, as it turned out, with an unfortunate effect. For mother and aunty, having decided that the child was too young to go so far from home, had persuaded her, by the prospect of many delightful treats and excursions with them, to make up her mind that she would far rather stay at home, than go on this long, uncertain journey without them. But alas! all this delightful stir of preparation had fascinated the child, and completely changed her views on the subject. She was seized with a desire to go too, and she suddenly burst into a loud scream, which increased every instant under Emma's scolding, and was only intensified by Fred's taunting song:—

"Hanseli is a cry-baby, Rikli is another; She's so exactly like him, He must be her brother."

In the midst of this hubbub, the mother entered, and at once interposed her tranquillizing influence. She lifted Rikli from the floor, where she sat in the midst of the luggage, and called the other two to sit quietly down at her side. On this last evening, she said, she wanted to have a little peaceful time with them; and Emma

and Fred were very glad to consult her about the various questions which lay on their minds, which they had meant to ask aunty about, when Oscar so unceremoniously usurped her.

As Rikli listened to the conversation which followed, and learned how many things her brother and sister were in doubt about,—as to their behavior in Mrs. Stanhope's house, and what they should say and do there, and what they could not,—she made up her mind that it was far better for her to stay quietly at home with her mother and aunty; and the prospect of walks and drives with them, and of the biggest share of all the cherry and apple cakes, seemed more attractive than the very doubtful circumstances in which the others would be placed. So Rikli became quite reconciled to her lot, and was in good-humor again.

Oscar had meantime led his aunt into an unused bedroom on the ground floor, and, having locked the door for farther security from interruption, he announced that he had something very important to consult her about. He had been all winter hunting for suitable mottoes for his new banner, and had pressed so many friends into the service, that he had collected no fewer than thirty-five beautiful mottoes, any one of which would have been perfectly satisfactory. From such wealth it seemed impossible to choose, yet some choice must be made. One banner would hold only one motto, and even Oscar, with all his enthusiasm, could scarcely hope to have thirty-five banners for the sake of using them all. Aunty must help him decide, and already before this last afternoon they had had at least a dozen consultations on the subject, in which they had gradually succeeded in reducing the number of candidates to three. And now the final selection must be made, and Oscar and his aunt could not agree upon it. His aunt wanted him to make his own choice, but he was not willing to decide against her opinion; yet he could not give up his own; he hoped by farther argument to bring her over to his side.

"Now, aunty," he said, when the door was safely locked, "we must settle this about

the motto. I will repeat them all three over again, and you really must choose. First I'll say the one you like best:—

"'Drums beat and banners fly Our Festival to grace; Long live all men, we cry; But guests we forward place.'

"Now that's a good motto, aunty, but you see I can't pack the drum, and so it won't suit very well to say 'drums beat,'—will it?"

"There must be plenty of drums there, and perhaps Fani has one," said his aunt. "And I'm sure the motto is a very good one. However, let me hear the second. I've forgotten just how it goes."

"'Come to our Festival! come all! Come from Switzerland! Conductor, let your tickets fall! And, fireman, stay your hand! You who make boots, or who brew beer, You one and all are welcome here.'

"Don't you think that is, after all, better than the other, aunty?"

"Yes, it is certainly very good, but it is too long. It would take Elsli such a time to embroider it."

"That settles it, then," said Oscar, well pleased that his aunt found a decisive reason for rejecting another. "Now, then, for the last, short and energetic:—

"'Freedom we shout! Freedom for all! Freedom for ever and aye! We will not yield till all chains fall, And tyrants are banished or die!'

"Do you hear that, aunty?"

"Yes, my dear, I can't help hearing it, and it's very spirited, but it doesn't mean anything. I don't know of any 'tyrants' that need to be banished or die, do you? It isn't to be thought of. Take the first, or, if you don't like that, choose another from the list."

But Oscar was obstinate. The first he wouldn't have, and he must somehow or other bring his aunt over to accept this one.

"But, aunty," he began in a tone of remonstrance, "there were tyrants once; don't you remember the poem about Dionysius, the tyrant? And if there have been once, there may be again, and then this verse would be splendid; don't you think so?"

Before aunty could respond to this appeal, came a fearful pounding at the door, which put a stop to the discussion. Fred and Emma, having hunted over the rest of the house in vain, had at last bethought themselves of this apartment; and, finding the door locked, they felt sure that the objects of their search were within.

Emma called through the keyhole:—

"Come, aunty, please, quick! Supper is ready, and papa has come, and mamma sent us to call you."

And Fred shouted in a still louder tone:—

"Come along, Oscar; papa is asking for you."

All was over. His aunt opened the door at once, and Oscar had to follow her.

The next morning, when the carriage had been rolled out of the coach-house and stood waiting for the horses, to which the groom was giving the last polish in the stable, Dr. Stein came into the room where the mother and aunt were putting the final touches to the preparation of the children for the journey.

"I must say good-bye now. My patients cannot be kept waiting, and I must go. One word to you, Oscar. Be careful not to carry your schemes too far while you are visiting. Here, at home, every one knows you; and, if you do a foolish thing, they say: 'It's the doctor's boy; he'll soon be set right.' But now you will have only yourself to depend upon; so don't go into anything heedlessly. Don't undertake anything which you are not quite sure about, so that no unpleasant consequences may result either for yourself or for the lady whose guest you are to be. You must remember that you will displease Mrs. Stanhope if you do a wrong or foolish thing. You are old enough to understand me without farther explanation. Do not forget. Now good-bye, my boy, and you too, Emma; good-bye, Fred. Be happy and be

good."

With these words the father shook all three pairs of outstretched hands and was off.

The mother drew Emma to the other side of the room for a word of admonition. The big roll of paper and the book that the little girl had been so anxious to have at Christmas, and was now so determined to take with her, roused anxious thoughts in the mother's mind, and she felt that she must speak seriously to the child, warning her not to instigate Fani to any undertaking which Mrs. Stanhope might not approve. She reminded Emma that Fani was now very well off, and that the prospect before him was very bright, if Mrs. Stanhope should decide to take him under her protection. But it was of the greatest importance that he should do nothing to displease Mrs. Stanhope, and Emma would certainly never forgive herself if she should be the means of leading him to act contrary to his benefactress' wishes.

Emma understood the value of her mother's suggestion and promised to heed her advice, adding earnestly that she would try to think of different ways in which Fani could make himself agreeable to Mrs. Stanhope.

"You'd far better not think about it at all, my child," replied her mother. "Enjoy with Fani the pleasures and advantages of his life, and don't try to bring about any special event, as you are so fond of doing. And one thing more: don't forget to pray every day to God to protect you and to help you to carry out all your good resolutions. Now that you are leaving home, my only comfort is that our Father's hand is still about you, there as well as here. Promise me that you will pray for the heavenly blessing every night, as we do together at home."

Emma promised not to neglect her morning and evening prayers, and begged her mother to have no anxiety about her.

Meanwhile, aunty had been standing by the window, talking with Fred.

"Pray be careful," she said, "never by any chance to let one of your small creatures, even the prettiest one, escape out of your pockets upon the table or the floor. In fact,

you would do better not to put them into your pockets at all, for fear of some such mishap, as often occurs at home. It would spoil all the pleasure of your visit; for Mrs. Stanhope would neither understand nor forgive such carelessness."

"Don't worry, aunty," replied the boy; "I'll fix them so they can't stir. I'll bring them all safe home to you, and I'm sure you will be delighted with them."

Rikli had been meanwhile listening to one person and another, catching the words of warning and advice as they were given to the three travellers, and dwelling with pride and pleasure at the thought that she was the only one who did not need any caution.

To her aunt's closing words to Fred, she added quickly:—

"Yes, yes! how Mrs. Stanhope would stare to see a horrid frog or a red snail or a blind worm come hopping over her white table-cloth!"

"Well, I think any one would stare, to see a snail or a worm hop anywhere!" said the boy laughing.

"You'd see what she would say, and how she would put you out of the house in no time, and take all your food away."

"I don't believe I should see her say anything at all," retorted Fred, with another laugh.

"You'd find out how it would be, when you were sent home in disgrace; and you'd be ashamed to be seen in the railway carriage, and by the children in school."

"I don't mean to find out anything of the kind," said Fred, and the contest dropped.

The coachman cracked his whip as a signal that it was high time to start. Hurried good-byes were said; the children seized their bags, and seated themselves in the carriage; the horses started, and the journey was begun. Mother and aunt stood by the road-side, and waved their handkerchiefs till the carriage turned a corner and was lost to view.

"Oh! I wish I knew that they would meet with no accident, and would all come home safe!" said the mother, with a sigh, as she turned back to the house.

"That will be as God wills," said her sister; "we must trust them to him, and pray him to send his angels to watch over them; that will be a better protection than any that we two could afford them."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE BEAUTIFUL RHINE.

In the garden at Rosemount was such an excitement and running to and fro as had never been seen there before. It was the day after the arrival of the three guests. Great had been the surprise of the doctor's children, yesterday evening, when they were shown up stairs, to find three large rooms assigned for their use, one to each. For the house was so arranged that there was but one bed in each room. The windows of all three rooms overlooked the garden, and beyond could be seen the river. The children had never before been so royally lodged. Emma planned directly to spend long hours at her window, looking into the moonlight and listening to the river, as late as she chose, for no one would come to send her off to bed. Oscar looked about the large apartment, and thought what a fine place it would be to spread out his banners. They would not be in any one's way, as they were at home; and no one would come and clear them out. Fred examined all the presses, tables, and drawers, and destined them to his special uses.

The meeting of the five children was a most joyous one to them all. From the first moment they found themselves on as intimate a footing as if they had never been separated. Elsli and Fani were not changed as the doctor's children had feared they might be; on the contrary, it seemed as if they were even nearer to their old friends. Fani was merrier and more lively than ever, and Elsli, although still somewhat shy, was more confiding than before, and just as amiable and obliging; and they both

were so attractive in their nice clothes, that Emma took great delight in merely looking at them.

The first morning was spent in emptying the big trunk, with Aunt Clarissa's help, and in arranging the contents in the three rooms. In the afternoon the children were allowed to explore the house and garden, and to have a run in the meadows, that they might become acquainted with Rosemount and its surroundings. What a pleasure for them all!

Emma's first wish was to get down to the river-side, under the lindens, and to see the branches dip and rise and dip again into the swiftly flowing stream. Fani had drawn her a picture of it, and she must see it. It was Fani's favorite spot, and he was ready enough to show it to her; so the two ran off together.

Fred did not know which way to turn. He was fairly bewildered by all the living wonders that surrounded him; the glancing, gleaming, humming world of the rose-garden. Here a golden beetle crept across the lawn; there the air seemed full of gayly colored butterflies. On the edge of the fountain sat a golden-green lizard in the sun. Over on the hedge a great variety of wonderful insects swarmed on every leaf and twig! What a harvest he could gather! He ran about in every direction; he was beside himself with delight; discovering every moment something new and unexpected. Nor was this in the garden only. Down by the river, under the old trees, in the thick hedges, in the damp earth by the water-side, between the cracks of the stones by the river, he felt sure of countless treasures. He paid little attention to his friends or his brother and sister; he seemed to swim in an ocean of wealth, undreamed of before, and all within his grasp!

Oscar, meantime, under Elsli's guidance, had been examining every part of the garden; carefully observing everything as he walked along down to the Rhine, along the meadow-land and back to the court-yard, which was all walled in, and where two big oak-trees cast a far-reaching shadow. Around these oaks ran a wooden seat

where one could sit in comfort under the thick protection of the leafy cover. Here the two children seated themselves; and Oscar looked thoughtfully across the broad meadow, around which ran a high hedge; a broad paved path led from the court-yard down to a gate-way of iron-work, which united the hedges that enclosed the whole estate.

"And you say, Elsli," said Oscar presently, "that beyond the hedges the land does not belong to Mrs. Stanhope at all?"

"No, Oscar; a very large vineyard belongs to her besides. It is so large that you would not believe the quantity of grapes that she gets from it. It lies on the other side of the house, towards the Rhine."

"I don't mean that," said Oscar; "Fani showed me that this morning. I mean from the end of the meadow-land across the high-road there."

Elsli was quite sure that Mrs. Stanhope owned nothing beyond the high-road.

"Do you see that little hill over there?" said Oscar, pointing in that direction. "There's a wind-mill up there; see how finely the big wings go turning round in the wind, like huge banners waving for a festival, and inviting people from all sides to come and rejoice together. All the people who are to come to our celebration might camp out around the foot of that hill, and the speaker could stand up above there on that platform, and those huge flags would wave to and fro behind him and show where the festival was taking place, to all the neighboring country!"

Oscar uttered these words in such a tone of enthusiasm that his companion caught the infection; but she hesitated.

"Yes, it would be fine," she said; "but don't you think we should have to ask the miller's leave?"

Oscar thought this would not be at all necessary, as the meeting would do no harm to the mill or to the grass, which was evidently very short. He would go over and inspect the place himself.

"How is the banner getting on, Elsli?" he asked presently.

"Oh, I forgot it entirely!" said the girl, somewhat startled. "It is all ready, and I meant to put it in your bedroom to welcome you. You see, Oscar, I finished it; because Aunt Clarissa said that it would be prettier without a motto, if I put a wreath of Alpine roses on the Swiss flag, and so I embroidered one upon it."

But this did not suit Oscar at all; he wished to have his motto, his verses, over which he had spent so much trouble and had had so many discussions. He had no mind to drop it now; and he looked as if he had suffered a severe loss. Elsli saw his disappointment, and she hastened to propose a remedy. Why not put the motto on the other side of the banner? Oscar could print the verse in large letters on a piece of paper, and she would fasten it upon the banner, on the side opposite the Alpine roses. That was a clever thought. Oscar's spirits rose again, and the banner would be really in the end far handsomer than he had expected.

