The Emperor of Portugallia

by Selma Lagerlöf

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THE EMPEROR OF PORTUGALLIA

by

SELMA LAGERLÖF

Translated from the Swedish by Velma Swanston Howard

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE The Beating Heart Glory Goldie Sunnycastle The Christening The Vaccination Bee The Birthday Christmas Morn Glory Goldie's Illness Calling on Relatives The School Examination The Contest Fishing Agrippa Forbidden Fruit BOOK TWO Lars Gunnarson The Red Dress The New Master On the Mountain-top The Eve of Departure At the Pier The Letter August Dar Nol October the First The Dream Begins Heirlooms Clothed in Satin Stars Waiting The Empress The Emperor BOOK THREE The Emperor's Song The Seventeenth of August Katrina and Jan Bjorn Hindrickson's Funeral The Dying Heart Deposed The Catechetical Meeting An Old Troll The Sunday after Midsummer Summernight The Emperor's Consort BOOK FOUR The Welcome Greeting The Flight Held! Jan's Last Words The Passing of Katrina The Burial of the Emperor

BOOK ONE

THE BEATING HEART

Jan of Ruffluck Croft never tired of telling about the day when his little girl came into the world. In the early morning he had been to fetch the midwife, and other helpers; all the forenoon and a good part of the afternoon he had sat on the chopping-block, in the woodshed, with nothing to do but to wait.

Outside it rained in torrents and he came in for his share of the downpour, although he was said to be under cover. The rain reached him in the guise of dampness through cracks in the walls and as drops from a leaky roof, then all at once, through the doorless opening of the shed, the wind swept a regular deluge in upon him.

"I just wonder if anybody thinks I'm glad to have that young one coming?" he

muttered, impatiently kicking at a small stick of wood and sending it flying across the yard. "This is about the worst luck that could come to me! When we got married, Katrina and I, it was because we were tired of drudging as hired girl and farmhand for Eric of Falla, and wanted to plant our feet under our own table; but certainly not to raise children!"

He buried his face in his hands and sighed heavily. It was plain that the chilly dampness and the long dreary wait had somewhat to do with putting him in a bad humour, but they were by no means the only cause. The real reason for his lament was something far more serious.

"I've got to work every day," he reminded himself, "work from early morning till late in the evening; but so far I've at least had some peace nights. Now I suppose that young one will be squalling the whole night long, and I'll get no rest then, either."

Whereupon an even worse fear seized him. Taking his hands from before his face he wrung them so hard that the knuckles fairly cracked. "Up to this we've managed to scratch along pretty well, because Katrina, has been free to go out and work, the same as myself, but now she'll have to sit at home and take care of that young one."

He sat staring in front of him as hopelessly as if he had beheld Famine itself stalking across the yard and making straight for his hut.

"Well!" said he, bringing his two fists down on the chopping-block by way of emphasis. "I just want to say that if I'd only known at the time when Eric of Falla came to me and offered to let me build on his ground, and gave me some old timber for a little shack, if I had only known then that this would happen, I'd have said no to the whole business, and gone on living in the stable-loft at Falla for the rest of my days."

He knew these were strong words, but felt no inclination to take them back.

"Supposing something were to happen—?" he began—for by that time matters had reached such a pass with him he would not have minded it if the child had met with

some mishap before coming into the world—but he never finished what he wished to say as he was interrupted by a faint cry from the other side of the wall.

The woodshed was attached to the house itself. As he listened, he heard one peep after the other from within, and knew, of course, what that meant. Then, for a long while he sat very still, feeling neither glad nor sorry. Finally he said, with a little shrug:

"So it's here at last! And now, for the love of God, they might let me slip in to warm myself!"

But that comfort was not to be his so soon! There were more hours of waiting ahead of him.

The rain still came down in sheets and the wind increased. Though only the latter part of August, it was as disagreeable as a November day. To cap the climax, he fell to brooding over something that made him even more wretched. He felt that he was being slighted and set aside.

"There are three womenfolk, beside the midwife, in there with Katrina," he murmured. "One of them, at least, might have taken the trouble to come and tell me whether it's a boy or a girl."

He could hear them bustling about, as they made up a fire, and saw them run out to the well to fetch water, but of his existence no one seemed to be aware.

Of a sudden he clapped his hands to his eyes and began to rock himself backward and forward. "My dear Jan Anderson," he said in his mind, "what's wrong with you? Why does everything go against you? Why must you always have such a dull time of it? And why couldn't you have married some good-looking young girl, instead of that ugly old Katrina from Falla?"

He was so unspeakably wretched! Even a few tears trickled down between his fingers. "Why are you made so little of in the parish, my good Jan Anderson? Why should you always be pushed back for others? You know there are those who are

just as poor as yourself and whose work is no better than yours; but no one gets put down the way you do. What can be the matter with you, my dear Jan Anderson?"

These were queries he had often put to himself, though in vain, and he had no hope of finding the answer to them now, either. After all, perhaps there was nothing wrong with him? Perhaps the only explanation was that both God and his fellowmen were unfair to him?

When that thought came to him, he took his hands from before his eyes and tried to put on a bold face.

"If you're ever again allowed inside your own house, my good Jan Anderson, you mustn't so much as glance toward the young one, but march yourself straight over to the fireplace and sit down, without saying a word. Or, suppose you get right up and walk away! You don't have to sit here any longer now that you know it's over with. Suppose you show Katrina and the rest of the womenfolk that you're not a man to be trifled with…. "

He was just on the point of rising, when the mistress of Falla appeared in the doorway of the woodshed, and, with a charming curtsy, bade him come inside to have a peep at the infant.

Had it been any one else than the mistress of Falla herself that had invited him in, it is doubtful whether he would have gone at all, angry as he was. Her he had to follow, of course, but he took his own time about it. He tried to assume the air and bearing of Eric of Falla, when the latter strode across the floor of the town hall to deposit his vote in the ballot-box, and succeeded remarkably well in looking quite as solemn and important.

"Please walk in," said the mistress of Falla, opening the door for him, then stepping aside to let him go first.

One glance at the room told him that everything had been cleaned and tidied up in there. The coffeepot, newly polished and full and steaming, stood at the edge of the

hearth, to cool; the table, over by the window, was spread with a snow-white cover, on which were arranged dainty flowered cups and saucers belonging to the mistress of Falla. Katrina lay on the bed and two of the women, who had come to lend a hand, stood pressed against the wall so that he should have a free and unobstructed view of all the preparations. Directly in front of the table stood the midwife, with a bundle on her arm.

Jan could not help thinking that for once in his life he appeared to be the centre of attraction. Katrina glanced up at him appealingly, as if wanting to ask whether he was pleased with her. The other women, too, all turned their eyes toward him, expectantly waiting for some word of praise from him for all the trouble they had been to on his account.

However, it is not so easy to appear jubilant when one has been half frozen and out of sorts all day! Jan could not clear his face of that Eric-of-Falla expression, and stood there without saying a word.

Then the midwife took a step forward. The hut was so tiny that that one stride put her square in front of him, so that she could place the child in his arms.

"Now Jan shall have a peek at the li'l' lassie She's what I'd call a real baby!" said the midwife.

And there stood Jan, holding in his two hands something soft and warm done up in a big shawl, a corner of which had been turned back that he might see the little wrinkled face and the tiny wizzened hands. He was wondering what the womenfolk expected him to do with that which had been thrust upon him, when he felt a sudden shock that shook both him and the child. It had not come from any of the women and whether it had passed through the child to him or through him to the child, he could not tell.

Immediately after, the heart of him began to beat in his breast as it had never done before. Now he was no longer cold, or sad, or worried. Nor did he feel angry. All

was well with him. But he could not comprehend why there was a thumping and a beating in his breast, when he had not been dancing, or running, or climbing hills.

"My good woman," he said to the midwife, "do lay your hand here and feel of my heart! It seems to beat so queerly."

"Why, it's a regular attack of the heart!" the midwife declared. "But perhaps you're subject to these spells?"

"No," he assured her. "I've never had one before—not just in this way."

"Do you feel bad? Are you in pain?"

"Oh, no!"

Then the midwife could not make out what ailed him. "Anyhow," said she, "I'll relieve you of the child."

But now Jan felt he did not want to give up the child. "Ah, let me hold the little girl!" he pleaded.

The womenfolk must have read something in his eyes, or caught something in his tone that pleased them: for the midwife's mouth had a peculiar quirk and the other women all burst out laughing.

"Say Jan, have you never cared so much for somebody that your heart has been set athrobbing because of her?" asked the midwife.

"No indeed!" said Jan.

But at that moment he knew what it was that had quickened the heart in him. Moreover he was beginning to perceive what had been amiss with him all his life, and that he whose heart does not respond to either joy or sorrow can hardly be called human.

GLORY GOLDIE SUNNYCASTLE

The following day Jan of Ruffluck Croft stood waiting for hours on the doorstep of his hut, with the little girl in his arms.

This, too, was a long wait. But now it was all so different from the day before. He was standing there in such good company that he could become neither weary nor disheartened. Nor could he begin to tell how good it felt to be holding the warm little body pressed close to his heart. It occurred to him that hitherto he had been mighty sour and unpleasant, even to himself; but now all was bliss and sweetness within him. He had never dreamed that one could be so gladdened by just loving some one.

He had not stationed himself on the doorstep without a purpose, as may be assumed. It was an important matter that he must try to settle while standing there. He and Katrina had spent the whole morning trying to choose a name for the child. They had been at it for hours, without arriving at a decision. Finally Katrina had said: "I don't see but that you'll have to take the child and go stand on the stoop with her. Then you can ask the first female that happens along what her name is, and the name she names we must give to the girl, be it ugly or pretty."

Now the hut lay rather out of the way and it was seldom that any one passed by their place; so Jan had to stand out there ever so long, without seeing a soul. This was also a gray day, though no rain fell. It was not windy and cold, however, but rather a bit sultry. If Jan had not held the little girl in his arms he would have lost heart.

"My dear Jan Anderson," he would have said to himself. "You must remember that you live away down in the Ashdales, by Dove Lake, where there isn't but one decent farmhouse and here and there a poor fisherman's hut. Who'll you find hereabout with a name that's pretty enough to give to your little girl?"

But since this was something which concerned his daughter he never doubted that all would come right. He stood looking down toward the lake, as if not caring to her how shut in from the whole countryside it lay, in its rock-basin. He thought it might just happen that some high-toned lady, with a grand name, would come rowing across from Doveness, on the south shore of the lake. Because of the little girl he felt

almost sure this would come to pass.

The child slept the whole time; so for all of her he could have stood there and waited as long as he liked. But the worrisome person was Katrina! Every other minute she would ask him whether any one had come along yet and if he thought it prudent to keep the infant out in the damp air any longer.

Jan turned his eyes up toward Great Peak, rising high above the little groves and garden-patches of the Ashdales, like a watch tower atop some huge fortress, keeping all strangers at a distance. Still it might be possible that some great lady, who had been up to the Peak, to view the beautiful landscape had taken the wrong path back and strayed in the direction of Ruffluck.

He quieted Katrina as well as he could. The child was safe enough, he assured her. Now that he had stood out there so long he wanted to wait another minute or so.

Not a soul hove in sight, but he was confident that if he just stuck to it, the help would come. It could not be otherwise. It would not have surprised him if a queen in a golden chariot had come driving over mountains and through thickets, to bestow her name upon his little girl.

More moments passed, and he knew that dusk would soon be falling. Then he would not be let stand there longer. Katrina looked at the clock, and again begged him to come inside.

"Just you be patient a second!" he said. "I think I see something peeping out over west."

The sky had been overcast the whole day, but at that moment the sun [Note: In Swedish the sun is feminine.] came bursting out from behind the clouds, and darted a few rays down toward the child.

"I don't wonder at your wanting to have a peek at the li'l' lassie before you go down," said Jan to the sun. "She's something worth seeing!"

The sun came forth, clearer and clearer, and shed a rose-coloured glow over both the child and the hut.

"Maybe you'd like to be godmother to 'er?" said Jan of Ruffluck.

To which the sun made no direct reply. She just beamed for a moment, then drew her mist-cloak about her and disappeared.

Once again Katrina was heard from. "Was any one there?" asked she. "I thought I heard you talking to somebody. You'd better come inside now."

"Yes, now I'm coming," he answered, and stepped in. "Such a grand old aristocrat just went by! But she was in so great a hurry I had barely time to say 'go'day' to her, before she was gone."

"Goodness me! How provoking!" exclaimed Katrina. "And after we'd waited so long, too! I suppose you didn't have a chance to ask what her name was?"

"Oh, yes. Her name is Glory Goldie Sunnycastle—that much I got out of her."

"Glory Goldie Sunnycastle! But won't that name be a bit too dazzling?" was Katrina's only comment.

Jan of Ruffluck was positively astonished at himself for having hit upon something so splendid as making the sun godmother to his child. He had indeed become a changed man from the moment the little girl was first laid in his arms!

THE CHRISTENING

When the little girl of Ruffluck Croft was to be taken to the parsonage, to be christened, that father of hers behaved so foolishly that Katrina and the godparents were quite put out with him.

It was the wife of Eric of Falla who was to bear the child to the christening. She sat in the cart with the infant while Eric of Falla, himself, walked alongside the vehicle, and held the reins. The first part of the road, all the way to Doveness, was so wretched it could hardly be called a road, and of course Eric had to drive very

carefully, since he had the unchristened child to convey.

Jan had himself brought the child from the house and turned it over to the godmother, and had seen them set out. No one knew better than he into what good hands it was being intrusted. And he also knew that Eric of Falla was just as confident at handling the reins as at everything else. As for Eric's wife—why she had borne and reared seven children; therefore he should not have felt the least bit uneasy.

Once they were well on their way and Jan had again gone back to his digging, a terrible sense of fear came over him. What if Eric's horse should shy? What if the parson should drop the child? What if the mistress of Falla should wrap too many shawls around the little girl, so she'd be smothered when they arrived with her at the parsonage?

He argued with himself that it was wrong in him to borrow trouble, when his child had such godfolk as the master and mistress of Falla. Yet his anxiety would not be stilled. Of a sudden he dropped his spade and started for the parsonage just as he was taking the short cut across the heights, and running at top speed all the way. When Eric of Falla drove into the stable-yard of the parsonage the first person that met his eyes was Jan of Ruffluck.

Now, it is not considered the proper thing for the father or mother to be present at the christening, and Jan saw at once that the Falla folk were displeased at his coming to the parsonage. Eric did not beckon to him to come and help with the horse, but unharnessed the beast himself, and the mistress of Falla, drawing the child closer to her, crossed the yard and went into the parson's kitchen, without saying a word to Jan.

Since the godparents would not so much as notice him, he dared not approach them; but when the godmother swept past him he heard a little piping sound from the bundle on her arm. Then he at least knew the child had not been smothered.

He felt it was stupid in him not to have gone home at once. But now he was so sure the parson would drop the child, that he had to stay.

He lingered a moment in the stable-yard, then went straight over to the house and up the steps into the hallway.

It is the worst possible form for the father to appear before the clergyman, particularly when his child has such sponsors as Eric of Falla, and his wife. When the door to the pastor's study swung open and Jan of Ruffluck in his soiled workaday clothes calmly shuffled into the room, just after the pastor had begun the service and there was no way of driving him out, the godparents swore to themselves that once they were home they would take him severely to task for his unseemly behaviour.

The christening passed off as it should without the slightest occasion for a mishap, and Jan of Ruffluck had nothing for his intrusion. Just before the close of the service he opened the door and quietly slipped out again, into the hallway. He saw of course that everything seemed to go quite smoothly and nicely without his help.

In a little while Eric of Falla and his wife also came out into the hall. They were going across to the kitchen, where the mistress of Falla had left the child's outer wraps and shawls. Eric went ahead and opened the door for his wife, whereupon two kittens came darting into the hallway and tumbled over each other right in front of the woman's feet, tripping her. She felt herself going headlong and barely had time to think: "I'm falling with the child; it will be killed and I'll be heartbroken for life," when a strong hand seized and steadied her. Looking round she saw that her rescuer was Jan Anderson of Ruffluck, who had lingered in the hallway as if knowing he would be needed there. Before she could recover herself sufficiently to thank him, he was gone.

And when she and her husband came driving home, there stood Jan digging away. After the accident had been averted, he had felt that he might safely go back to his work.

Neither Eric nor his wife said a word to him about his unseemly behaviour. Instead, the mistress of Falla invited him in for afternoon coffee, muddy and begrimed as he was from working in the wet soil.

THE VACCINATION BEE

When the little girl of Ruffluck was to be vaccinated no one questioned the right of her father to accompany her, since that was his wish. The vaccinating took place one evening late in August. When Katrina left home, with the child, it was so dark that she was glad to have some one along who could help her over stiles and ditches, and other difficulties of the wretched road.

The vaccination bee was held that year at Falla. The housewife had made a big fire on the hearth in the living-room and thought it unnecessary to furnish any other illumination, except a thin tallow candle that burned on a small table, at which the sexton was to perform his surgical work.

The Ruffluck folk, as well as every one else, found the room uncommonly light, although it was as dim at the back as if a dark-gray wall had been raised there—making the room appear smaller than it was. And in this semi-darkness could be dimly seen a group of women with babes in arms that had to be trundled, and fed, and tended in every way.

The mothers were busy unwinding shawls and mufflers late from their little ones, drawing off their slips, and unloosing the bands of their undershirts, so that the upper portion of their little bodies could be easily exposed when the sexton called them up to the operating table.

It was remarkably quiet in the room, considering there were so many little cry-babies all gathered in one place. The youngsters seemed to be having such a good time gazing at one another they forgot to make a noise. The mothers were quiet because they wanted to hear what the sexton had to say; for he kept up a steady flow of small talk.

"There's no fun like going about vaccinating and looking at all the pretty babies," said he. "Now we shall see whether it's a fine lot you've brought me this year."

The man was not only the sexton of the parish, where he had lived all his life, but he was also the schoolmaster. He had vaccinated the mothers, had taught them, and seen them confirmed and married. Now he was going to vaccinate their babies. This was the children's first contact with the man who was to play such an important part in their lives.

It seemed to be a good beginning. One mother after the other came forward and sat down on a chair at the table, each holding her child so that the light would fall upon its bared left arm; and the sexton, chattering all the while, then made the three tiny scratches in the smooth baby skin, without so much as a peep coming from the youngster. Afterward the mother took her baby over to the fireplace to let the vaccine dry in. Meantime she thought of what the sexton had said of her child—that it was large and beautiful and would some day be a credit to the family; that it would grow up to be as good as its father and grandfather—or even better.

Everything passed off thus peacefully and quietly until it came to Katrina's turn at the table with her Glory Goldie.

The little girl simply would not be vaccinated. She screamed and fought and kicked. Katrina tried to hush her and the sexton spoke softly and gently to her; but it did no good. The poor little thing was uncontrollably frightened.

Katrina had to take her away and try to get her quieted. Then a big, sturdy boy baby let himself be vaccinated with never a whimper. But the instant Katrina was back at the table with her girl the trouble started afresh. She could not hold the child still long enough for the sexton to make even a single incision.

Now there was no one left to vaccinate but Glory Goldie of Ruffluck. Katrina was in despair because of her child's bad behaviour. She did not know what to do about it, when Jan suddenly emerged from the shadow of the door and took the child in his

arms. Then Katrina got up to let him take her place at the table.

"You just try it once!" she said scornfully, "and let's see whether you'll do any better." For Katrina did not regard the little toil-worn servant from Falla whom she had married as in any sense her superior.

Before sitting down, Jan slipped off his jacket. He must have rolled up his shirt sleeve while standing in the dark, at the back of the room, for his left arm was bared.

He wanted so much to be vaccinated, he said. He had never been vaccinated but once, and there was nothing in the world he feared so much as the smallpox.

The instant the little girl saw his bare arm she became quiet, and looked at her father with wide, comprehending eyes. She followed closely every movement of the sexton, as he put in the three short red strokes on the arm. Glancing from one to the other, she noticed that her father was not faring so very badly.

When the sexton had finished with Jan, the latter turned to him, and said:

"The li'l' lassie is so still now that maybe you can try it."

The sexton tried, and this time everything went well. The little girl was as quiet as a mouse the whole time—the same knowing look in her eyes. The sexton also kept silence until he had finished; then he said to the father:

"If you did that only to calm the child, we could just as well have made believe—"

"No, Sexton," said Jan, "then you would not have succeeded. You never saw the like of that child! So don't imagine you can get her to believe in something that isn't what it passes for."

THE BIRTHDAY

On the little girl's first birthday her father was out digging in the field at Falla; he tried to recall to mind how it had been in the old days, when he had no one to think about while at work in the field; when he did not have the beating heart in him, and when he had no longings and was never anxious.

"To think that a man can be like that!" he mused in contempt of his old self. "If I were as rich as Eric of Falla or as strong as Börje, who digs here beside me, it would be as nothing to having a throbbing heart in your breast. That's the only thing that counts."

Glancing over at his comrade, a powerfully built fellow who could do again as much work as himself, he noticed that to-day the man had not gone ahead as rapidly as usual with the digging.

They worked by the job. Börje always took upon himself more work than did Jan, yet they always finished at about the same time. That day, however, it went slowly for Börje; he did not even keep up with Jan, but was left far behind.

But then Jan had been working for all he was worth, that he might the sooner get back to his little girl. That day he had longed for her more than usual. She was always drowsy evenings; so unless he hurried home early, he was likely to find her asleep for the night when he got home.

When Jan had completed his work he saw that Börje was not even half through. Such a thing had never happened before in all the years they had worked together, and Jan was so astonished he went over to him.

Börje was standing deep down in the ditch, trying to loosen a clump of sod. He had stepped on a piece of glass, and received an ugly gash on the bottom of his foot, so that he could hardly step on it. Imagine the torture of having to stand and push the spade into the soil with an injured foot!

"Aren't you going to quit soon?" asked Jan.

"I'm obliged to finish this job to-day," replied the comrade. "I can't get any grain from Eric of Falia till the work is done, and we're all out of rye-meal."

"Then go'-night for to-day," said Jan.

Börje did not respond. He was too tired and done up to give even the customary

good-night salutation.

Jan of Ruffluck walked to the edge of the field; but there he halted.

"What does it matter to the little girl whether or not you come home for her birthday?" he thought. "She's just as well off without you. But Börje has seven kiddies at home, and no food for them. Shall you let them starve so that you can go home and play with Glory Goldie?"

Then he wheeled round, walked back to Börje, and got down into the ditch to help him. Jan was rather tired after his day's toil and could not work very fast. It was almost dark when they got through.

"Glory Goldie must be asleep this long while," thought Jan, when he finally put in the spade for the last bit of earth.

"Go'-night for to-day," he called back to Börje for the second time.

"Go'-night," returned Börje, "and thanks to you for the help. Now I must hurry along and get my rye. Another time I'll give you a lift, be sure of that!"

"I don't want any pay … Go'-night!"

"Don't you want anything for helping me?" asked Börje. "What's come over you, that you're so stuck-up all at once?"

"Well, you see, it's—it's the lassie's birthday to-day."

"And for that I got help with my digging?"

"Yes, for that and for something else, too! Well—good bye to you!"

Jan hurried away so as not to be tempted to explain what that something else was. It had been on the tip of his tongue to say: "To-day is not only Glory Goldie's birthday, but it's also the birthday of my heart."

It was as well, perhaps, that he did not say it, for Börje would surely have thought Jan had gone out of his mind.

CHRISTMAS MORN

Christmas morning Jan took the little girl along with him to church; she was then just one year and four months old.

Katrina thought the girl rather young to attend church and feared she would set up a howl, as she had done at the vaccination bee; but inasmuch as it was the custom to take the little ones along to Christmas Matins, Jan had his own way.

So at five o'clock on Christmas Morn they all set out. It was pitch dark and cloudy, but not cold; in fact the air was almost balmy, and quite still, as it usually is toward the end of December.

Before coming to an open highway, they had to walk along a narrow winding path, through fields and groves in the Ashdales, then take the steep winter-road across Snipa Ridge.

The big farmhouse at Falla, with lighted candles at every window, stood out as a beacon to the Ruffluck folk, so that they were able to find their way to Börje's hut; there they met some of their neighbours, bearing torches they had prepared on Christmas Eve. Each torch-bearer led a small group of people most of whom followed in silence; but all were happy; they felt that they, too, like the Wise Men of old, were following a star, in quest of the new-born King.

When they came to the forest heights they had to pass by a huge stone which had been hurled at Svartsjö Church, by a giant down in Frykerud, but which, luckily, had gone over the steeple and dropped here on Snipa Ridge. When the church-goers came along, the stone lay, as usual, on the ground. But they knew, they did, that in the night it had been raised upon twelve golden pillars and that the trolls had danced and feasted under it.

It was not so very pleasant to have to walk past a stone like that! Jan looked over at Katrina to see whether she was holding the little girl securely. Katrina, calm and unconcerned, walked along, chatting with one of their neighbours. She was quite oblivious, apparently, to the terrors of the place.

The spruce trees up there were old and gnarled, and their branches were dotted with clumps of snow. As seen in the glow of the torch light, one could not but think that some of the trees were really trolls, with gleaming eyes beneath snow hats, and long sharp claws protruding from thick snow mittens.

It was all very well so long as they held themselves still. But what if one of them should suddenly stretch forth a hand and seize somebody? There was no special danger for grown-ups and old people; but Jan had always heard that the trolls had a great fondness for small children—the smaller the better. It seemed to him that Katrina was holding the little girl very carelessly. It would be no trick at all for the huge clawlike troll hands to snatch the child from her. Of course he could not take the baby out of her arms in a dangerous spot like this, for that might cause the trolls to act.

Murmurs and whispers now passed from tree-troll to tree-troll; the branches creaked as if they were about to bestir themselves.

Jan did not dare ask the others if they saw or heard what he did. A question of that sort might be the very thing to rouse the trolls. In this agony of suspense he knew of but one thing to do: he struck up a psalm-tune. He had a poor singing-voice and had never before sung so any one could hear him. He was so weak at carrying a tune that he was afraid to sing out even in church; but now he had to sing, no matter how it went. He observed that the neighbours were a little surprised. Those who walked ahead of him nudged each other and looked round; but that did not stop him; he had to continue.

Immediately one of the womenfolk whispered to him: "Wait a bit, Jan, and I'll help you."

She took up the Christmas carol in the correct melody and the correct key. It sounded beautiful, this singing in the night among the trees, and soon everybody joined in.

"Hail Blessed Morn, by prophets' holy words foretold," rang out on the air. A murmur of anguish came from the tree-trolls; they bowed their heads so that their wicked eyes were no longer visible, and drew in their claws under spruce needles and snow. When the last measure of the first stanza died away, no one could have told that there was anything besides ordinary old spruce trees on the forest heights.

The torches that had lighted the Ashdales folk through the woods were burned out when they came to the highroad; but here they went on, guided by the lights from peasant huts. When one house was out of sight, they glimpsed another in the distance, and every house along the road had candles burning at all the windows, to guide the poor wanderers on their way to church.

At last they came to a hillock, from which the church could be seen. There stood the House of God, like acme gigantic lantern, light streaming out through all Its windows. When the foot-farers saw this, they held their breath. After all the little, low-windowed huts they had passed along the way, the church looked marvellously big and marvellously bright.

At sight of the sacred edifice Jan fell to thinking about some poor folk in Palestine, who had wandered in the night from Bethlehem to Jerusalem with a child, their only comfort and joy, who was to be circumcised in the Temple of the Holy City. These parents had to grope their way in the darkness of night, for there were many who sought the life of their child.

The people from the Ashdales had left home at an surly hour, so as to reach the church ahead of those who drove thither. But when they were quite near the church grounds, sleighs, with foaming horses and jingling bells, went flying past, forcing the poor foot-farers to fake to the snow banks, at the edge of the road.

Jan now carried the child. He was continually dodging vehicles, for the tramp along the road had become very difficult. But before them lay the shining temple; if they could only get to it they would be sheltered, and safe from harm.

Suddenly, from behind, there came a deafening noise of clanging bells and clamping hoofs. A huge sledge, drawn by two horses, was coming. On the front seat sat a young gentleman, in a fur coat and a high fur cap, and his young wife. The gentleman was driving; behind him stood his coachman, holding a burning torch so high that the draft blew the flame backward, leaving in its wake a long trail of smoke and flying sparks.

Jan, with the child in his arms, stood at the edge of the snowbank. All at once his foot sank deep in the snow, and he came near falling. Quickly the gentleman in the sledge drew rein and shouted to the peasant, whom he had forced from the road:

"Hand over the child and it shall ride to the church with us. It's risky carrying a little baby when there are so many teams out."

"Much obliged to you," said Jan Anderson, "but I can get along all right."

"We'll put the little girl between us, Jan," said the young wife.

"Thanks," he returned, "but you needn't trouble yourselves!"

"So you're afraid to trust us with the child?" laughed the man in the sledge, and drove on.

The foot-farers trudged along under ever-increasing difficulties. Sledge followed sledge. Every horse in the parish was in harness that Christmas morning.

"You might have let him take the girl," said Katrina. "I'm afraid you'll fall with her!"

"What, I let him have my child? What are you thinking of, woman! Didn't you see who he was?"

"What harm would there have been in letting her ride with the superintendent of the ironworks?"

Jan Anderson of Ruffluck stood stockstill. "Was that the superintendent at Doveness?" he said, looking as though he had just come out of a dream.

"Why of course! Who did you suppose it was?"

Yes, where had Jan's thoughts been? What child had he been carrying? Where had he intended going? In what land had he wandered? He stood stroking his forehead, and looked rather bewildered when he answered Katrina.

"I thought it was Herod, King of Judea, and his wife, Herodias," he said.

GLORY GOLDIE'S ILLNESS

When the little girl of Ruffluck was three years old she had an illness which must have been the scarlet fever, for her little body was red all over and burning hot to the touch. She would not eat, nor could she sleep; she just lay tossing in delirium. Jan could not think of going away from home so long as she was sick. He stayed in the hut day after day, and it looked as though Eric of Falla's rye would go unthreshed that year.

It was Katrina who nursed the little girl, who spread the quilt over her every time she cast it off, and who fed her a little diluted blueberry cordial, which the housewife at Falla had sent them. When the little maid was well Jan always looked after her; but as soon as she became ill he was afraid to touch her, lest he might not handle her carefully enough and would only hurt her. He never stirred from the house, but sat in a corner by the hearth all day, his eyes fixed on the sick child.

The little one lay in her own crib with only a couple of straw pillows under her, and no sheets. It must have been hard on the delicate little body, made sensitive by rash and inflammation, to lie upon the coarse tow-cloth pillow-casings.

Strange to say, every time the child began to toss on the bed Jan would think of the finest thing he had to his name—his Sunday shirt.

He possessed only one good shirt, which was of smooth white linen, with a starched front. It was so well made that it would have been quite good enough for the superintendent at Doveness. And Jan was very proud of that shirt. The rest of his wearing apparel, which was in constant use, was as coarse as were the pillow-casings the little girl lay on.

But maybe it was only stupid in him to be thinking of that shirt? Katrina would never in the world let him ruin it, for she had given it to him as a wedding present.

Anyhow, Katrina was doing all she could. She borrowed a horse from Eric of Falla, wrapped the little one in shawls and quilts and rode to the doctor's with her. That was courageous of Katrina—though Jan could not see that it did any good. Certainly no help came out of the big medicine bottle she brought back with her from the apothecary's, nor from any of the doctor's other prescriptions.

Perhaps he would not be allowed to keep so rare a jewel as the little girl, unless he was ready to sacrifice for her the best that he had, mused he. But it would not be easy to make a person of Katrina's sort understand this.

Old Finne-Karin came into the hut one day while the girl lay sick. She knew how to cure sickness in animals, as do all persons of her race, and she was not so bad, either, at conjuring away styes and boils and ringworms; but for other ailments one would scarcely think of consulting her. It was hardly the thing to expect help from a witch doctor for anything but trifling complaints.

The moment the old woman stepped into the room she noticed that the child was ill. Katrina informed her that it had the scarlet fever, but nobody sought her advice. That the parents were anxious and troubled she must have seen, of course, for as soon as Katrina had treated her to coffee and Jan had given her a piece of plug-tobacco, she said, entirely of her own accord:

"This sickness is beyond my healing powers; but as much I'm able to tell you; you can find out whether it's life or death. Keep awake till midnight, then, on the stroke of twelve, place the tip of the forefinger of your left hand against the tip of the little finger, eyelet-like, and look through at the young one. Notice carefully who lies beside her in the bed, and you'll know what to expect."

