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CECILY  
(ELF GOLDIHAIR)









Illustration







**CECILY**



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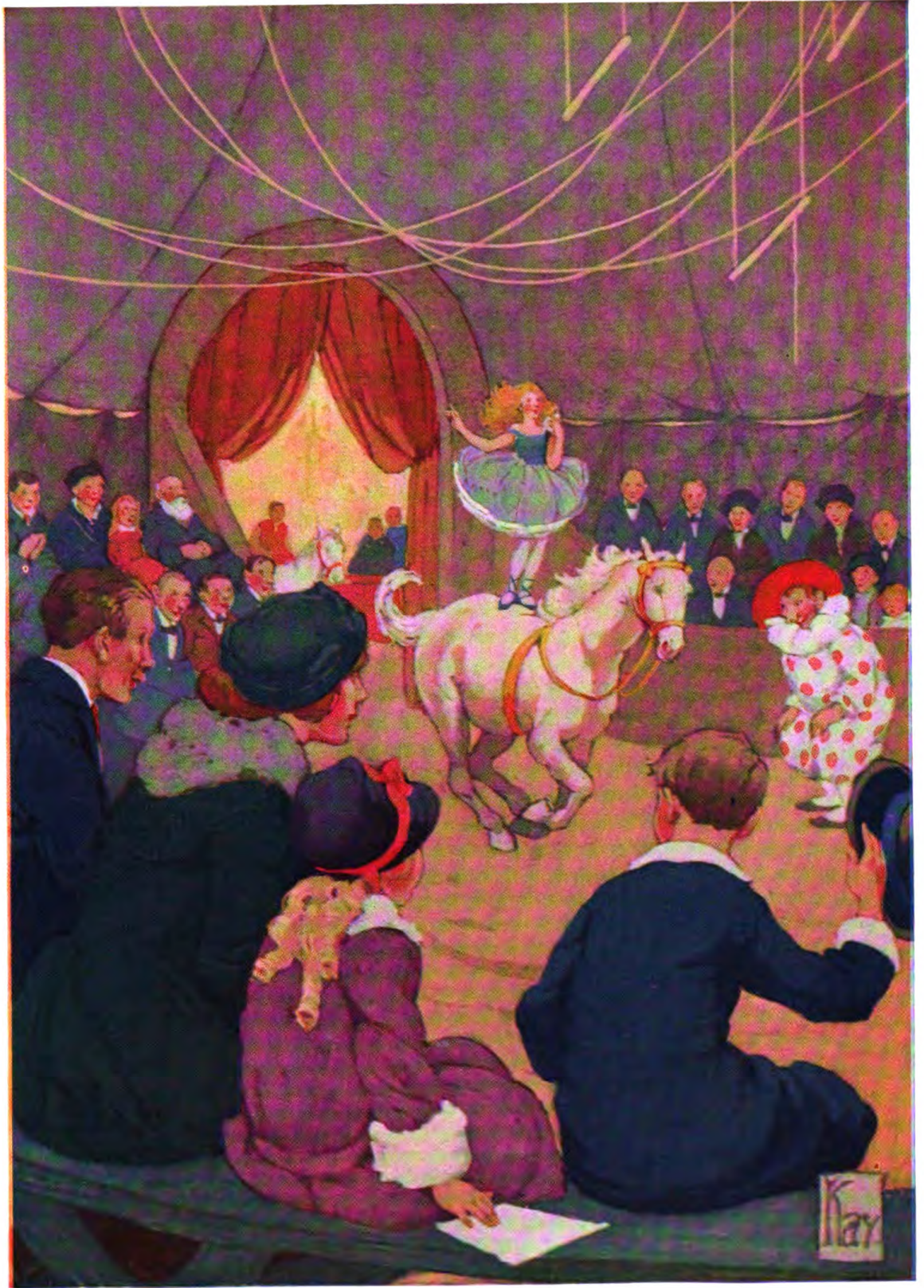
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"BE QUIET, THERE SHE COMES!"

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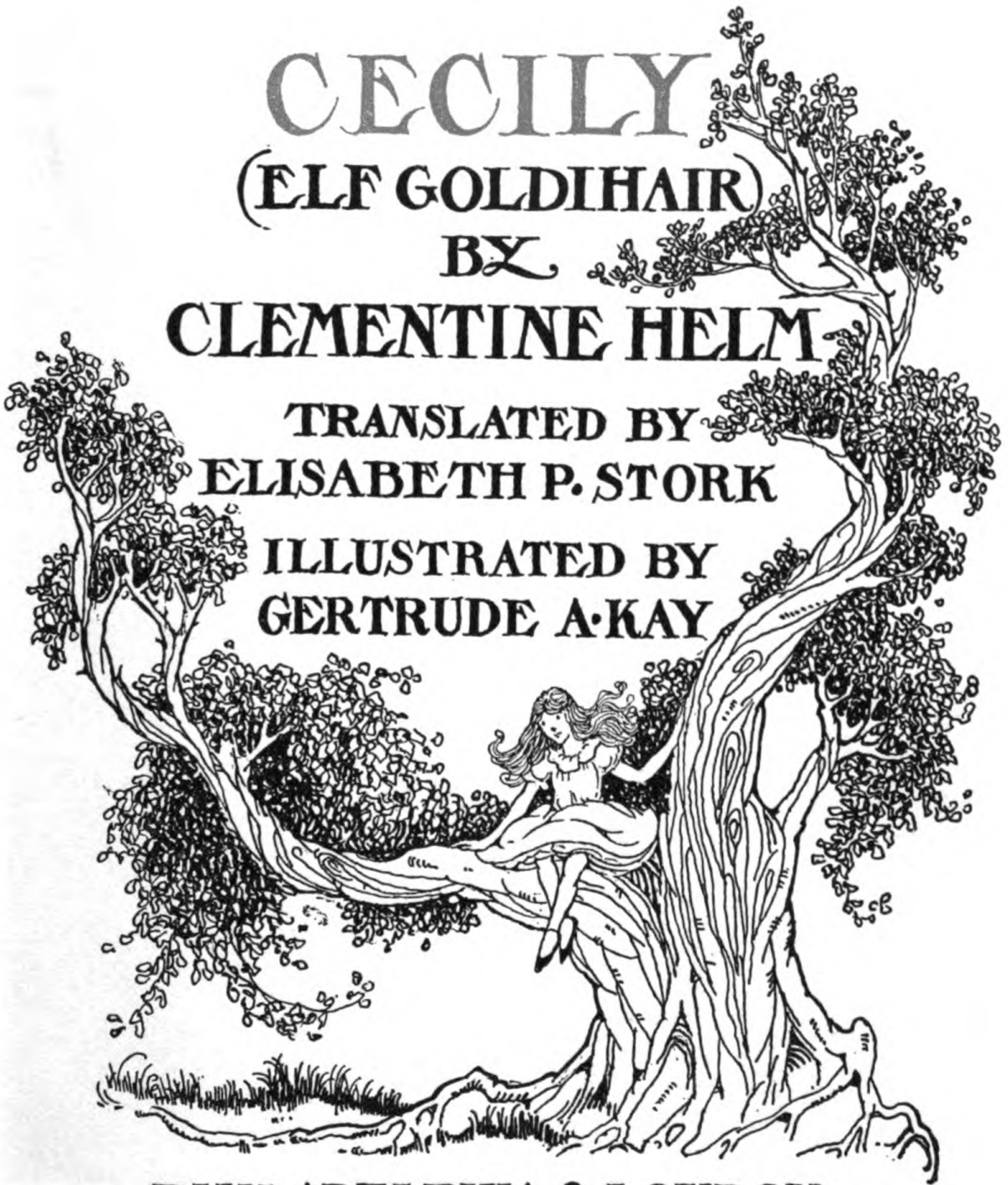
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**CECILY**  
**(ELF GOLDIHAIR)**  
BY

**CLEMENTINE HELM**

TRANSLATED BY  
**ELISABETH P. STORK**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**GERTRUDE A. KAY**



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# CECILY

## CHAPTER I

### THE CIRCUS

IN A large open space before the town of N——, a number of men were busy at a common task. Beams were being fastened together and raised; while from quantities of boards and canvas, heaped around, walls were made over scaffolding, and a broad wooden roof built over the top.

The airy building was entirely round and took up practically the whole of the open space. Hammering and sawing went on mingled with cries and shouts. For years this quiet spot had not known such noise and bustle.

Directly over this new building, which under the hands of the workmen rose with such marvellous rapidity, loomed the smoky chimneys of an iron-foundry. The numerous buildings belonging to the latter also surrounded an enormous yard, which was just as active as the place beyond.

A bell resounded in the factory. This was the sign that work was done for that day, and soon afterwards many workmen came out through a large door. Most of them were rusty and sooty fellows in blue shirts and rough coats, with leather aprons round their hips and bags in which they carried their belongings. Nearly



all had short pipes in their mouths and talked cheerfully together as they started on their way home. Between the men the big and little boys employed there also tried to slip through. Their grey linen trousers all bore the marks of the red-brown iron they had just been handling.

But the workmen did not go as usual straight across the open square towards their homes in the town or in the neighboring little hamlets. Instead they halted wonderingly in front of the new wooden building which had been half completed in this single day.

“What on earth is this going to be?” said a grey-haired man, pointing at it with his short pipe. “It’s as round as a pepper-box.”

“They are in a hurry, as if the comedy had to begin today,” replied his neighbor. “What do they call this thing, Trangott? I saw you chatting with these people for ever so long this morning. You were almost too late in reaching the enamel-works, and the master had to scold you.”

“Bah, he means no harm,” laughed Trangott, puffing the smoke more vigorously from his pipe. “When they are settled in this place they call a circus and begin to show their tricks, he’ll come out and see them, too, however much he scolds us now.”

“What do they do in a circus?” asked a young lad, peeping through the boards which formed the wall. “They are putting benches all around, just leaving a free space in the middle.”

“Yes, yes, the benches are for us, and in the middle

both animals and people and what not show their tricks," explained Trangott. "A large company of artists are here and are said to fill the hotel in the suburb to overflowing. The shows begin next Sunday, so we workmen can see them too."

"They had better not ask much, for I refuse to give a lot of money for such rubbish," said the grey-haired man. Then he walked away and most of the workmen followed in his direction. A few of the younger boys kept running about among the carpenters and getting into their way until they were finally sent off.

A stately building stood beside the foundry in the direction of the town. Here lived the higher officials employed at the works. A fine, large garden bordered the side of the house. It still looked wintry and bare, as gardens generally look at the beginning of March.

Despite the cool evening air a little girl of ten sat in one of the bare arbors of the garden. She was bending over a book, but in the twilight was scarcely able to decipher the print.

"Gabriele, where are you? What! Here in the arbor? I even think you are still reading. But it is pitch-dark!" cried out her approaching, somewhat older brother, pulling the book out of Gabriele's hand.

"Oh, my book! You'll lose my page. Give it to me, Lothar," exclaimed the little one, crying and stretching out a hand towards her property.

"Here it is! Just cry right away, you silly little cry-Gabriele!" said Lothar, flinging the book towards



her. "But come now and see what they are building out there. Mr. Fakter said it was a circus and that when this building on the square is finished we will soon see something wonderful."

"A circus, Lothar?" said Gabriele, listening eagerly. "I was just reading a beautiful story about a circus in Rome, where wild beasts fought with men. I guess we won't see anything like that?"

"God forbid, Gabriele," laughed Lothar. "Those are old stories from the time of Rome. Nowadays people show wonderful tricks in a circus, Mr. Fakter told me. But we'll soon find out for ourselves. Come out there before mamma calls us in to supper."

Lothar and Gabriele, the children of the foundry director, hurried hand in hand towards the square. The half-finished structure greatly excited their curiosity, and they sat down on a heap of boards. While they were watching the carpenters they suddenly heard some music. Full of surprise, they saw quite a crowd of gaily dressed people coming down the street which led from the town to the iron-works.

"Just look, Gabriele, here come the artists who will perform here!" cried Lothar, pointing toward them. "Oh, what a dear little horse they have, and what a charming doll is sitting on it! What funny leaps the clown beside it is making and what a large trumpet he has in his hand! Listen! The music has stopped and the long fellow in the red vest is going to announce something."

The procession had come close to the house near

which the children were standing. Here it halted; whereupon the little deformed clown blew a dashing flourish with his trumpet, which was nearly as big as himself. Then a tremendously tall man in a red coat trimmed with gold braid went forward a step and called out in a shrill voice:

“Next Sunday evening at seven o’clock the great artists of the famous Circus Strianski will have the honor of appearing for the first time before the high nobility and the honored audience. Among others will appear the world-famous acrobats, the brothers Senno, also the Indian snake-king, Leone; then Miss Olla in her unsurpassed accomplishments on horseback; as well as the Chinese magician, So-Li; and Nero, the strong Hercules. But, before everything else, will appear Elf Goldihair, the star of our company. First she will be shown in the midst of flames and then she will fly over the whole circus on the trapeze. We hope sincerely and beg you most humbly to honor us with a numerous audience.”

Another flourish resounded from the gigantic trumpet, followed by a bow from the eloquent speaker. After this the gay troupe moved towards a neighboring hamlet, to invite its inhabitants to the performance.

“I wonder if Elf Goldihair, of whom the giant was speaking, is the charming little girl on the pony,” said Lothar with gleaming eyes, as he pulled his sister after him to see the company a little longer.

“Her hair was a shiny gold, and it fell in waves down her back,” replied Gabriele. “And did you see



how becoming the sky-blue dress was to her? It was completely embroidered in silver, and a dove sat on her shoulder."

"Papa is sure to take us to the performance; we must beg him to," said Lothar. "It's going to be much more fun than the tight-rope walkers we saw last year and the man with the camel and the funny dressed-up monkeys. But I hear mamma calling us to supper. Come into the house, Gabriele, for papa does not like to wait for us."

At supper the children could not talk their fill about the travelling artists they had seen, and the parents duly gave their promise to take Lothar and Gabriele to the first performance.

The day before the first show the circus building was finished and all the youth of the town surrounded it. They looked with wondering eyes at the large brightly-colored pictures over the entrance, where the marvellous deeds of every single member of the company were shown. Most of all they wondered at a representation of the sun giving forth sparks of fire, in the midst of which stood a little girl with a veil over her golden hair and her hand raised as if commanding the flames not to touch her. The deformed little man with the giant trumpet guarded the entrance and with his long arms vigorously repulsed all the jeering with which the children teased him.

On Sunday evening the inside of the circus gleamed with brilliant light. On the benches a numerous audi-

ence had assembled, which waited in suspense for the things to come.

Full of curiosity, the inhabitants of the town and the villages round about had accepted the invitation of the artists. The workmen of the iron-works also had gladly paid their little entrance fee to see the marvels which were announced, and sat in their clean Sunday suits in the rows farthest back. In the front row sat the higher officials of the town, among them Gabriele and Lothar at their parents' side.

The children eagerly studied the printed programmes which announced what the artists were to perform that evening. The little hunchback, dressed like a clown in a loose, white costume on which bright signs and figures were sewn, amused the audience with his jokes. His white painted face and his curious bounds constantly produced great merriment.

"Hello, hello!" he cried finally, and hurried towards one side, where bars shut off the circus. "Here comes my own proud horse, my sweet little Rosinante! Just come, my sweet white chicken, chick, chick, chick!"

A heavy, somewhat elderly white horse trotted in through the entrance carrying on his back a wide saddle in which sat a young, airily clad lady. This, according to the programme, was Miss Olla. She threw dainty kisses with her hands towards all sides, then sprang up and made such wonderful leaps and dance steps on the back of the galloping horse that her thin skirts and bright-colored ribbons fairly fluttered in the wind. The

clown running alongside of her made constant fun. He would hold out his pointed hat when she jumped in order to catch her in it; then he clumsily imitated her clever tricks and chattered with the horse. The audience laughed and gaily clapped their hands.

The four Senno brothers followed and made the most remarkable leaps, first together, and then over each other's heads. They stood on each other's shoulders and formed a pyramid, they twisted their limbs in unbelievable ways, played with uncountable round balls, which they sometimes caught in their hands and sometimes made to dance over their necks, arms, and hips. Finally they threw sharp knives at each other, and one could not help being afraid they would wound each other fatally. But however close to their heads or under their arms and feet the sharp blades flew, they always struck the firm wall of boards beside which the living target stood, and there buried themselves.

"Oh, that was terrible! I am glad it is over," cried out Gabriele with a sigh, as the artists disappeared to give place to others. But despite the fact that she had been terribly frightened during the dangerous game, she had never taken her eyes off the spectacle. And it was the same with the rest of the audience. They were frightened but watched intently.

"Now come the Chinese men!" cried Lothar, reading his programme. "Look, here they are already with their long pigtailed and pointed shoes. How ridiculous they look and what bright-colored coats they have!"

Now, Gabriele did not need to shut her eyes timidly,

for these artists did the most delightful tricks. They pulled whole wagonloads of multicolored tissue paper out of their mouths, they swallowed fire, balanced tables and chairs on their noses, and finally whirled a great number of open, colored umbrellas about, under which they performed a clever dance.

The performances of Hercules also produced astonishment and no fear. The powerful workmen of the foundry especially clapped their hands as Mr. Strianski himself, the strong man, lifted iron weights with his teeth or his little finger, as if they were just toys. He gave other proofs of his strength, and the workmen could appreciate how hard it was to handle such iron weights.

A movement of anticipation went through the audience now, for the star of the company was to appear, Elf Goldihair, as she was called.

“ It must be the little girl in blue we have seen! ” cried Gabriele eagerly. “ Be quiet, there she comes! Oh, how adorable she looks! ”

Galloping in on the swift pony, the little elf-like child entered the ring. She wore the silver-embroidered blue dress, her gold-brown hair lay free and curly upon her back, and the blue-grey dove sat again on her shoulder. While the child rode swiftly several times around the ring, the dove sat perfectly still and finally snuggled close to its mistress's neck, as the latter stood still to dismount.

The delicate face of the little girl had flushed during the lively ride and her curly hair surrounded her like



a veil. Now she shook it back and stepped close to the pony, which she touched with her whip. The pretty animal immediately fell down on its front legs as if he were bowing before the public, and at the next sign from Elf Goldihair lightly sprang up again. Then he fetched the little Elf's handkerchief like a dog, danced on his hind legs by holding up his front legs, and finally lay down on the ground, pretending to be dead and not making the slightest movement.

His little mistress now turned her face towards the dove, which had half hidden itself in her gleaming hair, and called out a few words. Immediately the little creature flew up and sat down on the pony's head. With its pointed beak it picked him several times on the ear, after which the pony jumped on his feet again. Elf Goldihair gave him a light blow with the riding-whip and in graceful bounds the animal ran out of the ring with the grey dove on his head.

The little girl gracefully thanked the audience with a pretty bow. Then she hurried towards a ladder which was leaning against some scaffolding, and with the help of the little clown, who always remained near her, she quickly mounted to the top with light bounds. Here she pulled down a rope hanging from above, grasped the cross-bar with both hands, and as quick as lightning swung herself through the whole width of the circus to another rope, grasping the bar with her hands. Then she flew back again to the first and, light as a bird, hovered over the heads of the anxious onlookers, who

hardly dared to breathe from fright, as they feared the enchanting little creature might fall.

“ Thank goodness she is coming down her ladder again! ” cried Gabriele, who had anxiously clung to her mother with tears in her eyes. “ Oh, mamma, I am sure the little girl has no parents. They would never let her do such dangerous things. ”

“ I wasn't a bit afraid! How can anybody cry so quickly? You certainly are a regular cry-Gabriele, ” exclaimed Lothar with glowing cheeks. “ Elf Goldihair was so calm and sure of herself, and I am sure she never falls. Besides the people had spread out a net under her and so she could not come to harm. ”

“ Just the same I am glad it is over, ” sighed Gabriele. “ Doesn't the last performance, the snake-king, come now? ”

“ No, the fire-magic is the last, ” said Lothar. “ I am sure Elf Goldihair is going to stand in the glowing sun, just as the picture outside showed. It will be wonderful. ”

“ Oh, look, how awful! ” cried Gabriele, terrified anew, pointing to a big chest from which a fantastically dressed man took several weirdly shimmering snakes. These wound themselves at once around his arms, crawled down his legs, and lay around his neck like garlands. The magician even held the head of one snake in his mouth and played with the creatures as if they were the most harmless things in the world. As a matter of fact the smallest pressure or the lightest contraction of the reptiles might suffice to strangle the man.

He finally slipped the strange fetters from him and produced a long flute. As soon as he blew on it, all the snakes which had been lying before him raised their heads, and moving about their pointed little tongues, lifted up the front part of their bodies as straight as candles. Then they swayed lightly to the rhythm of the music. Their eyes glistened, and only when their master dropped his instrument again did they sink down and curl about each other into a shapeless coil.

Gabriele was glad when the fantastic snake-king had disappeared, but Lothar, on the contrary, would have loved to inspect the snakes closely. He looked up to the wonderman who had been able to train the uncanny things to do his bidding.

“ I am sure he has broken their poison fangs,” said his father, “ but the snakes might still do him harm. I certainly should choose different toys from these long dangerous creatures. But quiet! the fire-magic is beginning.”

A burning red light now penetrated the building from the entrance and a slight figure wrapped in a dense veil was carried in and placed on a little throne. Brightly gleaming, a ray of fire shot up directly behind her, then a second and a third, and finally Elf Goldihair stood in the midst of a sun of fireworks, exactly as the picture outside had shown. She unfastened the veil, which was soaked with fireproof liquids, and her delicate face was lit up by the glow of light. One could also see the dove on her shoulder now, which, however, timidly hid in the child's thick hair while the glow

lasted. The little girl raised her hand now as if she were commanding the brightly burning flames and firewheels, and they immediately went out. A blue sort of moonlight spread all over the circus, and surrounded by this magic light, Elf Goldihair floated away again. The performance was ended.

A storm of applause now broke forth, which threatened to shake the foundations of the circus, and a thousand voices demanded the reappearance of the artists. Louder than any other, though, was heard the name "Elf Goldihair," and in the end the child appeared surrounded by her companions. But she looked tired and exhausted, and although smiling and gratefully bowing, as all the company did, one could see that she was eager to leave the circus. Clinging to the deformed clown, she hurried ahead of all the others away from the place which had seen her remarkable, much-admired accomplishments.



## CHAPTER II

### FAILURE

FOUR times similar performances had taken place in the circus, and the good attendance showed how much the inhabitants of N—— and its suburbs enjoyed the fine accomplishments of the company.

Lothar was one of the most enthusiastic members of the audience and had not missed a single show. His sister, however, was so terrified and anxious that she preferred to stay at home and hear him tell the wonders he had seen. Most of the performances were rather commonplace, as such wandering troupes mostly give, but the inhabitants of N—— were not spoiled. They gazed at everything with amazement, and Lothar more so than anybody else.

“ Today Elf Goldihair flies through the whole circus again on the trapeze,” said Lothar, beaming with delight. His father had given him permission to attend the circus again, as only two more performances were to take place before the troupe was leaving. “ Oh, come along this time, Gabriele! ”

“ No, no, I am so afraid for the little girl,” replied Gabriele, pressing her hands together. “ If only no misfortune happens to her! ”

“ Nonsense! she does not do it for the first time,” laughed Lothar; but his timid sister could not make up

her mind to accompany him. So he went alone, and his parents also remained at home.

But after an hour Lothar came flying into the room.

“ She has fallen and they are bringing her here to the works. Quickly, mamma, come and help her! ” he cried, entirely beside himself, pulling his mother out of the room.

“ Who, Lothar? Somebody from the circus? ” asked Mrs. Bernsdorf, frightened.

“ Yes, indeed! Elf Goldihair. She missed the trapeze and fell. The net under her broke, so she fell to the ground, ” Lothar related breathlessly. “ She lies as if dead on a stretcher with which they are carrying her. I told them right away to take her into the house of old Poole, the nearest house to the circus. Oh, the poor, poor little girl! ”

Sobbing loudly, the boy flung his arms about his mother’s neck, and she affectionately drew the excited child to her.

“ That was fine and sensible, my boy, ” she said kindly. “ But do not let us lose time now. I hear the people calling to me already. I suppose they want linen for bandages and such things. They are sure not to have any at Mrs. Poole’s. ”

On a stretcher covered with a veil lay the delicate, pale child, who was carefully carried into the overseer’s little house at the end of the works.

Many anxious faces surrounded the poor little one, for everyone had followed. People wept and lamented

on all sides and everybody tried to see her or find out about her.

But all those who came too near were warded off by the scowling little hunchback, who walked in his clown's costume right beside the stretcher. His bright fool's costume and his white, chalky face formed a sad contrast with the sorrowful expression of his features.

But nobody dared to make fun of the ridiculous little figure. Only one of the young work-boys had scoffingly run alongside of him and pointed jeeringly at him. But a resounding blow on his cheek from one of the workmen quickly stopped him.

"I'll teach you to sneer at unfortunates, you dirty lout," he called out grimly, and the chastised lad took his leave, loudly crying.

"Is the clown Elf Goldihair's father?" asked a woman in a low voice.

"That could not be possible; a charming little creature like her! She is said not to have a father living," replied another.

"The poor child! But I hope a mother."

"No, no mother, either. The brightly dressed man is her adopted father."

"No, her guardian. But he is said to love her like his own daughter. How unhappy the poor little hunchback looks with his white painted face."

"Is she dead?"

"Who can tell; the poor little thing looks pale enough."

“ One could hardly believe that children could perform in such shows.”

“ But the little one pleased us all so much with her dove and her little horse.”

“ The dove sat right by her on the stretcher. Didn't you see it? The clown put it there.”

“ They are bringing her into old Mr. Poole's house. That is right, for Mrs. Poole is a good woman and her daughter, too.”

