

Bimbi eBook

Bimbi by Ouida

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Page 1

THE NURNBERG STOVE

August lived in a little town called Hall. Hall is a favorite name for several towns in Austria and in Germany; but this one especial little Hall, in the Upper Innthal, is one of the most charming Old-World places that I know, and August, for his part, did not know any other. It has the green meadows and the great mountains all about it, and the gray-green glacier-fed water rushes by it. It has paved streets and enchanting little shops that have all latticed panes and iron gratings to them; it has a very grand old Gothic church, that has the noblest blendings of light and shadow, and marble tombs of dead knights, and a look of infinite strength and repose as a church should have. Then there is the Muntze Tower, black and white, rising out of greenery, and looking down on a long wooden bridge and the broad rapid river; and there is an old schloss which has been made into a guardhouse, with battlements and frescos and heraldic devices in gold and colors, and a man-at-arms carved in stone standing life-size in his niche and bearing his date 1530. A little farther on, but close at hand, is a cloister with beautiful marble columns and tombs, and a colossal wood-carved Calvary, and beside that a small and very rich chapel; indeed, so full is the little town of the undisturbed past, that to walk in it is like opening a missal of the Middle Ages, all emblazoned and illuminated with saints and warriors, and it is so clean, and so still, and so noble, by reason of its monuments and its historic color, that I marvel much no one has ever cared to sing its praises. The old pious, heroic life of an age at once more restful and more brave than ours still leaves its spirit there, and then there is the girdle of the mountains all around, and that alone means strength, peace, majesty.

In this little town a few years ago August Strehla lived with his people in the stone-paved, irregular square where the grand church stands.

He was a small boy of nine years at that time,—a chubby-faced little man with rosy cheeks, big hazel eyes, and clusters of curls the brown of ripe nuts. His mother was dead, his father was poor, and there were many mouths at home to feed. In this country the winters are long and very cold; the whole land lies wrapped in snow for many months; and this night that he was trotting home, with a jug of beer in his numb red hands, was terribly cold and dreary. The good burghers of Hall had shut their double shutters, and the few lamps there were flickered dully behind their quaint, old-fashioned iron casings. The mountains indeed were beautiful, all snow-white under the stars that are so big in frost. Hardly any one was astir; a few good souls wending home from vespers, a tired post-boy, who blew a shrill blast from his tasseled horn as he pulled up his sledge before a hostelry, and little August hugging his jug of beer to his ragged sheepskin coat, were all who were abroad, for the snow fell heavily and the good folks of Hall go early to their beds. He could not run, or he would have spilled the beer; he was half frozen and a little frightened, but he kept up his courage by saying over and over again to himself, "I shall soon be at home with dear Hirschvogel."

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He went on through the streets, past the stone man-at-arms of the guardhouse, and so into the place where the great church was, and where near it stood his father Karl Strehla's house, with a sculptured Bethlehem over the doorway, and the Pilgrimage of the Three Kings painted on its wall. He had been sent on a long errand outside the gates in the afternoon, over the frozen fields and the broad white snow, and had been belated, and had thought he had heard the wolves behind him at every step, and had reached the town in a great state of terror, thankful with all his little panting heart to see the oil lamp burning under the first house shrine. But he had not forgotten to call for the beer, and he carried it carefully now, though his hands were so numb that he was afraid they would let the jug down every moment.

The snow outlined with white every gable and cornice of the beautiful old wooden houses; the moonlight shone on the gilded signs, the lambs, the grapes, the eagles, and all the quaint devices that hung before the doors; covered lamps burned before the Nativities and Crucifixions painted on the walls or let into the woodwork; here and there, where a shutter had not been closed, a ruddy fire-light lit up a homely interior, with a noisy band of children clustering round the house-mother and a big brown loaf, or some gossips spinning and listening to the cobbler's or the barber's story of a neighbor, while the oil wicks glimmered, and the hearth logs blazed, and the chestnuts sputtered in their iron roasting pot. Little August saw all these things, as he saw everything with his two big bright eyes, that had such curious lights and shadows in them; but he went needfully on his way for the sake of the beer which a single slip of the foot would make him spill. At his knock and call the solid oak door, four centuries old if one, flew open, and the boy darted in with his beer and shouted with all the force of mirthful lungs: "Oh, dear Hirschvogel, but for the thought of you I should have died!"

It was a large barren room into which he rushed with so much pleasure, and the bricks were bare and uneven. It had a walnut-wood press, handsome and very old, a broad deal table, and several wooden stools, for all its furniture; but at the top of the chamber, sending out warmth and color together as the lamp shed its rays upon it, was a tower of porcelain, burnished with all the hues of a king's peacock and a queen's jewels, and surmounted with armed figures, and shields, and flowers of heraldry, and a great golden crown upon the highest summit of all.

It was a stove of 1532, and on it were the letters H. R. H., for it was in every portion the handwork of the great potter of Nurnberg, Augustin Hirschvogel, who put his mark thus, as all the world knows.



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The stove, no doubt, had stood in palaces and been made for princes, had warmed the crimson stockings of cardinals and the gold-broidered shoes of archduchesses, had glowed in presence-chambers and lent its carbon to help kindle sharp brains in anxious councils of state; no one knew what it had seen or done or been fashioned for; but it was a right royal thing. Yet perhaps it had never been more useful than it was now in this poor, desolate room, sending down heat and comfort into the troop of children tumbled together on a wolfskin at its feet, who received frozen August among them with loud shouts of joy.

“Oh, dear Hirschvogel, I am so cold, so cold!” said August, kissing its gilded lion’s claws. “Is father not in, Dorothea?”

“No, dear. He is late.”

Dorothea was a girl of seventeen, dark-haired and serious, and with a sweet sad face, for she had had many cares laid on her shoulders, even whilst still a mere baby. She was the eldest of the Strehla family; and there were ten of them in all. Next to her there came Jan and Karl and Otho, big lads, gaining a little for their own living; and then came August, who went up in the summer to the high alps with the farmers’ cattle, but in winter could do nothing to fill his own little platter and pot; and then all the little ones, who could only open their mouths to be fed like young birds,—Albrecht and Hilda, and Waldo and Christof, and last of all little three-year-old Ermengilda, with eyes like forget-me-nots, whose birth had cost them the life of their mother.

They were of that mixed race, half Austrian, half Italian, so common in the Tyrol; some of the children were white and golden as lilies, others were brown and brilliant as fresh fallen chestnuts. The father was a good man, but weak and weary with so many to find for and so little to do it with. He worked at the salt furnaces, and by that gained a few florins; people said he would have worked better and kept his family more easily if he had not loved his pipe and a draught of ale too well; but this had only been said of him after his wife’s death, when trouble and perplexity had begun to dull a brain never too vigorous, and to enfeeble further a character already too yielding. As it was, the wolf often bayed at the door of the Strehla household, without a wolf from the mountains coming down.

Dorothea was one of those maidens who almost work miracles, so far can their industry and care and intelligence make a home sweet and wholesome and a single loaf seem to swell into twenty. The children were always clean and happy, and the table was seldom without its big pot of soup once a day. Still, very poor they were, and Dorothea’s heart ached with shame, for she knew that their father’s debts were many for flour and meat and clothing. Of fuel to feed the big stove they had always enough without cost, for their mother’s father was alive, and sold wood and fir cones and coke, and never grudged them to his grandchildren, though he grumbled at Strehla’s improvidence and hapless, dreamy ways.



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“Father says we are never to wait for him; we will have supper, now you have come home, dear,” said Dorothea, who, however she might fret her soul in secret as she knitted their hose and mended their shirts, never let her anxieties cast a gloom on the children; only to August she did speak a little sometimes, because he was so thoughtful and so tender of her always, and knew as well as she did that there were troubles about money,—though these troubles were vague to them both, and the debtors were patient and kindly, being neighbors all in the old twisting streets between the guardhouse and the river.

Supper was a huge bowl of soup, with big slices of brown bread swimming in it and some onions bobbing up and down; the bowl was soon emptied by ten wooden spoons, and then the three eldest boys slipped off to bed, being tired with their rough bodily labor in the snow all day, and Dorothea drew her spinning-wheel by the stove and set it whirring, and the little ones got August down upon the old worn wolfskin and clamored to him for a picture or a story. For August was the artist of the family.

He had a piece of planed deal that his father had given him, and some sticks of charcoal, and he would draw a hundred things he had seen in the day, sweeping each out with his elbow when the children had seen enough of it, and sketching another in its stead,—faces and dogs’ heads, and men in sledges, and old women in their furs, and pine trees, and cocks and hens, and all sorts of animals, and now and then—very reverently—a Madonna and Child. It was all very rough, for there was no one to teach him anything. But it was all lifelike, and kept the whole troop of children shrieking with laughter, or watching breathless, with wide open, wondering, awed eyes.

They were all so happy; what did they care for the snow outside? Their little bodies were warm, and their hearts merry; even Dorothea, troubled about the bread for the morrow, laughed as she spun; and August, with all his soul in his work, and little rosy Ermengilda’s cheek on his shoulder, glowing after his frozen afternoon, cried out loud, smiling, as he looked up at the stove that was shedding its heat down on them all:—

“Oh, dear Hirschvogel! you are almost as great and good as the sun! No; you are greater and better, I think, because he goes away nobody knows where all these long, dark, cold hours, and does not care how people die for want of him; but you—you are always ready; just a little bit of wood to feed you, and you will make a summer for us all the winter through!”

The grand old stove seemed to smile through all its iridescent surface at the praises of the child. No doubt the stove, though it had known three centuries and more, had known but very little gratitude.

It was one of those magnificent stoves in enameled faience which so excited the jealousy of the other potters of Nurnberg that in a body they demanded of the magistracy that Augustin Hirschvogel should be forbidden to make any more of them,—

the magistracy, happily, proving of a broader mind, and having no sympathy with the wish of the artisans to cripple their greater fellow.

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It was of great height and breadth, with all the majolica luster which Hirschvogel learned to give to his enamels when he was making love to the young Venetian girl whom he afterwards married. There was the statue of a king at each corner, modeled with as much force and splendor as his friend Albrecht Durer could have given unto them on copperplate or canvas. The body of the stove itself was divided into panels, which had the Ages of Man painted on them in polychrome; the borders of the panels had roses and holly and laurel and other foliage, and German mottoes in black letter of odd Old World moralizing, such as the old Teutons, and the Dutch after them, love to have on their chimney-places and their drinking cups, their dishes and flagons. The whole was burnished with gilding in many parts, and was radiant everywhere with that brilliant coloring of which the Hirschvogel family, painters on glass and great in chemistry, as they were, were all masters.

The stove was a very grand thing, as I say; possibly Hirschvogel had made it for some mighty lord of the Tyrol at that time when he was an imperial guest at Innsbruck, and fashioned so many things for the Schloss Amras and beautiful Philippine Welser, the burgher's daughter, who gained an archduke's heart by her beauty and the right to wear his honors by her wit. Nothing was known of the stove at this latter day in Hall. The grandfather Strehla, who had been a master-mason, had dug it up out of some ruins where he was building, and, finding it without a flaw, had taken it home, and only thought it worth finding because it was such a good one to burn. That was now sixty years past, and ever since then the stove had stood in the big, desolate, empty room, warming three generations of the Strehla family, and having seen nothing prettier, perhaps, in all its many years than the children tumbled now in a cluster like gathered flowers at its feet. For the Strehla children, born to nothing else, were all born with beauty; white or brown, they were equally lovely to look upon, and when they went into the church to Mass, with their curling locks and their clasped hands, they stood under the grim statues like cherubs flown down off some fresco.

"Tell us a story, August," they cried in chorus, when they had seen charcoal pictures till they were tired; and August did as he did every night pretty nearly—looked up at the stove and told them what he imagined of the many adventures and joys and sorrows of the human being who figured on the panels from his cradle to his grave.

To the children the stove was a household god. In summer they laid a mat of fresh moss all round it, and dressed it up with green boughs and the numberless beautiful wild flowers of the Tyrol country. In winter all their joys centered in it, and scampering home from school over the ice and snow they were happy, knowing that they would soon be cracking nuts or roasting chestnuts in the broad ardent glow of its noble tower, which rose eight feet high above them with all its spires and pinnacles and crowns.



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Once a traveling peddler had told them that the letters on it meant Augustin Hirschvogel, and that Hirschvogel had been a great German potter and painter, like his father before him, in the art-sanctified city of Nurnberg, and had made many such stoves, that were all miracles of beauty and of workmanship, putting all his heart and his soul and his faith into his labors, as the men of those earlier ages did, and thinking but little of gold or praise.

An old trader, too, who sold curiosities not far from the church, had told August a little more about the brave family of Hirschvogel, whose houses can be seen in Nuremberg to this day; of old Veit, the first of them, who painted the Gothic windows of St. Sebald with the marriage of the margravine; of his sons and of his grand-sons, potters, painters, engravers all, and chief of them great Augustin, the Luca della Robbia of the North. And August's imagination, always quick, had made a living personage out of these few records, and saw Hirschvogel as though he were in the flesh walking up and down the Maximilian-Strass in his visit to Innspruck, and maturing beautiful things in his brain as he stood on the bridge and gazed on the emerald green flood of the Inn.

So the stove had got to be called Hirschvogel in the family, as if it were a living creature, and little August was very proud because he had been named after that famous old dead German who had had the genius to make so glorious a thing. All the children loved the stove, but with August the love of it was a passion; and in his secret heart he used to say to himself, "When I am a man, I will make just such things too, and then I will set Hirschvogel in a beautiful room in a house that I will build myself in Innspruck just outside the gates, where the chestnuts are, by the river; that is what I will do when I am a man."

For August, a salt baker's son and a little cow-keeper when he was anything, was a dreamer of dreams, and when he was upon the high alps with his cattle, with the stillness and the sky around him, was quite certain that he would live for greater things than driving the herds up when the springtide came among the blue sea of gentians, or toiling down in the town with wood and with timber as his father and grandfather did every day of their lives. He was a strong and healthy little fellow, fed on the free mountain air, and he was very happy, and loved his family devotedly, and was as active as a squirrel and as playful as a hare; but he kept his thoughts to himself, and some of them went a very long way for a little boy who was only one among many, and to whom nobody had ever paid any attention except to teach him his letters and tell him to fear God. August in winter was only a little, hungry schoolboy, trotting to be catechised by the priest, or to bring the loaves from the bakehouse, or to carry his father's boots to the cobbler; and in summer he was only one of hundreds of cowboys, who drove the poor, half-blind,



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blinking, stumbling cattle, ringing their throat bells, out into the sweet intoxication of the sudden sunlight, and lived up with them in the heights among the Alpine roses, with only the clouds and the snow summits near. But he was always thinking, thinking, thinking, for all that; and under his little sheepskin winter coat and his rough hempen summer shirt his heart had as much courage in it as Hofer's ever had,— great Hofer, who is a household word in all the Innthal, and whom August always reverently remembered when he went to the city of Innsbruck and ran out by the foaming water mill and under the wooded height of Berg Isel.

August lay now in the warmth of the stove and told the children stories, his own little brown face growing red with excitement as his imagination glowed to fever heat. That human being on the panels, who was drawn there as a baby in a cradle, as a boy playing among flowers, as a lover sighing under a casement, as a soldier in the midst of strife, as a father with children round him, as a weary, old, blind man on crutches, and, lastly, as a ransomed soul raised up by angels, had always had the most intense interest for August, and he had made, not one history for him, but a thousand; he seldom told them the same tale twice. He had never seen a storybook in his life; his primer and his Mass book were all the volumes he had. But nature had given him Fancy, and she is a good fairy that makes up for the want of very many things! only, alas! her wings are so very soon broken, poor thing! and then she is of no use at all.

"It is time for you all to go to bed, children," said Dorothea, looking up from her spinning. "Father is very late to-night; you must not sit up for him."

"Oh, five minutes more, dear Dorothea!" they pleaded; and little rosy and golden Ermengilda climbed up into her lap. "Hirschvogel is so warm, the beds are never so warm as he. Cannot you tell us another tale, August?"

"No," cried August, whose face had lost its light, now that his story had come to an end, and who sat serious, with his hands clasped on his knees, gazing on to the luminous arabesques of the stove.

"It is only a week to Christmas," he said suddenly.

"Grandmother's big cakes!" chuckled little Christof, who was five years old, and thought Christmas meant a big cake and nothing else.

"What will Santa Claus find for 'Gilda if she be good?" murmured Dorothea over the child's sunny head; for, however hard poverty might pinch, it could never pinch so tightly that Dorothea would not find some wooden toy and some rosy apples to put in her little sister's socks.



“Father Max has promised me a big goose, because I saved the calf’s life in June,” said August; it was the twentieth time he had told them so that month, he was so proud of it.

“And Aunt Maila will be sure to send us wine and honey and a barrel of flour; she always does,” said Albrecht. Their Aunt Maila had a chalet and a little farm over on the green slopes towards Dorp Ampas.

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"I shall go up into the woods and get Hirschvogel's crown," said August; they always crowned Hirschvogel for Christmas with pine boughs and ivy and mountain berries. The heat soon withered the crown; but it was part of the religion of the day to them, as much so as it was to cross themselves in church and raise their voices in the "O Salutaris Hostia."

And they fell chatting of all they would do on the Christ-night, and one little voice piped loud against another's, and they were as happy as though their stockings would be full of golden purses and jeweled toys, and the big goose in the soup pot seemed to them such a meal as kings would envy.

In the midst of their chatter and laughter a blast of frozen air and a spray of driven snow struck like ice through the room, and reached them even in the warmth of the old wolfskins and the great stove. It was the door which had opened and let in the cold; it was their father who had come home.

The younger children ran joyous to meet him. Dorothea pushed the one wooden armchair of the room to the stove, and August flew to set the jug of beer on a little round table, and fill a long clay pipe; for their father was good to them all, and seldom raised his voice in anger, and they had been trained by the mother they had loved to dutifulness and obedience and a watchful affection.

To-night Karl Strehla responded very wearily to the young ones' welcome, and came to the wooden chair with a tired step and sat down heavily, not noticing either pipe or beer.

"Are you not well, dear father?" his daughter asked him.

"I am well enough," he answered dully, and sat there with his head bent, letting the lighted pipe grow cold.

He was a fair, tall man, gray before his time, and bowed with labor.

"Take the children to bed," he said suddenly, at last, and Dorothea obeyed. August stayed behind, curled before the stove; at nine years old, and when one earns money in the summer from the farmers, one is not altogether a child any more, at least in one's own estimation.

August did not heed his father's silence; he was used to it. Karl Strehla was a man of few words, and, being of weakly health, was usually too tired at the end of the day to do more than drink his beer and sleep. August lay on the wolfskin, dreamy and comfortable, looking up through his drooping eyelids at the golden coronets on the crest of the great stove, and wondering for the millionth time whom it had been made for, and what grand places and scenes it had known.



Dorothea came down from putting the little ones in their beds; the cuckoo clock in the corner struck eight; she looked to her father and the untouched pipe, then sat down to her spinning, saying nothing. She thought he had been drinking in some tavern; it had been often so with him of late.

There was a long silence; the cuckoo called the quarter twice; August dropped to sleep, his curls falling over his face; Dorothea's wheel hummed like a cat.



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Suddenly Karl Strehla struck his hand on the table, sending the pipe on the ground.

“I have sold Hirschvogel,” he said; and his voice was husky and ashamed in his throat. The spinning wheel stopped. August sprang erect out of his sleep.

“Sold Hirschvogel!” If their father had dashed the holy crucifix on the floor at their feet and spat on it, they could not have shuddered under the horror of a greater blasphemy.

“I have sold Hirschvogel!” said Karl Strehla in the same husky, dogged voice. “I have sold it to a traveling trader in such things for two hundred florins. What would you?—I owe double that. He saw it this morning when you were all out. He will pack it and take it to Munich to-morrow.”

Dorothea gave a low, shrill cry:—

“Oh, father!—the children—in midwinter!”

She turned white as the snow without; her words died away in her throat.

August stood, half blind with sleep, staring with dazed eyes as his cattle stared at the sun when they came out from their winter’s prison.

“It is not true! It is not true!” he muttered. “You are jesting, father?”

Strehla broke into a dreary laugh.

“It is true. Would you like to know what is true too?—that the bread you eat, and the meat you put in this pot, and the roof you have over your heads, are none of them paid for, have been none of them paid for for months and months; if it had not been for your grandfather, I should have been in prison all summer and autumn; and he is out of patience and will do no more now. There is no work to be had; the masters go to younger men; they say I work ill; it may be so. Who can keep his head above water with ten hungry children dragging him down? When your mother lived it was different. Boy, you stare at me as if I were a mad dog! You have made a god of yon china thing. Well—it goes; goes to-morrow. Two hundred florins, that is something. It will keep me out of prison for a little, and with the spring things may turn—”

August stood like a creature paralyzed. His eyes were wide open, fastened on his father’s with terror and incredulous horror; his face had grown as white as his sister’s; his chest heaved with tearless sobs.

“It is not true! It is not true!” he echoed stupidly. It seemed to him that the very skies must fall, and the earth perish, if they could take away Hirschvogel. They might as soon talk of tearing down God’s sun out of the heavens.



“You will find it true,” said his father doggedly, and angered because he was in his own soul bitterly ashamed to have bartered away the heirloom and treasure of his race and the comfort and health-giver of his young children.” You will find it true. The dealer has paid me half the money to-night, and will pay me the other half to-morrow, when he packs it up and takes it away to Munich. No doubt it is worth a great deal more,—at least I suppose so, as he gives that,—but beggars



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cannot be choosers. The little black stove in the kitchen will warm you all just as well. Who would keep a gilded, painted thing in a poor house like this, when one can make two hundred florins by it? Dorothea, you never sobbed more when your mother died. What is it, when all is said?— a bit of hardware much too grand-looking for such a room as this. If all the Strehlas had not been born fools, it would have been sold a century ago, when it was dug up out of the ground. It is a stove for a museum, the trader said when he saw it. To a museum let it go.”

August gave a shrill shriek like a hare’s when it is caught for its death, and threw himself on his knees at his father’s feet.

“Oh, father, father!” he cried convulsively, his hands closing on Strehla’s knees, and his uplifted face blanched and distorted with terror. “Oh, father, dear father, you cannot mean what you say? Send *it* away—our life, our sun, our joy, our comfort? We shall all die in the dark and the cold. Sell *me* rather. Sell me to any trade or any pain you like; I will not mind. But Hirschvogel!—it is like selling the very cross off the altar! You must be in jest. You could not do such a thing—you could not!—you who have always been gentle and good, and who have sat in the warmth here year after year with our mother. It is not a piece of hardware, as you say; it is a living thing, for a great man’s thoughts and fancies have put life into it, and it loves us though we are only poor little children, and we love it with all our hearts and souls, and up in heaven I am sure the dead Hirschvogel knows! Oh, listen; I will go and try and get work to-morrow! I will ask them to let me cut ice or make the paths through the snow. There must be something I could do, and I will beg the people we owe money to to wait; they are all neighbors, they will be patient. But sell Hirschvogel!—oh, never! never! never! Give the florins back to the vile man. Tell him it would be like selling the shroud out of mother’s coffin, or the golden curls off Ermengilda’s head! Oh, father, dear father! do hear me, for pity’s sake!”

Strehla was moved by the boy’s anguish. He loved his children, though he was often weary of them, and their pain was pain to him. But besides emotion, and stronger than emotion, was the anger that August roused in him; he hated and despised himself for the barter of the heirloom of his race, and every word of the child stung him with a stinging sense of shame.

And he spoke in his wrath rather than in his sorrow.

“You are a little fool,” he said harshly, as they had never heard him speak. “You rave like a play-actor. Get up and go to bed. The stove is sold. There is no more to be said. Children like you have nothing to do with such matters. The stove is sold, and goes to Munich to-morrow. What is it to you? Be thankful I can get bread for you. Get on your legs I say, and go to bed.”



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Strehla took up the jug of ale as he paused, and drained it slowly as a man who had no cares.