"You are the smartest girl I know, Elsli," cried the lad; and this unexpected praise brought the color into Elsli's cheeks, for she was little accustomed to notice, much less to commendation.

"How many Swiss have you found and invited to join our society?" continued Oscar.

Elsli confessed that she had discovered but one; the baker's boy who brought fresh bread to the house every day; and she could not induce him to join the society. "I am very sorry," she said, "that I could not do as you asked me; but we are not allowed to go into the kitchen and talk to the people that come there."

But Oscar was well satisfied. He only wanted to know at what time and from which direction the baker's boy came every morning; and this Elsli told him. "All right!" he said; "I can help myself, now."

Meanwhile, Fani and Emma were walking up and down by the river-side, talking with constantly increasing eagerness. Emma had never been so excited; she had had a tremendous surprise. Since Fani had left home, she had never lost sight of her hope

that he would become a great artist. He had never mentioned the subject in his letters, and it had been more and more evident that Mrs. Stanhope meant to educate the two children, as she would have done her own, in various branches, without any view to a special training for a life-work. Emma feared that Fani would lose his ambition to be an artist, and she set herself to work to counteract this danger. She had heard of a book called the "Lives of Celebrated Painters," and she did not rest till her aunt promised to procure it for her at Christmas; for she thought it would inspire Fani with fresh enthusiasm to learn how artists had become great and celebrated. She now brought the book with her, and told Fani about it, in the hope that it would serve as a spur to arouse his dormant energies. What was her astonishment when Fani pushed the book away, and broke out passionately:—

"No, no; I will not read it! I will try not to think of it at all! You see, Emma, I have a drawing lesson every day; only now of course I do not, while you are here on a visit. And the more I draw, the more I want to; I can do much better than I used to, and the teacher has told me several times that I can certainly learn to be an artist."

Emma could not contain her joy at these words, and she cried out:—

"Now it's all right, Fani! You can be a painter, and I am sure you will be a celebrated one, the most famous one in all the land. But why do not you tell Mrs. Stanhope directly that you want to do that and nothing else?"

Fani shook his head and looked very much depressed.

"It would be of no use. Mrs. Stanhope will not allow me to be an artist; I am sure of that. Once when we were walking, I said to her that I thought painting pictures was the greatest happiness a man could have; she said it was only a childish notion; and that when I grew up I should have very different ideas as to greatness and happiness. And since then she has taken me about the estate several times; for you know, Emma, that it is a very large property; great vineyards stretching for miles along the Rhine. She says there is nothing so desirable for a man as to own a large place, and

to live on it; and I think she has the thought in her mind that she will keep me with her here on the estate; and of course it would be a great thing for me if she did. Just think of it. Always to live here as we do now; how terribly ungrateful I should be if I did not rejoice in such a prospect! Only—I must give up all idea of ever being an artist!" And Fani hung his head.

"Oh, what a shame! It's of no use thinking about it any more, then!" cried Emma, in tones of intense disappointment. "And I was just beginning to think that everything would turn out for you as I had hoped. It is too bad! I had such good fun reading the book, and putting your name in the place of the celebrated artist; like this—'In delicacy of drawing Fani von Buchberg stands far above all his compeers.' For you know when you were celebrated, you would be spoken of so; for they always take the name of their birth-place, instead of their family name; and that would be particularly nice, because Hopli isn't a very good name, but Fani von Buchberg sounds finely, doesn't it? Listen!" And Emma read from the book.

"Where Fani von Buchberg learned to mix his paints, is a mystery. Even to this day, he is the only one who can place such enchanting tones of color upon his canvas. Of course, that is a mistake; it ought to be shades of color, shouldn't it, Fani? Oh! think, if such things could be said of you! and now it is all over; no chance of that any more!" And the girl threw herself on the bench as if it wasn't worth while to take the trouble to stir again.

Fani sat down at her side. He had followed every word she had said, with increasing excitement; and he had caught the fire of her enthusiasm, for his eyes flamed.

"I know something that may make a difference," he said presently; and at his words Emma, who had looked as if life had lost all charm for her, sprang up with renewed interest, exclaiming eagerly:—

"What is it, Fani? Speak; do speak!"

"Come with me," and he ran along the river-side, drawing her with him. "There, sit

down here and look up over Rosemount, towards the wood. Do you see that ruined castle, all covered with ivy?"

"I don't see anything. Oh, yes, I do now! I can see an old, old tower"; and as she spoke the excited girl leaned backwards towards the river, and she would certainly have fallen in, if Fani had not caught her and held her fast.

"There, we will go back to the seat again," he said; "though the ruin is scarcely visible from here," he added, as they reached the spot; "but it is safer. It is the most beautiful ruined castle that you can imagine. It is all covered with ivy, and the stones are moss-grown, and the gray walls show through in places, and in the setting sun they flame with crimson; you've no idea how beautiful it is! I saw it once from the steamboat. It was splendid! Now listen! The last lesson I took, the teacher asked me whether I was in earnest when I said that I wanted to be a painter; and I said yes, but that I could never be allowed to; and I told him just what I have told you. He understood at once; and he said that I mustn't, of course, do anything to displease Mrs. Stanhope; but that possibly she might in some way be led to have the same wish. He advised me to make a drawing of something very beautiful; and he said he would send it to Düsseldorf, where they do something or other with a whole lot of drawings, and the best one gets a prize. If mine got a prize, Mrs. Stanhope might change her mind; and if it didn't, I could try again. I thought directly of the ruined castle, and how beautiful it would be to draw! But there's no good view of it except from the middle of the river, and it's quite impossible for me to get there."

To Emma there was no such word as impossible.

"Of course we can get there, Fani. What a delightful ideal" she cried. "We can make a trip on the steamboat, and we can see the river, and you must make a sketch of it as fast as you can."

"Oh, yes! I shall just get a few strokes on the paper, and then—whizz!—we shall be past it like a flash of lightning. What good would that do?"

Emma was not to be discouraged. If the only thing needful was a way to take a sketch from the river, she would set herself to find such a way.

At this moment Fani interrupted her meditations by the exclamation: "Oh, the bell! the bell!" and she heard the ringing of the supper-bell; and the two children scampered back to the house, and joined the scattered guests, who came from every direction to meet in the great dining-room.

At the upper end of the table, spread with many delicious luxuries, sat Mrs. Stanhope, and she welcomed the children in the kindest manner. Aunt Clarissa seated them in their places, then sat down herself at the foot of the table, and the meal began. The guests brought wonderful appetites to the feast. The conversation was subdued, for in Mrs. Stanhope's presence the children's liveliness was somewhat checked. Elsli spoke least, and also partook least of the tempting viands. Her abstinence attracted the attention of Fred, who sat next her, and, in spite of a warning shove which she gave him under the table, to show him that she wished to avoid observation, he exclaimed in a loud whisper:—

"What's the matter with you, Elsli? Why don't you eat?"

After supper Mrs. Stanhope led them all out upon the terrace, and they sat down in a semicircle on the garden benches. Then she told them that she had a plan of taking them very soon on a steamboat excursion down the Rhine, as far as Cologne; where there was a remarkably fine zoölogical garden which they would all visit together. Emma's eyes blazed with delight, but she did not speak; her thoughts were busy, but not wholly with the animals of the garden. Fred was delighted at the prospect; but the zoölogical garden had a powerful rival in an enormous night-moth which was humming about his head, and which he could hardly resist his desire to jump up and catch. Such a prize it would be! But he recollected his aunt's advice, on the good manners of sitting still, especially in Mrs. Stanhope's presence. Oscar was overjoyed at the prospect of a voyage, and he bethought himself immediately of the possibility

of meeting with persons much more desirable for his Society than Elsli's baker's boy.

The next day the children sat down to keep their promise of writing home an account of their experiences. The three letters were very different in style, but they were all filled with the delight of their writers at the beauty and magnificence of the villa, and with the pleasures they enjoyed and the kindness they received. They hoped they should stay twelve weeks instead of six. These were the letters. But into each letter was secretly slipped a private note, addressed to Aunty, begging her to persuade papa to allow the visit to be prolonged as much as possible. Fred added that if the time fixed should be a year, and then a cipher added to the number of days, three thousand six hundred and fifty would not be one too many for him.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

The next morning, Oscar was early on hand at the iron gate; waiting to see the baker's boy, when he brought the bread. The boy came along with a huge basket on his arm, from which issued an agreeable smell of freshly baked loaves. Oscar went to meet him, and asked abruptly:—

"Which canton are you from?"

"That is none of your business," answered the boy.

Oscar was not a whit surprised or daunted by this reply.

"You needn't be so rough," he said; "I've a very good reason for asking." And he went on to explain to the boy what he had in mind, and to enlarge on the pleasure of collecting as many Swiss as possible; and of holding a festival in honor of their country. Then it appeared that the fellow was not a bad fellow at all, and had only answered in that rude way to show his independence. He received Oscar's proposal

with great interest, though he owned that he knew but very few Swiss in the neighborhood. He had come from Lucerne only about six months before, to work for the baker, whose wife was his cousin. A shoemaker's boy from Uri lived near by, and a porter at the "Bunch of Grapes" came from Schwyz. Then there was the great factory down by the canal, which belonged to some Swiss gentlemen. He carried bread there every day, and had often seen two boys playing ball in the garden, but they had never spoken to him. Oscar was well pleased with this information. He asked the boy to invite the shoemaker's boy and the porter to join the society, and he would see the others himself. He would appoint the day, and decide on other particulars later; as the baker's boy came every day to the house, there would be no difficulty in keeping him informed.

Highly delighted with his success, Oscar told the other children of his plans, and asked Fani to go with him to the factory to see the two boys. Fani refused decidedly. Mrs. Stanhope, he said, did not allow him and Elsli to visit people with whom she was not acquainted, especially in the neighborhood. But when Elsli saw how badly Oscar felt at this refusal, she said:—

"Perhaps you can go, Oscar. If you don't think of any better way, I'll tell you what I think you could do. When I came away from home, Mr. Bickel asked me to look about here and find out what sort of factories there were in this neighborhood, and send him word so that he might know whether he could form any business relations with them. I have not been able to do anything about it. Perhaps you could go and visit the factory, and then write to Mr. Bickel about it."

"I always said you were the cleverest girl in the world," cried Oscar, with delight; for he saw the way now clear before him. That afternoon, when they all went out to the court-yard and garden for their out-door games, he ran off to the factory. The dwelling-house stood not far from the canal, surrounded by a pretty flower-garden. Under the trees two lads were playing ball. They played with such zeal that Oscar,

looking over the hedge, became absorbed in watching them, and entirely forgot his object He was a good player himself; but such throws!

"Bravo!" he cried; and the boys looked round. "Come and play too," called one of them.

Oscar asked nothing better. Hardly had he entered the yard than piff! paff! the play began again. Such a game he had never had before, nor with such players. The boys were as well pleased as he; and they played on till the big factory bell rang for close of work, and Oscar remembered that he must go home. He wanted to make acquaintance with these boys. The three playmates had, to be sure, already struck up a friendship, but they did not even know each other's names. Oscar now told his, and asked theirs; and learned that they were named Fink; the sons of the family who lived in the large house. They were from St. Gall, and were warm-hearted, wide awake young fellows. They made friends with this new acquaintance from Switzerland with all their hearts, and Oscar was as ardent as they. What enterprises they would plan and carry out together! But there was no time to stop and talk about it now. He could only hint to them that he had a project of founding a great society of Swiss, a kind of Swiss Confederation, in which he wished them to take part. They received the idea with enthusiasm, and, having fixed a time for meeting his new friends again, Oscar returned to Rosemount with a happy heart. But what kind of a factory that was of Mr. Fink's, he knew as little as before; he had forgotten to ask.

From this time Oscar was always missing during the time that the children were left to themselves to play as they pleased out-of-doors. No one minded his absence; Fred was so busy with his collections that he thought of nothing else; Fani and Emma were absorbed in their own plans and only wanted to be let alone; and Elsli, feeling that her society was not important to any one, sat by herself on the bench under the lindens, occupied with her own thoughts by the hour together. Sometimes she grew unhappy at the thought that she was living here so well-off and at ease, while her

father and mother still had such a hard life at home. Often she thought about Nora, and wondered if she had forgotten to ask the heavenly Father to call her to himself. She could well be spared from the earth, where no one needed her, and she longed to go. To tell the truth, Elsli dreaded to look forward. She did not feel at home in Mrs. Stanhope's house; she had a constant sense of unfitness for the position; yet when she thought of going back to her parents, she knew that there she should be equally out of place. So the poor child was living a lonely life at beautiful Rosemount, and thinking herself a useless and superfluous being on the face of the earth.

Down along the bank of the river, a narrow foot-path ran for some distance towards a thick clump of willows, in which it disappeared. Elsli had often followed this path by herself; it was so quiet that she liked it particularly; she never met any one there, for it led only from Mrs. Stanhope's grounds to the willows. To-day, after Elsli had sat alone for a time, she rose and walked along this path, and gazed at the ever-moving waves as they rushed headlong toward the sea. Sunk in thought, she came at last nearer to the willows than she had ever been before. The bushes grew larger and higher and became real trees; from a distance they looked like a thick wood that reached far into the water. Here was complete solitude; not a creature was to be seen, and the plash of the water below was the only sound that broke the stillness. Suddenly a loud scream startled the air. Elsli drew back in alarm. Louder and louder grew the sounds of distress, now pausing, then beginning afresh. The child, recovering her courage, hurried forward to the spot from which they came. Behind the first low-growing clump of willows the ground was wet and swampy; and fast caught in the bog stood two children;—a little girl, who was screaming with all her might, and a boy, who was tugging at his sister's arm as hard as he could. When he found that he could not pull her out he too began to cry aloud. Elsli came to their aid, and lifted the little girl from her uncomfortable position. The boy then slowly worked his way out, but his wooden shoes were a great encumbrance, and he moved with difficulty. When the two children stood at last on dry land with their wet

shoes and clothes soaked with muddy water, they presented a pitiable sight, and Elsli asked them sympathetically whether they were far from home, and where they lived.