The sad procession was beyond the view of the crowd now. The gate was shut as soon as the carriers had set down their burden in the house.

Old Mrs. Poole, a very good, warm-hearted woman, immediately placed the unconscious child on a bed in her dwelling. Then she bent over her to listen to her breathing.

“ I am afraid she is dead. Is the little heart still? ” a trembling voice said beside her. Looking up, the woman gazed into the chalky face of the little fun-maker, over whose thin, painted cheeks big tears rolled down.

“ No, she is not dead. I can feel the beating of her heart, but very faintly,” answered Mrs. Poole. “ Are you the little girl's father? ”

“ No, her guardian, her parents are both dead,” said the man with a faint voice. Then he put his large, brown hand anxiously on the child's heart. “ Poor little Cecily,” he went on, sobbing. “ Perhaps it would be best if you never woke up.”



“What is the little one’s name? Did her parents belong to the troupe?” inquired Mrs. Poole.

“Cecelia Melau is her name,” replied the man. “Her father was my brother, one of the best circus-riders of the company. Unfortunately he was internally injured by a bad fall from a horse and died after a short illness. His wife did not survive him long. She caught a bad fever from which she never recovered. The director only kept her with the company for the sake of the child, who brought him loads of money. I never wanted the little one to work on the trapeze. But my objection did not help, for I am only the clown, who has not much to say. I prophesied long ago what happened today. A child of her age is not fit for such things.”

This recital, brought out between many sobs, was interrupted now by the arrival of Mrs. Bernsdorf and the doctor. The latter ordered all present out of the room except Mrs. Bernsdorf and Mrs. Poole, as he had to examine the little one carefully.

“It seems that nothing is broken,” he said at last. “But I cannot judge if the child has suffered internally by her fall till she regains consciousness. I think some strong medicine will bring her to.”

The doctor soon succeeded in his eager efforts to wake the little one from her deep faint. The heart beat more strongly, her breathing was evident, and her lips as well as the fine transparent nostrils trembled faintly. Finally she slowly opened her large brown eyes, looked dreamily about her, then closed her lids again.

“ Uncle Melau,” she whispered, scarcely audibly.

Then she suddenly moved convulsively and exclaimed in terror:

“ Now Mr. Strianski will beat me with his big whip, because I tore the net when I fell.”

“ No, no, I won't let him beat you. Just be quiet, dearest child,” said Mrs. Bernsdorf kindly, caressing the child's small hand.

“ Who are you? ” asked the little one, looking up again. “ Isn't Uncle Melau here? ”

The doctor called in the little clown who had stood trembling at the door. He commanded him to remain quiet and to hide his anxiety.

“ Cecily, my sweet little Cecily! ” called the man softly, kneeling down at the child's bedside and tenderly kissing her hands. “ Do you recognize your Uncle Melau, my darling? I brought you your little dove. Come, Sidi, come.”

He pulled from his breast, covered with the now mussed-looking bright suit, the blue-grey dove which had been sitting on Elf Goldihair's shoulder during the performance.

The little creature immediately fluttered to her accustomed place, and hiding deep in Cecily's golden hair, nestled close up to the pale child's neck. The latter tenderly stroked her little fingers over the shining feathers. But now her glance fell on Gabriele's white frock, in which Mrs. Bernsdorf had dressed her instead of the tinsel one she had worn.

“ Where am I, Uncle Melau? ” she cried timidly, taking the hand of the figure kneeling beside her,

“ What dress have I on? Did my silver dress tear when I fell? Oh, but Mrs. Strianski will get so angry. Where did you put it, Uncle Melau? ”

“ I put it away carefully, dear Cecily, and it wasn't torn,” said old Mrs. Poole, stepping nearer.

“ Who are you? ” stammered Cecily, wondering anew. “ I don't even know you. Give me my dress back! I have to get dressed right away, for Mr. Strianski must be very angry with me already.”

She quickly tried to raise herself, but with an exclamation of pain sank back again.

“ Oh, my back, oh, my head, oh, my feet hurt me so; everything hurts me so! Oh, I can't.”

“ You must lie still, my little Cecily,” said Job Melau gently. “ The good, dear woman here has promised to nurse you till you are well again. So be very good and polite, dear, won't you? ”

“ Just pretend I am your mother, little daughter,” continued Mrs. Poole kindly.

“ My mother? She died a long time ago. Black men put her in the ground and then Uncle Melau planted beautiful flowers on her grave,” said Cecily sadly. “ But that is far, far away from here.”

Wearily the child closed her eyes and seemed to doze off.

The doctor forbade all disturbance, for he hoped that sleep would do her good. Soon, however, a convulsive shudder shook her body and violent pains showed how seriously the poor child had suffered from the fall. Hours went by before she again wakened to

clear consciousness and then she lay tired and listless on her pillows.

During that time the little clown had rid himself of his harlequin costume. After that he hastened to Mr. Strianski, the director of the troupe, to speak to him and his wife about Elf Goldihair's misfortune.

"The doctor is afraid that she will be sick quite a while and she'll need the best of care for a long time after," he said, looking up to his chief, whose hard, rough face mirrored the keenest disgust.

"Doctors say that after each little accident. I don't care a fig for that," he answered harshly. "Kascha will rub the stupid thing with her balsam; that's much better than all the quackeries of your doctors. Don't you think so, too, madam?"

"Naturally! Cecily is afraid and does not want to come because she'll be punished for her accident," said Mrs. Kascha, shrugging her shoulders. "I'll go to the people in the works myself and fetch her."

"I can spare you that trouble, Mrs. Strianski," retorted Job Melau, shaking his head. "The poor child is so dangerously ill that they even sent me away. Besides, she is so well taken care of in the house of the overseer of the foundry that it would be wrong to fetch her. His wife does not leave her bedside and the doctor is very conscientious."

"She simply has to be on her feet for the farewell performance tomorrow. That is my special command. Otherwise the whip shall teach her!" cried the director violently, stamping with his foot. "I can't close the



last show without the fire-magic. It simply wouldn't do. If she wants to she can leave the trapeze alone tomorrow, for the net is torn. Go now, Mr. Melau, and tell her that."

He turned his back on the clown and left the room.

"God in Heaven, but that is impossible!" exclaimed Job Melau, pressing his hands to his thin face in sheer despair. "Have mercy, Mrs. Strianski! You are a woman and have children yourself. Just think if one of them should ever have such an accident."

"They will be more skilful when their time comes," laughed Mrs. Strianski scornfully. "Cecily is a fussy thing and you, Job Melau, spoil and ruin her with your monkey-love. My husband tired long ago of your stupid, silly jokes, and I shall see that you leave the troupe as soon as we get the musical clown. He'll be able to amuse the public much better with his jokes than you with your awkward wit. The separation is absolutely necessary for Cecily."

The poor little cripple fell back on his seat, pale and rigid.

"Merciful heavens, don't do this to me, Mrs. Strianski!" he stammered, raising his hands in supplication. "I can't and must not leave the child. I solemnly promised it to her dying mother. Oh, I'll think out some new jokes to attract the public and I'll gladly be satisfied with less pay. But don't send me away from Cecily. Oh, be merciful, Mrs. Kascha!"

And flinging himself down on his knees before the

hard-hearted woman, the poor little man kissed her hands and the hem of her dress.

“ We’ll think it over, but see to it that Elf Goldihair can perform again tomorrow,” said Mrs. Strianski coldly, and left the room.

The crippled figure stayed hopelessly prostrate on the floor. His long arms hung slackly down his sides, his large head was sunk on his breast, and a deadly pallor covered his old, wrinkled face.

“ She’ll send me away, I know, for she can do anything with her husband,” he groaned in a low voice. “ I really don’t matter, I can earn my bread somehow. But I can’t leave my Cecily, the child of my heart, alone with those hard-hearted people. It is a terrible thought to think I might not be able to watch over her and protect her. The cruel director and his hard-hearted wife will force her to terrible exertions, and my poor darling will surely die. Oh, Jenny, Jenny, what shall I do to keep my oath to you if they send me away? ”

In complete desperation the poor cripple sought his bed and tossed there sleeplessly half the night. But he finally sat up, folded his hands and raised them with a glowing gaze to the dark star-lit heavens.

“ That’s it, I shall do that! Oh, God be thanked for this inspiration! ” he said happily, drawing a deep breath. “ Let my plan succeed, Oh, God, and protect Elf Goldihair, my loved and precious child! ”

## CHAPTER III

### SEPARATION

WHEN the little clown hurried to the iron-works next morning and asked after his foster-daughter, he was told that the little one was still very ill. In order not to excite her he was only allowed to see her a short time. But he was taken to the invalid because she constantly asked for her Uncle Melau.

When he entered she happily stretched out her hands towards him and the little man kissed them with humility and devotion, as if Elf Goldihair had been a princess.

“ How do you feel, my darling? ” he inquired tenderly. “ Are you suffering any pain? ”

“ Yes, Uncle Melau! Everything hurts me, but especially my head,” complained Cecily. “ I can’t come to the evening performance today and I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Strianski will be very angry.”

“ No, no, don’t worry, my precious,” Uncle Melau consoled her. “ I’ll appear in the fire-magic instead of you today.”

“ You, Uncle Melau? ” cried Cecily, laughing heartily. “ Oh, what a funny idea! You to appear in the glowing sun instead of Elf Goldihair! The audience will laugh and clap much more than if I came. Will you take your felt cap on your shoulder in place of my Sidi? ”

“ You are a rascal to make fun of your handsome Uncle Melau! ” the dwarf threatened good-naturedly. “ Just get up and look into the circus tonight. Then you will see how splendid I’ll look as the fire sorcerer. ”

“ Oh, Uncle Melau, I think I won’t be able to get up for a long time yet, ” sighed Cecily, unhappily. “ But everybody here is very kind to me, Mr. and Mrs. Poole as well as their daughter and sons. The director’s two children have been here, too, with Mr. and Mrs. Bernsdorf. Just feel what a fine soft bed they gave me. But all the same my body hurts all over! ”

With tears in his eyes Job Melau sympathized, for he could not bear to see his darling suffer. Soon after Mrs. Poole entered and ended the visit.

“ But you must soon come again, Uncle, ” begged Cecily.

“ Surely, my angel, ” he consoled her. “ I’ll soon come again. ” And nodding a hearty farewell with his misshapen head, he left the room with old Mrs. Poole.

“ You are the best of women! ” he said with a trembling voice, pressing Mrs. Poole’s wrinkled hand to his ugly lips. “ I thank you a thousand times for all you are doing for Cecily. May God reward you a hundredfold in my stead, for I can’t! Oh, my good, kind woman, ” he continued quietly, but showing deep feeling in his voice, “ may I speak of my troubles and ask your advice and help? It affects my Cecily, to whom you have already shown much kindness. ”

“ Tell me what worries you, dear man! I’ll help you all I can and my husband will do the same, ” the old



woman answered kindly. "Sit down here by me and tell me everything."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Poole," said Job Melau, greatly affected, and taking a seat. "God's providence has seen to it that Cecily had her misfortune here where such noble people are taking an interest in her. Though she is the child of travelling artists, her mother came of excellent family who, however, denied her completely. So Cecily was raised as the child of a circus-rider. I myself know only too well that such a life is bad for the poor girl. If I had the means I'd go far away and never let her repeat those dangerous tricks. But I cannot do it, for I am very poor. Besides that, Mr. Strianski would never let me go. He earns lots of money with her and says that Cecily is only paying her mother's debts. But he misuses the child's talents by compelling her to learn most difficult tricks; her present misfortune has clearly shown this. Cecily's mother made me her guardian, and I protect her with all my power against the hardest and most difficult tasks. I have often threatened Strianski to notify the authorities of his behaviour. They don't tolerate such cruelties to children, he knows that. Just the same he pays no heed to my words and I have only brought down his hate upon me for my threat. He treats me roughly and cruelly and his wife more so. But I have patiently endured it all in order to keep watch over Cecily."

"But everything is over now. Yesterday Mrs. Strianski told me that her husband is planning to dismiss me. In spite of all my supplications he will do it.

Then my poor child will be quite helpless against these cruel people. They will drive her to still more dangerous things in order to create sensation and earn more money. But that must never be. I beg you most earnestly to help me keep the child out of the Strianskis' hands. Cecily has paid her mother's debts a thousand-fold and he won't dare to hold her with such excuses. But where shall I go with her? To live like a travelling beggar with a miserable cripple like me would be a fresh misfortune for the growing girl. She needs another education than I can give her. Oh, my dear, kind woman, advise me. What is the right thing for me to do?"

"Thank you for having so much confidence in me, Mr. Melau," said old Mrs. Poole seriously, giving him her hand. "The child must and shall be helped. It is our duty as Christians to do so. She can't follow Strianski's troupe for the present, for the doctor says that she must not leave her bed for some weeks. Our director and his wife are interested in the little girl, as well as my husband and myself, so we'll assist you all we can. Every step must be taken, if necessary with the help of the police, to take the child out of the clutches of Strianski. But will Cecily want to leave the troupe? I heard that she adores performing."

"She is a lively child, who naturally revels in her success and the pretty clothes she wears at the shows," replied Job Melau. "She also loves animals. It will be hard for her to part from her pony and she can't live without her dove. But the latter belongs to her

and she can keep it. Once when a buzzard chased it the frightened bird flew into her room and Cecily saved it. Since then the dove won't leave her side."

"But how will she bear the separation from you, Mr. Melau?" asked the old woman thoughtfully.

"It won't be easy, for the little thing is greatly attached to me," sighed the cripple, while a tear stole down his cheek. "But she always willingly obeys me. Knowing what I endured for her sake at the troupe, she will resign herself."

"She'll want to go with you as soon as she hears Strianski has dismissed her," said Mrs. Poole.

"Therefore she shall not hear of it at all," Job Melau answered, wagging his head from side to side. "I thought of that. But, my best woman," he went on timidly, "as the troupe is leaving shortly, it would be necessary. . . ."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Bernsdorf will take immediate steps. My husband will ask him to," said the old woman. "His position will have weight in the matter. We can decide at leisure where Cecily shall go when she is well again. First we must succeed in the most urgent thing and keep her from returning to those horrid people."

With glowing words of thanks the little clown now took leave of his kind old friend. His wrinkled face fairly shone with joy and satisfaction as he left the house.

"It is a quite different question how the parting from your darling will affect you, old Melau," he sighed

to himself. "But I make the sacrifice for the sake of her future happiness."

It proved easier than Director Bernsdorf had feared to persuade Strianski to let Elf Goldihair go. First, the man protested violently and asked for a sum of money for relinquishing one of his most valuable artists. But when the director made allusions to his knowledge that Strianski had no legal right to the child and mentioned the police authorities, the cruel man quickly gave way. He had to admit to himself that he might easily be made responsible for Cecily's misfortune. Then he would have to bear the costs of her care and her further maintenance in case the child had seriously injured herself.

"Just let the stupid little thing go," Mrs. Kascha whispered angrily to her husband, when he still hesitated. "I am convinced that she has hurt herself so much in her fall that she'll feel it all her life and will only be a burden to us. Be glad if other people are willing to undertake to feed her."

So the matter was settled and Strianski dismissed Elf Goldihair that selfsame day. It did not happen, however, without the most violent complaints and imprecations against the misfortune which had robbed him of his best artist. That evening at his final show Strianski discovered that Elf Goldihair had been by far the greatest attraction to his audience. The circus was nearly empty and his receipts very small. A strong inimical feeling also had risen against him on account of Elf Goldihair's accident, and he, therefore, found it advisable to beat a rapid retreat from N——.



During the next few days Cecily was still so ill that she lay indifferent and quiet on her bed and no one was allowed to see her except Mrs. Poole and her daughter. Uncle Melau, whom Strianski had actually dismissed, came every morning to her bedside to inquire after his darling.

“Doesn't Mr. Strianski leave here soon, as he meant to, uncle?” asked Cecily one day.

“He is gone already, child, but I'll join him later on.”

“I suppose you'll go with me as soon as I can get up again?”

“Yes, darling, but perhaps I'll come to fetch you later, in case it should take more time.”

“Oh, uncle! I am sure Mr. Strianski will beat me with his whip for not earning any money for him for such a long while. I am so afraid.”

“Would you like to stay here and not go back to the troupe at all, my angel? Then you wouldn't ever be beaten any more.”

Cecily looked at her uncle with big eyes.

“To stay here when I am well? But that is impossible! I have to earn the money for Mr. Strianski that my mother owed him when she died.”

“You have paid that off already, child. He has nothing against your remaining here.”

“But then you won't go to him, either, I hope, Uncle Melau, and I can stay with you.”

“No, my dear child, that can't be. Mr. Strianski

won't dismiss me, and I have to go to him. And just think! Who would look after the pony?"

"Ah, yes, the pony, the dear thing! I'll have to be separated from him, too. I'll find that very hard. But won't you come often to see me with the pony, uncle?"

"Surely, surely, my darling. But you can keep your dove. Look, she has put her head under her wing and has gone to sleep. You had better go to sleep, too. Your eyes look so heavy and tired. I'll soon come again."

"Yes, I'll sleep, uncle. And do you think if I stay here no one will ever beat me with a big whip again?"

"No, no, you'll never get another beating like that. Good-bye, darling."

Cecily wearily shut her eyes and a blissful smile hovered over her features as she fell asleep.

Uncle Melau then went to old Mrs. Poole to discuss the girl's future.

"She'll gladly and willingly stay here. I have just spoken to her," he said, deeply moved. "Do you perhaps have an orphan home in your town or a reasonable-priced boarding school, where Cecily can be admitted? I have very little money and can only pay a slight sum for her maintenance."

"I have thoroughly thought it over and talked with my husband and my daughter, who is a widow and lives with us, dear Mr. Melau," replied Mrs. Poole. "They would be sure to take her in the town's orphan home for girls. But the poor child, who is used to such a free life, would find the strict order of that place very diffi-

cult. We have grown very fond of Cecily, and if you as guardian have nothing against it, we'd like to keep her with us for the present. My daughter, who has lived with us since the death of her husband, would like to undertake the little one's education. We won't object to a small sum for her board, for we are not well-to-do people; it might cover the expenses for her school and clothing. I hope that she'll feel happy with us, because we all love children. There are few better and kinder people in the world than my daughter. Here she comes and you can tell her yourself what you wish for the child, Mr. Melau."

"How can I thank you, dear, kind woman?" said Job Melau, stretching out both his hands towards the young widow. "Do you really want to take charge of my poor Cecily? I am terribly afraid, though, that the child will give you a great deal of trouble, for she, unfortunately, has not had a good education. She was so young when her mother died—and after that! Dear God! how could she have learned good manners suitable for a little girl under such circumstances? She has a good, gentle heart, but many faults I could not cure her of, despite all my efforts."

"In our quiet, simple household things might be learned more easily, dear Mr. Melau. At least we will try," answered Mrs. Krause, the widow.

"Yes, please try, and God bless you for it!" said Job Melau, once more giving her his hand. "Be strict with her before everything and train her to work, for she is poor and will have to make her own way in the

world some day. That is why I thought of an orphan home. She would be raised simply and strictly there and would learn to forget her former ways. If she gives you too much trouble, just send her to the orphan home and I'll be perfectly satisfied."

When Uncle Melau brought Cecily the news that she would stay in the overseer's cottage even after her recovery, the little girl remained serious and thoughtful for a while. She could not accustom herself to such a changed existence. From her earliest youth she had been obliged to help at the performances, had learned circus tricks, and had danced and ridden about as she had been bidden. She had appreciated the public's applause and gifts of sweets and had been thrilled when she was allowed to wear a pretty new dress for the performance. But she had received terrible beatings and scoldings and had had to twist her little limbs most painfully. How all the other children in the circus, who sat beside their parents, had envied her and had cheered her! Often her limbs ached so she would have liked to scream; but despite that she had been obliged to smile and bow gracefully and thank the audience. Otherwise she was punished. If it had not been for Uncle Melau, Mr. Strianski and his wife would have teased and tortured her still more, and now she had to part from him, too.

Crying bitterly, she wound her arms about the crippled figure of the little man and would not be quieted for a long while. But Job Melau talked so gently and affectionately with her and painted in such rosy colors



the life she was to lead now that she finally looked up happily and dried her tears.

“ It will be easier for you, Uncle Melau, if I am not with the troupe any more,” she said at last, caressing the old man’s wrinkled face tenderly with her hands. “ I know how much you had to suffer for my sake from Mr. and Mrs. Strianski.”

“ Don’t talk like that, darling, I was glad to do it,” replied Job Melau tenderly. “ But now good-bye, for I have to leave early tomorrow to join the circus. You will often hear from me, and as soon as I can I’ll visit you. And now, my precious, you must promise to obey your foster-parents and be a good, dear child. That is the only way in which you can repay them for all their kindness. Yes. Will you always be my sweet, good Cecily? ”

The little girl nodded her head and promised in a low voice to do so. But then the pain of the separation overcame her and, violently sobbing, she clutched her uncle as if she could not let him go.

A hand was laid affectionately on her head, and soft, comforting words were spoken to her. Uncle Melau loosened the arms of the crying child gently from his neck and laid the little orphan on the breast of her new mother, who embraced her affectionately and kissed her. Then he quietly slipped out of the room, while hot tears rolled down his face.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOVERED

AFTER a few weeks had passed, Elf Goldihair had so far recovered that she was allowed to get up and play a little with Mrs. Poole's little grandson, Hans Krause.

Everyone was anxious to show the little convalescent kindness and the beautiful, peaceful life in the quiet house seemed very pleasant to Cecily, who had been treated so roughly till now. A friendly, affectionate spirit reigned in the household, which was new to the child, hitherto accustomed to the rough life of the troupe. Old Mr. and Mrs. Poole, their two sons and daughter were as kind to her always as only Uncle Melau had been to her till now.

Lothar and Gabriele, the director's children, often came to visit her and vied with each other in entertaining her and helping her pass the dreary hours in bed. Gabriele was very gentle, but Lothar very lively. The boy, therefore, found it rather hard to sit quietly in the room, but he, notwithstanding, made this sacrifice quite often. Ever since he had witnessed her accident, the little girl had excited his keenest interest. She seemed to him like a heroine who had become the victim of her courage. When she lay sick and pale on her pillows, he longed to show her his pity and admiration by a noble action. But he had to content himself with sitting

patiently beside her bed, reading or telling her stories or building high houses of cards. He also raised wonderful structures with his blocks and cut out funny shadow-pictures which made her laugh when he held them up to the wall.

Usually the gentle Gabriele stayed much longer at Cecily's bedside, and when Lothar had left her to race about in the yard and garden, his sister still sat long hours by the patient.

How different the two girls were, however! Gabriele had been carefully brought up and was an eager student. In school she was, therefore, considered one of the best pupils. She was a quiet, industrious child, had a neat handwriting, read well, and excelled at the handiwork her mother had taught her.

Elf Goldihair understood practically nothing of these things. There had been no time for schooling in her life except the little reading, writing and arithmetic her uncle had insisted upon. But she had never gotten beyond the very foundations and could not help marvelling at the ease with which Gabriele could read and write. She had never learned to embroider and knit, and where indeed could she have found the time? From early morning she had been obliged to take exercises in order to keep her body soft and supple. She had to jump and ride, swing and dance and do various other tricks. Once in a while she had to take care of the director's two children and also train her pony. Whenever they arrived in a new place she had to parade about with others of the troupe and announce the perform-

ances. Often she was so exhausted that she was glad when the evening came and she could stretch out her limbs on her hard, small bed. Her reading and writing book had often been put aside for weeks as useless objects.

So she had no idea how other children played. She gazed with admiration at the dolls Gabriele brought to her bedside and knew by name. Cecily had never owned a doll. She timidly touched the delicate cheeks of a beautiful waxen doll, caressed the blonde curls of another and was quite frightened when the doll in swaddling clothes could open and shut its eyes.

“She is alive!” she cried out, frightened, and quickly put her down on the coverlet. “She is sure to cry.”

“Surely, can’t you hear her?” laughed Gabriele, punching the doll, which gave forth a feeble cry.

Cecily looked at her, still more disturbed.

“I never saw such a small child before,” she said. “Mrs. Strianski’s Nana was at least three times as big when she was born. But she died right away.”

Gabriele laughed heartily now, but had trouble persuading Cecily that the crying baby was only a doll and not a human being.

How surprised the little girl was when Gabriele told of her doll-room with the pretty furniture, mirrors, beds and other things; of the little kitchen with the cooking stove and the shiny tin pots; also the prettily painted tea things which Gabriele once brought to Cecily’s bedside.



“ When you get up you must sit on the little sofa I got for Christmas,” said Gabriele. “ I already had a little table and wicker chair, so we can give a splendid doll-party. Then we can cook together, but only cold things. Mamma won’t let me use the alcohol cooking stove unless she is watching me.”

Elf Goldihair gazed wonderingly at her small companion, not knowing what she meant.

“ Cook? We will cook? ” she asked, shaking her head. “ Can you do that? Don’t they cook in the kitchen at your house? ”

“ Yes, I don’t mean real cooking,” laughed Gabriele. “ Mamma gives us chocolate and sugar, raisins and biscuits and a little milk. One can make nice things with that, you’ll see. Once I made real pancakes and chocolate on my stove, but mother helped me. Oh, that was wonderful! Just get well and we’ll celebrate your recovery. We’ll cook and invite all the dolls.”

“ The dolls? But they can’t eat,” said Cecily.

“ No, we’ll pretend they can and eat it all ourselves,” laughed Gabriele. “ Sometimes I invite Lothar, but he always makes fun of my doll-kitchen. If I cook on the real stove he usually comes right away, though, and eats more than anyone else, especially when we make pancakes.”

Cecily could not understand what the pleasure might be in cooking, for she thought of the untidy kitchen and the smoky range on which Mrs. Strianski

cooked her meals. She had often been obliged to help and it had given her no pleasure.