August sprang to his feet and threw his hair back off his face; the blood rushed into his cheeks, making them scarlet; his great soft eyes flamed alight with furious passion.

“You *dare* not!” he cried aloud, “you dare not sell it, I say! It is not yours alone; it is ours —”

Strehla flung the emptied jug on the bricks with a force that shattered it to atoms, and, rising to his feet, struck his son a blow that felled him to the floor. It was the first time in all his life that he had ever raised his hand against any one of his children.

Then he took the oil lamp that stood at his elbow and stumbled off to his own chamber with a cloud before his eyes.

“What has happened?” said August a little while later, as he opened his eyes and saw Dorothea weeping above him on the wolfskin before the stove. He had been struck backward, and his head had fallen on the hard bricks where the wolfskin did not reach. He sat up a moment, with his face bent upon his hands.

“I remember now,” he said, very low, under his breath.

Dorothea showered kisses on him, while her tears fell like rain.

“But, oh, dear, how could you speak so to father?” she murmured. “It was very wrong.”

“No, I was right,” said August; and his little mouth, that hitherto had only curled in laughter, curved downward with a fixed and bitter seriousness. “How dare he? How dare he?” he muttered, with his head sunk in his hands. “It is not his alone. It belongs to us all. It is as much yours and mine as it is his.”

Dorothea could only sob in answer. She was too frightened to speak. The authority of their parents in the house had never in her remembrance been questioned.

“Are you hurt by the fall, dear August?” she murmured at length, for he looked to her so pale and strange.

“Yes—no. I do not know. What does it matter?”

He sat up upon the wolfskin with passionate pain upon his face; all his soul was in rebellion, and he was only a child and was powerless.

“It is a sin; it is a theft; it is an infamy,” he said slowly, his eyes fastened on the gilded feet of Hirschvogel.



“Oh, August, do not say such things of father!” sobbed his sister. “Whatever he does, we ought to think it right.”

August laughed aloud.

“Is it right that he should spend his money in drink?—that he should let orders lie unexecuted?—that he should do his work so ill that no one cares to employ him?—that he should live on grandfather’s charity, and then dare sell a thing that is ours every whit as much as it is his? To sell Hirschvogel! Oh, dear God! I would sooner sell my soul!”

“August!” cried Dorothea with piteous entreaty. He terrified her; she could not recognize her little, gay, gentle brother in those fierce and blasphemous words.



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August laughed aloud again; then all at once his laughter broke down into bitterest weeping. He threw himself forward on the stove, covering it with kisses, and sobbing as though his heart would burst from his bosom.

What could he do? Nothing, nothing, nothing!

“August, dear August,” whispered Dorothea piteously, and trembling all over,—for she was a very gentle girl, and fierce feeling terrified her,—“August, do not lie there. Come to bed; it is quite late. In the morning you will be calmer. It is horrible indeed, and we shall die of cold, at least the little ones; but if it be father’s will—”

“Let me alone,” said August through his teeth, striving to still the storm of sobs that shook him from head to foot. “Let me alone. In the morning!—how can you speak of the morning”

“Come to bed, dear,” sighed his sister. “Oh, August, do not lie and look like that! you frighten me. Do come to bed.”

“I shall stay here.”

“Here! all night!”

“They might take it in the night. Besides, to leave it *now!*”

“But it is cold! the fire is out.”

“It will never be warm any more, nor shall we.”

All his childhood had gone out of him, all his gleeful, careless, sunny temper had gone with it; he spoke sullenly and wearily, choking down the great sobs in his chest. To him it was as if the end of the world had come.

His sister lingered by him while striving to persuade him to go to his place in the little crowded bedchamber with Albrecht and Waldo and Christof. But it was in vain. “I shall stay here,” was all he answered her. And he stayed—all the night long.

The lamps went out; the rats came and ran across the floor; as the hours crept on through midnight and past, the cold intensified and the air of the room grew like ice. August did not move; he lay with his face downward on the golden and rainbow-hued pedestal of the household treasure, which henceforth was to be cold forevermore, an exiled thing in a foreign city, in a far-off land.

Whilst yet it was dark his three elder brothers came down the stairs and let themselves out, each bearing his lantern and going to his work in stone yard and timber yard and at the salt works. They did not notice him; they did not know what had happened.



A little later his sister came down with a light in her hand to make ready the house ere morning should break.

She stole up to him and laid her hand on his shoulder timidly.

“Dear August, you must be frozen. August, do look up! do speak!”

August raised his eyes with a wild, feverish, sullen look in them that she had never seen there. His face was ashen white; his lips were like fire. He had not slept all night; but his passionate sobs had given way to delirious waking dreams and numb senseless trances, which had alternated one on another all through the freezing, lonely, horrible hours.



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“It will never be warm again,” he muttered, “never again!”

Dorothea clasped him with trembling hands. “August! do you not know me?” she cried in an agony. “I am Dorothea. Wake up, dear— wake up! It is morning, only so dark!”

August shuddered all over.

“The morning!” he echoed.

He slowly rose up on to his feet.

“I will go to grandfather,” he said very low. “He is always good; perhaps he could save it.”

Loud blows with the heavy iron knocker of the house-door drowned his words. A strange voice called aloud through the keyhole:—

“Let me in! Quick!—there is no time to lose! More snow like this, and the roads will all be blocked. Let me in! Do you hear? I am come to take the great stove.”

August sprang erect, his fists doubled, his eyes blazing.

“You shall never touch it!” he screamed; “you shall never touch it!”

“Who shall prevent us?” laughed a big man who was a Bavarian, amused at the fierce little figure fronting him.

“I!” said August. “You shall never have it! you shall kill me first!”

“Strehla,” said the big man as August’s father entered the room, “you have got a little mad dog here; muzzle him.”

One way and another they did muzzle him. He fought like a little demon, and hit out right and left, and one of his blows gave the Bavarian a black eye. But he was soon mastered by four grown men, and his father flung him with no light hand out from the door of the back entrance, and the buyers of the stately and beautiful stove set to work to pack it heedfully and carry it away.

When Dorothea stole out to look for August, he was nowhere in sight. She went back to little Gilda, who was ailing, and sobbed over the child, whilst the others stood looking on, dimly understanding that with Hirschvogel was going all the warmth of their bodies, all the light of their hearth.

Even their father now was sorry and ashamed; but two hundred florins seemed a big sum to him, and, after all, he thought the children could warm themselves quite as well



at the black iron stove in the kitchen. Besides, whether he regretted it now or not, the work of the Nurnberg potter was sold irrevocably, and he had to stand still and see the men from Munich wrap it in manifold wrappings and bear it out into the snowy air to where an ox cart stood in waiting for it.

In another moment Hirschvogel was gone—gone forever and aye.

August had stood still for a time, leaning, sick and faint from the violence that had been used to him, against the back wall of the house. The wall looked on a court where a well was, and the backs of other houses, and beyond them the spire of the Muntze Tower and the peaks of the mountains.

Into the court an old neighbor hobbled for water, and, seeing the boy, said to him:—

“Child, is it true your father is selling the big painted stove?”



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August nodded his head, then burst into a passion of tears.

“Well, for sure he is a fool,” said the neighbor. “Heaven forgive me for calling him so before his own child! but the stove was worth a mint of money. I do remember in my young days, in old Anton’s time (that was your great-grand-father, my lad), a stranger from Vienna saw it, and said that it was worth its weight in gold.”

August’s sobs went on their broken, impetuous course.

“I loved it! I loved it!” he moaned. “I do not care what its value was. I loved it! I *loved it!*”

“You little simpleton!” said the old man, kindly. “But you are wiser than your father, when all’s said. If sell it he must, he should have taken it to good Herr Steiner over at Spritz, who would have given him honest value. But no doubt they took him over his beer—ay, ay! but if I were you I would do better than cry. I would go after it.”

August raised his head, the tears raining down his cheeks.

“Go after it when you are bigger,” said the neighbor, with a good-natured wish to cheer him up a little. “The world is a small thing after all: I was a traveling clockmaker once upon a time, and I know that your stove will be safe enough whoever gets it; anything that can be sold for a round sum is always wrapped up in cotton wool by everybody. Ay, ay, don’t cry so much; you will see your stove again some day.”

Then the old man hobbled away to draw his brazen pail full of water at the well.

August remained leaning against the wall; his head was buzzing, and his heart fluttering with the new idea which had presented itself to his mind. “Go after it,” had said the old man. He thought, “Why not go with it?” He loved it better than any one, even better than Dorothea; and he shrank from the thought of meeting his father again, his father who had sold Hirschvogel.

He was by this time in that state of exaltation in which the impossible looks quite natural and commonplace. His tears were still wet on his pale cheeks, but they had ceased to fall. He ran out of the courtyard by a little gate, and across to the huge Gothic porch of the church. From there he could watch unseen his father’s house door, at which were always hanging some blue-and-gray pitchers, such as are common and so picturesque in Austria, for a part of the house was let to a man who dealt in pottery.

He hid himself in the grand portico, which he had so often passed through to go to mass or complin within, and presently his heart gave a great leap, for he saw the straw-enwrapped stove brought out and laid with infinite care on the bullock dray. Two of the Bavarian men mounted beside it, and the sleigh-wagon slowly crept over the snow of the place—snow crisp and hard as stone. The noble old minister looked its grandest



and most solemn, with its dark gray stone and its vast archways, and its porch that was itself as big as many a church, and its strange gargoyles and lamp-irons black against the snow on its roof and on the pavement; but for once August had no eyes for it: he only watched for his old friend. Then he, a little unnoticeable figure enough, like a score of other boys in Hall, crept, unseen by any of his brothers or sisters, out of the porch and over the shelving uneven square, and followed in the wake of the dray.



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Its course lay towards the station of the railway, which is close to the salt works, whose smoke at times sullies this part of clean little Hall, though it does not do very much damage. From Hall the iron road runs northward through glorious country to Salzburg, Vienna, Prague, Buda, and southward over the Brenner into Italy. Was Hirschvogel going north or south? This at least he would soon know.

August had often hung about the little station, watching the trains come and go and dive into the heart of the hills and vanish. No one said anything to him for idling about; people are kind-hearted and easy of temper in this pleasant land, and children and dogs are both happy there. He heard the Bavarians arguing and vociferating a great deal, and learned that they meant to go too and wanted to go with the great stove itself. But this they could not do, for neither could the stove go by a passenger train nor they themselves go in a goods train. So at length they insured their precious burden for a large sum, and consented to send it by a luggage train which was to pass through Hall in half an hour. The swift trains seldom deign to notice the existence of Hall at all.

August heard, and a desperate resolve made itself up in his little mind. Where Hirschvogel went would he go. He gave one terrible thought to Dorothea—poor, gentle Dorothea!—sitting in the cold at home, then set to work to execute his project. How he managed it he never knew very clearly himself; but certain it is that when the goods train from the north, that had come all the way from Linz on the Danube, moved out of Hall, August was hidden behind the stove in the great covered truck, and wedged, unseen and undreamt of by any human creature, amidst the cases of wood-carving, of clocks and clock-work, of Vienna toys, of Turkish carpets, of Russian skins, of Hungarian wines, which shared the same abode as did his swathed and bound Hirschvogel. No doubt he was very naughty, but it never occurred to him that he was so: his whole mind and soul were absorbed in the one entrancing idea, to follow his beloved friend and fire-king.

It was very dark in the closed truck, which had only a little window above the door; and it was crowded, and had a strong smell in it from the Russian hides and the hams that were in it. But August was not frightened; he was close to Hirschvogel, and presently he meant to be closer still; for he meant to do nothing less than get inside Hirschvogel himself. Being a shrewd little boy, and having had, by great luck, two silver groschen in his breeches pocket, which he had earned the day before by chopping wood, he had bought some bread and sausage at the station of a woman there who knew him, and who thought he was going out to his Uncle Joachim's chalet above Jenbach. This he had with him, and this he ate in the darkness and the lumbering, pounding, thundering noise which made him giddy, as never had he been in a train of any kind before. Still he ate, having had no breakfast, and being a child, and half a German, and not knowing at all how or when he ever would eat again.



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When he had eaten, not as much as he wanted, but as much as he thought was prudent (for who could say when he would be able to buy anything more?), he set to work like a little mouse to make a hole in the withes of straw and hay which enveloped the stove. If it had been put in a packing-case, he would have been defeated at the onset. As it was, he gnawed, and nibbled, and pulled, and pushed, just as a mouse would have done, making his hole where he guessed that the opening of the stove was—the opening through which he had so often thrust the big oak logs to feed it. No one disturbed him; the heavy train went lumbering on and on, and he saw nothing at all of the beautiful mountains, and shining waters, and great forests through which he was being carried. He was hard at work getting through the straw and hay and twisted ropes; and get through them at last he did, and found the door of the stove, which he knew so well, and which was quite large enough for a child of his age to slip through, and it was this which he had counted upon doing. Slip through he did, as he had often done at home for fun, and curled himself up there to see if he could anyhow remain during many hours. He found that he could; air came in through the brass fretwork of the stove; and with admirable caution in such a little fellow he leaned out, drew the hay and straw together, and rearranged the ropes, so that no one could ever have dreamed a little mouse had been at them. Then he curled himself up again, this time more like a dormouse than anything else; and, being safe inside his dear Hirschvogel and intensely cold, he went fast asleep, as if he were in his own bed at home with Albrecht and Christof on either side of him. The train lumbered on, stopping often and long, as the habit of goods trains is, sweeping the snow away with its cow-switcher, and rumbling through the deep heart of the mountains, with its lamps aglow like the eyes of a dog in a night of frost.

The train rolled on in its heavy, slow fashion, and the child slept soundly for a long while. When he did awake, it was quite dark outside in the land; he could not see, and of course he was in absolute darkness; and for a while he was sorely frightened, and trembled terribly, and sobbed in a quiet, heartbroken fashion, thinking of them all at home. Poor Dorothea! how anxious she would be! How she would run over the town and walk up to grandfather's at Dorf Ampas, and perhaps even send over to Jenbach, thinking he had taken refuge with Uncle Joachim! His conscience smote him for the sorrow he must be even then causing to his gentle sister; but it never occurred to him to try and go back. If he once were to lose sight of Hirschvogel, how could he ever hope to find it again? how could he ever know whither it had gone—north, south, east, or west? The old neighbor had said that the world was small; but August knew at least that it must have a great many places in it: that he had seen himself on the maps on his schoolhouse walls. Almost any other little boy would, I think, have been frightened out of his wits at the position in which he found himself; but August was brave, and he had a firm belief that God and Hirschvogel would take care of him. The master-potter of Nurnberg was always present to his mind, a kindly, benign, and gracious spirit, dwelling manifestly in that porcelain tower whereof he had been the maker.



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A droll fancy, you say? But every child with a soul in him has quite as quaint fancies as this one was of August's.

So he got over his terror and his sobbing both, though he was so utterly in the dark. He did not feel cramped at all, because the stove was so large, and air he had in plenty, as it came through the fretwork running round the top. He was hungry again, and again nibbled with prudence at his loaf and his sausage. He could not at all tell the hour. Every time the train stopped and he heard the banging, stamping, shouting, and jangling of chains that went on, his heart seemed to jump up into his mouth. If they should find him out! Sometimes porters came and took away this case and the other, a sack here, a bale there, now a big bag, now a dead chamois. Every time the men trampled near him, and swore at each other, and banged this and that to and fro, he was so frightened that his very breath seemed to stop. When they came to lift the stove out, would they find him? and if they did find him, would they kill him? That was what he kept thinking of all the way, all through the dark hours, which seemed without end. The goods trains are usually very slow, and are many days doing what a quick train does in a few hours. This one was quicker than most, because it was bearing goods to the King of Bavaria; still, it took all the short winter's day and the long winter's night and half another day to go over ground that the mail trains cover in a forenoon. It passed great armored Kufstein standing across the beautiful and solemn gorge, denying the right of way to all the foes of Austria. It passed twelve hours later, after lying by in out-of-the-way stations, pretty Rosenheim, that marks the border of Bavaria. And here the Nurnberg stove, with August inside it, was lifted out heedfully and set under a covered way. When it was lifted out, the boy had hard work to keep in his screams; he was tossed to and fro as the men lifted the huge thing, and the earthenware walls of his beloved fire-king were not cushions of down. However, though they swore and grumbled at the weight of it, they never suspected that a living child was inside it, and they carried it out on to the platform and set it down under the roof of the goods shed. There it passed the rest of the night and all the next morning, and August was all the while within it.

The winds of early winter sweep bitterly over Rosenheim, and all the vast Bavarian plain was one white sheet of snow. If there had not been whole armies of men at work always clearing the iron rails of the snow, no trains could ever have run at all. Happily for August, the thick wrappings in which the stove was enveloped and the stoutness of its own make screened him from the cold, of which, else, he must have died—frozen. He had still some of his loaf, and a little—a very little—of his sausage. What he did begin to suffer from was thirst; and this frightened him almost more than anything else, for Dorothea had read aloud to them one night a story of the tortures some wrecked men had endured because they could not find any water but the salt sea. It was many hours since he had last taken a drink from the wooden spout of their old pump, which brought them the sparkling, ice-cold water of the hills.



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But, fortunately for him, the stove, having been marked and registered as “fragile and valuable,” was not treated quite like a mere bale of goods, and the Rosenheim station-master, who knew its consignees, resolved to send it on by a passenger train that would leave there at daybreak. And when this train went out, in it, among piles of luggage belonging to other travelers, to Vienna, Prague, Buda-Pest, Salzburg, was August, still undiscovered, still doubled up like a mole in the winter under the grass. Those words, “fragile and valuable,” had made the men lift Hirschvogel gently and with care. He had begun to get used to his prison, and a little used to the incessant pounding and jumbling and rattling and shaking with which modern travel is always accompanied, though modern invention does deem itself so mightily clever. All in the dark he was, and he was terribly thirsty; but he kept feeling the earthenware sides of the Nurnberg giant and saying, softly, “Take care of me; oh, take care of me, dear Hirschvogel!”

He did not say, “Take me back;” for, now that he was fairly out in the world, he wished to see a little of it. He began to think that they must have been all over the world in all this time that the rolling and roaring and hissing and jangling had been about his ears; shut up in the dark, he began to remember all the tales that had been told in Yule round the fire at his grandfather’s good house at Dorf, of gnomes and elves and subterranean terrors, and the Erl King riding on the black horse of night, and—and—and he began to sob and to tremble again, and this time did scream outright. But the steam was screaming itself so loudly that no one, had there been any one nigh, would have heard him; and in another minute or so the train stopped with a jar and a jerk, and he in his cage could hear men crying aloud, “Munchen! Munchen!”

Then he knew enough of geography to know that he was in the heart of Bavaria. He had had an uncle killed in the Bayerischenwald by the Bavarian forest guards, when in the excitement of hunting a black bear he had overpassed the limits of the Tyrol frontier.

That fate of his kinsman, a gallant young chamois hunter who had taught him to handle a trigger and load a muzzle, made the very name of Bavaria a terror to August.

“It is Bavaria! It is Bavaria!” he sobbed to the stove; but the stove said nothing to him; it had no fire in it. A stove can no more speak without fire than a man can see without light. Give it fire, and it will sing to you, tell tales to you, offer you in return all the sympathy you ask.

“It is Bavaria!” sobbed August; for it is always a name of dread augury to the Tyroleans, by reason of those bitter struggles and midnight shots and untimely deaths which come from those meetings of jager and hunter in the Bayerischenwald. But the train stopped; Munich was reached, and August, hot and cold by turns, and shaking like a little aspen leaf, felt himself once more carried out on the shoulders of men, rolled along on a truck, and finally set down, where he knew not, only he knew he was thirsty—so thirsty! If only he could have reached his hand out and scooped up a little snow!

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He thought he had been moved on this truck many miles, but in truth the stove had been only taken from the railway station to a shop in the Marienplatz. Fortunately, the stove was always set upright on its four gilded feet, an injunction to that effect having been affixed to its written label, and on its gilded feet it stood now in the small dark curiosity shop of one Hans Rhilfer.

“I shall not unpack it till Anton comes,” he heard a man’s voice say; and then he heard a key grate in a lock, and by the unbroken stillness that ensued he concluded he was alone, and ventured to peep through the straw and hay. What he saw was a small square room filled with pots and pans, pictures, carvings, old blue jugs, old steel armor, shields, daggers, Chinese idols, Vienna china, Turkish rugs, and all the art lumber and fabricated rubbish of a bric-a-brac dealer’s. It seemed a wonderful place to him; but, oh! was there one drop of water in it all? That was his single thought; for his tongue was parching, and his throat felt on fire, and his chest began to be dry and choked as with dust.

There was not a drop of water, but there was a lattice window grated, and beyond the window was a wide stone ledge covered with snow. August cast one look at the locked door, darted out of his hiding-place, ran and opened the window, crammed the snow into his mouth again and again, and then flew back into the stove, drew the hay and straw over the place he entered by, tied the cords, and shut the brass door down on himself. He had brought some big icicles in with him, and by them his thirst was finally, if only temporarily, quenched. Then he sat still in the bottom of the stove, listening intently, wide awake, and once more recovering his natural boldness.

The thought of Dorothea kept nipping his heart and his conscience with a hard squeeze now and then; but he thought to himself, “If I can take her back Hirschvogel, then how pleased she will be, and how little ‘Gilda will clap her hands!’” He was not at all selfish in his love for Hirschvogel: he wanted it for them all at home quite as much as for himself. There was at the bottom of his mind a kind of ache of shame that his father—his own father—should have stripped their hearth and sold their honor thus.

A robin had been perched upon a stone griffin sculptured on a house eave near. August had felt for the crumbs of his loaf in his pocket, and had thrown them to the little bird sitting so easily on the frozen snow.

In the darkness where he was he now heard a little song, made faint by the stove-wall and the window glass that was between him and it, but still distinct and exquisitely sweet. It was the robin, singing after feeding on the crumbs. August, as he heard, burst into tears. He thought of Dorothea, who every morning threw out some grain or some bread on the snow before the church. “What use is it going *there*,” she said, “if we forget the sweetest creatures God has made?” Poor Dorothea! Poor, good, tender, much-burdened little soul! He thought of her till his tears ran like rain.



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Yet it never once occurred to him to dream of going home. Hirschvogel was here.

Presently the key turned in the lock of the door, he heard heavy footsteps and the voice of the man who had said to his father, "You have a little mad dog; muzzle him!" The voice said, "Ay, ay, you have called me a fool many times. Now you shall see what I have gotten for two hundred dirty florins. Potztausend! never did *you* do such a stroke of work."

Then the other voice grumbled and swore, and the steps of the two men approached more closely, and the heart of the child went pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, as a mouse's does when it is on the top of a cheese and hears a housemaid's broom sweeping near. They began to strip the stove of its wrappings: that he could tell by the noise they made with the hay and the straw. Soon they had stripped it wholly: that, too, he knew by the oaths and exclamations of wonder and surprise and rapture which broke from the man who had not seen it before.

"A right royal thing! A wonderful and never-to-be-rivaled thing! Grander than the great stove of Hohen-Salzburg! Sublime! magnificent! matchless!"

So the epithets ran on in thick guttural voices, diffusing a smell of lager beer so strong as they spoke that it reached August crouching in his stronghold. If they should open the door of the stove! That was his frantic fear. If they should open it, it would be all over with him. They would drag him out; most likely they would kill him, he thought, as his mother's young brother had been killed in the Wald.

The perspiration rolled off his forehead in his agony; but he had control enough over himself to keep quiet, and after standing by the Nurnberg master's work for nigh an hour, praising, marveling, expatiating in the lengthy German tongue, the men moved to a little distance and began talking of sums of money and divided profits, of which discourse he could make out no meaning. All he could make out was that the name of the king—the king—the king came over very often in their arguments. He fancied at times they quarreled, for they swore lustily and their voices rose hoarse and high; but after a while they seemed to pacify each other and agree to something, and were in great glee, and so in these merry spirits came and slapped the luminous sides of stately Hirschvogel, and shouted to it:—

"Old Mumchance, you have brought us rare good luck! To think you were smoking in a silly fool of a salt baker's kitchen all these years!"