The boy, who was scarcely more than six years old, evidently felt immediate confidence in Elsli. He took her by the hand and said entreatingly:—

"Come with us and tell mother about it!" And as he spoke he looked ruefully at his shoes and at his sister's gown, on which the mud was rapidly drying, and which looked as if it were made of pasteboard. The little girl, not more than four years old, taking Elsli's other hand, said softly, "Do come with us."

It was plain that they wanted some friendly intercession with their mother, and Elsli felt sure that such small children could not have wandered far from home; so she held tight the clasping hands and let them lead her.

The boy became at once very confidential, and entered on the family history. His mother was ill, and his grandfather could not go out into the sun unless she helped him. The little girl's name was Lenchen, and his own was Lucas, and the other boys were Tolf and Heini, and were not much bigger than he. As he talked, they passed the willow-bushes, and came to the taller trees that stood near together; and quite close to the water, wedged tightly in between two of these trees, stood a small hut, so low and gray with moss, that it could scarcely be distinguished from the trees.

"Here," said the boy, and drew Elsli with him into the house. It was pleasant and clean within, though low and small. The sun was streaming in through the little window in the corner. Against the wall was a bedstead, where the sick mother lay, staring with big, wide-open eyes at the new-comer. In the sunny corner sat an old man with snow-white hair. He looked up wonderingly at Elsli and the children. Two boys, not much larger than Lucas, came towards them as they entered.

"We've been looking for you everywhere, and we couldn't find you anywhere!" they cried. Elsli went to the bedside and told the mother about the children's misfortune,

and where she had found them.

The poor woman thanked her, and said it was very difficult for her to look after the little ones, now that she was confined to her bed. The two older boys had all they could do to keep the house in order, so she let the younger children go out by themselves; and sometimes they got into trouble, for they were foolish little things. As she spoke, the mother looked with anxious eyes at Lenchen, as she stood in her mud-stiffened clothes.

"Can I help you in any way?" asked Elsli. She spoke timidly, for the woman's tone and manner compelled respect.

"We have never been obliged to beg," was the reply. "We help ourselves as well as we can. But since I have been ill, it has been very hard. What help could a young lady like you give us?"

"I am not a young lady. I can take off Lenchen's frock and wash it, and hang it out to dry," replied Elsli, eagerly.

"Your dress shows that you are a young lady," answered the sick woman, evidently much surprised; and she glanced searchingly at Elsli from head to foot.

The dress, which was one of Nora's, was of soft woollen material, trimmed with silk bands.

"It is not mine; it was only given me to wear," she said.

Suddenly the woman felt strongly drawn towards the friendly girl. She thought she must be a foreigner. Her way of speaking, her whole appearance had something unusual about it. Perhaps some one had taken pity on her, and had lent her clothes because she was so good. So she thanked Elsli and accepted her offer. Without hesitation Elsli set to work, and it was easy to see that it was not for the first time. In a trice she had freed Lenchen from her shell, and dressed her in a little jacket that hung on the wall. Then she took the stiff frock upon her arm and went with the children into the kitchen. She drew water in a wooden bucket, and put the two pairs

of little feet to soak, after removing the dirty shoes and socks. When they were clean and dried, she sent the children back into the other room, while she washed out the dress. They went very obediently, but Lucas called back to her to hurry and come to them as soon as the washing was done. The other boys now came into the kitchen, desirous to scrape acquaintance with this novel visitor.

When Tolf saw how much at home the stranger seemed to be in her work, he said:—

"Get our supper ready too, won't you? If you don't, we shall have to wait till father comes home; and he doesn't know how to cook very well, either."

"Yes," chimed in Heini; "and once he fell asleep when he was cooking, he was so tired; and the potatoes were all burned up."

"Yes, and then father has to go fishing after supper," continued Tolf; "every day, no matter how tired he is, he takes the boat and goes to catch fish to sell."

"And we've got to learn to fish too," interrupted Heini; "father says the oars are too heavy for us now, but by and by we shall be strong enough, and we must all work as hard as we can, or else we shall have nothing to eat, and our house will be taken away from us."

These words roused many old memories in Elsli; how well she knew how it all was. It seemed to her as if she were at home with her father again, and saw his tired face, and heard him say:—

"If we can only manage so that we shall not have to give up our house!"

When Elsli had finished the washing, she went to the mother's bedside, and asked if she were willing that she should get the supper ready, and if she would tell her what to do. The eyes of the sick woman glowed with pleasure.

"Oh!" she cried, "how kind you are! will you really do that for us?" and she seized Elsli's hand, and grasped it heartily. Then she told her what she wished to have done. It was simple enough; Elsli had done the same at home a hundred times. The boys

ran into the kitchen with her.

"I know of something new for you to do," she said, presently. "How old are you?"

"I am seven," "I am eight," they answered both at once; and Elsli said:—

"Well, you are old enough. When I was eight I had to cook the potatoes all by myself. Now I will show you how to do it, if you like, and then when your father comes home tired, you can say, 'Sit down, dear father, and eat your supper; it is all ready.'"

The boys were very much pleased with this proposition, and all eagerness to begin. Elsli showed them how to make the fire with small bits of dry wood at first, and to put the larger sticks on afterwards. Then the potatoes must be washed very clean, and put into the pot, and a very little water poured upon them. The boys worked away merrily, and meanwhile Elsli fetched the sour milk. The boys watched the pot unceasingly, but when the potatoes began to burst apart, first one and then another, they were frightened and called aloud for Elsli. She speedily reassured them, explaining that the bursting only meant that they were good potatoes and that they were done. Then she threw away the water that remained in the pot, and poured the potatoes out into a big round dish. She carried the plates into the other room, and made the table ready against the father's arrival.

The old grandfather, who had watched the proceedings from his corner, called Elsli to him.

"You are good, and very handy too," he said; "can you come again to-morrow?"

Elsli promised to come.

"Look, I am lame," he went on, "and ever since my daughter has been sick, I have not been able to get out into the sun, because there is no one for me to lean on; the children are too little. Will you help me to-morrow to get out-of-doors?"

She promised that too. But now it was time for her to go; she must not be away

when the supper-bell rang. The mother thanked her again and again, and the children begged her to stay longer. As she went out of the house she saw a man just taking from his shoulder a shovel, which he placed against the house. Elsli recognized him at once as the weary laborer whom she had seen before, and who had reminded her of her father. And as he stood there now, with his two boys affectionately clinging to his sides, and looked sadly yet kindly at her, he seemed still more to resemble her father, and she could not keep the tears from her eyes. She could scarcely refrain from sobbing, so clearly did she see the anxiety and trouble that were in his heart, the same that weighed down her own father at home. She held her hand to him, he pressed it kindly, and she was gone.

When the father entered the cottage, the children all began talking at once, so that he could not understand a word they said. He went to the bedside, and asked his wife for an explanation. She told him just what had happened, and of her wonder that a child so well dressed and with such an air of refinement should have been able to do that kind of work for poor people like themselves, and she didn't know where she could have come from; but the father said simply, "Our Heavenly Father has taken pity on our misery, and has sent a kind angel to help us." And he thought of the tears of pity that he had seen in Elsli's eyes.

Elsli ran as fast as she could along the path to the linden tree and up into the garden. The supper-bell rang just as she reached the house, and the different members of the household gathered together from their different occupations. No one asked any questions of Elsli. She meant, as soon as she could find a good opportunity, to ask Aunt Clarissa's leave to continue her visits to the fisherman's family. She did not doubt that she should be allowed to help them; they were so much in need of help.

When she left the cottage, she had asked the woman if she should not send a doctor to her; but the answer was that the best medicine would be her own return. The poor mother had been constantly prevented from getting well by trying to work before

she was strong enough, and yet there was so much to be done that it was hard for her to keep her bed. If she could lie still for one week only, she would be well again.

So Elsli had decided that she could not help going again, and she was glad to go. It was a real pleasure to her to feel that she could be of use, that some one really needed her.

The next afternoon Elsli did not wait a moment on the seat by the river. As soon as the children had scattered to their different amusements she started down to the lindens, and she did not stop till she reached the little house among the willows. All four children were standing in the door-way awaiting her. They cried out with joy when they espied her, and ran to meet her, and when she took little Lenchen up in her arms, the child almost choked her in her close embrace. The boys too were so glad to see her, and pressed so near her side, that she began to feel as if she were surrounded by a tenderness and love such as she had never before received; the poor, lonely little girl!

The mother's welcome was warm, and the grandfather raised both arms in the air and cried out:—

"God be praised! I had begun to think that there was no chance for to-day!"

He asked her to help him go directly out into the sun; for it was pleasant and warm outside, but within he sat chilly all day long. It was no easy task, for the old man was heavy, and leaned upon her so that she could scarcely stand under his weight, but at last they struggled out to where the sun shone pleasantly on the water, and gilded the trunks of the old willows with his beams. Here the old man sat down, and asked Elsli to sit by him. She did so, and he went on talking.

"Yes," he said, "that is the same old Rhine! How I have always loved it! But it will soon be all over with me; I shall not be long here to see it; I must go, and where? But it's foolish to talk this way to you; you are too young to understand. Your life is just beginning. Are you not happy, and glad to think that you can stay here by this

beautiful water for a long, long time to come?"

"I don't think of that when I look at the river," said Elsli. "I think of the beautiful stream that flows through Paradise, and of the happiness of those who live there."

"What do you say! How can you know anything about that?" said the old man, looking at Elsli in amazement.

"I know what is said about it in a beautiful song; I have known it a long time. One of my friends taught it to me, and she has gone there already. Shall I repeat it to you?"

The old man nodded assent, and Elsli was glad to repeat the song again to some one who must be interested to hear it, since he was so soon going there himself, he said. She began directly, and, as the old man listened with great attention, she kept on to the end. He shook his head several times during the recitation, and, when it was finished, he said:—

"That will not be for me."

Elsli was very much startled. "But why not, why not?" she asked, anxiously. "It is certainly for every one; we must all die some time, and then how happy we shall be, when we go there."

He shook his head again.

"Not for me; it is only for the good." He said no more for some minutes, and Elsli sat in silence. At last he spoke again.

"I could tell you something, but I don't think you would understand me. If a man doesn't get along well in life, and he thinks that God can help him but does not, he says to himself that there's no use in praying, and he must help himself as he can; and so he grows reckless and does things that are wrong and that he shouldn't do; then when he comes to die, and he has not thought for a long time anything about God and Heaven, then the door of Paradise does not open to him, and he cannot go in to that happy life. But why do I talk to you of this? You cannot understand."

But Elsli did understand partly, for she remembered hearing her step-mother once say it was easy enough for those to pray who had all they wanted, for they could see that God helped them; but he had never helped her. And Elsli could hear again the sorrowful tones of her father's voice as he answered:—

"If we think that, it will be worse and worse for us; that is not the right way to think."

These thoughts made Elsli very sad; but presently she roused herself and said she would go into the house and see if she could do something for the sick woman; she would come back by and by, and help him into the house again. The old man would not let her go, however; he drew her down again upon the fallen tree on which he was sitting.

"No, no; stay here," he said. "Let us talk a little more; you are wise for your age. Don't you know some other song? I should like to hear another."

Yes; Elsli knew many others; but she could not tell which it would be best to repeat now. After thinking awhile, she suddenly looked up brightly and said, "I remember one now that perhaps you will like. Shall I say it?" and as her companion nodded assent, she went on:—

"The night draws on—sped is my day; I know my end is near. I raise my trembling hands to pray; The grave's dark road I fear.

"O God! thou art my only light! Be thou my guiding star! Hide all my trespasses from sight; Thy mercies endless are.

"Look down upon me, Lord! I bow, Repenting of my sin, Oh! ope the gates of heaven now, And bid me enter in."

The old man was silent. In a few moments Elsli arose, and the grandfather rose also, to go back with her into the house. While with slow and painful steps they regained the door, he said, thoughtfully:—

"Yes; I heard that long ago when I went to church. Then, it is still true! If I could only find my way there! Will you come to-morrow, my child, and say those verses again?"

Elsli promised heartily. She was glad that she had thought of the right words to help the poor old man. She set to work at once in the house, and did not rest till she had put to rights everything that could make the mother uneasy, and had made the sick woman and the children orderly and comfortable. The boys were eager to have her come into the kitchen, to see how well they remembered their yesterday's lesson. Everything went right; and as she was leaving the house she again met the father coming in, and again received from him the friendly yet depressed greeting which reminded her of her own father. And when the four children seized and held her, declaring that she should not leave them, a rare smile lighted up his weary face for a moment, and he stretched out his hand to her with such a tender look of love as she had never in her life received from any one but her father.

And this was the story of one day after another for many succeeding days. Elsli was living in quite another world from that in which the other children were amusing themselves at Rosemount. A new life had come to her, and she looked so happy always and so changed that Fred one day called out:—

"What makes you so happy, Elsli? You look as if you had just caught two gold beetles!"