“ When you get up we’ll have a grand laundry for the dolls,” Gabriele went on. “ Mamma has given me a real little laundry tub, a little place to dry the things, with a clothes-line and pins for the dolls’ clothes. I also have a little iron and a board. Oh, how neatly we’ll iron them. I can do it quite well, for mamma has showed me how. Can you do it, too, Cecily ? ”

“ No, I did not have to wash and iron. Miss Olla did that when she did not have to practise riding ? ” replied Cecily. “ But she always quarrelled about it with Mrs. Strianski, for she did not want to do it. She always said it was horrid work.”

“ But the dolls’ laundry is quite different. It is very amusing,” answered Gabriele. “ The nicest of all is to sew clothes for the dolls. I made the last dress for my curly doll myself; doesn’t it fit well ? ”

Full of pride, she held up a stately doll with a blue woolen dress, which had indeed been a success. Cecily was full of admiration, but she thought that Gabriele had a rather odd taste to like cooking, washing and sewing. She did not look forward in the least to taking part in these pursuits. The games and pleasures Lothar told her about in the yard and garden tempted her much more and she hardly could wait to get up and jump about with him.

Finally that time arrived. Cecily’s room was changed into a play-room, for Gabriele as well as

Lothar brought a lot of toys to entertain her. Cecily usually gazed with surprise and timidity at the pretty things children play with and did not exactly know what to do with them. She had to learn to play, just as she had to learn something constantly in the new world in which she now lived.

She was thoroughly happy only when she was allowed to go into the garden, the yard, the woods and the meadow and all the places she had longed for from her window. What a pleasure it was for Lothar and Gabriele to take her about and show her everything!

A regular paradise opened for Cecily. Situated a good distance from the town, the foundry with its buildings, yards, garden, the neighboring woods and meadows formed a little world in itself. The director's children had such freedom as few city children can enjoy. Besides that, everybody in the works gave them especial privileges and indulged them greatly.

If they wanted something nailed or glued, they ran to the carpenter's shop and had it done and often received besides a pot of glue and a supply of nails and screws. The blacksmith shop was just as useful, and at the fire of the forge or enamel-works they warmed their frozen fingers after a snowball fight. Here they burnt little clay balls for their guns, for they were allowed to shoot sparrows, which abounded in the yard. A large building with a crane was the storehouse, where the finished merchandise was packed, loaded on wagons and shipped away. This furnished inexhaustible supplies for all their games and undertakings. Cases

and bales of all sizes, straw, oakum, pasteboard, hay, linen and strings, and a thousand varied objects were found there in great quantity. A little robbery was, therefore, laughingly granted by the men.

Every workman, whenever his time permitted, was eager to be of service to the children. Countless boys were employed, too, some for driving the coal about in little carts, others for bearing the enamel out of the iron pots, for shoveling earth and other tasks. All these lads were greatly flattered when young master Lothar begged their service for an enterprise, or if Miss Gabriele wished something done for herself.

Old Mr. Poole, the overseer, always shut a lenient eye and let them do it. He was the children's special friend, for he had known them from their birth.

"Old Mr. Poole lets us do it," was the catchword for all the children's undertakings.

There could have been no nicer playground than this wide yard surrounded by the buildings where something was going on all day. It resembled a beehive in its incessant activity, with hundreds of workmen busily running to and fro.

Heavily loaded freight carts drove in at the doors, bringing coal and iron ore from the far stations. At the end of the yard this lay heaped up as high as mountains beside huge heaps of bluish slate. A long row of little carts, driven by the boys, rolled about on rails. These brought the coal to the big furnace, whose glow hardly ever died down, and was fed day and night to melt the iron. Heavily loaded workmen hurried to the



various workshops with their burdens. Here half-finished machinery-parts were taken away, wheels rolled along and merchandise was taken to the storerooms. In another place loud hammering, filing, sawing, squeaking and scratching from a thousand industrious hands and machines were heard. The chimneys gave forth black smoke into the clear air, loud calls and orders mingled with the neighing of horses, the scolding of drivers and the merry laughter, singing and whistling of the small and grown-up workers. Black and smudgy from the coal dust or dirty and rusty from the iron ore, they went about their tasks till the bell of the foundry gave forth its shrill tones and allowed the busy hands a short stretch of leisure. At noontime the wives or children of the workmen brought father his lunch in pots or pans. Breakfast and some bread for an afternoon snack every workman brought along in a leathern bag he carried on his shoulder. The yard quickly emptied itself every night at the last peal of the bell and the whole busy throng hurried eagerly home to their wives and children or parents and sisters. Many of these lived at a considerable distance in surrounding villages. Only a small number of workmen were left behind to feed the furnace, complete important work and guard the premises.

The overseer lived in a house at the end of the yard. This small, hidden place with a tiny garden in front, where Elf Goldihair had found her home, was one of the favorite playgrounds of the Bernsdorf children.

The yard with its buildings was separated from the stately dwelling of the higher employees by a beautiful garden. Here many good things tempted them. In summertime sweet berries ripened on bushes and in beds, the fruit trees lavished their luscious gifts, and tempting peaches and grapes hung on trellises. A fountain threw its spray high into the air and showed a manifold rainbow whenever the sun was reflected in it. Gold and silver fishes swam in the water basin, and two swans, which were daily fed by the children, peacefully reigned there.

Along the wall of a stable beehives were placed, for the little insects found rich food in the blossoms of the trees and the beautiful rich flower garden. Cecily had to inspect everything as soon as she was allowed to go out of doors, and both children wanted to show her their favorite haunts.

“ First you must see our prisoner in this stone rampart,” cried Lothar. He had conducted Cecily to a little pit, heavily grated on top, which was placed under the stairway of the big house.

She fell back afraid when a pair of eyes glistened up at her from below.

“ A wolf? Have you locked up a wolf here? ” she cried, terrified.

“ Oh, no, it is only a fox,” said Lothar laughing. “ A workman caught him in the woods, where he lay with a broken leg. Come here, Master Reynard, and show that you are a good fellow. We put this chain on

him for safety, for his teeth are sharp. Look how beautifully he presents his tail and what a fine red color his hair has. It's quite white on his stomach."

"But he smells so badly and I don't like him. You had better come to our rabbits, Cecily; they are much nicer," said Gabriele. Then she pulled Cecily with her to a stable in which a goat and a lot of white and gray rabbits jumped about.

"Oh, how cunning!" cried Cecily, quite enchanted, and trying to catch one of the little animals. But she did not succeed. Lothar had to show her how. Quickly catching one by its long ears, he held it out to Cecily, who took it on her lap and fondled it.

"But its eyes are red!" she cried, astonished. "Just like the eyes of the idiotic little boy of our clown, they called Kakerlak. It suits the rabbits much better, though."

She caught several by their ears and jumped about as hard as they. Finally Lothar took her hand and drew her out.

"We still have a lot to see, Cecily. Come now!" he cried. "You needn't be afraid of the bees in these hives. They are only furious when the honey is taken away. We get wonderful slices of honeycomb when it is cut. Oh, it tastes so good!"

"I never ate honey in my life," said Cecily. "Do you take it out of the hives, Lothar?"

"I?" laughed the boy. "Oh, no, Mr. Poole does that. He puts on a thick leather cap which has a close wire before his face so that the bees can't sting him, and

he wears heavy gloves on his hands. The insects sit right down on his cap and swarm about him furiously. I understand they don't like to give up their honey which they have gathered for so long."

Cecily gazed astonished at the humming, active bees which flew to and fro and entered into every blossom that had opened. Their busy little legs were covered with pollen, which looked like little drawers on them. They left and entered the hives, always busy and eager.

"Bees and ants are the most industrious creatures in the world, says old Mr. Poole. Look how busy the ants here are!" cried Gabriele, pointing to a low mound of earth, which seemed to consist entirely of insects. It actually swarmed with them when Lothar poked his stick into it.

"What are they pulling along in their mouths?" asked Cecily, laughing. "The bundle is bigger than themselves! And look! here are two pulling together like two porters."

"They are pulling their eggs to safety," Lothar instructed her. "I have often seen six or eight ants working together in bringing an insect or a piece of fruit into their hill. They have sharp pincers for grasping things and they often take their booty alive. Look! here comes a whole caravan with a live bug. How the poor thing is struggling to get away. Just wait, you shall not keep him. Look for dead booty, little barbarians, and leave live things alone."

He quickly delivered the dangling bug from his enemies, whereupon the ants rapidly fled.



After the children had paid a visit to the pond and had fed the swans and goldfishes, Gabriele pointed down a little hill.

“ Why does Master Stork make such curious jumps today? ” she cried, laughing. “ He usually doesn’t dance with his lame leg. ”

“ A stork? Have you a stork, too? ” said Cecily, surprised. “ You seem to have a whole menagerie. There are lots of chickens, ducks and pigeons in the farmyard, too. ”

“ We got the stork only a short time ago from Mr. Poole, ” said Gabriele. “ Just think, the poor bird lay in the meadow with a broken wing and lame leg. It would have died in misery if he had not taken it on his arm and carried it into the house. The accident had probably happened on its trip from some far country and its companions had meanly deserted it. ”

The children had reached the stork now, which was standing in front of one of the cellar doors, fluttering its wings and making curious leaps.

“ But Hans, what tricks are those? ” cried Gabriele, laughing heartily and embracing the toddling bird. “ Did you mean to help the cook or did you want to go crabbing yourself? Oh, you poor, poor fellow! Lothar, come and help me. ”

Here she seized one of the bird’s legs, on which two large crabs were tightly fastened. In the cellar beside him stood a barrow in which many crabs crawled about.

“ The bird was probably curious and put his foot in there. I don’t understand it otherwise, ” laughed

Lothar, delivering the stork from his torturers. The more it had tried to get rid of them by jumping and biting, the tighter they had fastened themselves to him.

“ If I am not mistaken the rascal has stolen something! ” cried Lothar, threatening the bird. “ Who made such a mess of this piece of bread and butter on the bench? Well, Hans, did you get no frogs today for dinner, that you must steal our crabs and eat our bread and butter? Just wait and see what happens if I tell Papa Poole about it.”

The stork was happily delivered of his enemies now, and the children gaily laughed after him as he half fluttered and half limped away, apparently afraid of further punishment.

## CHAPTER V

### AT THE FURNACE

“ Now come with us to the furnace ; there is a lot to see there,” cried Lothar, pulling Cecily along. “ It is just the hour when it is cleared out. That looks nearly as pretty as your fire-magic. Instead of Elf Goldihair our black workmen stand in the fiery glow.”

In the largest building of the yard, the smelting works, the workmen had just gathered round the closed furnace, each with a long iron ladle in his hand.

The floor of this huge building, lighted by high arched windows, was strewn with thick black earth and coal dust. In this cover were sunk the clay moulds which were to receive the liquid, glowing metal. Countless moulds for pots and pans, openwork grates and stove doors, and innumerable other objects were buried here in the earth to be filled. When the metal had cooled, the clay moulds were broken in order to take out the firm iron kernel which had taken their shape. For some articles, especially pots and pans, the liquid metal was poured through a hole into a double mould and in filling this they took the necessary smoothness and thickness. The men employed at the works had to renew these shapes constantly from certain models, for they were broken after every casting.

The workmen immediately cleared a space near the furnace for the entering children so they could watch

everything unhindered. The men curiously motioned to each other as they looked at the little stranger, for this was the first time they had seen her since her accident.

“That is Elf Goldihair, the little one from the circus,” they whispered on all sides.

“The poor little thing, how pale she still looks!”

“It is a miracle she didn’t break anything.”

“Wasn’t it a terrible fall?”

“Will she be sent after the troupe now?”

“No, she is going to stay in Poole’s house.”

“That is good; otherwise the poor, pretty child might break her neck some day.”

“How kind this is of the Pooles! They are good people.”

“Quiet now! Bruning is opening the furnace. Have your ladles ready!”

One of the workmen with a thick iron rod now beat a hole of an arm’s width through the clayey substance in the furnace, and the next moment the glowing red liquid poured out from it like a fiery stream of water.

Each workman rapidly approached the stream to catch a portion of the iron in his ladle. Rapidly, but full of caution in order not to spill the precious and dangerous burden on the way, they hastened to pour the liquid into the moulds scattered about the floor. With empty ladles they came back again to fetch some more until the stream at last grew thin. The supply in the furnace was exhausted for the moment and the



opening was closed again till the next casting that evening.

“ What are the people doing who strew us all so full of dust ? ” cried Cecily, jumping back frightened, as one of the workers passed her with a little bag and ran in front of the casters who poured out the metal into the moulds.

“ They dust the forms before the casting with coal dust, otherwise the iron cracks,” said Lothar, who was well informed in these things. “ But come now, they take the slag out of the furnace and cast it into shapes so they can be used for walls like bricks.”

“ Slag, what is that ? ” asked Cecily, and curiously watched them take out the large, glowing lumps from the furnace and carry them away.

“ Those are the bad, clayey parts of the iron ore which melt in the furnace,” said Lothar. “ They mix with the coal when they melt, but the pure iron, which is heavier, flows away below. This comes out at the little opening in front of the furnace as you saw.”

“ I don’t understand it, it is tiresome,” cried Cecily, running away. “ Come out again into the yard, it is much nicer there.”

“ Oh, yes, in the smelting works it is so hot and dirty, I hate to be there,” cried Gabriele, running after her friend. Then she carefully dusted her clothes and little boots, which were entirely covered with grey dust.

“ What does a bit of dirt matter ? What do we live in iron-works for ? ” laughed Lothar.

“ Yes, you have dark things on ; they don't show, of course ! ” said Gabriele. “ But my dress can't stand the dust. Good gracious ! here I've got some ugly black spots. What will mamma say ? ” Crying, she rubbed and shook her dress, but it was in vain, the spots would not vanish.

“ Rosel can wash it out, that is no great misfortune. You really are a constant cry-Gabriele, ” said Lothar, mockingly. “ Look ! here come the work-boys with the coal for the furnace. I must drive along even if my clothes get worse still. Hello ! William, hold still a minute so I can jump on. Are you coming, girls ? ”

They stood before a row of low wagons filled with high receptacles of coal and iron ore, new food for the unappeasable furnace, which kept going night and day.

Lothar quickly swung himself up, grasping one of the buckets with both arms. Then he rolled gaily over the rails to the furnace.

“ I thank you for that pleasure, I am dirty enough already, ” said Gabriele, stepping back, annoyed. Cecily, however, quickly ran after the wagons which had passed her already and as quick as lightning jumped up on one of them without letting it even halt.

“ Bravo, Elf Goldihair, that was cleverly done ! ” said Lothar, looking back. “ But hold on tight so you won't fall off. ”

“ Oh, I certainly won't, ” she laughed gaily. “ This is a jolly trip. ”

The little wagons drove in a row under an open space where a machine lifted the buckets to the top of the furnace. Here the workmen received and emptied them. When empty, they were let down again to be driven back and filled again by the boys.

Lothar's wagon arrived first and he jumped quickly down as the bucket was hooked to the hanging rope to begin its upward trip. Now Cecily's wagon had arrived also.

"Cecily, jump down quickly!" cried Lothar, reaching out his hand.

But the next instant he saw Elf Goldihair swing herself to the top of the heaped-up coal bucket. A moment after she was pulled on high.

Lothar cried out alarmed.

"Cecily, for Heaven's sake, what are you doing?" he exclaimed, full of fear. "You'll fall. Hold on tight, for the rope is swaying fearfully. Oh, glory, if papa saw that!"

It was really alarming to see the little girl standing erect on the bucket, which floated ever higher and at the same time swayed violently. But Elf Goldihair had executed quite different tricks and this little airy journey seemed to her perfectly safe. She waved a merry greeting to Lothar and his sister, who had joined him now, also full of fright. Then she floated higher and higher to the very top of the immense furnace. She leaped down contentedly from her bucket in order to begin her downward journey in one of the empty ones which were let down into the yard.

As she gaily arrived below, she found not only Lothar and Gabriele waiting for her, but also old Mr. Poole.

He lifted the little girl from the black bucket on whose edge she had been sitting, carelessly swinging her legs in the air.

“ Now, Cecily, we won't repeat this trip! ” he said seriously, pushing from her forehead the curly, gold-brown hair which the wind had violently tossed about during her foolhardy journey. “ Those are circus tricks and not suitable here. Remember you are not Elf Goldihair any more. You won't do it again? ”

“ Why not? ” cried the little one, laughing. “ It was wonderful when I climbed higher and higher and you looked as small below as Gabriele's dolls. ”

“ But I forbid it, Cecily, and you must never do it again. Do you understand me? ” said the overseer seriously. “ You might fall as you fell from the trapeze. ”

But she raised her large brown eyes to the old man, with the regular pride of an artist and answered with a shake of her head:

“ I shouldn't fall from there. That would be a disgrace for Elf Goldihair. ”

The old man once more thoughtfully stroked the child's pretty head, for he did not know what to answer.

“ Our iron-works are no circus, Cecily, and you must not try exploits here like this journey to the furnace, ” he replied at last. “ I thought you had paid dearly enough already for such airy journeys. Just



stay nicely on the earth from now on, the way Gabriele does, without too much jumping and flying.”

The little one gazed at Gabriele, who in her quiet timid ways was her very opposite. But she made a discontented face, for she did not like to have all jumping and other pranks forbidden her. It seemed very tiresome always to walk about quietly and composed like Gabriele and it was so unlike her former life.

Her great vivacity and restlessness began to show more clearly since her recovery. Gabriele often looked with surprise at her little playmate, who never calmly walked like her, but whose graceful little feet nearly always seemed to leap, or dance, or float. Her small, delicate figure appeared to have been especially made for flying and dancing, and Elf Goldihair was the most appropriate name for the airy child with the curly, gold-brown hair.

The quiet regular life in her foster-parents' house, however beautiful it had seemed at first, began to depress her and make her feel confined. She hardly realized what it was she missed, but in the midst of her quiet work and games she sometimes rushed outside to get rid of her surplus energy. She simply had to fly about the yard or woods in order to exercise her limbs in jumping and climbing.

Lothar usually kept at her side, trying to vie with her in agility, but he soon found himself behind and unable to keep up. No tree was too high for Cecily and there was no height from which she hesitated to jump down. She ran with such rapidity that no child could

catch up to her and like a clever runner she took every obstacle in the form of hedges, gates and ditches with the greatest ease.

“ She is like a wildcat,” said Rosel, the nurse-maid, to little Hermann, three-year-old son of Director Bernsdorf. The nurse could not bear Cecily, who was far from polite to her, and only teased and mocked her. What manners indeed were those for a beggar-girl!

“ She may be a little gipsy, the wild little witch,” Rosel grumbled angrily. “ It is foolish of the Pooles to take such beggar-folk into their house. She seems to spoil our children, too, with her wildness, for Lothar can’t be tamed since she came. His trousers never had such holes before.”

Rosel did not dare to speak so openly before Mrs. Poole and her daughter, but the women noticed soon enough that she did not like the child.

“ One must have patience with her, Rosel; she’ll get better after a while,” Mrs. Poole comforted the old nurse in her gentle manner. “ Just think how the child has been brought up. The poor little thing had no idea till now of order and cleanliness.”

“ Yes, yes, your daughter has undertaken a nice bit of work and she’ll soon get tired of the torn frocks the girl will bring her,” replied Rosel. As she spoke the large black bow on her Silesian cap began to shake and the white starched ruffle about her neck to tremble.

Old Mrs. Poole took Cecily’s part more than anyone. Her widowed daughter, who had undertaken the child’s education, soon agreed with the nurse at the bot-

tom of her heart, but she would not let others see it. Only when she was alone with her mother did she openly speak of the difficulty of her task.

“ Can you just imagine, mother,” she said one day, quite excited, “ that Cecily has never yet prayed to God? She does not know a single prayer and has hardly ever heard of God. She never had any instruction in religion. One must really be ashamed to send such a little heathen to school.”

“ The poor child! ” said Mrs. Poole with pity. “ We must tell her a great deal about God and Jesus. She’ll like to hear about it. As the widow of a schoolmaster you must know how to teach children.”

“ No, mother, John did not train me in that, he preferred to do the work himself,” Mrs. Krause replied, laughing slightly at her mother’s idea that teaching came naturally to the schoolmaster’s widow. “ I fear it’s not religion alone that Cecily lacks. She seems to have no conception of right and wrong. I believe the little thing tells lies.”

“ Isn’t that sad, the poor child? ” the kind old woman cried, clasping her hands.

“ And she has not learned obedience, either,” replied Mrs. Krause, sighing. “ She laughs at everything I say and you all make my task still harder.”

“ We? But how, Gutschen? ” the old woman said, quite surprised. “ What do you mean? ”

“ You and father and Gottfried always laugh at everything the sly thing says and think her nonsense funny. She can’t help finding my scolding only amus-

ing after that and therefore it makes no impression on her. You must not do that, mother.”

“ Yes, yes, I suppose you are right, Gustchen, but it is difficult to stay serious when the little girl makes faces and looks amused instead of sad when you scold her. But I’ll try to remember what you say, and father must do so, too. I am sure it will be difficult to show Gottfried that his laughter does no good. Christian does not care much for her, but Gottfried loves her and plays with her all the time. What a wise woman you are; you must have learned that all from John. Well, a school teacher is sure to understand children better than one of us.”

## CHAPTER VI

### AT THE OVERSEER'S

“ ONCE more, Ami, stand up! Will you please stand nicely on your hind legs and don't always fall forward, you stupid fellow? Shall I nail your ears to the wall or will you stand up? Give your paw, now! Oh, what a nice dog! He'll get a little lump of sugar for reward now! ”

Thus Cecily chatted to Papa Poole's dog, while kneeling on the floor of the living-room downstairs, trying her best to teach Ami different tricks.

As soon as she got up, the dog fell forward, a position which suited his comfort better than standing up. Cecily looked searchingly about and finally found what she was seeking. Listening carefully at first to see that no one came, she stepped up to a low cupboard on which stood a sugar-bowl. It was closed but the key was in the lock. She took out a handful of sugar, gave Ami one lump, which he had to catch sitting on his hind legs, and the rest she ate herself.

Mrs. Krause entered at that moment with her little son on her arm.

“ Cecily, watch Hanschen for a while. I must go to the kitchen, ” she said, putting the boy on the ground. “ But don't go outside with him any more; it is getting cool. ”



Little Hans ran up to Ami, sat down on a footstool and took the dog on his lap.

“Now you two must jump over this stick,” cried Cecily, fetching Gottfried's thick stick from the corner. “That will be fun! I'll show you how. Watch, Hanschen.”

She laid the stick over the backs of two chairs, and taking a short run she leaped over it as lightly as a rubber ball again and again without growing tired.

Hanschen laughed and clapped his hands.

“Jump, too, Cecily, Hanschen wants to jump, too.”

“All right, now it's yours and Ami's turn. But this is too high for you. I'll put the stick on the seat for you, instead of on the back.”

Hanschen, trying in vain, could not succeed in leaping over the stick. Ami could not do it, either, for he was as stiff as the white circus pony, Cecily said. Grasping the little one's hand she helped him to jump over, to his great delight. But finally, losing his balance, he fell violently, striking his head against the edge of the chair.

A terrific howling was the result, and Mrs. Krause came in quite frightened.

“He is so clumsy and always falls right away,” said Cecily, who tried in vain to quiet the boy.

“What did you do together?” exclaimed Mrs. Krause angrily. “His forehead is swelling up. Did you make him jump over the stick?”

“But I held him quite tight. I couldn't help it, aunt,” said Cecily sulkily.

“ I have forbidden you once for all to make him jump,” scolded Mrs. Krause. “ You know you must not perform circus tricks with him. Here, soak this cloth in cold water. I must cool his forehead. Poor little chap! ”

“ But he wanted to jump himself. I couldn’t help it,” Cecily grumbled obstinately.

“ I am sure you showed him how; I know that. Go and sit at the window there and take your knitting. I’ll have to watch Hans myself; otherwise we’ll have another accident.”

The child crossly took up her knitting, which Mrs. Krause had begun for her. It had two needles and the wool was pink.

She pulled and turned the piece about for a while, stuck in one needle and let the other fall to the floor. Then she stamped impatiently with her foot and finally threw the knitting down.

“ I can’t do this horrid knitting, aunt,” she said, nearly crying.

“ Come here, I’ll show you once more,” said Mrs. Krause calmly. “ But no nice girl stamps with her foot.”

“ I don’t want to be a nice girl. I don’t want to learn how to knit! ” the child cried passionately.

“ But I want you to, and therefore you will do it,” replied Mrs. Krause, putting the knitting into Cecily’s hands. “ So begin now. Put in the needle, fetch the yarn, pull it through and slip it off. Now you do

it alone. But hold the needle tighter, you'll lose it otherwise."

Cecily now tried this feat of making stitches much against her will, and it proved a very difficult task. Her little foot kept on stamping the ground in spite of Mrs. Krause's command, and every minute she dropped a stitch on purpose in order to have a free time while Mrs. Krause set the work in order again. The woman behaved with most admirable patience, but did not let Cecily go till she had knitted the whole long row.

"Isn't this Gabriele's dress you are sewing, aunt?" asked Cecily, looking up from her work.

"Yes, child, Mrs. Bernsdorf has given it to me for you," answered Mrs. Krause. "It is very good of her, for your only dress is getting very shabby."

"But it is ugly and I don't want it," she cried crossly. "Such an ugly gray dress. Gabriele has much prettier ones. Why didn't she give me one of her colored ones?"

"Because she needs those for herself, Cecily. It is not nice of you to be so ungrateful."

"But put at least a red or silver ribbon on it for a trimming. It looks like a gray sack otherwise."