Katrina thanked her kindly, knowing it was best to keep on the good side of such folk; but she had no notion of doing as she had been told.

Jan attached no importance to the advice, either. He thought of nothing but the shirt. But how would he ever be able to muster courage enough to ask Katrina if he might tear up his wedding shirt? That the little girl would not get any better on that account he understood, to be sure, and if she must die anyhow, he would just be throwing it away.

Katrina went to bed that evening at her usual hour, but Jan felt too troubled to sleep. Seated in his corner, he could see how Glory Goldie was suffering. That which she had under her was too rough and coarse. He sat thinking how nice it would be if he could only make up a bed for the little girl that would feel cool and soft and smooth.

His shirt, freshly laundered and unused, lay in the bureau drawer. It hurt him to think of its being there; at the same time he felt it would hardly be fair to Katrina to use her gift as a sheet for the child.

However, as it drew on toward midnight and Katrina was sleeping soundly, he went over to the bureau and took out the shirt. First he tore away the stiff front, then he slit the shirt into two parts, whereupon he slipped one piece under the little girl's body, and spread the other one between the child and the heavy quilt that covered her.

That done, he stole back to his corner and again took up his vigil. He had not sat there long when the clock struck twelve. Almost without thinking of what he was doing he put the two fingers of his left hand up to his eye, ring fashion, and peeped through at the bed.

And lo, at the edge of the bed sat a little angel of God! It was all scratched, and bleeding, from contact with the coarse bedding, and was about to go away, when it turned and felt of the fine shirt, running its tiny hands over the smooth white linen. Then, in a twinkling, it swung its legs inside the edge of the bed and lay down again, to watch over the child. At the same time up one of the bedposts crawled something black and hideous, which on seeing that the angel of God seemed about to depart,

stuck its head over the bedside and grinned with glee, thinking it could creep inside and lie down in the angel's place.

But when it saw that the angel of God still guarded the child, it began to writhe as if suffering the torments of hell, and shrank back toward the floor.

The next day the little girl was on the road to recovery. Katrina was so glad the fever was broken that she had not the heart to say anything about the spoiled wedding shirt, though she probably thought to herself that she had a fool of a husband.

CALLING ON RELATIVES

One Sunday afternoon Jan and Glory Goldie set out together in the direction of the big forest; the little girl was then in her fifth year.

Silent and serious, father and little daughter walked hand in hand, as if bent upon a very solemn mission. They went past the shaded birch grove, their favourite haunt, past the wild strawberry hill and the winding brook, without stopping; then, disappearing in an easterly direction, they went into the densest part of the forest; nor did they stop there. Wherever could they be going? By and by they came out on a wooded hill above Loby. From there they went down to the scale-pan, where country-road and town-road cross. They did not go to Nästa or to Nysta, and never even glanced toward Där Fram and På Valln, but went farther and farther into the village. No one could have told just where they were bound for. Surely they could not be thinking of calling upon the Hindricksons, here in Loby?

To be sure Björn Hindrickson's wife was a half-sister of Jan's mother, so that Jan was actually related to the richest people in the parish, and he had a right to call Hindrickson and his wife uncle and aunt. But heretofore he had never claimed kinship with these people. Even to Katrina he had barely mentioned the fact that he had such high connections. Jan would always step out of the way when he saw Björn Hindrickson coming, and not even at church did he go up and shake hands with him.

But now that Jan had such a remarkable little daughter he was something more than

just a poor labourer. He had a jewel to show and a flower with which to adorn himself. Therefore he was as rich as the richest, as great as the greatest, and now he was going straight to the big house of Björn Hindrickson to pay his respects to his fine relatives, for the first time in his life.

The visit at the big house was not a long one. In less than an hour after their arrival, Jan and the little girl were crossing the house-yard toward the gate. But at the gate Jan stopped and glanced back, as if half-minded to go in again.

He certainly had no reason to regret his call. Both he and the child had been well received. Björn Hindrickson's wife had taken the little girl over to the blue cupboard, and given her a cookie and a lump of sugar, and Björn Hindrickson himself had asked her name and her age; whereupon he had opened his big leather purse and presented her with a bright new sixpence.

Jan had been served with coffee, and his aunt had asked after Katrina and had wondered whether they kept a cow or a pig, and if their hut was cold in winter and if the wages Jan received from Eric of Falla were sufficient for their needs.

No, there was nothing about the visit itself that troubled Jan. When he had chatted a while with the Hindricksons they had excused themselves—which was quite proper—saying they were invited to a tea that afternoon and would be leaving in half an hour. Jan had risen at once and said good-bye, knowing they must allow themselves time to dress. Then his aunt had gone into the pantry and had brought out butter and bacon, had filled a little bag with barley, and another with flour, and had tied them all into a single parcel, which she had put into Jan's hand at parting. It was just a little something for Katrina, she had said. She should have some recompense for staying at home to look after the house.

It was this parcel Jan stood there pondering over. He knew that in the bundle were all sorts of good things to eat, the very things they longed for at every meal at Ruffluck, still he felt it would be unfair to the little girl to keep it.

He had not come to the Hindricksons as a beggar, but simply to see his kinsfolk. He did not wish them to entertain any false notions as to that. This thought had come to him instantly the parcel was handed to him, but his regard for the Hindricksons was so great that he would not have dared refuse it.

Now, turning back from the gate, he walked over to the barn and put the parcel down near the door, where the housefolk constantly passed and would be sure to see it.

He was sorry to have to leave it. But his little girl was no beggar! Nobody must think that she and her father went about asking alms.

THE SCHOOL EXAMINATION

When the little girl was six years old Jan went along with her to the Östanby school one day, to listen to the examinations.

This being the first and only schoolhouse the parish boasted, naturally every one was glad that at last a long-felt want had been met. In the old days Sexton Blackie had no choice but to go about from farmhouse to farmhouse with his pupils.

Up until the year 1860, when the Östanby school was built, the sexton had been compelled to change classrooms every other week, and many a time he and his little pupils had sat in a room where the housewife prepared meals and the man of the house worked at a carpenter's bench; where the old folk lay abed all day and the chickens were cooped under the sofa.

But just the same it had gone rather well with the teaching; for Sexton Blackie was a man who could command respect in all weathers. Still it must have been a relief to him to be allowed to work in a room that was to be used only for school purposes; where the walls were not lined with cubby-beds and shelves filled with pots and pans and tools; where there was no obstructing loom in front of the window to shut out the daylight, and where women neighbours could not drop in for a friendly chat over the coffee cups during school hours.

Here the walls were hung with illustrations of Bible stories, with animal pictures and portraits of Swedish kings. Here the children had little desks with low benches, and did not have to sit perched up round a high table, where their noses were hardly on a level with the edge. And here Sexton Blackie had a desk all to himself, with spacious drawers and compartments for his record-books and papers. Now he looked rather more impressive during school hours than in former days, when he had often heard lessons while seated upon the edge of a hearth, with a roaring fire at his back and the children huddled on the floor in front of him. Here he had a fixed place for the blackboard and hooks for maps and charts, so that he did not have to stand them up against doors and sofa backs. He knew, too, where he had his goose quills and could teach the children how to make strokes and curves, so that each one of them would some day be as fine a penman as himself. It was even possible to train the children to rise in a body and march out in line, like soldiers. Indeed, no end of improvements could be introduced now that the schoolhouse was finished.

Glad as was every one of the new school, the parents did not feel altogether at ease in the presence of their children, after they had begun to go there. It was as if the youngsters had come into something new and fine from which their elders were excluded. Of course it was wrong of the parents to think this, when they should have been pleased that the children were granted so many advantages which they themselves had been denied.

The day Jan of Ruffluck visited the school, he and his little Glory Goldie walked hand in hand, as usual, all the way, like good friends and comrades; but as soon as they came in sight of the schoolhouse and Glory Goldie saw the children assembled outside, she dropped her father's hand and crossed to the other side of the road. Then, in a moment, she ran off and joined a group of children.

During the examination Jan sat near the teacher's lectern, up among the School Commissioners and other fine folk. He had to sit there; otherwise he could not have

seen anything of Glory Goldie but the back of her neck, as she sat in the front row, to the right of the lectern, where the smaller children were placed. In the old days Jan would never have gone so far forward; but one who was father to a little girl like Glory Goldie did not have to regard himself as the inferior of anybody. Glory Goldie could not have helped seeing her father from where she sat, yet she never gave him a glance. It was as if he did not exist for her. On the other hand, Glory Goldie's gaze was fixed upon her teacher, who was then examining the older pupils, on the left side of the room. They read from books, pointed out different countries and cities on the map, and did sums on the blackboard, and the teacher had no time to look at the little tots on the right. So it would not have mattered very much if Glory Goldie had sent her father an occasional side-glance; but she never so much as turned her head toward him.

However, it was some little comfort to him that all the other children did likewise. They, too, sat the whole time with their clear blue eyes fastened on their teacher. The little imps made believe they understood him when he said something witty or clever; for then they would nudge each other and giggle.

No doubt it was a surprise to the parents to see how well the children conducted themselves throughout the examination. But Sexton Blackie was a remarkable man. He could make them do almost anything.

As for Jan of Ruffluck, he was beginning to feel embarrassed and troubled. He no longer knew whether it was his own little girl who sat there or somebody else's. Of a sudden he left his place among the School Commissioners and moved nearer the door.

At last the teacher was done examining the older pupils. Now came the turn of the little ones, those who had barely learnt their letters. They had not acquired any vast store of learning, to be sure, but a few questions had to be put to them, also. Besides, they were to give some account of the Story of the Creation.

First they were asked to tell who it was that created the world. That they knew of course. And then, unhappily, the teacher asked them if they knew of any other name for God.

Now all the little A-B-C-ers were stumped! Their cheeks grew hot and the skin on their foreheads was drawn into puckers, but they could not for the life of them think out the answer to such a profound question.

Among the larger children, over on the right, there was a general waving of hands, and whispering and tittering; but the eight small beginners held their mouths shut tight and not a sound came from them. Glory Goldie was as mum as the rest.

"There is a prayer which we repeat every day," said the teacher. "What do we call God there?"

Now Glory Goldie had it! She knew the teacher wanted them to say they called God Father—and raised her hand.

"What do we call God, Glory Goldie?" he asked.

Glory Goldie jumped to her feet, her cheeks aflame, her little yellow pigtail of a braid pointing straight out from her neck.

"We call him Jan," she answered in a high, penetrating voice.

Immediately a laugh went up from all parts of the room. The gentry, the School Board, parents and children all chuckled. Even the schoolmaster appeared to be amused.

Glory Goldie went red as a beet and her eyes filled up. The teacher rapped on the floor with the end of his pointer and shouted "Silence!" Whereupon he said a few words to explain the matter.

"It was Father Glory Goldie wanted to say, of course, but said Jan instead because her own father's name is Jan. We can't wonder at the little girl, for I hardly know of another child in the school who has so kind a father as she has. I have seen him

stand outside the schoolhouse in rain and bluster, waiting for her, and I've seen him come carrying her to school through blizzards, when the snow was knee-deep in the road. So who can wonder at her saying Jan when she must name the best she knows!"

The teacher patted the little girl on the head. The people all smiled, but at the same time they were touched.

Glory Goldie sat looking down, not knowing what she should do with herself; but Jan of Ruffluck felt as happy as a king, for it had suddenly become clear to him that the little girl had been his the whole time.

THE CONTEST

It was strange about the little girl of Ruffluck and her father! They seemed to be so entirely of one mind that they could read each other's thoughts.

In Svartsjö lived another schoolmaster, who was an old soldier. He taught in an out-of-the-way corner of the parish and had no regular schoolhouse, as had the sexton; but he was greatly beloved by all children. The youngsters themselves hardly knew they went to school to him, but thought they came together just to play.

The two schoolmasters were the best of friends. But sometimes the younger teacher would try to persuade the older one to keep abreast of the times, and wanted him to go in for phonetics and other innovations. The old soldier generally regarded such things with mild tolerance. Once, however, he lost his temper.

"Just because you've got a schoolhouse you think you know it all, Blackie!" he let fly. "But I'll have you understand that my children know quite as much us yours, even if they do have only farmhouses to sit in."

"Yes, I know," returned the sexton, "and have never said anything to the contrary. I simply mean that if the children could learn a thing with less effort—"

"Well, what then?" bristled the old soldier.

The sexton knew from the old man's tone that he had offended him, and tried to smooth over the breach.

"Anyhow you make it so easy for your pupils that they never complain about their lessons."

"Maybe I make it too easy for them?" snapped the old man. "Maybe I don't teach them anything?" he shouted, striking the table with his hand.

"What on earth has come over you, Tyberg?" said the sexton. "You seem to resent everything I say."

"Well, you always come at me with so many allusions!"

Just then other people happened in, and soon all was smooth between the schoolmasters; when they parted company they were as good friends as ever. But when old man Tyberg was on his way home, the sexton's remarks kept cropping up in his mind, and now he was even angrier than before.

"Why should that strippling say I could teach the children more if I kept abreast of the times?" he muttered to himself. "He probably thinks I'm too old, though he doesn't say it in plain words." Tyberg could not get over his exasperation, and as soon as he reached home he told it all to his wife.

"Why should you mind the sexton's chatter?" said the wife. "'Youth is elastic, but age is solid,' as the saying goes. You're excellent teachers both of you."

"Little good your saying it!" he grunted. "Others will think what they like just the same."

The old man went about for days looking so glum that he quite distressed his wife.

"Can't you show them they are in the wrong?" she finally suggested.

"How show them? What do you mean?"

"I mean that if you know your pupils to be just as clever as the sexton's—"

"Of course they are!" he struck in.

"—then you must see that your pupils and his get together for a test examination."

The old man pretended not to be interested in her proposition, but all the same it caught his fancy. And some days later the sexton received a letter from him wherein he proposed that the children of both schools be allowed to test their respective merits.

The sexton was not averse to this, of course, only he wanted to have the contest held some time during the Christmas holidays, so that it could be made a festive occasion for the children.

"That was a happy conceit," thought he. "Now I shan't have to review any lessons this term."

Nor was it necessary. It was positively amazing the amount of reading and studying that went on just then in the two schools!

The contest was held the evening of the day after Christmas. The schoolroom had been decorated for the occasion with spruce trees, on which shone all the church candles left over from the Christmas Matins, and there were apples enough to give every child two apiece. It was whispered about that the parents and guardians who had come to listen to the children would be served with coffee and cakes. The chief attraction, however, was the big contest.

On one side of the room sat the soldier's pupils, on the other the sexton's. And now it was for the children to defend their teachers' reputations. Schoolmaster Tyberg had to examine the sexton's pupils, and the sexton the Tyberg pupils. Any questions that could not be answered by the one school were to be taken up by the other. Each question had to be duly recorded so that the judges would be able to decide which school was the better.

The sexton opened the contest. He proceeded rather cautiously at first, but when he found that he had a lot of clever children to deal with he went at them harder and harder. The Tyberg pupils were so well grounded they did not let a single quizz get

by them.

Then came old man Tyberg's turn at questioning the sexton's pupils.

The soldier was no longer angry with the sexton. Now that his children had shown that they knew their bits, the demon of mischief flew into him. At the start he put a few straight questions to the sexton's pupils, but being unable to remain serious for long at a time he soon became as waggish as he usually was at his own school.

"Of course I know that you have read a deal more than have we who come from the backwoods," said he. "You have studied natural science and much else, still I wonder if any of you can tell me what the stones in Motala Stream are?"

Not one of the sexton's pupils raised a hand, but on the other side hand after hand shot up.

Yet, in the sexton's division sat Olof Oleson—he who knew he had the best head in the parish, and Där Nol, of good old peasant stock. But they could not answer. There was Karin Svens, the sprightly lass of a soldier's daughter, who had not missed a day at school. She, with the others, wondered why the sexton had not told them what there was remarkable about the stones in Motala Stream.

Schoolmaster Tyberg stood looking very grave while Schoolmaster Blackie sat gazing at the floor, much perturbed.

"I don't see but that we'll have to let this question go to the opposition," said the soldier-teacher. "Fancy, so many bright boys and girls not being able to answer an easy question like that!"

At the last moment Glory Goldie turned and looked back at her father, as was her habit when not knowing what else to do.

Jan was too far away to whisper the answer to her; but the instant the child caught her father's eye she knew what she must say. Then, in her eagerness, she not only raised her hand, but stood up.

Her schoolmates all turned to her, expectantly, and the sexton looked pleased because the question would not be taken away from his children.

"They are wet!" shouted Glory Goldie without waiting for the question to be put to her, for the time was up.

The next second the little girl feared she had said something very stupid and spoiled the thing for them all. She sank down on the bench and hid her face under the desk, so that no one should see her.

"Well answered, my girl!" said the soldier-teacher. "It's lucky for you sexton pupils there was one among you could reply; for, with all your cock-sureness, you were about to lose the game."

And such peals of laughter as went up from the children of both schools and from the grown folk as well, the two schoolmasters had never heard. Some of the youngsters had to stand up to have their laugh out, while others doubled in their seats, and shrieked. That put an end to all order.

"Now I think we'd better remove the benches and take a swing round the Christmas trees," said old man Tyberg.

And never before had they had such fun in the schoolhouse, and never since, either.

FISHING

It would hardly have been possible for any one to be as fond of the little girl as her father was; but it may be truly said that she had a very good friend in old seine-maker Ola.

This is the way they came to be friends: Glory Goldie had taken to setting out fishing-poles in the brook for the small salmon-trout that abounded there. She had better luck with her fishing than any one would have expected, and the very first day she brought home a couple of spindly fishes.

She was elated over her success, as can be imagined, and received praise from her

mother for being able to provide food for the family, when she was only a little girl of eight. To encourage the child, Katrina let her cleanse and fry the fish. Jan ate of it and declared he had never tasted the like of that fish, which was the plain truth. For the fish was so bony and dry and burnt that the little girl herself could scarcely swallow a morsel of it.

But for all that the little girl was just as enthusiastic over her fishing. She got up every morning at the ionic time that Jan did and hurried off to the brook, a basket on her arm, and carrying in a little tin box the worms to bait her hooks. Thus equipped, she went off to the brook, which came gushing down the rocky steep in numerous falls and rapids, between which were short stretches of dark still water and places where the stream ran, clear and transparent, over a bed of sand and smooth stones.

Think of it! After the first week she had no luck with the fishing. The worms were gone from all the hooks, but no fish had fastened there. She shifted her tackle from rapid to still water, from still water to rippling falls, and she changed her hooks—but with no better results.

She asked the boys at Börje's and at Eric's if they were not the ones who got up with the lark and carried off her fish. But a question like that the boys would not deign to answer. For no boy would stoop to take fish from the brook, when he had the whole of Dove Lake to fish in. It was all right for little girls, who were not allowed to go down to the lake, to run about hunting fish in the woods, they said.

Despite the superior airs of the boys, the little girl only half-believed them. "Surely someone must take the fish off my hooks!" she said to herself. Hers were real hooks, too, and not just bent pins. And in order to satisfy herself she arose one morning before Jan or Katrina were awake, and ran over to the brook. When near to the stream she slackened her pace, taking very short cautious steps so as not to slip on the stones or to rustle the bushes. Then, all at once her, whole body became numb. For at the edge of the brook, on the very spot where she had set out her poles the

morning before, stood a fish thief tampering with her lines. It was not one of the boys, as she had supposed, but a grown man, who was just then bending over the water, drawing up a fish.

Little Glory Goldie was never afraid. She rushed right up to the thief and caught him in the act.

"So you're the one who comes here and takes my fish!" she said. "It's a good thing I've run across you at last so we can put a stop to this stealing."

The man then raised his head, and now Glory Goldie saw his face. It was the old seine-maker, who was one of their neighbours.

"Yes, I know this is your tackle," the man admitted, without getting angry or excited, as most folks do when taken to task for wrongdoing.

"But how can you take what isn't yours?" asked the puzzled youngster.

The man looked straight at her; she never forgot that look; she seemed to be peering into two open and empty caverns at the back of which were a pair of half-dead eyes, beyond reflecting either joy or grief.

"Well, you see, I'm aware that you get what you require from your parents and that you fish only for the fun of it, while at my home we are starving."

The little girl flushed. Now she felt ashamed.

The seine-maker said nothing further, but picked up his cap (it had dropped from his head while he was bending over the fishing-poles) and went his way. Nor did Glory Goldie speak. A couple of fish lay floundering on the ground, but she did not take them up; when she had stood a while looking at them, she kicked them back into the water.

All that day the little girl felt displeased with herself, without knowing why. For indeed it was not she who had done wrong. She could not get the seine-maker out of her thoughts. The old man was said to have been rich at one time; he had once

owned seven big farmsteads, each in itself worth as much as Eric of Falla's farm. But in some unaccountable way he had disposed of his property and was now quite penniless.

However, the next morning Glory Goldie went over to the brook the same as usual. This time no one had touched her hooks, for now there was a fish at the end of every line. She released the fishes from the hooks and laid them in her basket; but instead of going home with her catch she went straight to the seine-maker's cabin.

When the little girl came along with her basket the old man was out in the yard, cutting wood. She stood at the stile a moment, watching him, before stepping over. He looked pitifully poor and ragged. Even her father had never appeared so shabby.

The little girl had heard that some well-do-to people had offered the seine-maker a home for life, but in preference he had gone to live with his daughter-in-law, who made her home here in the Ashdales, so as to help her in any way that he could; she had many children, and her husband, who had deserted her, was now supposed to be dead.

"To-day there was fish on the hooks!" shouted the little girl from the stile.

"You don't tell me!" said the seine-maker. "But that was well."

"I'll gladly give you all the fish I catch," she told him, "if I'm only allowed to do the fishing myself." So saying, she went up to the seine-maker and emptied the contents of her basket on the ground, expecting of course that he would be pleased and would praise her, just as her father—who was always pleased with everything she said or did—had always done. But the seine maker took this attention with his usual calm indifference.

"You keep what's yours," he said. "We're so used to going hungry here that we can get on without your few little fishes."

There was something out of the common about this poor old man and Glory Goldie was anxious to win his approval.

"You may take the fish of and stick the worms on the hooks, if you like," said she, "and you can have all the tackle and everything."

"Thanks," returned the old man. "But I'll not deprive you of your pleasure."

Glory Goldie was determined not to go until she had thought out a way of satisfying him.

"Would you like me to come and call for you every morning," she asked him, "so that we could draw up the lines together and divide the catch—you to get half, and I half?"

Then the old man stopped chopping and rested on his axe. He turned his strange, half-dead eyes toward the child, and the shadow of a smile crossed his face.

"Ah, now you put out the right bait!" he said. "That proposition I'll not say no to."

AGRIPPA

The little girl was certainly a marvel! When she was only ten years old she could manage even Agrippa Prästberg, the sight of whom was enough to scare almost any one out of his wits.

Agrippa had yellow red-lidded eyes, topped with bushy eyebrows, a frightful nose, and a wiry beard that stood out from his face like raised bristles. His forehead was covered with deep wrinkles and his figure was tall and ungainly. He always wore a ragged military cap.

One day when the little girl sat all by herself on the flat stone in front of the hut, eating her evening meal of buttered bread, she espied a tall man coming down the lane whom she soon recognized as Agrippa Prästberg. However, she kept her wits about her, and at once broke and doubled her slice of bread buttered side in—then slipped it under her apron.

She did not attempt to run away or to lock up the house, knowing that that would be useless with a man of his sort; but kept her seat. All she did was to pick up an

unfinished stocking Katrina had left lying on the stone when starting out with Jan's supper a while ago, and go to knitting for dear life.

She sat there as if quite calm and content, but with one eye on the gate. No, indeed, there was not a doubt about it—Agrippa intended to pay them a visit, for just then he lifted the gate latch.

The little girl moved farther back on the stone and spread out her skirt. She saw now that she would have to guard the house.

Glory Goldie knew, to be sure, that Agrippa Prästberg was not the kind of man who would steal, and he never struck any one unless they called him Grippie, or offered him buttered bread, nor did he stop long at a place where folk had the good luck not to have a Darlecarlian clock in the house.

Agrippa went about in the parish "doctoring" clocks, and once he set foot in a house where there was a tall, old-fashioned chimney clock he could not rest until he had removed the works, to see if there was anything wrong with them. And he never failed to find flaws which necessitated his taking the whole clock apart. That meant he would be days putting it together again. Meantime, one had to house and feed him.

The worst of it was that if Agrippa once got his hands on a clock it would never run as well as before, and afterward one had to let him tinker it at least once a year, or it would stop going altogether. The old man tried to do honest and conscientious work, but just the name he ruined all the clocks he touched.

Therefore it was best never to let him fool with one's clock. That Glory Goldie knew, of course, but she saw no way of saving the Dalecarlian timepiece, which was ticking away inside the hut.

Agrippa knew of the clock being there and had long watched for an opportunity to get at it, but at other times when he was seen thereabout, Katrina had been at home to keep him at a safe distance.

When the old man came up he stopped right in front of the little girl, struck the ground with his stick, and rattled off:

"Here comes Johan Utter Agrippa Prästberg, drummer-boy to His Royal Highness and the Crown! I have faced shot and shell and fear neither angels nor devils. Anybody home?"

Glory Goldie did not have to reply, for he strode past her into the house and went straight over to the big Dalecarlian clock.

The girl ran in after him and tried to tell him what a good clock it was, that it ran neither too fast nor too slow and needed no mending.

"How can a clock run well that has not been regulated by Johan Utter Agrippa Prästberg!" the old man roared.

He was so tall he could open the clock-case without having to stand on a chair. In a twinkling he removed the face and the works and placed them on the table. Glory Goldie clenched the hand under her apron, and tears came to her eyes; but what could she do to stop him?

Agrippa was in a fever of a hurry to find out what ailed the clock, before Jan or Katrina could get back and tell him it needed no repairing. He had brought with him a small bundle, containing work-tools and grease jars, which he tore open with such haste that half its contents fell to the floor.

Glory Goldie was told to pick up everything that had dropped. And any one who has seen Agrippa Prästberg must know she would not have dared do anything but obey him. She got down on all fours and handed him a tiny saw and a mallet.

"Anything more!" he bellowed. "Be glad you're allowed to serve His Majesty's and the Kingdom's drummer-boy, you confounded crofter-brat!"

"No, not that I see," replied the little girl meekly. Never had she felt so crushed and unhappy. She was to look after the house for her mother and father, and now this

had to happen!

"But the spectacles?" snapped Agrippa. "They must have dropped, too?"

"No," said the girl, "there are no spectacles here." Suddenly a faint hope sprang up in her. What if he couldn't do anything to the clock without his glasses? What if they should be lost? And just then her eye lit on the spectacle-case, behind a leg of the table.

The old man rummaged and searched among the cog-wheels and springs in his bundle. "I don't see but I'll have to get down on the floor myself, and hunt," he said presently. "Get up, crofter-brat!"

Quick as a flash the little girl's hand shot out and closed over the spectacle-case, which she hid under her apron.

"Up with you!" thundered Agrippa. "I believe you're lying to me. What are you hiding under your apron? Come! Out with it!"

She promptly drew out one hand. The other hand she had kept under her apron the whole time. Now she had to show that one, too. Then he saw the buttered bread.

"Ugh! It's buttered bread!" Agrippa shrank back as if the girl were holding out a rattlesnake.

"I sat eating it when you came, and then I put it out of sight for, I know you don't like butter."

The old man got down on his hands and knees and began to search, but to no purpose, of course.

"You must have left them where you were last," said Glory Goldie.

He had wondered about that himself, though he thought it unlikely. At all events he could do nothing to the clock without his glasses. He had no choice but to gather up his tools and replace the works in the clock-case.

While his back was turned the little girl slipped the spectacles into his bundle, where

he found them when he got to Lövdala Manor— the last place he had been to before coming to Ruffluck Croft. On opening the bundle to show they were not there, the first object that caught his eye was the spectacle-case.

Next time he saw Jan and Katrina in the pine grove outside the church, he went up to them.

"That girl of yours, that handy little girl of yours is going to be a comfort to you," he told them.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

There were many who said to Jan of Ruffluck that his little girl would be a comfort to him when she was grown. Folks did not seem to understand that she already made him happy every day and every hour that God granted them. Only once in the whole time of her growing period did Jan have to suffer any annoyance or humiliation on her account.

The summer the little girl was eleven her father took her to Lövdala Manor on the seventeenth of August, which was the birthday of the lord of the manor, Lieutenant Liljecrona.

The seventeenth of August was always a day of rejoicing that was looked forward to all the year by every one in Svartsjö and in Bro, not only by the gentry, who participated in all the festivities, but also by the young folk of the peasantry, who came in crowds to Lövdala to look at the smartly dressed people and to listen to the singing and the dance music.

There was something else, too, that attracted the young people to Lövdala on the seventeenth of August, and that was all the fruit that was to be found in the orchard at that time. To be sure, the children had been taught strict honesty in most matters, but when it came to a question of such things as hang on bushes and trees, out in the open, they felt at liberty to take as much as they wanted, just so they were careful not to be caught at it.

When Jan came into the orchard with his Glory Goldie he noticed how the little girl opened her eyes when she saw all the fine apple trees, laden with big round greenings. And Jan would not have denied her the pleasure of tasting of the fruit had he not seen Superintendent Söderlind and two other men walking about in the orchard, on the lookout for trespassers.

He hurried Glory Goldie over to the lawn in front of the manor-house, out of temptation's way. It was plain that her thoughts were still on the apple trees and the gooseberry bushes, for she never even glanced at the prettily dressed children of the upper class or at the beautiful flowers. Jan could not get her to listen to the fine speeches delivered by the Dean of Bro and Engineer Boraeus of Borg, in honour of the day. Why she would not even listen to Sexton Blackie's congratulatory poem!

Anders Öster's clarinet could be heard from the house. It was playing such lively dance music just then that folks were hardly able to hold themselves still, but the little girl only tried to find a pretext for getting back to the orchard.

Jan kept a firm grip on her hand all the while and no matter what excuse she would hit upon to break away, he never relaxed his hold. Everything went smoothly for him until evening, when dusk fell.

Then coloured lanterns were brought out and set in the flower beds and hung in the trees and in among the clinging ivy that covered the house wall. It was such a pretty sight that Jan, who had never before seen anything of that kind, quite lost his head and hardly knew whether he was still on earth; but just the same he did not let go of the little hand.

When the lanterns had been lighted, Anders Öster and his nephew and the village shopkeeper and his brother-in-law struck up a song. While they sang the air seemed to vibrate with a strange sort of rapture that took away all sadness and depression. It came so softly and caressingly on the balmy night air that Jan just gave up to it, as did every one else. All were glad to be alive; glad they had so beautiful a world to

live in.

"This must be the way folks feel who live in Paradise," said a youth, looking very solemn.

After the singing there were fireworks, and when the rockets went up into the indigo night-sky and broke into showers of red, blue, and yellow stars, Jan was so carried away that for the moment he forgot about Glory Goldie. When he came back to himself she was gone.

"It can't be helped now," thought Jan. "I only hope all will go well with her, as usual, and that Superintendent Söderlind or any of the other watchers won't lay hands on her."

It would have been futile for Jan to try to find her out in the big, dark orchard: he knew that the sensible thing for him to do was to remain where he was, and wait for her. And he did not have to wait very long! There was one more song; the last strains had hardly died away when he saw Superintendent Söderlind come up, with Glory Goldie in his arms.

Lieutenant Liljecrona was standing with a little group of gentlemen at the top of the steps, listening to the singing, when Superintendent Söderlind stopped in front of him and set the little girl down on the ground.

Glory Goldie did not scream or try to run away. She had picked her apron full of apples and thought of nothing save to hold it up securely, so that none of the apples would roll out.

"This youngster has been up in an apple tree," said Superintendent Söderlind, "and your orders were that if I caught any apple thieves I was to bring them to you."

Lieutenant Liljecrona glanced down at the little girl, and the fine wrinkles round his eyes began to twitch. It was impossible to tell whether he was going to laugh or cry in a second. He had intended to administer a sharp reprimand to the one who had stolen his apples. But now when he saw the little girl tighten her hands round her

apron, he felt sorry for her. Only he was puzzled to know how he should manage this thing so that she could keep her apples; for if he were to let her off without further ado, it might result in his having his whole orchard stripped.