Elsli had found a place in the world, and no longer felt herself useless and superfluous. She knew that early every morning the four children began to count the hours till she should come. The sick mother longed for her to appear and with her skilful hands bring neatness and comfort into her room. The grandfather depended on her help to take his daily airing, and, more than that, he loved the songs and hymns and gentle talk, with which Elsli brightened an hour of his lonely day. And every day Elsli could see more clearly how the father grew happier in his

home-coming, now that he found the house-work done and a peaceful evening of rest before him.

Only one thing troubled her. She had not found a chance to talk with Aunt Clarissa, and these daily visits were still a secret. And what if Mrs. Stanhope should disapprove them! This thought gave her great anxiety. She knew that there was nothing wrong about them, but she was not sure that they would be allowed. For all that, she could not give them up. She had made many attempts to tell Aunt Clarissa, but there was a great deal going on in the house, and every time she spoke she was told that she must wait till another time. One day she determined to make another effort to get a few minutes' attention from Aunt Clarissa in the evening, and then she would tell her the whole story. After supper she went to her and asked whether she might tell her something before they went out on the terrace with the others. Aunt Clarissa asked how long it would take, for Mrs. Stanhope wished them all to go out together in a few minutes. Elsli answered that it would take some time to tell it all, but that it was very important.

"Then, dear," said Aunt Clarissa, "we shall have to wait till some other time; but I will call you to come to me in my room as soon as I can find a quiet time. There is no hurry, I'm sure."

So it was put off again.

CHAPTER V.

GREAT PREPARATIONS.

The day had come for the expedition to Cologne. It was a perfect day. The sky was blue and the sun shone bright. The children had a delightful trip, and the zoölogical garden was beyond all expectation interesting. Nevertheless, when they went to bed that night, each was a little dissatisfied on looking back over the day. Each thought:—

"It was splendid! but what a shame!"

Yet each was thinking of a different disappointment.

When they went on board the steamboat in the morning, Mrs. Stanhope said:—

"Now, all come and sit here quietly with me; there are so many passengers to-day that it will not do for you to be running about."

This prevented Oscar from carrying out his plan of going through the crowd, to find as many fellow-countrymen as he could, whom he could invite to his great Festival.

Emma had cherished a hope that by some unexpected arrangement it would turn out that the boat would stop for a little while in sight of the ruined castle, and she had brought pencils and paper, so as to be ready for the fortunate moment, if it should come. She was greatly disappointed when the boat shot swiftly by the spot, so that she hardly caught even a glimpse of the chosen view. Fani glanced at her despondently, with a look which said:—

"You see I was right. There's nothing to be done about it."

On entering the gardens, Mrs. Stanhope said again that they must all keep together. No one must linger behind, nor hurry before, or they might get lost; and they must not touch anything in the garden.

This was a blow to Fred, and took away most of his satisfaction in seeing the animals; and his martyrdom did not cease while they were in the gardens. Here he heard great buzzing and humming in a bush, and he longed to see the wonderful insects that made it. There he saw bright-colored butterflies fluttering about the flowers; on one side red-gold beetles were creeping in the grass before his eyes; on the other some huge lizards were sunning themselves on a rock. He must pass by all these attractions; not stop a moment to examine them, not touch one of all this multitude of treasures. It was almost too much for him. He could scarcely keep his hands off.

Elsli walked silently along, scarcely able to enjoy anything she saw, for thinking:—

"They are all waiting for me; and I shall not come all day."

And so it was that all five, in spite of the enjoyments of the day, went to bed at night with the feeling, "What a shame!"

But the next morning the thoughts of disappointment had passed away, and they came out to their recreation in the garden with happy plans for the day.

Oscar had a great deal of business on hand. He must see the Fink boys and fix the day for the Festival. Then, Feklitus was to come to-day, and he must be met at the station. They had put off the Festival till his arrival, for he would be one countryman more, and that was worth counting. Oscar had written him that there were three good hotels near the station; the Bunch of Grapes, the Eagle, and the Morning Star. A little farther on, down by the Rhine, was a magnificent house, as large as the church and the school-house at home put together; yes, and six dwelling-houses besides. It was called the Crown Prince. There were Rhine baths there, and many guests came for the sake of the bathing; perhaps this hotel was rather more expensive than the others.

Mr. and Mrs. Bickel immediately decided in favor of the Crown Prince, on account of the name, which certainly suited perfectly for their son, and also because of the acquaintances he might make there. Of course, there would be only the best of company there, since only those would go who could afford to pay high prices. It was proper, too, to show people that their son was a person who could afford to stay at the most expensive place. Oscar was therefore requested to engage a room for Feklitus at the Crown Prince.

When the time came for the children to go out and occupy themselves as they pleased, Oscar went off like a shot. He and the Fink brothers were now such fast friends that they could not pass one day without meeting, and had promised to remain intimate all their lives long. Oscar had never had such friends before. When

they were together the hours flew like minutes, for they had a thousand interests in common—their plays, their plans, their wishes for the future; they talked over everything together.

When the hour came for Feklitus to arrive, they started for the station together. In spite of the friendliness with which the Fink boys met the new-comer, the greeting was rather a one-sided affair, for Feklitus was not accustomed to making friends with strangers. His trunks were handed over to the omnibus-driver, and the four boys proceeded to the hotel on foot. Here he was shown to a very large room, furnished in splendid bright red satin, and with windows higher than the doors of most Buchberg houses.

Oscar began directly to tell Feklitus the arrangements that were to be made to-day in preparation for the great Festival to-morrow. The flag-staff must be set in a hole in the ground, and held firm by stones placed close around its base, so that there would be no delay in the morning. Then he told him whom he had found to join the society and take part in the Festival.

Feklitus' nose went up in scorn.

"A fine set of people you have collected! and all from the small cantons, too!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" cried Oscar, angrily. "Who was it that wanted to put on the banner, 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'?"

"Well, I say that still," answered Feklitus, stoutly. "But I'll have fraternity with those I choose, and not with every one that comes along, as you do."

"Ho, ho! that's it, is it?" cried Oscar, still more furious. "What do you understand, then, by equality?"

"Just what you do," retorted Feklitus. "I mean that we all have equal rights to do our own way; I don't care what other people do as long as they let me alone to act as I choose."

"Oh, you're a fine Swiss!" cried Oscar, screaming with excitement. "Much you must know about the history of your country! Do you know what you would be doing now if it had not been for the brave fellows from the small cantons? You'd be crouching before the tyrant's hat and licking the dust from his shoes!"

At this point the Fink boys joined with great liveliness in the dispute, and supported Oscar's side so energetically that Feklitus became excited in his turn, and shouted that he knew the history of Switzerland as well as they did, and that he had always been at the head of his class in school. The quarrel grew louder and louder, and above all Oscar's voice rose the loudest, crying angrily:—

"We will show you by and by, when we are old enough, what fraternity and equality and love of our country means. We will found a society for the whole of Switzerland, and every year we will celebrate the Feast of the Foundation, in which all the inhabitants of all the cantons shall take part; and at the feasts they shall sit in the order in which they joined the society. The first members shall sit at the head, and then you will see who they are!"

"Yes; then you'll see!" screamed the Finks, and Feklitus raised his voice still more furiously:—

"Well, you won't come anywhere near the first, you St. Gall fellows, not by a long piece!"

Just here the door was thrown wide-open by a very elegant waiter, who looked anxiously at the windows, as if he was afraid they had been broken in the fray. Then he placed himself in the door-way with a very polite air, as if to intimate that he would there await the close of the entertainment.

Oscar found it quite time to lower his voice, and to invite his friends to go with him to the place chosen for the Festival. The polite spectator waiting at the door seemed to exercise a subduing influence upon all the young patriots; for they became suddenly silent, and followed Oscar readily. He stopped at Rosemount only to fetch

his banner, and then the boys went on.

When they reached the hill where the windmill stood, the banner was unrolled and admired. The garland of Alpine roses was beautiful with its bright colors and green leaves. On the other side Elsli had neatly sewed a large circle of paper, on which Oscar had inscribed his favorite motto, in large, legible letters.

The afternoon sun shone brightly on the hill and on the great sails of the windmill. It was a fine place for a festival. The Fink brothers began to dig a hole for the flag-staff; and Oscar directed them, and when they were ready he held the staff upright while they filled in the earth around it, and piled up the heavy stones. Feklitus looked on.

Just before this, the owner of the mill had decided on a walk to visit his property. He was looking about inside, when unusual noises without attracted his attention. Coming to a window in the upper story, he looked down on the scene below. There, directly before his astonished eyes, floated a banner, on which these words were plainly visible:

"Freedom we shout! Freedom for all! Freedom forever and aye! We will not yield till all chains fall, And tyrants are banished or die!"

He saw, too, that the boys were working hard to fasten the staff securely in its place.

"Hm, hm, so, so!" he murmured; "that's to be planted on my land! We'll see about that."

He stood still at his post of observation, and watched the farther proceedings. When the staff was firmly fixed so that it was not swayed by the blowing of the banner above, it was carefully drawn out, the stones were buried in the hole and neatly covered with sod. The preparations for the Festival were now all made, and to-morrow the banner could be easily set in place, and the celebration go on.

Oscar had long had a speech in readiness. Now he cast one long delighted glance at the beautiful platform before the windmill, so suitable for a speaker.

"At six o'clock to-morrow evening, not before; the others could not get away before," he said to his friends. "The meeting-place is behind Rosemount, by the three oaks. From there we shall march to music."

Then the four boys went down the hill, and at the main road they separated, promising to meet at the appointed time and place to-morrow.

Early in the morning of this same day, Emma had begun in her busy brain a new set of schemes. On the trip the day before, she had seen something which had excited her inventive powers in the highest degree. At the table at noon a keen observer would have suspected that something was in the wind, from the unseemly haste with which the little girl devoured her food. She was too busy with her project to remember her manners! When they arose from the table, and Mrs. Stanhope, with her never-forgotten politeness, dismissed them with "many wishes for an agreeable afternoon," Emma slipped lightly down the stairs, like a little weasel, and into the kitchen. The fat cook looked up with surprise from her cup of coffee; she could not get along without her coffee at noon, whatever happened.

"Well, now, has anything gone wrong with you, miss?" she asked.

"Oh, no," answered Emma; "but I have a little favor to ask of you. Drink your coffee, first; do."

"I've finished. What do you want?" asked the cook, slowly rising from her chair.

"My shoes are very dusty; will you please wipe them for me?" asked Emma, as politely as if she could not speak in any other way.

"It's hardly worth while," answered the woman, but she lifted Emma's foot upon a cricket, and began to rub it.

"And I want to ask you something more," began Emma. "Where do you get those beautiful fish that we have on the table so often?"

"They come out of the water near by," answered the cook.

"Yes, of course; but I mean, does a fisherman bring them to you, or do you go yourself to fetch them?"

"That would be a queer thing, if I had to trot round a couple of hours before I could have fish for my frying-pan! There! your shoes are all clean again." And she laid the brush away.

"Does it take a couple of hours to go to the fisherman's?" asked Emma.

"Goodness me! I can't speak always as if I were on oath; if you want to know how far it is, you'd better go measure it yourself, miss," retorted the displeased woman.

"That's just what I want to do! Will you please tell me the way?" asked Emma; and she thanked the cook for brushing her shoes, like a little lady.

"You go directly down behind the house, as far as the main road; go along the road a little way, and then turn to the left along a narrow path, till you come to a clump of willows; there you'll find the fisherman's house."

With many thanks Emma ran off.

"She is thinking of going a-fishing herself, I'm sure," said the cook, looking after her.

Emma rushed into the garden to find Fani.

"Come along, come with me! I know something nice! We can do it now!" and, dragging the boy along with her, the impetuous girl told him that the day before she had seen a fisherman out in his boat on the river, and she had made an excuse to go into the kitchen to speak to the cook, because she knew that children were not allowed there unless they had an errand to do; and she had found out where the fisherman lived, and of course they could hire his boat. In that they could go out on the river, and she would keep the boat still while Fani took a sketch of the ruin. If he could not finish it the first time, they could go again and again. It wouldn't cost so much to hire the boat that they couldn't take it several times if necessary.

Fani was delighted. But there was one difficulty.

"Who will row us, Elsli? I don't know how, and the fisherman couldn't leave his work so long."

"I can row myself. I took four people out in a boat once, when I was making a visit, near a lake, to some friends of mamma's. I have often rowed about alone. You don't know how skilful I am."

Fani was quite satisfied. He never dreamed of questioning Emma's capability. They went down to the road, and, after looking about for some time and retracing their steps, they found at last the narrow foot-path leading to the left, and, after walking a little way, they saw before them the clump of willows at a short distance. It was now nearly evening, for they had been a long time finding the way. The path they had taken was twice as long as that by the river, by which Elsli went; but they knew nothing of that. Under the willows all was still; there was nothing to be seen beyond but more willows, and the sound of the rushing river came through the silence to their ears. The children came in among the trees till they could see the water that flowed beyond. There lay the boat not far from them, and behind the bushes a slender thread of blue smoke rising into the air showed them where the fisherman's hut was. A man was just going down to the edge of the water, and presently he began to hammer at something in the boat. Emma ran towards him, and Fani followed.

"Are you the fisherman?" asked Emma?

The man raised his head, and stopped hammering.

"Yes, I am; at your service," he answered, politely. "Do you want to buy some fish?"

Emma explained that they only wanted to hire a boat, just for an hour or two; not to go far away from the shore at all. The man looked doubtful. Fani looked like a steady little fellow. He ought to manage a boat; still, it was best to be prudent, so he asked,—

"Are you young people in the habit of rowing yourselves?"