"No, child, I won't put a bright ribbon on it, because that might make you look like a circus-rider again. You surely wouldn't like that?"

"Why not? I am Elf Goldihair, and a donkey-gray dress doesn't suit me."

"But you are Cecily now at our house and it is very suitable for her. That settles it. What have you there,

little Hans?" She turned to her little son, who held up something tight in his hand.

"Sugar! Can I eat it?"

"Sugar, where did you find it, my dear boy?"

"Found it near Ami on the floor there," said the youngster with sparkling eyes.

Mrs. Krause quickly glanced at Cecily, whose face had grown very red and who suddenly bent eagerly over her knitting. The woman got up, went to the cupboard and took down the sugar-box.

"Cecily, you have been at the sugar-box. Did you take any sugar?" she asked calmly.

"No, aunt," said Cecily quickly.

"You are lying, Cecily. I know you have taken some sugar," retorted Mrs. Krause severely. "You must tell me the truth now."

"Only a tiny piece for Ami, nothing more," cried the child, throwing back her hair.

"That is not true. You took a whole handful, I can see it from the sugar," said Mrs. Krause, lifting up the child's head. "Look me in the eyes, Cecily."

The little one obstinately kept her head down and made a very unpleasant face.

"Just see, Cecily, your bad conscience won't let you look me in the eyes," said Mrs. Krause gently. "Don't you know that lying is a sin. If no one else saw you eat it, God saw it all and knows."

"No, He couldn't see it. The trees are too close to the window to see through," she answered, glad to have something else to talk about.

“ But Cecily, God is always with you and sees and knows everything you do. Don't you know that? ”

“ No one ever told me that. But if He is always with me why did He let me fall from the trapeze? He surely wasn't with me then.”

“ Surely, child, otherwise you would have broken your limbs. He sent an angel to hold you when you fell.”

“ No, aunt, Uncle Melau held the net and not an angel, I know,” cried the little one eagerly. “ God surely had something else to do instead of watching me. That's why I fell.”

“ No, my dear Cecily, it is written in the Bible that no hair falls from our heads without God's knowledge. And just think! If you had not fallen you would have had to go away with Mr. Strianski and wouldn't have come to us. I really think you like it here.”

“ Yes, it is nicer with you. I always get enough to eat and no beatings with the whip. Do you really think, aunt, that God has fixed everything up that way? ”

“ Surely, my little girl, that is God's providence. God is good to all men as He is to you and we must love Him for that and not make Him sad. When you lie and are disobedient nobody can love you, neither God nor we human beings.”

“ But Uncle Melau always loved me when I was naughty,” cried the little girl with glowing eyes. “ You have no idea how good Uncle Melau is.”

“ But Uncle Melau especially wants you to become a nice, good Cecily. That's why he left you with us. If



he knew that you told a lie today and were disobedient he would be very sad.”

“ Yes, I believe it, and when he was sad he always made such a funny, gloomy face that I had to laugh. Look, aunt, this is the way he looked.”

And she gave her pretty face such a comical expression that little Hans, who sat on his mother's lap, gave a delighted laugh. But Mrs. Krause sighed deeply, for she did not know how to explain to Cecily that she would have to change her ways. She angrily forbade her to make fun of her uncle, but Cecily was only puzzled. Whenever she had imitated Uncle Melau or other people, everybody had always laughed and no one had ever forbidden it.

The evening bell now resounded from the yard. Mrs. Krause got up to attend to the supper and took Cecily along to help her. As long as the little girl was attentive she was very clever at her tasks. But her thoughts often drifted to other things, and whenever that happened trouble and scoldings followed. But she shook these annoyances from her as quickly as a poodle shakes off water, and nothing made much impression upon her.

She was told to set the table.

“ Get down the plates and glasses, dear Cecily, and then come out to fetch more things,” said old Mrs. Poole, bringing in the service.

The child did this quite carefully, but then, instead of going to the kitchen, she put Ami on Hanschen's high chair, tied a napkin around his neck, set Mrs. Poole's cap, which lay on the bureau, on his head and put Papa



SHE PUT AMI ON HANSCHEN'S HIGH CHAIR



Poole's glasses on his nose. As the dog still struggled and would not be still, she tied him with another napkin, and finally laid her knitting in his forepaws.

"But Cecily, where are you?" cried Mrs. Krause, now opening the door.

At the same instant Gottfried, the elder son, who was blacksmith in the forge of the iron-works, came in through the other door.

Ami was accustomed to run towards him, and therefore pulled violently on the bands which held him tight. Cecily tried to hold him, but jumping directly over the table he slipped through her hands.

But click, click! resounded under the paws of the fugitive, and a plate and a glass rolled down from the table with the dog.

Mrs. Krause came in quickly to prevent the other objects from following and then turned angrily to the irresponsible Cecily, who was shaking with laughter.

"Aunt, aunt, look how funny Ami looks with the cap, just like grandmother," she called out gaily. "Gottfried, dear Uncle Gottfried, hold him a moment so I can put back the glasses he has lost."

But a strong hand pulled the glasses as well as the cap away from her and gave her a sharp blow on the fingers.

"Naughty thing! What nonsense is this again?" cried Mrs. Krause furiously. But Cecily, instead of being frightened, kept on laughing.

"But aunt, I can't help laughing, I really can't help



it," she said when she was scolded for that too. "Ami looked too ridiculous."

"And the things which were broken through your fault? They don't trouble you a bit, incorrigible child!" cried Mrs. Krause, picking up the fragments. "That girl is just terrible!"

"There, sister, buy some more with that," said Gottfried now, throwing a coin on the table. "Cecily didn't break it, but the dog who wanted to come to me. You certainly fixed him nicely, Cecily. When he sat there in Hans's chair I thought he was a human being. You are a great girl." Gaily laughing, he took the little one's head between his rough, blackish hands and then lifted the light little figure in the air.

"Yes, yes, just support her in her naughtiness, that is the only thing you can do to make matters worse," grumbled Mrs. Krause, angrily, hastening outside. Gottfried stood the child on the floor again and sat down in his father's broad armchair.

"Now Elf Goldihair, come on!" he cried out. "One—two—three!"

At three the girl flew toward him and with a single leap stood straight on Gottfried's knee, saluting with her fingers.

"But Gottfried, Gusti does not want her to do these pranks," said Mother Poole, entering just then with a dish of steaming potatoes. "Jump down, quickly, she is coming."

Cecily flew down as fast as she had gone up and



threw her arms about Mamma Poole, so the latter could barely set down the dish in time.

“ Grandmother, don't you begin to scold me, too,” she cried, kissing the old woman. “ Ami crushed your cap dreadfully, but you won't be cross, will you? He looked so funny with it on.”

“ Ami in my cap? You rascal! If you do that again!” threatened the old woman with her finger.

“ No, no, the next time I'll tie your neck ruffle around him. Then he'll look still more like you,” cried Cecily.

Mr. Poole and his second son Christian, who was founder at the works, came in, too, now, and the frugal meal united the whole family around the large table. Cecily was seated between Gottfried and the grandmother, as she called the old lady, and she thoroughly enjoyed the good morsels which these two good friends of hers put on her plate. Mrs. Krause was kept very busy with Hans, otherwise she might have often shaken her head. Cecily was full of nonsense all through the meal and had a grateful audience in Gottfried and the grandmother, and often in Papa Poole, too, who also laughed at all her silliness. Only Christian did not laugh and often gazed severely and discontentedly at the wild little thing who threatened to turn everything in the household topsy-turvy.

## CHAPTER VII

### CECILY

IT WAS still early morning, but the foundry was buzzing with activity. The chimneys smoked, the furnace threw its flames high into the air at times and the machines were as busy as the workmen.

From the forge came sometimes a merry whistling and sometimes the heavy sounds of the hammer. Gottfried worked there and either melted iron with his apprentices or beat it with his powerful hammer.

The small house of his parents was not far away and the faint light on that cloudy day only penetrated dimly through the windows, partly hidden by trees.

Elf Goldihair stepped out of the door now and called enticingly: "Sidi, Sidi, come here!" Immediately her dove fluttered down from the nearby dove-cote where she had been installed.

She sat on Cecily's shoulder and stroked her blue head caressingly against her mistress, who kissed her little beak. Cecily then put her hand into a bowl with seed, holding out a handful to the dove. The bird fed so eagerly that her neck swelled up.

"Hold, hold, not so fast, Sidi!" cried Cecily, laughing. "Take your time. You eat as if you were starved. We are not with the Strianskis any more and can both eat all we want."

But the dove kept on eating till the hand was empty.

In the meantime old Mrs. Poole had stepped into the house door and watched the two with quiet satisfaction.

“ We’ll give our other little birds their breakfast now, Sidi,” said Cecily, walking into the garden, which was close by the house.

She had hardly entered when a crowd of little birds, robins, finches and titmice, and of course some insolent sparrows, circled about the girl.

She put her hand into the bowl from which she had fed the dove and strewed some of the seed on the ground. The whole company threw itself twittering upon the proffered meal. Each tried to push the other away and the first sparrows were so saucy and greedy that Cecily threw stones at some to drive them away.

When that little flock was fed, she took another bowl with mealworms and went to the other side of the house. On a long building adjoining it hung a row of swallow nests in which the slender birds flew in and out.

Cecily looked up attentively at one of the nests and cried caressingly :

“ Swallow, my little swallow! ”

Immediately a little black head peeped out of the opening, and the body of a young swallow followed. Spreading out its broad wings it fluttered down to Elf Goldihair.

It settled on the ground quite near the little girl and looked up confidently at her with its large black eyes, waiting to see the hoped-for worm appear.

“ Good, my little swallow! ” said Cecily in a low voice. She threw the bird several worms, which it

picked up eagerly. But it only took three or four at a time, then circling about the yard flew up to the roof again. Finally it came back when Cecily called "Swallow, dear Swallow!" in a friendly voice. She threw a few worms to it again, of which the little bird ate three or four, then fluttering about the yard it sat down on the edge of the roof to gaze down on her.

This was repeated at least ten times till Mrs. Poole came to see where the child was. The swallow flew now into its nest and did not come out again.

"What are you doing here, darling? It is going to rain soon. Come into the house," cried the old woman. She was most surprised to find Cecily standing quiet with the dove on her shoulder, not jumping and racing about as usual.

"Oh, grandmother," she cried happily, "I have tamed a little swallow. It was shy at first and would not come near me despite my giving it some of Uncle Gottfried's worms. But it grew bolder gradually and after picking up a worm it flew away. Then it finally came nearer and now it has grown quite confident. It knows my voice and when I call, 'Swallow, dear Swallow!' it sticks its head out of its nest and comes down at once to get fed. But when others come, I can call all I want to, and I can't get it to come out of its nest at all."

"What great love the child has for animals, Gusti," said Mrs. Poole to her daughter as, soon after, she was helping her in the kitchen. "One would never expect it of the wild little thing."

"Yes, I am glad to see it, too," the other answered.

“ It is a sign she has a heart, which one sometimes doubts. She has had such rough treatment that she has grown unfeeling, and her callous ways often hurt me.”

“ You are often too hard on her, Gutschen. Do you think it is good for the child? ” the old woman said thoughtfully. “ I am often sorry for the little thing.”

“ It is necessary, for if we always give way to her she'll never be any good,” Mrs. Krause replied seriously. “ I am already afraid that she gets spoiled here and that this is not the best place for her.”

“ Cecily! Cecily! ” a voice cried from the yard now to the little girl who was playing in the room beside the woman. Next moment a face pressed itself against the window-pane. “ Are you ready? The carriage is here; papa lets us drive to school today because it's raining.”

“ Yes, at once. But come into the house while you wait, Lothar. You are getting wet,” cried Cecily, quickly opening the window. Lothar, shaking his head, ran away, still warning her to be quick, as the horses should not be kept standing long.

The little girl quickly seized her books and got ready for school. Then, calling out a hasty farewell to the women in the kitchen, she flew light-footedly to the official's house where the carriage stood.

“ You see, mother, we should not allow this, either,” said Mrs. Krause, gazing after Cecily.

“ What do you mean, Gusti? ”

“ Well, she shouldn't drive to school with the children of the officials. It is not wise. The director is very kind to let her go along, but then she seems to her-



self as good as they in the first place, and gets needlessly spoiled besides. The child is no guinea-fowl that can't get wet. The bit of rain won't hurt her."

"But the little thing might get a cold by sitting in school with wet feet."

"The new leather boots we had made for her instead of the pitifully thin shoes she had are thick and let no dampness through. You can be assured on that point, dear mother. But there is no use in changing now that we let her do it the first time. I only say that it should not be and that she is getting spoiled."

In the meantime the children squeezed themselves noisily into the broad family coach, which provided very tight quarters. But that made it all the more fun. Besides Lothar, Gabriele and Cecily, the overseer's two boys and the foreman's little daughter went along. They really had to sit pretty tight in order to have room.

"You sat down on my hand, Lothar, all my fingers are crushed," his sister complained, pushing Lothar away.

"Oh, you poor cry-Gabriele, shall I call the doctor?" mocked Lothar.

"My leg, my leg! Sit still, Edmund;" cried little Katherine Walter now, giving her neighbor a shove.

"But Hermann, why do you throw down my school-bag? It can stand quite easily between us," scolded Gabriele again.

"No, no, it is tight enough already," said Hermann, and fighting and laughing, the little company finally settled down. Cecily was the only who did not

mind her narrow seat, for she had been obliged to squeeze up much tighter when she had travelled with the Strianskis' troupe.

"This isn't tight here, we have loads of room," she said. "You should have seen the wagon in which we travelled from place to place. It was so packed full of things that there was no room left for us. A part of the wagon was furnished like a little room, where Mr. and Mrs. Strianski slept with the two children when we travelled at night. But I and Uncle Melau, who was always with us, I think only to take care of me, we had to do the best we could to find a little spot among the tools and instruments. It was lucky we both were small. I often slept on the big drum with the feed bag under my head and Uncle Melau under the broad saddle of the old horse on which we executed our jumps in the circus."

"Where did you keep your dove, then?" asked Gabriele.

"Oh, she always sat snugly in the pointed felt cap Uncle Melau wears as clown," laughed Cecily. "If only I could have taken my poor, dear pony in the wagon, too. But he had to pull the great cart which carried the other implements and cases. The good white circus horse pulled our wagon, the poor dear."

"It must have been a gay trip and I wish I could have gone along!" cried Hermann.

"Oh, no, not I. I'd rather drive in our coach," said Katherine.

The carriage stopped.

“Cecily, you have to get out, here is your school,” cried Lothar, flinging open the door. The little one jumped lightly out while the others drove on. She went to the public school, while the others had private lessons.

“Here comes the circus princess to school in a carriage,” some of the children cried teasingly as Cecily entered the classroom.

The little girl lost no time in flying up to the mockers and raining rapid blows among them. As soon as the children found themselves attacked like that they gave back the assault and soon a bitter fight began, mingled with loud shrieks and cries.

When the teacher entered the contestants flew apart.

“What is happening? Who began the noise?” she asked angrily.

“Cecily Melau, she beat us first,” cried some.

“But they made fun of me and I wouldn’t stand that,” Cecily retorted obstinately.

“But you mustn’t hit them. I have forbidden you to do this before. Those are rough circus manners,” said the teacher severely. “Go and stand in the corner during the lesson for punishment.”

Cecily did sulkily what she was told, but she thought it very unjust that she alone was punished. She did not like the school at all and would have preferred to go with her friends to their private lessons.

“I don’t want to go to that school any more, aunt. They make fun of me there,” she exclaimed upon reaching home. “I’d much rather go to school with Lothar and Gabriele and the overseer’s children.”

“ No, my child, that isn't possible,” replied Mrs. Krause. “ You are a poor child and must go to the public school. The private school is too expensive.”

The little one went angrily away, while Gottfried gazed thoughtfully after her.

“ Tell me, Gusti, wouldn't it be possible to send the little thing to the other school? ” he said, twisting his mustache. “ She is such a nice little lassie. Being there with rough children doesn't do her any good.”

“ She always wants too much. Please don't put such ideas into her head,” replied Mrs. Krause angrily. “ And who should pay for it? ”

“ Well, I suppose if I could scrape enough together there wouldn't be any further difficulty,” said Gottfried. “ If I ever marry I'll need it, of course, but I still mean to wait a while. Ricky also says we should wait till we have saved more. But I'll gladly give that bit of money for the little one's school.”

“ You should save up your pennies, Friedrich,” Mrs. Krause retorted, shrugging her shoulders. “ Nothing is ever too much for the little thing. I don't approve of spoiling her so much, and her uncle didn't want it, either.”

“ No, but a good school won't spoil her,” said Gottfried eagerly. “ It might be of great future use to her. I'll speak to the director, and if he approves it we'll send her to school with the others. As long as they play together all day they might just as well study together, too.”

But his sister was of the opposite opinion as well as Christian, who worked against the plan when it was

discussed in the family council. But the mother agreed with Gottfried and old Mr. Poole was always willing for Cecily to have the very best.

So, after a short time, she was allowed to go to the private school with her playmates. She studied so eagerly to catch up with them that she was constantly praised by her teachers. In the public school she had been quite indifferent to the fact that her ignorance had placed her at the bottom of her class among much younger children. What did these children matter to her? But she was now ashamed of her ignorance before her playmates and studied so industriously that Gottfried was very proud of his protégée, who, instead of bad reports, now brought home always the very best.

But that was only in regard to her studies, for in the point of "behaviour" she always failed miserably. Her restlessness and loud, insolent ways were censured every week. It also seemed as if she had a bad influence on the other children, for there had never been so much scolding necessary at home as well as in the school since Cecily had come among them.

She was always the leader in the funniest and most daring exploits and surpassed everyone in boldness and madness. She naturally preferred to play with the boys and when Gabriele and Katherine sat with their dolls, Cecily raced about with the three boys in the yard, the neighboring woods and the meadow. She also ordered her playmates about in the most natural way, and as long as she usually thought out their gay exploits, the others willingly obeyed her commands.



## CHAPTER VIII

### YOUTHFUL EXPLOITS

“ COME, we’ll take the fox with us to the meadow today; he never gets out of his prison,” said Cecily one day, running to the ramp where Reynard passed his quiet hours.

“ No, he bites, and he’ll escape. We can’t do that,” cried Hermann. “ One can’t tame foxes.”

“ Oh, I’ll keep him from biting! I know how to do it, for they did it in the circus,” replied Cecily. “ Come here, my friend; here is something for you.”

When she had lured the animal with a good morsel, she opened the grating and cleverly throwing her apron over his head she tied it on tight. The fox struggled in vain and found himself completely blinded.

The animal pulled and tugged with his paws on the covering. Not being able to free himself, he bit and jumped about on his chain.

Cecily unhooked this now and ran off, pulling the fox behind her. He had to follow, but running proved difficult with his lame leg. The other children ran after Cecily and the wild little army arrived thus in the meadow bordering the foundry.

Here was grazing one of the two horses used for pulling burdens to the railroad. As swift as lightning Cecily swung herself on its back. With one hand holding the mane and the other leading the fox on his chain, she galloped wildly over the meadow.

Poor Reynard had a hard time following, but the chain dragged him mercilessly. Finally, not able to run any more, he was hauled behind the wild rider, who raced along, laughing and rejoicing.

“ Stop, Cecily, stop! You’ll strangle the fox. He can’t follow any more,” the children cried, as she flew by them again.

“ Now he’ll soon be tame,” cried the latter, jumping down from the horse. The fox fell prostrate immediately and lay on the ground as if dead. However, when Cecily came close to him to take off the apron, he bit her so violently in the hand that she shrieked and leaped backwards. The animal used that moment to rid himself of the already loosened apron and pulled the chain out of Cecily’s hand. Then despite his exhaustion he fled across the meadows.

“ Hold him, hold him! He is running away!” exclaimed the children, frightened and rushing after the fugitive. But the fox was even quicker than Cecily. Soon he disappeared behind some bushes and the chase proved useless.

“ You have tamed him nicely,” cried Lothar, nearly crying with grief. “ No one will ever catch our fox again. I wonder what papa will say, and Mr. Poole?”

“ If only he hadn’t bitten me so hard. I let him go with fright,” said Cecily, wrapping her bleeding hand in the completely torn and ripped apron. “ The apron was too thin; he could bite through it.”

Rather dejected, the little company came back from their chase. All desire to play had vanished; even Cecily

had grown quiet because she was a bit afraid of Mrs. Krause on account of the torn apron. But this dejected mood never lasted long.

“Have you ever seen the nest of a dwarf-mouse?” she called, running to a willow bush which stood by the stream in the meadow.

“Mice have no nests like birds,” said Lothar.

“Oho! I’ll show you that I am right,” replied Cecily, throwing back her head. Then stooping down to the willow, she bent back the branches. On four or five strong reed grasses lay a small round nest. It was fastened on the reeds and made of long grass blades. Inside it was lined with various kinds of hair and fibre.

On the soft bed lay eight completely naked little mice, but the mother, as soon as her nest was touched, jumped through a hole into the bushes. The children could quietly observe the nest and the young ones now.

“Oh, how hideously ugly they are!” cried Hermann. “How different from birds!”

“No, birds look ridiculous, too, before they have feathers,” said Cecily. “When they are fed they seem to be only beaks, they open them so wide. A skylark’s nest must be here somewhere, too. Uncle Gottfried showed it to me the other day. He’ll try to take one of the little ones out and raise it for me. They get quite tame, he says, and sing beautifully. He has his whole room full of birds.”

The beautiful, long-drawn-out note of a bird came from quite close, and over the children’s head floated the little singer. He fluttered here and there in gentle

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circles, sometimes pausing in mid-air and sometimes rapidly sinking to the ground as if falling down.

“That is the skylark; her nest must be near here,” cried Cecily delightedly. Then she carefully sneaked up to the spot where the bird had last dropped. “Just look! Here it is. But no one must touch the bird.”

The little girl who a short while ago had raced across the meadow like a little demon with her fox and horse, stepped quietly and gently now, like a real elf, to the bird's nest. It was well hidden on the ground among grasses and reeds and daintily made of divers little roots, grasses, moss and blades. Inside it was lined with horsehair, bits of wool and dry leaves, and in the cup-like hole in the middle sat the brown bird on its eggs.

As soon as it noticed the disturbance, it stretched its little head but remained seated on its nest. The male meanwhile, twittering shrilly, slipped through the grass and bushes and rose into the air, floating above the nest as if to drive the intruders away.

“Come away! the little birds are frightened,” cried Cecily, drawing the boys back. “If only no cat or other bad animal finds the nest! It is so close to the ground. There are still more hereabouts. Uncle Gottfried knows, for he loves them.”

“Here comes Uncle Gottfried now. What is he carrying?” cried Edmund, pointing to the figure approaching from the meadow.

“Now tell me, children, what has happened to your fox,” cried Gottfried, throwing down the bag he had carried on his arm. “I found him half dead near the

woods in some bushes. He must have broken away, for he had the chain around his neck. He bit me when I put him into this bag where I was carrying some iron. Look at my fingers! ”

Here he wiped the blood from several wounds which were quite as bad as those Cecily had received a while ago.

“ Our fox is back again! ” cried the boys, merrily dancing around the bag. Only Cecily looked anxiously at Gottfried’s profusely bleeding hands.

“ Oh, uncle, I’ll wrap my apron round them, ” she said. “ Does it hurt very much? He bit me badly, too. ”

“ You? Did you try to catch him, too, Cecily? ”

“ Oh, no, uncle. I wanted to tame him, but it didn’t work. He ran away and bit through my apron. Aunt Krause will scold me, I know. It is lucky you are bringing him back. ”

The vicious fugitive was now quickly brought back to his den and Cecily made no more attempts to tame him.

“ We had enough trouble with the fox, he can stay in his hole now, ” she soon after said to her playmates. “ But we should take out our rabbits once. How happily they would jump about! ”

As soon done as said. Little Henry’s coach, which stood in the garden, was fetched. Then with all the rabbits packed in tight they set off to the neighboring wood.

“ There are more things to eat there than in the meadow, ” said Gabriele, who with Kathy had joined the party today.



Arrived in the forest the children set the rabbits down on the grass and mosses under the trees and were happy when they saw how the little animals enjoyed their freedom.

Suddenly the big gray male rabbit gave a bound and fled as quick as lightning into the thick woods.

The other rabbits hesitated a moment, pricked up their ears and then followed their leader in hasty leaps. Within a few moments they had all disappeared in the underbrush.

The children rushed in all directions to seize the fugitives, but it was in vain. If they happened to catch one by the ear or leg it would tear itself loose again. Soon they had run so far and crept so deeply into the bushes that the chase had to be given up. With torn clothes, scratched hands and flying hair the children came back from the hunt without a single rabbit.

"Oh, I nearly had my beautiful white Velvet-Fur, but it ran off into the woods again," lamented Gabriele, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Don't always cry the first thing, stupid little cry-Gabriele! We'll get it again and the others besides," said Lothar, mopping the perspiration from his brow. "When they leave off working in the yard we'll ask the boys to help us."

"Yes, yes, that will be capital fun! We'll have a real chase in the woods," cried the others.

That moment the evening bell sounded and Lothar and Hermann quickly ran to the works to get the needed help. It was impossible to succeed alone, and the rabbits could not be left in the forest.

A large crowd of big and small workers soon set off to the woods, where they formed a regular ring and began to drive as at a regular hunt. With cries of laughter the frightened animals were chased out of their hiding-places and being at last encircled they came together and were caught. The big male rabbit who had begun the trouble evaded them the longest. But at last two young lads seized him at the same time and he was brought back with hurt skin and torn ears.

“ Who had the wild idea of taking the rabbits into the wood? ” asked Christian at supper.