"So you've been up in the apple trees, have you?" said the lieutenant. "You have gone to school and read about Adam and Eve, so you ought to know how dangerous it is to steal apples."

At that moment Jan came forward and placed himself beside his daughter; he felt quite put out with her for having spoiled his pleasure, but of course he had to stand by her.

"Don't do anything to the little girl, Lieutenant!" he said. "For it was I who gave her leave to climb the tree for the apples."

Glory Goldie sent her father a withering glance, and broke her silence. "That isn't true," she declared. "I wanted the apples. Father has been standing here the whole evening holding onto my hand so I shouldn't go pick any."

Now the lieutenant was tickled. "Good for you, my girl!" said he. "You did right in not letting your father shoulder the blame. I suppose you know that when Our Lord was so angry at Adam and Eve it wasn't because they had stolen an apple, but because they were cowards and tried to shift the blame, the one onto the other. You may go now, and you can keep your apples because you were not afraid to tell the truth."

With that he turned to one of his sons, and said:

"Give Jan a glass of punch. We must drink to him because his girl spoke up for herself better than old Mother Eve. It would have been well for us all if Glory Goldie had been in the Garden of Eden instead of Eve."

BOOK TWO

LARS GUNNARSON

One cold winter day Eric of Falla and Jan were up in the forest cutting down trees. They had just sawed through the trunk of a big spruce, and stepped aside so as not to be caught under its branches when it came crashing to the ground.

"Look out, Boss!" warned Jan. "It's coming your way."

There was plenty of time for Eric to have escaped while the spruce still swayed; but he had felled so many trees in his lifetime that he thought he ought to know more about this than Jan did, and stood still. The next moment he lay upon the ground with the tree on top of him. He had not uttered a sound when the tree caught him and now he was completely hidden by the thick spruce branches.

Jan stood looking round not knowing what had become of his employer. Presently he heard the old familiar voice he had always obeyed; but it sounded so feeble he could hardly make out what it was saying.

"Go get a team and some men to take me home," said the voice.

"Shan't I help you from under first?" asked Jan.

"Do as I tell you!" said Eric of Falla.

Jan, knowing his employer to be a man who always demanded prompt obedience, said nothing further but hurried back to Falla as fast as he could. The farm was some distance away, so that it took time to get there.

On arriving, the first person Jan came upon was Lars Gunnarson, the husband of Eric's eldest daughter and prospective master of Falla, which he was destined to take over upon the decease of the present owner.

When Lars Gunnarson had received his instructions he ordered Jan to go straight to the house and tell the mistress of what had occurred; then he was to call the hired boy. Meantime Lars himself would run down to the barn and harness a horse.

"Perhaps I needn't be so very particular about telling the womenfolk just yet?" said Jan. "For if they once start crying and fretting it will only mean delay. Eric's voice

sounded so weak from where he lay that I think we'd best hurry along."

But Lars Gunnarson, since coming to the farm, had made it a point to assert his authority. He would no more take back an order once given than would his father-in-law.

"Go into mother at once!" he commanded. "Can't you understand that she must get the bed ready so we'll have some place to put him when we come back with him?"

Then of course Jan was obliged to go inside and notify the mistress. Try as he would to make short work of it, it took time to relate what had happened and how it had happened.

When Jan returned to the yard he heard Lars thundering and swearing in the stable. Lars was a poor hand with animals. The horses would kick if he went anywhere near them and he had not been able to get one of the beasts out of its stall the whole time that Jan had been inside talking with the housewife.

It would not have been well for Jan had he offered to help Lars. Knowing this he went immediately on his other errand, and fetched the hired boy. He thought it mighty strange that Lars had not told him to speak to Börje, who was threshing in the barn close by, instead of sending him after the hired boy, who was at work out in the birch-grove, a good way from the farmyard.

And while Jan ran these needless errands, the faint voice under the spruce branches rang in his ears. The voice was not so imperative now, but it begged and implored him to hasten. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" Jan whispered back. He had the sensation of one in a nightmare who tries to run but who cannot take a step.

Lars had at last managed to get a horse into the shafts. Then the womenfolk came and told him to be sure to take along straw and blankets. This was all very well, but it meant still further delay.

Finally Lars and Jan and the hired boy drove away from the farm. But they had got no farther than to the edge of the forest, when Lars stopped the horse.

"One gets sort of rattled when one receives news of this kind," said he. "I never thought of it till just now—but Börje is back at the barn."

"It would have been well to have taken him along," said Jan, "for he's twice as strong as any of us."

Then Lars sent the hired boy back to the farm to get Börje; which meant a long wait.

While Jan sat in the sledge, powerless to act, he felt as though within him opened a big, empty ice-cold void. It was the awful certainty that they would be too late!

Then at last came Börje and the boy, all out of breath from running, and now they drove on into the woods. They went very slowly, though, for Lars had harnessed the old spavined bay to the sledge. What he had said about his being rattled must have been true, for all at once he wanted to turn in on the wrong road.

"If you go in that direction, we'll come to Great Peak," Jan told him; "and we must get to the woods beyond Loby."

"Yes, I know," returned Lars, "but farther up there's a crossroad where it's better driving."

"What road might that be? I've never seen it."

"Wait, and I'll show you," said Lars, determined to continue up the mountain.

Now Börje sided with Jan, so Lars had to give in of course; but precious time had been consumed while they argued with him, and Jan felt as if all the life had gone out of his body.

"Nothing matters now," thought he. "Eric of Falla will be beyond our help when we arrive."

The old bay jogged along the forest road as well as it could, but it had not the strength for a heavy pull like this. It was poorly shod, and stumbled time after time. When going uphill the men had to get down from the sledge and walk, and when they came upon trackless unbeaten ground in the thick of the forest the horse was

almost more of a hindrance than a help.

At all events they got there finally. Strange to say, they found Eric of Falla in fairly good condition; he was not much hurt and no bones were broken. One of his thighs had been lacerated by a branch, and there he had an ugly wound; still it was nothing but what he could recover from.

When Jan went back to his work the next morning he learned that Eric had a high fever and was suffering intense pain. While lying on the frozen ground he had caught a severe cold, which developed into pneumonia, and within a fortnight he was dead.

THE RED DRESS

The summer the young girl was in her seventeenth year she went to church one Sunday with her parents. On the way she had worn a shawl, which she slipped off when she came to the church knoll. Then everybody noticed that she was wearing a dress such as had never before been seen in the parish.

A travelling merchant, one of the kind that goes about with a huge pack on his back, had found his way to the Ashdales, and on seeing Glory Goldie in all the glow and freshness of her youth he had taken from his pack a piece of dress goods which he tried to induce her parents to buy for her. The cloth was a changeable red, of a texture almost like satin and as costly as it was beautiful. Of course Jan and Katrina could not afford to buy for their girl a dress of that sort, though Jan, at least, would have liked nothing better.

Fancy! When the merchant had vainly pressed and begged the parents for a long while he grew terribly excited because he could not have his way. He said he had set his heart on their daughter having the dress, that he had not seen another girl in the whole parish who would set it off as well as she could. Whereupon he had measured and cut off as much of the cloth as was needed for a frock, and presented it to Glory Goldie. He did not want any payment, all he asked was to see the young girl dressed

in the red frock the next time he came to Ruffluck.

Afterward the frock was made up by the best seamstress in the parish, the one who sewed for the young ladies at Lövdala Manor, and when Glory Goldie tried it on the effect was so perfect that one would have thought the two had blossomed together on one of the lovely wild briar bushes out in the forest.

The Sunday Glory Goldie showed herself at church in her new dress, nothing could have kept Jan and Katrina at home, so curious were they to hear what folks would say.

And it turned out, as has been said, that everybody noticed the red dress. When the astonished folk had looked at it once they turned and looked again; the second time, however, they glanced not only at the dress but at the young girl who wore it.

Some had already heard the story of the dress. Others wanted to know how it happened that a poor cotter's lass stood there in such fine raiment. Then of course Katrina and Jan had to tell them all about the travelling merchant's visit, and when they learned how it had come about they were all glad that Fortuna had thought of taking a little peep into the humble home down in the Ashdales.

There were sons of landed proprietors who declared that if this girl had been of less humble origin they would have proposed to her then and there. And there were daughters of landed proprietors—some of them heiresses—who said to themselves that they would have given half of their possessions for a face as rosy and young and radiant with health as hers.

That Sunday the Dean of Bro preached at the Svartsjö church, instead of the regular pastor. The dean was an austere, old fashioned divine who could not abide extravagance in any form, whether in dress or other things.

Seeing the young girl in the bright red frock he must have thought she was arrayed in silk, for immediately after the service he told the sexton to call the girl and her parents, as he wished to speak with them. Even he noticed that the girl and the dress

went well together, but for all that he was none the less displeased.

"My child," he said, laying his hand on Glory Goldie's shoulder, "I have something I want to say to you. Nobody could prevent me from wearing the vestments of a bishop, if I so wished; but I never do it because I don't want to appear to be something more than what I am. For the same reason you should not dress as though you were a young lady of quality, when you are only the daughter of a poor crofter."

These were cutting words, and poor Glory Goldie was so dismayed she could not answer. But Katrina promptly informed him that the girl had received the cloth as a gift.

"Be that as it may," spoke the dean. "But parents, can't you comprehend that if you allow your daughter to array herself once or twice in this fashion she will never again want to put on the kind of clothes you are able to provide for her?"

Now that the dean had spoken his mind in plain words he turned away; but before he was out of earshot Jan was ready with a retort.

"If this little girl could be clothed as befits her, she would be as gorgeous as the sun itself," said he. "For a sunbeam of joy she has been to us since the day she was born."

The dean came back and regarded the trio thoughtfully. Both Katrina and Jan looked old and toil worn, but the eyes in their furrowed faces shone when they turned them toward the radiant young being standing between them.

Then the dean felt it would be a shame to mar the happiness of these two old people. Addressing himself to the young girl, he said in a mild voice:

"If it is true that you have been a light and a comfort to your poor parents, then you may well wear your fine dress with a good grace. For a child that can bring happiness to her father and mother is the best sight that our eyes may look upon."

THE NEW MASTER

When the Ruffluck family came home from church the Sunday the dean had spoken so beautifully to Glory Goldie they found two men perched on their fence, close to the gate. One of the men was Lars Gunnarson, who had become master of Falla after Eric's death, the other was a clerk from the store down at Broby, where Katrina bought her coffee and sugar.

They looked so indifferent and unconcerned sitting there that Jan could hardly think they wanted to see him; so he simply raised his cap as he went past them into the house, without speaking.

The men remained where they were. Jan wished they would go sit where he could not see them. He knew that Lars had harboured a grudge against him since that ill-fated day in the forest and had hinted more than once that Jan was getting old and would not be worth his day's wage much longer.

Katrina brought on the midday meal, which was hurriedly eaten. Lars Gunnarson and the clerk still sat on the fence, laughing and chatting. They reminded Jan of a pair of hawks biding their time to swoop down upon helpless prey. Finally the men got down off the fence, opened the gate, and went toward the house.

Then, after all, they had come to see him!

Jan had a strong presentment that they wished him ill. He glanced anxiously about, as if to find some corner where he might hide. Then his eyes fell on Glory Goldie, who also sat looking out through the window, and instantly his courage came back.

Why should he be afraid when he had a daughter like her? he thought. Glory Goldie was wise and resourceful, and afraid of nothing. Luck was always on her side, so that Lars Gunnarson would find it far from easy to get the best of her!

When the two men came in they seemed as unconcerned as before. Yet Lars said that after sitting so long on the fence looking at the pretty little house they had finally taken a notion to step inside.

They lavished praises upon everything in the house and Lars remarked that Jan and

Katrina had reason to feel very thankful to Eric of Falla; for of course it was he who had made it possible for them to build a home and to marry.

"That reminds me," he said quickly, looking away from Jan and Katrina. "I suppose Eric of Falla had the foresight to give you a deed to the land on which the hut stands?"

Neither Jan nor Katrina said a word. Instantly they knew that Lars had now come to the matter he wanted to discuss with them.

"I understand there are no papers in existence," continued Lars, "but I can't believe it is so bad as all that. For in that event the house would fall to the owner of the land."

Still Jan said nothing, but Katrina was too indignant to keep silent any longer.

"Eric of Falla gave us the lot on which this house stands," she said, "and no one has the right to take it away from us!"

"And no one has any intention of doing so," said the new owner in a pacifying tone. He only wanted to have everything regular, that was all. If Jan could let him have a hundred rix-dollars by October fairtime—

"A hundred rix-dollars!" Katrina broke in, her voice rising almost to a shriek.

Lars drew his head back and tightened his lips.

"And you, Jan, you don't say a word!" said Katrina reproachfully. "Don't you hear that Lars wants to squeeze from us one hundred rix-dollars?"

"It won't be so easy, perhaps, for Jan to come up with one hundred rix-dollars," returned Lars Gunnarson, "but just the same I've got to know what's mine."

"And so you're going to steal our hut?"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Lars. "The hut is yours. It's the land I'm after."

"Then we can move the hut off of your land," said Katrina.

"It would hardly be worth your while to go to the bother of moving something you'll not be able to keep."

"Well, I never!" gasped Katrina. "Then you really do mean to lay hands on our property?"

Lars Gunnarson made a gesture of protest.

No, of course he did not want to put a lien on the house, not he! Had he not already told them as much? But it so happened that the storekeeper at Broby had sent his clerk with some accounts that had not been settled.

The clerk now produced the bills and laid them on the table. Katrina pushed them over to Glory Goldie and told her to figure up the total amount due.

It was no less than one hundred rix-dollars that they owed!

Katrina went white as a sheet. "I see that you mean to turn us out of house and home," she said, faintly.

"Oh, no," answered Lars, "not if you pay what you owe."

"You ought to think of your own parents, Lars," Katrina reminded him. "They, too, had their struggles before you became the son-in-law of a rich farmer."

Katrina had to do all the talking, as Jan would not say anything; he only sat and looked at Glory Goldie—looked and waited. To his mind this affair was just something that had been planned for her special benefit, that she might prove her worth.

"When you take the hut away from the poor man he's done for," wailed Katrina.

"I don't want to take the hut," said Lars Gunnarson, on the defensive. "All I want is a settlement."

But Katrina was not listening. "As long as the poor man has his home he's as good as anybody else, but the homeless man knows he's nobody."

Jan felt that Katrina was right. The hut was built of old lumber and stood aslant on a poor foundation. Small and cramped it certainly was, but just the same it seemed as if all would be over for them if they lost it. Jan, for his part, could not think for a

second it would be as bad as that. Was not his Glory Goldie there? And could he not see how her eyes were beginning to flash fire? In a little while she would say something or do something that would drive these tormentors away.

"Of course you've got to have time to think it over," said the new owner. "But bear in mind that either you move on the first of October or you pay the storekeeper at Broby the one hundred rix-dollars you owe him on or before that date. Besides, I must have another hundred for the land."

Old Katrina sat wringing her toil-gnarled hands. She was so wrought up that she talked to herself, not caring who heard her.

"How can I go to church and how can I be seen among people when I'm so poor I haven't even a hut to live in?"

Jan was thinking of something else. He called to mind all the beautiful memories associated with the hut. It was here, near the table, the midwife had laid the child in his arms. It was over there, in the doorway, he had stood when the sun peeped out through the clouds to name the little girl. The hut was one with himself; with Katrina; with Glory Goldie. It could never be lost to them.

He saw Glory Goldie clench her fist, and felt that she would come to their aid very soon.

Presently Lars Gunnarson and the shopkeeper's clerk got up and moved toward the door. When they left they said "good-bye," but not one of the three who remained in the hut rose or returned the salutation.

The moment the men were gone the young girl, with a proud toss of her head, sprang to her feet.

"If you would only let me go out in the world!" she said.

Katrina suddenly ceased mumbling and wringing her hands. Glory Goldie's words had awakened in her a faint hope.

"It shouldn't be so very difficult to earn a couple of hundred rix-dollars between now and the first of October," said the girl. "This is only midsummer, so it's three whole months till then. If you will let me go to Stockholm and take service there, I promise you the house shall remain in your keeping."

When Jan of Ruffluck heard these words he grew ashen. His head sank back as if he were about to swoon. How dear of the little girl! he thought. It was for this he had waited the whole time—yet how, how could he ever bear to let her go away from him?

ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP

Jan of Ruffluck walked along the forest road where he and his womenfolk, happy and content, had passed on the way home from church a few hours earlier.

He and Katrina, after long deliberation, had decided that before sending their daughter away or doing anything else in this matter that Jan had better see Senator Carl Carlson of Storvik and ask him whether Lars Gunnarson had the right to take the hut from them.

There was no one in the whole of Svartsjö Parish who was so well versed in the law and the statutes as was the senator from Storvik, and those who had the good sense to seek his advice in matters of purchase and sale, in making appraisals, or setting up an auction, or drawing up a will, could rest assured that everything would be done in a correct and legal manner and that afterward there was no fear of their becoming involved in lawsuits or other entanglements.

The senator was a stern and masterful man, brusque of manner and harsh of voice, and Jan was none too pleased at the thought of having to talk with him.

"The first thing he'll do when I come to him will be to read me a lecture because I've got no papers," thought Jan. "He has scared some folks so badly at the very start that they never dared tell him what they had come to consult him about."

Jan left home in such haste that he had no time to think about the dreadful man he

was going to see. But while passing through the groves of the Ashdales toward the big forest the old dread came over him. "It was mighty stupid in me not to have taken Glory Goldie along!" he said to himself.

When leaving home he had not seen the girl about, so he concluded that she had betaken herself to some lonely spot in the woods, to weep away her grief, as she never wanted to be seen by any one when she felt downhearted.

Just as Jan was about to turn from the road into the forest he heard some one yodelling and singing up on the mountain, to right of him. He stopped and listened. It was a woman's voice; surely it could not be the one it sounded like! In any case, he must know for a certainty before going farther.

He could hear the song clearly and distinctly, but the singer was hidden by the trees. Presently he turned from the road and pushed his way through some tangle-brush in the hope of catching a glimpse of her; but she was not as near as he had imagined. Nor was she standing still. On the contrary, she seemed to be moving farther away—farther away and higher up.

At times the singing seemed to come from directly above him. The singer must be going up to the peak, he thought.

She had evidently taken a winding path leading up the mountain, where it was almost perpendicular. Here there was a thick growth of young birches; so of course he could not see her. She seemed to be mounting higher and higher, with the swiftness of a bird on the wing, singing all the while.

Then Jan started to climb straight up the mountain; but in his eagerness he strayed from the path and had to make his way through the bewildering woods. No wonder he was left far behind! Besides he had begun to feel as if he had a heavy weight on his chest; he could hardly get his breath as he tramped uphill, straining his ears to catch the song. Finally he went so slowly that he seemed not to be moving at all.

It was not easy to distinguish voices out in the woods, where there was so much that

rustled and murmured and chimed in, as it were. But Jan felt that he must get to where he could see the one who for very joy went flying up the steep. Otherwise he would harbour doubts and misgivings the rest of his life. He knew that once he was on the mountain top, where it was barren of trees, the singer could not elude him.

The view from the summit was glorious. From there could be seen the whole of long Lake Löven, the green vales encircling the lake and all the blue hills that shelter the valley. When folks from the shut-in Ashdales climbed to the towering peak they must have thought of the mountain whither the Tempter had once taken Our Lord, that he might show Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glories.

When Jan had at last left the dense woods behind him and had come to a cleared place, he saw the singer. At the top of the highest peak was a cairn, and on the topmost stone of this cairn silhouetted against the pale evening sky stood Glory Goldie Sunnycastle, in her scarlet dress.

If the folk in the dales and woodlands below had turned their eyes toward the peak just then, they would have seen her standing there in her shining raiment.

Glorv Goldie looked out over miles and miles of country. She saw steep hills crowned with white churches on the shores of the lake, manors and founderies surrounded by parks and gardens, rows of farmhouses along the skirt of the woods, stretches of field and meadow land, winding roads and endless tracts of forest.

At first she sang. But presently she hushed her singing and thought only of gazing out over the wide, open world before her. Suddenly she flung out her arms as if wanting to take it all into her embrace—all this wealth and power and bigness from which she had been shut out until that day.

Jan did not return until far into the night, and when he reached home he could give no coherent account of his movements. He declared he had seen and talked with the senator, but what the senator had advised him to do he could not remember.

"It's no good trying to do anything," he said again and again. That was all the

satisfaction Katrina got.

Jan walked all bent over, and looked ill. Earth and moss clung to his coat, and Katrina asked him if he had fallen and hurt himself.

"No," he told her, but he may have lain on the ground a while.

Then he must be ill, thought Katrina.

It was not that either. It was just that something had stopped the instant it dawned on him that his little girl had offered to save the home for her parents not out of love for them, but because she longed to get away and go out in time world. But this he would not speak of.

THE EVE OF DEPARTURE

The evening before Glory Goldie of Ruffluck left for Stockholm Jan discovered no end of things that had to be attended to all at once. He had no sooner got home from his work than he must betake himself to the forest to gather firewood, whereupon he set about fixing a broken board in the gate that had been hanging loose a whole year. When he had finished with that he dragged out his fishing tackle and began to overhaul it.

All this time he was thinking how strange it seemed not to feel any actual regret. Now he was the same as he had been seventeen years before; he felt neither glad nor sad. His heart had stopped like a watch that has received a hard blow when he had seen Glory Goldie on the mountain-top, opening her arms to the whole world.

It had been like this with him once before. Then folks had wanted him to be glad of the little girl's coming, but he had not cared a bit about it; now they all expected him to be sad and disconsolate over her departure, and he was not that, either.

The hut was full of people who had come to say good-bye to Glory Goldie. Jan had not the face to go in and let them see that he neither wept nor wailed; so he thought it best to stop outside.

At all events it was a good thing for him matters had taken this turn, for if all had been as before he knew he should never have been able to endure the separation, and all the heartache and loneliness.

A while ago, in passing by the window, he had noticed that the hut inside was decked with leaves and wild flowers. On the table were coffee cups, as on the day of which he was thinking. Katrina was giving a little party in honour of the daughter who was to fare forth into the wide world to save the home. Every one seemed to be weeping, both the housefolk and those who had come to bid the little girl Godspeed. Jan heard Glory Goldie's sobs away out in the yard, but they had no effect upon him.

"My good people," he mumbled to himself, "this is as it should be. Look at the young birds! They are thrust out of the nest if they don't leave it willingly. Have you ever watched a young cuckoo? What could be worse than the sight of him lying in the nest, fat and sleek, and shrieking for food the whole blessed day while his parents wear themselves out to provide for him? It won't do to let the young ones sit around at home and become a burden to us older ones. They have got to go out into the world and shift for themselves my good friends."

At last all was quiet in the house. The neighbours had left, so that Jan could just as well have gone inside; but he went on puttering with his fishing tackle a while longer. He would rather that Glory Goldie and Katrina should be in bed and asleep before he crossed the threshold.

By and by, when he had heard no sound from within for ever so long, he stole up to the house as cautiously as a thief.

The womenfolk had not retired. As Jan passed by the open window he saw Glory Goldie sitting with her arms stretched out across the table, her head resting on them. It looked as if she were still crying. Katrina was standing back in the room wrapping her big shawl around Glory Goldie's bundle of clothing.

"You needn't bother with that, mother," said Glory Goldie without raising her head.

"Can't you see that father is mad at me because I'm leaving?"

"Then he'll have to get glad again," returned Katrina, calmly.

"You say that because you don't care for him," said the girl, through her sobs. "All you think about is the hut. But father and I, we think of each other, and I'll not leave him!"

"But what about the hut?" asked Katrina.

"It can go as it will with the hut, if only father will care for me again."

Jan moved quietly away from the door, where he had been standing a moment, listening, and sat down on the step. He never thought for an instant that Glory Goldie would remain at home. Indeed he knew better than did any one else that she must go away. All the same it was to him as if the soft little bundle had again been laid in his arms. His heart had been set going once more. Now it was beating away in his breast as if trying to make up for lost time. With that he felt that his armour of defence was gone.

Then came grief and longing. He saw them as dark shadows in among the trees. He opened his arms to them, a smile of happiness lighting his face.

"Welcome! Welcome!" he cried.

AT THE PIER

When the steamer Anders Fryxell pulled out from the pier at Borg Point with Glory Goldie of Ruffluck on board, Jan and Katrina stood gazing after it until they could no longer see the faintest outline of either the girl or the boat. Every one else had left the pier, the watchman had hauled down the flag and locked the freight shed, but they still tarried.

It was only natural that the parents should stand there as long as they could see anything of the boat, but why they did not go their ways afterward they hardly knew themselves. Perhaps they dreaded the thought of going home again, of stepping into

the lonely hut in each other's company.

"I've got no one but him to cook for now!" mused Katrina, "no one but him to wait for! But what do I care for him? He could just as well have gone, too. It was the girl who understood him and all his silly talk, not I. I'd be better off alone."

"It would be easier to go home with my grief if I didn't have that sour-faced old Katrina sitting round the house," thought Jan. "The girl knew so well how to get on with her, and could make her happy and content; but now I suppose I'll never get another civil word from that quarter."

Of a sudden Jan gave a start. Bending forward he clapped his hands to his knees. His eyes kindled with new-found hope and his whole face shone. He kept his gaze on the water and Katrina thought something extraordinary must have riveted his attention, although she, who stood beside him, saw nothing save the ceaseless play of the gray-green waves, chasing each other across the surface of the lake, with never a stop.

Jan ran to the far end of the pier and bent down over the water, with the look on his face which he always wore whenever Glory Goldie approached him, but which he could never put on when talking to any one else. His mouth opened and his lips moved as though he were speaking, but not a word was heard by Katrina. Smile after smile crossed his face, just as when the girl used to stand and rail at him.

"Why, Jan!" said Katrina, "what has come over you?"

He did not reply, but motioned to her to be still. Then he straightened himself a little. His gaze seemed to be following something that glided away over the gray-green waves. Whatever it was, it moved quickly in the direction the boat had taken. Now Jan no longer bent forward but stood quite upright, shading his eyes with his hand that he might see the better. Thus he remained standing till there was nothing more to be seen, apparently. Then, turning to Katrina, he said:

"You didn't see anything, perhaps?"

"What can one see here but the lake and its waves?"

"The little girl came rowing back," Jan told her, his voice lowered to a whisper. "She had borrowed a boat of the captain. I noticed it was marked exactly like the steamer. She said there was something she had forgotten about when she left; it was something she wanted to say to us."

"My dear Jan, you don't know what you're talking about! If the girl had come back then I, too, would have seen her."

"Hush now, and I'll tell you what she wants of us!" said Jan, in solemn and mysterious whispers. "It seems she had begun to worry about us; she was afraid we two wouldn't get on by ourselves. Before she had always walked between us, she said, with one hand in mine and the other in yours, and in that way everything had gone well. But now that she wasn't here to keep us together she didn't know what might happen, 'Now perhaps father and mother will go their separate ways,' she said."

"Sakes alive!" gasped Katrina, "that she should have thought of that!" The woman was so affected by what had just been said—for the words were the echo of her own thoughts—that she quite forgot that the daughter could not possibly have come back to the pier and talked with Jan without her seeing it.

"'So now I've come back to join your hands,' said he, 'and you mustn't let go of each other, but keep a firm hold for my sake till I return and link hands with you again.' As soon as she had said this she rowed away."

There was silence for a moment on the pier.

"And here's my hand," Jan said presently, in an uncertain voice that betrayed both shyness and anxiety—and put out a hand, which despite all his hard toil had always remained singularly soft. "I do this because the girl wants me to," he added.

"And here's mine," said Katrina. "I don't understand what it could have been that you saw, but if you and the girl want us to stick together, so do I."

Then they went all the way home to their hut, hand in hand.

THE LETTER

One morning when Glory Goldie had been gone about a fortnight, Jan was out in the pasture nearest the big forest, mending a wattled fence. He was so close to the woods that he could hear the murmur of the pines and see the grouse hen walking about under the trees, scratching for food-along line of grouse chicks trailing after her.

Jan had nearly finished his work when he heard a loud bellowing from the wooded heights! It sounded so weird and awful he began to be alarmed. He stood still a moment and listened. Soon he heard it again. Then he knew it was nothing to be afraid of, but on the contrary, it seemed to be a cry for help.

He threw down his pickets and branches and hurried through the birch grove into the dense fir woods, where he had not gone far before he discovered what was amiss. Up there was a big, treacherous marsh. A cow belonging to the Falla folk had gone down in a quagmire and Jan saw at once that it was the best cow they had on the farm, one for which Lars Gunnarson had been offered two hundred rix-dollars. She had sunk deep in the mire and was now so terrified that she lay quite still and sent forth only feeble and intermittant bellowings. It was plain that she had struggled desperately for she was covered with mud clear to her horns, and round about her the green moss-tufts had been torn up. She had bellowed so loud that Jan thought every one in Ashdales must have heard her, yet no one but himself had come up to the marsh. He did not tarry a second, but ran straight to the farm for help.

It was slow work setting poles in the marsh, laying out boards and slipping ropes under the cow, to draw her up by. For when the men reached her she had sunk to her back, so that only her head was above the mire. After they had finally dragged her back onto firm ground and carted her home to Falla the housewife invited all who had worked over the animal to come inside for coffee.

No one had been so zealous in the rescue work as had Jan of Ruffluck. But for him the cow would have been lost. And just think! She was a cow worth at least two hundred rix-dollars.

To Jan this seemed a rare stroke of luck. Surely the new master and mistress could not fail to recognize so great a service. Something of a similar nature once happened in the old master's time. Then it was a horse that had been impaled on a picket fence. The one who found the horse and had it carted home received from Eric of Falla a reward of ten rix-dollars; And that despite the fact that the beast was so badly injured that Eric had to shoot it.

But the cow was alive and in nowise harmed. So Jan pictured himself going on the morrow to the sexton, or to some other person who could write, to ask him to write to Glory Goldie and tell her to come home.

When Jan came into the living-room at Falla he naturally drew himself up a bit. The old housewife was pouring coffee and he did not wonder at it when she handed him his cup before even Lars Gunnarson had been served. Then, while they were all having their coffee, every one spoke of how well Jan had done, that is, every one but the farmer and his wife; not a word of praise came from them.

But now that Jan felt so confident his hard times were over and his luck was coming back, it was easy for him to find grounds for comfort. It might be that Lars was silent because he wished to make what he would say all the more impressive. But he was certainly withholding his thanks a distressingly long while.

The situation had become embarrassing. The others had stopped talking and looked a little uncomfortable. When the old mistress went round to refill the coffee cups some of the men hesitated; Jan among them.

"Oh, have another wee drop, Jan!" she said. "If you hadn't been so quick to act we would have lost a cow that's worth her two hundred rix-dollars."

This was followed by a dead silence, and now every one's eyes turned toward the

man of the house. All were waiting for some expression of appreciation from him.

Lars cleared his throat two or three times, as if to give added weight to what he was about to say.

"It strikes me there's something queer about this whole business," he began. "You all know that Jan owes two hundred rix-dollars and you also know that last spring I was offered just that sum for the cow. It seems to fit in altogether too well with Jan's case that the cow should have gone down in the marsh to-day and that he should have rescued her."

Lars paused and again cleared his throat. Jan rose and moved toward him; but neither he nor any of the others had an answer ready.

"I don't know how Jan happened to be the one who heard the cow bellowing up in the marsh," pursued Lars. "Perhaps he was nearer the scene when the mishap occurred than he would have us think. Maybe he saw a possibility of getting out of debt and deliberately drove the cow—"

Jan brought his fist down on the table with a crash that made the cups jump in their saucers.

"You judge others by yourself, you!" he said, "That's the sort of thing you might do, but not I. You must know that I can see through your tricks. One day last winter you—"

But just when Jan was on the point of saying something that could only have ended in an irreparable break between himself and his employer, the old housewife tipped him by the coat sleeve.

"Look out, Jan!" said she.

Jan did so. Then he saw Katrina coming toward the house with a letter in her hand.

That was surely the letter from Glory Goldie which they had been longing for every day since her departure. Katrina, knowing how happy Jan would be to get this, had

come straight over with it the moment it arrived.