"Oh, yes, it is not our first trip, by any means," said Emma. "We can take care of ourselves"; and Fani was no less confident.

The fisherman said it was too late to go that day; he should need the boat himself, and there was some mending to be done to it before it could be used. If they wanted it the next day, he would have it ready; they could take it themselves, if he was not there. They ought not to go far from shore, and the young gentleman could use the pole where the oars wouldn't serve; he would understand. Emma promised to be careful, and they promised to pay on their return; and these arrangements being completed to their immense satisfaction, the children walked happily back to Rosemount, eagerly discussing their plans on the way. At the same time Elsli came silent and alone along the little foot-path by the river. All three came from the same place, but they knew nothing of each other, for Elsli had not come out of the house till after the others had reached the road. In the garden they met, and asked each other whether the supper-bell had rung. As they spoke they heard it; and, running up the stone steps, they sat down to supper without farther questions, and each was glad that the others asked none.

CHAPTER VI.

ANXIETY AT ROSEMOUNT.

The only really quiet part of the day at Rosemount was during the morning hours, when the children were busy writing letters home and learning their lessons. To-day, however, a certain restlessness seemed to have taken possession of them all. Emma and Fani could not keep still a minute. The latter tossed his papers about as if he couldn't make up his mind which one he wanted. The former made all sorts of signs to him across the table, and, in the midst of studying her French verbs, she seemed to be suddenly seized with a desire for lead-pencils, for she began to sharpen all that

she could get together, one after the other. Oscar was writing out his speech. Any one would have thought that he was composing a drama and acting it out as he went along; he kept throwing up his head, and gazing enthusiastically first at one inkstand and then at another, as if he were summoning them all to great heroic deeds.

Aunt Clarissa, who generally sat in the room during the lesson-time to keep order in the little company, had just been called out by Lina, the maid-servant, who was usually a most quiet and reserved young person, but who was now, evidently, much excited and almost distressed as she asked to "speak a word with Mrs. Clarissa."

No sooner was the door closed than Oscar broke out eagerly:—

"Though neither you nor anybody knows where the Festival is to be this evening, Fani, yet promise me, on your word of honor, that you will join us—Promise! at quarter before six, at the three oaks. Promise! and from there we march to the place of celebration."

Fani looked at Emma.

"Yes, of course you can promise. We shall be back by that time," said Emma, decidedly. "You see, Oscar, we have something to do together before that; but we are going at two o'clock if we can get away."

"Go where you please; only promise to be back," said Oscar.

Fani promised that he would be at the three oaks before six o'clock.

"And you too, Fred; we have not too many at the best. Promise that you'll come too."

It was not so easy to get Fred's consent; he was always slow to make a promise. Perhaps he would come; but, if he had anything important to attend to, he couldn't come if he did promise, so he must be excused.

Oscar was determined to have his own way. Fred was obstinate and would not yield. Emma and Fani were not at all loath to give up their studies and join in the dispute.

In the other room, Lina, her cheeks flaming with excitement, was declaring to Mrs. Clarissa that she would not stay another day in the house; no one would believe such things could happen who hadn't seen them; she never heard of such things before in her life.

"Do try to speak plainly, so that I can understand what you mean," said Clarissa, who had not an idea what the girl was talking about.

"Well, I noticed it a little once or twice before," said the agitated house-maid; "but I thought it came in at the open window. But to-day, just now, when I opened the drawer of the young gentleman's wash-stand to clean it, out jumped a live frog. I opened another and there were a lot of spiders crawling about! I slapped at them with a cloth and they ran into all the corners, and I couldn't get them out. Then I saw that the key was in the writing-desk, and I thought what if by chance any of the disgusting creatures had got in there; for what would Mrs. Stanhope say? I opened one division and then another and another. Hu! how it looked! I can't tell you how horrid it was! Snails, caterpillars, beetles, every sort of ugly living creature crawled out of every place,—it was all dirty and nasty and abominable! I cleaned and brushed and washed and scrubbed as well as I could; but it was so dirty and so sticky! Ugh! And it was done on purpose, too; that's the worst of it; and the nasty things have got into my clothes and my hair and all over me! That stupid young gentleman did it just to frighten whoever came and found them there! I know he did!"

"No, Lina, you're mistaken," said Clarissa, when she could get in a word. "Come with me, and I'll see what can be done with the room. The boy didn't mean to frighten any one. I'm only afraid he was trying to hide them where they wouldn't be found. Let's go and see."

The aspect of Fred's room was indeed alarming. All the drawers and shelves in the different pieces of furniture were pulled out, and all were dirty and bore the marks of

the creatures who had been kept in them. On the floor lay the remains of the spiders and worms that Lina had destroyed. The windows also were spotted with the dead bodies of insects. Clarissa shook her head sadly.

"Call the lad to come up here," she said. "But do not make any more fuss about the matter. Listen to me, Lina; we must make this all clean and nice again without letting Mrs. Stanhope know anything about it. Do you understand?"

Lina muttered something to herself and went to call Fred. When the poor lad entered his room and saw the destruction of all his carefully preserved treasures, he turned as white as chalk, and spoke not one word.

"My dear boy," said Clarissa very gently, "you need not be frightened, but I must tell you that you cannot use these drawers nor this desk for this purpose. Now, we will clean them all out, but remember that no more creatures must be brought into the house."

"Oh, my collection! my whole collection!"

"Yes, you see this is not the way to go to work to make a collection. Don't be unhappy. I will see about your getting some more creatures. But the first thing is to get this room cleaned up, and I'm sure you won't want to give us so much trouble again."

Fred glanced at the places where his most cherished treasures had been stored. His rare oleander-worms and his priceless beetles all were destroyed. The drawers all opened, the creatures all killed and spoiled. He went down stairs again, but he could not go back to the others and have them ask him why he had been sent for. He went out into the garden, and down to the seat under the lindens by the river. The thought of his specimens, his precious specimens, was too much for the poor fellow. He threw himself on the ground and poured out his sorrows in sobs and tears.

In the afternoon, when the others all ran out rejoicing in the sunshine, he hid himself in a corner of the school-room, and wrote the following letter:—

DEAR AUNTY:—You will cry when you read this, I am sure. It is all done for, my entire collection; all killed with a dust-cloth, squashed, smashed, driven out of windows, and into holes, and all by a maid-servant. As I had no boxes for them, I naturally put my specimens into the best places I could find for them. In the writing-desk in my room were ever so many little divisions, just the very thing to put different varieties into. When the maid came to clear up the room, she didn't know anything about their value, of course, and she thrust her hateful brush right in and destroyed them all. She is a savage, an ignorant savage. I did as you told me, dear aunty. Not one tiny little frog even have I carried in my pockets, not even a beetle; and this is the result. I will not tell you all the things I had found; I couldn't bear to describe them. Two such beauties of beetles—bright red wings, the body lilac blue, and glittering as any precious stone! Such a rare species! And an oleander-sphinx! And my magnificent caterpillar of the humming-bird moth!—you know, aunty, that one with yellow stripes and blue eye-spots. All trodden to death on the floor.

I must stop; the longer I think of it, the worse I feel. I will say one thing though. You may call a person "Aunty," but that doesn't make her one. When we first came here, I used to say to Fani, when he wanted anything, "Why don't you go and ask Aunt Clarissa?" and he answered more than a dozen times, "That isn't allowed here." So at last I understood, and as I didn't want to lead him to do anything out of the way, I didn't say it any more. But now you see the difference between a real aunt and a make-believe one. There is nothing in the world that we can't ask you. If you can't do it, you say so, and there's the end of it. But that's no reason for not asking another time; there is always something to ask, and you understand that, and don't expect us to stop asking just because you have to say no sometimes. Now, this whole trouble comes from this; for when I asked Fani to ask Aunt Clarissa to give me some twenty or thirty old boxes to keep my specimens in, he said it was not proper to ask for so many things, and I could pack them in paper. Just think of that! To wrap living creatures up in paper! Of course Fani doesn't understand anything about such things.

Now what I want you to do, dear aunty, is to write in your next letter that we are to come home; it is high time. It is four weeks since we came, and that is long enough to be away from home; for home is the best place in the whole world. There are plenty of boxes to be had there, and everything that you want, and there are nice places for things, and there isn't such danger of accidents. And if anything does go wrong, you are there, aunty, and in a minute it is set right again. Do write and say that we may leave here on Saturday, and then on Sunday we shall be at home again. How glad we shall be! Good-bye, dear aunty; your ever-loving nephew,

FRED.

The evening came; lovely and bright. Under the three oaks were assembled the two Fink boys, the baker's son from Lucerne, the shoemaker's apprentice from Uri, the hotel porter from Schwyz, and Feklitus! Oscar stood in the midst with his banner, and looked sharply in every direction, for it was almost six o'clock and neither Fred nor Fani was in sight. The clock struck; five, ten minutes passed, and they did not come.

Oscar felt that it was useless to wait longer. Fred did not mean to come; he had seen that in the morning; but Fani, where was he? As he asked himself this question, Oscar raised his fist threateningly in the air and muttered to himself:—

"Oh, that Emma! that Xanthippe!"

His original intention had been to march to the windmill to the music of fife and drum, flute and harmonicon, but he had given up part of this plan; chiefly, he said to himself, on account of his father's advice not to make any disturbance in a strange place; but also because he could not get a drum, and Feklitus would not play the flute.

Now it was time to move, and the procession began to march. The lad from Lucerne went first, playing briskly upon the harmonicon; the others followed two and two, and Oscar in the middle held aloft the banner. The staff was quickly planted as

previously arranged; the beautiful banner floated proudly over the land. Oscar took his stand by it, and the others formed a circle, lying on the grass about him. With a loud ringing voice he began:—

"Friends and brothers!"

"What does this mean? What is this all about?" suddenly thundered a voice behind him.

The boys sprang to their feet. Oscar looked round. Two bearded men in uniform stood close behind him and looked at him with threatening glances. In a flash Oscar turned about, made one great leap down the hill-side and away across the field like a madman. Behind him came the Finks, scarcely touching the ground. Down the other side ran the Lucerner fast on the heels of the Schwyzer, who tripped, and both went headlong into a ditch. Feklitus was the only one who kept his ground. He knew who he was; Fortunatus, the only son of Mr. Bickel. No one would dare to meddle with him. He knew, too, that he was by no means nimble, and the sudden appearance of the men in uniform had given him a strange feeling of heaviness in his legs. He had no mind to stay alone, however, and so he seized the shoemaker's boy by the collar, and held him as in a vise.

One of the men now came up to them and said roughly,—

"Come along to the watch-house and explain what you have been about, and what it all means."

The Uri boy hid himself as well as he could. Feklitus, half-frightened, half-angry, answered,—

"We have done nothing. We are not to blame. It's all Oscar's doing."

"We don't know anything about that," said the man. "You come along with us. Our motto is, 'Taken together, hung together.'" Then he turned to his comrade, and they began to whisper.

Feklitus was as pale as a ghost.

"Did you hear that? They are going to hang us," he said, grasping his companion still more tightly.

"Let us run away," gasped the boy, hardly able to speak for choking.

Feklitus looked at the men; they were in earnest conversation with the miller. He sprang from the ground; fear gave him unwonted agility. Down the hill he raced, his hair fairly standing on end with fright, and the Uri boy after him. Neither looked back to see whether they were pursued, but they thought they heard footsteps behind them. On they ran—on, on; at last they separated; one this way, the other that; and then both disappeared. They had not been followed.

Oscar reached Rosemount all out of breath. He rushed up the steps, ran to his bed-room, took out his portfolio, threw himself on a seat before the table, and wrote the following, sobbing more and more as he went on:—

DEAR AUNTY,—I want your help. Something has happened that may have very unpleasant consequences, and you are the only person that can help me; you will know how. I really did mean to be careful, just as my father bade me, and not do anything out of the way, and particularly not make a noise. You will not think that I did wrong to select the best of the mottoes. You know you said yourself that though we had no tyrants ourselves, yet, where there were any, it was a splendid verse. I cannot explain it all exactly, but we were taken by surprise in the middle of a perfectly harmless meeting. We succeeded in escaping, but I think perhaps we shall be prosecuted; and if my name comes out, they may write to papa from the court of justice here, and that would be horrible. You will stand by me, won't you, dear aunty? If a letter should come to my father, couldn't you get hold of it and read it and answer it yourself, without letting him know? You can explain to the gentlemen that we were only having a little Swiss celebration just among ourselves. Pray do help me, and not let the story get out. I hope you will write to-morrow and tell us to

come home. We have been away long enough. I am sure papa and mamma would be glad, for we cannot do our lessons nicely here, at all. Everything is far better at home; things are better arranged, and the amusements are a great deal better. Do write to us to come home directly; and tell me too that you have done what I ask about the letter to papa. Best love, dearest aunty,

From your loving nephew,

OSCAR.

The letter was folded in haste, and the address quickly added; and the writer ran with all his might to the post-office, a short distance from the house. He had to hurry, for it was nearly supper-time. As he came tearing along into the court-yard at Rosemount, on his return, he started back; for there stood one of the men in uniform, with the deserted banner in his hand. He was waiting to be let in. The door opened. He entered. Oscar drew back behind a great oak-tree. His heart beat like a trip-hammer. What was going on inside there? Mrs. Stanhope would know now all about it! What would she think of him after this! Perhaps she would send them all home with a letter of complaint to their father! His heart beat louder and louder. Perhaps the man came to fetch him to be punished and imprisoned. Had he broken some law when he had the hole dug in front of the mill, when there was nothing but short grass there? Oh, if he had only followed his father's advice, and not tried to do anything in this strange country without leave! All these anxious thoughts ran through Oscar's head, and the longer that dreadful man stayed, the more alarmed he grew.