Then inside the stove August jumped up, with flaming cheeks and clinching hands, and was almost on the point of shouting out to them that they were the thieves and should say no evil of his father, when he remembered, just in time, that to breathe a word or make a sound was to bring ruin on himself and sever him forever from Hirschvogel. So he kept quite still, and the men barred the shutters of the little lattice and went out by the

door, double-locking it after them. He had made out from their talk that they were going to show Hirschvogel to some great person: therefore he kept quite still and dared not move.



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Muffled sounds came to him through the shutters from the streets below—the rolling of wheels, the clanging of church bells, and bursts of that military music which is so seldom silent in the streets of Munich. An hour perhaps passed by; sounds of steps on the stairs kept him in perpetual apprehension. In the intensity of his anxiety, he forgot that he was hungry and many miles away from cheerful, Old World little Hall, lying by the clear gray river-water, with the ramparts of the mountains all around.

Presently the door opened again sharply. He could hear the two dealers' voices murmuring unctuous words, in which "honor," "gratitude," and many fine long noble titles played the chief parts. The voice of another person, more clear and refined than theirs, answered them curtly, and then, close by the Nurnberg stove and the boy's ear, ejaculated a single "Wunderschon!" August almost lost his terror for himself in his thrill of pride at his beloved Hirschvogel being thus admired in the great city. He thought the master-potter must be glad too.

"Wunderschon!" ejaculated the stranger a second time, and then examined the stove in all its parts, read all its mottoes, gazed long on all its devices.

"It must have been made for the Emperor Maximilian," he said at last; and the poor little boy, meanwhile, within, was "hugged up into nothing," as you children say, dreading that every moment he would open the stove. And open it truly he did, and examined the brass-work of the door; but inside it was so dark that crouching August passed unnoticed, screwed up into a ball like a hedgehog as he was. The gentleman shut to the door at length, without having seen anything strange inside it; and then he talked long and low with the tradesmen, and, as his accent was different from that which August was used to, the child could distinguish little that he said, except the name of the king and the word "gulden" again and again. After a while he went away, one of the dealers accompanying him, one of them lingering behind to bar up the shutters. Then this one also withdrew again, double-locking the door.

The poor little hedgehog uncurled itself and dared to breathe aloud.

What time was it?

Late in the day, he thought, for to accompany the stranger they had lighted a lamp; he had heard the scratch of the match, and through the brass fretwork had seen the lines of light.

He would have to pass the night here, that was certain. He and Hirschvogel were locked in, but at least they were together. If only he could have had something to eat! He thought with a pang of how at this hour at home they ate the sweet soup, sometimes with apples in it from Aunt Maila's farm orchard, and sang together, and listened to Dorothea's reading of little tales, and basked in the glow and delight that had beamed on them from the great Nurnberg fire-king.



“Oh, poor, poor little 'Gilda! What is she doing without the dear Hirschvogel?” he thought. Poor little 'Gilda! she had only now the black iron stove of the ugly little kitchen. Oh, how cruel of father!



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August could not bear to hear the dealers blame or laugh at his father, but he did feel that it had been so, so cruel to sell Hirschvogel. The mere memory of all those long winter evenings, when they had all closed round it, and roasted chestnuts or crab apples in it, and listened to the howling of the wind and the deep sound of the church bells, and tried very much to make each other believe that the wolves still came down from the mountains into the streets of Hall, and were that very minute growling at the house door—all this memory coming on him with the sound of the city bells, and the knowledge that night drew near upon him so completely, being added to his hunger and his fear, so overcame him that he burst out crying for the fiftieth time since he had been inside the stove, and felt that he would starve to death, and wondered dreamily if Hirschvogel would care. Yes, he was sure Hirschvogel would care. Had he not decked it all summer long with alpine roses and edelweiss and heaths and made it sweet with thyme and honeysuckle and great garden lilies? Had he ever forgotten when Santa Claus came to make it its crown of holly and ivy and wreath it all around?

“Oh, shelter me; save me; take care of me!” he prayed to the old fire-king, and forgot, poor little man, that he had come on this wild-goose chase northward to save and take care of Hirschvogel!

After a time he dropped asleep, as children can do when they weep, and little robust hill-born boys most surely do, be they where they may. It was not very cold in this lumber-room; it was tightly shut up, and very full of things, and at the back of it were the hot pipes of an adjacent house, where a great deal of fuel was burnt. Moreover, August’s clothes were warm ones, and his blood was young. So he was not cold, though Munich is terribly cold in the nights of December; and he slept on and on—which was a comfort to him, for he forgot his woes, and his perils, and his hunger, for a time.

Midnight was once more chiming from all the brazen tongues of the city when he awoke, and, all being still around him, ventured to put his head out of the brass door of the stove to see why such a strange bright light was round him.

It was a very strange and brilliant light indeed; and yet, what is perhaps still stranger, it did not frighten or amaze him, nor did what he saw alarm him either, and yet I think it would have done you or me. For what he saw was nothing less than all the bric-a-brac in motion.

A big jug, an Apostel-Krug, of Kruessen, was solemnly dancing a minuet with a plump Faenza jar; a tall Dutch clock was going through a gavotte with a spindle-legged ancient chair; a very droll porcelain figure of Littenhausen was bowing to a very stiff soldier in terre cuite of Ulm; an old violin of Cremona was playing itself, and a queer little shrill plaintive music that thought itself merry came from a painted spinnet covered with faded roses; some gilt Spanish leather had got up on



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the wall and laughed; a Dresden mirror was tripping about, crowned with flowers, and a Japanese bonze was riding along on a griffin; a slim Venetian rapier had come to blows with a stout Ferrara sabre, all about a little pale-faced chit of a damsel in white Nymphenburg china; and a portly Franconian pitcher in gres gris was calling aloud, "Oh, these Italians! always at feud!" But nobody listened to him at all. A great number of little Dresden cups and saucers were all skipping and waltzing; the teapots, with their broad round faces, were spinning their own lids like teetotums; the high-backed gilded chairs were having a game of cards together; and a little Saxe poodle, with a blue ribbon at its throat, was running from one to another, whilst a yellow cat of Cornelis Lachtleven's rode about on a Delft horse in blue pottery of 1489. Meanwhile the brilliant light shed on the scene came from three silver candelabra, though they had no candles set up in them; and, what is the greatest miracle of all, August looked on at these mad freaks and felt no sensation of wonder! He only, as he heard the violin and the spinnet playing, felt an irresistible desire to dance too. No doubt his face said what he wished; for a lovely little lady, all in pink and gold and white, with powdered hair, and high-heeled shoes, and all made of the very finest and fairest Meissen china, tripped up to him, and smiled, and gave him her hand, and led him out to a minuet. And he danced it perfectly—poor little August in his thick, clumsy shoes, and his thick, clumsy sheepskin jacket, and his rough homespun linen, and his broad Tyrolean hat! He must have danced it perfectly, this dance of kings and queens in days when crowns were duly honored, for the lovely lady always smiled benignly and never scolded him at all, and danced so divinely herself to the stately measures the spinnet was playing that August could not take his eyes off her till, their minuet ended, she sat down on her own white-and-gold bracket.

"I am the Princess of Saxe-Royale," she said to him, with a benignant smile; "and you have got through that minuet very fairly."

Then he ventured to say to her:—

"Madame my princess, could you tell me kindly why some of the figures and furniture dance and speak, and some lie up in a corner like lumber? It does make me curious. Is it rude to ask?"

For it greatly puzzled him why, when some of the bric-a-brac was all full of life and motion, some was quite still and had not a single thrill in it.

"My dear child," said the powdered lady, "is it possible that you do not know the reason? Why, those silent, dull things are *imitation!*"

This she said with so much decision that she evidently considered it a condensed but complete answer.



“Imitation?” repeated August, timidly, not understanding.

“Of course! Lies, falsehoods, fabrications!” said the princess in pink shoes, very vivaciously. “They only *pretend* to be what we *are*! They never wake up: how can they? No imitation ever had any soul in it yet.”



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“Oh!” said August, humbly, not even sure that he understood entirely yet. He looked at Hirschvogel: surely it had a royal soul within it: would it not wake up and speak? Oh, dear! how he longed to hear the voice of his fire-king! And he began to forget that he stood by a lady who sat upon a pedestal of gold-and-white china, with the year 1746 cut on it, and the Meissen mark.

“What will you be when you are a man?” said the little lady, sharply, for her black eyes were quick though her red lips were smiling. “Will you work for the Konigliche Porcellan-Manufactur, like my great dead Kandler?”

“I have never thought,” said August, stammering; “at least—that is—I do wish—I do hope to be a painter, as was Master Augustin Hirschvogel at Nurnberg.”

“Bravo!” said all the real bric-a-brac in one breath, and the two Italian rapiers left off fighting to cry, “Begone!” For there is not a bit of true bric-a-brac in all Europe that does not know the names of the mighty masters.

August felt quite pleased to have won so much applause, and grew as red as the lady's shoes with bashful contentment.

“I knew all the Hirschvogels, from old Veit downwards,” said a fat gres de Flandre beer jug; “I myself was made at Nurnberg.” And he bowed to the great stove very politely, taking off his own silver hat—I mean lid—with a courtly sweep that he could scarcely have learned from burgomasters. The stove, however, was silent, and a sickening suspicion (for what is such heartbreak as a suspicion of what we love?) came through the mind of August: *Was Hirschvogel only imitation?*

“No, no, no, no!” he said to himself stoutly; though Hirschvogel never stirred, never spoke, yet would he keep all faith in it! After all their happy years together, after all the nights of warmth and joy he owed it, should he doubt his own friend and hero, whose gilt lion's feet he had kissed in his babyhood? “No, no, no, no!” he said again, with so much emphasis that the Lady of Meissen looked sharply again at him.

“No,” she said, with pretty disdain; “no, believe me, they may ‘pretend’ forever. They can never look like us! They imitate even our marks, but never can they look like the real thing, never can they chassent de race.”

“How should they?” said a bronze statuette of Vischer's. “They daub themselves green with verdigris, or sit out in the rain to get rusted; but green and rust are not patina; only the ages can give that!”

“And *my* imitations are all in primary colors, staring colors, hot as the colors of a hostelry's signboard!” said the Lady of Meissen, with a shiver.



“Well, there is a gres de Flandre over there, who pretends to be a Hans Kraut, as I am,” said the jug with the silver hat, pointing with his handle to a jug that lay prone on its side in a corner. “He has copied me as exactly as it is given to moderns to copy us. Almost he might be mistaken for me. But yet what a difference there is! How crude are his blues! how evidently done over the glaze are his black letters! He has tried to give himself my very twist; but what a lamentable exaggeration of that playful deviation in my lines which in his becomes actual deformity!”



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“And look at that,” said the gilt Cordovan leather, with a contemptuous glance at a broad piece of gilded leather spread out on a table. “They will sell him cheek by jowl with me, and give him my name; but look! *I* am overlaid with pure gold beaten thin as a film and laid on me in absolute honesty by worthy Diego de las Gorgias, worker in leather of lovely Cordova in the blessed reign of Ferdinand the Most Christian. *His* gilding is one part gold to eleven other parts of brass and rubbish, and it has been laid on him with a brush—A *brush!*—pah! of course he will be as black as a crock in a few years’ time, whilst I am as bright as when I first was made, and, unless I am burnt as my Cordova burnt its heretics, I shall shine on forever.”

“They carve pear wood because it is so soft, and dye it brown, and call it *me!*” said an old oak cabinet, with a chuckle.

“That is not so painful; it does not vulgarize you so much as the cups they paint to-day and christen after *me!*” said a Carl Theodor cup subdued in hue, yet gorgeous as a jewel.

“Nothing can be so annoying as to see common gimcracks aping *me!*” interposed the princess in the pink shoes.

“They even steal my motto, though it is Scripture,” said a Trauerkrug of Regensburg in black-and-white.

“And my own dots they put on plain English china creatures!” sighed the little white maid of Nymphenburg.

“And they sell hundreds and thousands of common china plates, calling them after me, and baking my saints and my legends in a muffle of to-day; it is blasphemy!” said a stout plate of Gubbio, which in its year of birth had seen the face of Maestro Giorgio.

“That is what is so terrible in these bric-a-brac places,” said the princess of Meissen. “It brings one in contact with such low, imitative creatures; one really is safe nowhere nowadays unless under glass at the Louvre or South Kensington.”

“And they get even there,” sighed the gres de Flandre. “A terrible thing happened to a dear friend of mine, a terre cuite of Blasius (you know the terres cuites of Blasius date from 1560). Well, he was put under glass in a museum that shall be nameless, and he found himself set next to his own imitation born and baked yesterday at Frankfort, and what think you the miserable creature said to him, with a grin? ‘Old Pipeclay,’—that is what he called my friend,—‘the fellow that bought *me* got just as much commission on me as the fellow that bought *you*, and that was all that *he* thought about. You know it is only the public money that goes!’ And the horrid creature grinned again till he actually cracked himself. There is a Providence above all things, even museums.”



“Providence might have interfered before, and saved the public money,” said the little Meissen lady with the pink shoes.

“After all, does it matter?” said a Dutch jar of Haarlem. “All the shamming in the world will not *make* them us!”



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“One does not like to be vulgarized,” said the Lady of Meissen, angrily.

“My maker, the Krabbetje,[Footnote: Jan Asselyn. called Krabbetje, the Little Crab, born 1610, master-potter of Delft and Haarlem] did not trouble his head about that,” said the Haarlem jar, proudly. “The Krabbetje made me for the kitchen, the bright, clean, snow-white Dutch kitchen, well-nigh three centuries ago, and now I am thought worthy the palace; yet I wish I were at home; yes, I wish I could see the good Dutch vrouw, and the shining canals, and the great green meadows dotted with the kine.”

“Ah! if we could all go back to our makers!” sighed the Gubbio plate, thinking of Giorgio Andreoli and the glad and gracious days of the Renaissance: and somehow the words touched the frolicsome souls of the dancing jars, the spinning teapots, the chairs that were playing cards; and the violin stopped its merry music with a sob, and the spinnet sighed, thinking of dead hands.

Even the little Saxe poodle howled for a master forever lost; and only the swords went on quarreling, and made such a clattering noise that the Japanese bonze rode at them on his monster and knocked them both right over, and they lay straight and still, looking foolish, and the little Nymphenburg maid, though she was crying, smiled and almost laughed.

Then from where the great stove stood there came a solemn voice.

All eyes turned upon Hirschvogel, and the heart of its little human comrade gave a great jump of joy.

“My friends,” said that clear voice from the turret of Nurnberg faience, “I have listened to all you have said. There is too much talking among the Mortalities whom one of themselves has called the Windbags. Let not us be like them. I hear among men so much vain speech, so much precious breath and precious time wasted in empty boasts, foolish anger, useless reiteration, blatant argument, ignoble mouthings, that I have learned to deem speech a curse, laid on man to weaken and envenom all his undertakings. For over two hundred years I have never spoken myself: you, I hear, are not so reticent. I only speak now because one of you said a beautiful thing that touched me. If we all might but go back to our makers! Ah, yes! if we might! We were made in days when even men were true creatures, and so we, the work of their hands, were true too. We, the begotten of ancient days, derive all the value in us from the fact that our makers wrought at us with zeal, with piety, with integrity, with faith,—not to win fortunes or to glut a market, but to do nobly an honest thing and create for the honor of the Arts and God. I see amidst you a little human thing who loves me, and in his own ignorant childish way loves Art. Now, I want him forever to remember this night and these words; to remember that we are what we are, and precious in the eyes of the world, because centuries ago those who were of single mind and of pure hand so created us, scorning sham and haste

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and counterfeit. Well do I recollect my master, Augustin Hirschvogel. He led a wise and blameless life, and wrought in loyalty and love, and made his time beautiful thereby, like one of his own rich, many-colored church casements, that told holy tales as the sun streamed through them. Ah, yes, my friends, to go back to our masters!—that would be the best that could befall us. But they are gone, and even the perishable labors of their lives outlive them. For many, many years I, once honored of emperors, dwelt in a humble house and warmed in successive winters three generations of little, cold, hungry children. When I warmed them they forgot that they were hungry; they laughed and told tales, and slept at last about my feet. Then I knew that humble as had become my lot it was one that my master would have wished for me, and I was content. Sometimes a tired woman would creep up to me, and smile because she was near me, and point out my golden crown or my ruddy fruit to a baby in her arms. That was better than to stand in a great hall of a great city, cold and empty, even though wise men came to gaze and throngs of fools gaped, passing with flattering words. Where I go now I know not; but since I go from that humble house where they loved me, I shall be sad and alone. They pass so soon— those fleeting mortal lives! Only we endure—we, the things that the human brain creates. We can but bless them a little as they glide by: if we have done that, we have done what our masters wished. So in us our masters, being dead, yet may speak and live.”

Then the voice sank away in silence, and a strange golden light that had shone on the great stove faded away; so also the light died down in the silver candelabra. A soft, pathetic melody stole gently through the room. It came from the old, old spinnet that was covered with the faded roses.

Then that sad, sighing music of a bygone day died too; the clocks of the city struck six of the morning; day was rising over the Bayerischenwald. August awoke with a great start, and found himself lying on the bare bricks of the floor of the chamber, and all the bric-a-brac was lying quite still all around. The pretty Lady of Meissen was motionless on her porcelain bracket, and the little Saxe poodle was quiet at her side.

He rose slowly to his feet. He was very cold, but he was not sensible of it or of the hunger that was gnawing his little empty entrails. He was absorbed in the wondrous sight, in the wondrous sounds, that he had seen and heard.

All was dark around him. Was it still midnight or had morning come? Morning, surely; for against the barred shutters he heard the tiny song of the robin.

Tramp, tramp, too, came a heavy step up the stair. He had but a moment in which to scramble back into the interior of the great stove, when the door opened and the two dealers entered, bringing burning candles with them to see their way.



August was scarcely conscious of danger more than he was of cold or hunger. A marvelous sense of courage, of security, of happiness, was about him, like strong and gentle arms enfolding him and lifting him upwards—upwards—upwards! Hirschvogel would defend him.



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The dealers undid the shutters, scaring the redbreast away, and then tramped about in their heavy boots and chattered in contented voices, and began to wrap up the stove once more in all its straw and hay and cordage.

It never once occurred to them to glance inside. Why should they look inside a stove that they had bought and were about to sell again for all its glorious beauty of exterior?

The child still did not feel afraid. A great exaltation had come to him: he was like one lifted up by his angels.

Presently the two traders called up their porters, and the stove, heedfully swathed and wrapped and tended as though it were some sick prince going on a journey, was borne on the shoulders of six stout Bavarians down the stairs and out of the door into the Marienplatz. Even behind all those wrappings August felt the icy bite of the intense cold of the outer air at dawn of a winter's day in Munich. The men moved the stove with exceeding gentleness and care, so that he had often been far more roughly shaken in his big brothers' arms than he was in his journey now; and though both hunger and thirst made themselves felt, being foes that will take no denial, he was still in that state of nervous exaltation which deadens all physical suffering and is at once a cordial and an opiate. He had heard Hirschvogel speak; that was enough.

The stout carriers tramped through the city, six of them, with the Nurnberg fire-castle on their brawny shoulders, and went right across Munich to the railway station, and August in the dark recognized all the ugly, jangling, pounding, roaring, hissing railway noises, and thought, despite his courage and excitement, "Will it be a very long journey?" for his stomach had at times an odd sinking sensation, and his head sadly often felt light and swimming. If it was a very, very long journey, he felt half afraid that he would be dead or something bad before the end, and Hirschvogel would be so lonely: that was what he thought most about; not much about himself, and not much about Dorothea and the house at home. He was "high strung to high emprise," and could not look behind him.

Whether for a long or a short journey, whether for weal or woe, the stove with August still within it was once more hoisted up into a great van; but this time it was not all alone, and the two dealers as well as the six porters were all with it.

He in his darkness knew that; for he heard their voices. The train glided away over the Bavarian plain southward; and he heard the men say something of Berg and the Wurm-See, but their German was strange to him, and he could not make out what these names meant.

The train rolled on, with all its fume and fuss, and roar of steam, and stench of oil and burning coal. It had to go quietly and slowly on account of the snow which was falling, and which had fallen all night.

“He might have waited till he came to the city,” grumbled one man to another. “What weather to stay on at Berg!”

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But who he was that stayed on at Berg, August could not make out at all.

Though the men grumbled about the state of the roads and the season, they were hilarious and well content, for they laughed often, and, when they swore, did so good-humoredly, and promised their porters fine presents at New Year; and August, like a shrewd little boy as he was, who even in the secluded Inntal had learned that money is the chief mover of men's mirth, thought to himself with a terrible pang:—

“They have sold Hirschvogel for some great sum! They have sold him already!”

Then his heart grew faint and sick within him, for he knew very well that he must soon die, shut up without food and water thus; and what new owner of the great fire-palace would ever permit him to dwell in it?

“Never mind; I *will* die,” thought he; “and Hirschvogel will know it.”

Perhaps you think him a very foolish little fellow; but I do not.

It is always good to be loyal and ready to endure to the end. It is but an hour and a quarter that the train usually takes to pass from Munich to the Wurm-See or Lake of Starnberg; but this morning the journey was much slower, because the way was encumbered by snow. When it did reach Possenhofen and stop, and the Nurnberg stove was lifted out once more, August could see through the fretwork of the brass door, as the stove stood upright facing the lake, that this Wurm-See was a calm and noble piece of water, of great width, with low wooded banks and distant mountains, a peaceful, serene place, full of rest.

It was now near ten o'clock. The sun had come forth; there was a clear gray sky hereabouts; the snow was not falling, though it lay white and smooth everywhere, down to the edge of the water, which before long would itself be ice.

Before he had time to get more than a glimpse of the green gliding surface, the stove was again lifted up and placed on a large boat that was in waiting—one of those very long and huge boats which the women in these parts use as laundries, and the men as timber rafts. The stove, with much labor and much expenditure of time and care, was hoisted into this, and August would have grown sick and giddy with the heaving and falling if his big brothers had not long used him to such tossing about, so that he was as much at ease head, as feet, downward. The stove once in it safely with its guardians, the big boat moved across the lake to Leoni. How a little hamlet on a Bavarian lake got that Tuscan-sounding name I cannot tell; but Leoni it is. The big boat was a long time crossing; the lake here is about three miles broad, and these heavy barges are unwieldy and heavy to move, even though they are towed and tugged at from the shore.

“If we should be too late!” the two dealers muttered to each other, in agitation and alarm. “He said eleven o’clock.”

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“Who was he?” thought August; “the buyer, of course, of Hirschvogel.” The slow passage across the Wurm-See was accomplished at length; the lake was placid; there was a sweet calm in the air and on the water; there was a great deal of snow in the sky, though the sun was shining and gave a solemn hush to the atmosphere. Boats and one little steamer were going up and down; in the clear frosty light the distant mountains of Zillerthal and the Algau Alps were visible; market people, cloaked and furred, went by on the water or on the banks; the deep woods of the shores were black and gray and brown. Poor August could see nothing of a scene that would have delighted him; as the stove was now set, he could only see the old worm-eaten wood of the huge barge.

Presently they touched the pier at Leoni.

“Now, men, for a stout mile and half! You shall drink your reward at Christmas-time,” said one of the dealers to his porters, who, stout, strong men as they were, showed a disposition to grumble at their task. Encouraged by large promises, they shouldered sullenly the Nurnberg stove, grumbling again at its preposterous weight, but little dreaming that they carried within it a small, panting, trembling boy; for August began to tremble now that he was about to see the future owner of Hirschvogel.

“If he look a good, kind man,” he thought, “I will beg him to let me stay with it.”

The porters began their toilsome journey, and moved off from the village pier. He could see nothing, for the brass door was over his head, and all that gleamed through it was the clear gray sky. He had been tilted on to his back, and if he had not been a little mountaineer, used to hanging head downwards over crevasses, and, moreover, seasoned to rough treatment by the hunters and guides of the hills and the salt-workers in the town, he would have been made ill and sick by the bruising and shaking and many changes of position to which he had been subjected.