Jan glanced about him, bewildered. Many ugly words were on the tip of his tongue, but now he had no time to give vent to them. What did he care about being revenged on Lars Gunnarson? Why should he bother to defend himself? The letter drew him away with a power that was irresistible. He was out of the house and with Katrina before the people inside had recovered from their dread of what he might have hurled at his employer in the way of accusation.

AUGUST DÄR NOL

One evening, when Glory Goldie had been gone about a month, August Där Nol came down to the Ashdales. August and Glory had been comrades at the Östanby school and had been confirmed the same summer.

A fine, manly lad was August Där Nol, and a favourite with every one. His parents were people of means and no one had a brighter or more assured future to look forward to than had he. Having been absent from home for six months, he had only learned on his return that Glory Goldie had gone away in order to earn money to save her old home. It was his mother who told him of this, and before she had finished talking he snatched up his cap and rushed out, never pausing until he had reached the gate at Ruffluck Croft; there he stopped and looked toward the hut.

Katrina saw August standing there and made a pretext of going to the well for water in order to speak to him; but the lad did not appear to see her, so Katrina immediately went back into the house.

Then in a little while Jan came down from the forest with an armful of wood, and when August saw him coming he stepped to one side until he, too, had gone in; then he went back to the gate.

Presently the window of the hut swung open, disclosing Jan seated at one side of the window-table smoking his pipe, and Katrina at the other side, knitting.

"Well, Katrina dear," said Jan, "now we're having a real cosy evening. There's only

one thing I wish for."

"I wish for a hundred things!" sighed Katrina, "and if I could have them all I'd still be unsatisfied."

"But I only wish the seine-maker, or somebody else who can read, would drop in and read us Glory Goldie's letter."

"You've had that letter read to you so many times since you got it that you ought to know it by heart."

"That may be true enough," returned Jan, "but still it always does me good to hear it read, for then I feel as though the little girl herself were standing and talking to me, and I seem to see her eyes beam on me as I listen to her words."

"I wouldn't mind hearing it again, myself," said Katrina, glancing out through the open window. "But on a fine light evening like this we can't expect folks to come to our hut."

"It would be better to me than the taste of white bread with coffee to hear Glory Goldie's letter read while I'm sitting here smoking," declared Jan, "but I'm sure every one in the Ashdales has grown tired of being asked to read the letter over and over, and now I don't know who to turn to."

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the door opened, and in walked August Där Nol. Jan started in surprise.

"Bless me! Here you come, my dear August, just when wanted." After Jan had shaken hands with the caller and pulled up a chair for him he said: "I've got a letter I'd like you to read to us. It's from an old schoolmate of yours. Maybe you'd be interested to hear how she's getting on?"

August Där Nol took the letter and read it aloud, lingering over each word as if drinking it in. When he had finished, Jan remarked:

"How wonderfully well you read, my dear August! I've never heard Goldie's words

sound as beautiful as from your lips. Would you do me the favour to read the letter once more?"

Then the boy read the letter for the second time, with the same deep feeling. It was as if he had come with a thirst-parched throat to a spring of pure water. When he had read to the end he carefully folded the letter and smoothed it over with his hand. As he was about to return it to Jan, it occurred to him the letter had not been properly folded and he must do it over. That done, he sat very silent. Jan tried to start a conversation, but failed. Finally the boy rose to go.

"It's so nice to get a little help sometimes," said Jan. "Now I have another favour to ask of you. We don't know just what to do with Glory Goldie's kitten. It will have to be put out of the way, I suppose, as we can't afford to keep it; but I can't bear the thought of that, nor has Katrina the heart to drown it. We've talked of asking some stranger to take it."

August Där Nol stammered a few words, which could scarcely be heard.

"You can put the kitten in a basket, Katrina," Jan said to his wife, "then August will take it along, so that we'll not have to see it again."

Katrina then picked up a little kitten that lay asleep on the bed, placed it in an old basket around which she wrapped a cloth, and then turned it over to the boy.

"I'm glad to be rid of this kitten," said Jan. "It's wee happy and Playful—too much like Glory Goldie herself. It's best to have it out of the way."

Young Där Nol, without a word, went toward the door; but suddenly he turned back, took Jan's hand, and pressed it.

"Thanks!" he said in a choked voice. "You have given me more than you yourself know."

"Don't imagine it, my dear August Där Nol!" Jan said to himself when the boy had gone. "This is something I understand about. I know what I've given you, and I

know who has taught me to know."

OCTOBER THE FIRST

The first day of October Jan lay on the bed the whole afternoon, fully dressed, his face turned to the wall, and nobody could get a word out of him.

In the forenoon he and Katrina had been down to the pier to meet the little girl. Not that Glory Goldie had written them to say she was coming, for indeed she had not! It was only that Jan had figured out that it could not be otherwise. This was the first of October, the day the money must be paid to Lars Gunnarson, so of course Glory Goldie would come. He had not expected her home earlier. He knew she would have to remain in Stockholm as long as she could in order to lay by all that money; but that she should be away any longer he never supposed. Even if she had not succeeded in scraping together the money, that was no reason why she should be away after the first of October.

That morning while Jan had stood on the pier waiting, he had said to himself: "When the little girl sees us from the boat she'll put on a sad face, and the moment she lands she'll tell us she has not been able to raise the money. When she says that Katrina and I will pretend to take her at her word and I'll say that can't understand how she dared come home when she knew that all Katrina and I cared about was the money." He was sure that before they were away from the pier she would go down in her pocket, bring up a well-filled purse, and turn it over to them. Then, while Katrina counted the bank notes, he would only stand and look at Glory Goldie. The little girl would then see that all in the world he cared about was to have her back, and she would tell him he was just as big a simpleton now as when she went away.

Thus had Jan pictured to himself Glory Goldie's homecoming. But his dream did not come true.

That day he and Katrina did not have a long wait at the pier. The boat arrived on time, but it was so overladen with passengers and freight bound for the Broby Fair

that at first glance they were unable to tell whether or not the little girl was on board. Jan had expected that she would be the first to come tripping down the gangplank; but only a couple of men came ashore. Then Jan attempted to look for her on the boat; but he could get nowhere for the crush. All the same he felt so positive she was there that when the deck hands began to draw in the gangplank he shouted to the captain not to let the boat leave as there was another person to come ashore here. The captain questioned the purser, who assured him there were no more passengers for Svartsjö.

Then the boat pulled out and Katrina and Jan had to go home by themselves, and the moment they were inside the hut Jan cast himself down on the bed—so weary and disheartened that he did not know how he would ever be able to get up again.

The Ashdales folk who had seen the father and mother return from the pier without Glory Goldie were greatly concerned. One after the other, the neighbours dropped in at Ruffluck to find out how matters stood with them.

Was it true that Glory Goldie had not come on the boat? They inquired. And was it true that they had received no letter or message from her during the whole month of September?

Jan answered not a word to all their queries. It mattered not who came in—he lay still. Katrina had to enlighten the neighbours as best she could. They thought Jan lay on the bed because he was in despair of losing the hut. They could think what they liked for all of him.

Katrina wept and wailed, and once inside the friends felt they must remain, if only out of pity for her, and to give what little comfort they could.

It was not likely that Lars Gunnarson would take the house from them, they said. The old mistress of Falla would never let that happen. She had always shown herself to be a just and upright person. Besides, the day was not over yet, and Glory Goldie might still be heard from. To be sure it would be nothing short of marvellous if she

had succeeded in earning 200 rix-dollars in less than three months' time: but then, that girl always had such good luck.

They discussed the chances for and against. Katrina informed them that Glory Goldie had earned nothing whatever the first weeks, that she had taken lodgings with a family from Svartsjö, now living in Stockholm, where she had been obliged to pay for her keep. And then one day she had had the good fortune to meet in the street the merchant who had given her the red dress, and he had found a place for her.

Would it not be reasonable to suppose that the merchant had also raised the money for her? That was not altogether impossible.

"No, it was not impossible," said Katrina, "but since the girl has neither come herself nor written it's plain she has failed."

Every one in the hut grew more anxious and apprehensive for every moment that passed. They all felt that some dire misfortune would soon fall upon those who lived there. When the tension was becoming unbearable the door opened once more and a man who was seldom seen in the Ashdales came in.

The instant this man entered it became as still in the hut as on a winter night in the forest, and every one's eyes save Jan's alone turned toward him. Jan did not stir, although Katrina whispered to him that Senator Carl Carlson of Storvik had just come in.

The senator held in his hand a roll of papers and every one took for granted that he had been sent here by the new owner of Falla, to notify the Ruffluck folk of what must befall them, now that they could not meet Lars Gunnarson's claim.

Carl Carlson wore his usual magisterial mien and no one could guess how heavily the blow he had come to deal would fall. He went up and shook hands, first with Katrina, then with the others, and each one in turn rose as he came to them; the only one who did not rise was Jan.

"I am not very well acquainted in this district," said the senator, "but I gather that this must be the place in the Ashdales that is called Ruffluck Croft."

It was of course. Every one nodded in the affirmative, but no one was able to utter an audible word. They wondered that Katrina had the presence of mind to nudge Börje, and make him get up and give his chair to the senator.

After drawing the chair up to the table the senator laid the roll of papers down, then he took out his snuff box and placed it beside the papers, whereupon he removed his spectacles from their case and wiped them with his big blue-and-white checkered handkerchief. After these preliminaries he glanced round the room, looking from one person to the other. Those who sat there were persons of such little importance he did not even know them by name.

"I wish to speak with Jan Anderson of Ruffluck," he said.

"That's him over there," volunteered the seine-maker, pointing at the bed.

"Is he sick?" inquired the senator.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" replied half a dozen at the same time.

"And he isn't drunk, either," added Börje.

"Nor is he asleep," said the seine-maker.

"He has walked so far to-day he's all tired out," said Katrina, thinking it best to explain the matter in that way. At the same time she bent down over her husband and tried to persuade him to rise.

But Jan lay still.

"Does he understand what I'm saying?" asked the senator.

"Yes indeed," they all assured him.

"Perhaps he's not expecting any glad tidings, seeing it's Senator Carl Carlson who is paying him a call." This from the seine-maker.

The senator turned his head and stared at the seine-maker. "Ol' Bengtsa of Lusterby

has not always been so afraid of meeting Carl Carlson of Storvik," he observed in a mild voice. Turning toward the table again, he took up a letter.

Every one was dumbfounded. The senator had actually spoken in a friendly tone. He could almost be said to have smiled.

"The fact is," he began, "a couple of days ago I received a communication from a person who calls herself Glory Goldie Sunnycastle, daughter of Jan of Ruffluck, in which she says she left home some months ago to try to earn two-hundred rix-dollars, which sum her parents have to pay to Lars Gunnarson of Falla on the first day of October in order to obtain full rights of ownership to the land on which their hut stands."

Here the senator paused a moment so that his hearers would be able to follow him.

"And now she sends the money to me," he continued, "with the request that I come down to the Ashdales and see that this matter is properly settled with the new owner of Falla; so that he won't be able to play any new trick later on."

"That girl has got some sense in her head," the senator remarked as he folded the letter. "She turns to me from the start. If all did as she has done there would be less cheating and injustice in this parish."

Before the close of that remark Jan was sitting on the edge of the bed. "But the girl? Where is she?" he asked.

"And now I'd like to know," the senator proceeded, taking no notice of Jan's question, "whether the parents are in accord with the daughter and authorize me to close—"

"But the girl, the girl?" Jan struck in. "Where is she?"

"Where she is?" said the senator, looking in the letter to see. "She says it was impossible for her to earn all this money in just two or three months, but she has found a place with a kind lady, who advanced her the money, and now she will have

to stay with the lady until she has made it good."

"Then she's not coming home?" Jan asked.

"No, not for the present, as I understand it," replied the senator.

Again Jan lay down on the bed and turned his face to the wall.

What did he care for the hut and all that? What was the good of his going on living, when his little girl was not coming back?

THE DREAM BEGINS

The first few weeks after the senator's call Jan was unable to do a stroke of work: he just lay abed and grieved. Every morning he rose and put on his clothes, intending to go to his work; but before he was outside the door he felt so weak and weary that all he could do was to go back to bed.

Katrina tried to be patient with Jan, for she understood that pining, like any other sickness, had to run its course. Yet she could not help wondering how long it would be before Jan's intense yearning for Glory Goldie subsided. "Perhaps he'll be lying round like this till Christmas!" she thought. "Or possibly the whole winter?"

And this might have been the case, too, had not the old seine-maker dropped in at Ruffluck one evening and been asked to stay for coffee.

The seine-maker, like most persons whose thoughts are far away and who do not keep in touch with what happens immediately about them, was always taciturn. But when his coffee had been poured and he had emptied it into his saucer, to let it cool, it struck him that he ought to say something.

"To-day there's bound to be a letter from Glory Goldie," he said. "I feel it in my bones."

"We had greetings from her only a fortnight ago in her letter to the senator," Katrina reminded him.

The seine-maker blew into his saucer a couple of times before saying anything more.

Whereupon he again found it expedient to bridge a long silence with a word or so.

"Maybe some blessing has come to the girl, and it has given her something to write about."

"What kind of blessing might that be?" scouted Katrina. "When you've got to drudge as a servant, one day is as humdrum as another."

The seine-maker bit off a corner of a sugar-lump and gulped his coffee. When he had finished an appalling stillness fell upon the room.

"It might be that Glory Goldie met some person in the street," he blurted out, his half-dead eyes vacantly staring at space. He seemed not to know what he was saying.

Katrina did not think it necessary to respond; so replenished his cup without speaking.

"Maybe the person she met was an old lady who had difficulty in walking," the seine-maker went on in the same offhand manner, "and maybe she stumbled and fell when Glory Goldie came along."

"Would that be anything to write about?" asked Katrina, weary of this senseless talk.

"But suppose Glory Goldie stopped and helped the old lady up?" pursued the seine-maker, "and she was so thankful to the girl for helping her that she opened her purse and gave her all of ten rix-dollars—wouldn't that be worth telling?"

"Why certainly," said Katrina, "if it were true. But this is just something you're making up."

"It is well, sometimes, to be able to indulge in little thought feasts," contended the seine-maker, "they are often more satisfying than the real ones."

"You've tried both kinds," returned Katrina, "so you ought to know."

The seine-maker went his way directly, and Katrina gave no further thought to his story.

As for Jan, he took it at first as idle chatter. But lying abed, with nothing to take up his mind, presently he began to wonder if there was not some hidden meaning back of the seine-maker's words. The old man's tone sounded a bit peculiar when he spoke of the letter. Would he have sat there and made up such a long story only for talk's sake? Perhaps he had heard something. Perhaps Glory Goldie had written to him? It was quite possible that something so great had come to the little girl that she dared not send direct word to her parents, and wrote instead to the seine-maker, asking him to prepare them.

"He'll come again to-morrow," thought Jan, "and then we'll hear all about it."

But for some reason the seine-maker did not come back the next day, nor the day after. By the third day Jan had become so impatient to see his old friend that he got up and went over to his cabin, to find out whether there was anything in what he had said.

The old man was sitting alone mending a drag-net when Jan came in. He was so crippled from rheumatism, he said, he had been unable to leave the house for several days.

Jan did not want to ask him outright if he had received a letter from Glory Goldie. He thought he would attain his object more easily by approaching it in the indirect way the other had taken. So he said:

"I've been thinking of what you told us about Glory Goldie the last time you were at our place."

The seine-maker looked up from his work, puzzled. It was some little time before he comprehended what Jan alluded to. "Why, that was just a little whimsey of mine," he returned presently.

Then Jan went very close to the old man. "Anyhow it was something pleasant to listen to," he said. "You might have told us more, perhaps, if Katrina hadn't been so mistrustful?"

"Oh, yes," replied the seine-maker. "This is the sort of amusement one can afford to indulge in down here, in the Ashdales."

"I have thought," continued Jan, emboldened by the encouragement, "that maybe the story didn't end with the old lady giving Glory Goldie the ten rix-dollars. Perhaps she also invited the girl to come to see her?"

"Maybe she did," said the seine-maker.

"Maybe she's so rich that she owns a whole stone house?"

"That was a happy thought, friend Jan!"

"And maybe the rich old lady will pay Glory Goldie's debt?" Jan began, but stopped short, because the old man's daughter-in-law had just come in, and of course he did not care to let her into the secret.

"So you're out to-day, Jan," observed the daughter-in-law. "I'm glad you're feeling better."

"For that I have to thank my good friend Ol' Bengtsa!" said Jan, with an air of mystery. "He's the one who has cured me."

Jan said good-bye, and left at once. For a long while the seine-maker sat gazing out after him.

"I don't know what he can have meant by saying that I have cured him," the old man remarked to his daughter-in-law. "It can't be that he's—? No, no!"

HEIRLOOMS

One evening, toward the close of autumn, Jan was on his way home from Falla, where he had been threshing all day. After his talk with the seine-maker his desire for work had come back to him. He felt now that he must do what he could to keep up so that the little girl on her return would not be subjected to the humiliation of finding her parents reduced to the condition of paupers.

When Jan was far enough away from the house not to be seen from the windows he

noticed a woman in the road coming toward him. Dusk had already fallen, but he soon saw it was the mistress herself—not the new one, but the old and rightful mistress of Falla. She had on a big shawl that came down to the hem of her skirt. Jan had never seen her so wrapped up, and wondered if she was ill. She had looked poorly of late. In the spring, when her husband died, she had not a gray hair on her head, and now, half a year afterward, she had not a dark hair left.

The old mistress stopped and greeted Jan, after which the two stood and talked. She said nothing that would indicate that she had come out expressly to see him, but he felt it to be so. It flashed into his head that she wanted to speak with him about Glory Goldie, and he was rather miffed when she began to talk about something quite different.

"I wonder, Jan, if you remember the old owner of Falla, my father, who was master there before Eric came?"

"Why shouldn't I remember him, when I was all of twelve at the time of his death?"

"He had a good son-in-law," said the old mistress.

"He had that," agreed Jan.

The old mistress was silent a moment, and sighed once or twice before she continued: "I want to ask your advice about something, Jan. You are not the sort that would go about tittle-tattling what I say."

"No, I can hold my tongue."

"Yes, I've noticed that this year."

New hopes arose in Jan. It would not be surprising, thought he, if Glory Goldie had turned to the old mistress of Falla and asked her to tell him and Katrina of the great thing that had come to her. For the old seine-maker had been taken down with rheumatic fever shortly after their interrupted conversation, and for weeks he had been too ill to see him. Now he was up and about again, but very feeble. The worst

of it was that after his illness his memory seemed to be gone. He had waited for him to say something more about Glory Goldie's letter, but as he had failed to do so, and could not even take a hint, he had asked him straight out. And the old man had declared he had not received any letter. To convince Jan he had pulled out the table drawer and thrown back the lid of his clothes-chest, to let him see for himself that there was no such letter.

Of course he had forgotten what he did with it, Jan concluded. So, no wonder the little girl had turned to the mistress of Falla. Pity she hadn't done it in the first place! Now that the old mistress was hesitating so long he felt certain in his own mind that he was right. But when she again returned to the subject of her father, he was so surprised he could hardly follow her. She said:

"When father was nearing the end he summoned Eric of Falla to his bedside and thanked him for his loving care of a helpless old man in his declining years. 'Don't think about that, Father,' said Eric. 'We're glad to have you with us just as long as you care to stay.' That's what Eric said. And he meant it, too!"

"He did that," confirmed Jan. "There were no fox-tricks about him!"

"Wait, Jan!" said the mistress, "we'll just speak of the old people for the present. Do you remember the long silver-mounted stick father used to carry?"

"Yes; both the stick and the high leather cap he always wore when he went to church."

"So you remember the cap, too? Do you know what father did at the last? He told me to fetch him his stick and cap, and then he gave them to Eric. 'I could have given you something that was worth more money,' he told Eric, 'but I am giving you these instead, for I know you would rather have something I have used.'"

"That was an honour well earned." When Jan said that he noticed that the old mistress drew her shawl closer together. He was sure now she was hiding something under it—maybe a present from Glory Goldie! "She'll get round to that in time," he

thought. "All this talk about her father is only a makeshift."

"I have often spoken of this to my children," the old mistress went on, "and also to Lars Gunnarson. Last spring, when Eric lay sick, I think both Lars and Anna expected that Lars would be called to the bedside, as Eric had once been called. I had brought him in the stick and cap so they'd be handy in case Eric wished to give them to Lars; but he had no such thought."

The old mistress's voice shook as she said that, and when she spoke again her tone sounded anxious and uncertain.

"Once, when we were alone, I asked Eric what his wishes were, and he said if I wanted to I could give the things to Lars when he was gone as he had not the strength to make speeches."

Whereupon the mistress of Falla threw back her big shawl, and then Jan saw that she held under it a long, silver-mounted ebony stick and a stiff, high-crowned leather cap.

"Some words are too heavy for utterance," she said with great gravity. "Answer me with just a nod, Jan, if you will. Can I give these to Lars Gunnarson?"

Jan drew back a step. This was a matter he had entirely dismissed from his mind. It seemed such a long time since Eric of Falla died he hardly remembered how it happened.

"You understand, Jan, that all I want to know is whether Lars can accept the stick and cap with the same right as Eric. You must know, as you were with him that time in the forest. It would be well for me," she added, as Jan did not speak, "if I could give them to Lars. I believe there would be less friction afterward between the young folks and me."

Her voice failed her again, and Jan began to perceive why she had aged so much the past few months; but now his mind was so taken up with other things that he no longer cherished the old resentment against his new employer.

"It's best to forgive and forget," he said. "It pays in the long run."

The old mistress caught her breath. "Then it is just as I thought!" she said, drawing herself up to her full height. "I'll not ask you to tell what took place. It's best for me not to know. But one thing is certain, Lars Gunnarson shall never get his hands on my father's stick!"

She had already turned to go, then suddenly faced about. "Here, Jan," she said, holding out the things. "You may have the stick and cap, for I want them to be in good, honest hands. I daren't take them home again lest I be forced to turn them over to Lars; so you keep them as a memento of the old master, who always thought well of you."

Then she walked away, erect and proud, and there Jan stood holding the cap and stick. He hardly knew how it had come about. He had never expected to be so honoured. Were these heirlooms now to be his? Then in a moment, he found an explanation: Glory Goldie was back of it all. The old mistress knew that he was soon to be elevated to a station so exalted that nothing would be too good for him. Indeed, had the stick been of silver and the cap of gold they would have been even more suitable for the father of Glory Goldie.

CLOTHED IN SATIN

No letter had come from Glory Goldie to either her father or mother. But it mattered very little now that Jan knew she was silent simply because she wished her parents to be all the more surprised and happy when the time came for her to proclaim the good tidings.

But, in any case, it was a good thing for him that he had peeped into her cards. Otherwise he might easily have been made a fool of by persons who thought they knew more about Glory's doings than he did. For instance, there was Katrina's experience at church the first Sunday in Advent. Katrina had been to service, and upon her return Jan had noticed that she was both alarmed and depressed.

She had seen a couple of youths who were just back from Stockholm standing on the church knoll talking with a group of young boys and girls. Thinking they might be able to give her some news of Glory Goldie, she had gone up to them to make inquiries.

The youths were evidently telling of some of their escapades, for all the men, at least, laughed uproariously. Katrina thought their behaviour very unseemly, considering they were on church ground. The men must have realized this themselves, for when she came up they nudged one another and hushed. She had caught only a few words, spoken by a youth whose back was turned to her, and who had not seen her.

"And to think that she was clothed in satin!" he said.

Instantly a young girl gave him a push that silenced him, then, glancing round, he saw Katrina just behind him and his face went red as blood; but immediately after he tossed his head, and said in a loud voice:

"What's the matter with you? Why can't I be allowed to say that the queen was arrayed in satin?"

When he said that the young people laughed louder than ever. Then Katrina went her way, unable to bring herself to question them. And when she came home she was so unhappy that Jan was almost tempted to come out with the truth about Glory Goldie; but on second thought, he asked her to tell him again what had been said about the queen.

Katrina did so, but added: "You understand of course that that was only said to sweeten the pill for me."

Jan meanwhile kept mum. But he could not help smiling to himself.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Katrina. "You have such a queer look on your face these days. You don't know what they meant, do you?"

"I certainly don't," answered Jan. "But we ought to have enough confidence in the little girl to think all is as it should be."

"But I'm getting so anxious—"

"The time to speak," Jan struck in, "has not come, either for them or me. Glory Goldie herself has probably requested them not to say anything to us. So we must rest easy, Katrina, indeed we must."

STARS

When the little girl had been gone nearly eight months, who should come stalking into the barn at Falla one fine day, while Jan stood threshing there, but Mad Ingeborg!

Mad Ingeborg was first cousin to Jan. But as she was afraid of Katrina he seldom saw her. It was to escape meeting Jan's wife that she had sought him out at Falla during his work hours.

Jan was none too pleased to see Ingeborg! She was not exactly insane, but flighty—and a terrible chatterer. He went right on with his work, taking no notice of her.

"Stop your threshing, Jan!" she said, "so that I can tell you what I dreamed about you last night."

"You'd better come some other time, Ingeborg," Jan suggested. "If Lars Gunnarson hears that I'm resting from my work he'll be sure to come over to see what's up."

"I'll be as quick as quick can be. If you remember, I was the brightest child in our family, which doesn't give me much to brag about, as the rest of you were a dull lot."

"You were going to tell me about a dream," Jan reminded her.

"In a minute—a minute! You mustn't be afraid. I understand— understand: hard master now at Falla—hard master. But don't be uneasy, for you'll not be scolded on

my account. There's no danger of that when you're with a sensible person like me."

Jan would have liked to hear what she dreamed about him, for confident as he was of the ultimate realization of his great expectations, he nevertheless sought assurances from all quarters. But now Mad Ingeborg was wandering along her own thought-road and at such times it was not easy to stop her. She went very close to Jan, then, bending over him, her eyes shut tight, her head shaking, the words came pouring out of her mouth.

"Don't be so scared. Do you suppose I'd be standing here talking to you while you're threshing at Falla if I didn't know the master had gone up to the forest and the mistress was down at the village selling butter. 'Always keep them in mind,' says the catechism. I know enough for that and take good care not to come round when they can see me."

"Get out of the way, Ingeborg! Otherwise the flail might hit you."

"Think how you boys used to beat me when we were children!" she rattled on. "Even now I have to take thrashings. But when it came to catechism examinations, I could beat you all. 'No one can catch Ingeborg napping,' the dean used to say. 'She always knows her lessons.' And I'm good friends with the little misses at Lövdala Manor. I recite the catechism for them both questions and answers— from beginning to end. And what a memory I've got! I know the whole Bible by heart and the hymn book, too, and all the dean's sermons. Shall I recite something for you, or would you rather hear me sing?"

Jan said nothing whatever, but went to threshing again. Ingeborg, undaunted, seated herself on a sheaf of straw and struck up a chant of some twenty stanzas, then she repeated a couple of chapters from the Bible, whereupon she got up and went out. Jan thought she had gone for good, but in a little while she reappeared in the doorway of the barn.

"Hold still!" she whispered. "Hold still! Now we'll say nothing but what we were

going to say. Only be still—still!"

Then up went her forefinger. Now she held her body rigid and her eyes open. "No other thoughts, no other thoughts!" she said. "We'll keep to the subject. Only hush your pounding!"

She waited till Jan minded her.

"You came to me last night in a dream—yes, that was it. You came to me and I says to you like this: 'Are you out for a walk, Jan of the Ashdales?' 'Yes,' says you, 'but now I'm Jan of the Vale of Longings.' 'Then, well met,' says I. 'There's where I have lived all my life.'"

Whereupon she disappeared again, and Jan, startled by her strange words, did not immediately resume his work, but stood pondering. In a moment or two she was there again.

"I remember now what brought me here," she told him. "I wanted to show you my stars."

On her arm was a small covered basket bound with cord, and while she tugged and pulled at a knot, to loosen it, she chattered like a magpie.

"They are real stars, these. When one lives in the Vale of Longings one isn't satisfied with the things of earth; then one is compelled to go out and look for stars. There is no other choice. Now you, too, will have to go in search of them."

"No, no, Ingeborg!" returned Jan. "I'll confine my search to what is to be found on this earth."

"For goodness sake hush!" cried the woman. "You don't suppose I'm such a fool as to go ahunting for those which remain in the heavens, do you? I only seek the kind that have fallen. I've got some sense, I guess!"

She opened her basket which was filled with a variety of stars she had evidently picked up at the manors. There were tin stars and glass stars and paper

stars—ornaments from Christmas trees and confectionery.

"They are real stars fallen from the sky," she declared. "You are the only person I've shown them to. I'll let you have a couple whenever you need them."

"Thanks, Ingeborg," said Jan. "When the time comes that I shall have need of stars—which may be right soon—I don't think I'll ask you for them."

Then at last Mad Ingeborg left.

It was some little time, however, before Jan went back to his threshing. To him this, too, was a finger-pointing. Not that a crack-brained person like Ingeborg could know anything of Glory Goldie's movements; but she was one of the kind who sensed it in the air when something extraordinary was going to happen. She could see and hear things of which wise folk never had an inkling.

WAITING

Engineer Boraeus of Borg was in the habit of strolling down to the pier mornings to meet the steamer. He had only a short distance to go, through his beautiful pine grove, and there was always some one on the boat with whom he could exchange a few words to vary the monotony of country life.

At the end of the grove, where the road began an abrupt descent to the pier, were some large bare rocks upon which folk who had come from a distance used to sit while waiting for the boat. And there were always many who waited at the Borg pier, as there was never any certainty as to when the boat would arrive. It seldom put in before twelve o'clock, and yet once in a while it reached the pier as early as eleven. Sometimes it did not come until one or two; so that prompt people, who were down at the landing by ten o'clock, often had to sit there for hours.

Engineer Boraeus had a good outlook over Lake Löven from his chamber window at Borg. He could see when the steamer rounded the point and never appeared at the landing until just in the nick of time. Therefore he did not have to sit on the rocks and wait, and would only cast a glance, in passing, at those who were seated there.

However, one summer, he noticed a meek-looking little man with a kindly face sitting there waiting day after day. The man always sat quite still, seemingly indifferent, until the boat hove in sight. Then he would jump to his feet, his face shining with joyous anticipation, and rush down the incline to the far end of the pier, where he would stand as if about to welcome some one. But nobody ever came for him. And when the boat pulled out he was as alone as before. Then, as he turned to go home, the light of happiness gone from his face, he looked old and worn; he seemed hardly able to drag himself up the hill.

Engineer Boreaus was not acquainted with the man. But one day when he again saw him sitting there gazing out upon the lake, he went up and spoke to him. He soon learned that the man's daughter, who had been away for a time, was expected home that day.

"Are you quite certain she is coming to-day?" said the engineer. "I've seen you sitting here waiting ever day for the past two months. In that case she must have sent you wrong instructions before."

"Oh, no," replied the man quietly, "indeed she hasn't given me any wrong instructions!"

"Then what in the name of God do you mean?" demanded the engineer gruffly, for he was a choleric man. "You've sat here and waited day after day without her coming, yet you say she has not given you wrong instructions."

"No," answered the meek little man, looking up at the engineer with his mild, limpid eyes, "she couldn't have, as she has not sent any instructions."

"Hasn't she written to you?"

"No; we've had no letter from her since the first day of last October."

"Then why do you idle away your mornings down here?" asked the engineer, wonderingly. "Can you afford to leave off working like this?"

"No," replied the man, smiling to himself. "I suppose it's wrong in me to do so; but all that will soon be made good."

"Is it possible that you're such a stupid ass as to hang round here when there's no occasion for it?" roared the engineer, furiously. "You ought to be shut up in a madhouse."

The man said nothing. He sat with his hands clasped round his knees, quite unperturbed. A smile played about his mouth all the while, and every second he seemed more and more confident of his ultimate triumph.

The engineer shrugged his shoulders and walked away, but before he was halfway down the hill he repented his harshness, and turned back. The stern forbidding look which his strong features habitually wore was now gone and he put out his hand to the man.

"I want to shake hands with you," he said. "Until now I had always thought that I was the only one in this parish who knew what it was to yearn; but now I see that I have found my master."