“ I did, Uncle Christian, ” cried Cecily, laughing. “ It was such fun! ”

“ But our director is very angry, ” replied Christian, “ first the fox and now the rabbits. You start too much nonsense, child. The other children were all scolded, but you need more, for you began everything. ”

“ But Christian, the child meant no harm; you only wanted to give the fox and the rabbits a little freedom. Wasn't that it, Cecily? ” asked old Mrs. Poole, goodheartedly, stroking Cecily's curly hair.

“ No, no, grandmother, don't always excuse her. She is a wild, naughty girl who needs punishment, ” Mrs. Krause replied angrily. “ You are not going to play with the other children for three days now. Mrs. Bernsdorf will probably forbid you to go to them at all if you make them as wild and naughty as you are yourself. ”

It was a hard punishment for Cecily to pass the next three days alone. On the fourth, however, she marched gaily about again with them on the meadow, her favor-

ite playground. All were together this time, Lothar, Gabriele, Hermann, Edmund and Kathy. Even little Hans had been allowed to go along, naturally with the most serious injunction to take good care of him and start no nonsense.

First they played at soldiers. Lothar was officer and led them with drawn swords while Edmund and Hermann followed, guns over their shoulders. Gabriele and Kathy with little Hans between them closed the procession, their dolls in their arms instead of guns. All had on paper caps with cock feathers stuck in them. Cecily marched ahead of the little column, with a drum on which she cleverly beat one flourish after another. She even began a march now, with whose rhythm they could bravely march up and down. "Left, right, left, right, turn about!" commanded Lothar, and his battalion followed.

One of the working boys arrived now. He spent his leisure hours catching frogs for the lame stork in a marshy place, and he was quite well paid for that occupation.

"We must help him!" cried Cecily, throwing down her drum. "Come quickly, I know how to do it. Give me your red neck-cloth, Kathy. We need red rags to tempt the frogs out."

The little girl willingly undid her cloth which Cecily fastened to a stick, putting Hans's red shawl on another.

With the help of these flags, for the boy had brought one, too, the frogs were lured from the marsh and either caught by hand or with a net. Cecily was very eager at

this sport, even more so than the boys. As little Hans wanted to catch frogs, too, she let him splash about in the dampness. Only Kathy and Gabriele stayed away, for they abhorred everything in the shape of frogs, toads and lizards.

When quite a quantity had been secured, they marched back to the works in order to bring the stork his meal.

Hans had not wanted to give up his flag and Kathy also carried hers. Cecily had washed it at the brook and in order to dry it fluttered it in the wind.

“Gobble, gobble, gobble!” suddenly was heard close to the little ones marching behind. Before they realized it the large turkey, lured by the bright red of the flags, came running after them, forming a huge wheel and showing his angrily swollen comb.

Kathy ran away crying, but little Hans, whose hand she had held, stumbled forward frightened and then fell down. Before the boys could hurry to him and keep the furious bird away, it had flown at the boy. Springing upon the child he mercilessly attacked him with his wings and beak.

The workmen and boys at last came to deliver the boy from his enemy, but he cried pitifully and could not be quieted.

Cecily had to take him home, shrieking loudly, besides being dirty and wet as he was already from catching frogs. Cecily's clothes and shoes were also completely soaked.

Mrs. Krause was quite terrified when she saw them,

for she thought they had both fallen into the water. But when Cecily ingenuously told about the frog hunt and reassured Mrs. Krause that little Hans was only frightened, Mrs. Krause sighed deeply and threw a hopeless glance at the little girl.

“ One should chain you down like the fox, wild, senseless creature! ” she said, lifting Hans upon her arm to take him up to bed. “ Quickly go and change your clothes, or you’ll get sick. May God prevent you from getting an illness. If He does not, it will be your own fault, naughty thing! ”

The little boy was really obliged to stay in bed a few days. The fright had shaken him up somewhat and he had caught a cold besides. What punishment and scolding could not do for Cecily her anxiety for the small lad did now. She was actually sorry for her misdeeds, for her devotion to the boy was sincere. She would have loved to sit beside him all day and night. Aunt Krause sent her away, however, for she feared further injury from her for her little son. That was the greatest punishment Cecily could have received.

“ I wish Aunt Gusti would beat me the way Mrs. Strianski did, ” she said to Gottfried.

“ One does not spank little girls, that’s only punishment for naughty boys, ” he replied.

“ But Aunt Krause has done it several times when I told a lie, ” said Cecily, unashamed. “ But you know, uncle, it didn’t hurt a bit. Mrs. Strianski could do it much better. ”



## CHAPTER IX

### IN THE HOUSE

HANSCHEN, soon bright and well again, was playing near his mother and grandmother, who sat together at their work. They were shelling a basket of green peas and little Hans let the pods ride on his little nose, ears and fingers. But he wanted to have some of the peas, too.

“How does one beg, Hans?” asked Mrs. Krause, holding up a pod.

Lifting his apron the little one came to his mother.

“Says the little begging mouse,  
‘Give me something for my house!  
Quickly, too! I can not wait,  
I must run. It’s getting late.’”

he supplicated, holding out his apron.

“Here, little beggar, I hope you’ll enjoy it!” laughed Mrs. Krause, as she threw several peas into his apron. Going to his grandmother, he repeated his little song.

He went on with this game tirelessly till the work was done and all the peas shelled.

“Take me on your lap, mamma. Hans is tired,” said the boy, and putting his head on her shoulder, he closed his eyes.

“Sing, mother!” he begged. Mrs. Krause sang in

a low voice a familiar children's rhyme, substituting the word "peas" for "almonds" in the song.

"No, mamma, they were almonds," he corrected.

"But they were as sweet as sugar today. I think you liked them. Tomorrow we'll cook them."

"Yes, and milk and pancakes."

"Yes, milk soup and pancakes for Hanschen."

"Cecily must have pancakes, too, but not the naughty turkey."

"No, no, not the bad turkey. Look! here comes Cecily."

Hastily, as usual, the little girl came leaping across the yard. Her thick brown hair hanging in braids about her head tumbled untidily about her neck and her cheeks were scarlet.

"Aunt, aunt!" she cried from afar, "Gabriele has a birthday party on Sunday. All her friends are asked, and I, too. It will be glorious! Oh, how I look forward to it!"

"But how do you know I will let you go, Cecily?" said Mrs. Krause.

"But if I am invited, you must let me go!" replied Cecily sulkily.

"If you don't ask me nicely and if you sulk instead I won't let you go," replied Mrs. Krause morosely.

"Oh, let her go, Gusti. I am so glad she'll have that pleasure," said Mrs. Poole good-naturedly.

"Grandmother is much nicer than you, aunt," cried Cecily, turning her face to the old woman, who smoothed her hair and fastened up her braids.

Mrs. Krause gazed at her mother disapprovingly, then said angrily, "Grandmother spoils you and that is very bad for you."

She went into the house to put Hans to bed and soon her mother followed.

"You should not have pleaded for the stubborn child, mother," said Mrs. Krause seriously. "If it went according to my wishes I would not let her go to this party."

"But why not, Gusti? She has just promised to be very good in order to get you to let her go," said the old woman. "One can do much more with her by love than strictness."

"Neither love nor strictness help with her. She is incorrigible," sighed the widow. "She does not really belong in such parties. She is a poor child and it will completely turn her little wanton head. You do all you can to make her think she is as good as the children from the best families in the town. School and play with these children! She teases me for better dresses all the time, because she wants to look like the others. I undertook her education, but I can't possibly keep my promise to her guardian under such conditions."

"Which promise, Gusti?"

"To bring up the girl simply and without pretence, as is suitable for a poor child who will have to earn her living as a servant some day."

"A servant? That child? You can't mean that, Gusti. Such a dainty little thing!"

"Of course not within the next few years, for she is

much too young. But later on, certainly. Who will look after her if she grows up as a young lady who has not learned to work? We are too poor for that, and her uncle has just written that he can't send me any money. He has no employment just now, but he wants me to get what Cecily needs. If the poor man earns nothing, as is possible, I can see it coming that we'll have to provide for her. Then she'll have to go into service as soon as she is old enough."

The old woman grew thoughtful, for she had never realized this.

"The uncle will soon send money again, Gusti," she consoled her. "All we can do now is to let her study and train her out of those stupid circus manners. Everything else will come of itself, so don't worry needlessly. It is also better for her to see the children of good families than those of our workmen. She would only learn worse manners from them."

"The nice children will learn bad manners from her, for she orders them all about," replied Mrs. Krause, shrugging her shoulders. "Who can tell if the officials don't think it conceited of us to send Cecily to school with their children and let her play with them instead of the workmen's children."

"But, Gusti, they would not invite her if they didn't want her," said the mother, shaking her head.

"The children do that and not the parents," replied Mrs. Krause. "As I said before, I know it is wrong to let Cecily accept that invitation. If the other families invite her later on, we can't refuse either and no good

can come to her from that; nothing but conceit and vanity; you can believe me, mother."

"But the poor child looks forward to it so much! You really are too hard and strict with her," said Mrs. Poole, inclining her head sympathetically. "Don't always look at the sombre side of things. Why shouldn't good come instead of bad? But you have been that way all your life and I don't see that it has made you particularly happy, poor child."

Mrs. Krause turned quickly about and hastened out, the apron before her eyes.

When she re-entered the room, she found Cecily with her mother.

"If you are very good till Sunday, Cecily, I'll let you go to the birthday party at Bernsdorfs," she said with more kindness in her voice than she had used toward her for a long time. "But are you sure Mrs. Bernsdorf wants you?"

"Yes, aunt," cried Cecily gaily, "she said so herself when Gabriele begged her for it. Cry-Gabriele is very fond of me, and Lothar, too, as well as the other children. They always do what I say."

"Alas, yes! I wish they didn't," sighed Mrs. Krause. "But why do you call Gabriele 'cry-Gabriele'?"

"Lothar calls her that because she always cries the first thing," laughed Cecily. "He says she is built too near the water and therefore overflows so easily."

"You should not call Gabriele that," replied Mrs. Krause severely. "If Lothar does it, it is not nice, but you must not do it, my child. You must always be polite





to the children of our employers, for you are not as good as they. Remember that, even if you go to school with them and play with them. But now try hard to be mannerly till Sunday, otherwise I can't let you go to the party."

Cecily was really more quiet and obedient during the next few days, but on Saturday her expectation was nearly shattered.

"What are you making, Uncle Gottfried?" she asked, sitting down beside the young man on the bench before the house.

"A bird-house, Cecily. I got the boards from the carpenter shop and now I am making holes for drawing through the wire."

"What will you put in there?"

"A pair of goldfinches I have raised. You can come up to my bird-room today, if I have time at noon. The swallows are hatching again."

Cecily, glad of the permission, watched him quietly for a little while till he got up. He threw his tools into a box which stood in the hall, then went to the forge.

Cecily noiselessly opened the lid of the box and hunted about among the things. She finally found what she wanted, namely, the gimlet Gottfried had used. In the stable she gathered a few thick straws, took a little bottle out of her pocket, and went to a few young trees which stood on the wall of the works.

"But, Cecily, what are you doing?" cried Christian suddenly, stepping up to the child, who had busied herself with a young birch tree.

She looked up annoyed when she saw Christian, for she did not love him much. He always found fault with her.

“ I want to get birch water,” she said curtly, screwing the gimlet deep into the trunk.

“ Birch water, what an idea! ” cried Christian.

“ Why not? It tastes very good,” Cecily answered eagerly. “ Mrs. Strianski always did it. She used it for her freckles, but Lena and I drank it.”

“ Nonsense, child, leave it alone! ” Christian said, taking away the straw which she meant to stick into the hole in order to let the juice flow out. “ One can only get birch-water in the spring. Don’t dare to bore into any more trees, for you are ruining them completely. Run away now, quick! ”

The child obstinately turned her back on Christian. “ I’ll do it just the same! ” she cried stamping her foot on the ground. “ He only says there is no birch-water because he does not want me to bore the trees. There are some birches over there, where he can’t see me.”

She then hastened out of the yard to where a row of young birches stood in an out-of-the-way place, their tops overlooking the wall. Hurriedly, for fear of being disturbed again, she began to bore into one of the trunks, deeper and deeper, but no sap would come. She stuck in the straw and sucked on it, as she had often done before. But everything was in vain and the straw stayed dry.

She went to the next tree, then the third and fourth, but all her zeal was unrewarded. She bored and bored,

ran from one tree trunk to the next, and worked till the perspiration poured from her brow. Not a single drop of the sweet water flowed out.

Nearly crying with disappointment, she had to give up her enterprise, for it was time for school and she heard someone call her name. She hurriedly ran away.

“ I should like to know how my gimlet got outside the doors of the yard,” said Gottfried at noon, when the family sat together at lunch. “ I remember putting it in my box this morning.”

Cecily flushed a deep red but said nothing. But she felt Christian’s penetrating glance upon her.

“ Cecily will know,” he said. “ Did you go to the birches out there ? ”

“ No, not there,” promptly replied the child.

Christian kept silence, but after everyone got up from the table, he went outside the big doors of the yard. Upon examining the birches he found that they all had holes.

“ Cecily,” he said severely, taking the little girl aside, “ you were disobedient and told a lie. All the birches on the wall have holes; I know who did it, for the borer gave you away. Shall I tell Aunt Krause about it? Then you won’t be allowed to go the party tomorrow.”

Cecily looked truly anxious.

“ Oh, please, Uncle Christian, don’t do that,” she supplicated. “ I didn’t want the birch-water for myself. I wanted to give it to Gabriele for her birthday. It tastes so nice and now I have nothing else to give her.

But it was no good. No juice came out and now I have nothing after all for Gabriele."

Christian was glad that Cecily had wanted the birch-water for that purpose and not out of greediness, as he had thought.

"I told you that one can only get it in the spring when the fresh sap flows in the trees," he said a little less severely. "If it had been spring and you had robbed the poor trees of their sap, they would all have died."

"They would die?" asked Cecily, frightened.

"Surely," replied Christian. "It would be like taking all the blood from your body. That would make you die, too."

"Oh, then I won't ever do it again, uncle. The poor, pretty trees," cried the child, with tears in her eyes.

"You have been a very naughty child," said Christian in a more serious way, "and I really should tell Aunt Gusti. But to show you that I am not always the bad uncle that you call me, I'll say nothing about it. Shall I, Cecily?"

"Good Uncle Christian," cried the little one, violently throwing her arms round his neck. "I'll love you, too, now, nearly as much as Uncle Gottfried."

But she could not love him quite as much. When Gottfried called to her in order to show her his birds as he had promised, she confessed her misdeed of her own accord, something she had never done before.

"If only I had a present for Gabriele!" she con-

cluded. "I have nothing beside Sidi, and I couldn't give her my dove."

"No, no, Cecily, don't part from her," assented Gottfried. "But come along now, we may find something for Gabriele."

They climbed up together to Gottfried's little gable-room, which he shared with a lot of birds and other pets. Many more were lodged in a garret room beside it.

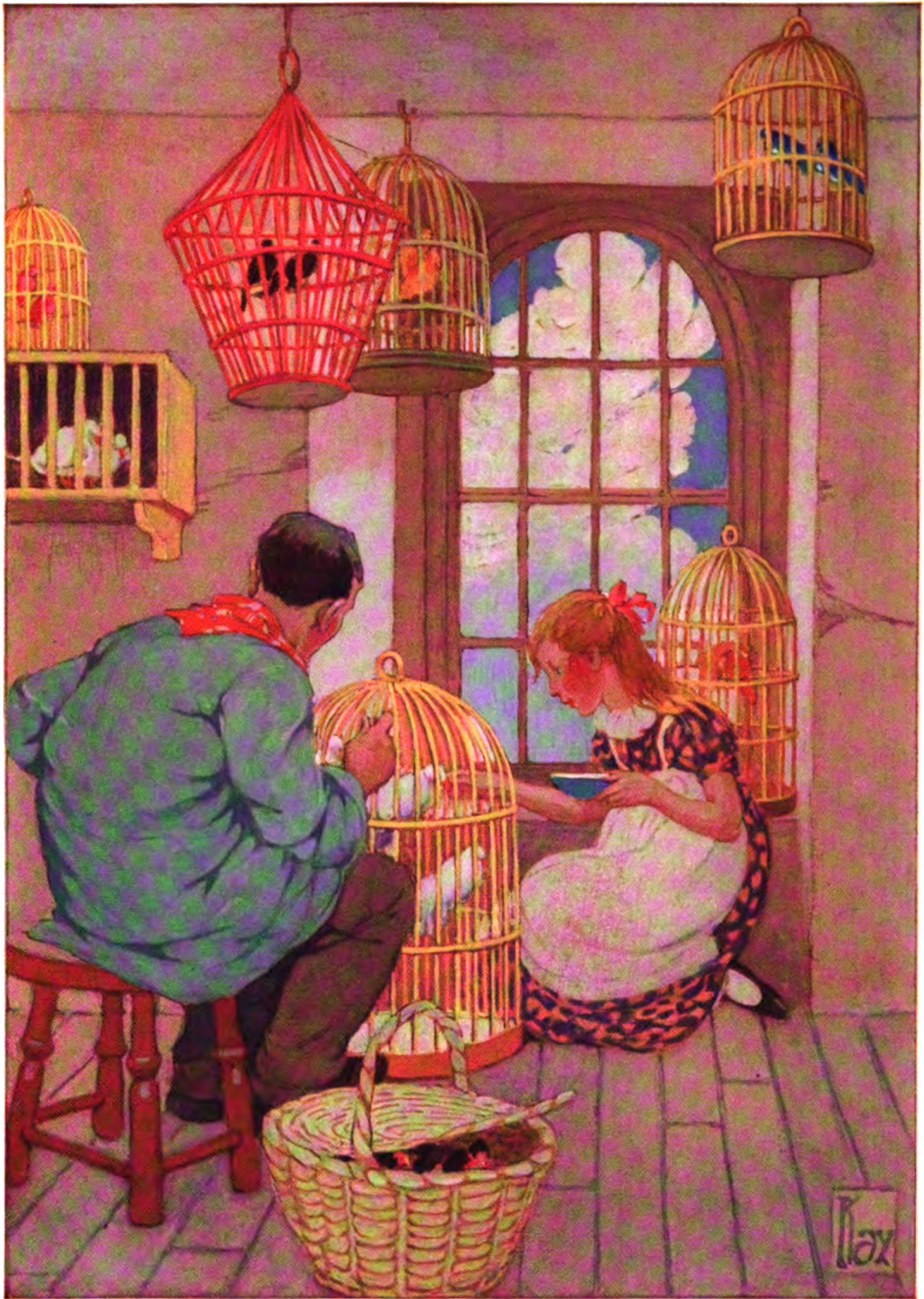
When Gottfried entered, the singing, twittering, whistling and shrieking they had heard from outside grew twice as loud. In his own room quite a number of birds lived in cages of his own making which hung along the walls. In the adjoining room, which was filled entirely with brushwood, some of their more common brothers flew about free. Here the little creatures could sing and gaily hop about. Boxes and baskets for hatching were fastened on the branches, and various birds who were sitting on their eggs stuck out their tiny heads.

Gottfried threw them a handful of fresh seed and changed the water in the bowls which stood upon the floor for drinking and bathing. Some of his special little friends flew to his arm and shoulder to be caressed.

In the corner of the room stood a large cage with pigeons. In several of the baskets birds were hatching, while the rest made violent noises. Cecily kneeled down delightedly in front of the bars to observe the pretty creatures better.

"Just look at this ridiculous fellow!" she cried, pulling Uncle Gottfried to the cage. A stately pigeon





CECILY KNEELED DOWN DELIGHTEDLY IN FRONT OF THE BARS TO OBSERVE THE PRETTY CREATURES BETTER



eagerly chased a little female, but she kept on running away from him.

“ Kuckerwha! Kuckerwha! ” he cried incessantly, with his head laid back and his neck all swollen up.

“ Hihihih! ” he would conclude, while he leaped towards the little dove, who every time tripped to the other side of the cage, where several of her comrades were feeding.

While Cecily knelt on the floor, she heard a shuffling and crawling beside her, and looking down, saw a pair of turtles who came towards her solemnly, pushing their heavy armor slowly before them. Arriving before Cecily, they stretched out their heads on long necks from under their shields and gazed at her from the side with their black eyes.

“ Oh, what ridiculous creatures! ” cried Cecily. “ Do they want something from me? ”

“ Yes, indeed, they want flies, ” said Gottfried, taking some out of a glass and throwing them to the turtles. After hastily snapping these up they again crept clumsily and slowly into their dark corner.

In a large bowl some salamanders and lizards swam about among little fishes. As soon as Gottfried brought them flies, they sat down on a little hill of slag and stones in the middle, which was overgrown with water-plants.

“ But come now, see my favorite, who is probably rattling his cage with impatience by now, ” said Gottfried, going into his own room. As he opened one of the cages hanging on the wall, a yellow canary bird,



which had already violently shaken the bars, flew out and sat twittering on his head.

“ Now watch how clever the little rascal is, Cecily! ” cried Gottfried, stroking the bird with his thick finger as it fluttered to his shoulder. “ He’ll immediately show me what he wants.”

The bird first flew to a spot on the floor, then to a pitcher which stood on the table. Twittering, it came back to Gottfried’s shoulder. It described the same circle three or four times more, till its master finally said, laughing:

“ Well, Matzchen, you shall have your way now. But don’t be impatient! ”

“ What does he want? ” asked Cecily, surprised.

“ He wants to bathe,” said Gottfried. “ I always put his bath on that place on the floor and he also knows the water is in the pitcher. He shows me his wishes by flying to and fro and I simply have to do the obstinate little thing’s bidding, whether I want to or not.”

“ I thought you did not like obstinate little things, uncle? ” cried Cecily.

“ Certainly not obstinate girls, you are right,” laughed Gottfried, filling the bowl with water. The bird immediately jumped into his bath and splashed violently about with his head and wings.

Then it flew back to Gottfried’s shoulder and confidently dried its wet feathers on his hair and beard.

Cecily heartily laughed at the little creature.

“ Oh,” she sighed, “ I wish I were a bird. Then you would do what I want even when I am obstinate.”

Here she stepped to the large cage of a squirrel jumping restlessly about and shaking the bars in order to be let out.

“ His obstinate and headstrong behaviour does him as little good as yours does you, Cecily,” said Gottfried. “ He bit me the other day and has to be imprisoned now for several days as punishment. That always helps with such violent little creatures; remember that as a warning! But come! I’ll give you something for Gabriele now. What do you think of this cunning goldfinch? ”

Taking one of the cages from the wall, he showed Cecily a splendid little goldfinch.

“ Oh, will you really give it to me, uncle? ” she cried, with gleaming eyes, stretching out her hands. “ Oh, how good of you! ”

“ I have several more; this one has not been out of the nest long,” said Gottfried.

“ What beautiful feathers the little thing has—green, red, yellow and blue! ”\* cried Cecily, in admiration.

“ Do you know how it happened that he grew so bright? ”

“ No, how should I know? ”

“ Well, when God had created all the birds, one green, another brown, and a third red, and had painted one after the other, He pushed His paint-pots aside because He thought His task was finished. Suddenly the goldfinch, who had sat hidden away, came humbly out of his corner and said:

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\* The European goldfinch is highly colored.



“ ‘ Oh, dear God, please give me a color! I have not been painted yet.’

“ ‘ You? ’ said God, surprised. ‘ But why did you not come sooner? All my paint-pots are empty now. But come! we’ll see what can be done.’

“ He peeped into the paint-pots, then scraped out all the colors which had stuck to the edge, and touched up the poor little goldfinch. In this way he got a little bit of all the colors. When he was finished, he looked so bright and cunning that he flew happily after the other birds, twittering gaily: ‘ Many thanks, dear God.’ ”

Cecily laughed about the little story and looked more tenderly than ever at the little goldfinch.

“ Do you know, uncle,” she said, “ the goldfinch is the clown among the birds. Uncle Melau’s harlequin costume was put together out of bright colored pieces, too, just like the feather dress of the goldfinch. I like him now even more than before. And if he is a real clown he’ll do such funny tricks that cry-Gabriele will be changed into a laugh-Gabriele.”

Full of joy, she carried the pretty bird away from his many comrades, who sang and whistled behind him as if they were saying good-bye and wishing him a happy journey.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BIRTHDAY

As CECILY had told everyone beforehand, all her friends were bidden to Gabriele's birthday party. Lothar had also been allowed to invite some of his school friends. A group of eighteen children had come together on that day and they laughed and chattered as noisily as Gottfried's birds in the garret.

The little girls each brought the birthday-child a pretty present; one a basket with flowers, another a work-bag or a game, always something they hoped would please Gabriele. But she showed herself most delighted with Cecily's goldfinch. She adored birds and already had a pair of canaries hanging in her room.

"Uncle Gottfried said you could put the goldfinch into your cage with the canaries; they get along well together," said Cecily, very proud of having given her friend so much pleasure. This consoled her a trifle for wearing an extremely plain and simple dress, which contrasted strongly with the dainty attire of the other girls. Aunt Krause had said that a freshly washed calico dress suited a poor child best; a better would not really be right for her to wear. But Cecily did not agree with this and greatly longed to be as prettily dressed as the other children.

First they had chocolate to drink and Gabriele's large cake was cut. It was surrounded by a wreath of

flowers and eleven lights were burning on it. One candle in the middle was for good luck.

“ I propose Gabriele’s health,” cried Edmund, raising his cup of chocolate for the purpose.

“ Don’t! Don’t drink her health with cups,” cried Lothar, pulling Edmund down to his seat again. “ You can do it later with the punch we are going to have.”

“ Real punch? Oh, that is splendid!” said Edmund, wiping his mouth in anticipation. “ You are right, we can toast her better with that than with chocolate.”

Various games were played in the garden now; cat and mouse, hindmost of three, rooms to let, throwing hoops, black man, and beating the pot blindfolded.