The way the men took was a mile and a half in length, but the road was heavy with snow, and the burden they bore was heavier still. The dealers cheered them on, swore at them and praised them in one breath; besought them and reiterated their splendid promises, for a clock was striking eleven, and they had been ordered to reach their destination at that hour, and, though the air was so cold, the heat-drops rolled off their foreheads as they walked, they were so frightened at being late. But the porters would not budge a foot quicker than they chose, and as they were not poor fourfooted carriers their employers dared not thrash them, though most willingly would they have done so.

The road seemed terribly long to the anxious tradesmen, to the plodding porters, to the poor little man inside the stove, as he kept sinking and rising, sinking and rising, with each of their steps.



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Where they were going he had no idea, only after a very long time he lost the sense of the fresh icy wind blowing on his face through the brasswork above, and felt by their movements beneath him that they were mounting steps or stairs. Then he heard a great many different voices, but he could not understand what was being said. He felt that his bearers paused some time, then moved on and on again. Their feet went so softly he thought they must be moving on carpet, and as he felt a warm air come to him he concluded that he was in some heated chambers, for he was a clever little fellow, and could put two and two together, though he was so hungry and so thirsty and his empty stomach felt so strangely. They must have gone, he thought, through some very great number of rooms, for they walked so long on and on, on and on. At last the stove was set down again, and, happily for him, set so that his feet were downward.

What he fancied was that he was in some museum, like that which he had seen in the city of Innsbruck.

The voices he heard were very hushed, and the steps seemed to go away, far away, leaving him alone with Hirschvogel. He dared not look out, but he peeped through the brasswork, and all he could see was a big carved lion's head in ivory, with a gold crown atop. It belonged to a velvet fauteuil, but he could not see the chair, only the ivory lion.

There was a delicious fragrance in the air—a fragrance as of flowers. "Only how can it be flowers?" thought August. "It is November!"

From afar off, as it seemed, there came a dreamy, exquisite music, as sweet as the spinnet's had been, but so much fuller, so much richer, seeming as though a chorus of angels were singing all together. August ceased to think of the museum: he thought of heaven. "Are we gone to the Master?" he thought, remembering the words of Hirschvogel.

All was so still around him; there was no sound anywhere except the sound of the far-off choral music.

He did not know it, but he was in the royal castle of Berg, and the music he heard was the music of Wagner, who was playing in a distant room some of the motives of "Parsival."

Presently he heard a fresh step near him, and he heard a low voice say, close behind him, "So!" An exclamation no doubt, he thought, of admiration and wonder at the beauty of Hirschvogel.

Then the same voice said, after a long pause, during which no doubt, as August thought, this newcomer was examining all the details of the wondrous fire-tower, "It was well bought; it is exceedingly beautiful! It is most undoubtedly the work of Augustin Hirschvogel."



Then the hand of the speaker turned the round handle of the brass door, and the fainting soul of the poor little prisoner within grew sick with fear.

The handle turned, the door was slowly drawn open, some one bent down and looked in, and the same voice that he had heard in praise of its beauty called aloud, in surprise: "What is this in it? A live child!"



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Then August, terrified beyond all self-control, and dominated by one master-passion, sprang out of the body of the stove and fell at the feet of the speaker.

“Oh, let me stay! Pray, mein herr, let me stay!” he sobbed. “I have come all the way with Hirschvogel!”

Some gentlemen’s hands seized him, not gently by any means, and their lips angrily muttered in his ear, “Little knave, peace! be quiet! hold your tongue! It is the king!”

They were about to drag him out of the august atmosphere as if he had been some venomous, dangerous beast come there to slay, but the voice he had heard speak of the stove said, in kind accents, “Poor little child! he is very young. Let him go: let him speak to me.”

The word of a king is law to his courtiers: so, sorely against their wish, the angry and astonished chamberlains let August slide out of their grasp, and he stood there in his little rough sheepskin coat and his thick, mud-covered boots, with his curling hair all in a tangle, in the midst of the most beautiful chamber he had ever dreamed of, and in the presence of a young man with a beautiful dark face, and eyes full of dreams and fire; and the young man said to him:—

“My child, how came you here, hidden in this stove? Be not afraid: tell me the truth. I am the king.”

August, in an instinct of homage, cast his great battered black hat with the tarnished gold tassels down on the floor of the room, and folded his little brown hands in supplication. He was too intensely in earnest to be in any way abashed; he was too lifted out of himself by his love for Hirschvogel to be conscious of any awe before any earthly majesty. He was only so glad—so glad it was the king. Kings were always kind; so the Tyrolese think, who love their lords.

“Oh, dear king!” he said, with trembling entreaty in his faint little voice, “Hirschvogel was ours, and we have loved it all our lives; and father sold it. And when I saw that it did really go from us, then I said to myself I would go with it; and I have come all the way inside it. And last night it spoke and said beautiful things.

“And I do pray you to let me live with it, and I will go out every morning and cut wood for it and you, if only you will let me stay beside it. No one ever has fed it with fuel but me since I grew big enough, and it loves me,—it does indeed; it said so last night; and it said that it had been happier with us than if it were in any palace—”

And then his breath failed him, and, as he lifted his little, eager, pale face to the young king’s, great tears were falling down his cheeks.



Now, the king liked all poetic and uncommon things, and there was that in the child's face which pleased and touched him. He motioned to his gentlemen to leave the little boy alone.

"What is your name?" he asked him.

"I am August Strehla. My father is Hans Strehla. We live in Hall, in the Innthal; and Hirschvogel has been ours so long—so long!"



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His lips quivered with a broken sob.

“And have you truly traveled inside this stove all the way from Tyrol?”

“Yes,” said August; “no one thought to look inside till you did.”

The king laughed; then another view of the matter occurred to him.

“Who bought the stove of your father?” he inquired.

“Traders of Munich,” said August, who did not know that he ought not to have spoken to the king as to a simple citizen, and whose little brain was whirling and spinning dizzily round its one central idea.

“What sum did they pay your father, do you know?” asked the sovereign.

“Two hundred florins,” said August, with a great sigh of shame. “It was so much money, and he is so poor, and there are so many of us.”

The king turned to his gentlemen-in-waiting. “Did these dealers of Munich come with the stove?”

He was answered in the affirmative. He desired them to be sought for and brought before him. As one of his chamberlains hastened on the errand, the monarch looked at August with compassion.

“You are very pale, little fellow; when did you eat last?”

“I had some bread and sausage with me; yesterday afternoon I finished it.”

“You would like to eat now?”

“If I might have a little water I would be glad; my throat is very dry.”

The king had water and wine brought for him, and cake also; but August, though he drank eagerly, could not swallow anything. His mind was in too great a tumult.

“May I stay with Hirschvogel?—may I stay?” he said, with feverish agitation.

“Wait a little,” said the king, and asked abruptly, “What do you wish to be when you are a man?”

“A painter. I wish to be what Hirschvogel was—I mean the master that made *my* Hirschvogel.”

“I understand,” said the king.



Then the two dealers were brought into their sovereign's presence. They were so terribly alarmed, not being either so innocent or so ignorant as August was, that they were trembling as though they were being led to the slaughter, and they were so utterly astonished too at a child having come all the way from Tyrol in the stove, as a gentleman of the court had just told them this child had done, that they could not tell what to say or where to look, and presented a very foolish aspect indeed.

"Did you buy this Nurnberg stove of this boy's father for two hundred florins?" the king asked them; and his voice was no longer soft and kind as it had been when addressing the child, but very stern.

"Yes, your majesty," murmured the trembling traders.

"And how much did the gentleman who purchased it for me give to you?"

"Two thousand ducats, your majesty," muttered the dealers, frightened out of their wits, and telling the truth in their fright.

The gentleman was not present: he was a trusted counselor in art matters of the king's, and often made purchases for him.



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The king smiled a little, and said nothing. The gentleman had made out the price to him as eleven thousand ducats.

“You will give at once to this boy’s father the two thousand gold ducats that you received, less the two hundred Austrian florins that you paid him,” said the king to his humiliated and abject subjects. “You are great rogues. Be thankful you are not more greatly punished.”

He dismissed them by a sign to his courtiers, and to one of these gave the mission of making the dealers of the Marienplatz disgorge their ill-gotten gains.

August heard, and felt dazzled yet miserable. Two thousand gold Bavarian ducats for his father! Why, his father would never need to go any more to the salt-baking! And yet whether for ducats or for florins, Hirschvogel was sold just the same, and would the king let him stay with it?—would he?

“Oh, do! oh, please do!” he murmured, joining his little brown weather-stained hands, and kneeling down before the young monarch, who himself stood absorbed in painful thought, for the deception so basely practised for the greedy sake of gain on him by a trusted counselor was bitter to him.

He looked down on the child, and as he did so smiled once more.

“Rise up, my little man,” he said, in a kind voice; “kneel only to your God. Will I let you stay with your Hirschvogel? Yes, I will; you shall stay at my court, and you shall be taught to be a painter,—in oils or on porcelain as you will,—and you must grow up worthily, and win all the laurels at our Schools of Art, and if when you are twenty-one years old you have done well and bravely, then I will give you your Nurnberg stove, or, if I am no more living, then those who reign after me shall do so. And now go away with this gentleman, and be not afraid, and you shall light a fire every morning in Hirschvogel, but you will not need to go out and cut the wood.”

Then he smiled and stretched out his hand; the courtiers tried to make August understand that he ought to bow and touch it with his lips, but August could not understand that anyhow; he was too happy. He threw his two arms about the king’s knees, and kissed his feet passionately; then he lost all sense of where he was, and fainted away from hunger, and tire, and emotion, and wondrous joy.

As the darkness of his swoon closed in on him, he heard in his fancy the voice from Hirschvogel saying:—

“Let us be worthy our maker!”

He is only a scholar yet, but he is a happy scholar, and promises to be a great man. Sometimes he goes back for a few days to Hall, where the gold ducats have made his



father prosperous. In the old house room there is a large white porcelain stove of Munich, the king's gift to Dorothea and 'Gilda.

And August never goes home without going into the great church and saying his thanks to God, who blessed his strange winter's journey in the Nurnberg stove. As for his dream in the dealers' room that night, he will never admit that he did dream it; he still declares that he saw it all, and heard the voice of Hirschvogel. And who shall say that he did not? for what is the gift of the poet and the artist except to see the sights which others cannot see and to hear the sounds that others cannot hear?



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THE AMBITIOUS ROSE TREE

She was a Quatre Saison Rose Tree.

She lived in a beautiful old garden with some charming magnolias for neighbors: they rather overshadowed her, certainly, because they were so very great and grand; but then such shadow as that is preferable, as every one knows, to a mere vulgar enjoyment of common daylight, and then the beetles went most to the magnolia-blossoms, for being so great and grand of course they got very much preyed upon, and this was a vast gain for the rose that was near them. She herself leaned against the wall of an orange-house, in company with a Banksia, a buoyant, active, simple-minded thing, for whom Rosa Damascena, who thought herself much better born than these climbers, had a natural contempt. Banksiae will flourish and be content anywhere, they are such easily pleased creatures; and when you cut them they thrive on it, which shows a very plebeian and pachydermatous temper; and they laugh all over in the face of an April day, shaking their little golden clusters of blossom in such a merry way that the Rose Tree, who was herself very reserved and thorny, had really scruples about speaking to them.

For she was by nature extremely proud,—much prouder than her lineage warranted,—and a hard fate had fixed her to the wall of an orangery, where hardly anybody ever came, except the gardener and his men to carry the oranges in in winter and out in spring, or water and tend them while they were housed there.

She was a handsome rose, and she knew it. But the garden was so crowded—like the world—that she could not get herself noticed in it. In vain was she radiant and red close on to Christmas-time as in the fullest heats of midsummer. Nobody thought about her or praised her. She pined and was very unhappy.

The Banksiae, who are little, frank, honest-hearted creatures, and say out what they think, as such plebeian people will, used to tell her roundly she was thankless for the supreme excellence of her lot.

“You have everything the soul of a rose can wish for: a splendid old wall with no nasty chinks in it; a careful gardener, who nips all the larvae in the bud before they can do you any damage; sun, water, care; above all, nobody ever cuts a single blossom off you! What more can you wish for? This orangery is paradise!”

She did not answer.

What wounded her pride so deeply was just this fact, that they never *did* cut off any of her blossoms. When day after day, year after year, she crowned herself with her rich crimson glory and no one ever came nigh to behold or to gather it, she could have died with vexation and humiliation.



Would nobody see she was worth anything?

The truth was that in this garden there was such an abundance of very rare roses that a common though beautiful one like Rosa Damascena remained unthought of; she was lovely, but then there were so many lovelier still, or, at least, much more a la mode.



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In the secluded garden corner she suffered all the agonies of a pretty woman in the great world, who is only a pretty woman, and no more. It needs so *very* much more to be “somebody.” To be somebody was what Rosa Damascena sighed for, from rosy dawn to rosier sunset.

From her wall she could see across the green lawns, the great parterre which spread before the house terrace, and all the great roses that bloomed there,—Her Majesty Gloire de Dijon, who was a reigning sovereign born, the royally born Niphetos, the Princesse Adelaide, the Comtesse Ouvaroff, the Vicomtesse de Cazes all in gold, Madame de Sombreuil in snowy white, the beautiful Louise de Savoie, the exquisite Duchess of Devoniensis,—all the roses that were great ladies in their own right, and as far off her as were the stars that hung in heaven. Rosa Damascena would have given all her brilliant carnation hues to be pale and yellow like the Princesse Adelaide, or delicately colorless like Her Grace of Devoniensis.

She tried all she could to lose her own warm blushes, and prayed that bees might sting her and so change her hues; but the bees were of low taste, and kept their pearl-powder and rouge and other pigments for the use of common flowers, like the evening primrose or the butter-cup and borage, and never came near to do her any good in arts of toilet.

One day the gardener approached and stood and looked at her: then all at once she felt a sharp stab in her from his knife, and a vivid pain ran downward through her stem.

She did not know it, but gardeners and gods “this way grant prayer.”

“Has not something happened to me?” she asked of the little Banksiae; for she felt very odd all over her; and when you are unwell you cannot be very haughty.

The saucy Banksiae laughed, running over their wires that they cling to like little children.

“You have got your wish,” they said. “You are going to be a great lady; they have made you into a Rosa Indica!”

A tea rose! Was it possible?

Was she going to belong at last to that grand and graceful order, which she had envied so long and vainly from afar?

Was she, indeed, no more mere simple Rosa Damascena? She felt so happy she could hardly breathe. She thought it was her happiness that stifled her; in real matter of fact it was the tight bands in which the gardener had bound her.



“Oh, what joy!” she thought, though she still felt very uncomfortable, but not for the world would she ever have admitted it to the Banksiae.

The gardener had tied a tin tube on to her, and it was heavy and cumbersome; but no doubt, she said to herself, the thing was fashionable, so she bore the burden of it very cheerfully.

The Banksiae asked her how she felt, but she would not deign even to reply; and when a friendly blackbird, who had often picked grubs off her leaves, came and sang to her, she kept silent: a Rosa Indica was far above a blackbird.



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“Next time you want a caterpillar taken away, he may eat you for *me!*” said the blackbird, and flew off in a huff.

She was very ungrateful to hate the black-bird so, for he had been most useful to her in doing to death all the larvae of worms and beetles and caterpillars and other destroyers which were laid treacherously within her leaves. The good blackbird, with many another feathered friend, was forever at work in some good deed of the kind, and all the good, grateful flowers loved him and his race. But to this terribly proud and discontented Rosa Damascena he had been a bore, a common creature, a nuisance, a monster—any one of these things by turns, and sometimes all of them altogether. She used to long for the cat to get him.

“You ought to be such a happy rose!” the merle had said to her, one day. “There is no rose so strong and healthy as you are, except the briars.”

And from that day she had hated him. The idea of naming those hedgerow brier roses in the same breath with her!

You would have seen in that moment of her rage a very funny sight had you been there; nothing less funny than a rose tree trying to box a blackbird’s ears!

But, to be sure, you would only have thought the wind was blowing about the rose, so you would have seen nothing really of the drollery of it all, which was not droll at all to Rosa Damascena, for a wound in one’s vanity is as long healing as a wound from a conical bullet in one’s body. The blackbird had not gone near her after that, nor any of his relations and friends, and she had had a great many shooting and flying pains for months together, in consequence of aphides’ eggs having been laid inside her stem—eggs of which the birds would have eased her long before if they had not been driven away by her haughty rage.

However, she had been almost glad to have some ailment. She had called it aneurism, and believed it made her look refined and interesting. If it would only have made her pale! But it had not done that: she had remained of the richest rose color.

When the winter had passed and the summer had come round again, the grafting had done its work: she was really a Rosa Indica, and timidly put forth the first blossom in her new estate. It was a small, rather puny yellowish thing, not to be compared to her own natural red clusters, but she thought it far finer.

Scarcely had it been put forth by her than the gardener whipped it off with his knife, and bore it away in proof of his success in such transmogrifications.

She had never felt the knife before, when she had been only Rosa Damascena: it hurt her very much, and her heart bled.



“Il faut souffrir pour etre belle,” said the Banksiae in a good-natured effort at consolation. She was not going to answer them, and she made believe that her tears were only dew, though it was high noon and all the dewdrops had been drunk by the sun, who by noontime gets tired of climbing and grows thirsty.



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Her next essay was much finer, and the knife whipped that off also. That summer she bore more and more blossoms, and always the knife cut them away, for she had been made one of the great race of Rosa Indica.

Now, a rose tree, when a blossom is chopped or broken off, suffers precisely as we human mortals do if we lose a finger; but the rose tree, being a much more perfect and delicate handiwork of nature than any human being, has a faculty we have not: it lives and has a sentient soul in every one of its roses, and whatever one of these endures the tree entire endures also by sympathy. You think this very wonderful? Not at all. It is no whit more wonderful than that a lizard's tail chopped off runs about by itself, or that a dog can scent a foe or a thief whilst the foe or the thief is yet miles away. All these things are most wonderful, or not at all so--just as you like.

In a little while she bore another child: this time it was a fine fair creature, quite perfect in its hues and shapes. "I never saw a prettier!" said an emperor butterfly, pausing near for a moment; at that moment the knife of the gardener severed the rosebud's stalk.

"The lady wants one for her bouquet de corsage: she goes to the opera to-night," the man said to another man, as he took the young tea rose.

"What is the opera?" asked the mother rose wearily of the butterfly. He did not know; but his cousin the death's-head moth, asleep under a magnolia leaf, looked down with a grim smile on his quaint face.

"It is where everything dies in ten seconds," he answered. "It is a circle of fire; many friends of mine have flown in, none ever returned: your daughter will shrivel up and perish miserably. One pays for glory."

The rose tree shivered through all her stalks; but she was still proud, and tried to think that all this was said only out of envy. What should an old death's-head moth know, whose eyes were so weak that a farthing rushlight blinded them?

So she lifted herself a little higher, and would not even see that the Banksiae were nodding to her; and as for her old friend the blackbird, how vulgar he looked, bobbing up and down hunting worms and woodlice! could anything be more outrageously vulgar than that staring yellow beak of his? She twisted herself round not to see him, and felt quite annoyed that he went on and sang just the same, unconscious of, or indifferent to, her coldness.

With each successive summer Rosa Damascena became more integrally and absolutely a Rosa Indica, and suffered in proportion to her fashion and fame.



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True, people came continually to look at her, and especially in Maytime would cry aloud, "What a beautiful Niphetos!" But then she was bereaved of all her offspring, for, being of the race of Niphetos, they were precious, and one would go to die in an hour in a hot ballroom, and another to perish in a Sevres vase, where the china indeed was exquisite but the water was foul, and others went to be suffocated in the vicious gases of what the mortals call an opera box, and others were pressed to death behind hard diamonds in a woman's bosom; in one way or another they each and all perished miserably. She herself also lost many of her once luxuriant leaves, and had a little scanty foliage, red-brown in summer, instead of the thick, dark-green clothing that she had worn when a rustic maiden. Not a day passed but the knife stabbed her; when the knife had nothing to take she was barren and chilly, for she had lost the happy power of looking beautiful all the year round, which once she had possessed.

One day came when she was taken up out of the ground and borne into a glass house, placed in a large pot, and lifted up on to a pedestal, and left in a delicious atmosphere, with patrician plants all around her with long Latin names, and strange, rare beauties of their own. She bore bud after bud in this crystal temple, and became a very crown of blossom; and her spirit grew so elated, and her vanity so supreme, that she ceased to remember she had ever been a simple Rosa Damascena, except that she was always saying to herself, "How great I am! how great I am!" which she might have noticed that those born ladies, the Devoniensis and the Louise de Savoie, never did. But she noticed nothing except her own beauty, which she could see in a mirror that was let into the opposite wall of the greenhouse. Her blossoms were many and all quite perfect, and no knife touched them; and though to be sure she was still very scantily clothed so far as foliage went, yet she was all the more fashionable for that, so what did it matter?

One day, when her beauty was at its fullest perfection, she heard all the flowers about her bending and whispering with rustling and murmuring, saying, "Who will be chosen? who will be chosen?"

Chosen for what? They did not talk much to her, because she was but a newcomer and a parvenue, but she gathered from them in a little time that there was to be a ball for a marriage festivity at the house to which the greenhouse was attached. Each flower wondered if it would be chosen to go to it. The azaleas knew they would go, because they were in their pink or rose ball-dresses all ready; but no one else was sure. The rose tree grew quite sick and faint with hope and fear. Unless she went, she felt that life was not worth the living. She had no idea what a ball might be, but she knew that it was another form of greatness, when she was all ready, too, and so beautiful!

The gardener came and sauntered down the glass house, glancing from one to another. The hearts of all beat high. The azaleas only never changed color: they were quite sure of themselves. Who could do without them in February?



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“Oh, take me! take me! take me!” prayed the rose tree, in her foolish, longing, arrogant heart.

Her wish was given her. The lord of their fates smiled when he came to where she stood.

“This shall be for the place of honor,” he murmured, as he lifted her out of the large vase she lived in on to a trestle and summoned his boys to bear her away. The very azaleas themselves grew pale with envy.

As for the rose tree herself, she would not look at any one; she was carried through the old garden straight past the Banksise, but she would make them no sign; and as for the blackbird, she hoped a cat had eaten him! Had he not known her as Rosa Damascena?

She was borne bodily, roots and all, carefully wrapped up in soft matting, and taken into the great house.

It was a very great house, a very grand house, and there was to be a marvelous feast in it, and a prince and princess from over the seas were that night to honor the mistress of it by their presence. All this Rosa Indica had gathered from the chatter of the flowers, and when she came into the big palace she saw many signs of excitement and confusion: servants out of livery were running up against one another in their hurry-scurry; miles and miles, it seemed, of crimson carpeting were being unrolled all along the terrace and down the terrace steps, since by some peculiar but general impression royal personages are supposed not to like to walk upon anything else, though myself I think they must get quite sick of red carpet, seeing so very much of it spread for them wherever they go. To Rosa Indica, however, the bright scarlet carpeting looked very handsome, and seemed, indeed, a foretaste of heaven.

Soon she was carried quite inside the house, into an immense room with a beautiful dome-shaped ceiling, painted in fresco three centuries before, and fresh as though it had been painted yesterday. At the end of the room was a great chair, gilded and painted, too, three centuries before, and covered with velvet, gold-fringed, and powdered with golden grasshoppers. “That common insect here!” thought Rosa, in surprise, for she did not know that the chief of the house, long, long, long ago, when sleeping in the heat of noon in Palestine in the first crusade, had been awakened by a grasshopper lighting on his eyelids, and so had been aroused in time to put on his armor and do battle with a troop attacking Saracen cavalry, and beat them; wherefore, in gratitude, he had taken the humble field-creature as his badge for evermore.