Clarissa had just finished her disagreeable task, and, assisted very reluctantly by the indignant Lina, had at last succeeded in removing all traces of Fred's unfortunate collection, when a tremendous ringing at the house-door called her down stairs. It was the watchman with the banner. Another strange occurrence. What would happen next? She was really frightened when she recognized Oscar's banner, and read the

too distinctly printed motto which embellished it. Clarissa looked anxiously at the different doors for fear that Mrs. Stanhope might come through one of them. She asked the man what his business might be. He replied that they had discovered that the owner of the banner he held in his hand belonged at Rosemount, and also that they had come to the conclusion that all that affair was only boys' play, though at first the miller had thought otherwise because of the motto. This was why he had informed the police. Now, they merely wished to advise Mrs. Stanhope to bid her young people keep such games within the limits of her own grounds.

Clarissa still glanced anxiously towards the doors, while she assured the man that his advice would be followed, and pressed a coin into his hand as an acknowledgment of the trouble he had taken. Then she hurriedly took the banner, rolled it up, and carried it away. She was determined, if possible, to keep from Mrs. Stanhope all knowledge of this day's occurrences. But would it be possible?

However, all was safe for the present; and, when the bell rang for supper, Clarissa laid aside her anxiety and went cheerfully into the dining-room. Oscar and Fred followed each other with slow steps and dejected demeanor. Their usual vivacity had vanished, and, as they seated themselves at the table, they hung their heads like hyacinths nipped by the frost.

Elsli sat next to Fred; her cheeks were glowing with exercise, for she had had to run fast all the way home to be in time for supper. She, too, hung her head over her plate to hide her heated face.

Emma and Fani were not there.

Mrs. Stanhope looked silently first at the empty places, then at the children.

Clarissa watched the door uneasily; no one came.

"I am willing to allow children all possible freedom," said Mrs. Stanhope, seriously; "but the order of the house must be maintained. I am very much annoyed at unpunctuality at meals. Fani has never allowed himself any such irregularity. I

wonder how it happened now."

She looked from one brother to another as if expecting some explanation. They looked so uncomfortable that she took it as a sign of regret for their sister's delinquency, and so forbore farther remark.

After supper, Mrs. Stanhope went out as usual on the terrace, and the others followed. It began to grow dark. Clarissa's anxiety became unendurable; what could have happened to the children?

"Dear Mrs. Stanhope," she said, entreatingly, "do let me send some one out to look for the children. I cannot rest for fear that they have met with some accident."

"Where can we send? We have no clue to the direction they have taken," answered Mrs. Stanhope in a tone of vexation. "It is very provoking. Fani never did such a thing before. I will go with you."

She rose and went through a long corridor to the court-yard. Clarissa and the children followed. There they found the servants all assembled: the footman, coachman, cook, and maids were holding a council. They were talking over the children's absence, its possible cause, and Mrs. Stanhope's probable displeasure. When that lady came upon them unperceived, they tried to separate and escape; but it was too late. She told the men to go out into the street and to inquire in different directions whether anything had been seen of the lost children. Lina came forward to say that the cook knew that the young lady had gone fishing. It was a pity that all these young people were so cruel to animals, the house-maid added; and therewith she shot an angry glance at Fred, whom she hadn't forgiven for the trouble he had given her.

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Clarissa, in great alarm. "If those children have gone out on the river, something terrible must have happened to them! If we could only have the least idea which way they went!"

The cook, being appealed to, said that she had directed the young lady to the

fisherman's hut. It might be well to look for her there.

Clarissa started at once, calling the men to go with her and show her the way.

Poor Elsli was more frightened now than any one else. She thought that Aunt Clarissa would now learn the story which she ought long ago to have told her. By her daily visits she had become so familiar with all the wants and sufferings of the fisherman's family that she had been led on to undertake more and more, till at last she had come to do nearly all the housework of the poor little dwelling. But gradually had grown upon her the conviction that Mrs. Stanhope would be extremely displeased if she knew of her conduct. In great agony she now started after Aunt Clarissa, crying out:—

"Oh, do let me go with you! I have something to tell you, and we can talk as we go."

"My dear child, what a time to choose to tell me something! How could I listen now? Turn back directly. What will Mrs. Stanhope think to see you running away at such a time?"

Mrs. Stanhope only thought that Elsli was anxious about her brother, as was very natural. She bade the children go to bed, since they could be of no use in finding the missing ones. They obeyed her in silence, and went to their rooms. The boys fell asleep as soon as their heads touched their pillows, and so happily lost remembrance of their troubles; but poor Elsli sat on her bed with wide-open eyes, for the anxious fear in her heart made sleep impossible. She went over and over again the events of the last few weeks. She had not at first meant to do wrong, but she certainly ought not to have repeated her visits to the fisherman's house without leave, especially as she knew that Mrs. Stanhope would probably object. Yet, how could she have left those poor people without help, when she found that she could do so much for them, and they reminded her so much of her family at home? Probably Mrs. Stanhope would send her and Fani away, but she deserved it and Fani did not. The more the poor girl pondered over all this trouble, the more unhappy she became; and at last

she burst into tears and sobbed out:—

"Oh, if I only had some one to help me. I cannot tell what to do!"

Then Elsli remembered that she could bring her trouble to her Heavenly Father, and seek comfort and forgiveness from him. She had already repeated her daily evening prayer; but now she folded her hands again, and prayed, not as a form but from the bottom of her heart, that God would help her in her dire need, so that Fani should not be punished for her fault, and that she should not do wrong again, and that the fisherman's family should not suffer any more. Peace came as she prayed, and she lay down and slept at last.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNEXPECTED TERMINATION.

Directly after dinner Emma and Fani had started on their expedition. They had no trouble to-day in finding their way to the willows, and they went as quickly as they could, so that they could have a long afternoon, and yet get back in time for Oscar's Festival.

They found the boat ready for them; oars and pole all in position, and a seat in the middle. The boat was but lightly fastened to the shore, and the children sprang gayly into it. Emma took the oars and pushed off. She rowed well, and knew what she was about. She handled the boat skilfully, for she had often been out on the lake with her friend when the wind blew and the waves were high.

Fani took his seat in the stern, saying:—

"When you want my help, just say so, Emma. But I don't know anything at all about rowing."

"I shan't need you," answered Emma, bravely, as she pulled away.

Two things, however, she had not counted on. The boat was much heavier than that

which she had used on the lake, and the swift current of the river was a very different thing to row against, from the quiet waters of a lake. Emma worked sturdily against the stream. She wanted to go out far enough to be in full sight of the ruined castle. She had arranged in her mind a plan for keeping the boat in place while Fani sketched. But she soon began to find herself growing very tired, while yet she made little head-way.

"Take the pole, Fani," she said, "and stick it firmly against the bottom and push." Fani did so, and the boat made an advance of several feet. "Again, again, Fani." Fani did his best.

"Now I'll row a bit farther into the middle of the river, then hold fast so that we shall not be carried down; here we are! there is the ruin, Fani! Now, Fani, stick the pole down, and I'll hold it and you can begin to sketch."

Fani stuck his pole manfully into the bottom of the river, but the rushing current seized it and threw it up again as if it had been a reed.

"Oh! oh!" he cried, "we shall be carried away!"

"You take one of the oars and we'll row back to the shore," said Emma, anxiously. "Come, be quick!"

But the stream seized the oar before Fani could take it from her, and it was swept away.

"What shall we do? There is no one to help us," cried Emma, beside herself. "Suppose the boat should upset!"

Faster and faster they were whirled along, the boat tossing like a nut-shell upon the waves.

The children sat still, although frightened almost to death.

"Fani, we are lost! who can help us?" screamed Emma. "Let us say our prayers. I have forgotten to say them ever since I came to Rosemount. I promised mamma not

to forget; but I did. Do you think God will hear me now? Fani, you pray; you do it every day, I know."

"No; I thought Elsli would do it for me and for herself," said the boy hoarsely.

"That is no good; you must do it for yourself or God will not listen. He will only say, 'I do not know him,' when Elsli prays for you. Oh, if I had not forgotten to pray myself, he would not punish me so now!"

And then she sat silent, looking at the sky and praying from her heart that God would forgive her forgetfulness of him, and save her and Fani from the danger that threatened them.

"A steamboat! A steamboat! It is going to run us down!" shrieked Fani; and his fears were well grounded. With lightning speed, as it seemed, the great boat came rushing toward them like a huge giant, and in a few minutes the little boat would be engulfed in the swelling waves.

The children screamed; the steamer came nearer; it was close upon them; the boat was upset! At the same instant Emma was seized by a strong hand, lifted into the air, and then set down upon her feet on the deck of the steamer. Fani was saved, too, by another seaman, and both stood shivering with cold and fright, dripping with water, and soaked to the skin, but safe and sound. The passengers crowded about them.

Suddenly a tall, black-bearded man with angry eyes came toward them. It was the captain.

"What madness is this?" he thundered. "Do you think it is the business of steamboats to look out for little fools of fishermen? Whose fault would it have been if you had been run down and drowned?"

But as he looked at the two little dripping, miserable figures, his tone softened.

"Bring them below and give them something hot to drink," he said to one of the gaping by-standers. It was a mercy to get them away from all those staring eyes;

they swallowed the steaming contents of the glass that was given them in the cabin without a word, though it burned their throats. They did not dare to sit down; they were too wet.

After a while the captain came down and asked where they came from, and where they were going in that "old fish-box."

Fani told the whole story without reserve. An expression of amusement passed over the captain's brown face more than once during this narration, and when he had heard all, he said kindly that they must get themselves dried off as best they could; he was going to stop at Cologne, and there they could take the train home again.

To reward him for saving them, Mrs. Stanhope could invite him to visit her house at the next vintage.

This was their second visit to Cologne; how different it was from the first one!

The captain's parting advice was that they should in future make their expeditions by land rather than by water; it was much safer, he said.

It was pretty dark by this time, and they had some trouble in finding the way to the station. They wandered from street to street inquiring their way, and at last found themselves again at the steamboat wharf, just where they had landed. They began to fear that they should lose the train and have to stay in the city all night. They set out again upon their search, and at last they came upon a policeman, who took pity upon them and led them through alleys and by-streets to the station, where they found that one train had just left, and they must wait two hours for the next. The little wanderers sat down outside the building to wait. They were wet and cold and hungry, but they did not complain of these minor troubles; their anxieties lay far deeper.

"I am dreadfully worried," said Fani, with a deep sigh.

"So am I, but I don't know exactly why," replied Emma.

"Well, I do," said the boy. "I'm perfectly sure that Mrs. Stanhope will send me home after this, and poor Elsli will have to go too, for she could never stay without me."

"Oh, that is dreadful!" cried Emma. She was conscience-stricken. It was a bad scrape, and it was mainly her fault. "Mrs. Stanhope is so kind," she went on hopefully, "perhaps she will not be so very angry."

Fani shook his head.

"You don't know about it, Emma. Of course Mrs. Stanhope is the greatest benefactress in the world. But she is very particular about our minding exactly what she tells us; and one of her principal rules is that we must never disturb the regularity of the household, and must keep punctually to just such hours; and now see what we have done! We shall not get home till twelve o'clock to-night, midnight! Probably they are hunting for us everywhere. How will it all turn out? Oh, dear! if she sends us off, there's an end of drawing and painting for me! That's all over"; and Fani looked despairing.

Emma felt that he knew Mrs. Stanhope far better than she did, and her courage began to fail. They sat in silence till the train came along. At the end of their journey they had a long walk from the station to Rosemount, and they stumbled along in the dark, frightened and trembling, and scarcely exchanging a word. Their hearts beat more and more as they neared the house. As they entered the court-yard, the watch-dog began to bark, but he stopped when he heard Fani's voice.

The great house-door was opened, and Aunt Clarissa came out to meet them from the lighted hall.

"Is it you?" she cried. "Thank God!" and she drew them into the house.

Mrs. Stanhope had not gone to bed. She was standing just inside the door.

"Now you may tell me all about it," she said, looking seriously at the children, who presented a shocking appearance. "So, you've been in the water! Where are the men?"

The children stammered out that they had seen no men. They had just come up from the station.

Mrs. Stanhope shook her head.

"Some one must be sent to the fisherman's hut to tell the men to stop the search," she said coldly. "I will leave the care of the children to more skilful hands"; and she withdrew without more words.

Aunt Clarissa put them to bed directly, and a big pitcher of hot tea was brought to each of them, from which they had to drink one steaming cup after another, till they were warmed through. Then Clarissa sat down first by Emma's bed, and then by Fani's, to learn exactly what had happened, and whether they had met with any injuries that would need a doctor's attention.

In the midst of assurances that they were not injured, and of attempts to explain what had happened, the two tired miscreants fell asleep, and Aunt Clarissa went to her room with thankful heart that things were no worse.

The next morning Fani was determined, in spite of his weariness of limb, to be punctual at the breakfast table. He sprang out of bed the moment that he waked, and dressed an hour too early. He went into the garden to listen to the birds; he thought their happy singing might make him happier. As he was walking up and down, he saw the fisherman coming into the court-yard. He went to meet him. The man stopped and lifted his cap politely. "I know what you have come for," said Fani, taking out his purse; "how much do I owe you?"

The man turned his cap about in his hands, as if he were turning his thoughts over too.

"I don't want to be unreasonable," he said presently, "and I don't suppose a young gentleman like you knows how much a boat with all its belongings is worth. I cannot say less than eighty marks; I shall lose at that, but I will not ask more."

Fani stood thunder-struck. Of course, as the boat was lost, he must make it good.