In all these games depending on physical prowess Cecily always won the prize, for no one could surpass her in quickness and agility. But when it grew cool outside and so-called intellectual games were played, like where and why, giving and placing, finding the likeness and difference and others, she could not well follow, for she had not learned to control her thoughts as well as her body.

“ We’d rather play something nicer,” she wearily said at last.

“ Yes, yes, let us act proverbs! That is much more fun!” cried several others who also did not care to think while they played.

This proposal met with great success. Good Mrs. Bernsdorf opened wardrobes and drawers to find the children clothes. She also brought down from the gar-

ret a whole chest with old costumes, which had often served such purposes.

There was such noisy delight and laughter at first that no one thought about performing and each child tried to deck herself out the best she could with the treasures from the box. Lothar put a white wig with big curls on his head and a three-cornered hat on top, Edmund strutted about in short black trousers and buckled shoes, and Hermann with a long, embroidered vest which hung down to his shoes. The girls stuck tinsel and flowers in their hair, put on the heavily-flowered crinolines, and wrapped themselves in pale grey shawls which had not been used for many years.

“Look at me, I am your queen,” cried Cecily, swinging herself to a table and looking down proudly at the other children. She had been able to snatch some of the best pieces from the chest and had decked herself out most daintily. A long red silk skirt hung about her shoulders like a mantle and dragged in a train behind her. A piece of net interwoven with gold was spread over her head and back, and a stiff gold belt trimmed with colored glass was the crown set on her hair, which she had unfastened and which lay in gold-shimmering waves upon her back. Swinging a folded fan in her hand as a sceptre, she spread out her arms like a ruler to announce her wishes to her subjects.

“Elf Goldihair, Elf Goldihair!” cried the children, delightedly, making a ring about her. “She’ll be our queen and we’ll build her a throne.”

Several clever hands quickly raised a sort of throne-

chair from cushions, chairs and footstools for Cecily. She was in her element again and accepted the cheers and homage as full of dignity and grace as Elf Goldihair used to do as ruler of "Fire-Magic."

She graciously nominated some of the boys as knights. They were to stand at her side and several little girls were to be her ladies of honor. Others had to kneel sideways at the steps of her throne and still others, as ambassadors and foreign princes, were to bring gifts and lay them at her feet.

A grand dressing-up and costuming began for the performance. The knights improvised shields and armor out of coffee-trays and cardboard. The ladies of honor trimmed themselves with ribbons and used old lace curtains for veils. They made long trains from raincoats and table-covers. The foreign ambassadors put their coats on wrong side out, set scrap baskets on their heads as helmets and fabricated beards and wigs from cotton and oakum. The two smallest girls were to be brought to the queen as slaves, entirely hidden in veils, with their hands crossed on their breasts.

Cecily now ascended her throne with dignity. The knights stood as guards on her side, the ladies of honor sat a little lower down, and two pages knelt on the steps. At a signal given on a child's trumpet by Lothar, one of the knights, the doors opened and the embassy entered solemnly in pairs with the two veiled slave-girls in their midst. When they reached the throne they knelt down and greeted the queen with crossed arms, touching the floor with their faces. When the queen graciously



waved her sceptre, they rose and walked up in pairs to the lowest steps of the throne. Here they laid down their gifts, which were received by the pages.

“Receive, oh, great queen,” thus spake the deputy of the land of Wulu-Kaffers, while he presented a coffee-pot, “this drinking horn made from the skull of our great leader, Lion-Claw, out of which our chieftain Tsihibumbum has till now daily sipped the blood of several enemies as his morning-drink.”

“And the mighty king of the Botokudors, great queen, sends you his greetings,” said the second, “and begs you to accept this scalp as a tribute of his friendship. He captured it with his own hands in his last war against the redskins. Wear it the way he did on your belt as a remembrance.” Here he presented an old fox-tail which was used by the maid as a duster.

Now came the ambassador from the land of Patagonia, bringing a valuable necklace for the queen, adorned with his enemies’ teeth in the shape of small horse-reins set with little bells from little Henry’s toys. The Emperor of China sent several stones from the great Chinese wall which surrounds his country, and the King Kamehamea several captured sparks from his fire-belching mountain, the Kilauea in Hawaii; namely, a box of matches.

“Huh! don’t burst with all your learning, Sir Ambassador,” Lothar interrupted the ceremony, laughing, but the queen immediately bade her knight keep a respectful silence. The deputies of several Indian tribes came next. One of them laid on the throne-steps the

sandals of the last of the Mohicans, and one from another tribe the peace-pipe which Chingachgook had smoked with his guests, which was a little cigarette-holder of boxwood.

“ Good! you have used your Indian stories to advantage,” cried the incorrigible Lothar anew, and for punishment the queen ordered him to turn his back to the whole company.

The two veiled slave-girls were now led before her and they prostrated themselves flat on the floor. The queen presented them as a birthday gift to her beloved lady of honor, Gabriele, as train-carriers.

“ And now, beloved,” the small queen continued, getting up from her seat, “ put the presents away in my treasure-chamber. Then let us proceed to the festive board I have prepared for our foreign ambassadors. We’ll keep them company there and drink their rulers’ health. But the highest favor I will show them is the king’s leap. Incline your heads to receive it.”

Flying over the heads of the frightened assembly in a mighty jump, Elf Goldihair sprang from her throne, executing the king’s leap as she had promised. Loud shouts rewarded this show of skill, but the whole stately court dissolved with laughter and merriment, because mamma really just then called them to the festive board as the queen had announced.

The queen was unwilling yet to give up her reign and ordered the march to the dining-room in a solemn procession. The knights marched ahead, blowing frightful noises on their trumpets and the queen fol-

lowed, her train carried by the pages. Behind her came the ladies in waiting with the slave-girls as train-bearers. The foreign emissaries followed as they pleased.

At table they tried to keep order in the same way, but this soon proved impossible. A toast to Gabriele's health Cecily could still propose as sovereign. Then her reign was ended and soon after the whole feast, for it was evening and the little girls from the town had been called for by their maids.

"You must come to me, too, Cecily. My birthday party is in two weeks. We must act something again, then," cried Elsie von Moller at parting.

"And to me, too," cried the other children. "Cecily can start such wonderful things, she must always be there."

"Oh, that was glorious! I never enjoyed myself so much in all my life," said the child when she came back to her little home with beaming face and glowing eyes.

"But Cecily, how wild you look! Your braids are unfastened and there is gold tinsel all over your hair," said Mrs. Krause, stroking the child's head.

"I was a queen with a gold crown and I ruled over the other children. Oh, that was too wonderful," cried Cecily proudly. "And I'll be invited to Elsie von Moller's and Rose Bertram's and all the others. They promised it. Elsie's birthday party is in two weeks and we are going to act something again; that will be glorious."

"Didn't I predict it, mother? Now you can see I

was right in not wanting to accept this first invitation for Cecily," said Mrs. Krause after the little girl had gone to bed. "One can't refuse the other invitations now because all those children are Cecily's school friends. She'll get dreadfully spoiled and her head will be filled with nothing but conceit and vanity. How proud she was to be a queen. She should really not dare to set herself over the children who are socially above her."

"But they chose her for it, Gusti. How can she help it?" the mother soothed her. "She is such a dainty little fairy and outshines them all in spite of her plain clothes."

"Yes, of course, take her part as usual," grumbled the widow. "It seems as if the whole world conspired to spoil this unlucky child. I can't see any good coming from it all, and I'll stick to that opinion in spite of everybody."

Old Mrs. Poole shook her head as her daughter angrily left the room.

"Why does she always see everything so black?" she murmured to herself. "I can't see any harm in the little one's being happy. The poor woman doesn't know any more what happiness is, so it frightens her when others enjoy themselves. But she might let such a darling as Cecily have all the happy hours she can when they are offered. How should that hurt her?"

"Oh, grandmother, if only I had a prettier dress for Else von Moller's birthday! Else said the other day

that their maids always wore frocks like mine. The other little girls all are so nicely dressed," complained Cecily when she was alone in the garden several days later with Gottfried and Mrs. Poole.

"But you are not a rich child like Else von Moller and your other school friends," answered the old woman, smoothing Cecily's ever-tangled hair. "But wait, I'll tie a pretty red ribbon round your head and you can wear a pink shawl which I have in my wardrobe. Then you'll look pretty, too, darling."

"Why don't you buy me a pretty dress, grandmother?" asked Cecily, who seemed to set little store by these promised things.

"Because we have no money for that," laughed the woman. "Otherwise you would get as pretty a dress as you could wish."

"That stupid money! Mrs. Strianski always said she had no money, too, when I didn't get enough to eat," replied the child.

"Well, you see how much better off you are now. You don't have to go hungry any more," Mrs. Poole comforted her.

"If I got a beautiful dress I wouldn't mind starving a bit," said Cecily.

"Don't talk like that, foolish child! If Aunt Krause could hear that she would be very angry," retorted Mrs. Poole, looking around to see if her daughter was near.

Gottfried had silently listened to this conversation, quietly carving his cage till the little girl had run away.



“ Tell me, mother, how much would a dress cost like the one Cecily wants? ” he said, pushing aside his work.

“ A dress like that? Oh, I couldn't tell exactly, ” answered his mother. “ That depends on the kind of material one would use. But why? ”

“ Well, I'd like to give her one, ” said Gottfried, slowly twisting his mustache. “ I don't think it is good for her to look enviously at the better-dressed girls. If one lets her go into their society she should not be dressed quite so plainly. I think myself that the little blue rag which she wore to the director's party is too shabby. ”

“ But it was whole and freshly laundered, and that's the best poor people can do. ”

“ Yes, yes, you are right, mother, but a child does not understand that and gets envious, ” said Gottfried. “ I have just earned a few extra thalers and I'd like to give them for a better dress for Cecily so she won't have to go to the rich Mollers's like a beggar-girl. ”

“ You had better put your money into the savings fund, Gottfried, ” warned the mother. “ Remember you want to get married some day. ”

“ I don't forget that, dear mother, ” laughed Gottfried, “ but Ricki and I have already saved a neat little sum, so I can easily spend a little extra. ”

“ You had better talk it over with Gusti first. She won't willingly allow it, for she is so strict with Cecily in everything. ”

“ I can easily do that,” replied Gottfried rising. “ But as she hasn’t got the money, she won’t have the first word to say. It is more important to find out if Ricki can finish the dress in time for the Mollers’s party. I must consult her this evening, for she can best advise me what stuff to get. But don’t tell Cecily about it, as it is meant to be a surprise. Oh, what eyes the little one will make when she sees what her Uncle Gottfried means to give her! I really think our little Elf Goldihair is an entrancing creature.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BOLANDT FAMILY

ON AN unpretentious house in a narrow street in N—— hung a black shield. In slightly darkened letters the following inscription could be read on it: “Delicatessen & Grocery Shop. Nikodemus Bolandt, Proprietor.”

Under this shield a many-paned, low glass door led into the rather deep shop. It was unusually broad, to let in as much sunlight as possible. A large number of objects placed on wooden shelves behind the panes, seemed, however, to interfere with this purpose. These gave the passers-by an inviting picture of all the good things to be had there in plenty.

In a row stood an array of glass bottles, whose transparent contents, clear as crystal, revealed excellent beverages. Besides the colorless vinegar stood the golden oil, and these with several brands of wine formed an endless chain. Surrounding these were garlands of laurel leaves, all sorts of spices, nuts and raisins. Yellow lemons were shown in stars and wreaths of little pots and cans, which promised the best of contents. In firmly twisted rolls the solid tobacco surrounded the cigars, which formed the background in countless little boxes, decorated with bright-colored pictures.

An assortment of noodles and grains of different kinds were placed in small brown bowls beside each

other. But the most tempting of all to the children were the high glass jars filled with sweets, bonbons and barley sugar in red, brown and yellow mixtures, colored candy balls and taffy in different forms.

On both sides of the black shield above the door rose a small golden sugar-loaf and a third was held by a tiny Moor near the entrance. This little figure had a brightly colored apron of feathers and sat with bare twisted legs on a barrel on which the word " coffee " was painted in large letters. His white teeth gleamed in a terrifying manner from his thick lips, while his black eyes actually seemed to roll to and fro.

What an assortment of goods presented itself to the person entering the shop! A deliciously penetrating odor was suffused by all the good things which lay and stood there side by side. A faint light spread over the small and large barrels and casks, cans, jars and cases, which crowded the walls to the very corners where no light could penetrate.

Another glass door here led into an adjoining chamber, but a red curtain prevented the eye from gazing in. A sharp voice, however, found its way now and then as far as the front part of the shop, where Mr. Nikodemus Bolandt was busied just now in swinging to and fro some coffee which had just been roasted behind the curtain.

His round merry face gleamed once in a while through the steam of the coffee like the full moon through a passing cloud. The work had tinged his full cheeks a deep red and during the violent exercise his

green crocheted cap slipped further and further back. It only revealed some grayish blonde hair on the little man's nape, the rest of his skull being bare and shiny as a billiard ball.

Mr. Nikodemus had taken off his coat in order to be comfortable, working in shirt sleeves. No one was in the store beside himself, for it was early morning, the hour when the servant girls and lads had not yet come to make their purchases. He had leisure, therefore, to devote to his coffee, a task he did not willingly leave to his apprentice.

But suddenly he started, turning his round head in the direction of the red window curtain. Through the rustling and bursting of his roasted coffee beans sounded a shriller and more vigorous tone than before.

"Demus, Demus, can't you ever hear?" someone called, and a ray of light fell through the opened glass door into the shop. A woman's dark head half covered with a night-cap appeared in the doorway, while a pair of small, sharp eyes gleamed at him.

"Did you call me, Sali? I just only heard you this moment," said Mr. Nikodemus in alarm, placing his swing hastily on one of the nearest casks. "What is it? Is the coffee roasted? Yes, yes, I'll come at once."

And as fast as his short fat legs could carry him he trotted after the gleaming eyes which had disappeared again behind the curtain. This glass door hid Mr. and Mrs. Bolandt's big living-room and beside it were the other rooms belonging to the family. In the open kitchen range burnt a mighty fire, before which Mrs.



Bolandt stood with a large coffee-roaster, shaking the beans with an energetic motion up and down. She now handed it to her small husband.

“ Here, shake some more! They’ll soon be brown,” she commanded. “ I must go to little Victor. His milk got burnt and the boy had to get me some more. But I can’t leave the child alone.”

“ Yes, yes, the milk is burnt; I can smell it,” said Nikodemus, lifting his short nose into the air. Then he put back the coffee-roaster on the fire and began to turn. “ Is Victor up yet? ”

“ Papa, papa! ” shrieked a child’s voice from the adjoining room, “ come here, come to Victor, papa! ”

Obedying this command with equal swiftness, Mr. Bolandt, the coffee-roaster in his hand, followed his offspring’s call in order to say good-morning. The little one, dressed only in his shirt, sat on his mother’s arm. As soon as Mr. Nikodemus approached, he hit straight into the round face of his merrily laughing papa with both fat fists. The latter’s eyes began to water from these blows.

“ What strength the boy has got! ” cried Nikodemus, drying his eyes on his shirt-sleeve. “ One can hardly believe it. Come and give your papa a kiss now, darling.”

But the proffered face only received a new load of blows instead of the kiss. Mrs. Bolandt again cried eagerly: “ Run away quickly, Demus, the fire is burning for nothing. You have to pound some pepper this

morning, too, for I sold the last yesterday to Mrs. Rector's cook."

" Bertel, the boy, can do that," cried Nikodemus from the fire.

" I need Bertel for other things," Sali curtly replied. " Or shall I carry the water myself? You know it is wash-day and the maid is already in the laundry. You men always think your affairs are more important. You above all men. You are a veritable tyrant."

" I a tyrant, Sali? " cried the little man, amazed. " Oh, don't say that. You know that I always do everything for you! I suppose I can get along without Bertel, and if the store gets too crowded, perhaps Riki can help me or William before he goes to school."

" I don't think Riki can," said Mrs. Bolandt, while she dressed her boy. " She never has time and sews from early till late to earn enough money to marry soon. But poor William I suppose helps where he can. He even doesn't mind putting his hands into the barrel of herring if it's needed."

" But his principal has several times forbidden him to do so," replied Mr. Nikodemus, " because he does not think it dignified for a teacher to wait on people in a shop."

" Oh, his principal is a fool," Mrs. Bolandt replied disdainfully. " I suppose it is a great honor to be under-teacher at St. Mary's. It is wonderful to get ten thalers a month and give lessons from early till late. If we give William his board for so little money he can help

once in a while in the shop. No pearls will drop out of his crown for that, and I don't care a straw for Mr. Block's silly talk."

The sound of a bell interrupted these charitable words. Mr. Nikodemus quickly pulled on his coat, laid aside his roaster and hastened to the service of his customers, leaving Mrs. Bolandt in the middle of her outburst.

Sali, the second wife of Mr. Bolandt, had known how to secure the ageing widower for herself. She had brought him, besides her own person, a little capital with which Mr. Nikodemus had been able to assist his rather tightened circumstances and had given his delicatessen and grocery shop a new glory.

In gratitude for this the kind-hearted little man now endured all his wife's whims with the patience of a veritable angel and even bore the sharpest words with a smiling face. When little Victor was born a new tyranny began, for the little one was the naughtiest lad who ever lay in a cradle. Despite all that, the happy papa thought that there had never been a more wonderful boy in the world and suffered everything from the spoiled little fellow.

Little Victor tyrannized over the whole household. Not only Papa Nikodemus and Mamma Sali, but William and Riki besides, the children of Mr. Bolandt's first marriage, and above everybody else the apprentice Bertel, who seemed actually to fill the post of baby-nurse instead of shop-boy.

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Victor was put into his charge that morning as soon as he returned with the milk. The boy carried it timidly in his red, even in summer, decidedly frozen-looking hands. His master, who needed him dreadfully, waited in vain. Bertel was not allowed to leave his post. Many customers began to arrive, and Mr. Bolandt was compelled to do the work alone.

“ Good morning, Mam’selle Koblancken! You are up early today,” he cheerfully greeted his first customer, who had called him from behind the red curtain with the shrill sound of the doorbell. “ What do you wish, my pretty child? Half a pound of coffee? Good, I have just roasted some this minute. You can still smell the delicious perfume. Most excellent quality. The finest Java. Sixty pfennig a pound, but just because it is you, dear mam’selle, I’ll let you have it twenty pfennig cheaper. Such a kind old customer as you are! And what else? A pound of sugar? No, you still have some? Or granulated sugar? Not either? Well, another time, then, and please honor me soon again, my beautiful child. Your servant, your servant.”

“ Morning! Good morning! What do you wish? What can I get for you, young friend? ” he accosted a young workman who came in in shirt-sleeves and blue apron. “ And you, my lady? ” he turned immediately to a servant girl, who carried a heavy basket on her arm and proudly shoved the young man aside.

“ A pound of salt and some English spices. Half a pound of sweet almonds.” “ Right away, beautiful child. But make yourself at home and set down the





IN THE NIKODEMUS SHOP





heavy basket. This young gentleman will gladly help you, too. I suppose you bought lots in the market? Ah, ha, I see a chicken peeping out there. Yes, Doctor Heister keeps a nice table. Always a pretty morsel in the pan, and cooked by such a pretty child it tastes twice as good. Your servant; please come again."

Two young cooks entered as she left and the young workman was still waiting for his three herrings. While Mr. Nikodemus bent over the herring cask, the young man impatiently rattled his plate. The doorbell rang again, announcing newcomers. The shop grew more crowded every moment, and the little merchant ever more hasty and excited, for no help appeared. He jumped about the store like a top in order to wait on everybody and his round face grew even more red and puffy. Full of anxiety he glanced towards the curtain once in a while, still hoping for assistance. But nothing stirred there; his apprentice was listening to higher commands.

But suddenly a side door opened and a round, neat little figure entered the shop. Her fresh face resembled Mr. Bolandt's a trifle. He might have looked that way in his younger years. But a pair of splendid blue eyes shone from her face, such as the merchant had never possessed.

"Can I help you, father? Oh, you have your hands full," she said, nodding to Mr. Nikodemus. Here she took from his hands the scales with which he was just weighing a quarter-pound of cream of wheat.

“ Oh, Riki, how good of you to come! ” cried the old gentleman with a beaming face. “ Bertel has to help Sali today; you know it is wash-day.”

“ Yes, yes, I know, father, that’s why I came,” replied Riki, and glanced eagerly at the balance of the scales. “ William is coming, too, in a minute; he still has a quarter of an hour before school begins.”

“ Oh, you good, kind children! ” cried Nikodemus, touched, bending at the same time over a petroleum can from which he poured a small quantity for a customer. “ A half-pint, my pretty child, yes? So, and don’t forget to cork it well, otherwise it will run into your butter, and that would not be pleasant. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ”

Now came William as announced, an overgrown, thin young man, from whose pale meagre face also looked a pair of kind blue eyes. A long black, somewhat shabby coat hung loosely about his thin figure. He carefully turned back his coat-sleeves, for no spots must give away his occupation later on.

“ What do you wish to get, my darling? ” he said, leaning over the counter, to a child who had been impatiently holding out a cup, while other buyers had pushed her back.

“ Syrup for two groschens,” said the child timidly and immediately placed the money beside the cup.

William carefully filled it from a cask and gave it to the little girl.

“ Here, my little daughter! ” he said kindly. “ But carry your cup carefully and don’t fall down with it. Also be sure not to stick in your little finger to see how

sweet it is. The little finger which does that won't grow any more and will always remain as little as it is now, while all the others grow large."

The little girl looked a little shyly and anxiously at the young man. Then she laughed and shook her head, and timidly holding the cup with both hands, tripped hastily away.

"Please, will you change me this two-mark piece, Mr. Teacher?" said a small boy, pushing forward and holding out the coin.

"Surely, give it here, my son," replied William. "Do you want it all in groschens?"

"Yes, mother said so," cried the small lad.

After receiving the money, he still hesitated.

"Do you want something more, Francis?" asked William.

"Don't I get anything besides?" said the boy. "Mr. Bolandt always gives me something."

William laughed heartily.

"Oh, I see, for having the money changed," he said, putting his hand into a drawer. "All right, I'll give you a few raisins, so you won't cry. Here, hold your cap."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Teacher."

And the boy ran off happily with his booty.

"Right away, right away, just have a moment's patience, my beautiful lady; it will be pounded in a moment!" cried Mr. Nikodemus, and ran as fast as his short legs would carry him to a large mortar which stood in a corner.

“ What is missing, father? ” said William, joining him.

“ Pepper, my boy, pepper! ” replied Nikodemus in a low voice, seizing hold of the pestle. “ I haven’t had time yet to pound any and Bertel has to help Sali.”

“ I know, father dear, give it to me. I’ll pound some right away,” answered William, taking the pestle. “ Just go to the other customers now; you do that so much better than I.”

“ But William, think of your cough. Pepper-dust is sure to irritate it,” said the father hesitatingly.

“ Never mind, I’ll turn my head to the other side,” laughed William, already bravely pounding away.

The glass door opened again and a whole crowd of children stormed into the shop, school bags on their backs or on their arms. The children from the iron-works were there with Cecily among them.

“ Quick, Mr. Bolandt, the clock will strike eight right away. Give me barley sugar for five pennies,” cried Lothar, throwing the money on the table.

“ And me taffy for two pennies and licorice for two more,” cried a little fellow, hunting for the money in his pockets.

“ I want bonbons for a groschen, brown chocolate bonbons! ” “ And I red ones for five pennies,” cried two little girls, pushing forward.

“ And I carob beans for three pennies,” cried the factor’s little Kathy in a thin voice.

“ You all seem to have a very sweet tooth! ” Riki menaced laughingly with her finger while she and her



father vied with each other in fulfilling the children's wishes. "I suppose you all got your pocket-money today, yes? Here is your licorice for your two pennies, Gustav. Have you a cough?"

"Oh, no, but Henry and I want to make licorice-water and drink it on the way to the country. We are taking a trip today," replied the boy, smiling.

"Good appetite! But don't get sick," laughed Riki. "And you, little Cecily?" she said to the child who had remained near the door, "do you want a few candies, too, darling?"

The child sadly shook her head. "I have no money, Aunt Riki," she said in an undertone.

"Here, have some without paying. Hold out your apron, little rogue!" Riki cried in a friendly manner, throwing in several candies. "And another thing, Cecily. Come to me again after school, for I want to give you something for Gottfried. Be sure to remember."

Cecily gave her promise and hastened away with the rest of the little band. Just then the clock struck on a near church-steeple, which meant that school was beginning. William also hastily pulled down his coat sleeves and beat the dust from his clothes, for it was time to go to St. Mary's House, where he was an assistant teacher.

It had grown more quiet in the shop now, and Mr. Nikodemus could easily look after it alone. Riki, therefore, after nodding to him in a friendly manner, went to her room to take up her interrupted work.

She sat down at a dressmaker's table covered with

many pieces of material. Taking up a dainty dress of pink muslin, she stitched a simple embroidery around the neck and sleeves. Then she held up the dress with a pleased expression.

“ I suppose it is done now. How becoming it will be! How happy good Gottfried is when he can do a kindness to someone!” she whispered to herself. “ How sweet of him and how happy Cecily will be! It is truly not good for children to be envious, William says one must never needlessly give them occasion for it. How sadly she stood at our door today, longing for sweets! It actually hurt me that the poor little thing had no pennies of her own. They all like sweets; that’s why they are children. William and I did, too, and nothing pleased us more than a few anise-candies, or better still, some marshmallows from the drug store.”

“ Come here, Cecily, I want to see if the dress I’ve made here looks well,” Riki said with a sly smile, when Cecily came to do her errand at noontime. “ But close the door behind you, child, for you are no little boy. Only they leave all the doors open.”