They set the roots of Rosa Indica now into a vase—such a vase! the royal blue of Sevres, if you please, and with border and scroll work and all kinds of wonders and glories painted on it and gilded on it, and standing four feet high if it stood one inch! I



could never tell you the feelings of Rosa if I wrote a thousand pages. Her heart thrilled so with ecstasy that she almost dropped all her petals, only her vanity came to her aid, and helped her to control in a measure her emotions. The gardeners broke off a good deal of mould about her roots, and they muttered one to another something about her dying of it. But Rosa thought no more of that than a pretty lady does when her physician tells her she will die of tight lacing; not she! She was going to be put into that Sevres vase.



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This was enough for her, as it is enough for the lady that she is going to be put into a hundred-guinea ball gown.

In she went. It was certainly a tight fit, as the gown often is, and Rosa felt nipped, strained, bruised, suffocated. But an old proverb has settled long ago that pride feels no pain, and perhaps the more foolish the pride the less is the pain that is felt—for the moment.

They set her well into the vase, putting green moss over her roots, and then they stretched her branches out over a gilded trelliswork at the back of the vase. And very beautiful she looked; and she was at the head of the room, and a huge mirror down at the farther end opposite to her showed her own reflection. She was in paradise!

“At last,” she thought to herself, “at last they have done me justice!”

The azaleas were all crowded round underneath her, like so many kneeling courtiers, but they were not taken out of their pots; they were only shrouded in moss. They had no Sevres vases. And they had always thought so much of themselves and given themselves such airs, for there is nothing so vain as an azalea,—except, indeed, a camellia, which is the most conceited flower in the world, though, to do it justice, it is also the most industrious, for it is busy getting ready its next winter buds whilst the summer is still hot and broad on the land, which is very wise and prudent in it and much to be commended.

Well, there was Rosa Indica at the head of the room in the Sevres vase, and very proud and triumphant she felt throned there, and the azaleas, of course, were whispering enviously underneath her, “Well, after all, she was only Rosa Damascena not so *very* long ago.”

Yes, *they knew!* What a pity it was! They knew she had once been Rosa Damascena and never would wash it out of their minds—the tiresome, spiteful, malignant creatures!

Even aloft in the vase, in all her glory, the rose could have shed tears of mortification, and was ready to cry like Themistocles, “Can nobody give us oblivion?”

Nobody could give that, for the azaleas, who were so irritated at being below her, were not at all likely to hold their tongues. But she had great consolations and triumphs, and began to believe that, let them say what they chose, she had never been a common garden wall rose. The ladies of the house came in and praised her to the skies; the children ran up to her and clapped their hands and shouted for joy at her beauty; a wonderful big green bird came in and hopped before her, cocked his head on one side, and said to her, “Pretty Poll! oh, *such* a pretty Poll!”



“Even the birds adore me here!” she thought, not dreaming he was only talking of himself; for when you are as vain as was this poor dear Rosa, creation is pervaded with your own perfections, and even when other people say only “Poll!” you feel sure they are saying “You!” or they ought to be if they are not.



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So there she stood in her grand Sevres pot, and she was ready to cry with the poet, "The world may end tonight!" Alas! it was not the world which was to end. Let me hasten to close this true heart-rending history.

There was a great dinner as the sun began to set, and the mistress of the house came in on the arm of the great foreign prince; and what did the foreign prince do but look up at Rosa, straight up at her, and over the heads of the azaleas, and say to his hostess: "What a beautiful rose you have there! A Niphetos, is it not?"

And her mistress, who had known her long as simple Rosa Damascena, answered, "Yes, sir; it is a Niphetos."

Oh, to have lived for that hour! The silly thing thought it worth all her suffering from the gardener's knife, all the loss of her robust health and delightful power of flowering in all four seasons. She was a Niphetos, really and truly a Niphetos! and not one syllable hinted as to her origin! She began to believe she had been *born* a tea rose!

The dinner was long and gorgeous; the guests were dazzling in jewels and in decorations; the table was loaded with old plate and rare china; the prince made a speech and used her as a simile of love and joy and purity and peace. The rose felt giddy with triumph and with the fumes of the wines around her. Her vase was of purple and gold, and all the voices round her said, "Oh, the beautiful rose!" No one noticed the azaleas. How she wished that the blackbird could see for a minute, if the cat would gobble him up the next!

The day sped on; the chatelaine and her guests went away; the table was rearranged; the rose tree was left in its place of honor; the lights were lit; there was the sound of music near at hand; they were dancing in other chambers.

Above her hung a chandelier—a circle of innumerable little flames and drops that looked like dew or diamonds. She thought it was the sun come very close. After it had been there a little while it grew very hot, and its rays hurt her.

"Can you not go a little farther away, O Sun?" she said to it. It was flattered at being taken for the sun, but answered her: "I am fixed in my place. Do you not understand astronomy?"

She did not know what astronomy was, so was silent, and the heat hurt her. Still, she was in the place of honor: so she was happy.

People came and went; but nobody noticed her. They ate and drank, they laughed and made love, and then went away to dance again, and the music went on all night long, and all night long the heat of the chandelier poured down on her.

"I am in the place of honor," she said to herself a thousand times in each hour.



But the heat scorched her, and the fumes of the wines made her faint. She thought of the sweet fresh air of the old garden where the Banksiae were. The garden was quite near, but the windows were closed, and there were the walls now between her and it. She was in the place of honor. But she grew sick and waxed faint as the burning rays of the artificial light shining above her seemed to pierce through and through her like lances of steel. The night seemed very long. She was tired.



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She was erect there on her Sevres throne, with the light thrilling and throbbing upon her in every point. But she thought of the sweet, dark, fresh nights in the old home where the blackbird had slept, and she longed for them.

The dancers came and went, the music thrummed and screamed, the laughter was both near and far; the rose tree was amidst it all. Yet she felt alone—all alone! as travelers may feel in a desert. Hour succeeded hour; the night wore on apace; the dancers ceased to come; the music ceased, too; the light still burned down upon her, and the scorching fever of it consumed her like fire.

Then there came silence—entire silence. Servants came round and put out all the lights—hundreds and hundreds of lights—quickly, one by one. Other servants went to the windows and threw them wide open to let out the fumes of wine. Without, the night was changing into the gray that tells of earliest dawn. But it was a bitter frost; the grass was white with it; the air was ice. In the great darkness that had now fallen on all the scene this deadly cold came around the rose tree and wrapped her in it as in a shroud.

She shivered from head to foot.

The cruel glacial coldness crept into the hot banqueting chamber, and moved round it in white, misty circles, like steam, like ghosts of the gay guests that had gone. All was dark and chill—dark and chill as any grave!

What worth was the place of honor now?

Was this the place of honor?

The rose tree swooned and drooped! A servant's rough hand shook down its worn beauty into a heap of fallen leaves. When they carried her out dead in the morning, the little Banksia-buds, safe hidden from the frost within their stems, waiting to come forth when the summer should come, murmured to one another:—

“She had her wish; she was great. This way the gods grant foolish prayers, and punish discontent!”

LAMPBLACK

A poor black paint lay very unhappy in its tube one day alone, having tumbled out of an artist's color box and lying quite unnoticed for a year. “I am only Lampblack,” he said to himself. “The master never looks at me: he says I am heavy, dull, lustreless, useless. I wish I could cake and dry up and die, as poor Flake-white did when he thought she turned yellow and deserted her.”



But Lampblack could not die; he could only lie in his tin tube and pine, like a silly, sorrowful thing as he was, in company with some broken bits of charcoal and a rusty palette knife. The master never touched him; month after month passed by, and he was never thought of; the other paints had all their turn of fair fortune, and went out into the world to great academies and mighty palaces, transfigured and rejoicing in a thousand beautiful shapes and services. But Lampblack was always passed over as dull and coarse, which indeed he was, and knew himself to be so, poor fellow, which made it all the worse. "You are only a deposit!" said the other colors to him; and he felt that it was disgraceful to be a deposit, though he was not quite sure what it meant.



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“If only I were happy like the others!” thought poor, sooty Lampblack, sorrowful in his corner. “There is Bistre, now, he is not so very much better-looking than I am, and yet they can do nothing without him, whether it is a girl’s face or a wimple in a river!”

The others were all so happy in this beautiful bright studio, whose open casements were hung with myrtle and passion-flower, and whose silence was filled with the singing of nightingales. Cobalt, with a touch or two, became the loveliness of summer skies at morning; the Lakes and Carmines bloomed in a thousand exquisite flowers and fancies; the Chromes and Ochres (mere dull earths) were allowed to spread themselves in sheets of gold that took the shine of the sun into the darkest places; Umber, a sombre and gloomy thing, could lurk yet in a child’s curls and laugh in a child’s smiles; whilst all the families of the Vermilions, the Blues, the Greens, lived in a perpetual glory of sunset or sunrise, of ocean waves or autumn woods, of kingly pageant or of martial pomp.

It was very hard. Poor Lampblack felt as if his very heart would break, above all when he thought of pretty little Rose Madder, whom he loved dearly, and who never would even look at him, because she was so very proud, being herself always placed in nothing less than rosy clouds, or the hearts of roses, or something as fair and spiritual.

“I am only a wretched deposit!” sighed Lampblack, and the rusty palette knife grumbled back, “My own life has been ruined in cleaning dirty brushes, and see what the gratitude of men and brushes is!”

“But at least you have been of use once; but I never am—never!” said Lampblack, wearily; and indeed he had been there so long that the spiders had spun their silver fleeces all about him, and he was growing as gray as an old bottle does in a dark cellar.

At that moment the door of the studio opened, and there came a flood of light, and the step of a man was heard: the hearts of all the colors jumped for joy, because the step was that of their magician, who out of mere common clays and ground ores could raise them at a touch into splendors of the gods and divinities immortal.

Only the heart of poor dusty Lampblack could not beat a throb the more, because he was always left alone and never was thought worthy even of a glance. He could not believe his senses when this afternoon—oh, miracle and ecstasy!—the step of the master crossed the floor to the obscured corner where he lay under his spiders’ webs, and the hand of the master touched him. Lampblack felt sick and faint with rapture. Had recognition come at last?

The master took him up, “You will do for this work,” he said; and Lampblack was borne trembling to an easel. The colors, for once in their turn neglected, crowded together to watch, looking in their bright tin tubes like rows of little soldiers in armor.

“It is the old dull Deposit,” they murmured to one another, and felt contemptuous, yet were curious, as scornful people often will be.



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“But I am going to be glorious and great,” thought Lampblack, and his heart swelled high; for never more would they be able to hurl the name of Deposit at him, a name which hurt him none the less, but all the more indeed, because it was unintelligible.

“You will do for this work,” said the master, and let Lampblack out of his metal prison house into the light and touched him with the brush that was the wand of magic.

“What am I going to be?” wondered Lampblack, as he felt himself taken on to a large piece of deal board, so large that he felt he must be going to make the outline of an athlete or the shadows of a tempest at the least.

Himself he could not tell what he was becoming: he was happy enough and grand enough only to be employed, and, as he was being used, began to dream a thousand things of all the scenes he would be in, and all the hues that he would wear, and all the praise that he would hear when he went out into that wonderful great world of which his master was an idol. From his secret dreams he was harshly roused; all the colors were laughing and tittering round him till the little tin helmets they wore shook with their merriment.

“Old Deposit is going to be a signpost,” they cried to one another so merrily that the spiders, who are not companionable creatures, felt themselves compelled to come to the doors of their dens and chuckle too. A signpost! Lampblack, stretched out in an ecstasy upon the board, roused himself shivering from his dreams, and gazed at his own metamorphosis. He had been made into seven letters, thus:—

BANDITA

This word in the Italian country, where the English painter’s studio was, means, Do not trespass, do not shoot, do not show yourself here: anything, indeed, that is peremptory and uncivil to all trespassers. In these seven letters, outspread upon the board, was Lampblack crucified!

Farewell, ambitious hopes and happy dreams! He had been employed to paint a signboard, a thing stoned by the boys, blown on by the winds, gnawed by the rats, and drenched with the winter’s rains. Better the dust and the cobwebs of his old corner than such shame as this!

But help was there none. His fate was fixed. He was dried with a drench of turpentine, hastily clothed in a coat of copal, and here he yet was fully aware of all his misery, was being borne away upon the great board out of doors and handed to the gardener. For the master was a hasty and ardent man, and had been stung into impatience by the slaughter of some favorite blue thrushes in his ilex trees that day, and so in his haste had chosen to do journeyman’s work himself. Lampblack was carried out of the studio for the last time, and as the door closed on him he heard all the colors laughing, and the



laugh of little Rose Madder was highest of all as she cried to Naples Yellow, who was a dandy and made court to her: "Poor old ugly Deposit! He will grumble to the owls and the bats now!"



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The door shut, shutting him out forever from all that joyous company and palace of fair visions, and the rough hands of the gardener grasped him and carried him to the edge of the great garden, where the wall overlooked the public road, and there fastened him on high with a band of iron round the trunk of a tree.

That night it rained heavily, and the north wind blew, and there was thunder also. Lampblack, out in the storm without his tin house to shelter him, felt that of all creatures wretched on the face of the earth there was not one so miserable as he.

A signboard! Nothing but a signboard!

The degradation of a color, created for art and artists, could not be deeper or more grievous anywhere. Oh, how he sighed for his tin tube and the quiet nook with the charcoal and the palette knife!

He had been unhappy there indeed, but still had had always some sort of hope to solace him—some chance still remaining that one day fortune might smile and he be allowed to be at least the lowest stratum of some immortal work.

But now hope was there none. His doom, his end, were fixed and changeless. Never more could he be anything but what he was; and change there could be none till weather and time should have done their work on him, and he be rotting on the wet earth, a shattered and worm-eaten wreck.

Day broke—a gloomy, misty morning.

From where he was crucified upon the tree-trunk he could no longer even see his beloved home, the studio; he could only see a dusky, intricate tangle of branches all about him, and below the wall of flint, with the Banksia that grew on it, and the hard muddy highway, drenched from the storm of the night.

A man passed in a miller's cart, and stood up and swore at him, because the people had liked to come and shoot and trap the birds of the master's wooded gardens, and knew that they must not do it now.

A slug crawled over him, and a snail also. A woodpecker hammered at him with its strong beak. A boy went by under the wall and threw stones at him, and called him names. The rain poured down again heavily. He thought of the happy painting room, where it had seemed always summer and always sunshine, and where now in the forenoon all the colors were marshaling in the pageantry of the Arts, as he had seen them do hundreds of times from his lone corner. All the misery of the past looked happiness now.

"If I were only dead, like Flakewhite," he thought; but the stones only bruised, they did not kill him; and the iron band only hurt, it did not stifle him. For whatever suffers very

much has always so much strength to continue to exist. And almost his loyal heart blasphemed and cursed the master who had brought him to such a fate as this.



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The day grew apace, and noon went by, and with it the rain passed. The sun shone out once more, and Lampblack, even imprisoned and wretched as he was, could not but see how beautiful the wet leaves looked, and the gossamers all hung with raindrops, and the blue sky that shone through the boughs; for he had not lived with a great artist all his days to be blind, even in pain, to the loveliness of nature. The sun came out, and with it some little brown birds tripped out too—very simple and plain in their costumes and ways, but which Lampblack knew were the loves of the poets, for he had heard the master call them so many times in summer nights. The little brown birds came tripping and pecking about on the grass underneath his tree-trunk, and then flew on the top of the wall, which was covered with Banksia and many other creepers. The brown birds sang a little song, for though they sing most in the moonlight, they do sing by day too, and sometimes all day long. And what they sung was this:—

“Oh, how happy we are, how happy! No nets dare now be spread for us, no cruel boys dare climb, and no cruel shooters fire. We are safe, quite safe, and the sweet summer has begun!”

Lampblack listened, and even in his misery was touched and soothed by the tender liquid sounds that these little throats poured out among the light yellow bloom of the Banksia flowers. And when one of the brown birds came and sat on a branch by him, swaying itself and drinking the raindrops off a leaf, he ventured to ask, as well as he could for the iron that strangled him, why they were so safe, and what made them so happy.

The bird looked at him in surprise.

“Do you not know?” he said. “It is *you!*”

“I!” echoed Lampblack, and could say no more, for he feared that the bird was mocking him, a poor, silly, rusty black paint, only spread out to rot in fair weather and foul. What good could he do to any creature?

“You,” repeated the nightingale. “Did you not see that man under the wall? He had a gun; we should have been dead but for you. We will come and sing to you all night long, since you like it; and when we go to bed at dawn, I will tell my cousins, the thrushes and merles, to take our places, so that you shall hear somebody singing near you all the day long.”

Lampblack was silent.

His heart was too full to speak.

Was it possible that he was of use, after all?

“Can it be true?” he said timidly.



“Quite true,” said the nightingale.

“Then the master knew best,” thought Lampblack.

Never would he adorn a palace or be adored upon an altar. His high hopes were all dead, like last year’s leaves. The colors in the studio had all the glories of the world, but he was of use in it, after all: he could save these little lives. He was poor and despised, bruised by stones and drenched by storms; yet was he content, nailed there upon his tree, for he had not been made quite in vain.



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The sunset poured its red and golden splendors through the darkness of the boughs, and the birds sang all together, shouting for joy and praising God.

THE CHILD OF URBINO

It was in the year of grace 1490, in the reign of Guidobaldo, Lord of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino,—the year, by the way, of the birth of that most illustrious and gracious lady, Vittoria Colonna.

It was in the spring of the year, in that mountain eyrie beloved of the Muses and coveted of the Borgia, that a little boy stood looking out of a grated casement into the calm, sunshiny day. He was a pretty boy, with hazel eyes, and fair hair cut straight above his brows; he wore a little blue tunic with some embroidery about the throat of it, and had in his hand a little round flat cap of the same color. He was sad of heart this merry morning, for a dear friend of his, a friend ten years older than himself, had gone the night before on a journey over the mountains to Maestro Francesco at Bologna, there to be bound apprentice to that gentle artist. This friend, Timoteo della Vita, had been very dear to the child, had played with him and jested with him, made him toys and told him stories, and he was very full of pain at Timoteo's loss. Yet he told himself not to mind, for had not Timoteo said to him, "I go as goldsmith's 'prentice to the best of men; but I mean to become a painter"? And the child understood that to be a painter was to be the greatest and wisest the world held; he quite understood that, for he was Raffaello, the seven-year-old son of Signor Giovanni Sanzio.

He was a very happy little boy here in this stately, yet homely and kindly Urbino, where his people had come for refuge when the lances of Malatesta had ravaged and ruined their homestead. He had the dearest old grandfather in all the world; he had a loving mother, and he had a father who was very tender to him, and painted him among the angels of heaven, and was always full of pleasant conceits and admirable learning, and such true love of art that the child breathed it with every breath, as he could breathe the sweetness of a cowslip-bell when he held one in his hands up to his nostrils. It was good in those days to live in old Urbino. It was not, indeed, so brilliant a place as it became in a later day, when Ariosto came there, and Bembo and Castiglione and many another witty and learned gentleman, and the Courts of Love were held with ingenious rhyme and pretty sentiment, sad only for wantonness. But, if not so brilliant, it was homelier, simpler, full of virtue, with a wise peace and tranquillity that joined hands with a stout courage. The burgher was good friends with his prince, and knew that in any trouble or perplexity he could go up to the palace, or stop the duke in the market place, and be sure of sympathy and good counsel. There were a genuine love of beautiful things, a sense of public duty and of public spirit, a loyal temper and a sage contentment, among the good people of that time, which made them happy and prosperous.



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All work was solidly and thoroughly done, living was cheap, and food good and plentiful, much better and more plentiful than it is now; in the fine old houses every stone was sound, every bit of ornament well wrought; men made their nests to live in and to pass to their children and children's children after them, and had their own fancies and their own traditions recorded in the ironwork of their casements and in the woodwork of their doors. They had their happy day of honest toil from matins bell to evensong, and then walked out or sat about in the calm evening air and looked down on the plains below that were rich with grain and fruit and woodland, and talked and laughed among each other, and were content with their own pleasant, useful lives, not burnt up with envy of desire to be some one else, as in our sickly, hurrying time most people are.

Yes, life must have been very good in those old days in old Urbino, better than it is anywhere in ours.

Can you not picture to yourself good, shrewd, wise Giovanni Sanzio, with his old father by his side, and his little son running before him, in the holy evening time of a feast day, with the deep church bells swaying above-head, and the last sun-rays smiting the frescoed walls, the stone bastions, the blazoned standard on the castle roof, the steep city rocks shelving down into the greenery of cherry orchard and of pear tree? I can, whenever I shut my eyes and recall Urbino as it was; and would it had been mine to live then in that mountain home, and meet that divine child going along his happy smiling way, garnering unconsciously in his infant soul all the beautiful sights and sounds around him, to give them in his manhood to the world.

"Let him alone: he will paint all this some day," said his wise father, who loved to think that his brushes and his colors would pass in time to Raffaello, whose hands would be stronger to hold them than his own had been. And, whether he would ever paint it or not, the child never tired of thus looking from his eyrie on the rocks and counting all that passed below through the blowing corn under the leafy orchard boughs.

There were so many things to see in Urbino in that time, looking so over the vast green valley below: a clump of spears, most likely, as men-at-arms rode through the trees; a string of market folk bringing in the produce of the orchards or the fields; perchance a red-robed cardinal on a white mule with glittering housings, behind him a sumpter train rich with baggage, furniture, gold and silver plate; maybe the duke's hunting party going out or coming homeward with caracoling steeds, beautiful hounds straining at their leash, hunting horns sounding merrily over the green country; maybe a band of free lances, with plumes tossing, steel glancing, bannerets fluttering against the sky; or maybe a quiet gray-robed string of monks or pilgrims singing the hymn sung before Jerusalem, treading the long lush grass with sandaled feet, coming towards the city, to crowd slowly and gladly up its rocky height. Do you not wish with me you could stand in the window with Raffaello to see the earth as it was then?



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No doubt the good folks of Urbino laughed at him often for a little moonstruck dreamer, so many hours did he stand looking, looking,—only looking,—as eyes have a right to do that see well and not altogether as others see. Happily for him, the days of his childhood were times of peace, and he did not behold, as his father had done, the torches light up the street and the flames devour the homesteads.

At this time Urbino was growing into fame for its pottery work: those big dishes and bowls, those marriage plates and pharmacy jars which it made, were beginning to rival the products of its neighbor Gubbio, and when its duke wished to send a bridal gift, or a present on other festal occasions, he oftenest chose some service or some rare platter of his own Urbino ware. Now, pottery had not then taken the high place among the arts of Italy that it was destined very soon to do. As you will learn when you are older, after the Greeks and the Christians had exhausted all that was beautiful in shape and substance of clay vases, the art seemed to die out, and the potters and the pottery painters died with it, or at any rate went to sleep for a great many centuries, whilst soldiers and prelates, nobles and mercenaries, were trampling to and fro all over the land and disputing it, and carrying fire and torch, steel and desolation, with them in their quarrels and covetousness. But now, the reign of the late good duke, great Federigo, having been favorable to the Marches (as we call his province now), the potters and pottery painters, with other gentle craftsmen, had begun to look up again, and the beneficent fires of their humble ovens had begun to burn in Castel Durante, in Pesaro, in Faenza, in Gubbio, and in Urbino itself. The great days had not yet come: Maestro Giorgio was but a youngster, and Orazio Fontane not born, nor the clever baker Prestino either, nor the famous Fra Xanto; but there was a Don Giorgio even then in Gubbio, of whose work, alas! one plate now at the Louvre is all we have; and here in the ducal city on the hill rich and noble things were already being made in the stout and lustrous majolica that was destined to acquire later on so wide a ceramic fame. Jars and bowls and platters, oval dishes and ewers and basins, and big-bodied, metal-welded pharmacy vases were all made and painted at Urbino whilst Raffaele Sanzio was running about on rosy infantine feet. There was a master-potter of the Montefeltro at that time, one Maestro Benedetto Ronconi, whose name had not become world-renowned as Orazio Fontane's and Maestro Giorgio's did in the following century, yet who in that day enjoyed the honor of all the duchy, and did things very rare and fine in the Urbino ware. He lived within a stone's throw of Giovanni Sanzio, and was a gray-haired, handsome, somewhat stern and pompous man, now more than middle-aged, who had one beauteous daughter, by name Pacifica. He cherished Pacifica well, but not so well as he cherished the things he

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wrought—the deep round nuptial plates and oval massive dishes that he painted with Scriptural stories and strange devices, and landscapes such as those he saw around, and flowing scrolls with Latin mottoes in black letters, and which, when thus painted, he consigned with an anxiously beating heart to the trial of the ovens, and which sometimes came forth from the trial all cracked and blurred and marred, and sometimes emerged in triumph and came into his trembling hands iridescent and lovely with those lustrous and opaline hues which we admire in them to this day as the especial glory of majolica.