But eighty marks! He had never even seen so much money as that. He was speechless. The fisherman looked thoughtfully at him. Presently he said modestly:—

"I can understand that you cannot pay me the money yourself; you will have to ask your mother for it. I will come again to-morrow."

"No, no!" cried Fani. "I will bring it to you as soon as I get it. I will certainly come," he added, as he saw the man's disappointed look. "I shall keep my word; only I can't say exactly when."

It seemed as if the man had something more to say; but he swallowed it down, and went away, muttering to himself, "No boat! and no money to buy another!"

Fani ran back into the house. He looked at Emma's door to see whether her boots were still outside, but they had disappeared; so he tapped on the door and said softly:—

"Come out, Emma, I have something to say to you."

"What is the matter? Has Mrs. Stanhope been talking to you?" asked Emma, in a low tone, as she opened the door.

"No," said Fani, "it's not that"; and he drew her into the garden, to an arbor in a far-away corner, and there he told her about the eighty marks that were owing for the lost boat. Emma was greatly excited.

"We can never in the world get together so much as eighty marks! What can we do?" she cried in a tone of anguish.

"I don't know. We can't ask Mrs. Stanhope for a lot of money like that, after all that we have done to displease her. Can't you think of any way? If I only knew some one to borrow of! Oh, don't you know of anybody, Emma?"

Emma had sunk upon a bench, and her eyes looked as if they would start out of her head; she was trying so hard to see some way out of the dilemma.

Fred came running down the walk. He wanted to know what they were about the

night before, but they had no time to answer, for just then the bell rang for breakfast.

The meal was not a merry one. The children were all embarrassed, and they knew why; they were all conscious that they had not behaved well to their hostess.

Mrs. Stanhope looked at them inquiringly, but said not a word. Aunt Clarissa nervously buttered large slices of bread as fast as she could; the dish was piled high with them, for no one ate much.

As Mrs. Stanhope left the table, she turned to Fani and said:—

"Go into the library and wait for me. I want to speak to you."

Fani grew white; Emma, red. "It's coming now," they said to themselves.

As Mrs. Stanhope opened the door to leave the room, she was knocked against by a house-maid who was entering in great haste.

"Excuse me, madam," she said. "I was in such a hurry. Something else has happened. A servant has just come from the Crown Prince to say that the young gentleman for whom Master Oscar ordered a room there has not been at home all night; and this morning the shoemaker told them at the hotel that he was with the young man himself last evening, and saw him running like a crazy fellow down towards the river."

It was now Oscar's turn to grow pale.

Aunt Clarissa sent the maid away, saying that she would speak to the hotel servant herself. She was afraid that Lina would let out the secret of Fred's untidy room if she were allowed to go on.

Mrs. Stanhope looked very serious.

"I don't understand all this," she said, turning to Clarissa; "but if the young stranger has anything to do with Oscar, I will be responsible for his bill at the hotel." And she left the room.

Emma instantly rushed to the school-room, seized her portfolio, and began to write

as fast as her pen could go.

DEAR AUNTY,—For pity's sake, help me now! Something dreadful has happened. I will never make any plans again as long as I live, even if they would be sure to come out right. I will always do just as mamma bids me, and never suggest anything more to Fani. I gave him the book just to encourage him; but he said before he looked at it that what he cared for most was to be an artist. And there was something that he could do that would make Mrs. Stanhope willing to have him one, only he couldn't find any way to do it. So I found a way. I didn't forget that I promised mamma that I wouldn't make any plans; but I thought this was different. Fani knew what he wanted to do; only he couldn't see the way clear to do it, and I was just going to help him. Don't you see? And there was a dreadful thing that happened when we tried that way; but I can't write about it now, it is a long story. I'll tell you by and by. But the trouble now is, we have lost a boat in the river; it is a poor fisherman's, and we must pay him for it. You will understand that we do not dare to tell Mrs. Stanhope anything about it. We can't ask her for so much money. Fani says he would rather go to work in the factory. But you will help us, I know, dear aunty; you will not let us suffer. We want eighty marks. It is terrible. But it is worth that, for there were two oars and a pole besides the boat. I don't ask you to give it to me, but only to lend it. I will keep thinking day and night how I can earn enough to pay you. I have some things, you know; my godfather's present. In my drawer in the little writing-table at home are six silver spoons, and a beautiful pincushion, and two old Easter eggs with pictures on them cut out of paper: dragons spitting fire, and flowers, and the sun, moon, and stars. You can sell them for something, I am sure; and after this I will sell directly everything that I get and give you the money. And perhaps I shall contrive to think of some way to earn something too; if I can I will. Oh, dearest aunty, you will help us, I know, for you help everybody.

Write as soon as you can and tell us to come home. How glad we shall be to get there! There we can tell you all our troubles. I wish we could go to-morrow, and get

back to you and mamma. Write directly, dear aunty. I send you my love a thousand thousand times.

Your loving niece,

EMMA.

P.S. Aunty, dear, I have thought of another way. In Cologne I saw a girl who went about in the street with a basket and sold roses. Now I think that if Mrs. Stanhope would let me take two roses from each bed in her garden I should get a basket full, and I could earn a lot of money, I am sure. Don't you think so? With a thousand kisses, Your niece,

EMMA.

P.S. I have thought this very moment of the nicest plan of all. In the vineyards here they put horrid looking figures, like men with red beards and arms stretched out, to frighten away the birds. If you will send me some red stuff and some yellow, I can make figures a great deal more frightful, and they will sell for a great deal. Perhaps in this way I can pay you half the money, and I'm sure I shall find something else to do by and by.

I am again and always,

Your loving niece,

EMMA.

Fani had been sitting for some time in the library, awaiting with a beating heart the coming of Mrs. Stanhope. When the door opened, he sprang to his feet; he had learned that that was the proper thing to do when a lady entered the room. Mrs. Stanhope took a seat on the sofa, and motioned him to take a cricket and sit down by her.

"Now tell me all about it, Fani," she began. "Tell me the exact truth about what happened yesterday. What made you think of going out on the water, and how did

you manage it? Tell me the whole story just as it was. Keep nothing back."

Fani obeyed. He went way back to the plans which Emma and he had made before he left home so that he might become an artist. How pleased he had been to take drawing-lessons, and how they made him love drawing more and more. How glad Emma had been at his progress, and how she had urged him to tell Mrs. Stanhope how he felt about his future career. Now came the most important point, and Fani related it very clearly. He wished to make a picture of the old ruin, because if he got a prize for it he thought Mrs. Stanhope would look more favorably on his adoption of art as a business; and Emma had thought out a way of getting a good view of it from the river. Then followed the mishap, which occurred because Emma did not know the strength of the current, nor understand how different the river was from the lake on which she had been in the habit of rowing. Fani told the whole story faithfully. Mrs. Stanhope listened in silence to the end, and then said briefly,—

"Very well; you may go, Fani."

In the hall behind one of the pillars stood Emma, impatient to hear the result of the interview.

"Well? well?" she asked eagerly.

"Well; it's just as it was before; I don't know any more than I did."

"Did she scold you very hard? Did she say anything about me? For I was the one to blame."

"No, indeed; Mrs. Stanhope never scolds; but she is very angry with me, I know, for she did not speak to me when I had told her all about it. Generally she talks a good deal to me about all sorts of things; even when I have done something to displease her. I am sure there is no help for us."

Emma sighed. She knew too well how much she was to blame for this unfortunate state of things.

Three days passed. The house was more quiet than it had been before since the children came. A cloud was over them all. No one laughed or talked freely or cared for amusement. All seemed waiting for some unpleasant thing that was going to happen.

Early in the morning of the fourth day, a letter was brought to Mrs. Stanhope, containing an enclosure for the children. The letter was from their mother. She expressed her gratitude to Mrs. Stanhope for all her kindness, and for the pleasure the children had enjoyed at Rosemount. Then followed apologies and regrets for the trouble and annoyance that the visit must have caused Mrs. Stanhope. And Mrs. Stein closed by saying that they had too long trespassed on the indulgence of their kind hostess, and begged her to set a time when it would be convenient to her for them to take their leave.

The enclosure for the children contained three letters from their aunt. Emma tore hers open first. A banknote met her delighted eyes. She ran out of the room, and called Fani. "She has saved us!" she cried. "Oh, isn't aunty an angel from heaven!" Fani's face shone with pleasure and surprise. Emma thrust the money into his hand.

"Take it, and run to the fisherman's. I must read my letter"; and she ran off to the arbor.

After an affectionate greeting it ran thus;—

"It is a crying shame, my dear girl, that this delightful visit, full of pleasures that may never fall to your lot again, should have been spoiled by each of you three children, only because of your disobedience. Especially you and Oscar. Your father and mother gave you both particular warning against what you were not to do. You both set to work to see how you could manage to obey in all the trivial details, and yet carry out your own plans in essentials. You both knew very well what you were about, and have well deserved the unpleasant consequences of your actions. I trust that you have both received a lasting lesson. How much worse the results might

have been, dear Emma, we do not dare to think. We can only guess, though you do not tell us that you had a very narrow escape. We trust that you will show your gratitude to God for it by never again straying into forbidden paths. I send you the money you asked for, in order to spare Mrs. Stanhope any trouble about it. Fani showed a proper sense of his own folly and of his obligations to her when he said he would make any sacrifice rather than ask her for it. I do not lend you the money. It is a gift. But do not run in debt again. Another time I might not be able to help you. We shall all be glad to see you at home again."

In her letter to Oscar, aunty wrote that he deserved a much worse punishment than he had received, for his wilful misinterpretation of his father's warning, obeying the letter, rather than the spirit, and for his obstinacy about the motto. The letter then continued:—

"No notice from the police nor from the court of justice has been sent to your father; but a complaint has been lodged against you from another quarter. Only three days after he went from home, Feklitus came back again, without bag or baggage, as if he had fled for his life. He told a terrible tale of some scrape into which you had led him, and from which he had got away safe only by his own most skilful management. On the evening of that unlucky Festival he had scampered away from his captors with all his might, flung himself into a railway carriage, and, travelling all night, had not stopped till he reached home. Now you see, dear Oscar, that you have something to answer for in this affair; for even if Feklitus was unnecessarily frightened, it does not alter the fact that you got him involved in a most unpleasant way, and his parents are naturally very angry with you. You must at any rate take measures to set Mrs. Bickel's mind at rest She told me yesterday that she had lost her sleep and her appetite, from thinking about the beautiful leather trunk, and the six new suits of clothes, which she has no doubt the waiters at the Crown Prince are sharing among themselves. You must go to the hotel, pack all the clothes carefully, lock the trunk, and send it to him. Send the keys in a separate package, and then you

will have removed one cause of their not unreasonable displeasure."

With Fred, aunty pathetically condoled on the loss of his collection; and then she added:—

"Yet you see, my dear Fred, you are to blame after all; for I told you not to put your creatures where they would displease Mrs. Stanhope, if she should see them. I could not specify every such place, but I trusted to your commonsense to tell you that beetles and caterpillars do not belong in a writing-desk! You are such an insatiable collector! You will have to learn moderation. If you had only been satisfied with a reasonable number of the finest specimens, you would not have needed so many boxes; I am very glad that Fani hindered you from asking for them in a house where so many kindnesses were being shown to all of you. It ill becomes guests to make unreasonable demands. After all, dear Fred, I hope you will be able to bring home a few treasures, notwithstanding your great loss, and we will enjoy them together."

These letters were a great relief to all; but some uneasiness still remained. They did not know yet how Mrs. Stanhope would treat their several delinquencies, when she knew all about them, and, besides, they were homesick.

"What about going home?" they asked each other; and none of the letters had mentioned the subject. They were disappointed.

As to Fani, he began to wonder what Mrs. Stanhope's plans were for him. When would she talk with him again? Would he have to go back to the factory? She had never since that day talked with him as she used to do; but often he was aware that she was looking at him, long and thoughtfully.

In Elsli's heart, too, anxiety reigned supreme; not so much for herself as for Fani. Mrs. Stanhope was already displeased with him; and when she found out that she had been doing wrong too, Elsli could not but fear that her displeasure would be so severe that they should both be sent away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAPPY END.

Elsli's bedroom opened into that of Aunt Clarissa. During this time of worry and excitement, when every day so much happened that was new and unexpected, Clarissa found it difficult to fulfil all her household duties with her usual promptness and regularity, so it was often very late before she could get to her room for the night, and she always thought Elsli was fast asleep. One evening she was even later than usual, and she had hardly seated herself to read her evening prayer when she was surprised to hear Elsli calling her.

"I don't feel very well, Aunt Clarissa," said the child in a feeble voice; and before she had finished speaking her kind friend was at her bedside. Clarissa was startled to see her heavy eyes and feverish cheeks.

"What ails you, my dear girl?" she asked, tenderly, stroking the hot head with her cool hand, and trying to conceal the anxiety that she felt.

"Not much, I think," answered Elsli, with a faint smile; "I haven't been feeling very well for a week or two; I have had a good many dizzy turns and I've been hot and restless. I've heard you come up to bed every night though it was so late."

"Why didn't you speak to me, dear? I might have done something to make you sleep."

"I didn't want to trouble you and it was really nothing. I had no pain, only heat and restlessness. But to-night I thought I must call you, because I feel very ill, and besides I have something that I must tell you, you know, and you told me you would hear it when you could find a quiet time. Can you spare the time to-night, though it is so late? I think I could go to sleep better after I have told it. It has worried me so long." Elsli spoke feebly but eagerly; and Aunt Clarissa, full of anxious fear, could not but assent to her request, though she was almost afraid to have her go on; for she

saw that the little girl was really very ill.