Cecily laughed at these words and quickly shut the door. Then she gazed curiously at the pretty dress which Riki took from the chair.

“ Oh, how pretty! For whom did you make it, Auntie Riki?” she cried, longingly looking at the dainty material.

“ For a little girl just your size,” the latter replied calmly. “ Try it on, please, for I want to see if it fits well.”

Cecily swiftly exchanged her gray school-dress for the pink party frock, and stepping before the mirror looked admiringly at the pretty picture which she saw. She carefully stroked the soft material, and after gazing at the embroidery, sighed unhappily.

“ Why do you sigh, Cecily ? ” asked Riki, smiling.

“ If only I could wear a dress like that to Else’s party tomorrow ! ” she answered with tears in her eyes. “ My dark blue calico dress is so ugly. ”

“ Well, you might wear this one tomorrow, ” Riki cried gaily. “ It fits as if it were made for you. ”

“ But I can’t. It belongs to another little girl, auntie, ” and she shook her head.

“ But if the little girl for whom I made it should be called Cecily ? ” laughed Riki.

“ Is she called Cecily, too ? ” said the child indifferently, while she tried to fight her tears.

“ She is even called Elf Goldihair and looks exactly like you, darling, ” cried Riki, kissing the little girl.

“ Don’t talk that way, auntie ” sobbed Cecily. “ Who would give me such a beautiful dress ? Yes, it might be true if Uncle Melau were here. ”

“ But if Uncle Melau were called Uncle Gottfried and had ordered it from me for you to wear tomorrow ? ” said Riki, taking the child on her lap. “ Wouldn’t that be nice ? ”

“ Uncle Gottfried ? Oh, auntie, is that really true ? ” she cried, jumping down from Riki’s lap. “ Did you really make this adorable dress for me. Oh, how wonderfully good Uncle Gottfried is to me always ! Now

I don't have to wear that hideous blue calico rag and will look as pretty as Else and Gabriele and all the rest. Now I really look forward to tomorrow. I'd rather not have gone in my old dress."

Full of rapture, she threw her arms round Riki's neck and fairly choked her with kisses and caresses, thanking her over and over again.

Here the door opened and Gottfried entered. With the delighted cry of "Uncle Gottfried! Kind, best Uncle Gottfried!" Cecily flew towards him and the young man laughingly caught her in his arms. Then he held her off at arm's length and examined her with beaming eyes.

"Like a little rose, most charming!" he said, nodding with a satisfied smile. "Is Elf Goldihair satisfied with her old uncle now?"

"There is no better one in the whole world!" cried Cecily, winding both her arms around his neck. "Oh, uncle, I think I'll never forget this joy as long as I live, even if I should live to be a thousand."

"Well, it wouldn't be necessary to be quite as old as that, laughed Riki. "I fear the little dress might not be quite in fashion by that time."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE COUNSELLOR'S PARTY

MUCH more brilliant preparations had been made for Else von Moller's birthday than for Gabriele's party. Mr. von Moller was the richest man in town, and did everything for his children that might give them pleasure. The beautifully furnished house was supplied with a huge garden, a greenhouse, a pond and chicken-yard and many delightful things for children. It was always a special treat when Else invited her friends to come to see her.

While the boys raced about on their bicycles, the little girls drove around in a pretty wicker carriage, drawn by two billy-goats.

A charming merry-go-round tempted them to the end of the garden, where the little ladies flew about in seats of shell and the boys on horses; in passing they caught rings with their sabres. A gorgeous swing carried them high into the air and gymnastic apparatus furnished entertainment for the boys. Besides these there were common games like croquet, ring-throwing, bowling and others.

Little boats of various colors lay on the pond where they could be rowed about among shining swans and variegated mandarin ducks, which crowded about the boats when crumbs of bread were thrown to them. There was also a pretty grotto made of shells where a



moss-covered bench was placed near foaming little waterfalls bubbling out from artificial rocks. A graceful garden temple rose among blossoming shrubs and its brightly colored glass windows sometimes showed the landscape in a fiery red glow, then in either a pale yellow or blue light as if the moon stood in the sky.

There was no end to the children's enthusiasm and surprise, and Cecily especially was quite carried away by all the beautiful things she saw. She looked as dainty as the other girls in her charming pink dress, but surpassed them all in grace and charm.

She danced about in this fairy-world like a little elf, gazing about her entranced. Sometimes she would lightly leap across the bubbling waterfalls, then climb the artificial rocks and crags beside it; later she would swing to and fro on a hammock hung up between trees, or she floated like a bird high in the air on a swing. Gracefully holding up her little dress, she sometimes danced about alone on the green lawn, or twining her arm about Gabriele flew round in a circle.

"Come into the ballroom, we are going to dance, and Miss Selma will play for us if I ask her," cried Else, running to her governess, who had just stepped out of the house. The lady willingly seated herself at the piano and the little company merrily danced about.

"Cecily, please dance us the shawl-dance you showed us the other day," Gabriele begged. When all the others asked her, too, Cecily at once showed herself willing. Seizing a light shawl, she made the most graceful turns and motions to the sound of the music.

Now she would whirl about in rapid flight, suddenly holding a pretty posture, then cleverly winding the shawl around her head, arms and feet; then again, letting it flutter above her like a shawl, she spread it out and stooped down so that she sat there as in a little shell.

The children heaped her with applause, and Mrs. von Moller, who had stepped up to see the dance, enjoyed the child's agility and grace.

"Do you know more dances, Cecily?" asked Else, embracing the little girl.

"Yes, the egg-dance," replied Cecily with cheeks still glowing from the exertion. "But it is long since I did it and I may not know it any more."

"Oh, please try it! I'll quickly fetch you a basket with eggs," cried Else. "It won't matter if you break them all, will it, mamma? Or wait! we'll have them all hard-boiled, then it will not hurt if you step on them."

"Oh, no, I'm not so awkward as that," laughed Cecily. "Anybody can dance between hard-boiled eggs, there is no art in that. Just get fresh ones and I'll see if I know it still."

First she explained to Miss Selma the kind of music she wanted for the dance; then, after spreading a rug in the middle of the room, she slipped the shoes from her feet.

"Are you going to dance in your stocking feet?" asked Gabriele.

"Surely. I couldn't in my leather shoes," answered Cecily.

She placed the eggs on the rug now, but so close

together that there seemed barely room left for a foot between.

She began to dance between them, a little timidly at first and hesitating a great deal, but without touching a single egg. She then flew gracefully over them and the longer she danced the more dainty she became. From pleasure in the artful dance her dark brown eyes fairly glistened.

“Bravo! Elf Goldihair,” cried Lothar, clapping his hands vigorously when Cecily with a leap ended her performance.

The whole company followed his example, and Cecily, looking proudly about her, saw even Mrs. von Moller eagerly applauding.

“Too bad papa didn’t see it,” cried little Else. “Cecily should perform it again when he comes back from his travels, shouldn’t she, mamma? We might arrange a performance for his birthday party.”

“That is a good idea, Else,” said the mother, pleased. “Would you do that, Cecily?”

“Surely, I’d love to,” she cried joyfully. To be so admired by these rich people greatly flattered her vanity.

“All right, then, and I’ll invite you all for that day, children,” said Mrs. von Moller. “I want you to learn a gypsy-dance with our dancing master. Cecily will be a small Preciosa and conclude with the egg-dance while you others group about her. Nobody needs to trouble about the costumes. I’ll have them all made so they will be the same. Please ask at home if you can

take part in it and come next Wednesday afternoon when you have no school, so we can talk it over."

What pleasure this wonderful scheme promised! On their way home the children discussed the kind of dance to give and the type of costumes they would wear. Cecily arrived home in a great state of excitement, announcing the new invitation and her brilliant prospects.

"I am to be the chief person and repeat the egg-dance," she triumphantly called out.

"Repeat it? Have you already danced it once, Cecily?" Mrs. Krause said, surprised.

"Yes, today at the party, aunt," answered Cecily. "I still could do it quite well, though they didn't make me dance it during my last year in the circus."

"And you shall not dance it now, either, my child," said Mrs. Krause, slipping off the pink dress from Cecily's shoulders. "You know that Uncle Melau does not want you to be Elf Goldihair any more."

"But, aunt, Mrs. von Moller has settled it already," Cecily objected. "She is getting all our costumes and we are to go to her on Wednesday."

"I'll talk with Mrs. von Moller herself, my little daughter, for I can't let you dance there," said Mrs. Krause thoughtfully. "You have had enough parties, and I can't let you go to everything, especially not in that way."

Old Mrs. Poole had listened silently, and though she did not agree with her daughter, she said nothing in the child's presence.

"You can't be serious, Gusti," she said now, "in

wanting to oppose such distinguished people as the Mollers. How they would talk!"

"Let them talk, mother," replied Mrs. Krause. "I have charge of the child, not they. You can see yourself what comes from letting Cecily go to everything. They use her training to amuse company and then they turn up their noses at the little circus-girl. I won't allow it any longer."

The mother was silent in order not to quarrel, but she disapproved sincerely of such an opposition on her daughter's part, which might even prove suspicious.

Next day Cecily sobbingly told her playmates that she could not take part in the performance because her Aunt Krause would not allow it. Else laughed incredulously. She said they would soon see that that was not meant very seriously.

That afternoon when Mrs. Poole and her daughter were sitting with little Hans before their house an elegantly-dressed lady stepped across the yard straight towards them.

"Gracious, here comes Mrs. von Moller herself!" cried Mrs. Poole. Jumping hastily from the bench, she set Hans, who had been sitting in her lap, down on the ground.

Mrs. Krause also rose from her seat and calmly met the visitor.

"I am so glad to find you at home," said Mrs. von Moller pleasantly, stretching out her hands to both the women. "I suppose this is your little son, dear



Mrs. Krause. What a handsome, healthy child he is! Shake hands with me, sonny! What is your name?"

"Hans Krause," said the little one confidently, holding out his fat little hand.

"You are a good boy!" cried the visitor, fondling the child. "May I sit down here a few moments, or are you busy, Mrs. Poole?"

"Oh, what an honor, Mrs. Counsellor!" cried the old woman, curtsying and quickly wiping the already clean bench with her apron. "I hope you won't mind the hard wooden seat, Mrs. Counsellor. That is right, Gusti, I am glad you are bringing a cushioned seat. Mrs. Counsellor isn't used to a hard seat, as we poor people are."

Mrs. von Moller at first objected to their taking so much trouble, but in spite of that took a place on the chair opposite the women.

"I come to you with a great request, Mrs. Krause," she began, putting her finely gloved hand on the widow's knee. "Please allow your little charge to take part in the feast I am anxious to arrange for my husband. All my children's friends have permission already from their parents. You are the only one, Mrs. Krause, who is refusing. Else told me that. We really need your little Cecily more than anyone for the performance. That is why I have come myself to beg you to let us have her. You will have no cost or inconvenience from it whatever. I undertake to provide everything for the dance. I have begged the parents to let me look after

the children's costumes. I have engaged Miss Riki Bolandt for all next week to make them. So I hope you won't send me away with a refusal, dear Mrs. Krause. Please plead for me, Mrs. Poole."

"Of course my daughter will allow it. How can you doubt that, honored lady. It is a compliment to us poor people. And you to come here yourself!" said the old woman with an uncertain glance at her daughter, who gazed seriously and silently at the ground before her and looked very far from overwhelmed by the honor shown to her house. "But speak, Gusti, and tell Mrs. Counsellor yourself that you appreciate the honor she is doing us."

The widow looked calmly and with rather an air into her visitor's face.

"I wish you would not ask me for it, Mrs. von Moller," she said modestly. "Cecily does not belong to that society, and it is time she should be brought up as the orphan who has no part in such things. She is getting much too spoiled already, and I have to put a stop to it at last."

"You have to decide this, of course, dear Mrs. Krause," replied Mrs. von Moller politely, "but I ask you to allow it just once more, otherwise you will spoil everybody's pleasure. If Cecily can't do the egg-dance with the other gypsies I shall give it all up. I know, of course, how much my husband would be pleased with the little performance. I'd gladly do you a favor in return as I find an occasion and you can count on my appreciation. Cecily might easily be in a position to

need further help for her education, and I would gladly supply this at any time."

"I allow it most unwillingly, Mrs. von Moller. But I'll give way this time, as you wish it so much and I don't want to seem impolite," the widow said with a sigh. "I know it to be wrong. Cecily's head is already full of wrong fancies of all kinds, but, as I said, she may this time take the part you have assigned her."

The visitor, convinced from the beginning of the success of her mission, thanked Mrs. Krause in a few friendly words. With expressions of gratitude the women escorted her to her carriage, which was waiting at the door of the smelting works, where she left them with many words of thanks. Old Mrs. Poole curtsied to the ground and looked proudly toward the big house where curious eyes beheld the usually haughty Mrs. von Moller graciously offering to both mother and daughter her hand as a greeting. The elegant carriage now rolled away towards the town.

"She must think you very obstinate, Gusti. How she had to plead with you!" said the old woman, shaking her head. "To think of such a rich, proud woman coming to beg a favor from poor people like us!"

"She'd do more than that for her selfish pleasure," the daughter replied bitterly. "What does she care if she harms us? She did not even listen."

"Yes, but she said she would show her gratitude, Gusti. Don't be so uncharitable," scolded the mother.

"Oh, yes, nothing but fine words," replied the widow, shrugging her shoulders. "She only wanted to

gain her ends and there is no other significance to her words. The only advantage in the whole thing is that Riki will get some pretty earnings, and I am glad of that for the industrious girl. Gottfried would never have forgiven me if I had robbed her of that."

The preparations for the party could now go on, and everyone taking part did his best to make it a success. The children were full of ardor when practising with the dancing master. Riki sat day after day in the midst of several helpers, making with her clever fingers the motley costumes to be worn on the festive night by the little band of gypsies.

The evening came at last. A brilliant company had gathered in the elegant Moller house to celebrate the host's birthday. When all the guests were present music was suddenly heard, the big folding doors of the ballroom opened, and a little band of young, brightly-dressed gypsies rushed out with rapid dainty leaps. They swung tambourines above their heads and the bells resounded merrily.

After some confusion they separated into two rows, the boys and girls facing. All were dressed in the same colors, light blue with bright red and gold. The boys wore short blue trousers open at the side, red sashes and blue jackets braided with gold cord, while broad red caps, bordered with gold, adorned their heads. The blue skirts of the little gypsy girls were trimmed with stripes of bright red, ornamented with gold lettering and pictures, and red velvet jackets with gold fringes only half covered their embroidered white blouses. On

their hair, which hung in braids down their backs, they had small gold-trimmed caps of light blue velvet. On their feet they wore shining black boots, while the boys wore silver spurs on theirs, which they kept beating together with a clinking sound, to the rhythm of their castanets, while the girls merrily swung their tambourines.

The couples executed a gay and pretty dance, sometimes whirling about close together, soon separating again, then fleeing while others pursued them. Sometimes they joined again in artful figures. Constantly new postures changed with new movements and the blooming young boys and girls thoroughly entertained the guests, who generously applauded. Suddenly the dancers flew towards the door and surrounded two figures which had danced in with rapid, agile strides.

It was Elf Goldihair with her partner, both dressed as gypsies, only their clothes were of pale yellow satin and gold-brown velvet, trimmed with fringes of gold and cord.

The children danced in attractive figures around the new arrivals till they had formed a semi-circle. Cecily's young partner spread out a rug in the middle of the room and laid out a number of eggs. As soon as he sounded his castanets Elf Goldihair began the pretty egg-dance she had done at Else's party a short time before. She first put her feet, shod with light brown shoes, tentatively and slowly to the ground as if she were afraid to touch it, but the more eggs were spread out, the more lively and daring she became. Swinging



her tambourine gaily over her head, she finally floated like a little breeze up and down between the eggs.

Unending applause met this artistic dance. The young gypsies seemed so enthusiastic about it that they surrounded the elf-like child, and holding her up on their arms and shoulders, carried her triumphantly out of the room.

With this the little performance was ended. The applause was so great, however, that a repetition was clamored for, and the little artists eagerly replied to the request.

The counsellor, in whose honor the feast had been arranged, gave the children the liveliest applause and promised them a brilliant party as a reward. They were themselves to decide what it should be, a ball, a masked party, or something else.

“ Oh, please, a masked ball, papa! What a wonderful idea! ” cried Else, enchanted, and all agreed that this would be the best.

The host promised to obey their wishes and with great delight all the children looked forward to this new festivity.

“ Who is the pretty little Preciosa who performed the egg-dance? ” he asked his wife when the dance was ended.

“ Didn't you recognize her? It is the little girl who had the accident in the circus. She is living with the Pooles, out in the smelting works, ” answered Mrs. von Moller. “ So you see she has not yet forgotten her art. ”



SWINGING HER TAMBOURINE GAILY OVER HER HEAD, SHE FINALLY FLOATED LIKE A LITTLE BREEZE UP AND DOWN BETWEEN THE EGGS





“ She? Elf Goldihair, the circus-girl? ” replied the husband, slowly drawling his words, while a deep frown appeared on his unusually high forehead. Then he continued in an undertone: “ I can’t understand you, Bernardine. How could you be so tactless as to make this small homeless vagabond the chief attraction of the dance? Our children carried her away like a little princess. I won’t have my children in the company of folk from whom they can only learn harm.”

“ The child is quite well brought up, you need have no fear on that score. But I do not intend to let her have any further intercourse with our children, either, Fedor,” said the wife. “ I only used her talent to complete our feast. We won’t have any occasion to ask her again, because her foster-mother, a very honest but rather impolite person, will not allow it, either. I had quite a hard time to obtain her permission to let us have the child this once.”

“ I don’t suppose her opposition was very serious,” retorted the counsellor. “ You can send her a small compensation for the little one’s performance in order to show that we are grateful. I want no gifts from such people. But before everything else I forbid any further intercourse of our children with this circus-girl. She has still enough recollection probably of her former wild existence, for the clever way in which she did the egg-dance shows she has not forgotten everything. She is no companion whatever for our children, remember that, and it is bad enough already that they should go to school together.”

Little Cecily, therefore, got no invitation to the coming masked ball, which her playmates talked over day in and day out. But Else urgently begged to have Cecily invited.

“A little circus-girl is no suitable friend for you, Else,” the father said solemnly. “The other families may do as they please, but I do not wish it.”

The example of prominent people is apt to be copied, and soon the other families found it unsuitable to invite the little circus-rider to their homes. Some even objected audibly to having Cecily go to their private school, to which only the better families sent their children.

Such rumors reached even Mrs. Krause's ears and made her doubly repent not having resisted the temptation better. She ought to have kept Cecily away from these circles which had begun to spurn her. In the fear of the child becoming a burden, she did not even let her play any more with her former playmates, though those families remained kind to Cecily as before.

Old Mrs. Poole shook her head very sadly. She could not see why a happy, pretty child like their Cecily should not be welcome everywhere. But she had to be silent for her intelligent daughter had been right as always. Despite that she kept to her opinion.

A short time after the Moller feast the latter's butler one morning brought a package for Mrs. Krause. It contained a beautiful dress for Cecily in gratitude for the child's participation in the dance.



While Mrs. Poole, touched to the heart by the great kindness, admired the soft material, her daughter stood silently beside her.

“ Why don't you say something, Gusti? Don't you like it, too? ” she asked. “ You see I was right in saying that Mrs. von Moller was grateful for your permission and wants now to thank you in some lovely way. ”

“ You had better say, wants to pay us for Cecily's performance, ” replied the widow. “ She would never dare to repay any of the other children for anything they did. ”

“ But, child, we are poor people, ” scolded the mother. “ It does not do for us to talk so proudly. ”

“ I do not see why we should have no pride like other people, ” said Mrs. Krause. “ We ask nothing from the rich and they should leave us alone. I am very much tempted to send it back. ”

“ Oh, please don't do that! no, not for anything in the world! ” pleaded the mother. “ They already say we are proud and conceited, and if you did that they would say other things still. How do we know that we shall never need their kindness for the child? We must not spoil such prospects. ”

“ Need their kindness for Cecily? ” said the widow morosely, “ no, mother, I promise you that this will never happen. Things are bad enough with the poor child. I hear nothing more from her Uncle Melau, but before I beg for Cecily, at whom they already look

askance, I'll send her to St. Mary's. Her uncle wished this from the start, and I think it would have been much the wiser for the unmanageable little thing."

"Poor little child!" sighed the mother sadly. "That certainly would be hard for her. Just have a little more patience with her, Gusti. We'll pull her through, however poor we may be. And you won't return the dress, will you?"

"No, mother, I'll conquer my pride and keep it for her. The winter is coming and I don't know where to get one," said the widow, sighing. "But I simply hate to do it."

## CHAPTER XIII

### AN EXCURSION TO THE COUNTRY

“ You have grown quite pale these last few weeks from working, Riki,” Gottfried said one evening to his betrothed. “ If this continues you might even lose your beautiful pink cheeks. But I won’t have it and you must not sew as much as you have done lately.”

“ Don’t worry, Gottfried, the whole thing is over,” replied Riki. “ I mean the children’s ball at the Mollers’s for which I had to make so many frocks. You see every little lady wanted something new to wear for that occasion. But I had splendid earnings from it. The gypsy-dance especially brought me a neat little sum and has swelled our savings considerably.”

“ Oh, dear, how difficult it is for us to get a sum together which people like the Mollers throw away for all manner of nonsense! ” said Gottfried, depressed.

“ Don’t talk like that, Gottfried,” retorted Riki with merry eyes. “ If the rich people didn’t do that, we poor people would earn no money, either. It was lots of fun making the costumes. But our dear little Cecily was by far the prettiest and I wonder why she was not invited to the Mollers’s ball.”

“ I am glad of it,” said Gottfried. “ My sister is right when she says that such parties are not meant for a poor orphan. They only use her talent to amuse the guests and then they promptly look down upon her, as

you see. Though Gusti is the youngest of us, she is the cleverest of us all and she foresaw how it would end. But let us leave that now. I wanted to ask you to take a long walk with me next Sunday. You must have some fresh air after all your stitching. Does that tempt you?"

"Does it tempt me?" cried Riki, jumping up. "Of course, dear, best Gottfried. Too bad William has to be at St. Mary's next Sunday, for his principal is out then. Perhaps father would like to go, too. He loves walks above everything else, but since he married again he seldom gets the chance."

"If we can't manage otherwise, we'll ask the whole household to come along, for your father must have some relaxation for once," laughed Gottfried. "Come and help me assault the fortress."

When Gottfried and Riki stepped into the Bolandt's room, they found Mr. Nikodemus occupied in feeding his offspring with soup. While he did this, Mrs. Bolandt stood at the window and tried on a new bonnet.

Small Victor sat on his short father's knee. While the latter carefully filled a spoon with soup and vigorously blew to cool it, the child roughly brought down his hand on the plate. It upset, and the hot soup poured over the little fellow's hand and dress. Howling frantically, he threw himself backward, kicking his bewildered father.

"My goodness, the poor child!" cried Mrs. Bolandt, coming to their rescue and seizing Victor vigorously. "If you can't do better than scald the poor little worm with soup I'd rather do it myself. Go out to the shop

again, for you are no good for anything else. It is just awful!"

As soon, however, as she saw the pair near the door she hurriedly changed to a different tone of voice.

"Oh, Mr. Gottfried, I am heartily glad to see you," she said quickly and walked towards them. "Nikodemus, quickly bring a chair, your son-in-law may want to sit down with us a while. And little Riki, too, yes, am I right? Or are you in a hurry to work again? No? Well, I am glad. You have earned enough these last days and must be a real Cræsus by now from all these orders."

"Yes, yes, she is working enough to lose her red cheeks, don't you think so, too, father?" said Gottfried, shaking his future father-in-law's proffered hand. "That is why I want to take a trip to the country next Sunday. We thought maybe you and Mamma Sali would want to come, too."

"A trip to the country?" cried Nikodemus, rising abruptly from his chair. "That is wonderful! We simply must go, too. That means," he replied dejectedly, "of course only if you want to go, Sali, only then. I think country air would be good for little Victor, too. What do you think, Sali, shall we go along?"

"But gracious goodness, Nikodemus!" Sali replied quickly, "one might think I had everything to settle in this house and you made no decisions. The main thing is your wishes, everything else comes later. Of course I never have time, but as I said, I'll find time, if you want to go, especially if we can do a favor for Riki and Mr. Gottfried."



“ Well, mother,” said Gottfried, gazing roguishly at Riki, “ you need not make a sacrifice for us. Riki might not be afraid just to take a walk with me. Perhaps papa could come with us alone.”

“ I alone? oh, never, never!” Mr. Nikodemus replied, quite frightened. “ Sali and Victor must come along or I’ll stay home, too.”

“ Then I’ll surely make it possible, my good husband, and you won’t have to lose your pleasure,” said Mrs. Bolandt, kindly stroking her husband’s bald head. “ Where are we going, Mr. Gottfried? ”

“ We’ll think that over. The prettiest place is just good enough for us,” said Gottfried.

“ What do you think of Marienfried or Scherbenburg with the big park? ” said Mr. Bolandt.

“ Oh, yes! Scherbenburg; I have not been there for ages,” cried Riki, delighted.

“ Good, we’ll go to Scherbenburg,” decided Gottfried. “ And do you know, Riki, we’ll take Cecily, too. The little thing loves trees and birds so much, she’ll be happy in that big park. I only hope we’ll have good weather for our trip on Sunday.”

Luckily the sun shone brightly and merrily that Sunday. On waking up, Cecily bounded gladly to the window, for no one was looking forward more to the excursion than she. It was a totally new and unknown pleasure for her.

“ May I put on my pink dress, aunt? ” she cajoled. “ It is Sunday today.”

“ All right, you can wear it, otherwise you’ll only

outgrow it," said Mrs. Krause. "But take care not to ruin it, you wild little thing."