Maestro Benedetto was an ambitious and vain man, and had had a hard, laborious manhood, working at his potter's wheel and painter's brush before Urbino ware was prized in Italy or even in the duchy. Now, indeed, he was esteemed at his due worth, and his work was so also, and he was passably rich, and known as a good artist beyond the Marches; but there was a younger man over at Gubbio, the Don Giorgio who was precursor of unequaled Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, who surpassed him, and made him sleep o' nights on thorns, as envy makes all those to do who take her as their bedfellow.

The house of Maestro Benedetto was a long stone building, with a loggia at the back all overclimbed by hardy rose trees, and looking on a garden that was more than half an orchard, and in which grew abundantly pear trees, plum trees, and wood strawberries. The lancet windows of his workshop looked on all this quiet greenery. There were so many such pleasant workshops then in the land—calm, godly, homelike places, filled from without with song of birds and scent of herbs and blossoms. Nowadays men work in crowded, stinking cities, in close factory chambers; and their work is barren as their lives are.

The little son of neighbor Sanzio ran in and out this bigger, wider house and garden of Maestro Benedetto at his pleasure, for the maiden Pacifica was always glad to see him, and even the sombre master-potter would unbend to him, and show him how to lay the color on to the tremulous, fugitive, unbaked biscuit.

Pacificica was a lovely young woman of some seventeen or eighteen summers; and perhaps Raffaele was but remembering her when he painted in his after-years the face of his Madonna di San Sisto. He loved her as he loved everything that was beautiful and every one who was kind; and almost better than his own beloved father's studio, almost better than his dear old grandsire's cheerful little shop, did he love this grave, silent, sweet-smelling, sun-pierced, shadowy old house of Maestro Benedetto.



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Maestro Benedetto had four apprentices or pupils in that time learning to become figuli, but the one whom Raffaelle liked the most (and Pacifica too) was one Luca Torelli, of a village above in the mountains,—a youth with a noble, dark, pensive beauty of his own, and a fearless gait, and a supple, tall, slender figure that would have looked well in the light coat of mail and silken doublet of a man-at-arms. In sooth, the spirit of Messer Luca was more made for war and its risks and glories than for the wheel and the brush of the bottega; but he had loved Pacifica ever since he had come down one careless holy-day into Urbino, and had bound himself to her father's service in a heedless moment of eagerness to breathe the same air and dwell under the same roof as she did. He had gained little for his pains: to see her at mass and at mealtimes, now and then to be allowed to bring water from the well for her or feed her pigeons, to see her gray gown go down between the orchard trees and catch the sunlight, to hear the hum of her spinning wheel, the thrum of her viol—this was the uttermost he got of joy in two long years; and how he envied Raffaelle running along the stone floor of the loggia to leap into her arms, to hang upon her skirts, to pick the summer fruit with her, and sort with her the autumn herbs for drying!

"I love Pacifica!" he would say, with a groan, to Raffaelle; and Raffaelle would say, with a smile, "Ah, Luca, so do I!"

"It is not the same thing, my dear," sighed Luca; "I want her for my wife."

"I shall have no wife; I shall marry myself to painting," said Raffaelle, with a little grave, wise face looking out from under the golden roof of his fair hair. For he was never tired of watching his father painting the saints with their branch of palm on their ground of blue or of gold, or Maestro Benedetto making the dull clay glow with angels' wings and prophets' robes and holy legends told in color.

Now, one day, as Raffaelle was standing and looking thus at his favorite window in the potter's house, his friend, the handsome, black-browed Luca, who was also standing there, did sigh so deeply and so deplorably that the child was startled from his dreams.

"Good Luca, what ails you?" he murmured, winding his arms about the young man's knees.

"Oh, 'Faello!" mourned the apprentice, woefully. "Here is such a chance to win the hand of Pacifica if only I had talent—such talent as that Giorgio of Gubbio has! If the good Lord had only gifted me with a master's skill, instead of all this bodily strength and sinew, like a wild hog of the woods, which avails me nothing here!"

"What chance is it?" asked Raffaelle, "and what is there new about Pacifica? She told me nothing, and I was with her an hour."



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“Dear simple one, she knows nothing of it,” said Luca, heaving another tremendous sigh from his heart’s deepest depths. “You must know that a new order has come in this very forenoon from the duke; he wishes a dish and a jar of the very finest and firmest majolica to be painted with the story of Esther, and made ready in three months from this date, to then go as his gifts to his cousins of Gonzaga. He has ordered that no cost be spared in the work, but that the painting thereof be of the best that can be produced, and the prize he will give is fifty scudi. Now, Maestro Benedetto, having known some time, it seems, of this order, has had made in readiness several large oval dishes and beautiful big-bellied jars: he gives one of each to each of his pupils,—to myself, to Berengario, to Tito, and Zenone. The master is sorely distraught that his eyesight permits him not himself to execute the duke’s commands; but it is no secret that should one of us be so fortunate as to win the duke’s approbation, the painter who does so shall become his partner here and shall have the hand of Pacifica. Some say that he has only put forth this promise as a stimulus to get the best work done of which his bottega is capable; but I know Maestro Benedetto too well to deem him guilty of any such evasion. What he has said, he will carry out; if the vase and the dish win the duke’s praise, they will also win Pacifica. Now you see, ‘Faello mine, why I am so bitterly sad of heart, for I am a good craftsman enough at the wheel and the furnace, and I like not ill the handling and the moulding of the clay, but at the painting of the clay I am but a tyro, and Berengario or even the little Zenone will beat me; of that I am sure.”

Raffaelle heard all this in silence, leaning his elbows on his friend’s knee, and his chin on the palms of his own hands. He knew that the other pupils were better painters by far than his Luca, though not one of them was such a good-hearted or noble-looking youth, and for none of them did the maiden Pacifica care.

“How long a time is given for the jar and the dish to be ready?” he asked, at length.

“Three months, my dear,” said Luca, with a sigh sadder than ever. “But if it were three years, what difference would it make? You cannot cudgel the divine grace of art into a man with blows as you cudgel speed into a mule, and I shall be a dolt at the end of the time as I am now. What said your good father to me but yesternight?—and he *is* good to me and does not despise me. He said: ‘Luca, my son, it is of no more avail for you to sigh for Pacifica than for the moon. Were she mine I would give her to you, for you have a heart of gold, but Signor Benedetto will not; for never, I fear me, will you be able to decorate anything more than an apothecary’s mortar or a barber’s basin. If I hurt you, take it not ill; I mean kindness, and were I a stalwart youth like you I would go try my fortunes in the Free Companies in France or Spain, or down in Rome, for you are made for a soldier.’ That was the best even your father could say for me, ‘Faello.”



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“But Pacifica,” said the child,—“Pacifica would not wish you to join the Free Companies.”

“God knows,” said Luca, hopelessly. “Perhaps she would not care.”

“I am sure she would,” said Raffaelle, “for she does love you, Luca, though she cannot say so, being but a girl, and Signor Benedetto against you. But that redcap you tamed for her, how she loves it, how she caresses it, and half is for you, Luca, half for the bird!”

Luca kissed him.

But the tears rolled down the poor youth’s face, for he was much in earnest and filled with despair.

“Even if she did, if she do,” he murmured hopelessly, “she never will let me know it, since her father forbids a thought of me; and now here is this trial of skill at the duke’s order come to make things worse, and if that swaggering Berengario of Fano win her, then truly will I join the free lances and pray heaven send me swift thrive and shroud.”

Raffaelle was very pensive for a while; then he raised his head, and said:—

“I have thought of something, Luca. But I do not know whether you will let me try it.”

“You angel child! What would your old Luca deny to you? But as for helping me, my dear, put that thought out of your little mind forever, for no one can help me, ‘Faello, not the saints themselves, since I was born a dolt!”

Raffaelle kissed him, and said, “Now listen!”

A few days later Signer Benedetto informed his pupils in ceremonious audience of the duke’s command and of his own intentions; he did not pronounce his daughter’s name to the youths, but he spoke in terms that were clear enough to assure them that whoever had the good fortune and high merit to gain the duke’s choice of his pottery should have the honor of becoming associate in his own famous bottega. Now, it had been known in Urbino ever since Pacifica had gone to her first communion that whoever pleased her father well enough to become his partner would have also to please her as her husband. Not much attention was given to maidens’ wishes in those times, and no one thought the master-potter either unjust or cruel in thus suiting himself before he suited his daughter. And what made the hearts of all the young men quake and sink the lowest was the fact that Signer Benedetto offered the competition, not only to his own apprentices, but to any native of the duchy of Urbino. For who could tell what hero might not step forth from obscurity and gain the great prize of this fair hand of Pacifica’s? And with her hand would go many a broad gold ducat, and heritage of the wide old gray stone house, and many an old jewel and old brocade that were kept there

in dusky sweet-smelling cabinets, and also more than one good piece of land, smiling with corn and fruit trees, outside the gates in the lower pastures to the westward.



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Luca, indeed, never thought of these things, but the other three pupils did, and other youths as well. Had it not been for the limitation as to birth within the duchy, many a gallant young painter from the other side of the Apennines, many a lusty vasalino or boccialino from the workshops of fair Florence herself, or from the Lombard cities, might have traveled there in hot haste as fast as horses could carry them, and come to paint the clay for the sake of so precious a recompense. But Urbino men they had to be; and poor Luca, who was so full of despair that he could almost have thrown himself headlong from the rocks, was thankful to destiny for even so much slender mercy as this,—that the number of his rivals was limited.

“Had I been you,” Giovanni Sanzio ventured once to say respectfully to Signor Benedetto, “I think I should have picked out for my son-in-law the best youth that I knew, not the best painter; for be it said in all reverence, my friend, the greatest artist is not always the truest man, and by the hearthstone humble virtues have sometimes high claim.”

Then Signor Benedetto had set his stern face like a flint, knowing very well what youth Messer Giovanni would have liked to name to him.

“I have need of a good artist in my bottega to keep up its fame,” he had said stiffly. “My vision is not what it was, and I should be loath to see Urbino ware fall back, whilst Pesaro and Gubbio and Castel Durante gain ground every day. Pacifica must pay the penalty, if penalty there be, for being the daughter of a great artist.”

Mirthful, keen-witted Sanzio smiled to himself, and went his way in silence; for he who loved Andrea Mantegna did not bow down in homage before the old master-potter’s estimation of himself, which was in truth somewhat overweening in its vanity.

“Poor Pacifica!” he thought; “if only my ‘Faello were but some decade older!”

He, who could not foresee the future, the splendid, wondrous, unequalled future that awaited his young son, wished nothing better for him than a peaceful painter’s life here in old Urbino, under the friendly shadow of the Montefeltro’s palace walls.

Meanwhile, where think you was Raffaelle? Half the day, or all the day, and every day whenever he could? Where think you was he? Well, in the attic of Luca, before a bowl and a dish almost as big as himself. The attic was a breezy, naked place, underneath the arches supporting the roof of Maestro Benedetto’s dwelling. Each pupil had one of these garrets to himself,—a rare boon, for which Luca came to be very thankful, for without it he could not have sheltered his angel; and the secret that Raffaelle had whispered to him that day of the first conference had been, “Let *me* try and paint it!”

For a long time Luca had been afraid to comply, had only forborne indeed from utter laughter at the idea from his love and reverence for the little speaker. Baby Sanzio, who



was only just seven years old as the April tulips reddened the corn, painting a majolica dish and vase to go to the Gonzaga of Mantua! The good fellow could scarcely restrain his shouts of mirth at the audacious fancy; and nothing had kept him grave but the sight of that most serious face of Raffaello, looking up to his with serene, sublime self-confidence, nay, perhaps, rather, confidence in heaven and in heaven's gifts.



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“Let me try!” said the child a hundred times. He would tell no one, only Luca would know; and if he failed—well, there would only be the spoiled pottery to pay for, and had he not two whole ducats that the duke had given him when the court had come to behold his father’s designs for the altar frescos at San Dominico di Cagli?

So utterly in earnest was he, and so intense and blank was Luca’s absolute despair, that the young man had in turn given way to his entreaties. “Never can I do aught,” he thought, bitterly, looking at his own clumsy designs, “And sometimes by the help of cherubs the saints work miracles,”

“It will be no miracle,” said Raffaelle, hearing him murmur this; “it will be myself, and that which the dear God has put into me.”

From that hour Luca let him do what he would, and through all these lovely early summer days the child came and shut himself up in the garret, and studied, and thought, and worked, and knitted his pretty fair brows, and smiled in tranquil satisfaction, according to the mood he was in and the progress of his labors.

Giovanni Sanzio went away at that time to paint an altar-piece over at Citta di Castello, and his little son for once was glad he was absent. Messer Giovanni would surely have remarked the long and frequent visits of Raffaelle to the attic, and would, in all likelihood, have obliged him to pore over his Latin or to take exercise in the open fields; but his mother said nothing, content that he should be amused and safe, and knowing well that Pacifica loved him and would let him come to no harm under her roof. Pacifica herself did wonder that he deserted her so perpetually for the garret. But one day when she questioned him the sweet-faced rogue clung to her and murmured, “Oh, Pacifica, I do want Luca to win you, because he loves you so; and I do love you both!” And she grew pale, and answered him, “Ah, dear, if he could!” and then said never a word more, but went to her distaff; and Raffaelle saw great tears fall off her lashes down among the flax.

She thought he went to the attic to watch how Luca painted, and loved him more than ever for that, but knew in the hopelessness of her heart—as Luca also knew it in his—that the good and gallant youth would never be able to create anything that would go as the duke’s gifts to the Gonzaga of Mantua. And she did care for Luca! She had spoken to him but rarely indeed, yet passing in and out of the same doors, and going to the same church offices, and dwelling always beneath the same roof, he had found means of late for a word, a flower, a serenade. And he was so handsome and so brave, and so gentle, too, and so full of deference. Poor Pacifica cared not in the least whether he could paint or not. He could have made her happy.

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In the attic Raffaelle passed the most anxious hours of all his sunny little life. He would not allow Luca even to look at what he did. He barred the door and worked; when he went away he locked his work up in a wardrobe. The swallows came in and out of the unglazed window, and fluttered all around him; the morning sunbeams came in, too, and made a nimbus round his golden head, like that which his father gilded above the heads of saints. Raffaelle worked on, not looking off, though clang of trumpet, or fanfare of cymbal, often told him there was much going on worth looking at down below. He was only seven years old, but he labored as earnestly as if he were a man grown, his little rosy fingers gripping that pencil which was to make him in life and death famous as kings are not famous, and let his tender body lie in its last sleep in the Pantheon of Rome.

He had covered hundreds of sheets with designs before he had succeeded in getting embodied the ideas that haunted him. When he had pleased himself at last, he set to work to transfer his imaginations to the clay in color in the subtile luminous metallic enamel that characterizes Urbino majolica.

Ah, how glad he was now that his father had let him draw from the time he was two years old, and that of late Messer Benedetto had shown him something of the mysteries of painting on biscuit and producing the metallic lustre which was the especial glory of the pottery of the duchy!

How glad he was, and how his little heart bounded and seemed to sing in this his first enjoyment of the joyous liberties and powers of creative work!

A well-known writer has said that genius is the power of taking pains; he should have said rather that genius *has* this power also, but that first and foremost it possesses the power of spontaneous and exquisite production without effort and with delight.

Luca looked at him (not at his work, for the child had made him promise not to do so) and began to marvel at his absorption, his intentness, the evident facility with which he worked: the little figure leaning over the great dish on the bare board of the table, with the oval opening of the window and the blue sky beyond it, began to grow sacred to him with more than the sanctity of childhood. Raffaelle's face grew very serious, too, and lost its color, and his large hazel eyes looked very big and grave and dark.

"Perhaps Signer Giovanni will be angry with me if ever he knows," thought poor Luca; but it was too late to alter anything now. The child Sanzio had become his master.

So Raffaelle, unknown to any one else, worked on and on there in the attic while the tulips bloomed and withered, and the honeysuckle was in flower in the hedges, and the wheat and barley were being cut in the quiet fields lying far down below in the sunshine. For midsummer was come; the three months all but a week had passed by. It was known that every one was ready to compete for the duke's choice.



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One afternoon Raffaelle took Luca by the hand and said to him, "Come."

He led the young man up to the table, beneath the unglazed window, where he had passed so many of these ninety days of the spring and summer.

Luca gave a great cry, and stood gazing, gazing, gazing. Then he fell on his knees and embraced the little feet of the child: it was the first homage that he, whose life became one beautiful song of praise, received from man.

"Dear Luca," he said softly, "do not do that. If it be indeed good, let us thank God."

What his friend saw were the great oval dish and the great jar or vase standing with the sunbeams full upon them, and the brushes and the tools and the colors all strewn around. And they shone with lustrous opaline hues and wondrous flame-like glories and gleaming iridescence, like melted jewels, and there were all manner of graceful symbols and classic designs wrought upon them; and their borders were garlanded with cherubs and flowers, bearing the arms of Montefeltro, and the landscapes were the tender, homely landscapes round about Urbino; and the mountains had the solemn radiance that the Apennines wore at eveningtime; and amidst the figures there was one supreme, white-robed, golden-crowned Esther, to whom the child painter had given the face of Pacifica. And this wondrous creation, wrought by a baby's hand, had safely and secretly passed the ordeal of the furnace, and had come forth without spot or flaw.

Luca ceased not from kneeling at the feet of Raffaelle, as ever since has kneeled the world.

"Oh, wondrous boy! Oh, angel sent unto men!" sighed the poor 'prentice, as he gazed; and his heart was so full that he burst into tears.

"Let us thank God," said little Raffaelle again; and he joined his small hands that had wrought this miracle, and said his *Laus Domini*.

When the precious jar and the great platter were removed to the wardrobe and shut up in safety behind the steel wards of the locker, Luca said timidly, feeling twenty years in age behind the wisdom of this divine child: "But, dearest boy, I do not see how your marvelous and most exquisite accomplishment can advantage me. Even if you would allow it to pass as mine, I could not accept such a thing; it would be a fraud, a shame: not even to win Pacifica could I consent."

"Be not so hasty, good friend," said Raffaelle. "Wait just a little longer yet and see. I have my own idea. Do trust in me."

"Heaven speaks in you, that I believe," said Luca, humbly.



Raffaello answered not, but ran downstairs, and, passing Pacifica, threw his arms about her in more than his usual affectionate caresses.

“Pacifica, be of good heart,” he murmured, and would not be questioned, but ran homeward to his mother.

“Can it be that Luca has done well,” thought Pacifica; but she feared the child’s wishes had outrun his wisdom. He could not be any judge, a child of seven years, even though he were the son of that good and honest painter and poet, Giovanni Sanzio.



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The next morning was midsummer day. Now, the pottery was all to be placed on this forenoon in the bottega of Signor Benedetto; and the Duke Guidobaldo was then to come and make his choice from amidst them; and the master-potter, a little because he was a courtier, and more because he liked to affect a mighty indifference and to show he had no favoritism, had declared that he would not himself see the competing works of art until the eyes of the Lord of Montefeltro also fell upon them.

As for Pacifica, she had locked herself in her chamber, alone with her intense agitation. The young men were swaggering about, and taunting each other, and boasting. Luca alone sat apart, thrumming an old lute. Giovanni Sanzio, who had ridden home at evening from Citta di Castello, came in from his own house and put his hand on the youth's shoulder.

"I hear the Pesaro men have brought fine things. Take courage, my lad. Maybe we can entreat the duke to dissuade Pacifica's father from this tyrannous disposal of her hand."

Luca shook his head wearily.

There would be one beautiful thing there, indeed, he knew; but what use would that be to him?

"The child—the child—" he stammered, and then remembered that he must not disclose Raffaele's secret.

"My child?" said Signor Giovanni. "Oh, he will be here; he will be sure to be here: wherever there is a painted thing to be seen, there always, be sure, is Raffaele."

Then the good man sauntered within from the loggia, to exchange salutations with Ser Benedetto, who, in a suit of fine crimson with doublet of sad-colored velvet, was standing ready to advance bareheaded into the street as soon as the hoofs of the duke's charger should strike on the stones.

"You must be anxious in your thoughts," said Signor Giovanni to him. "They say a youth from Pesaro brings something fine: if you should find yourself bound to take a stranger into your workroom and your home—"

"If he be a man of genius, he will be welcome," answered Messer Ronconi, pompously. "Be he of Pesaro, or of Fano, or of Castel Durante, I go not back from my word: I keep my word, to my own hindrance even, ever."

"Let us hope it will bring you only joy and triumph here," said his neighbor, who knew him to be an honest man and a true, if over-obstinate and too vain of his own place in Urbino.



“Our lord the duke!” shouted the people standing in the street; and Ser Benedetto walked out with stately tread to receive the honor of his master’s visit to his bottega.

Raffaelle slipped noiselessly up to his father’s side, and slid his little hand into Sanzio’s.

“You are not surely afraid of our good Guidobaldo!” said his father, with a laugh and some little surprise, for Raffaelle was very pale, and his lower lip trembled a little.

“No,” said the child, simply.



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The young duke and his court came riding down the street, and paused before the old stone house of the master-potter,—splendid gentlemen, though only in their morning apparel, with noble Barbary steeds fretting under them, and little pages and liveried varlets about their steps. Usually, unless he went hunting or on a visit to some noble, Guidobaldo, like his father, walked about Urbino like any one of his citizens; but he knew the pompous and somewhat vainglorious temper of Messer Benedetto, and good-naturedly was willing to humor its harmless vanities. Bowing to the ground, the master-potter led the way, walking backward into his bottega; the courtiers followed their prince; Giovanni Sanzio with his little son and a few other privileged persons went in also at due distance. At the farther end of the workshop stood the pupils and the artists from Pesaro and other places in the duchy whose works were there in competition. In all there were some ten competitors: poor Luca, who had set his own work on the table with the rest as he was obliged to do, stood hindmost of all, shrinking back, to hide his misery, into the deepest shadow of the deep-bayed latticed window.

On the narrow deal benches that served as tables on working days to the pottery painters were ranged the dishes and the jars, with a number attached to each—no name to any, because Signor Benedetto was resolute to prove his own absolute disinterestedness in the matter of choice: he wished for the best artist. Prince Guidobaldo, doffing his plumed cap courteously, walked down the long room and examined each production in its turn. On the whole, the collection made a brave display of majolica, though he was perhaps a little disappointed at the result in each individual case, for he had wanted something out of the common run and absolutely perfect. Still, with fair words he complimented Signor Benedetto on the brave show, and only before the work of poor Luca was he entirely silent, since indeed silence was the greatest kindness he could show to it: the drawing was bold and regular, but the coloring was hopelessly crude, glaring, and ill-disposed.

At last, before a vase and a dish that stood modestly at the very farthest end of the deal bench, the duke gave a sudden exclamation of delight, and Signor Benedetto grew crimson with pleasure and surprise, and Giovanni Sanzio pressed a little nearer and tried to see over the shoulders of the gentlemen of the court, feeling sure that something rare and beautiful must have called forth that cry of wonder from the Lord of Montefeltro, and having seen at a glance that for his poor friend Luca there was no sort of hope.

“This is beyond all comparison,” said Guidobaldo, taking the great oval dish up reverently in his hands. “Maestro Benedetto, I do felicitate you indeed that you should possess such a pupil. He will be a glory to our beloved Urbino.”