She sat down by the bedside holding Elsli's trembling hand in her own and gently pressing it from time to time. Elsli began:—

"I want to tell you something that I ought to have spoken of long ago. It was not right for me to go on as I have been doing without telling you; and I am afraid Mrs. Stanhope will be very much displeased when she knows about it."

Clarissa could scarcely control her astonishment. Was it possible that this gentle, conscientious creature had been capable of doing something wrong and concealing it?

But she only said quietly: "Tell me everything that is on your mind, it will relieve you; but do not hurry, there is time enough."

Elsli told her of her accidental acquaintance with the fisherman's family, of their extreme poverty, of the illness of the mother, and of her own efforts to help them.

"Do you think I have done very wrong?" she asked, timidly, looking up at Clarissa with wistful eyes.

Clarissa was very much moved.

"My darling," she said, "do not worry about it. You did not mean to do anything wrong, and all that you did was in kindness. You wanted to tell me about it long ago, I remember; and it was no fault of yours that I did not hear it. I will explain it all to Mrs. Stanhope, and she will understand it and will not be displeased."

"And do you think she will let me go again and help them?"

"You are too ill to think about going now; but I promise to see to them myself, so do not fret about it, dear. I had no idea that the family were so poor; the man never has complained when he has been here with the fish. I will go and inquire what the sick woman needs. Will that satisfy you, dear?"

"Yes," said Elsli, but somewhat doubtfully. "You see, there is so much to be done

that no one would know about, and she would never tell about it. I couldn't do much darning and mending, and the clothes are so worn out that the children can scarcely keep them on; and their mother is too ill to cook, and when the father comes home he is too tired, and he has hard work even to keep a house over their heads. If I don't help them, they will never get through; they will suffer in silence. They are just like us at home."

Elsli's sobs prevented her from saying any more. The remembrance of her early sufferings and the thought of her parents' trials came over her like a flood, and she sobbed as if her heart would break. Clarissa lifted her head and raised the pillows behind it, so that she could look out into the clear, star-lit night.

Elsli gradually grew more tranquil, and by and by she looked up into Clarissa's face and smiled.

"Do you think I shall go to Nora?" she asked. "The old grandfather said that only good people go to heaven."

"My child," said Clarissa, "our Lord and Saviour shows us the way. He has opened the door for those who have erred, and shown us that our Heavenly Father is always ready to forgive and receive those who repent and turn to him. Don't you remember the parable of the Prodigal Son and the words of Jesus to the men who were crucified with him? They were not good, you know."

"Yes, I know," said the child in a tone of relief; and she repeated softly to herself the hymn which she had said to the old man. The last couplet was scarcely audible.

"Oh, ope the gates of heaven now, And bid me enter in!"

The next morning Clarissa went to the other children with the sad news that Elsli was very, very ill. They could not at first believe it. She had never complained, and had been only yesterday in the garden with them, joining in their play; quiet to be sure, but always sympathetic and trying to please them all. It was a sad day for them. They could not occupy themselves as usual, but sat about in the house and garden,

weeping in silence, or talking in subdued tones about the sick girl whom they all loved so dearly.

Fani was, of course, the most unhappy of all. Elsli's goodness to him in their days of poverty and hardship came clearly to his mind. How she had silently taken many a punishment and rebuke that were really deserved by him. He felt keenly that if Elsli did not recover he should never meet with any one to take her place. He saw now, as he had never seen before, what his sister had been to him.

To Mrs. Stanhope too the blow was a severe one. She blamed herself for not having noticed that the child had been growing thin and pale during the last few weeks, and she recalled, now that it was too late, several times when she had thought that Elsli looked over-heated and tired, but she had done nothing about it, thinking it only a passing matter. She sent at once for the physician. He gave little hope of the child's recovery. He said she had evidently been "running down" for some time, and she must have been eating too little and doing too much, and, besides, he suspected some mental depression and anxiety. All this, acting on a frame naturally delicate and weakened by the hardships of her early years, had more than counteracted the gain that Elsli had certainly made during the first months of her life at Rosemount.

Clarissa then told Mrs. Stanhope the story which the little girl had related to her, and their tears fell fast over the simple tale of pity and self-sacrifice. Mrs. Stanhope's heart smote her, as she learned how Elsli had suffered from fear of her displeasure, and from the concealment into which this had led her, a concealment so foreign to her nature. She went to the child's bedside, and, embracing her more fondly than she had ever done before, she said tenderly:—

"I can't tell you, darling child, how sorry I am that you should have been afraid of me. I never meant it should be so, but I am naturally reserved, and when my Nora died, I felt as if all my power of loving had died with her. I liked you, and I meant to take good care of you, but I see now that I have seemed cold to you, and haven't

shown you the love that has really been growing up for you in my heart. Forgive me, dear, and believe that I do love you, and that I will be a real loving mother to Fani, as I would be to you—" She stopped, overcome by her own emotion.

Elsli's face beamed with a radiant smile. She lifted her feeble arm and laid it around Mrs. Stanhope's neck.

"I am going to Nora," she whispered; "I will tell her how good you have been to us. I love you," she added, and it went to Mrs. Stanhope's heart that it was the first time the child had ever said these words to her. She could not speak, but she drew Elsli's head to rest upon her shoulder, and in a few moments the sick girl fell asleep with a peaceful look upon her face, and Mrs. Stanhope sat holding her unwearied, till Clarissa came and gently laid the little head back upon the pillows.

For several days Elsli continued in a critical state; but they were happy days. Mrs. Stanhope never left her, and it seemed as if she could not do enough to show her tenderness. Clarissa was devoted to her comfort, and brought her every day news from her friends in the fisherman's hut, whom Mrs. Stanhope had already begun to help in the wisest and kindest ways. The poor family sent many messages of love and gratitude to their little helper, and these Clarissa delivered; but she did not tell Elsli how unhappy they were at the thought of losing her, nor how the father said:—

"I knew she was an angel from heaven; and we could not expect her to stay long with us. Now she is going back again where she belongs."

The children at Rosemount were allowed to come for a few minutes at a time into Elsli's room. They were charged to bring only cheerful faces, and not to trouble her with their grief. They brought her flowers from the garden, and sometimes they read to her from the books she loved. Fani especially was very tender and devoted, and Elsli took great satisfaction in having him with her.

Every interview was precious, since the time for them was probably so short.

But Elsli did not die. The complete repose of the sick-room, and the devoted care

she received, but perhaps more than all that the new happiness that had come into her heart in Mrs. Stanhope's awakened affection and her own response to it, and the fresh hopes which sprang from seeing how large a place she held in the lives of those about her, and the happy prospect of being useful and valuable without need of concealment or anxiety,—all these things helped in her recovery; and when, in a few weeks, she again came down stairs and out into the sunny garden, it was with new eyes that she looked upon life and its duties and opportunities, and she thanked God that he had permitted her to stay upon his beautiful earth, and help his children here. For she saw that the earth is the Lord's as well as the heavens, and while she still looked forward to the happy life of Paradise with hope and confidence, she no longer undervalued the joys and privileges which surrounded her here.

As soon as Elsli was fairly convalescent, the doctor's children went home. Their parents could spare them no longer. Mrs. Stanhope bade them good-bye with the assurance that she should depend on having another visit from them next year, so that it was plain that she felt no serious displeasure with them. They were grateful for her forgiveness, and fervently resolved that next year she should have nothing to forgive.

The three travellers went rapidly on towards their own dear home. At the last station their father's carriage was waiting for them. A shout of joy hailed them. It was Rikli. She had been allowed to come to meet them. It seemed that night as if they would never be tired enough to go to bed, they were so excited with joy at seeing father and mother and aunty, and at feeling themselves at home again. Questions and answers were all poured out together, interrupted by frequent exclamations of affection and of joy at being all together once more. There seemed no chance of quiet or rest that night.

But at last the evening came to an end. The active trio were in bed and asleep, and the happy mother went softly from one bedside to another, and breathed a silent

thanksgiving over each sleeping child, that they had all been preserved from harm and brought safely back to her arms.

Mrs. Stanhope's summer had been full of excitement of various kinds, such as she had never in her whole life experienced before. It had been rather a trying thing to her to have her very methodical and regular life so disturbed, and she had not always known how to take with equanimity the alarms and inconveniences that her generous invitation to the doctor's children had brought upon her. But she had been interested in the children, and it had been a good thing for her to become accustomed to the interruption of the too rigorous routine in which she had been living. Elsli's illness had been a deep and painful experience, but it had produced a blessed change in the whole tone of her life and spirit. Her new-born love for the little girl had broken up the sealed fountains of her heart, and she felt again the bliss of a mother's love ardently returned by a child. A warmer glow was infused too into her feeling for Fani, to whom she had been attracted at first by his resemblance to her Philo. Time had softened her sorrow for the loss of her boy, so that this resemblance endeared Fani to her, while in Elsli's case, a similar likeness to Nora had only made it the more difficult to receive one who was brought to her to take Nora's place, while she was still stunned with the grief of the recent parting.

Her first thought now was for Elsli. The doctor said that the child must spend the next winter in a warmer climate, and recommended a removal to the south of France or to Italy before the coming of cold weather.

"And meantime," he said, "you must put a stop to all this long sitting on the stone seat under those heavy lindens down by the water, and to pacing up and down that damp little path that leads to the willows, and to spending hours in that wretched hut by the bog, that isn't fit for any one to live in. The river is very beautiful, but it's better to be looked at from a distance above. Dry air and sunshine are what our little girl needs. She couldn't do anything worse for mind or body than to sit and meditate

in that cold, damp, lonely place."

Mrs. Stanhope's eyes were opened, and she resolved to act on the doctor's suggestion, not only with regard to Elsli, but also to the fisherman's family. She took measures directly for building a small house on her own land, in a dry situation, but not far from the river, so that he could continue his avocation as a fisherman, while she also gave him steady and profitable employment as a laborer on her estate. Elsli was very happy watching the progress of the new house and fitting it up for its inmates, and she had the pleasure of seeing them comfortably established there before she went south for the winter.

Meantime Mrs. Stanhope, after much deliberation, and with considerable reluctance, for she was not accustomed to change a resolution once made, had come to a decision with regard to Fani's future, quite at variance with her former plans, which had been to bring him up with a knowledge of business, with a view to his becoming steward of her estates.

One evening she was sitting with the two children in the parlor after supper; for they no longer went out on the terrace at this hour, since the days were growing shorter and Elsli must not be out after sundown. The children were chatting gayly, on various subjects, when Mrs. Stanhope, who had been reading, laid down her book, and said:—

"Come and sit by me, Fani; let us have a little talk together. That unfortunate expedition of yours on the river, and what you said when you told me about it, seemed to show that your heart was fully set on becoming an artist. Is it so still? or was it only a passing fancy? Are you sure that you have thought long enough about it to be certain of yourself?"

Fani grew crimson. He hesitated an instant, and then said:—

"Yes; I have thought about it and wished for it a long, long time; and the more I draw, the more I care for it. But I am willing to think no more about it; and I will do

whatever you wish, to the very best of my ability."

"I have been talking to your teacher," continued Mrs. Stanhope, "and he says, if your industry and perseverance are as great as your talent, you will be a successful artist. And as you care so much about it, I am sure you will be persevering. So I have decided to take you with us to Florence this winter, where you will have good instruction in drawing, and also the benefit of the galleries. You will go on with your studies too, for I want you to be a well educated man as well as an artist, and you are too young yet to give up school-work. If you do well, and at the end of a year or two still persevere in your desire to become a painter, you shall go to an art-school, at Düsseldorf or somewhere else, and take a course of several years. There you will find out just how much you can do, and after that we will decide what is best for our young artist."

Fani sprang to his feet and stood speechless before his kind benefactress. When he tried to speak, tears came instead of the words he meant to utter.

Mrs. Stanhope saw his emotion with far more satisfaction than if he had overwhelmed her with thanks.

"Now," she said to herself, "he is certainly in earnest."

"Meanwhile," she continued aloud, "we shall often be with you, Elsli and I, sometimes at home, or wherever it is best for us to spend the winters. In summer we shall be all together here. You are my own children now; and I shall do for you just as I should have done for my Philo and Nora if they had stayed with me."

Tears stood in Mrs. Stanhope's eyes, but she smiled too, as she held out her arms to the children, and drew them, radiant with joy and gratitude, into a mother's embrace.

There were great rejoicings among their friends in Buchberg over the news that Mrs. Stanhope had adopted the two children, and that Fani was to become an art-student. Oscar and Fred, and still more the triumphant Emma, could already see with prophetic eyes the announcement of the great exhibition to be held in the

neighboring city, of the wonderful landscapes of that "celebrated painter, Fani von Buchberg!"

Heiri's family grew better off every year with the help that came from the absent children and their new mother, and Elsli was happy in the thought that her father's hardest days were over, and that her own good-fortune had brought good to him also.

Oscar and the Fink boys kept up an uninterrupted correspondence. They were determined that when they were grown up to manhood they would found a Swiss brotherhood which should astonish the world.

Feklitus got back his shirts and his new clothes and his trunks safe from the clutches of the waiters at the Crown Prince. But he never spoke of his journey to the Rhine, no matter how much his companions might ply him with questions. If, in school, his geography lesson was upon the Rhine country, he turned a deaf ear, for he absolutely declined to learn anything about a place where innocent persons are treated with such indignity as they meet with there.

Mrs. Stein and her sister still had their hands and their hearts full with the care of the boys and girls who were at once their anxiety and their delight; but they still had time and thought to give to the interests of others, and they never failed to rejoice over the improvement and the happiness of Gritli's children.

Endpaper

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GRITLI'S CHILDREN ***

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