THE EMPRESS

The little girl of Ruffluck had been away fully thirteen months, yet Jan had not betrayed by so much as a word that he had any knowledge of the great thing that had come to her. He had vowed to himself never to speak of this until Glory Goldie's return. If the little girl did not discover that he knew about her grandeur, her pleasure in overwhelming him would be all the greater.

But in this world of ours it is the unexpected that happens mostly. There came a day when Jan was forced to unseal his lips and tell what he knew. Not on his own account. Indeed not! For he would have been quite content to go about in his shabby clothes and let folks think him nothing but a poor crofter to the end of his days. It was for the little girl's own sake that he felt compelled to reveal the great secret.

It happened one day, early in August, when he had gone down to the pier to watch

for her. For you see, going down to meet the boat every day that he might see her come ashore, was a pleasure he had been unable to deny himself. The boat had just put in and he had seen that Glory Goldie was not on board. He had supposed that she would be finished with everything now and could leave for home. But some new hindrance must have arisen to detain her, as had been the case all summer. It was not easy for one who had so many demands upon her time to get away.

Anyhow it was a great pity she did not come to-day, thought Jan, when there were so many of her old acquaintances at the pier. There stood both Senator Carl Carlson and August Där Nol. Björn Hindrickson's son-in-law was also on hand, and even Agrippa Prästberg had turned out.

Agrippa had nursed a grievance against the little girl since the day she fooled him about the spectacles. Jan had to admit to himself that it would have been a great triumph for him had Glory Goldie stood on the boat that day in all her pomp and splendour, so that Prästberg could have seen her. However, since she had not come, there was nothing for him but to go back home. As he was about to leave the pier cantankerous old Agrippa barred his way.

"Well, well!" said Agrippa. "So you're running down here after that daughter of yours to-day, too?"

Jan knowing it was best not to bandy words with a man like Agrippa, simply stepped to one side, so as to get by him.

"I declare I don't wonder at your wanting to meet such a fine lady as she has turned out to be!" said Agrippa with a leer.

Just then August Där Nol rushed up and seized Agrippa by the arm, to silence him. But Agrippa was not to be silenced.

"The whole parish knows of it," he shouted, "so it's high time her parents were told of her doings! Jan Anderson is a decent fellow, even if he did spoil that girl of his, and I can't bear to see him sit here day after day, week in and week out, waiting for

a—"

He called the little girl of Ruffluck such a bad name that Jan would not repeat it even in his thoughts. But now that Agrippa had flung that ugly word at him in a loud voice, so that every one on the pier heard what he said, all that Jan had kept locked within him for a whole year burst its bonds. He could no longer keep it hidden. The little girl must forgive him for betraying her secret. He said what he had to say without the least show of anger or boastfulness. With a sweep of his hand and a lofty smile, as if hardly deigning to answer, he said:

"When the Empress comes—"

"The Empress!" grinned Agrippa. "Who might that be?" Just as if he had not heard about the little girl's elevation.

Jan of Ruffluck, unperturbed, continued in the same calm, even tone of voice:

"When the Empress Glory of Portugallia stands on the pier, with a crown of gold upon her head, and with seven kings behind her holding up her royal mantle, and seven tame lions crouched at her feet, and seven and seventy generals, with drawn swords, going before her, then we shall see, Prästberg, whether you dare say to herself what you've just said to me!"

When he had finished speaking he stood still a moment, noting with satisfaction how terrified they looked, all of them; then, turning on his heel, he walked away, but without hurry or flurry, of course.

The instant his back was turned there was a terrible commotion on the pier. At first he paid no attention to it, but presently, on hearing a heavy thud, he had to look back. Then he saw Agrippa lying flat on his face and August Där Nol bending over him with clenched fists.

"You cur!" cried August. "You knew well enough that he couldn't stand hearing the truth. You can't have any heart in your body!"

This much Jan heard, but as anything in the way of fighting or quarrelling was contrary to his nature, he went on up the hill, without mixing in the fray.

But strangely enough, when he was out of every one's sight an uncontrollable spell of weeping came over him. He did not know why he wept, but probably his tears were of joy at having cleared up the mystery. He felt now as if his little girl had come back to him.

THE EMPEROR

The first Sunday in September the worshippers at Svartsjö church had a surprise in store for them.

There was a wide gallery in the church extending clear across the nave. The first row of pews in this gallery had always been occupied by the gentry—the gentlemen on the right side and the ladies on the left—as far back as can be remembered. All the seats in the church were free, so that other folk were not debarred from sitting there, if they so wished; but of course it would never have occurred to any poor cotter to ensconce himself in that row of pews.

In the old days Jan had thought the occupants of this particular bench a delight to the eye. Even now he was willing to concede that the superintendent from Doveness, the lieutenant from Lövdala, and the engineer from Borg were fine men who made a good appearance. But they were as nothing to the grandeur which folks beheld that day. For anything like a real emperor had never before been seen in the gentry's bench.

But now there sat at the head of this bench just such a great personage, his hands resting on a long silver-mounted stick, his head crowned with a high, green leather cap, while on his waistcoat glittered two large stars, one like gold, the other like silver.

When the organ began to play the processional hymn the Emperor lifted up his voice in song. For an emperor is obliged to sing out, loud and clear, when at church, even

if he cannot follow the melody or sing in tune. Folks are glad to hear him in any case.

The gentlemen at his left now and then turned and stared at him. Who could wonder at that? It was probably the first time they had had so exalted a personage among them.

He had to remove his hat, of course, for that is something which even an emperor must do when attending divine service; but he kept it on as long as possible, that all might feast their eyes on it.

And many of the worshippers who sat in the body of the church had their eyes turned up toward the gallery that Sunday. Their thoughts seemed to be on him more than on the sermon. They were perhaps a little surprised that he had become so exalted. But surely they could understand that one who was father to an empress must himself be an emperor. Anything else was impossible.

When he came out on the pine knoll at the close of the service many persons went up to him; but before he had time to speak to a soul Sexton Blackie stepped up and asked him to come along into the vestry.

The pastor was seated in the vestry, his back turned toward the door, talking with Senator Carl Carlson, when Jan and the sexton entered. He seemed to be distressed about something, for there were tears in his voice.

"These were two souls entrusted to my keeping whom I have allowed to go to ruin," he said.

The senator tried to console him, saying: "You can't be responsible, Pastor, for the evil that goes on in the large cities."

But the clergyman would not be consoled. He covered his beautiful young face with his hands, and wept.

"No," he sobbed, "I suppose I can't. But what have I done to guard the young girl

who was thrown on the world, unprotected? And what have I done to comfort her old father who had only her to live for?"

"The pastor is practically a newcomer in the parish," said the senator, "so that if there is any question of responsibility it falls more heavily upon the rest of us, who were acquainted with the circumstances. But who could think it was to end so disastrously? Young folk have to make their own way in life. We've all been thrust out in much the same way, yet most of us have fared rather well."

"O God of mercy!" prayed the pastor, "grant me the wisdom to speak to the unhappy father. Would I might stay his fleeing wits—!"

Sexton Blackie, standing there with Jan, now cleared his throat. The pastor rose at once, went up to Jan, and took him by the hand.

"My dear Jan!" he said feelingly. The pastor was tall and fair and handsome. When he came up to you, with his kindly blue eyes beaming benevolence, and spoke to you in his deep sympathetic voice, it was not easy to resist him. In this instance, however, the only thing to do was to set him right at the start, which Jan did of course.

"Jan is no more, my good Pastor," he said. "Now we are Emperor Johannes of Portugallia, and he who does not wish to address us by our proper title, him we have nothing to say to."

With that, Jan gave the pastor a stiff' imperial nod of dismissal, and put on his cap. They looked rather foolish, did the three men who stood in the vestry, when Jan pushed open the door and walked out.

BOOK THREE

THE EMPEROR'S SONG

In the wooded heights above Loby there was still a short stretch of an old country road where in bygone days all teams had to pass, but which was now condemned

because it led up and down the worst hills and rocky slopes instead of having the sense to go round them. The part that remained was so steep that no one in driving made use of it any more though foot-farers climbed it occasionally, as it was a good short cut.

The road ran as broad as any of the regular crown highways, and was still covered with fine yellow gravel. In fact, it was smoother now than formerly, being free from wheel tracks, and mud, and dust. Along the edge bloomed roadside flowers and shrubs; dogwood, bittervetch, and buttercups grew there in profusion even to this day, but the ditches were filled in and a whole row of spruce trees had sprung up in them. Young evergreens of uniform height, with branches from the root up, stood pressing against each other as closely as the foliage of a boxwood hedge; their needles were not dry and hard, but moist and soft, and their tips were all bright with fresh green shoots. The trees sang and played like humming bees on a fine summer day, when the sun beams down upon them from a clear sky.

When Jan of Ruffluck walked home from church the Sunday he had appeared there for the first time in his royal regalia, he turned in on the old forest road. It was a warm sunny day and, as he went up the hill, he heard the music of the spruces so plainly that it astonished him.

Never had spruce trees sung like that! It struck him that he ought to find out why they were so loud-voiced just to-day. And being in no special haste to reach home, he dropped down in the middle of the smooth gravel road, in the shade of the singing tree. Laying his stick on the ground, he removed his cap and mopped his brow, then he sat motionless, with hands clasped, and listened.

The air was quite still, therefore it could hardly have been the wind that had set all these little musical instruments into motion. It was almost as if the spruces played for very joy at being so young and fresh; at being let stand in peace by the abandoned roadside, with the promise of many years of life ahead of them before

any human being would come and cut them down.

But if such was the case, it did not explain why the trees sang with such gusto just that day; they could rejoice over those particular blessings any pleasant summer day; they did not call for any extra music.

Jan sat still in the middle of the road, listening with rapt attention. It was pleasant hearing the hum of the spruce, though it was all on one note, with no rests, so that there was neither melody nor rhythm about it.

He found it so refreshing and delightful up here on the heights. No wonder the trees felt happy, he mused. The wonder was they sang and played no better than they did. He looked up at their small twigs on which every needle was fine and well made, and in its proper place, and drank in the piney odour that came from them. There was no flower of the meadow, no blossom of the grove so fragrant! He noted their half-grown cones on which the scales were compactly massed for the protection of the seed.

These trees, which seemed to understand so well what to do for themselves, ought to be able to sing and play so that one could comprehend what they meant. Yet they kept harping all the while on the same strain. He grew drowsy listening to them, and stretched himself flat on the smooth, fine gravel to take a little nap.

But hark! What was this? The instant his head touched the ground and his eyes closed, the trees struck up something new. Ah, now there came rhythm and melody!

Then all that other was only a prelude, such as is played at church before the hymn.

This was what he had felt the whole time, though he had not wanted to say it even in his mind. The trees also knew what had happened. It was on his account they tuned up so loudly the instant he appeared. And now they sang of him—there was no mistaking it now, when they thought him asleep. Perhaps they did not wish him to hear how much they were making of him.

And what a song, what a song! He lay all the while with his eyes shut, but could

hear the better for that. Not a sound was lost to him.

Ah, this was music! It was not just the young trees at the edge of the road that made music now, but the whole forest. There were organs and drums and trumpets; there were little thrush flutes and bullfinch pipes; there were gurgling brooks and singing water-sprites, tinkling bluebells and thrumming woodpeckers.

Never had he heard anything so beautiful, nor listened to music in just this way. It rang in his ear; so that he could never forget it.

When the song was finished and the forest grew silent, he sprang to his feet as if startled from a dream. Immediately he began to sing this hymn of the woods so as to fix it forever in his memory.

The Empress's father, for his part, Feels so happy in his heart.

Then came the refrain, which he had not been able to catch word for word, but anyhow he sang it about as it had sounded to him:

Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom.

No gun be his but a sword of gold; Now a crown for a cap on his head behold! Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom.

Golden apples are his meat, No more of turnips shall he eat. Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom.

Court ladies clothed in bright array Bow as he passes on his way. Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom.

When he the forest proudly treads, All the tree-tops nod their heads. Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom.

It was just this "boom, boom" that had sounded best of all to him. With every boom he struck the ground hard with his stick and made his voice as deep and strong as he could. He sang the song over and over again, till the forest fairly rang with it.

But then the way in which it had been composed was so out of the common! And the fact that this was the first and only time in his life he had been able to catch and carry a tune was in itself a proof of its merit.

THE SEVENTEENTH OF AUGUST

The first time Jan of Ruffluck had gone to Lövdala on a seventeenth of August the visit had not passed off as creditably for him as he could have wished; so he had never repeated it, although he had been told that each year it was becoming more lively and festive at the Manor.

But now that the little girl had come up in the world, it was altogether different with him. He felt that it would be a great disappointment to Lieutenant Liljecrona if so exalted a personage as the Emperor Johannes of Portugallia did not do him the honour of wishing him happiness on his birthday.

So he donned his imperial regalia and sallied forth, taking good care not to be among the first arrivals. For him who was an emperor it was the correct thing not to put in an appearance until all the guests had made themselves quite at home, and the festivities were well under way.

Upon the occasion of his former visit he had not ventured farther than the orchard and the gravelled walk in front of the house. He had not even gone up to pay his respects to the host. But now he could not think of behaving so discourteously.

This time he made straight for the big bower at the left of the porch, where the lieutenant sat with a group of dignitaries from Svartsjö and elsewhere, grasped him by the hand, and wished him many happy returns of the day.

"So you've come out to-day, Jan," said the lieutenant in a tone of surprise.

To be sure he was not expecting an honour like this, which probably accounted for his so far forgetting himself as to address the Emperor by his old name. Jan knew that so genial a man as the lieutenant could have meant no offense by that, therefore he corrected him in all meekness.

"We must make allowances for the lieutenant," he said, "since this is his birthday; but by rights we should be called Emperor Johannes of Portugallia."

Jan spoke in the gentlest tone possible, but just the same the other gentlemen all laughed at the lieutenant for having made such a bad break. Jan had never intended to cause him humiliation on his birthday, so he promptly dismissed the matter and turned to the others. Raising his cap with an imperial flourish, he said:

"Go'-day, go'-day, my worthy Generals and Bishops and Governors." It was his intention to go around and shake hands with everybody, as one is expected to do at a party.

Nearest the lieutenant sat a short, stocky man in a white cloth jacket, with a gold-trimmed collar, and a sword at his side, who, when Jan stepped up to greet him did not offer his whole hand, but merely held out two fingers. The man's intentions may have been all right, but of course a potentate like Emperor Johannes of Portugallia knew he must stand upon his dignity.

"I think you will have to give me your whole hand, my good Bishop and Governor," he said very pleasantly, for he did not want to disturb the harmony on this great day.

Then, mind you, the man turned up his nose!

"I have just heard it was not to your liking that Liljecrona called you by name," he observed, "and I wonder how you can have the audacity to say du [Note: Du like the French "tu" is used only in addressing intimates.] to me!" Then, pointing to three poor little yellow stars that were attached to his coat, he roared: "See these?"

When remarks of this kind were flung at him, the Emperor Johannes thought it high time to lay off his humility. He quickly flipped back his coat, exhibiting a waistcoat

covered with large showy "medals" of "silver" and "gold." He usually kept his coat buttoned over these decorations as they were easily tarnished, and crushable. Besides, he knew that people always felt so ill at ease when in the presence of exalted personages and he had no desire to add to their embarrassment by parading his grandeur when there was no occasion for it. Now, however, it had to be done.

"Look here, you!" he said. "This is what you ought to show if you want to brag. Three paltry little stars—pooh! that's nothing!"

Then you had better believe the man showed proper respect! The fact that all who knew about the Empress and the Empire were laughing themselves sick at the Major General must have had its effect, also.

"By cracky!" he ejaculated, rising to his feet and bowing. "If it isn't a real monarch that I have before me! Your Majesty even knows how to respond to a speech."

"That's easy when you know how to meet people," retorted the other. After that no gentleman in the party was so glad to be allowed to talk to the ruler of Portugallia as was this very man, who had been so high and mighty at first that he would not present more than two fingers, when an emperor had offered him his whole hand.

It need hardly be said that none of the others seated in the bower refused to accord the Emperor a fitting greeting. Now that the first feeling of surprise and embarrassment had passed and the men were beginning to perceive that he was not a difficult person to get on with, emperor though he was, they were as eager as was every one else to hear all about the little girl's rise to royal honours and her prospective return to her home parish. At last he was on so friendly a footing with them all that he even consented to sing for them the song he had learned in the forest.

This was perhaps too great a condescension on his part, but since they were all so glad for every word he uttered he could not deny them the pleasure of hearing him sing, also.

And when he raised his voice in song imagine the consternation! Then his audience was not confined to the group of elderly gentlemen in the bower. For immediately the old countesses and the old wives of the old generals who had been sitting on the big sofa in the drawing room, sipping tea and eating bonbons, and the young barons and young Court ladies who had been dancing in the ballroom, all came rushing out to hear him and all eyes were fixed on him, which was quite the proper thing, as he was an emperor.

The like of that song they had never heard, of course, and as soon as he had sung it through they wanted him to sing it again. He hesitated a good while—for one must never be too obliging in such matters—but they would not be satisfied until he had yielded to their importunities. And this time, when he came to the refrain, they all joined in, and when he got to the "boom, boom" the young barons beat time with their feet and the young Court ladies clapped their hands to the measure of the tune.

But that was a wonderful day! As he sang it again and again, with so many smartly dressed people chiming in; so many pretty young ladies darting him glances of approval; so many young swains shouting bravo after every verse, he felt as dizzy as if he had been dancing. It was as if some one had taken him in their arms and lifted him into the air.

He did not lose his head, though, but knew all the while that his feet were still on the earth. Meantime, he had the pleasant sensation of being elevated far above every one. On the one hand, he was being borne up by the honour, on the other by the glory. They bore him away on strong wings and placed him upon an imperial throne, far, far away amongst the rosy evening clouds.

There was but one thing wanting. Think, if the great Empress, his little Glory Goldie, had only been there, too!

Instantly this thought flashed upon him, a red shimmer passed before his eyes. Gazing at it more intently, he saw that it emanated from a young girl in a red frock

who had just come out from the house, and was then standing on the porch.

The young girl was tall and graceful and had a wealth of gold yellow hair. From where he stood he could not see her face, but he thought she could be none other than Glory Goldie. Then he knew why he had been so blissfully happy that evening; it was just a foretoken of the little girl's nearness. Breaking off in the middle of his song and pushing aside all who stood in his way, he ran toward the house.

When he reached the steps he was obliged to halt. His heart thumped so violently it seemed ready to burst. But gradually he recovered just enough strength to be able to proceed. Very slowly he mounted step by step till at last he was on the porch. Then, spreading out his arms, he whispered:

"Glory Goldie!"

Instantly the young girl turned round. It was not Glory Goldie! A strange woman stood there, staring at him in astonishment.

Not a word could he utter, but tears sprang to his eyes; he could not hold them back. Now he faced about and staggered down the steps. Turning his back upon all the merriment and splendour, he went on up the driveway.

The people kept calling for him. They wanted him to come back and sing to them again. But he heard them not. As fast as he could go he hurried toward the woods, where he could be alone with his grief.

KATRINA AND JAN

Jan of Ruffluck had never had so many things to think about and ponder over as now, that he had become an emperor.

In the first place he had to be very guarded, since greatness had been thrust upon him, so as not to let pride get the upper hand. He must bear in mind continually that we humans were all made from the same material and had sprung from the same First Parents; that we were all of us weak and sinful and at bottom one person was

no better than another.

All his life long he had observed, to his dismay, how people tried to lord it over one another, and of course he had no desire to do likewise. He found, however, that it was not an easy matter for one who had become exalted to maintain a proper humility. His greatest concern was that he might perhaps say or do something that would cause his old friends, who were still obliged to pursue their humble callings, to feel themselves slighted and forgotten. Therefore he deemed it best when attending such functions as dinners and parties—which duty demanded of him—never to mention in the hearing of these people the great distinction that had come to him. He could not blame them for envying him. Indeed not! Just the same he felt it was wisest not to make them draw comparisons.

And of course he could not ask men like Börje and the seine-maker to address him as Emperor. Such old friends could call him Jan, as they had always done; for they could never bring themselves to do otherwise.

But the one whom he had to consider before all others and be most guarded with was the old wife, who sat at home in the hut. It would have been a great consolation to him, and a joy as well, if greatness had come to her also. But it had not. She was the same as of yore. Anything else was hardly to be expected. Glory Goldie must have known it would be quite impossible to make an empress of Katrina. One could not imagine the old woman pinning a golden coronet on her hair when going to church; she would have stayed at home rather than show her face framed in anything but the usual black silk headshawl.

Katrina had declared out and out she did not want to hear about Glory Goldie being an empress. On the whole it was perhaps best to humour her in this.

But one can understand it must have been hard for him who spent his mornings at the pier, surrounded by admiring throngs of people, who at every turn addressed him as "Emperor," to drop his royal air the moment he set foot in his own house. It

cannot be denied that he found it a bit irksome having to fetch wood and water for Katrina and then to be spoken to as if he had gone backward in life instead of forward.

If Katrina had only stopped at that he would not have minded it, but she even complained because he would not go out to work now, as in former days. When she came with such things he always turned a deaf ear. As if he did not know that the Empress of Portugallia would soon send him so much money that he need never again put on his working clothes! He felt it would be an insult to her to give in to Katrina on this point.

One afternoon, toward the end of August, as Jan was sitting upon the flat stone in front of the hut, smoking his pipe, he glimpsed some bright frocks in the woods close by, and heard the ring of youthful voices.

Katrina had just gone down to the birch grove to cut twigs for a broom: but before leaving she had said to Jan that hereafter they must arrange their matters so that she could go down to Falla and dig ditches; he might stay at home and do the cooking and mending, since he was too fine now to work for others. He had not said a word in retort, but all the same it was mighty unpleasant having to listen to such talk; therefore he was very glad that he could turn his thoughts to something else. Instantly he ran inside for his imperial cap and stick, and was out again and down at the gate just as the young girls came along.

There were no less than five of them in the party, the three young misses from Lövdala and two strangers, who were evidently guests at the Manor.

"Go'-day, my dear Court ladies," said Jan as he swung the gate wide open and went out toward them. "Go'-day, my dear Court ladies," he repeated, at the same time making such a big sweep with his cap that it almost touched the ground.

The girls stood stockstill. They looked a bit shy at first, but he soon helped them over their momentary embarrassment.

Then it was "good-day" and "our kind Emperor." It was plain they were really glad to see him again. These little misses were not like Katrina and the rest of the Ashdales folk. They were not at all averse to hearing about the Empress and immediately asked him if Her Highness was well and if she was not expected home soon.

They also asked if they might be allowed to step into the hut, to see how it looked inside. That he could well afford to let them do, for Katrina always kept the house so clean and tidy that they could receive callers there at any time.

When the young misses from the Manor came into the house they were no doubt surprised that the great Empress had grown up in a little place like that. It may have done very well in the old days, when she was used to it, they said, but how would it be now should she come back? Would she reside here, with her parents, or return to Portugallia?

Jan had thought the selfsame things himself, and he understood of course that Glory Goldie could not settle down in the Ashdales when she had a whole kingdom to rule over.

"The chances are that the Empress will return to Portugallia," he replied.

"Then you will accompany her, I suppose?" said one of the little misses.

Jan would rather the young lady had not questioned him regarding that matter. Nor did he give her any reply at first, but she was persistent.

"Possibly you don't know as yet how it will be?" she said.

Oh, yes, he knew all about it, only he was not quite sure how people would regard his decision. Perhaps they might think it was not the correct thing for an emperor to do. "I shall remain at home," he told her. "It would never do for me to leave Katrina."

"So Katrina is not going to Portugallia?"

"No," he answered. "You couldn't get Katrina away from the hut, and I shall stay right here with her. You see when one has promised to love and cherish till death—"

"Yes, I understand that one can't break that vow." This was said by the young girl who seemed most eager to know about everything. "Do you hear that, all of you?" she added. "Jan won't leave his wife though all the glories of Portugallia are tempting him."

And think of it! The girls were very glad of this. They patted him on the back and told him he did right. That was a favourable sign, they said, for it showed that all was not over yet with good old Jan Anderson of Ruffluck Croft.

He could not make out just what they meant by that; but probably they were happy to think the parish was not going to lose him.

They bade him good-bye now, saying they were going over to Doveness to a garden party.

They had barely gone when Katrina walked in. She must have been standing outside the door listening. But how long she had stood there or how much she had heard, Jan did not know. Anyway, she looked more amiable and serene than she had appeared in a long while.

"You're an old simpleton," she told him. "I wonder what other women would say if they had a husband like you? But still it's a comfort to know that you don't want to go away from me."

BJÖRN HINDRICKSON'S FUNERAL

Jan Anderson of Ruffluck was not invited to the funeral of Björn Hindrickson of Loby.

But he understood, of course, that the family of the departed had not been quite certain that he would care to claim kinship with them now that he had risen to such glory and honour; possibly they feared it might upset their arrangements if so

exalted a personage as Johannes of Portugallia were to attend the funeral.

The immediate relatives of the late Björn Hindrickson naturally wished to ride in the first carriage, where by rights place should have been made for him who was an emperor. They knew, to be sure, that he was not over particular about the things which seem to count for so much with most folks. It would never have occurred to him to stand in the way of those who like to sit in the place of honour at special functions. Therefore, rather than cause any ill feeling, he remained away from the house of mourning during the early forenoon, before the funeral procession had started, and went direct to the church. Not until the bells had begun tolling and the long procession had broken up on church ground did he take his place among his relatives.

When they saw Jan there they all looked a little astonished; but now he was so accustomed to seeing folks surprised at his condescension that he took it as a matter of course. No doubt they would have liked to place him at the head of the line, but then it was too late to do so, as they were already moving toward the churchyard.

After the burial service, when he accompanied the funeral party to the church and seated himself on the mourners' bench, they appeared to be slightly embarrassed. However, there was no time to comment upon his having placed himself among them instead of occupying his usual high seat, in the gentry's gallery—as the opening hymn had just begun.

At the close of the service, when the conveyances belonging to the funeral party drove up onto the knoll, Jan went out and climbed into the hearse, where he sat down upon the dais on which the coffin rested on the drive to the churchyard. As the big wagon would now be going back empty, he knew that here he would not be taking up some other person's place. The daughter and son-in-law of the late Björn Hindrickson walked back and forth at the side of the hearse and looked at him. They regretted no doubt that they could not ask him to ride in one of the first carriages.

Nor did he wish to incommode any one. He was what he was in any case.

During the drive to Loby he could not help thinking of the time when he and Glory Goldie had called upon their rich relatives. This time, however, it was all so different! Who was great and respected now? and who was conferring an honour upon his kinsfolk by seeking them out?

As the carriages drew up in turn before the house of mourning, the occupants stepped out and were conducted into the large waiting-room on the ground floor where they removed their wraps. Two neighbours of the Hindricksons, who acted as host and hostess, then invited the more prominent persons among the guests to step upstairs, where dinner was served.

It was a difficult task having to single out those who were to sit at the first table. For at so large a funeral gathering it was impossible to make room for all the guests at one sitting. The table had to be cleared and set three or four times.

Some people would have regarded it as an inexcusable oversight had they not been asked to sit at the first table. As for him who had risen to the exalted station of Emperor, he could be exceedingly obliging in many ways, but to be allowed to sit at the first table was a right which he must not forgo; otherwise folks might think he did not know it was his prerogative to come before all others. It did not matter so much his not being among the very first to be requested to step upstairs. It was self-evident that he should dine with the pastor and the gentry; so he felt no uneasiness on that score.

He sat all by himself on a corner bench, quite silent. Here nobody came up to chat with him about the Empress, and he seemed a bit dejected. When he left home Katrina had begged him not to come to this funeral, because the folks at this farm were of too good stock to cringe to either kings or emperors. It looked now as if she were right about it. For old peasants who have lived on the same farm from time immemorial consider themselves the superiors of the titled aristocracy.

It was a slow proceeding bringing together those who were to be at the first table. The host and hostess moved about a long while seeking the highest worthies, but somehow they failed to come up to him.

Not far from the Emperor sat a couple of old spinsters, chatting, who had not the least expectation of being called up then. They were speaking of Linnart, son of the late Björn Hindrickson, saying it was well that he had come home in time for a reconciliation with his father.

Not that there had been any actual enmity between father and son, but it happened that some thirty years earlier, when the son was two and twenty and wanted to marry, he had asked the old man to let him take over the management of the farm, so that he could be his own master. This Björn had flatly refused to do. He wanted the son to stay at home and go on working under him and then to take over the property when the old man was no more. "No," was the son's answer. "I'll not stay at home and be your servant even though you are my father. I prefer to go out in the world and make a home for myself, for I must be as good a man as you are, or the feeling of comradeship between us will soon end." "That can end at any time, if you choose to go your own ways," Björn Hindrickson told him. Then the son had gone up into the wilderness northeast of Dove Lake, and had settled in the wildest and least populated region, where he broke ground for a farm of his own. His land lay in Bro parish, and he was never again seen in Svartsjö. Not in thirty years had his parents laid eyes on him. But a week ago, when old Björn was nearing the end, he had come home.

This was good news to Jan of Ruffluck. The Sunday before, when Katrina got back from church and told him that Björn was dying, he immediately asked whether the son had been sent for. But it seems he had not. Katrina had heard that Björn's wife had begged and implored the old man to let her send for their son and that he would not hear of it. He wanted to die in peace, he said.

But Jan was not satisfied to let the matter rest there. The thought of Linnart away out in the wilds, knowing nothing of his father's grave condition had caused him to disregard old Björn's wishes and go tell the son himself. He had heard nothing as to the outcome until now, and he was so interested in what the two old spinsters were saying, that he quite forgot to think about either the first or the second table.

When the son returned he and the father were as nice as could be to each other. The old man laughed at the son's attire. "So you've come in your working clothes," he said. "I suppose I should have dressed up, since it's Sunday," Linnart replied. "But we've had so much rain up our way this summer and I had thought of hauling in some oats to-day." "Did you manage to get in any?" the old man asked him. "I got one wagon loaded, but that I left standing in the field when word came that you were sick. I hurried away at once, without stopping to change my clothes." "Who told you about it?" the father inquired. "Some man I've never seen before," replied the son. "It didn't occur to me to ask him who he was. He looked like a little old beggarman." "You must find that man and thank him from me," old Björn then said. "Him you must honour wherever you meet him. He has meant well by us." The father and son were so happy over their reconciliation that it was as if death had brought them joy instead of grief.

Jan winced when he heard that Linnart Hindrickson had called him a beggar. But he understood of course that it was simply because he had not worn his imperial cap or carried his stick when he went up to the forest. This brought him back to his present dilemma. Surely he had waited long enough! He should have been called by this time. This would never do!

He rose at once, resolutely crossed the room into the hallway, climbed the stairs, and opened the door to the big dining-hall. He saw at a glance that the dinner was already on; every place at the large horseshoe table was occupied and the first course had been served. Then it was not meant that he should be among the elect, for there

sat the pastor, the sexton, the lieutenant from Lövdala and his lady—there sat every one who should be there, except himself.

One of the young girls who passed around the food rushed over to Jan the instant he appeared in the doorway. "What are you doing here, Jan?" she said in a low voice. "Go down with you!"

"But my good hostess!" Jan protested, "Emperor Johannes of Portugallia should be present at the first sitting."

"Oh, shut up, Jan!" said the girl. "This is not the proper time to come with your nonsense. Go down, and you'll get something to eat when your turn comes."

It so happened that Jan entertained a greater regard for this particular household than for any other in the parish; therefore it would have been very gratifying to him to be received here in a manner befitting his station. A strange feeling of despondency came over him as he stood down by the door, cap in hand; he felt that all his imperial grandeur was falling from him. Then, in the middle of this sore predicament, he heard Linnart Hindrickson exclaim:

"Why, there stands the fellow who came to me last Sunday and told me that father was sick!"

"What are you saying?" questioned the mother. "But are you certain as to that?"

"Of course I am. It can't be any one but he. I've seen him before to-day, but I didn't recognize him in that queer get-up. However I see now that he's the man."

"If he is our man, he mustn't be allowed to stand down by the door, like a beggar," said the old housewife. "In that case, we must make room for him at the table. Him we owe both honour and thanks, for it was he who sent comfort to Björn in his last hours, while to me he has brought the only consolation that can lighten my sorrow in the loss of a husband like mine."

And room was made, too, though the table seemed to be crowded enough already.