“It is indeed most excellent work, my lord duke,” said the master-potter, who was trembling with surprise and dared not show all the astonishment and emotion that he felt at the discovery of so exquisite a creation in his bottega. “It must be,” he added, for he

was a very honest man, “the work of one of the lads of Pesaro or Castel Durante. I have no such craftsman in my workshop. It is beautiful exceedingly!”



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“It is worth its weight in gold!” said the prince, sharing his emotion. “Look, gentlemen—look! Will not the fame of Urbino be borne beyond the Apennines and Alps?”

Thus summoned, the court and the citizens came to look, and averred that truly never in Urbino had they seen such painting on majolica. “But whose is it?” said Guidobaldo, impatiently, casting his eyes over the gathered group in the background of apprentices and artists. “Maestro Benedetto, I pray you, the name of the artist; I pray you, quick!”

“It is marked number eleven, my lord,” answered the master-potter. “Ho, you who reply to that number, stand out and give your name. My lord duke has chosen your work. Ho, there! do you hear me?”

But not one of the group moved. The young men looked from one to another. Who was this nameless rival? There were but ten of themselves.

“Ho, there!” repeated Signor Benedetto, getting angry. “Cannot you find a tongue, I say? Who has wrought this work? Silence is but insolence to his highness and to me!”

Then the child Sanzio loosened his little hand from his father’s hold, and went forward, and stood before the master-potter.

“I painted it,” he said, with a pleased smile; “I, Raffaelle.”

Can you not fancy, without telling, the confusion, the wonder, the rapture, the incredulity, the questions, the wild ecstasy of praise, that followed on the discovery of the child artist? Only the presence of Guidobaldo kept it in anything like decent quietude, and even he, all duke though he was, felt his eyes wet and felt his heart swell; for he himself was childless, and for the joy that Giovanni Sanzio felt that day he would have given his patrimony and duchy.

He took a jewel hung on a gold chain from his own breast and threw it over Raffaelle’s shoulders.

“There is your first guerdon,” he said; “you will have many, O wondrous child, who shall live when we are dust!”

Raffaelle, who himself was all the while quite tranquil and unmoved, kissed the duke’s hand with sweetest grace, then turned to his own father.

“It is true I have won my lord duke’s prize?”

“Quite true, my angel!” said Giovanni Sanzio, with tremulous voice.

Raffaelle looked up at Maestro Benedetto.



“Then I claim the hand of Pacifica!”

There was a smile on all the faces round, even on the darker countenances of the vanquished painters.

“Oh, would indeed you were of age to be my son by marriage, as you are the son of my heart!” murmured Signor Benedetto. “Dear and marvelous child, you are but jesting, I know. Tell me what it is indeed that you would have. I could deny you nothing; and truly it is you who are my master.”



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“I am your pupil,” said Raffaelle, with that pretty serious smile of his, his little fingers playing with the ducal jewel. “I could never have painted that majolica yonder had you not taught me the secrets and management of your colors. Now, dear maestro mine, and you, O my lord duke, do hear me! I by the terms of the contest have won the hand of Pacifica and the right of association with Messer Ronconi. I take these rights and I give them over to my dear friend Luca of Fano, because he is the honestest man in all the world, and does honor Signor Benedetto and love Pacifica as no other can do so well, and Pacifica loves him, and my lord duke will say that thus all will be well.”

So with the grave, innocent audacity of a child he spoke—this seven-year-old painter who was greater than any there.

Signor Benedetto stood mute, sombre, agitated. Luca had sprung forward and dropped on one knee; he was as pale as ashes. Raffaelle looked at him with a smile.

“My lord duke,” he said, with his little gentle smile, “you have chosen my work; defend me in my rights.”

“Listen to the voice of an angel, my good Benedetto; heaven speaks by him,” said Guidobaldo, gravely, laying his hand on the arm of his master-potter.

Harsh Signor Benedetto burst into tears.

“I can refuse him nothing,” he said, with a sob. “He will give such glory unto Urbino as never the world hath seen!”

“And call down this fair Pacifica whom Raffaelle has won,” said the sovereign of the duchy, “and I will give her myself as her dower as many gold pieces as we can cram into this famous vase. An honest youth who loves her and whom she loves—what better can you do, Benedetto? Young man, rise up and be happy. An angel has descended on earth this day for you.”

But Luca heard not; he was still kneeling at the feet of Raffaelle, where the world has knelt ever since.

FINDELKIND

There was a little boy, a year or two ago, who lived under the shadow of Martinswand. Most people know, I should suppose, that the Martinswand is that mountain in the Oberinntal where, several centuries past, brave Kaiser Max lost his footing as he stalked the chamois, and fell upon a ledge of rock, and stayed there, in mortal peril, for thirty hours, till he was rescued by the strength and agility of a Tyrol hunter—an angel in the guise of a hunter, as the chronicles of the time prefer to say.



The Martinswand is a grand mountain, being one of the spurs of the greater Sonnstein, and rises precipitously, looming, massive and lofty, like a very fortress for giants, where it stands right across that road which, if you follow it long enough, takes you through Zell to Landeck,—old, picturesque, poetic Landeck, where Frederick of the Empty Pockets rhymed his sorrows in ballads to his people,—and so on by Bludenz into Switzerland itself, by as noble a highway



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as any traveler can ever desire to traverse on a summer's day. It is within a mile of the little burg of Zell, where the people, in the time of their emperor's peril, came out with torches and bells, and the Host lifted up by their priest, and all prayed on their knees underneath the steep gaunt pile of limestone, that is the same to-day as it was then, whilst Kaiser Max is dust; it soars up on one side of this road, very steep and very majestic, having bare stone at its base, and being all along its summit crowned with pine woods; and on the other side of the road are a little stone church, quaint and low, and gray with age, and a stone farmhouse, and cattle sheds, and timber sheds, all of wood that is darkly brown from time; and beyond these are some of the most beautiful meadows in the world, full of tall grass and countless flowers, with pools and little estuaries made by the brimming Inn River that flows by them; and beyond the river are the glaciers of the Sonnstein and the Selrain and the wild Arlberg region, and the golden glow of sunset in the west, most often seen from here through the veil of falling rain.

At this farmhouse, with Martinswand towering above it, and Zell a mile beyond, there lived, and lives still, a little boy who bears the old historical name of Findelkind, whose father, Otto Korner, is the last of a sturdy race of yeomen, who had fought with Hofer and Haspinger, and had been free men always.

Findelkind came in the middle of seven other children, and was a pretty boy of nine years, with slenderer limbs and paler cheeks than his rosy brethren, and tender dreamy eyes that had the look, his mother told him, of seeking stars in midday: *de chercher midi a quatorze heures*, as the French have it. He was a good little lad, and seldom gave any trouble from disobedience, though he often gave it from forgetfulness. His father angrily complained that he was always in the clouds,—that is, he was always dreaming, and so very often would spill the milk out of the pails, chop his own fingers instead of the wood, and stay watching the swallows when he was sent to draw water. His brothers and sisters were always making fun of him: they were sturdier, ruddier, and merrier children than he was, loved romping and climbing and nutting, thrashing the walnut trees and sliding down snowdrifts, and got into mischief of a more common and childish sort than Findelkind's freaks of fancy. For indeed he was a very fanciful little boy: everything around had tongues for him; and he would sit for hours among the long rushes on the river's edge, trying to imagine what the wild green-gray water had found in its wanderings, and asking the water rats and the ducks to tell him about it; but both rats and ducks were too busy to attend to an idle little boy, and never spoke, which vexed him.



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Findelkind, however, was very fond of his books; he would study day and night, in his little ignorant, primitive fashion. He loved his missal and his primer, and could spell them both out very fairly, and was learning to write of a good priest in Zirl, where he trotted three times a week with his two little brothers. When not at school, he was chiefly set to guard the sheep and the cows, which occupation left him very much to himself; so that he had many hours in the summertime to stare up to the skies and wonder—wonder—wonder about all sorts of things; while in the winter—the long, white, silent winter, when the post-wagons ceased to run, and the road into Switzerland was blocked, and the whole world seemed asleep, except for the roaring of the winds—Findelkind, who still trotted over the snow to school in Zirl, would dream still, sitting on the wooden settle by the fire, when he came home again under Martinswand. For the worst—or the best—of it all was that he was Findelkind.

This is what was always haunting him. He was Findelkind; and to bear this name seemed to him to mark him out from all other children and to dedicate him to heaven. One day three years before, when he had been only six years old, the priest in Zirl, who was a very kindly and cheerful man, and amused the children as much as he taught them, had not allowed Findelkind to leave school to go home, because the storm of snow and wind was so violent, but had kept him until the worst should pass, with one or two other little lads who lived some way off, and had let the boys roast a meal of apples and chestnuts by the stove in his little room, and, while the wind howled and the blinding snow fell without, had told the children the story of another Findelkind—an earlier Findelkind, who had lived in the flesh on Arlberg as far back as 1381, and had been a little shepherd lad, “just like you,” said the good man, looking at the little boys munching their roast crabs, and whose country had been over there, above Stuben, where Danube and Rhine meet and part.

The pass of Arlberg is even still so bleak and bitter that few care to climb there; the mountains around are drear and barren, and snow lies till midsummer, and even longer sometimes. “But in the early ages,” said the priest (and this is quite a true tale that the children heard with open eyes, and mouths only not open because they were full of crabs and chestnuts), “in the early ages,” said the priest to them, “the Arlberg was far more dreary than it is now. There was only a mule track over it, and no refuge for man or beast; so that wanderers and peddlers, and those whose need for work or desire for battle brought them over that frightful pass, perished in great numbers, and were eaten by the bears and the wolves. The little shepherd-boy Findelkind—who was a little boy five hundred years ago, remember,” the priest repeated—“was sorely disturbed and distressed to see these poor dead souls in the snow



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winter after winter, and seeing the blanched bones lie on the bare earth, unburied, when summer melted the snow. It made him unhappy, very unhappy; and what could he do, he a little boy keeping sheep? He had as his wages two florins a year; that was all; but his heart rose high, and he had faith in God. Little as he was, he said to himself, he would try and do something, so that year after year those poor lost travelers and beasts should not perish so. He said nothing to anybody, but he took the few florins he had saved up, bade his master farewell, and went on his way begging—a little fourteenth-century boy, with long, straight hair, and a girdled tunic, as you see them,” continued the priest, “in the miniatures in the black-letter missal that lies upon my desk. No doubt heaven favored him very strongly, and the saints watched over him; still, without the boldness of his own courage and the faith in his own heart, they would not have done so. I suppose, too, that when knights in their armor, and soldiers in their camps, saw such a little fellow all alone, they helped him, and perhaps struck some blows for him, and so sped him on his way, and protected him from robbers and from wild beasts. Still, be sure that the real shield and the real reward that served Findelkind of Arlberg was the pure and noble purpose that armed him night and day. Now, history does not tell us where Findelkind went, nor how he fared, nor how long he was about it; but history does tell us that the little barefooted, long-haired boy, knocking so loudly at castle gates and city walls in the name of Christ and Christ’s poor brethren, did so well succeed in his quest that before long he had returned to his mountain home with means to have a church and a rude dwelling built, where he lived with six other brave and charitable souls, dedicating themselves to St. Christopher, and going out night and day to the sound of the Angelus, seeking the lost and weary. This is really what Findelkind of Arlberg did five centuries ago, and did so quickly that his fraternity of St. Christopher twenty years after numbered among its members archdukes, and prelates, and knights without number, and lasted as a great order down to the days of Joseph II. This is what Findelkind in the fourteenth century did, I tell you. Bear like faith in your hearts, my children; and though your generation is a harder one than this, because it is without faith, yet you shall move mountains, because Christ and St. Christopher will be with you.”

Then the good man, having said that, blessed them, and left them alone to their chestnuts and crabs, and went into his own oratory to prayer. The other boys laughed and chattered; but Findelkind sat very quietly, thinking of his namesake, all the day after, and for many days and weeks and months this story haunted him. A little boy had done all that; and this little boy had been called Findelkind; Findelkind, just like himself.

It was beautiful, and yet it tortured him. If the good man had known how the history would root itself in the child’s mind, perhaps he would never have told it; for night and day it vexed Findelkind, and yet seemed beckoning to him and crying, “Go thou and do likewise!”



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But what could he do?

There was the snow, indeed, and there were the mountains, as in the fourteenth century, but there were no travelers lost. The diligence did not go into Switzerland after autumn, and the country people who went by on their mules and in their sledges to Innsbruck knew their way very well, and were never likely to be adrift on a winter's night, or eaten by a wolf or a bear.

When spring came, Findelkind sat by the edge of the bright pure water among the flowering grasses, and felt his heart heavy. Findelkind of Arlberg who was in heaven now must look down, he fancied, and think him so stupid and so selfish, sitting there. The first Findelkind, a few centuries before, had trotted down on his bare feet from his mountain pass, and taken his little crook, and gone out boldly over all the land on his pilgrimage, and knocked at castle gates and city walls in Christ's name and for love of the poor! That was to do something indeed!

This poor little living Findelkind would look at the miniatures in the priest's missal, in one of which there was the little fourteenth-century boy with long hanging hair and a wallet and bare feet, and he never doubted that it was the portrait of the blessed Findelkind who was in heaven; and he wondered if he looked like a little boy there, or if he were changed to the likeness of an angel.

"He was a boy just like me," thought the poor little fellow, and he felt so ashamed of himself—so very ashamed; and the priest had told him to try and do the same. He brooded over it so much, and it made him so anxious and so vexed, that his brothers ate his porridge and he did not notice it, his sisters pulled his curls and he did not feel it, his father brought a stick down on his back and he only started and stared, and his mother cried because he was losing his mind and would grow daft, and even his mother's tears he scarcely saw. He was always thinking of Findelkind in heaven.

When he went for water, he spilt one-half; when he did his lessons, he forgot the chief part; when he drove out the cow, he let her munch the cabbages; and when he was set to watch the oven, he let the loaves burn, like great Alfred. He was always busied thinking: "Little Findelkind that is in heaven did so great a thing: why may not I? I ought! I ought!" What was the use of being named after Findelkind that was in heaven, unless one did something great, too?

Next to the church there is a little stone lodge, or shed, with two arched openings, and from it you look into the tiny church with its crucifixes and relics, or out to the great, bold, sombre Martinswand, as you like best; and in this spot Findelkind would sit hour after hour, while his brothers and sisters were playing, and look up at the mountains or on to the altar, and wish and pray and vex his little soul most woefully; and his ewes and his lambs would crop the grass about the entrance, and bleat to make him



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notice them and lead them farther afield, but all in vain. Even his dear sheep he hardly heeded, and his pet ewes, Katte and Greta, and the big ram Zips, rubbed their soft noses in his hand unnoticed. So the summer droned away—the summer that is so short in the mountains, and yet so green and so radiant, with the torrents tumbling through the flowers, and the hay tossing in the meadows, and the lads and lasses climbing to cut the rich sweet grass of the alps. The short summer passed as fast as a dragonfly flashes by, all green and gold, in the sun; and it was near winter once more, and still Findelkind was always dreaming and wondering what he could do for the good of St. Christopher; and the longing to do it all came more and more into his little heart, and he puzzled his brain till his head ached. One autumn morning, whilst yet it was dark, Findelkind made his mind up, and rose before his brothers, and stole downstairs and out into the air, as it was easy to do, because the house door never was bolted. He had nothing with him; he was barefooted, and his school satchel was slung behind him, as Findelkind of Arlberg's wallet had been five centuries before.

He took a little staff from the piles of wood lying about, and went out on to the highroad, on his way to do heaven's will. He was not very sure what that divine will wished, but that was because he was only nine years old, and not very wise; but Findelkind that was in heaven had begged for the poor; so would he.

His parents were very poor, but he did not think of them as in any want at any time, because he always had his bowlful of porridge and as much bread as he wanted to eat. This morning he had nothing to eat; he wished to be away before any one could question him.

It was quite dusk in the fresh autumn morning: the sun had not risen behind the glaciers of the Stubai Thal, and the road was scarcely seen; but he knew it very well, and he set out bravely, saying his prayers to Christ, and to St. Christopher, and to Findelkind that was in heaven.

He was not in any way clear as to what he would do, but he thought he would find some great thing to do somewhere, lying like a jewel in the dust; and he went on his way in faith, as Findelkind of Arlberg had done before him.

His heart beat high, and his head lost its aching pains, and his feet felt light; so light as if there were wings to his ankles. He would not go to Zirl, because Zirl he knew so well, and there could be nothing very wonderful waiting there; and he ran fast the other way. When he was fairly out from under the shadow of Martinswand, he slackened his pace, and saw the sun come on his path, and the red day redden the gray-green water, and the early Stellwagen from Landeck, that had been lumbering along all the night, overtook him.

He would have run after it, and called out to the travelers for alms, but he felt ashamed; his father had never let him beg, and he did not know how to begin.



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The Stellwagen rolled on through the autumn mud, and that was one chance lost. He was sure that the first Findelkind had not felt ashamed when he had knocked at the first castle gates.

By and by, when he could not see Martinswand by turning his head back ever so, he came to an inn that used to be a posthouse in the old days when men traveled only by road. A woman was feeding chickens in the bright clear red of the cold daybreak.

Findelkind timidly held out his hand. "For the poor!" he murmured, and doffed his cap.

The old woman looked at him sharply. "Oh, is it you, little Findelkind? Have you run off from school? Be off with you home! I have mouths enough to feed here."

Findelkind went away, and began to learn that it is not easy to be a prophet or a hero in one's own country.

He trotted a mile farther, and met nothing. At last he came to some cows by the wayside, and a man tending them.

"Would you give me something to help make a monastery?" he said timidly, and once more took off his cap. The man gave a great laugh. "A fine monk, you! And who wants more of these lazy drones? Not I."

Findelkind never answered; he remembered the priest had said that the years he lived in were very hard ones, and men in them had no faith.

Ere long he came to a big walled house, with turrets and grated casements,—very big it looked to him,—like one of the first Findelkind's own castles. His heart beat loud against his side, but he plucked up his courage, and knocked as loud as his heart was beating.

He knocked and knocked, but no answer came. The house was empty. But he did not know that; he thought it was that the people within were cruel, and he went sadly onward with the road winding before him, and on his right the beautiful impetuous gray river, and on his left the green Mittelgebirge and the mountains that rose behind it. By this time the day was up; the sun was glowing on the red of the cranberry shrubs and the blue of the bilberry-boughs; he was hungry and thirsty and tired. But he did not give in for that; he held on steadily; he knew that there was near, somewhere near, a great city that the people called Sprugg, and thither he had resolved to go. By noontide he had walked eight miles, and came to a green place where men were shooting at targets, the tall thick grass all around them; and a little way farther off was a train of people chanting and bearing crosses and dressed in long flowing robes.

The place was the Hottinger Au, and the day was Saturday, and the village was making ready to perform a miracle play on the morrow.



Findelkind ran to the robed singing-folk, quite sure that he saw the people of God. “Oh, take me, take me!” he cried to them; “do take me with you to do heaven’s work.”

But they pushed him aside for a crazy little boy that spoiled their rehearsing.

“It is only for Hotting folk,” said a lad older than himself. “Get out of the way with you, Liebchen.” And the man who earned the cross knocked him with force on the head, by mere accident; but Findelkind thought he had meant it.

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Were people so much kinder five centuries before, he wondered, and felt sad as the many-colored robes swept on through the grass, and the crack of the rifles sounded sharply through the music of the chanting voices. He went on footsore and sorrowful, thinking of the castle doors that had opened, and the city gates that had unclosed, at the summons of the little long-haired boy whose figure was painted on the missal.

He had come now to where the houses were much more numerous, though under the shade of great trees,—lovely old gray houses, some of wood, some of stone, some with frescos on them and gold and color and mottoes, some with deep barred casements, and carved portals, and sculptured figures; houses of the poorer people now, but still memorials of a grand and gracious time. For he had wandered into the quarter of St. Nicholas in this fair mountain city, which he, like his country-folk, called Sprugg, though the government calls it Innsbruck.

He got out upon a long gray wooden bridge, and looked up and down the reaches of the river, and thought to himself, maybe this was not Sprugg but Jerusalem, so beautiful it looked with its domes shining golden in the sun, and the snow of the Soldstein and Branjoch behind them. For little Findelkind had never come so far as this before. As he stood on the bridge so dreaming, a hand clutched him, and a voice said:—

“A whole kreutzer, or you do not pass!”

Findelkind started and trembled.

A kreutzer! he had never owned such a treasure in all his life.

“I have no money,” he murmured timidly; “I came to see if I could get money for the poor.”

The keeper of the bridge laughed.

“You are a little beggar, you mean? Oh, very well! Then over my bridge you do not go.”

“But it is the city on the other side?”

“To be sure it is the city; but over nobody goes without a kreutzer.”

“I never have such a thing of my own! never! never!” said Findelkind, ready to cry.

“Then you were a little fool to come away from your home, wherever that may be,” said the man at the bridge-head. “Well, I will let you go, for you look a baby. But do not beg; that is bad.”

“Findelkind did it!”



“Then Findelkind was a rogue and a vagabond,” said the taker of tolls.

“Oh, no—no—no!”

“Oh, yes—yes—yes, little sauce-box; and take that,” said the man, giving him a box on the ear, being angry at contradiction.

Findelkind’s head drooped, and he went slowly over the bridge, forgetting that he ought to have thanked the toll taker for a free passage. The world seemed to him very difficult. How had Findelkind done when he had come to bridges?—and, oh, how had Findelkind done when he had been hungry?

For this poor little Findelkind was getting very hungry, and his stomach was as empty as was his wallet.

A few steps brought him to the Goldenes Dachl.



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He forgot his hunger and his pain, seeing the sun shine on all that gold, and the curious painted galleries under it. He thought it was real solid gold. Real gold laid out on a house roof—and the people all so poor! Findelkind began to muse, and wonder why everybody did not climb up there and take a tile off and be rich? But perhaps it would be wicked. Perhaps God put the roof there with all that gold to prove people. Findelkind got bewildered.

If God did such a thing, was it kind?

His head seemed to swim, and the sunshine went round and round with him. There went by him, just then, a very venerable-looking old man with silver hair; he was wrapped in a long cloak. Findelkind pulled at the coat gently, and the old man looked down.

“What is it, my boy?” he asked.

Findelkind answered, “I came out to get gold; may I take it off that roof?”

“It is not gold, child, it is gilding.”

“What is gilding?”

“It is a thing made to look like gold: that is all.”

“It is a lie, then!”

The old man smiled. “Well, nobody thinks so. If you like to put it so, perhaps it is. What do you want gold for, you wee thing?”

“To build a monastery and house the poor.”

The old man’s face scowled and grew dark, for he was a Lutheran pastor from Bavaria.

“Who taught you such trash?” he said crossly.

“It is not trash. It is faith.”

And Findelkind’s face began to burn and his blue eyes to darken and moisten. There was a little crowd beginning to gather, and the crowd was beginning to laugh. There were many soldiers and rifle-shooters in the throng, and they jeered and joked, and made fun of the old man in the long cloak, who grew angry then with the child. “You are a little idolater and a little impudent sinner!” he said wrathfully, and shook the boy by the shoulder, and went away, and the throng that had gathered round had only poor Findelkind left to tease.



He was a very poor little boy indeed to look at, with his sheepskin tunic, and his bare feet and legs, and his wallet that never was to get filled.

“Where do you come from, and what do you want?” they asked; and he answered, with a sob in his voice:—

“I want to do like Findelkind of Arlberg.”

And then the crowd laughed, not knowing at all what he meant, but laughing just because they did not know: as crowds always will do. And only the big dogs that are so very big in this country, and are all loose, and free, and good-natured citizens, came up to him kindly, and rubbed against him, and made friends; and at that tears came into his eyes, and his courage rose, and he lifted his head.

“You are cruel people to laugh,” he said indignantly; “the dogs are kinder. People did not laugh at Findelkind. He was a little boy just like me, no better and no bigger, and as poor; and yet he had so much faith, and the world then was so good, that he left his sheep and got money enough to build a church and a hospice to Christ and St. Christopher. And I want to do the same for the poor. Not for myself, no; for the poor! I am Findelkind, too, and Findelkind of Arlberg that is in heaven speaks to me.”