Jan was placed at the centre of the horseshoe, directly opposite the pastor. He could not have wished for anything better. At first he seemed a little dazed. He could not comprehend why they should make such fuss over him just because he had run a few miles into the woods with a message for Linnart Hindrickson. Suddenly he understood, and all became clear to him: it was the Emperor they wished to honour; they had gone about it in this way so that no one should feel slighted or put out. It couldn't be explained in any other way. For he had always been kind and good-natured and helpful, yet never before had he been honoured or fêted in the least degree for that.

THE DYING HEART

Engineer Boraeus on his daily stroll to the pier could not fail to notice the crowds that always gathered nowadays around the little old man from Ruffluck Croft. Jan did not have to sit all by himself any more and while away the long, dreary hours in silent musings, as he had done during the summer. Instead, all who waited for the boat went up to him to hear him tell what would happen on the homecoming of the Empress, more especially when she stepped ashore here, at the Borg landing. Every time Engineer Boraeus went by he heard about the crown of gold the Empress would wear on her hair and the gold flowers that would spring into bloom on tree and bush the instant she set foot on land.

One day, late in October, about three months after Jan of Ruffluck had first proclaimed the tidings of Glory Goldie's rise to royal honours, the engineer saw an uncommonly large gathering of people around the little old man. He intended to pass by with a curt greeting, as usual, but changed his mind and stopped to see what was going on.

At first glance he found nothing out of the ordinary, Jan was seated upon one of the waiting stones, as usual, looking very solemn and important. Beside him sat a tall, thin woman, who was talking so fast and excitedly that the words fairly spurted out

of her mouth; she shook her head and snapped her eyes, her body bending forward all the while so that by the time she had finished speaking her face was on a level with the ground.

Engineer Boraeus immediately recognized the woman as Mad Ingeborg. At first he could not make out what she was saying, so he turned to a man in the crowd and asked him what all this was about.

"She's begging him to arrange for her to accompany the Empress to Portgallia, when Her Royal Highness returns thither," the man explained. "She has been talking to him about this for a good while now, but he won't make her any promises."

Then the engineer had no difficulty in following the colloquy. But what he heard did not please him, and, as he listened, the wrinkle between his eyebrows deepened and reddened.

Here sat the only person in the world, save Jan himself, who believed in the wonders of Portugallia, yet she was denied the pleasure of a trip there. The poor old soul knew that in that kingdom there was no poverty and no hunger, neither were there any rude people who made fun of unfortunates, nor any children who pursued lone, helpless wanderers and cast stones at them. In that land reigned only peace, and all years were good years. So thither she longed to be taken—away from the anguish and misery of her wretched existence. She wept and pleaded, employing every argument she could think of, but "No," and again "No" was the only answer she got.

And he who turned a deaf ear to her prayers was one who had sorrowed and yearned for a whole year. A few months ago, when his heart was still athrob with life, perhaps he would not have said no to her pleadings; but now at a time when everything seemed to be prospering with him, his heart had become hardened. Even the outward appearance of the man showed that a great change had taken place within. He had acquired plump cheeks, a double chin, and a heavy black moustache. His eyes bulged from their sockets, and there was a cold fixed stare about them. His

nose, too, looked more prominent than of yore and had taken on a more patrician mold. His hair seemed to be entirely gone; not one hair stuck out from under the leather cap.

The engineer had kept an eye on the man from the day of their first talk in the summer. It was no longer an intense yearning that made Jan haunt the pier. Now he hardly glanced toward the boat. He came only to meet people who humoured his mania, who called him "Emperor" just for the sport of hearing him sing and narrate his wild fancies.

But why be annoyed at that? thought the engineer. The man was a lunatic of course. But perhaps the madness need never have become so firmly fixed as it was then. If some one had ruthlessly yanked Jan of Ruffluck down off his imperial throne in the beginning possibly he could have been saved.

The engineer flashed the man a challenging glance. Jan looked condescendingly regretful, but remained adamant as before.

In that fine land of Portugallia there were only princes and generals, to be sure—only richly dressed people. Mad Ingeborg in her old cotton headshawl and her knit jacket would naturally be out of place there. But Heavenly Father! the engineer actually thought—

Engineer Boraeus looked just then as if he would have liked to give Jan a needed lesson, but he only shrugged his shoulders. He knew he was not the right person for that, and would simply make bad worse. Quietly withdrawing from the crowd, he walked down to the end of the pier just as the boat hove into view from behind the nearest point.

DEPOSED

Long before his marriage to Anna Ericsdotter of Falla, Lars Gunnarson happened one day to be present at an auction sale.

The parties who held the auction were poor folk who probably had no tempting

wares to offer the bargain seekers, for the bidding had been slow, and the sales poor. They had a right to expect better results, with Jöns of Kisterud as auctioneer. Jöns was such a capital funmaker that people used to attend all auctions at which he officiated just for the pleasure of listening to him. Although he got off all his usual quips and jokes, he could not seem to infuse any life into the bidders on this occasion. At last, not knowing what else he could do, he put down his hammer saying he was too hoarse to do any more crying.

"The senator will have to get some one else to offer the wares," he told Carl Carlson of Stovik, who stood sponsor for the auction. "I've shouted myself hoarse at these stone images standing around me, and will have to go home and keep my mouth shut for a few weeks, till I can get back my voice."

It was a serious matter for the senator to be left without a crier, when most of the lots were still unsold; so he tried to persuade Jöns to continue. But it was plain that Jöns could not afford to hurt his professional standing by holding a poor auction, and therefore he became so hoarse all at once that he could not even speak in a whisper. He only wheezed.

"Perhaps there is some one here who will cry out the wares for a moment, while Jöns is resting?" said the senator, looking out over the crowd without much hope of finding a helper.

Then Lars Gunnarson pushed his way forward and said he was willing to try. Carl Carslon only laughed at Lars, who at that time looked like a mere stripling, and told him he did not want a small boy who had not even been confirmed. Whereupon Lars promptly informed Carl Carlson that he had not only been confirmed but had also performed military service. He begged so eagerly to be allowed to wield the hammer that the senator finally gave way to him.

"We may as well let you try your hand at it for a while," he said. "I dare say it can't go any worse than it has gone so far."

Lars promptly stepped into Jöns's place. He took up an old butter tub to offer it—hesitated and just stood there looking at it, turning the tub up and down, tapping on its bottom and sides. Apparently surprised not to find any flaws in it, he presently offered the lot in a reluctant tone of voice, as if distressed at having to sell so valuable an article. For his part, he would rather that no bids be made, he said. It would be lucky for the owner if no one discovered what a precious butter tub this was, for then he could keep it.

And now, when bid followed bid, everybody noticed how disappointed Lars looked. It was all very well so long as the bids were so low as to be beneath his notice; but when they began to mount higher and higher, his face became distorted from chagrin. He seemed to be making a great sacrifice when he finally decided to knock down the sour old butter tub.

After that he turned his attention to the water buckets, the cowls, and washtubs. Lars Gunnarson seemed somewhat less reluctant when it came to disposing of the older ones, which he sold without indulging in overmuch sighing; but the newer lots he did not want to offer at all. "They are far too good to give away," he remarked to the owner. "They've been used so little that you could easily sell them for new at the fair."

The auction hunters had no notion as to why they kept shouting more and more eagerly. Lars Gunnarson showed much distress for every fresh bid; it could never have been to please him they were bidding. Somehow they had come to regard the things he offered as of real worth. It suddenly occurred to them that one thing or another was needed at home and here were veritable bargains, which they were not buying now just for the fun of it, as had been the case when Jöns of Kisterud did the auctioning.

After this master stroke Lars Gunnarson was in great demand at all auctions. There was never any merriment at the sales after he had begun to wield the hammer; but he

had the faculty of making folks long to get possession of a lot of old junk and inducing a couple of bigwigs to bid against each other on things they had no earthly use for, simply to show that money was no object to them. And he managed to dispose of everything at all auctions at which he served.

Once only did it seem to go badly for Lars, and that was at Sven Österby's, at Bergvik. There was a fine big house, with all its furnishings up for sale. Many people had assembled, and though late in the autumn the weather was so mild that the auction could be held out of doors; yet the sales were almost negligible. Lars could not make the people take any interest in the wares, or get them to bid. It looked as though it would go no better for him than it had gone for Jöns of Kisterud the day Lars had to take up the hammer to help him out.

Lars Gunnarson, however, had no desire to turn his work over to another. He tried instead to find out what it was that seemed to be distracting the attention of the people and keeping them from making purchases. Nor was he long getting at the cause of it.

Lars had mounted a table, that every one might see what he had to offer, and from this point of vantage he soon discovered that the newly created emperor, who lived in the little hut close to Falla and had been a day labourer all his life, moved about in the crowd. Lars saw him bowing and smiling to right and left, and letting people examine his stars and his stick, and, at every turn, he had a long line of youngsters at his heels. Nor were older folks above bandying words with him. No wonder the auction went badly, with a grand monarch like him there to draw every one's attention to himself!

At first Lars went right on with his auctioneering, but he kept an eye on Jan of Ruffluck until the later had made his way to the front. There was no fear of Johannes of Portugallia remaining in the background! He shook hands with everybody and spoke a few pleasant words to each and all, at the same time pushing ahead until he

had reached the very centre of the ring.

But the moment Jan was there Lars Gunnarsom jumped down from the table, rushed up to him, snatched his imperial cap and stick and was back in his place before Jan had time to think of offering resistance.

Then Jan cried out and tried to climb up onto the table to get back the stolen heirlooms, but immediately Lars raised the stick to him and forced him back. At that there was a murmur of disapproval from the crowd, which, however, had no effect upon Lars.

"I see that you are surprised at my action," he shouted in his loud auctioneering voice, which could be heard all over the yard. "But this cap and this stick belong to us Falla folk. They were bequeathed to my father-in-law, Eric Ersa, by the old master of Falla, he who ran the farm before Eric took it over. These things have always been treasured in the family, and I can't tolerate having a lunatic parade around in them."

Jan had suddenly recovered his composure and while Lars was speaking, he stood with his arms crossed on his chest a look in his face of sublime indifference to Lars's talk. As soon as Lars subsided, Jan, with a gesture of command, turned to the crowd, and said very quietly:

"Now, my good Courtiers, you must see that I get back my property."

Not a solitary person made a move to help him, but there were some who laughed. Now they had all gone over to Lars's side. There was just one individual who seemed to feel sorry for Jan. A woman cried out to the auctioneer:

"Ah, Lars, let him keep his royal trumpery! The cap and stick are of no use to you."

"I'll give him one of my own caps, when I get home," returned Lars. "But I'll be hanged if I let him go about any longer with these heirlooms, making of them a target for jests!"

This was followed by loud laughs from the crowd, Jan was so dumfounded that all he could do was to stand still and look at the people. He glanced from one to another, unable to get over his amazement. Dear, dear! Was there no one among all those who had honoured and applauded him who would help him now, in his hour of need? The people stood there, unmoved. He saw then that he meant nothing to them and that they would not lift a finger for him. He became so frightened that all his imperial greatness fell from him, and he was like a little child that is ready to cry because its playthings have been taken away.

Lars Gunnarson turned to the huge pile of wares stacked beside him, prepared to go on with the auction. Then Jan attempted to do something himself. Wailing and protesting, he went up to the table where Lars stood, quickly bent down and tried to overturn it. But Lars was too alert for him; with a swing of the imperial stick, he dealt Jan a blow across his back that sent him reeling.

"No you don't!" cried he. "I'll keep these articles for the present. You've wasted enough time already on this emperor nonsense. Now you'd better go straight home and take to your digging again."

Jan did not appear to be specially anxious to obey; whereupon Lars again raised the stick, and nothing more was needed to make Emperor Johannes of Portugallia turn and flee.

No one made a move to follow him or offered him a word of sympathy. No one called to him to come back. Indeed folks only laughed when they saw how pitilessly and unceremoniously he had been stripped of all his grandeur.

But this did not suit Lars, either. He wanted to have it as solemn at his auctions as at a church service.

"I think it's better to talk sense to Jan than to laugh at him," he said, reprovingly. "There are many who encourage him in his foolishness and who even call him Emperor. But that is hardly the right way to treat him. It would be far better to make

him understand who and what he is, even though he doesn't like it. I have been his employer for some little time, therefore it is my bounden duty to see that he goes back to his work; otherwise he'll soon be a charge on the parish."

After that Lars held a good auction, with close and high bids. The satisfaction which he now felt was not lessened when on his homecoming the next day, he learned that Jan of Ruffluck had again put on his working clothes, and gone back to his digging.

"We must never remind him of his madness," Lars Gunnarson warned his people, "then perhaps his reason will be spared to him. Anyhow, he has never had more than he needs."

THE CATECHETICAL MEETING

Lars Gunnarson was decidedly pleased with himself for having taken the cap and stick away from Jan; it looked as if he had at the same time relieved the peasant of his mania.

A fortnight after the auction at Bergvik a catechetical meeting was held at Falla. People had gathered there from the whole district round about Dove Lake, the Ruffluck folk being among them. There was nothing in Jan's manner or bearing now that would lead one to think he was not in his right mind.

All the benches and chairs in the house had been moved into the large room on the ground floor and arranged in close rows, and there sat every one who was to be catechized, including Jan; for to-day he had not pushed his way up to a better seat than he was entitled to. Lars kept his eyes on Jan. He had to admit to himself that the man's insanity had apparently been checked. Jan behaved now like any rational being; he was very quiet and all who greeted him received only a stiff nod in response, which may have been due to a desire on his part not to disturb the spirit of the meeting.

The regular meeting was preceded by a roll call, and when the pastor called out "Jan Anderson of Ruffluck Croft," the latter answered "here" without the slightest

hesitation—as if Emperor Johannes of Portugallia had never existed.

The clergyman sat at a table at the far end of the room, with the big church registry in front of him. Beside him sat Lars Gunnarson, enlightening him as to who had moved away from the district within the year, and who had married.

Jan having answered all questions correctly and promptly, the pastor turned to Lars and put a query to him in a low tone of voice.

"It was not as serious as it appeared," said Lars. "I took it out of him. He works at Falla every day now, as he has always done."

Lars had not thought to lower his voice, as had the pastor. Every one knew of whom he was speaking and many glanced anxiously at Jan, who sat there as calm as though he had not heard a word.

Later, when the catechizing was well on, the pastor happened to ask a trembling youth whose knowledge of the Scriptures was to be tested, to repeat the Fourth Commandment.

It was not wholly by chance the pastor had chosen this commandment as his text for that evening. When seated thus in a comfortable old farmhouse, with its olden-time furniture, and much else that plainly bespoke a state of prosperity, he always felt moved to impress upon his hearers how well those prosper who hold together from generation to generation, who let their elders govern as long as they are able to do so, and who honour and cherish them throughout the remaining years of their lives.

He had just begun to unfold the rich promises which God has made to those who honour father and mother, when Jan of Ruffluck arose.

"There is some one standing outside the door who is afraid to come in," said Jan.

"Go see what the matter is, Börje," said the pastor. "You're nearest the door."

Börje rose at once, opened the door, and glanced up and down the entry.

"There's nobody out there," he replied. "Jan must have heard wrongly."

After this interruption the pastor proceeded to explain to his listeners that this commandment was not so much of a command as it was good counsel, which should be strictly followed if one wished to succeed in life. He was himself only a youth, but this much he had already observed: lack of respect toward parents and disobedience were at the bottom of many of life's misfortunes.

While the pastor was speaking Jan time and again turned his head toward the door and he motioned to Katrina, who was sitting on the last bench and could more easily get to the door than he could, to go open it.

Katrina kept her seat as long as she dared; but being a bit fearful of crossing Jan these days, she finally obeyed him. When she had got the door open, she, like Börje, saw no one in the entry. She shook her head at Jan and went back to her seat.

The pastor had not allowed himself to be disconcerted by Katrina's movements. To the great joy of all the young people, he had almost ceased putting questions and was voicing some of the beautiful thoughts that kept coming into his mind.

"Think how wisely and well things are ordered for the dear old people whom we have with us in our homes!" he said. "Is it not a blessing that we may be a stay and comfort to those who cared for us when we were helpless, to make life easy for those who perhaps have suffered hunger themselves that we might be fed? It is an honour for a young couple to have at the fireside an old father or mother, happy and content—"

When the pastor said that a smothered sob was heard from a corner of the room. Lars Gunnarson, who had been sitting with head devoutly bowed, arose at once. Crossing the floor on tiptoes, so as not to disturb the meeting, he went over to his mother-in-law, placed his arm around her, and led her up to the table. Seating her in his own chair, he stationed himself behind it and looked down at her with an air of solicitude; then he beckoned to his wife to come and stand beside him. Every one understood of course that Lars wanted them to think that in this home all was as the

pastor had said it should be.

The minister looked pleased as he glanced up at the old mother and her children. The only thing that affected him a little unpleasantly was that the old woman wept all the while. He had never before succeeded in calling forth such deep emotion in any of his parishioners.

"It is not difficult to keep the Fourth Commandment when we are young and still under the rule of our parents," the pastor continued; "but the real test comes later, when we are grown and think ourselves quite as wise—"

Here the pastor was again interrupted. Jan had just risen and gone to the door himself. He seemed to have better luck than had Börje or Katrina: for he was heard to say "Go'-day" to somebody out in the entry.

Now every one turned to see who it was that had been standing outside all the evening, afraid to come in. They could hear Jan urging and imploring. Evidently the person wished to be excused, for presently Jan pulled the door to and stepped back into the room, alone. He did not return to his seat, but threaded his way up to the table.

"Well, Jan," said the pastor, somewhat impatient, "may we hear now who it is that has been disturbing us the whole evening?"

"It was the old master of Falla who stood out there," Jan replied, not in the least astonished or excited over what he had to impart. "He wouldn't come in, but he bade me tell Lars from him to beware the first Sunday after Midsummer Day."

At first not many understood what lay back of Jan's words. Those who sat in the last rows had not heard distinctly, but they inferred from the startled look on the pastor's face that Jan must have said something dreadful. They all sprang up and began to crowd nearer the table, asking to right and left who on earth he could have been talking to.

"But Jan!" said the pastor in a firm tone, "do you know what you are saying?"

"I do indeed," returned Jan with an emphatic nod. "As soon as he had given me the message for his son-in-law he went away. 'Tell him,' he said, 'that I wish him no ill for letting me lie in the snow in my agony and not coming to my aid in time; but the Fourth Commandment is a strict one. Tell him from me he'd better repent and confess. He will have until the Sunday after Midsummer to do it in.'"

Jan spoke so rationally and delivered his strange message with such sincerity that both the pastor and the others firmly believed at first that Eric of Falla had actually stood outside the door of his old home and talked with Jan. And naturally they all turned their eyes toward Lars Gunnarson to see what effect Jan's words had had on him.

Lars only laughed. "I thought Jan sane," he said, "or I shouldn't have let him come to the meeting. The pastor will have to pardon the interruption. It is the madness breaking out again."

"Why of course!" said the pastor, relieved. For he had been on the point of believing he had come upon something supernatural. It was well, he thought, that this was only the fancy of a lunatic.

"You see, Pastor," Lars went on explaining, "Jan has no great love for me, and it's plain now he hasn't the wit to conceal it. I must confess that in a sense I'm to blame for his daughter having to go away to earn money. It's this he holds against me."

The parson, a little surprised at Lars's eager tone, gave him a searching glance. Lars did not meet that gaze, but looked away. Perceiving his mistake, he tried to look the parson in the face. Somehow he couldn't—so turned away, with an oath.

"Lars Gunnarson!" exclaimed the pastor in astonishment. "What has come over you?"

Lars immediately pulled himself together.

"Can't I be rid of this lunatic?" he said, as though Jan were the one he had sworn at. "Here stand the pastor and all my neighbours regarding me as a murderer only

because a madman happens to hold a grudge against me! I tell you he wants to get back at me on account of his daughter. How could I know that she would leave home and go wrong simply because I wanted what was due me. Is there no one here who will take charge of Jan," he asked, "so that the rest of us may enjoy the service in peace?"

The pastor sat stroking his forehead. Lars's remarks troubled him; but he could not reprimand him when he had no positive proof that the man had committed a wrong. He looked around for the old mistress of Falla; but she had slipped away. Then he glanced out over the gathering, and from that quarter he got no help. He was confident that all in the room knew whether or not Lars was guilty, yet, when he turned to them, their faces looked quite blank. Meantime Katrina had come forward and taken Jan by the arm, and the two of them were then moving toward the door. Anyhow, the pastor had no desire to question a crazy man.

"I think this will do for to-night," he said quietly. "We will bring the meeting to a close." He made a short prayer, which was followed by a hymn. Whereupon the people went their ways.

The pastor was the last to leave. While Lars was seeing him to the gate he spoke quite voluntarily of that which had just taken place.

"Did you mark, Pastor, it was the Sunday after Midsummer Day I was to be on my guard?" he said. "That just shows it was the girl Jan had in mind. It was the Sunday after Midsummer of last year that I was over at Jan's place to have an understanding with him about the hut."

All these explanations only distressed the pastor the more. Of a sudden he put his hand on Lars's shoulder and tried to read his face.

"I'm not your judge, Lars Gunnarson," he said in warm, reassuring tones, "but if you have something on your conscience, you can come to me. I shall look for you every day. Only don't put it off too long!"

AN OLD TROLL

The second winter of the little girl's absence from home was an extremely severe one. By the middle of January it had grown so unbearably cold that snow had to be banked around all the little huts in the Ashdales as a protection against the elements, and every night the cows had to be covered with straw, to keep them from freezing to death.

It was so cold that the bread froze; the cheese froze, and even the butter turned to ice. The fire itself seemed unable to hold its warmth. It mattered not how many logs one laid in the fireplace, the heat spread no farther than to the edge of the hearth.

One day, when the winter was at its worst, Jan decided that instead of going out to his work he would stay at home and help Katrina keep the fire alive. Neither he nor the wife ventured outside the hut that day, and the longer they remained indoors the more they felt the cold. At five o'clock in the afternoon, when it began to grow dark, Katrina said they might as well "turn in"; it was no good their sitting up any longer, torturing themselves.

During the afternoon Jan had gone over to the window, time and again, and peered out through a little corner of a pane that had remained clear, though the rest of the glass was thickly crusted with frost flowers. And now he went back there again.

"You can go to bed, Katrina dear," he said as he stood looking out, "but I've got to stay up a while longer."

"Well I never!" ejaculated Katrina. "Why should you stay up? Why can't you go to bed as well as I?"

But Jan did not reply to her questions. "It's strange I haven't seen Agrippa Prästberg pass by yet," he said.

"Is it him you're waiting for!" snapped Katrina. "He hasn't been so extra nice to you that you need feel called upon to sit up and freeze on his account!"

Jan put up his hand with a sweep of authority—this being the only mannerism acquired during his emperorship which had not been dropped. There was no fear of Prästberg coming to them, he told her. He had heard that the old man had been invited to a drinking bout at a fisherman's but here in the Ashdales, but so far he had not seen him go by.

"I suppose he has had the good sense to stay at home," said Katrina.

It grew colder and colder. The corners of the house creaked as if the freezing wind were knocking to be let in. All the bushes and trees were covered with such thick coats of snow and rim frost they looked quite shapeless. But bushes and trees, like humans, had to clothe themselves as well as they could, in order to be protected against the cold.

In a little while Katrina observed: "I see by the clock it's only half after five, but all the same I'll put on the porridge pot and prepare the evening meal. After supper, you can sit up and wait for Prästberg or go to bed, whichever you like."

All this time Jan had stood at the window. "It can't be that he has come this way without my seeing him?" he said.

"Who cares whether a brute like him comes or doesn't come!" returned Katrina sharply, for she was tired of hearing about that old tramp.

Jan heaved a deep sigh. Katrina was more right than she herself knew. He did not care a bit whether or not old "Grippie" had passed. His saying that he was expected was merely an excuse for standing at the window.

No word or token had he received from the great Empress, the little girl of Ruffluck, since the day Lars wrested from him his majesty and glory. He felt that such a thing could never have happened without her sanction, and inferred from this that he had done something to incur her displeasure; but what he could not imagine! He had brooded over this all through the long winter evenings; through the long dark mornings, when threshing in the barn at Falla; through the short days, when carting

wood from the big forest.

Everything had passed off so happily and well for him for three whole months, so of course he could not think she had been dissatisfied with his emperorship. He had then known a time such as he had never dreamed could come to a poor man like himself. But surely Glory Goldie was not offended at him for that!

No. He had done or said something which was displeasing to her, that was why he was being punished. But could it be that she was so slow to forget as never to forgive him? If she would only tell him what she was angry about! He would do anything he could to pacify her. She must see for herself how he had put on his working clothes and gone out as a day labourer as soon as she let him know that such was her wish.

He could not speak of this matter to either Katrina or the seine-maker. He would be patient and wait for some positive sign from Glory Goldie. Many times he had felt it to be so near that he had only to put out his hand and take it. That very day, shut in as he was, he had the feeling that there was a message from her on the way. This was why he stood peering out through the little clear corner of the window. He knew, also, that unless it came very soon he could not go on living.

It was so dark now that he could hardly see as far as the gate, and his hopes for that day were at an end. He had no objection to retiring at once, he said presently. Katrina dished out the porridge, the evening meal was hurridly eaten, and by a quarter after six they were abed.

They dropped off to sleep, too; but their slumbers were of short duration. The hands of the big Dalecarlian clock had barely got round to six-thirty when Jan sprang out of bed; he quickly freshened the fire, which was almost burned out, then proceeded to dress himself.

Jan tried to be as quiet as possible, but for all that Katrina was awakened; raising herself in bed she asked if it was already morning.

No, indeed it wasn't, but the little girl had called to Jan in a dream, and commanded him to go up to the forest.

Now it was Katrina's turn to sigh! It must be the madness come back, thought she. She had been expecting it every day for some little time, for Jan had been so depressed and restless of late.

She made no attempt to persuade him to stay at home, but got up, instead, and put on her clothes.

"Wait a minute!" she said, when Jan was at the door. "If you're going out into the woods to-night, then I want to go with you."

She feared Jan would raise objections, but he didn't; he remained at the door till she was ready. Though apparently anxious to be off, he seemed more controlled and rational than he had been all day.

And what a night to venture out into! The cold came against them like a rain of piercing and cutting glass-splinters. Their skins smarted and they felt as if their noses were being torn from their faces; their fingertips ached and their toes were as if they had been cut off; they hardly knew they had any toes.

Jan uttered no word of complaint, neither did Katrina; they just tramped on and on. Jan turned in on the winter-road across the heights, the one they had traversed with Glory Goldie one Christmas morning when she was so little she had to be carried.

There was a clear sky and in the west gleamed a pale crescent moon, so that the night was far from pitch dark. Still it was difficult to keep to the road because everything was so white with snow; time after time they wandered too close to the edge and sank deep into a drift. Nevertheless, they managed to make their way clear to the huge stone that had once been hurled by a giant at Svartsjö church. Jan had already got past it when Katrina, who was a little way behind him, gave a shriek.

"Jan!" she cried out. And Jan had not heard her sound so frightened since the day Lars threatened to take their home away from them. "Can't you see there's some one

sitting here?"

Jan turned and went back to Katrina. And now the two of them came near taking to their heels; for, sure enough, propped against the stone and almost covered with rim frost sat a giant troll, with a bristly beard and a beak-like nose!

The troll, or whatever it was, sat quite motionless. It had become so paralyzed from the cold that it had not been able to get back to its cave, or wherever else it kept itself nowadays.

"Think that there really are such creatures after all!" said Katrina. "I should never have believed it, for all I've heard so much about them."

Jan was the first to recover his senses and to see what it was they had come upon.

"It's no troll, Katrina," he said. "It's Agrippa Prästberg."

"Sakes alive!" gasped Katrina. "You don't tell me! From the look of him he could easily be mistaken for a troll."

"He has just fallen asleep here," observed Jan. "He can't be dead, surely!"

They shouted the old man's name and shook him; but he never stirred.

"Run back for the sled, Katrina," said Jan, "so we can draw him home. I'll stay here and rub him with snow till he wakes up."

"Just so you don't freeze to death yourself!"

"My dear Katrina," laughed Jan, "I haven't felt as warm as I feel now in many a day. I'm so happy about the little girl! Wasn't it dear of her to send us out here to save the life of him who has gone around spreading so many lies about her?"

A week or two later, as Jan was returning from his work one evening, he met Agrippa Prästberg.

"I'm right and fit again," Agrippa told him. "But I know well enough that if you and Katrina had not come to the rescue there wouldn't have been much left of Johan Utter Agrippa Prästberg by now. So I've wondered what I could do for you in

return."

"Oh, don't give that a thought my good Agrippa Prästberg!" said Jan, with that upward imperial sweep of the hand.

"Hush now, while I tell you!" spoke Prästberg. "When I said I'd thought of doing you a return service, it wasn't just empty chatter. I meant it. And now it has already been done. The other day I ran across the travelling salesman who gave that lass of yours the red dress."

"Who?" cried Jan, so excited he could hardly get his breath.

"That blackguard who gave the girl the red dress and who afterward sent her to the devil in Stockholm. First I gave him, on your account, all the thrashing he could take, and then I told him that the next time he showed his face around here he'd get just as big a dose of the same kind of medicine."

Jan would not believe he had heard aright. "But what did he say?" he questioned eagerly. "Didn't you ask him about Glory Goldie? Had he no greetings from her?"

"What could he say? He took his punishment and held his tongue. Now I've done you a decent turn, Jan Anderson, and we're even. Johan Utter Agrippa Prästberg wants no unpaid scores."

With that he strode on, leaving Jan in the middle of the road, lamenting loudly. The little girl had wanted to send him a message! That merchant had come with greetings from her, but not a thing had he learned because the man had been driven away.

Jan stood wringing his hands. He did not weep, but he ached all over worse than if he were ill. He felt certain in his own mind that Glory Goldie had wanted Prästberg to take a message from her brought by the merchant and convey it to her father. But it was with Prästberg as with the trolls—whether they wanted to help or hinder they only wrought mischief.

THE SUNDAY AFTER MIDSUMMER

The first Sunday after Midsummer Day there was a grand party at the seine-maker's to which every one in the Ashdales had been invited. The old man and his daughter-in-law were in the habit of entertaining the whole countryside on this day of each year.

Folks wondered, of course, how two people who were so pitiably poor could afford to give a big feast, but to all who knew the whys and wherefores it seemed perfectly natural.

As a matter of fact, when the seine-maker was a rich man he gave his two sons a farmstead each. The elder son wasted his substance in much the same way as Ol' Bengtsa himself had done, and died poor. The younger son, who was the more steady and reliable, kept his portion and even increased it, so that now he was quite well-to-do. But what he owned at the present time was as nothing to what he might have had if his father had not recklessly made away with both money and lands, to no purpose whatever. If such wealth had only come into the hands of the son in his younger days, there is no telling to what he might have attained. He could have been owner of all the woodlands in the Lovsjö district, had a shop at Broby, and a steamer plying Lake Löven; he might even have been master of the ironworks at Ekeby. Naturally he found it difficult to excuse the father's careless business methods, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

When the crash came for Ol' Bengtsa, a good many persons, Bengtsa among them, expected the son to come to his aid by the sacrifice of his own property. But what good would that have done? It would only have gone to the creditors. It was with the idea in mind that the father should have something to fall back upon when all his possessions were gone, that the son had held on to his own.

It was not the fault of the younger son that Ol' Bengtsa had taken up his abode with the widow of the elder son, for he had begged the father more than a hundred times to come and live with him. The father's refusal to accept this offer seemed almost

like an act of injustice; for because of it the son got the name of being mean and hard-hearted among those who knew the old man was badly off. Still, there was no ill-feeling between the two.

The son, accompanied by his wife and children, always drove down to the Ashdales over the steep and perilous mountain road once every summer, just to spend a day with his father.

If people had only known how badly he and his wife felt every time they saw the wretched hovel, the ramshackle outhouse, the stony potato patch, and the sister-in-law's ragged children, they would have understood how his heart went out to his father. The worst of all was that the father persisted in giving a big party in their honour. Every time they bade the old man good-bye they begged him not to invite all the neighbours in when they came again the next year; but he was obdurate; he would not forego his yearly feast, though he could ill afford the expense. Seeing how aged and broken he looked, one would hardly have thought there was so much of the old happy-go-lucky Ol' Bengtsa of Lusterby still left in him, but the desire to do things on a grand scale still clung to him. It had caused him misfortune from which he could never recover.

The son had learned inadvertently that the old man and the sister-in-law scrimped the whole year just to be able to give a grand spread on the day he was at home. And then it was nothing but eat, eat the whole time! He and his family were hardly out of the wagon before they were served with coffee and all kinds of tempting appetizers. And later came the dinner to all the neighbours with a fish course, a meat course, and game, and rice-cakes, and fruit-mold with whipped cream, and quantities of wines and spirits. It was enough to make one weep! He and his wife did nothing to encourage this foolishness. On the contrary, they brought with them only such plain fare as they were accustomed to have every day; but for all that they could not escape the feasting. Sometimes they felt that rather than let the old man ruin himself

on their account they might better remain away altogether. Yet they feared to do so, lest their good intentions should be misinterpreted.

And what a strange company they were thrown in with at these Parties—old blacksmiths and fishermen and backwoodsmen! If such good, substantial folk as the Falla family had not been in the habit of coming, too, there would have been no one there with whom they could have exchanged a word.

Ol' Bengtsa's son had liked the late Eric of Falla best, but he also entertained in a high regard for Lars Gunnarson, the present master of Falla. Lars Gunnarson came of rather obscure people, but he was a man who had the good sense to marry well, and who would doubtless forge ahead and gain for himself both wealth and position. When the old man told his son that Lars Gunnarson was not likely to come to the party this year, the latter was very much disappointed.

"But it's no fault of mine," Ol' Bengsta declared. "Lars isn't exactly my kind, but all the same, on your account, I went down to Falla yesterday and invited him."

"Maybe he's weary of these parties," said the son.

"Oh, no," returned Ol' Bengtsa. "I'm sure he'd be only too glad to come, but there's something that's keeping him away." He did not explain further just then, but while they were having their coffee, he went back to the subject. "You mustn't feel so badly because Lars isn't coming this evening," he said. "I don't believe you'd care for his company any more."

"You don't mean that he has taken to drink?"

"That wasn't such a bad guess! He took to it suddenly in the spring, and since Midsummer Day he hasn't drawn a sober breath."

During these visits the father and son immediately they had finished their coffee always went fishing. The old man usually kept very still on these occasions, so as not to scare the fish away, but this year was the exception. He spoke to the son time and again. His words came with difficulty, as always, still there seemed to be more

life in him now than ordinarily. Evidently there was something special he wanted to say, or rather something he wished to draw from his son. He was like one who stands outside an empty house shouting and calling, in the hope that somebody will come and open the door to him.

He harked back to Lars Gunnarson several times, relating in part what had occurred at the catechetical meeting, and he even dragged in all the gossip that had been circulated about Lars in the Ashdales since Eric's death.

The son granted that Lars might not be altogether blameless; if he had now begun drinking it was a bad sign.

"I'm curious to see how he'll get through this day," said Ol' Bengtsa.

Just then the son felt a nibble, and did not have to answer. There was nothing in this whole story that had any bearing upon the common interests of himself and his father, yet he could not but feel there was some hidden intent back of the old man's words.

"I hope he'll drive over to the parsonage this evening," pursued Ol' Bengtsa. "There is forgiveness of sins for him who will seek it."

A long silence ensued. The son was too busy baiting his hook to think of replying. Besides, this was not anything which called for a response. Presently there came from the old man such a heavy sigh that he had to look over toward him.

"Father! Can't you see you've got a nibble? I believe you are letting the perch jerk the rod away from you."

The old man quickly pulled up his line and released the fish from the hook. His fingers seemed to be all thumbs and the perch slipped from his hands back into the water.

"It isn't meant that I shall catch any fish to-day, however much I may want to."

Yes, there was certainly something he wished the son to say—to Confess—but

surely he did not expect him to liken himself to one who was suspected of having caused the death of his father-in-law?

Ol' Bengtsa did not bait his hook again. He stood upon a stone, with his hands folded—his half-dead eyes fixed on the smooth water.

"Yes—there is pardon for all," he said musingly, "for all who let their old parents lie waiting and freezing in icy chilliness— pardon even to this day. But afterward it will be too late!"

Surely this could never have been said for the son's benefit. The father was no doubt thinking aloud, as is the habit of old people.

Anyhow, the son thought he would try to make the old man talk about something else. So he said:

"How is the man who went crazy last year getting on?"

"Oh, you mean Jan of Ruffluck! Well, he has been in his right mind since last fall. He'll not be at the party, either. He's only a poor crofter like myself; so him you'll not miss, of course."

This was true enough. However, the son was so glad of an excuse to speak of some one other than Lars Gunnarson, that he asked with genuine concern what was wrong with Jan of Ruffluck.

"Oh, he's just sick from pining for a daughter who went away about two years ago, and who never writes to him."

"The girl who went wrong?"

"So you knew about it, eh? But it isn't because of that he's grieving himself to death. It is the awful hardness and lack of love that he can't bear up under."

This forced colloquy was becoming intolerable. It made the son feel all the more uncomfortable.

"I'm going over to the stone farthest out," he said. "I see a lot of fish splashing round

it."

By that move he was out of earshot of his father, and there was no further conversation between them for the remainder of the forenoon. But go where he would, he felt that the dim, lustreless eyes of the old man were following him. And this time he was actually glad when the guests arrived.

The dinner was served out of doors. When Ol' Bengtsa had taken his place at the board he tried to cast off all worry and anxiety. When acting as host at a party, so much of the Ol' Bengtsa of bygone days came to the fore it was easy to guess what manner of man he had once been.

No one from Falla was present. But it was plain that Lars Gunnarson was in every one's thoughts; which was not surprising since this was the day he had been warned to look out for. Now of course Ol' Bengtsa's son had to listen to further talk about the catechetical meeting at Falla, and he heard more about the pastor's extraordinary dissertation on the duties of children toward their parents than he cared to hear. However, he said nothing; but Ol' Bengtsa must have noticed that he was beginning to be bored, for he turned to him with the remark:

"What do you say to all this, Nils? I suppose you're sitting there thinking to yourself it's very strange Our Lord hasn't written a commandment for parents on how they shall treat their children?"

This was wholly unexpected. The son could feel the blood mounting to his face. It was as if he had done something dreadful, and been caught at it.

"But my dear father!" he protested, "I've never said or thought—"

"True," the old man struck in, turning now to his guests. "I know you will hardly believe what I tell you, but it's a fact that this son of mine has never spoken an unkind word to me; neither has his wife."

These remarks were not addressed to any one in particular, nor did any one feel disposed to respond to them.

"They have been put to some pretty hard tests," Ol' Bengtsa went on. "It was a large property they were deprived of. They could have been landed proprietors by this time if I had only done the right thing. Yet they have never uttered a word of complaint and every summer they pay me a visit, just to show they are not angry with me."

The old man's face looked so dead now, and his voice sounded so hollow! The son could not tell whether he was trying to come out with something or whether he talked merely for talk's sake.

"Now it's altogether different with Lisa," said Ol' Bengtsa, pointing at the daughter-in-law with whom he lived. "She scolds me every day for not holding on to my property."

The daughter-in-law, not in the least perturbed, retorted with a good-natured laugh: "And you scold me because I can't find time to patch all the holes in the boys' clothes."

"That's true," the old man admitted. "You see, we're not shy; we say right out what we think and tell each other everything. What I've got is hers, and what she's got is mine; so I'm beginning to think it is she who is my real child."

Again the son felt embarrassed, and troubled as well.

There was something the old man wanted to force from him—something of a personal nature; but surely he could not expect it to be forthcoming here, before all this company?

It was a great relief to the son of Ol' Bengtsa when on looking up he saw Lars Gunnarson and his wife standing at the gate. Not he alone, but every one was glad to see them. Now it was as if all their gloomy misgivings had suddenly been dispelled.

Lars and his wife made profuse apologies for being so late. Lars had been suffering from a bad headache and had feared he would not be able to come at all; but it had abated somewhat so he decided to come to the party, thinking he would forget about

his aches and pains if he got out among people.

He looked a bit hollow-eyed, but he was as jolly and sociable as he had been the year before. He had barely got down the first mouthful of food when he and the son of Ol' Bengtsa fell to talking of the lumber business, of big profits and interest on loans.

The poor rustics round about them, aghast at the mere mention of these large figures, were afraid to open their mouths. Ol' Bengtsa was the only one who wanted to have his say in the matter.

"Since you're talking of money," he said, "I wonder, Nils, if you remember that note for 17,000 rix-dollars I got from the old ironmaster at Doveness? It was mislaid, if you recollect, and couldn't be found at the time when I was in such hard straits. Just the same, I wrote to the ironmaster requesting immediate payment; but received the reply that he was dying. Later on, after his death, the administrators of the estate declared they could find no record of my claim. I was informed that it wasn't possible for them to pay me unless I produced the note. We searched high and low for it, both I and my sons, but we couldn't find it."

"You don't mean to tell me that you've come across it at last!" the son exclaimed.

"It was the strangest thing imaginable!" the old man went on. "Jan of Ruffluck came over here one morning and told me he knew for a certainty that the note was in the secret drawer of my cedar chest. He had seen me take it out in a dream, he said."

"But you must have looked there?"

"Yes, I did search through the secret drawer on the left-hand side. But Jan said it was in the drawer on the right, and then, when I looked more carefully, I found a secret drawer that I'd never known about; and in that lay the note."

"You probably put it there some time when you were in your cups."

"Very likely I did."

The son laid down his knife and fork for a moment, then took them up again. Something in the old man's tone made him a bit wary. "Maybe it's just a hoax," he thought to himself. Aloud he said, "it was outlawed, of course?"

"Oh, yes," replied the old man, "it would doubtless have been so regarded by any other debtor. But I rowed across to Doveness one day and took the note to the new ironmaster, who admitted at once that it was good. 'It's as clear as day that I must pay my father's debt, Ol' Bengtsa,' he said. 'But you'll have to give me a few weeks' grace. It is a large sum to pay out all at once.'"

"That was spoken like a man of honour!" said the son, bringing his hand down heavily on the table. A sense of gladness stole in upon him in spite of his suspicions. To think that it was something so splendid the old man had been holding back from him the whole day!

"I told the ironmaster that he needn't pay me just then; that if he would only give me a new note the money could remain in his safekeeping."

"That was well," said the son approvingly. There was a strong, glad ring in his voice, that betrayed an eagerness he would rather not have shown, for he knew of old that one could never be quite sure of Ol' Bengtsa—in the very next breath he might say it was just a yarn.

"You don't believe me," observed the old man. "Would you like to see the note? Run in and get it, Lisa!"

Almost immediately the son had the note before his eyes. First he glanced at the signature, and recognized the firm, legible hand of the ironmaster. Then he looked at the figures, and found them correct. He nodded to his wife, who sat opposite him, that it was all right, at the same time passing the note to her, knowing how interested she would be to see it.

The wife examined the note carefully. "What does this mean?" she asked—"'Payable to Lisa Persdotter of Lusterby'—is Lisa to have the money?"

"Yes," the old man answered. "She gets this money because she has been a good daughter to me."

"But this is unfair—"

"No, it is not unfair," drawled the old man in a tired voice. "I have squared myself and owe nobody anything. I might have had one other creditor," he added turning to this son, "but after looking into matters, I find that I haven't."

"You mean me, I suppose," said the son. "But you don't seem to think I—" All that the son had wanted to say to the father was left unsaid, as he was interrupted by a piercing shriek from the opposite side of the table.

Lars Gunnarson had just seized a bottle of brandy and put it to his mouth. His wife, screaming from terror, was trying to take it from him. He held her back until he had emptied half the contents, whereupon he set the bottle down and turned to his wife, his face flushed, his eyes staring wildly, his hands clenched.

"Didn't you hear it was Jan who found the note?" he said in a hoarse voice. "All his dreams come true! Can't you comprehend that the man has the gift of second sight? You'll see that something dreadful will happen to me this day, as he has predicted."

"Why he has only cautioned you to be on your guard," said the wife.

"You begged and teased me to come here so that I should forget what day it was, and now I get this reminder!"

Again Lars raised the brandy bottle to his lips. This time, however, the wife cast herself upon him with prayers and tears. Replacing the bottle on the table, he said with a laugh: "Keep it! Keep it for all of me!" With that he rose and kicked the chair out of his way. "Good-bye to you, Ol' Bengtsa," he said to the host. "I hope you will pardon my leaving, but to-day I must go to a place where I can drink in peace."

He rushed toward the gate, his wife following. When he was passing out into the road, he pushed her back. "Why can't you let me be!" he cried fiercely. "I've had my

warning, and I go to meet my doom!"

SUMMERNIGHT

All day, while the party was going on at the seine-maker's, Jan of Ruffluck kept to his hut. But at evening he went out and sat down up on the flat stone in front of the house, as was his wont. He was not ill exactly, but he felt weak and tired. The hut had become so overheated during the long, hot sunny day that he thought it would be nice to get a breath of fresh air. He found, however, that it was not much cooler outside, but he sat still all the same, mostly because there was so much out here that was beautiful to the eye.

It had been an excessively hot and dry month of June and forest fires, which always rage every rainless summer, had already got going. This he could tell by the pretty bluish-white smoke banks that rose above the hills at the other side of the lake. Presently, away off to southward, a shimmery white curly cloud head appeared, while in the west, over against Great Peak, huge smoke-blended clouds rolled up and up. It seemed to him as if the whole world were afire.

No flames could be seen from where he sat, but there was no mistaking that fire had broken out and could hold sway indefinitely. He only hoped it would confine itself to the forest trees, and not sweep down upon huts and farmsteads.

He could scarcely breathe. It was as if such quantities of air had been consumed that there was very little of it left. At short intervals he sensed an odour, as of something burning, that stuck in his nostrils. That odour did not come from any cook stove in the Ashdales! It was a salutation from the great stake of pine needles, and moss, and brushwood that sizzled and burned many miles away.

A little while ago the sun had gone down, red as fire, leaving in its wake enough colour to tint the whole sky, which was now rose hued not only across that corner of it where the sun had just been seen, but over its entire expanse. At the same time the waters of Dove Lake had become as dark as mirror glass in the shadow of the

towering hills. In this black-looking water ran streaks of red blood and molten gold.

It was the sort of night that makes one feel that the earth is not worthy a glance; that only the heavens and the waters that mirror them are worth seeing.

As Jan sat gazing out at the beauties of the light summer night he suddenly began to wonder. Could it be that he saw aright? But it actually looked as if the firmament were sinking. Anyway, to his vision it was much nearer to the earth than usual.

Could it be possible that something had gone wrong? Surely his eyes were not deceiving him! The great pink dome of sky was certainly moving down toward the earth, and all the while it was becoming hotter and more oppressive. He already felt the terrible heat that seemed to come from the red-hot dome that was sinking toward him.

To be sure Jan had heard a good deal of talk about the coming destruction of the world and had often pictured it as being effected by means of thunder-storms and earthquakes that would hurl the mountains into the seas and drive the waters of the lakes and rivers over plains and valleys, so that all life would become extinct. But he never imagined the end should come in this way: by the earth's burial under the vault of heaven with its inhabitants all dying from heat and suffocation! This, it seemed to him, was the worst of all.

He put down his pipe, though it was only half-smoked, but remained quietly seated in the one spot. For what else could he do? This was not something which he could ward off—something he could run away from. One could not take up arms and defend one's self against it, nor find safety by creeping into cellars or caves. Even if one had the power to empty all the oceans and lakes, their waters would not suffice to quench the fires of the firmament. If one could uproot the mountains and prop them, beam-like, against the sky, they could not hold up this heavy dome if it was meant that it should sink.

Singularly enough no one but himself seemed to be aware of what was happening.

Ah, look! What was that that went shooting up above the crest of the hill over yonder? A lot of black specks suddenly appeared in among the pale smoke clouds. These specks whirled round each other with such rapidity that to Jan's eyes they looked like a succession of streaks moving in much the same way as when bees swarm.

They were birds of course. The strange part of it was that they had risen in the night and soared into the clouds.

They probably knew more than the human kind, thought Jan, for they had sensed that something was about to happen.

Instead of the air becoming cooler, as on other nights, it grew warmer and warmer. Anything else was hardly to be expected, with the fiery dome coming nearer and nearer. Jan thought it had already sunk to the brow of Great Peak.

But if the end of the world was so close at hand and there was no hope of his getting any word from Glory Goldie, much less of his seeing her, before all was over, then he would pray for but a single grace—that it might be made clear to him what he had done to offend her, so that he could repent of it before the end of everything pertaining to the earth life. What had he done that she could not forgive nor forget? Why had the crown and sceptre been taken away from him?

As he put these queries to himself his glance fell upon a bit of gilt paper that lay glittering on the ground in front of him. But his mind was not on such things now. This must have been one of the paper stars he had borrowed of Mad Ingeborg. But he had not given a thought to this empty show since last autumn.

It kept getting hotter and hotter, and it was becoming more and more difficult to breathe. "The end is nearing," thought Jan. "Maybe it's just as well it wasn't too long coming."

A great sense of lassitude came over him. Unable to sit up any longer, he slipped down off the stone and stretched himself out on the ground. He felt it was hardly fair

to Katrina not to let her know what was taking place. But Katrina had gone to the seine-maker's party and was not back yet. If he only had the strength to drag himself thither! He would have liked to say a word of farewell to Ol' Bengtsa, too. He was very glad when he presently saw Katrina coming down the lane, accompanied by the seine-maker. He wanted to call out to them to hurry, but not a sound could he get past his lips. Shortly afterward the two of them stood bending over him.

Katrina immediately ran for water and made him drink some; and then he got back just enough strength to tell them that the Last judgment was at hand.

"How you talk!" said Katrina. "The Last Judgment indeed! Why, you've got fever, man, and you're out of your head."

Then Jan turned to the seine-maker. "Can't you see either that the firmament is sinking and sinking?"

The latter did not give him any reply, but turned instead to Katrina, saying:

"This is pretty serious. I think we'll have to try the remedy we talked of on the way. I may as well go down to Falla at once."

"But Lars will never consent to it."

"Why you know that Lars has gone down to the tavern. I'm sure the old mistress of Falla will have the courage—"

Jan cut him short. He could not bear to hear them speak of commonplace matters when such momentous things were in the air.

"Stop talking," he said. "Don't you hear the last trump? Don't you hear the rumbling up in the mountains?"

They paused a moment and listened, just to please Jan. And then they, too, heard a strange noise.

"There's a wagon rattling along in the woods," said Katrina. "What on earth can that mean?"

As the rumbling noise grew more and more distinct, their astonishment increased.

"And it's Sunday, too!" observed Katrina. "Now if this were a weekday you could understand it; but who can it be that's out driving in the woods on a Sunday night?"

She listened again. Then she heard the scraping of wheels against stones and the clatter of hoofs along the steep forest road.

"Do you hear?" asked Jan. "Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear," said Katrina. "But no matter who comes I've got to get the bed ready for you at once. It's that I have to think of."

"And I'm going down to Falla," said the seine-maker. "That's more important than anything else. Good-bye for the present."

The old man hurried away while Katrina went in to prepare the bed; she was hardly inside the door when the rattling noise, which she and the seine-maker believed was caused by a common wagon, sounded as if it were almost upon them. To Jan it was the rumble of heavy war chariots, at whose approach the whole earth trembled. He called in a loud voice to Katrina, who came out immediately.

"Dear heart, don't be so scared!" she said reassuringly. "I can see the horse now. It's the old bay from Falla. Sit up and you'll see it, too." Slipping her hand under Jan's neck she raised him to a sitting posture. Through the elder bushes at the edge of the road a horse could be seen running wildly in the direction of Ruffluck. "Don't you see it's only Lars Gunnarson driving home? He must have drunk himself full at the tavern, for he doesn't seem to know which way he's going."

When Katrina said that a horse and wagon dashed by their gate. Both she and Jan noticed that the wagon was empty and the horse driverless.

All at once she let out a shriek: "Lord deliver us! Did you see him, Jan? He's being dragged alongside the wagon!" Without waiting for a reply she rushed across the yard into the road, where the horse had just bolted past.

Jan let her go without a word. He was glad to be alone again. He had not yet found an answer to his query as to why the Empress was angry at him.

The bit of gilt paper now lay directly under his eyes. It glistened so that he had to look at it again and again. Meanwhile his thoughts went back to Mad Ingeborg—to the time when he had come upon her at the Borg landing. It struck him instantly that here was the answer he had been seeking. Now he knew what it was the little girl had been displeased about all this while. He had been unkind to Mad Ingeborg; he should never have refused to let her go along to Portugallia.

How could he ever have imagined anything so mean of the great Empress as that she would not want to have Mad Ingeborg with her! It was that kind that she liked best to help. No wonder she was angry! He ought to have known that the poor and unfortunate were always welcome in her kingdom.

There was very little that could be done in this matter if no to-morrow dawned, mused Jan. But what if there should be one? Ah, then he would go and talk with Mad Ingeborg first thing.

He closed his eyes and folded his hands. Anyway, it was a blissful relief to him that this anxiety had been stilled. Now it would not be nearly so hard to die. He had no idea as to how much time had elapsed before he again heard Katrina's voice close to him.

"Jan, dear, how do you feel now? You're not going to die and leave me, are you?"

Katrina sounded so doleful that he had to look up at her. Then he saw in her hand the imperial stick and the green leather cap.

"I asked the folks down at Falla to let me take these to you," she explained. "I told them that come what might it was better for you to have them again than to have you lose all interest in life."

"The dear little girl, the great Empress, isn't she wonderful!" Jan said to himself. No sooner had he come to a realization of his sin and promised to atone for it, than she

again granted him her grace and her favour.

He had such a marvellous feeling of lightness, as if a great weight had been lifted from him. The firmament had raised itself and let in air, at the same time drawing away the excessive heat. He was able to sit up now and fumble for the imperial regalia.

"Now you can have them for good and all," said Katrina. "There'll be no one to come and take them away from you, for Lars Gunnarson is dead."

THE EMPEROR'S CONSORT

Katrina of Ruffluck Croft came into the kitchen at Lövdala Manor with some spun wool. Lady Liljecrona herself received the yarn, weighed it, paid for it, and commended the old woman for her excellent work.

"It's fortunate for you, Katrina, that you are such a good worker," said Lady Liljecrona. "I dare say you have to earn the living for both yourself and the husband nowadays."

Katrina drew herself up a bit and two pink spots came into her face, just over the sharp cheekbones.

"Jan does his best," she retorted, "but he has never had the strength of a common labourer."

"At any rate, he doesn't seem to be working now," said Lady Liljecrona. "I have heard that he only runs about from place to place, showing his stars and singing."

Lady Liljecrona was a serious-minded and dutiful woman who liked industrious and capable folk like Katrina of Ruffluck. She had sympathy for her and wanted to show it. But Katrina continued to stand up for her husband.

"He is old and has had much sorrow these last years. He has need of a little freedom, after a lifetime of hard toil."

"It's well you can take your misfortune so calmly," observed Lady Liljecrona

somewhat sharply. "But I really think that you, with your good sense, should try to take out of Jan the ridiculous nonsense that has got into his head. You see, if this is allowed to go on it will end in his being shut up in a madhouse."

Now Katrina squared her shoulders and looked highly indignant.

"Jan is not crazy," she said. "But Our Lord has placed a shade before his eyes so he'll not have to see what he couldn't bear seeing. And for that one can only feel thankful."

Lady Liljecrona did not wish to appear contentious. She thought it only right and proper for a wife to stand by her husband.

"Then, Katrina, everything is all right as it is," she said pleasantly. "And don't forget that here you will find work enough to keep you going the year around."

And then Lady Liljecrona saw the stern, set old face in front of her soften and relax: all that had been bound in and held back gave way—grief and solicitude and love came breaking through, and the eyes overflowed.

"My only happiness is to work for him," said the old woman. "He has become so wonderful with the years that he's something more than just human. But for that I suppose they'll come and take him away from me."

BOOK FOUR

THE WELCOME GREETING

She had come! The little girl had come! It is hard to find words to describe so great an event.

She did not arrive till late in the autumn, when the passenger boats that ply Lake Löven had discontinued their trips for the season and navigation was kept up by only two small freight steamers. But on either of these she had not cared to travel—or perhaps she had not even known about them. She had come by wagon from the railway station to the Ashdales.

So after all Jan of Ruffluck did not have the pleasure of welcoming his daughter at the Borg pier, where for fifteen years he had awaited her coming. Yes, it was all of fifteen years that she had been away. For seventeen years she had been the light and life of his home, and for almost as long a time had he missed her.

It happened that Jan did not even have the good fortune to be at home to welcome Glory Goldie when she came. He had just stepped over to Falla to chat a while with the old mistress, who had now moved out of the big farmhouse and was living in an attic room in one of the cottages on the estate. She was one of many lonely old people on whom the Emperor of Portugallia peeped in occasionally, to speak a word of cheer so as to keep them in good spirits.

It was only Katrina who stood at the door and received the little girl on her homecoming. She had been sitting at the spinning wheel all day and had just stopped to rest for a moment, when she heard the rattle of a team down the road. It so seldom happened that any one drove through the Ashdales that she stepped to the door to listen. Then she discovered that it was not a common cart that was coming, but a spring wagon. All at once her hands began to tremble. They had a way of doing that now whenever she became frightened or perturbed. Otherwise, she was well and strong despite her two and seventy years. She was only fearful lest this trembling of the hands should increase so that she would no longer be able to earn the bread for herself and Jan, as she had done thus far.

By this time Katrina had practically abandoned all hope of ever seeing the daughter again, and that day she had not even been in her thought. But instantly she heard the rumble of wagon wheels she knew for a certainty who was coming. She went over to the chest of drawers to take out a fresh apron, but her hands shook so hard that she could not insert the key into the keyhole. Now it was impossible for her to better her attire, therefore she had to go meet her daughter just as she was.

The little girl did not come in any golden chariot, she was not even seated in the

wagon, but came afoot. The road to the Ashdales was as rocky then as at the time when Eric of Falla and his wife had driven her to the parsonage, to have her christened, and now she and the driver tramped on either side of the wagon steadying a couple of large trunks that stood on end behind the seat, to prevent them being jolted into the ditch. She arrived with no more pomp and state than this, and more was perhaps not called for either.

Katrina had just got the outer door open when the wagon stopped in front of the gate. She should have gone and opened the gate, of course, but she did not do so. She felt all at once such a sinking at the heart that she was unable to take a step.

She knew it was Glory Goldie who had come, although the person who now pushed the gate open looked like a grand lady. On her head was a large hat trimmed with plumes and flowers and she wore a smart coat and skirt of fine cloth; but all the same it was the little girl of Ruffluck Croft!

Glory Goldie, hurrying into the yard in advance of the team, rushed up to her mother with outstretched hand. But Katrina shut her eyes and stood still. So many bitter thoughts arose in her at that moment! She felt that she could never forgive the daughter for being alive and coming back so sound of wind and limb, after letting her parents wait in vain for her all these years. She almost wished the daughter had never bothered to come home.

Katrina must have looked as if ready to drop, for Glory Goldie quickly threw her arms around her and almost carried her into the house.

"Mother dear, you mustn't be so frightened! Don't you know me?"

Katrina opened her eyes and regarded the daughter scrutinizingly. She was a sensible person, was Katrina, and of course she did not expect that one whom she had not seen in fifteen years should look exactly as she had looked when leaving home. Nevertheless, she was horrified at what she beheld.

The person standing before her appeared much older than her years; for she was

only two and thirty. But it was not because Glory Goldie had turned gray at the temples and her forehead was covered with a mass of wrinkles that Katrina was shocked, but because she had grown ugly. She had acquired an unnatural leaden hue and there was something heavy and gross about her mouth. The whites of her eyes had become gray and bloodshot, and the skin under her eyes hung in sacks.

Katrina had sunk down on a chair. She sat with her hands tightly clasped round her knees to keep them from shaking. She was thinking of the radiant young girl of seventeen in the red dress; for thus had she lived in Katrina's memory up to the present moment. She wondered whether she could ever be happy over Glory Goldie's return.

"You should have written," she said. "You should at least have sent us a greeting, so that we could have known you were still in the land of the living."

"Yes, I know," said the daughter. Her voice, at least, had not failed her; it sounded as confident and cheery as of old. "I went wrong in the beginning—but perhaps you've heard about it?"

"Yes; that much we know," sighed Katrina.

"That was why I stopped writing," said Glory Goldie, with a little laugh. There was something strong and sturdy about the girl then, as formerly. She was not one of those who torture themselves with remorse and self-condemnation. "Don't think any more of that, mother," she added, as Katrina did not speak. "I've been doing real well lately. For a time I kept a restaurant and now, I'll have you know, I'm head stewardess on a steamer that runs between Malmö and Lübeck, and this fall I have fitted up a home for myself at Malmö. Sometimes I felt that I ought to write to you, but finding it rather hard to start in again, I decided to put it off until I was prepared to take you and father to live with me. Then, after I'd got everything fixed fine for you, I thought it would be ever so much nicer to come for you myself than to write."

"And you haven't heard anything about us?" asked Katrina. All that Glory Goldie

had told her mother should have gladdened her, but instead it only made her feel the more depressed.

"No," replied the daughter, then added, as if in self-justification: "I knew, of course, that you'd find help if things got too bad." At the same time she noticed how Katrina's hands shook for all they were being held tightly clasped. She understood then that the old folks were worse off than she had supposed, and tried to explain her conduct. "I didn't care to send home small sums, as others do, but wanted to save until I had enough money to provide a good home for you."

"We haven't needed money," said Katrina. "It would have been enough for us if you had only written."

Glory Goldie tried to rouse her mother from her slough of despond, as she had often done in the old days. So she said: "Mother, you don't want to spoil this moment for me, do you? Why, I'm back with you again! Come, now, and we'll take in my boxes and unpack them. I've brought provisions along. We'll have a fine dinner all ready by the time father comes home." She went out to help the driver take the luggage down from the wagon, but Katrina did not follow her.

Glory Goldie had not asked how her father was getting on. She supposed, of course, that he was still working at Falla. Katrina knew she would have to tell the daughter of the father's condition, but kept putting it off. Anyway, the little girl had brought a freshening breeze into the hut and the mother felt loath to put a sudden end to her delight at being home again.

While Glory Goldie was helping unload the wagon, half a dozen children came to the gate and looked in; they did not speak; they only pointed at her and laughed—then ran away. But in a moment or two they came back. This time they had with them a little faded and shrivelled old man, who strutted along, his head thrown back and his feet striking the ground with the measured tread of a soldier on parade.

"What a curious looking figure!" Glory Goldie remarked to the driver as the old man and the youngsters crowded in through the gate. She had not the faintest suspicion as to who the man was, but she could not help noticing a person who was so fantastically arrayed. On his head was a green leather cap, topped with a bushy feather; round his neck he wore a chain of gilt paper stars and crosses that hung far down on his chest. It looked as though he had on a gold necklace.

The youngsters, unable to hold in any longer, shouted "Empress, Empress!" at the top of their voices. The old man strode on as if the laughing and shrieking children were his guard of honour.

When they were almost at the door of the hut Glory Goldie gave a wild shriek, and fled into the house.

"Who is that man?" she asked her mother in a frightened voice. "Is it father? Has he gone mad?"

"Yes," said Katrina, the tears coming into her eyes.

"Is it because of me?"

"Our Lord let it happen out of compassion. He saw that his burden was too heavy for him."

There was no time to explain further, for now Jan stood in the doorway, and behind him was the gang of youngsters, who wanted to see how this meeting, which they had so often heard him picture, would be in reality.

The Emperor of Portugallia did not go straight up to his daughter but stopped just inside the door and delivered his speech of welcome.

"Welcome, welcome, O queen of the Sun! O rich and beautiful Glory Goldie!"

The words were delivered with that stilted loftiness which dignitaries are wont to assume on great occasions. All the same, there were tears of joy in Jan's eyes and he had hard work to keep his voice steady.

After the well-learned greeting had been recited the Emperor rapped three times on the floor with his imperial stick for silence and attention, whereupon he began to sing in a thin, squeaky voice.

Glory Goldie had drawn close to Katrina. It was as if she wished to hide herself, to crawl out of sight behind her mother. Up to this she had kept silence, but when Jan started to sing she cried out in terror and tried to stop him. Then Katrina gripped her tightly by the arm.