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Then he stopped, and a sob rose again in his throat.

“He is crazy!” said the people, laughing, yet a little scared; for the priest at Zirl had said rightly, this is not an age of faith. At that moment there sounded, coming from the barracks, that used to be the Schloss in the old days of Kaiser Max and Mary of Burgundy, the sound of drums and trumpets and the tramp of marching feet. It was one of the corps of Jagers of Tyrol, going down from the avenue to the Rudolfplatz, with their band before them and their pennons streaming. It was a familiar sight, but it drew the street throngs to it like magic: the age is not fond of dreamers, but it is very fond of drums. In almost a moment the old dark arcades and the riverside and the passages near were all empty, except for the women sitting at their stalls of fruit or cakes, or toys, They are wonderful old arched arcades, like the cloisters of a cathedral more than anything else, and the shops under them are all homely and simple—shops of leather, of furs, of clothes, of wooden playthings, of sweet and wholesome bread. They are very quaint, and kept by poor folks for poor folks; but to the dazed eyes of Findelkind they looked like a forbidden paradise, for he was so hungry and so heartbroken, and he had never seen any bigger place than little Zirl.

He stood and looked wistfully, but no one offered him anything. Close by was a stall of splendid purple grapes, but the old woman that kept it was busy knitting. She only called to him to stand out of her light.

“You look a poor brat; have you a home?” said another woman, who sold bridles and whips and horses’ bells and the like.

“Oh, yes, I have a home—by Martinswand,” said Findelkind, with a sigh.

The woman looked at him sharply. “Your parents have sent you on an errand here?”

“No; I have run away.”

“Run away? Oh, you bad boy!—unless, indeed—are they cruel to you?”

“No; very good.”

“Are you a little rogue, then, or a thief?”

“You are a bad woman to think such things,” said Findelkind, hotly, knowing himself on how innocent and sacred a quest he was.

“Bad? I? Oh ho!” said the old dame, cracking one of her new whips in the air, “I should like to make you jump about with this, you thankless little vagabond. Be off!”

Findelkind sighed again, his momentary anger passing; for he had been born with a gentle temper, and thought himself to blame much more readily than he thought other



people were,—as, indeed, every wise child does, only there are so few children—or men—that are wise.

He turned his head away from the temptation of the bread and fruit stalls, for in truth hunger gnawed him terribly, and wandered a little to the left. From where he stood he could see the long, beautiful street of Teresa, with its oriels and arches, painted windows and gilded signs, and the steep, gray, dark mountains closing it in at the distance; but the street frightened him, it looked so grand, and he knew it would tempt him; so he went where he saw the green tops of some high elms and beeches. The trees, like the dogs, seemed like friends. It was the human creatures that were cruel.



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At that moment there came out of the barrack gates, with great noise of trumpets and trampling of horses, a group of riders in gorgeous uniforms, with sabres and chains glancing and plumes tossing. It looked to Findelkind like a group of knights—those knights who had helped and defended his namesake with their steel and their gold in the old days of the Arlberg quest. His heart gave a great leap, and he jumped on the dust for joy, and he ran forward and fell on his knees and waved his cap like a little mad thing, and cried out:—

“Oh, dear knights! oh, great soldiers! help me! Fight for me, for the love of the saints! I have come all the way from Martinswand, and I am Findelkind, and I am trying to serve St. Christopher like Findelkind of Arlberg.”

But his little swaying body and pleading hands and shouting voice and blowing curls frightened the horses; one of them swerved and very nearly settled the woes of Findelkind forever and aye by a kick. The soldier who rode the horse reined him in with difficulty; he was at the head of the little staff, being indeed no less or more than the general commanding the garrison, which in this city is some fifteen thousand strong. An orderly sprang from his saddle and seized the child, and shook him, and swore at him. Findelkind was frightened; but he shut his eyes and set his teeth, and said to himself that the martyrs must have had very much worse than these things to suffer in their pilgrimage. He had fancied these riders were knights—such knights as the priest had shown him the likeness of in old picture books, whose mission it had been to ride through the world succoring the weak and weary, and always defending the right.

“What are your swords for, if you are not knights?” he cried, desperately struggling in his captor’s grip, and seeing through his half-closed lids the sunshine shining on steel scabbards.

“What does he want?” asked the officer in command of the garrison, whose staff all this bright and martial array was. He was riding out from the barracks to an inspection on the Rudolfplatz. He was a young man, and had little children himself, and was half amused, half touched, to see the tiny figure of the little dusty boy.

“I want to build a monastery, like Findelkind of Arlberg, and to help the poor,” said our Findelkind, valorously, though his heart was beating like that of a little mouse caught in a trap; for the horses were trampling up the dust around him, and the orderly’s grip was hard.

The officers laughed aloud; and indeed he looked a poor little scrap of a figure, very ill able to help even himself.

“Why do you laugh?” cried Findelkind, losing his terror in his indignation, and inspired with the courage which a great earnestness always gives. “You should not laugh. If you were true knights, you would not laugh; you would fight for me. I am little, I know,—I am



very little,—but he was no bigger than I; and see what great things he did. But the soldiers were good in those days; they did not laugh and use bad words—”

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And Findelkind, on whose shoulder the orderly's hold was still fast, faced the horses, which looked to him as huge as Martinswand, and the swords, which he little doubted were to be sheathed in his heart.

The officers stared, laughed again, then whispered together, and Findelkind heard them say the word "crazed." Findelkind, whose quick little ears were both strained like a mountain leveret's, understood that the great men were saying among themselves that it was not safe for him to be about alone, and that it would be kinder to him to catch and cage him—the general view with which the world regards enthusiasts.

He heard, he understood; he knew that they did not mean to help him, these men with the steel weapons and the huge steeds, but that they meant to shut him up in a prison; he, little free-born, forest-fed Findelkind. He wrenched himself out of the soldier's grip, as the rabbit wrenches itself out of the jaws of the trap even at the cost of leaving a limb behind, shot between the horses' legs, doubled like a hunted thing, and spied a refuge. Opposite the avenue of gigantic poplars and pleasant stretches of grass shaded by other bigger trees, there stands a very famous church, famous alike in the annals of history and of art,—the church of the Franciscans, that holds the tomb of Kaiser Max, though, alas! it holds not his ashes, as his dying desire was that it should. The church stands here, a noble, sombre place, with the Silver Chapel of Philippina Wessler adjoining it, and in front the fresh cool avenues that lead to the river and the broad water-meadows and the grand Hall road bordered with the painted stations of the Cross.

There were some peasants coming in from the country driving cows, and some burghers in their carts, with fat, slow horses; some little children were at play under the poplars and the elms; great dogs were lying about on the grass; everything was happy and at peace, except the poor, throbbing heart of little Findelkind, who thought the soldiers were coming after him to lock him up as mad, and ran and ran as fast as his trembling legs would carry him, making for sanctuary, as, in the old bygone days that he loved, many a soul less innocent than his had done. The wide doors of the Hofkirche stood open, and on the steps lay a black-and-tan hound, watching no doubt for its master or mistress, who had gone within to pray. Findelkind, in his terror, vaulted over the dog, and into the church tumbled headlong.

It seemed quite dark, after the brilliant sunshine on the river and the grass; his forehead touched the stone floor as he fell, and as he raised himself and stumbled forward, reverent and bareheaded, looking for the altar to cling to when the soldiers should enter to seize him, his uplifted eyes fell on the great tomb.

The tomb seems entirely to fill the church, as, with its twenty-four guardian figures round it, it towers up in the twilight that reigns here even at midday. There are a stern majesty and grandeur in it which dwarf every other monument and mausoleum. It is grim, it is

rude, it is savage, with the spirit of the rough ages that created it; but it is great with their greatness, it is heroic with their heroism, it is simple with their simplicity.

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As the awe-stricken eyes of the terrified child fell on the mass of stone and bronze, the sight smote him breathless. The mailed warriors standing around it, so motionless, so solemn, rilled him with a frozen, nameless fear. He had never a doubt that they were the dead arisen. The foremost that met his eyes were Theodoric and Arthur; the next, grim Rudolf, father of a dynasty of emperors. There, leaning on their swords, the three gazed down on him, armored, armed, majestic, serious, guarding the empty grave, which to the child, who knew nothing of its history, seemed a bier; and at the feet of Theodoric, who alone of them all looked young and merciful, poor little desperate Findelkind fell with a piteous sob, and cried: "I am not mad! Indeed, indeed, I am not mad!"

He did not know that these grand figures were but statues of bronze. He was quite sure they were the dead, arisen, and meeting there, around that tomb on which the solitary kneeling knight watched and prayed, encircled, as by a wall of steel, by these his comrades. He was not frightened, he was rather comforted and stilled, as with a sudden sense of some deep calm and certain help.

Findelkind, without knowing that he was like so many dissatisfied poets and artists much bigger than himself, dimly felt in his little tired mind how beautiful and how gorgeous and how grand the world must have been when heroes and knights like these had gone by in its daily sunshine and its twilight storms. No wonder Findelkind of Arlberg had found his pilgrimage so fair, when if he had needed any help he had only had to kneel and clasp these firm, mailed limbs, these strong cross-hiked swords, in the name of Christ and of the poor.

Theodoric seemed to look down on him with benignant eyes from under the raised visor; and our poor Findelkind, weeping, threw his small arms closer and closer round the bronze knees of the heroic figure, and sobbed aloud, "Help me, help me! Oh, turn the hearts of the people to me, and help me to do good!"

But Theodoric answered nothing.

There was no sound in the dark, hushed church; the gloom grew darker over Findelkind's eyes; the mighty forms of monarchs and of heroes grew dim before his sight. He lost consciousness, and fell prone upon the stones at Theodoric's feet; for he had fainted from hunger and emotion.

When he awoke it was quite evening; there was a lantern held over his head; voices were muttering curiously and angrily; bending over him were two priests, a sacristan of the church, and his own father. His little wallet lay by him on the stones, always empty.

"Boy of mine! were you mad?" cried his father, half in rage, half in tenderness. "The chase you have led me!—and your mother thinking you were drowned!—and all the

working day lost, running after old women's tales of where they had seen you! Oh, little fool, little fool! what was amiss with Martinswand, that you must leave it?"



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Findelkind slowly and feebly rose, and sat up on the pavement, and looked up, not at his father, but at the knight Theodoric.

“I thought they would help me to keep the poor,” he muttered feebly, as he glanced at his own wallet.” And it is empty— empty.”

“Are we not poor enough?” cried his father, with natural impatience, ready to tear his hair with vexation at having such a little idiot for a son. “Must you rove afield to find poverty to help, when it sits cold enough, the Lord knows, at our own hearth? Oh, little ass, little dolt, little maniac, fit only for a madhouse, talking to iron figures and taking them for real men! What have I done, O heaven, that I should be afflicted thus?”

And the poor man wept, being a good affectionate soul, but not very wise, and believing that his boy was mad. Then, seized with sudden rage once more, at thought of his day all wasted, and its hours harassed and miserable through searching for the lost child, he plucked up the light, slight figure of Findelkind in his own arms, and, with muttered thanks and excuses to the sacristan of the church, bore the boy out with him into the evening air, and lifted him into a cart which stood there with a horse harnessed to one side of the pole, as the country people love to do, to the risk of their own lives and their neighbors’. Findelkind said never a word; he was as dumb as Theodoric had been to him; he felt stupid, heavy, half blind; his father pushed him some bread, and he ate it by sheer instinct, as a lost animal will do; the cart jogged on, the stars shone, the great church vanished in the gloom of night.

As they went through the city towards the riverside along the homeward way, never a word did his father, who was a silent man at all times, address to him. Only once, as they jogged over the bridge, he spoke.

“Son,” he asked, “did you run away truly thinking to please God and help the poor?”

“Truly I did!” answered Findelkind, with a sob in his throat.

“Then thou wert an ass!” said his father. “Didst never think of thy mother’s love and of my toil? Look at home.”

Findelkind was mute. The drive was very long, backward by the same way, with the river shining in the moonlight and the mountains half covered with the clouds. It was ten by the bells of Zirl when they came once more under the solemn shadow of grave Martinswand. There were lights moving about his house, his brothers and sisters were still up; his mother ran out into the road, weeping and laughing with fear and joy.

Findelkind himself said nothing.

He hung his head.



They were too fond of him to scold him or to jeer at him; they made him go quickly to his bed, and his mother made him a warm milk posset and kissed him.

“We will punish thee to-morrow, naughty and cruel one,” said his parent. “But thou art punished enough already, for in thy place little Stefan had the sheep, and he has lost Katte’s lambs—the beautiful twin lambs! I dare not tell thy father to-night. Dost hear the poor thing mourn? Do not go afield for thy duty again.”

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A pang went through the heart of Findelkind, as if a knife had pierced it. He loved Katte better than almost any other living thing, and she was bleating under his window childless and alone. They were such beautiful lambs, too!—lambs that his father had promised should never be killed, but be reared to swell the flock.

Findelkind cowered down in his bed, and felt wretched beyond all wretchedness. He had been brought back; his wallet was empty; and Katte's lambs were lost. He could not sleep.

His pulses were beating like so many steam hammers; he felt as if his body were all one great throbbing heart. His brothers, who lay in, the same chamber with him, were sound asleep; very soon his father and mother snored also, on the other side of the wall. Findelkind was alone wide awake, watching the big white moon sail past his little casement, and hearing Katte bleat.

Where were her poor twin lambs?

The night was bitterly cold, for it was already far on in autumn; the rivers had swollen and flooded many fields, the snow for the last week had fallen quite low down on the mountainsides.

Even if still living, the little lambs would die, out on such a night without the mother or food and shelter of any sort. Findelkind, whose vivid brain always saw everything that he imagined as if it were being acted before his eyes, in fancy saw his two dear lambs floating dead down the swollen tide, entangled in rushes on the flooded shore, or fallen with broken limbs upon a crest of rocks. He saw them so plainly that scarcely could he hold back his breath from screaming aloud in the still night and answering the mourning wail of the desolate mother.

At last he could bear it no longer: his head burned, and his brain seemed whirling round; at a bound he leaped out of bed quite noiselessly, slid into his sheepskins, and stole out as he had done the night before, hardly knowing what he did. Poor Katte was mourning in the wooden shed with the other sheep, and the wail of her sorrow sounded sadly across the loud roar of the rushing river.

The moon was still high.

Above, against the sky, black and awful with clouds floating over its summit, was the great Martinswand.

Findelkind this time called the big dog Waldmar to him, and with the dog beside him went once more out into the cold and the gloom, whilst his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, were sleeping, and poor childless Katte alone was awake.



He looked up at the mountain and then across the water-swept meadows to the river. He was in doubt which way to take. Then he thought that in all likelihood the lambs would have been seen if they had wandered the river way, and even little Stefan would have had too much sense to let them go there. So he crossed the road and began to climb Martinswand.

With the instinct of the born mountaineer, he had brought out his crampons with him, and had now fastened them on his feet; he knew every part and ridge of the mountains, and had more than once climbed over to that very spot where Kaiser Max had hung in peril of his life.



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On second thoughts he bade Waldmar go back to the house. The dog was a clever mountaineer, too, but Findelkind did not wish to lead him into danger. "I have done the wrong, and I will bear the brunt," he said to himself; for he felt as if he had killed Katte's children, and the weight of the sin was like lead on his heart, and he would not kill good Waldmar too.

His little lantern did not show much light, and as he went higher upwards he lost sight of the moon. The cold was nothing to him, because the clear still air was that in which he had been reared; and the darkness he did not mind, because he was used to that also; but the weight of sorrow upon him he scarcely knew how to bear, and how to find two tiny lambs in this vast waste of silence and shadow would have puzzled and wearied older minds than his. Garibaldi and all his household, old soldiers tried and true, sought all night once upon Caprera in such a quest, in vain.

If he could only have awakened his brother Stefan to ask him which way they had gone! but then, to be sure, he remembered, Stefan must have told that to all those who had been looking for the lambs from sunset to nightfall. All alone he began the ascent.

Time and again, in the glad springtime and the fresh summer weather, he had driven his flock upwards to eat the grass that grew in the clefts of the rocks and on the broad green alps. The sheep could not climb to the highest points; but the goats did, and he with them. Time and again he had lain on his back in these uppermost heights, with the lower clouds behind him and the black wings of the birds and the crows almost touching his forehead, as he lay gazing up into the blue depth of the sky, and dreaming, dreaming, dreaming.

He would never dream any more now, he thought to himself. His dreams had cost Katte her lambs, and the world of the dead Findelkind was gone forever; gone were all the heroes and knights; gone all the faith and the force; gone every one who cared for the dear Christ and the poor in pain.

The bells of Zirl were ringing midnight. Findelkind heard, and wondered that only two hours had gone by since his mother had kissed him in his bed. It seemed to him as if long, long nights had rolled away, and he had lived a hundred years.

He did not feel any fear of the dark calm night, lit now and then by silvery gleams of moon and stars. The mountain was his old familiar friend, and the ways of it had no more terror for him than these hills here used to have for the bold heart of Kaiser Max. Indeed, all he thought of was Katte—Katte and the lambs. He knew the way that the sheep tracks ran; the sheep could not climb so high as the goats; and he knew, too, that little Stefan could not climb so high as he. So he began his search low down upon Martinswand.



After midnight the cold increased; there were snow clouds hanging near, and they opened over his head, and the soft snow came flying along. For himself he did not mind it, but alas for the lambs!— if it covered them, how would he find them? And if they slept in it, they were dead.

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It was bleak and bare on the mountainside, though there were still patches of grass such as the flocks liked, that had grown since the hay was cut. The frost of the night made the stone slippery, and even the irons gripped it with difficulty; and there was a strong wind rising like a giant's breath, and blowing his small horn lantern to and fro.

Now and then he quaked a little with fear—not fear of the night or the mountains, but of strange spirits and dwarfs and goblins of ill repute, said to haunt Martinswand after nightfall. Old women had told him of such things, though the priest always said that they were only foolish tales, there being nothing on God's earth wicked save men and women who had not clean hearts and hands. Findelkind believed the priest; still, all alone on the side of the mountain, with the snowflakes flying round him, he felt a nervous thrill that made him tremble and almost turn backward. Almost, but not quite; for he thought of Katte and the poor little lambs lost—and perhaps dead—through his fault. The path went zigzag and was very steep; the Arolla pines swayed their boughs in his face; stones that lay in his path unseen in the gloom made him stumble. Now and then a large bird of the night flew by with a rushing sound; the air grew so cold that all Martinswand might have been turning to one huge glacier. All at once he heard through the stillness—for there is nothing so still as a mountainside in snow—a little pitiful bleat. All his terrors vanished; all his memories of ghost tales passed away; his heart gave a leap of joy; he was sure it was the cry of the lambs. He stopped to listen more surely. He was now many score of feet above the level of his home and of Zirl; he was, as nearly as he could judge, halfway as high as where the cross in the cavern marks the spot of the Kaiser's peril. The little bleat sounded above him, and it was very feeble and faint.

Findelkind set his lantern down, braced himself up by drawing tighter his old leathern girdle, set his sheepskin cap firm on his forehead, and went towards the sound as far as he could judge that it might be. He was out of the woods now; there were only a few straggling pines rooted here and there in a mass of loose lying rock and slate; so much he could tell by the light of the lantern, and the lambs, by the bleating, seemed still above him.

It does not, perhaps, seem very hard labor to hunt about by a dusky light upon a desolate mountainside; but when the snow is falling fast,—when the light is only a small circle, wavering, yellowish on the white,—when around is a wilderness of loose stones and yawning clefts,—when the air is ice and the hour is past midnight,—the task is not a light one for a man; and Findelkind was a child, like that Findelkind that was in heaven.

Long, very long, was his search; he grew hot and forgot all fear, except a spasm of terror lest his light should burn low and die out. The bleating had quite ceased now, and there was not even a sigh to guide him; but he knew that near him the lambs must be, and he did not waver or despair.



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He did not pray; praying in the morning had been no use; but he trusted in God, and he labored hard, toiling to and fro, seeking in every nook and behind each stone, and straining every muscle and nerve, till the sweat rolled in a briny dew off his forehead, and his curls dripped with wet. At last, with a scream of joy, he touched some soft close wool that gleamed white as the white snow. He knelt down on the ground, and peered behind the stone by the full light of his lantern; there lay the little lambs—two little brothers, twin brothers, huddled close together, asleep. Asleep? He was sure they were asleep, for they were so silent and still.

He bowed over them, and kissed them, and laughed, and cried, and kissed them again. Then a sudden horror smote him; they were so very still. There they lay, cuddled close, one on another, one little white head on each little white body—drawn closer than ever together, to try and get warm.

He called to them; he touched them; then he caught them up in his arms, and kissed them again, and again, and again. Alas! they were frozen and dead. Never again would they leap in the long green grass, and frisk with each other, and lie happy by Katte's side; they had died calling for their mother, and in the long, cold, cruel night only death had answered.

Findelkind did not weep, or scream, or tremble; his heart seemed frozen, like the dead lambs,

It was he who had killed them.

He rose up and gathered them in his arms,—and cuddled them in the skirts of his sheepskin tunic, and cast his staff away that he might carry them, and so, thus burdened with their weight, set his face to the snow and the wind once more, and began his downward way.

Once a great sob shook him; that was all. Now he had no fear.

The night might have been noonday, the snow storm might have been summer, for aught he knew or cared.

Long and weary was the way, and often he stumbled and had to rest; often the terrible sleep of the snow lay heavy on his eyelids, and he longed to lie down and be at rest, as the little brothers were; often it seemed to him that he would never reach home again. But he shook the lethargy off him and resisted the longing, and held on his way: he knew that his mother would mourn for him as Katte mourned for the lambs. At length, through all difficulty and danger, when his light had spent itself and his strength had well nigh spent itself too, his feet touched the old highroad. There were flickering torches and many people, and loud cries around the church, as there had been four hundred



years before, when the last sacrament had been said in the valley for the hunter-king in peril above.

His mother, being sleepless and anxious, had risen long before it was dawn, and had gone to the children's chamber, and had found the bed of Findelkind empty once more.

He came into the midst of the people with the two little lambs in his arms, and he heeded neither the outcries of neighbors nor the frenzied joy of his mother: his eyes looked straight before him, and his face was white like the snow.



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"I killed them," he said, and then two great tears rolled down his cheeks and fell on the little cold bodies of the two little dead brothers.

Findelkind was very ill for many nights and many days after that.

Whenever he spoke in his fever he always said, "I killed them!"

Never anything else.

So the dreary winter months went by, while the deep snow filled up lands and meadows, and covered the great mountains from summit to base, and all around Martinswand was quite still, and now and then the post went by to Zirl, and on the holy-days the bells tolled; that was all. His mother sat between the stove and his bed with a sore heart; and his father, as he went to and fro between the walls of beaten snow, from the wood shed to the cattle byre, was sorrowful, thinking to himself the child would die, and join that earlier Findelkind whose home was with the saints,

But the child did not die.

He lay weak and wasted and almost motionless a long time; but slowly, as the springtime drew near, and the snows on the lower hills loosened, and the abounding waters coursed green and crystal clear down all the sides of the hills, Findelkind revived as the earth did, and by the time the new grass was springing and the first blue of the gentian gleamed on the Alps, he was well.

But to this day he seldom plays and scarcely ever laughs. His face is sad, and his eyes have a look of trouble.

Sometimes the priest of Zirl says of him to others, "He will be a great poet or a great hero some day." Who knows?

Meanwhile, in the heart of the child there remains always a weary pain, that lies on his childish life as a stone may lie on a flower.

"I killed them!" he says often to himself, thinking of the two little white brothers frozen to death on Martinswand that cruel night; and he does the things that are told him, and is obedient, and tries to be content with the humble daily duties that are his lot, and when he says his prayers at bedtime always ends them so: —

"Dear God, do let the little lambs play with the other Findelkind that is in heaven."

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