"Leave him alone!" she said. "He has been comforted by the hope of singing this song to you ever since you first became lost to us."

Then Glory Goldie held her peace and let Jan continue:

"The Empress's father, for his part, Feels so happy in his heart. Austria, Portugal, Metz, Japan, Read the newspapers, if you can. Boom, boom, boom, and roll. Boom, boom."

But Glory Goldie could stand no more. Rushing forward she quickly hustled the youngsters out of the house, and banged the door on them. Then turning round upon her father she stamped her foot at him. Now she was angry in earnest.

"For heaven's sake, shut up!" she cried. "Do you want to make a laughing-stock of me by calling me an empress?"

Jan looked a little hurt, but he was over it in a twinkling. She was the Great Empress, to be sure. All that she did was right; all that she said was to him as honey and balsam. In the supreme happiness of the moment he had quite forgotten to look for the crown of gold and the field marshals in golden armour. If she wished to appear poor and humble when she came, that was her own affair. It was joy enough for him that she had come back.

THE FLIGHT

One morning, just a week from the day of Glory Goldie's homecoming, she and her

mother stood at the Borg pier, ready to depart for good and all. Old Katrina was wearing a bonnet for the first time in her life, and a fine cloth coat. She was going to Malmö with her daughter to become a fine city dame. Never more would she have to toil for her bread. She was to sit on a sofa the whole day, with her hands folded, and be free from worry and care for the remainder of her life.

But despite all the promised ease and comfort, Katrina had never felt so wretchedly unhappy as then, when standing there on the pier. Glory Goldie, seeing that her mother looked troubled, asked her if she was afraid of the water, and tried to assure her there was no danger, although it was so windy that one could hardly keep one's footing on the pier. Glory Goldie was accustomed to seafaring and knew what she was talking about.

"These are no waves," she said to her mother. "I see of course that there are a few little whitecaps on the water, but I wouldn't be afraid to row across the lake in our old punt."

Glory Goldie, who did not seem to mind the gale, remained on the pier. But Katrina, to keep from being blown to pieces, went into the freight shed and crept into a dark corner behind a couple of packing cases. There she intended to remain until the boat arrived, as she had no desire to meet any of the parish folk before leaving. At the same time she knew in her heart that what she was doing was not right, since she was ashamed to be seen by people. She had one consolation at least; she was not going away with Glory Goldie because of any desire for ease and comfort, but only because her hands were failing her. What else could she do when her fingers were becoming so useless that she could not spin any more?

Then who should come into the shed but Sexton Blackie!

Katrina prayed God he would not see her and come up and ask her where she was going. For how would she ever be able to tell him she was leaving husband and home and everything!

She had tried to bring about some arrangement whereby Jan and she could stay on at the croft. If the daughter had only been willing to send them a little money—say about ten rix-dollars a month— they could have managed fairly well. But Glory would not hear of this; she had declared that not a penny would she give them unless Katrina went along with her.

Katrina knew of course it was not from meanness that Glory Goldie had said no to this. The girl had been to the trouble of fitting up a home for her parents and had looked forward to a time when she could prove to them how much she thought of them, and how hard she had worked for them, and now she wanted to have with her one parent, at least, to compensate her for all her bother. Jan had been uppermost in her thought when she was preparing the home, for she had been especially fond of her father in the old days. Now, however, she felt it would be impossible to have him with her.

Herein lay the whole difficulty: Glory Goldie had taken a violent dislike to her father. She could not abide him now. Never had he been allowed to talk with her of Portugallia or of her riches and power; why, she could hardly bear the sight of him decked out in his royal trumpery. All the same Jan was as pleased with her as ever he had been, and always wanted to be near her, though she only ran away from him. Katrina was sure that it was to escape seeing her crazy father that the girl had not remained at home longer than a week.

Presently Glory Goldie, too, came into the freight shed. She was not afraid of Sexton Blackie. Not she! She went right up to him and began to chat. She told him in the very first breath that she was returning to her own home and was taking her mother back with her.

Then Sexton Blackie naturally wanted to know how the father felt about this, and Glory Goldie informed him as calmly as though she were speaking of a stranger that she had arranged for her father to board with Lisa, the daughter-in-law of Ol'

Bengtsa. Lisa had built her a fine new house after the old man's death, and she had a spare room that Jan could occupy.

Sexton Blackie had a countenance that revealed no more of his thought than he wanted to reveal. And now, as he listened to Glory Goldie, his face was quite impassive. Just the same Katrina knew what he, who was like a father to the whole parish, was thinking. "Why should an old man who has a wife and daughter living be obliged to live with strangers? Lisa is a good woman, but she can never have the patience with Jan that his own folks had." That was what he thought. And he was right about it, too!

Katrina suddenly looked down at her hands. After all, perhaps she was deceiving herself in laying the blame on them. The real reason for her desertion of Jan was this: the daughter had the stronger will and she seemed unable to oppose her.

All this time Glory Goldie stood talking to the sexton. Now she was telling him of their being compelled to steal away from home so that Jan should not know of their leaving.

This had been the most dreadful part of it to Katrina. Glory Goldie had sent Jan on an errand to the store away up in Bro parish and as soon as he was gone they had packed up their belongings and left. Katrina had felt like a criminal in sneaking away from the house in that way, but Glory Goldie had insisted it was the only thing to do. For had Jan known of where they were going he would have cast himself in front of the wagon, to be trampled and run over. And now, on his return, Lisa would be at the house to receive him and of course she would try her best to console him; but still it hurt to think of how hard he would take it when he learned that his daughter had left him.

Sexton Blackie had listened quietly to Glory Goldie, without putting in a word. Katrina had begun to wonder whether he was pleased with what he had learned, when he suddenly took the girl's hand in his and said with great gravity:

"Inasmuch as I am your old teacher, Glory Goldie, I shall speak plainly to you. You want to run away from a duty, but that does not say that you will succeed. I have seen others try to do the same thing, but it has invariably resulted in their undoing."

When Katrina heard this she rose and drew a breath of relief. Those were the very words she herself had been wanting to say to her daughter.

Glory Goldie answered in all meekness that she did not know what else she could have done. She certainly could not take an insane man along to a strange city, nor could she remain in Svartsjö, and Jan had himself to thank for that. When she went past a house the youngsters came running out shouting "Empress, Empress" at her, and last Sunday at church the people in their eager curiosity to see her had crowded round her and all but knocked her down.

"I understand that such things are very trying," said the sexton. "But between you and your father there has been an uncommonly close bond of sympathy, and you musn't think it can be so easily severed."

Then the sexton and Glory Goldie went outside. Katrina followed immediately. She had altered her mind now and wanted to talk to the sexton, but stopped a moment to glance up toward the hill. She had the feeling that Jan would soon be there.

"Are you afraid father will come?" asked Glory Goldie, leaving the sexton and going over to her mother.

"Afraid!" cried Katrina. "I only hope to God he gets here before I'm gone!" Then, summoning all her courage, she went on: "I feel that I have done something wicked for which I shall suffer as long as I live."

"You think that only because you've had to live in gloom and misery so many years," said Glory Goldie. "You'll feel differently once we're away from here. Anyhow, it isn't likely that father will come when he doesn't even know we've left the house."

"Don't be too sure of that!" returned Katrina. "Jan has a way of knowing all that is

necessary for him to know. It has been like that with him since the day you left us, and this power of sensing things has increased with the years. When the poor man lost his reason Our Lord gave him a new light to be guided by."

Then Katrina gave Glory Goldie a brief account of the fate of Lars Gunnarson and of other happenings of more recent date, to prove to her that Jan was clairvoyant, as folks call it. Glory Goldie listened with marked attention. Before Katrina had tried to tell her of Jan's kindness toward many poor old people, but to that she had not cared to listen. This, on the contrary, seemed to impress the girl so much that Katrina began to hope the daughter's opinion of Jan would change and that she, too, would turn back.

But Katrina was not allowed to cling to this hope long! In a moment Glory Goldie cried out in a jubilant voice:

"Here's the boat, mother! So after all it has turned out well for us, and now we'll soon be off."

When Katrina saw the boat at the pier her old eyes filled up. She had intended to ask Sexton Blackie to say a good word for Jan and herself to Glory Goldie, but now there was no time. She saw no way of escaping the journey.

The boat was evidently late, for she seemed to be in a great hurry to get away again. There was not even time to put out the gangplank. A couple of hapless passengers who had to come ashore here were almost thrown onto the pier by the sailors. Glory Goldie seized her mother by the arm and dragged her over to the boat, where a man lifted her on board. The old woman wept and wanted to turn back, but no pity was shown her.

The instant Katrina was on deck Glory Goldie put her arm around her, to steady her.

"Come, let's go over to the other side of the boat," she said.

But it was too late. Old Katrina had just caught sight of a man running down the hill toward the pier. And she knew who it was, too!

"It's Jan!" she cried. "Oh, what will he do now!"

Jan did not stop until he reached the very edge of the pier; but there he stood—a frail and pathetic figure. He saw Glory Goldie on the outgoing boat and greater anguish and despair than were depicted on his face could hardly be imagined. But the sight of him was all Katrina needed to give her the strength to defy her daughter.

"You can go if you want to," she said. "But I shall get off at the next landing and go home again."

"Do as you like, mother," sighed Glory Goldie wearily, perceiving that here was something which she could not combat. And perhaps she, too, may have felt that their treatment of the father was outrageous.

No time was granted them for amends. Jan did not want to lose his whole life's happiness a second time, so with a bound he leaped from the pier into the lake.

Perhaps he intended to swim out to the boat. Or maybe he just felt that he could not endure living any longer.

Loud shrieks went up from the pier. Instantly a boat was sent out, and the little freight steamer lay by and put out her skiff.

But Jan sank at once and never rose to the surface. The imperial stick and the green leather cap lay floating on the waves, but the Emperor himself had disappeared so quietly, so beyond all tracing, that if these souvenirs of him had not remained on top of the water, one would hardly have believed him gone.

HELD!

It seemed extraordinary to many that Glory Goldie of Ruffluck should have to stand at the Borg pier day after day, watching for one who never came.

Glory Goldie did not stand there waiting on fine light summer days either! She was on the pier in bleak and stormy November and in dark and cold December. Nor did she have any sweet and solacing dreams about travellers from a far country who

would step ashore here in pomp and state. She had eyes and thoughts only for a boat that was being rowed back and forth on the lake, just beyond the pier, dragging for the body of a drowned man.

In the beginning she had thought that the one for whom she waited would be found immediately the dragging was begun. But such was not the case. Day after day a couple of patient old fishermen worked with grappling hooks and dragnets, without finding a trace of the body.

There were said to be two deep holes at the bottom of the lake, close to the Borg pier, and some folks thought Jan had gone down into one of them. Others maintained there was a strong under-tow here at the point which ran farther in, toward Big Church Inlet, and that he had been carried over there. Then Glory Goldie had the draglines lengthened, so that they would reach down to the lowest depths of the lake, and she ordered every foot of Big Church Inlet dragged; yet she did not succeed in bringing her father back into the light of day.

On the morning following the tragic end of her father Glory Goldie ordered a coffin made. When it was ready she had it brought down to the pier, that she might lay the dead man in it the moment he was found. Night and day it had to stand out there. She would not even have it put into the freight shed. The guard locked the shed whenever he left the pier, and the coffin had to be at hand always so that Jan would not be compelled to wait for it.

The old Emperor used to have kind friends around him at the pier, to enliven his long waiting hours. But Glory Goldie nearly always tramped there alone. She spoke to no one, and folks were glad to leave her in peace, for they felt that there was something uncanny about her which had been the cause of her father's death.

In December navigation closed. Then Glory Goldie had the pier all to herself. No one disturbed her. The fishermen who were conducting the search on the lake wanted to quit now. But that put Glory Goldie in despair. She felt that her only hope

of salvation lay in the finding of her father. She told the men they must go on with the search while the lake was still unfrozen, that they must search for him down by Nygard Point; by Storvik Point—they must search the length and breadth of all Lake Löven.

For each day that passed Glory Goldie became more desperately determined to find the body. She had taken lodgings in a cotter's but at Borg. In the beginning she remained indoors at least some moments during the day, but after a time her mind became prey to such intense fear that she could scarcely eat or sleep. Now she paced the pier all the while—not only during the short hours of daylight but all through the long, dark evenings, until bedtime.

The first two days after Jan's death Katrina had stayed on the pier with Glory Goldie, and watched for his return. Then she went back to Ruffluck. It was not from any feeling of indifference that she stopped coming to the pier, it was simply that she could not stand being with her daughter and hearing her speak of Jan. For Glory Goldie did not disguise her real sentiments. Katrina knew it was not from any sense of pity or remorse that Glory Goldie was so determined her father's body should rest in consecrated soil, but she was afraid, unreasonably afraid while the one for whose death she was responsible still lay unburied at the bottom of the lake. She felt that if she could only get her father interred in churchyard mould he would not be such a menace to her. But so long as he remained where he was she must live in constant terror of him and of the punishment he would mete out to her.

Glory Goldie stood on the Borg pier looking down at the lake, which was now gray and turgid. Her gaze did not penetrate beneath the surface of the water, yet she seemed to see the whole wide expanse of lake bottom underneath.

Down there sat he, the Emperor of Portugallia, his hands clasped round his knees, his eyes fixed on the gray-green water—in constant expectation that she would come to him. His imperial regalia had been discarded, for the stick and cap had never gone

down into the depths with him, and the paper stars had of course been dissolved by the water. He sat there now in his old threadbare coat with two empty hands. But there was no longer anything pretentious or ludicrous about him; now he was only powerful and awe-inspiring.

It was not without reason he had called himself an emperor. So great had been his power in life that the enemy whose evil deeds he hated had been overthrown, while his friends had received help and protection. This power he still possessed. It had not gone from him even in death.

Only two persons had ever wronged him. One of them had already met his doom. The other one was herself—his daughter who had first driven him out of his mind and had afterward caused his death. Her he bided down there in the deep. His love for her was over. Now he awaited her not to render her praise and homage, but to drag her down into the realms of death, as punishment for her heartless treatment of him.

Glory Goldie had a weird temptation: she wanted to remove the heavy coffin lid and slide the coffin into the lake, as a boat, and then to get inside and push away from shore, and afterward stretch herself out on the bed of sawdust at the bottom of the coffin.

She wondered whether she would sink instantly or whether she would drift a while, until the lashing waves filled her bark and drew it under. She also thought that she might not sink at all but would be carried out to sea only to be cast ashore at one of the elm-edged points. She felt strangely tempted to put herself to the test. She would lie perfectly still the whole time, she said to herself, and use neither hand nor foot to propel the coffin. She would put herself wholly at the mercy of her judge; he might draw her down or let her escape as he willed.

If she were thus to seek his indulgence perhaps his great love would again speak to her; perhaps he would then take pity on her and grant her grace. But her fear was too

great. She no longer dared trust in his love, and therefore she was afraid to put the black coffin out on the lake.

An old friend and schoolmate of Glory Goldie sought her out at this time. It was August Där Nol of Prästerud, who was still living under the parental roof.

August Där Nol was a quiet and sensible man whom it did her good to talk with. He advised her to go away and take up her old occupation. It was not well for her to haunt the desolate pier, watching for the return of a dead man, he said. Glory Goldie answered that she would not dare leave until her father had been laid in consecrated ground. But August would not hear of this. The first time he talked with her nothing was decided, but when he came again she promised to follow his advice. They parted with the understanding that he was to come for her the following day and take her to the railway station in his own carriage.

Had he done so possibly all would have gone smoothly. But he was prevented from coming himself and sent a hired man with the team. All the same Glory Goldie got into the carriage and drove off. On the way to the station she talked with the driver about her father and encouraged him to relate stories of her father's clairvoyance, the ones Katrina had told her on the pier and still others.

When she had listened a while she begged the driver to turn back. She had become so alarmed that she was afraid to go any farther. He was too powerful, was the old Emperor of Portugallia! She knew how the dead that have not been buried in churchyard mould haunt and pursue their enemies. Her father would have to be brought up out of the water and laid in his coffin. God's Holy Word must be read over him, else she would never know a moment's peace.

JAN'S LAST WORDS

Along toward Christmas time Glory Goldie received word that her mother lay at the point of death. Then at last she tore herself away from the pier.

She went home on foot, this being the best way to get to the Ashdales—taking the

old familiar road across Loby, then on through the big forest and over Snipa Ridge. When going past the old Hindrickson homestead she saw a big, broad-shouldered man, with a strong, grave-looking visage, standing at the roadside mending a picket fence. The man gave her a stiff nod as she went by. He stood still for a moment, looking after her, then hastened to overtake her.

"This must be Glory Goldie of Ruffluck," he said as he came up with her. "I'd like to have a word with you. I'm Linnart, son of Björn Hindrickson," he added, seeing that she did not know who he was.

"I'm terribly pressed for time now," Glory Goldie told him. "So perhaps you'd better wait till another day. I've just learned that my mother is dying."

Linnart Hindrickson then asked if he might walk with her part of the way. He said that he had thought of going down to the pier to see her and now he did not want to miss this good opportunity of speaking with her, as it was very necessary that she should hear what he had to say.

Glory Goldie made no further objections. She perceived, however, that the man had some difficulty in stating his business and concluded it was something of an unpleasant nature. He hemmed and hawed a while, as if trying to find the right words; presently he said, with apparent effort:

"I don't believe you know, Glory Goldie, that I was the last person who talked with your father—the Emperor, as we used to call him."

"No, I did not know of this," answered the girl, at the same time quickening her steps. She was thinking to herself that this conversation was something she would rather have escaped.

"One day last autumn," Linnart continued, "while I was out in the yard hitching up a horse to drive over to the village shop, I saw the Emperor come running down the road; he seemed in a great hurry, but when he espied me he stopped and asked if I had seen the Empress drive by. I couldn't deny that I had. Then he burst out crying.

He had been on his way to Broby, he said, but such a strange feeling of uneasiness had suddenly come over him that he had to turn back, and when he reached home he found the hut deserted. Katrina was also gone. He felt certain his wife and daughter were leaving by the boat and he didn't know how he should ever be able to get down to the Borg pier before they were gone."

Glory Goldie stood stock still. "You let him ride with you, of course?" she said.

"Oh, yes," replied Linn art. "Jan once did me a good turn and I wanted to repay it. Perhaps I did wrong in giving him a lift?"

"No, indeed!" said Glory Goldie. "It was I who did wrong in attempting to leave him."

"He wept like a child the whole time he sat in the wagon. I didn't know what to do to comfort him, but at last I said, 'Don't cry like that, Jan! We'll surely overtake her. Besides, these little freight steamers that run in the autumn are never on time.' No sooner had I said that than he laid his hand on my arm and asked me if I thought they would be harsh and cruel toward the Empress—those who had carried her off."

"Those who had carried me off!" repeated Glory Goldie in astonishment.

"I was as much astonished at that as you are," Linnart declared, "and I asked him what he meant. Well, he meant those who had lain in wait for the Empress while she was at home—all the enemies of whom Glory Goldie had been so afraid that she had not dared to put on her gold crown or so much as mention Portugallia, and who had finally overpowered her and carried her into captivity."

"So that was it!"

"Yes, just that. You understand of course that your father did not weep because he had been deserted and left alone, but because he thought you were in peril." It had been a little hard for Linnart to come out with the last few words; they wanted to stick in his throat. Perhaps he was thinking of old Björn Hindrickson and himself, for there was that in his own life which had taught him the true worth of a love that

never fails you.

But Glory Goldie did not yet understand. She had thought of her father only with aversion and dread since her return and muttered something about his being a madman.

Linnart heard what she said, and it hurt him. "I'm not so sure that Jan was mad!" he retorted. "I told him that I hadn't seen any gaolers around Glory Goldie. 'My good Linnart,' he then said, 'didn't you notice how closely they guarded her when she drove by? They were Pride and Hardness, Lust and Vice, all the enemies she has to battle against back there in her Empire.'"

Glory Goldie stopped a moment and turned toward Linnart. "Well?" was all she said.

"I replied that these enemies I, too, had seen," returned Linnart Hindrickson curtly.

The girl gave a short laugh.

"But instantly I regretted having said that," pursued the man. "For then Jan cried out in despair: 'Oh, pray to God, my dear Linnart, that I may be able to save the little girl from all evil! It doesn't matter what becomes of me, just so she is helped.'"

Glory Goldie did not speak, but walked on hurriedly. Something had begun to pull and tear at her heart strings—something she was trying to force back. She knew that if that which lay hidden within should burst its bonds and come to the surface, she would break down completely.

"And those were Jan's last words," said Linnart. "It wasn't long after that before he proved that he meant what he said. Don't think for a moment that Jan jumped into the lake to get away from his own sorrow; it was only to rescue Glory Goldie from her enemies that he plunged in after the boat."

Glory Goldie tramped on, faster and faster. Her father's great love from first to last now stood revealed to her. But she could not bear the thought of it and wanted to put

it behind her.

"We keep pretty well posted in this parish as to one another's doings," Linnart continued. "There was much ill feeling against you at first, after the Emperor was drowned. I for my part considered you unworthy to receive his farewell message. But we all feel differently now; we like your staying down at the pier to watch for him."

Then Glory Goldie stopped short. Her cheeks burned and her eyes flashed with indignation. "I stay down there only because I'm afraid of him," she said.

"You have never wanted to appear better than you are. We know that. But we understand perhaps better than you yourself do what lies back of this waiting. We have also had parents and we haven't always treated them right, either."

Glory Goldie was so furious that she wanted to say something dreadful to make Linnart hush, but somehow she couldn't. All she could do was to run away from him.

Linnart Hindrickson made no attempt to follow her further. He had said what he wanted to say and he was not displeased with that morning's work.

THE PASSING OF KATRINA

Katrina lay on the bed in the little hut at Ruffluck Croft, the pallor of death on her face, her eyes closed. It looked as if the end had already come. But the instant Glory Goldie reached her bedside and stood patting her hand, she opened her eyes and began to speak.

"Jan wants me with him," she said, with great effort. "He doesn't hold it against me that I deserted him."

Glory Goldie started. Now she knew why her mother was dying; she who had been faithful a lifetime was grieving herself to death for having failed Jan at the last.

"Why should you have to fret your heart out over that, when I was the one who

forced you to leave him?" said Glory Goldie.

"Just the same the memory of it has been so painful," replied Katrina. "But now all is well again between Jan and me." Then she closed her eyes and lay very still, and into her thin, wan face came a faint light of happiness. Soon she began to speak again, for there were things which had to be said; she could not find peace until they were said.

"Don't be so angry with Jan for running after you! He meant only well by you. Things have never been right with you since you and he first parted, and he knew it, too, nor with him either. You both went wrong, each in your own way."

Glory Goldie had felt that her mother would say something of this sort, and had steeled herself beforehand. But her mother's words moved her more than she realized, and she tried to say something comforting. "I shall think of father as he was in the old days. You remember what good friends we always were at that time."

Katrina seemed to be satisfied with the response, for she settled back to rest once more. Apparently she had not intended to say anything further. Then, all at once, she looked up at her daughter and gave her a smile that bespoke rare tenderness and affection.

"I'm so glad, Glory Goldie, that you have grown beautiful again," she said.

For that smile and those words all Glory Goldie's self-control gave way; she fell upon her knees beside the low bedstead, and wept. It was the first time since her homecoming that she had shed real tears.

"Mother, I don't know how you can feel toward me as you do!" cried the girl. "It's all my fault that you are dying, and I'm to blame for father's death, too."

Katrina, smiling all the while, moved her hands in a little caress.

"You are so good, mother," said Glory Goldie through her sobs. "You are so good to me!"

Katrina gripped hard her daughter's hand and raised herself in bed, to give her final testimony.

"All, that is good in me I have learned from Jan," she declared. After which she sank back on her pillow and said nothing more that was clear or sensible. The death struggle had begun, and the next morning she passed away.

But all through the final agony Glory Goldie lay weeping on the floor beside her mother's bed; she wept away her anguish; her fever-dreams; her burden of guilt. There was no end to her tears.

THE BURIAL OF THE EMPEROR

It was on the Sunday before Christmas they were to bury Katrina of Ruffluck. Usually on that particular Sabbath the church attendance is very poor, as most people like to put off their church-going until the great Holy Day services.

When the few mourners from the Ashdales drove into the pine grove between the church and the town hall, they were astonished. For such crowds of people as were assembled there that Sunday were rarely seen even when the Dean of Bro came to Svartsjö once a year, to preach, or at a church election.

It went without saying that it was not for the purpose of following old Katrina to her grave that every one to a man turned out. Something else must have brought them there. Possibly some great personage was expected at the church, or maybe some clergyman other than the regular pastor was going to preach, thought the Ashdales folk, who lived in such an out-of-the-way corner that much could happen in the parish without their ever hearing of it.

The mourners drove up to the cleared space behind the town hall, where they stepped down from the wagons. Here, as in the grove, they found throngs of people, but otherwise they saw nothing out of the ordinary. Their astonishment increased, but they felt loath to question any one as to what was going on; for persons who drive in a funeral procession are expected to keep to themselves and not to enter into

conversation with those who have no part in the mourning.

The coffin was removed from the hearse and placed upon two black trestles which had been set up just outside the town hall, where the body and those who had come with it were to remain until the bells began to toll and the pastor and the sexton were ready to go with them to the churchyard.

It was a stormy day. Rain came down in lashing showers and beat against the coffin. One thing was certain: it could never be said that fine weather had brought all these people out.

But that day nobody seemed to mind the rain and wind. People stood quietly and patiently under the open sky without seeking the shelter of either the church or the town hall.

The six pall-bearers and others who had gathered around Katrina noticed that there were two trestles there besides those on which her coffin rested. Then there was to be another burial that day. This they had not known of before. Yet no funeral procession could be seen approaching. It was already so late that it should have been at the church by that time.

When it was about ten minutes of ten o'clock and time to be moving toward the churchyard, the Ashdales folk noticed that every one withdrew in the direction of the Där Nol home, which was only two minutes' walk from the church. They saw then what they had not observed before, that the path leading from the town hall to the house of Där Nol was strewn with spruce twigs and that a spruce tree had been placed at either side of the gate. Then it was from there a body was to be taken. They wondered why nothing had been said about a death in a family of such prominence. Besides, there were no sheets put up at the windows, as there should be in a house of mourning.

Then, in a moment, the front doors opened and a funeral party emerged. First came August Där Nol, carrying a crêped mace. Behind him walked the six pall-bearers

with the casket. And now all the people who had been standing outside the church fell into line behind this funeral party. Then it was in order to do honour to this person they had come.

The coffin was carried down to the town hall and placed beside the one already there. August Där Nol arranged the trestles so that the two coffins would rest side by side. The second coffin was not so new and shiny as Katrina's. It looked as if it had been washed by many rains, and had seen rough handling, for it was both scratched and broken at the edges.

All the folk from the Ashdales suddenly caught their breath. For then they knew it was not a Där Nol that lay in this coffin! And they also knew that it was not for the sake of some stranger of exalted rank that so many people had come out to church. Instantly every one looked at Glory Goldie, to see whether she understood. It was plain she did.

Glory Goldie, pale and heart-broken, had been standing all the while by her mother's coffin, and as she recognized the one that had been brought from the Där Nol home she was beside herself with joy as one becomes when gaining something for which one has long been striving. However, she immediately controlled her emotion. Then, smiling wistfully, she lightly stroked the lid of Katrina's coffin.

"Now it has turned out as well for you as ever you could have wished," she seemed to be saying to her dead mother.

August Där Nol then stepped up to Glory Goldie and took her by the hand. "No doubt this arrangement is satisfactory to you," he said. "We found him only last Friday. I thought it would be easier for you this way."

Glory Goldie stammered a few words, but her lips quavered so that she could hardly be understood. "Thanks. It's all right. I know he has come to mother, and not to me."

"He has come to you both, be assured of that, Glory Goldie!" said August Där Nol.

The old mistress of Falla, who was now well on toward eighty and bowed down by

the weight of many sorrows, had come to the funeral out of regard for Katrina, who for many years had been her faithful servant and friend. She had brought with her the imperial cap and stick, which had been returned to her after Jan's death. She intended to place them in the grave with Katrina, thinking the old woman would like to have with her some reminder of Jan.

Presently Glory Goldie turned to the old mistress of Falla and asked her for the imperial regalia, and then she stood the long stick up against Jan's coffin and set the cap on top of the stick. Every one understood that she was sorry now that she had not wanted Jan to deck himself out in these emblems of royalty and was trying to make what slight amends she could. There is so little that one can do for the dead!

Instantly the stick was placed there the bells in the church tower began ringing and the pastor, the sexton, and the verger came out from the vestry and took their places at the head of the funeral procession.

The rain came in showers that day, but it happened, luckily, that there was a let-up while the people formed into line—menfolk first, then womenfolk—to follow the two old peasants to their grave. Those who lined up looked a little surprised at their being there, for they did not feel any grief, nor did they care especially to honour either of the dead. It was simply this: when the news was spread throughout the parish that Jan of Ruffluck had come back just in time to be buried with Katrina they had all felt that there was something singularly touching and miraculous about this, which made them want to come and see the old couple reunited in death. And of course no one dreamed that the same thought would occur to so many others. They felt that this was almost too much of a demonstration for a couple of poor and lowly cotters. People glanced at one another rather shamefacedly; but now that they were there, there was nothing to do but go along to the churchyard. Then, as it occurred to them that this was just what the Emperor of Portugallia would have liked, they smiled to themselves.

Two mace-bearers (for there was also one from the Ashdales) walked in front of the coffins, and the whole parish marched in the funeral procession. It could not have been better had the Emperor himself arranged for it. And they were not altogether certain that the whole thing was not his doing. He had become so wonderful after his death, had the old Emperor. He must have had a purpose in letting his daughter wait for him; a purpose in rising up out of the deep at just the right time—as sure as fate!

When they had all come up to the wide grave and the coffins had been lowered into it, the sexton sang "My every step leads to the grave."

Sexton Blackie was now an old man. His singing reminded Glory Goldie of that of another old man, to whom she had not wanted to listen. And the recollection of this brought with it bitter anguish; she pressed her hands to her heart and closed her eyes, so as not to betray her sufferings.

And while she stood thus she saw before her her father as he had been in her childhood, when he and she were such good friends and comrades. She recognized his face as she had seen it one Sunday morning after a blizzard, when the road was knee-deep with snow and he had to carry her to church. She saw him again as he appeared the Sunday she went to church in the red dress. No one had ever looked kinder or happier than Jan did then. But after that day there had been no more happiness for him, and she had never been quite contented either.

She strove to hold this face before her eyes. It did her good. There rose up in her such a strong wave of tenderness as she looked at it! That face only wished her well. It was not something to be feared. This was just the old kind-hearted Jan of Ruffluck. He would never sit in judgment upon her; he would not bring misfortune and suffering upon his only child.

Glory Goldie had found peace. She had come into a world of love now that she could see her father as he was. She wondered how she could ever have imagined that he hated her; he, who only wanted to forgive! Wherever she was or wherever she

went he would be there to protect her; he had no thought or wish but that.

Again she felt the great tenderness well up in her heart like a mighty wave-filling her whole being. Then she knew that all was well again between her father and her; that he and she were one, as in the old days. Now that she loved him, there was nothing to be atoned.

Glory Goldie awoke as from a dream. While she had stood looking into her father's kindly face the pastor had performed the burial service. Now he was addressing a few remarks to the people; he thanked them, one and all, for coming to this funeral. It was no great or distinguished man that had just been laid to rest, he said, but he was perhaps one who had borne the richest and warmest heart in these regions.

When the pastor said this the people again glanced at one another. And now every one looked pleased and satisfied. The parson was right: it was because of Jan's great heart they had come to the funeral.

Then the pastor spoke a few words to Glory Goldie. He said that she had received greater love from her parents than had any one he knew of, and that such love could only turn to blessing.

At this everybody looked over at Glory Goldie, and they all marvelled at what they saw. The pastor's saying had already come true. For there, at the grave of her parents, stood Glory Goldie Sunnycastle, who had been named by the Sun itself, shining like one transfigured! She was as beautiful now as on that Sunday when she came to church in the red dress, if not more beautiful.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE EMPEROR OF PORTUGALLIA ***

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