Mr. Bolandt's shop was closed sooner that morning than on other Sundays and behind the curtained door began an eager running to and fro. Mrs. Bolandt's sharp voice incessantly resounded as she gave her husband, the apprentice or the maid her orders. Victor shrieked rather ungraciously in their midst and divided blows and kicks between his papa and Bertel.

"Now, Demus, wrap this cloth round Victor's milk-bottle to keep it warm. He may get thirsty on the way. Cork it well," she commanded, holding out a large water-bottle. "Go quickly and shine up my good leather boots, Bertel; they have grown dull from standing. But darling Victor, don't crawl round on the floor, you'll make your clean dress all dirty. Watch the child, Demus, he is crawling round by your feet now. Pick him up!"

As soon as Nikodemus took his small son by his arm, the young rascal gave him such a number of blows with his fists that he could not turn away his head quickly enough. Just the same he laughed entranced and called to Sali with fatherly pride to notice what strength the lad was exhibiting.

"We are ready, father, whenever you are," came a clear voice from the door, followed by Riki's charming face. "Gottfried is here with Cecily. Give me little Victor, father. He is beating you like a villain, and you know he is always good with me."

"Yes, take him, Riki, and go ahead. We'll come

presently," said Mrs. Bolandt, tying up a large basket with supplies which were to go along.

"You carry this, Bertel, but very carefully," she concluded, hanging it on the apprentice's arm. Then she heaped a huge pile of shawls and jackets on her husband's arm as well as a full straw bottle. All these he accepted as if it were the most natural thing in the world. She still rushed hastily to and fro, giving various orders to the maid, among others to watch the house carefully. Then she tied her bonnet-strings, shut up a wardrobe and pulled out the key. She was done at last.

"Oh, dear! the umbrella. But you never think of anything, Demus," she exclaimed in the open doorway. Turning back, she brought out the large family parasol from behind the wardrobe.

"But Sali, we won't need it in such good weather," said Nikodemus, shaking his head.

"What good weather?" she eagerly retorted. "Who knows how long it will last? I suppose I am to ruin my new hat? And little Victor might get his death of cold if he gets wet, you foolish man. No, no trip to the country without an umbrella. That's settled. There carry it, Demus."

Patiently Mr. Bolandt accepted the big parasol, though he hardly knew how to carry it beside all the other things. But Riki soon saw how heavily laden her father was.

"Here, Gottfried! take Victor; he is always good with you," she said. "I want to relieve father of some of these things, for he is laden like a pack-horse."

Gottfried willingly took over the boy, who promptly buried his little fists in the long beard of the blacksmith, but he marched on as proudly and happily between Riki and Cecily as if he owned the pretty lad and all the whole world besides. Mr. Bolandt had solemnly given his arm to his thin spouse and walked behind the others. Sali was a full head taller than he, and he was very proud of her in her beautiful clothes. Bertel with the heavy basket closed the procession, throwing many longing glances at his fragrant burden, which promised most delightful things. He sincerely hoped to be allowed a share in them today.

It was a glorious day in late summer. Bright sunshine and a blue cloudless sky laughed down over the smiling landscape. Many gleaming insects shot through the air and Cecily, trying to catch them, flew about among the still flowering meadows like a pretty butterfly. She was entranced with everything she saw, and her delicate little face beamed and glowed with joy every time she came towards her elders with either a bunch of flowers, a pretty bug or a sparkling stone.

She had plenty of time for all this, as the procession was rather slow. Mrs. Bolandt, not used to walking, found it a trying experience. Little Victor constantly wanted to climb down from Gottfried's arm and pick flowers in the meadow with Cecily. But as he was yet scarcely master of his little legs, they could not go on till Gottfried with many flatteries and promises had taken him back on his arm.

But they finally reached their destination. Between the green they saw the red brick houses of Scherben-

burg peep out. A big park with splendid trees surrounded the stately old castle, situated on a low hill.

The park was open to the public through the liberality of the owners and was a favorite pleasure resort of the inhabitants of N——. Today several families had already settled under some of the old spreading trees in the park. Soon the Bolandts also found a spot where they could settle in peace. A broad mossy slope gently led down to a pretty lake, and several ancient oaks supplied thick shade, completely isolating it. One could not imagine a lovelier spot. Mr. Bolandt sank down comfortably in the soft moss as soon as they had chosen to rest there.

“Come, Sali, sit down beside me. The sun can't touch you here,” he said, patting the carpet of moss. “It is as soft and nice as a bed. And you, too, Victor, my little angel.”

“No, no, spread the shawl over the ground first, Demus,” Sali objected. “Think of my good dress. And shall the child catch his death of cold here on the damp ground?”

“Oh, yes, forgive me, Sali,” cried the little man, quickly jumping up from his soft couch. He then obligingly prepared a seat for his wife and son, on which Sali sank down wearily with a sigh.

“Poor Sali! I suppose you are a little tired. I guess it was rather far to come,” said Nikodemus tenderly, stroking the shawl on which his wife was sitting, for he did not dare to approach her.

“But you insisted on my coming,” growled Sali in



an undertone so that Gottfried could not hear it. The blacksmith, however, was otherwise occupied and paid little attention to his ungracious future relative.

He had chosen a spot free from underbrush, with a flat stone for his fire. Cecily and Victor were heaping up dry sticks, and he blew into it vigorously to make it burn. At last he succeeded, and a bright flame made the little twigs and branches crackle loudly.

“ Now, we can begin,” he called to his betrothed, beginning to unpack the heavy basket as well as the big hamper. “ Shall I get some water from the spring here for the coffee ? ”

“ Yes, do that! Here is a pan, Gottfried,” replied Riki, stepping up to the fire with food and several pans. The pan with water stood on the crackling fire now and a bag with coffee lay beside it. Victor’s milk also had to be warmed again, for it had grown cold despite the cover.

“ Watch the water, Gottfried, and I’ll prepare our table in the meantime,” said Riki, spreading out a napkin on a flat space. “ Just stay seated, mamma. You are tired. I’ll fix everything alone,” she cried to Mrs. Bolandt, who had made a motion to get up and help her. “ Today I’ll be the hostess, Gottfried the host and you our guests. Don’t worry, I won’t break anything.”

She placed cake and zweiback on broad green leaves instead of plates, poured the sugar on another leaf and laid out the cups, but without saucers, for they had been left at home as a useless burden. Cecily helped eagerly and did everything so nicely that she earned praise.

“ But the spoons, Aunt Riki, I find no spoons in the basket! ” exclaimed Cecily.

Riki laughed.

“ Mamma Sali, you forgot the spoons, ” she said gaily. “ Oh, how funny! What shall we do now? ”

“ Riki, the water is boiling. Shall I pour in the coffee? ” came a voice from beside the fire. But the clever little housewife jumped over to do it herself, for she had no great confidence in Gottfried’s art of cooking. Soon the steaming coffee spread its agreeable perfume and Riki filled the cups and placed the cream beside the cake.

“ If you please, honored guests, the coffee has been poured, ” she said, politely inviting the company. “ Whoever has a knife can use it for a spoon. I’ll take a crochet needle I have with me. ”

“ And I one of my knitting-needles, ” said Mrs. Bolandt.

“ And I this little stick. It is polished and nice, ” cried Cecily.

“ But Victor comes first. Isn’t his milk warm yet? ” cried Mrs. Bolandt sharply. “ The little one must have it right away, for he has been begging for it all the time. You have no heart whatever for your family, Nikodemus. You are willing to sit down to your coffee, while your poor little worm is nearly dying from hunger and thirst. ”

But Riki had already taken the small despot, who had been crying and kicking violently, on her lap and was giving him the warm milk with some pieces of biscuit. This at least quieted him so far as to allow the

others to refresh themselves. But he toddled around the coffee-table, threatening danger to the cups and pots by putting his fists into everything he could reach. He attacked the sugar and cake till Bertel, who had quickly sipped his coffee, took him down to the lake, where he entertained him by skipping stones.

The small company could now sit comfortably under the shady oak trees and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Everything shone in warm sunlight and the brilliant colors of Fall were beginning to appear.

Bright rays fell on the green, mossy ground through the thick branches, making the shadows dance. Wild pigeons, which flew to and fro, were nesting in the tree-tops; the sharp cry of a heron resounded from the nearby reeds. Once in a while a fish leaped from the water of the lake, and the sunlight sparkled on the drops of water that it splashed up.

Little ducks swam about on the gleaming surface. Sometimes they dived down with a whistling sound, while frogs gaily sang, and the melancholy call of the pewit came from a nearby marsh.

Cecily, after doing justice to the coffee and cake, had stretched out on her back on the moss with her hands under her head. She looked up at the green tree-tops and felt a well-being she had never experienced in her life before. She would have loved to fly about with the wild pigeons in the branches above her and in the clear blue sky.

But she jumped up quickly when Gottfried and Riki proposed a walk in the park, for she wanted to join them.

“ I won't go a step further than I have to,” said Mrs. Bolandt, settling down cosily on her seat and pulling out her knitting. She was making a pair of grey socks for her husband, who looked at them sadly, for he hated to wear them. He usually suffered from heat and besides that his wife nearly always made them too large for his small feet. But nothing helped, he had to wear them. He quietly settled down beside Sali, because he was too well mannered to leave her alone. Victor, too, sat down beside his parents and was soon fast asleep with his head on his father's knee. The poor man dared not move and got perfectly stiff from his uncomfortable position.

“ Run off with Cecily, Bertel, we don't need you now,” said Mrs. Bolandt to the boy, who, glad of his freedom, raced after the others.

The betrothed couple wandered about arm in arm, happily chatting, while Cecily ran about with Bertel among the broad paths or played hide-and-seek in the bushes.

“ Have you seen the bear yet, Cecily ? ” asked Bertel as they neared a wall.

“ A bear, here in the park ? ” she said, astonished. “ No, I didn't see it. Let's go there quickly.”

“ Where are you running off to, Cecily ? ” cried Gottfried as the children were leaving them.

“ Bertel wants to show me the bear, Uncle Gottfried. We'll soon be back,” said Cecily.

“ Good, but don't get into mischief,” said Gottfried, entering a side path with Riki.

The pit where an old brown bear passed his existence

was often visited and the bear fed by the visitors to the park. The pit was rather deep and surrounded by a breastwork, on which an iron railing prevented people from falling down. In the middle of the pit stood a big tree-trunk with blunt thick branches. The bear loved to climb up this to catch the morsels which were thrown to him. The trunk was polished and worn, for Master Bruin liked his high seat and often slid down the tree.

When Cecily and Bertel approached, the beast lay quietly on the ground, gnawing his paws.

“ We’ll soon make you lively,” said Bertel, throwing down a stone.

The bear gave an annoyed grumble and looked up.

“ Come up, Master Bruin! Come up, come! ” cried Bertel, holding up a piece of biscuit he had put in his pocket.

“ Throw it down to him, Bertel! Look how nicely he begs,” said Cecily.

“ No, no, he must climb his tree first; that’s more fun,” laughed Bertel, holding out the biscuit still more temptingly. “ You see he knows what I mean. He is climbing up. He has grown very stiff in his legs and has a hard time coming up.”

Bertel was right. Master Bruin was no youth and found climbing a hard task. But the morsel was too tempting to be despised.

When the bear finally reached the top, Bertel threw him a piece which he cleverly caught in his mouth. But a second failed of its mark and fell to the bottom of the pit. Bruin grumbled angrily and gazed downwards. He still waited for another treat, for the one below could



not escape him. But Bertel was hard-hearted and stingy with his gifts, for he had little left in his pocket. When the bear had waited a while in vain he at last decided to climb down and get the morsel.

But Cecily now held up her hand.

“Come, Master Bruin! Here is a piece of sugar,” she cried, showing the tempting object. She had taken it out from her pocket, where the sweet-toothed little girl had stored away several lumps she had begged from Riki.

This proved too tempting. Growling a little, the beast climbed to the height again and received his reward. But then a new piece tempted him down again, for the children enjoyed the heavy, awkward motions of the bear.

“I’d do that better than you, Master Bruin,” laughed Cecily. “Climbing does not suit you.”

“You think you can climb better than he? I don’t believe it,” said Bertel.

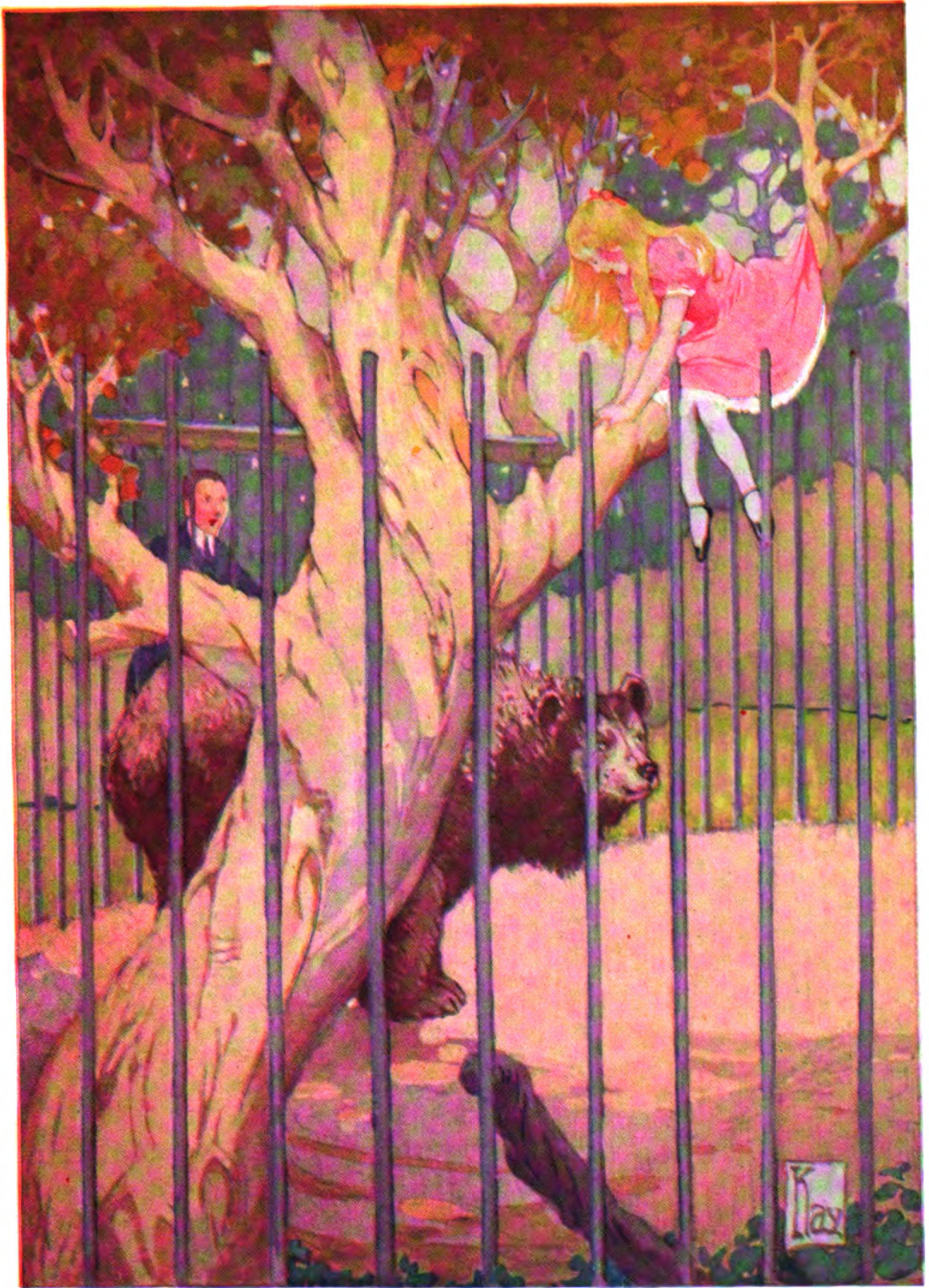
“That is nothing, even you could do that,” laughed Cecily. “Shall I climb to the top of the tree while he is below? He’d open his eyes wide if he saw me sitting up there in my pink dress.”

“He’d fetch you down and eat you up,” said Bertel.

“Nonsense, I’d keep absolutely quiet till he came,” she laughed. “Look, here are some boards. We’ll put one from the railing across to the tree. Then I can run over.”

“You wouldn’t do that. You’d be too much afraid.”

“I afraid? Ha! ha! You don’t know me. I am



THE BEAR LOOKED UP, SURPRISED





not afraid of anything. It is pure child's play to run over this board. I had to do quite different tricks from that. Come here and help me and I'll show you right away that I am not afraid."

"But, Cecily, if the bear should come up!"

"I'll just run right back and pull back the board. I'll be safe long before that lazy-bones climbs up."

Bertel anxiously glanced first at the tree and then at the bear, for the whole affair seemed a little doubtful. But Cecily had already arrived with a board she had found among others in the grass, which were used as props for young trees. He took hold and helped her lay it on the iron railing.

The highest cross-bar happened to be the same height as the last arm of the tree, and when the board had been laid across, it formed a pliable airy bridge across the pit.

"Now throw a morsel to Bruin so he'll stay down there," said Cecily, swinging herself up to the railing.

"Do you really want to go?" cried Bertel, frightened. "Don't do it! Think if you should fall down."

"I fall down! On such a wide bar," laughed the girl gaily. "You don't need to be afraid of that. Why am I Elf Goldihair?"

Bertel threw a whole biscuit to the bear in order to keep him busy while Cecily lightly ran over the bridge. She sat down triumphantly on the tree, saucily swinging her feet in the air.

The bear looked up surprised. He growled a little and sat up on his hind-legs, for he wished to examine

this new marvel above. But the food still kept him below, and even after he had finished, he made no preparations to climb the tree.

“Come up, old lazy-bones!” Cecily scolded him from her seat. But the bear did not move.

“Come, little Bruin, here is some sugar,” she tempted, holding out a piece she had taken from her pocket.

That helped. Growling again, the beast began to climb the tree. Cecily flew back over her bridge.

When the bear arrived at the top and touched it with his paw she pulled back the board. She laughed merrily over his angry growling, for poor Bruin saw himself fooled. Instead of throwing the sugar into his wide-open mouth she had thrown it into the pit.

After he had climbed down to get the piece, the child returned to her seat in the tree, then lured Bruin again and then flew away again. When she had tried it for the third time, the beast would not be fooled again. He quietly stayed below, and Cecily remained on her tree for quite a while. The bear had lain down and only squinted up now and then at the curious creature who occupied his seat above.

Gottfried and Riki now came out of an avenue of trees, also to pay a visit to the bear.

“Gracious goodness! Cecily! Look, Gottfried!” cried Riki, horrified, as soon as they had turned toward the pit. She pointed to the venturesome child, who was swinging her feet on the top of the tree. She and Bertel were bombarding the bear with little stones, which the



beast was shaking off with growls but without moving from the spot.

Gottfried stood petrified beside his betrothed and could hardly believe his eyes.

“Cecily!” he cried at last, calming himself with force and stepping to the pit. “Come away from there immediately.”

“But why, Uncle Gottfried?” she said gaily. “It is so pleasant here. Bruin doesn’t come up any more, for he is a lazy-bones. Only it smells a little badly. I am sure the fellow is very dirty. He looks unclean. Just look at him down there.”

But he did not lie there any more. He was just beginning to climb the tree, because the arrival of the new visitors had roused his hope for a treat.

“Gracious heavens, Cecily, the bear is coming!” cried Riki, shaking with fear and gazing into the pit. “Quickly, quickly, or he’ll catch you.”

Cecily was a little frightened, for she had not seen the creature rise. She wanted to beat her retreat quickly, but in her haste her dress caught on a nail fastened in the tree. This held her back considerably. The bear was already so high up that she could hear his breathing below her, and a cold perspiration stood on her brow. With a desperate wrench she pulled her dress free, so that a rag was left on the nail. When the paw of the beast already touched her, she flew across the bar.

But she felt the bear shaking her bridge until it began to slide from the tree. With a daring leap she caught the railing and held on tightly. The board in the meantime crashed down into the pit.

Without saying one word, Gottfried lifted the light figure across the railing. Cecily made no objection, for she was trembling in every limb and had grown deathly pale. But when she knew herself safe again she sighed, relieved, threatening the bear with her hand.

“Just wait, you ugly bear! To frighten me so! You won’t get a single lump of sugar from me now, however wide you may open your mouth.”

She happened to gaze down at herself.

“Oh, my dress! my pretty dress!” she sobbed. “Oh, it’s all torn! Oh, what will Aunt Krause say? You ugly thing, you horrid beast! Look! it’s your fault. Oh, good, kind Auntie Riki, won’t you sew it up so Aunt Krause can’t see it? She’ll be dreadfully cross otherwise.”

But Aunt Riki was not in the mood for mending dresses. She was sitting on a bench, her head against Gottfried’s shoulder. She was blanched with fear and faint with fright. Large tears rolled down her cheeks, and her hands were rolling together a handkerchief she was holding.

“Look! you naughty child, how you have frightened Riki. Are you not ashamed of yourself, you wicked child?” cried Gottfried furiously. “You have earned a severe punishment from Aunt Gusti for your unheard-of foolishness. Have you lost all sense and reason to climb into the bear’s pit? If you had fallen down, he would have torn you in pieces. Nothing would have saved you then.”

“But Uncle Gottfried,” said the incorrigible Cecily, laughing, “old Bruin is so awkward. I should have got-

ten up ten times before he climbed the tree. He would never have caught me. But please, good, good Uncle Gottfried, don't tell Aunt Krause."

"All right, I'll sew it up for you. But come away now from this horrible place," Riki said faintly as she rose from the bench. "But you should be scolded severely for this terrible exploit, Cecily. I think it better not to tell Gusti. Otherwise she will be terribly frightened. Oh, God! it was too horrible when the bear . . ."

"Stop, Riki, don't think of it any more," said Gottfried pleasantly, stroking her hand, which rested on his arm. "We'll forget it and Cecily will promise never to do such a terrible thing again, won't you, Cecily?"

"I'll never go near that horrible beast again!" she cried, shaking her fist at the bear, who still sat waiting on his tree-trunk, sniffing at the pink rag. "Keep it for a remembrance and have a new coat made for yourself," she concluded, chuckling. "Your old one is too gray and ugly, you dirty fellow!"

"Where did Bertel get to?" asked Riki, glancing around.

"He scooted as soon as you appeared," laughed Cecily. "He was afraid he would get beaten because he helped me to lay the board across."

"Which he has properly earned, too!" said Gottfried. "Thank heaven it all ended happily!"

"Except my dress," sighed Cecily.

"Well, Riki will be the doctor for that. That's why she brought her sewing-bag," Gottfried consoled her.

“ We might have needed another, which would have been much worse.”

Riki's fingers really mended the tear so cleverly that no one could tell what had happened to the dress or that Master Bruin had kept a piece for remembrance.

But Riki as well as Gottfried were so affected by the incident that all such inviting things as cold chicken, ham and sausage, which were still in the basket, could not restore their former gaiety. Only Cecily, the little sinner, was as gay and happy as ever when the damage in her dress was mended. She ran merrily along the street when they set off for their return home in the evening. Bertel also looked very gay, for his basket was as light as his heart, which had trembled in fear of punishment for his share in the unlucky affair. To his great surprise no one breathed a word about it.

The rest of the party seemed tired and wandered home quietly beside each other. Gottfried, who carried little sleeping Victor, could not help thinking of Cecily's incredible recklessness and the unlucky circus-tricks she could not forget. Riki still felt the shock in all her limbs and she leaned heavily on Gottfried's arm. Mrs. Bolandt did the same, and her small, fat and rather weary husband found the way home very long and tiresome.

They were all sincerely glad when they saw the golden sugar-loaves at last glinting beside the shield of the shop which they had left so gaily that very morning.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PRISONER

“I SHOULD certainly like to know where Cecily gets the money with which she has bought candies lately,” said Riki one day to Gottfried. “Do you give her any?”

“I? No, indeed,” he answered. “Children don’t need money. As you see, they only spend it for sweets. I must ask mother if she gave her some; she is so lenient with her.”

But Mrs. Poole had not done it either, and the old woman, as well as Gottfried, knew very well that Mrs. Krause had not done so.

“Do you think the other children might give her money?”

“I don’t believe so,” replied Mrs. Poole, shaking her head. “But don’t tell Gusti, for she always gets so angry. I’ll find out from Cecily herself, she must tell me where she gets it.”

At that moment the widow entered the room.

“Oh, mother, have you taken any money lately that I keep in this drawer for milk?” she asked, complainingly. “I know positively that I put three groschens in yesterday. When I wanted to pay the milkman just now there were only two. This has happened several times already.”



Mrs. Poole and Gottfried threw each other a perplexed glance.

“ You must be mistaken, Gusti,” said the woman with a worried look. “ I didn’t take any, and who else should do it? ”

“ Well, I’ll watch, but it is not my mistake,” said the widow, sitting down to work.

Mrs. Poole decided to examine Cecily, for the suspicion that she was the thief lay very near. But she did not find herself alone with the child all day and therefore the matter was overlooked.

Before going to school next morning the little girl rushed into the room after ascertaining through the window that no one was inside. Quickly opening the drawer of the table, she put in her hand and then quickly slipped something into her pocket. She was about to rush off as quickly as she had come, when she suddenly saw Mrs. Krause at her side.

“ What are you doing here, Cecily? ” the latter said, surprised.

“ I? Nothing, aunt,” retorted Cecily, frightened.

“ But you opened that drawer. Did you look for something? ”

“ Yes, aunt, a string for my sponge.”

“ A string? We don’t keep strings in that drawer.”

“ Oh, no, I made a mistake! I remember some now in the nail-chest outside. Good-bye, aunt.”

“ Wait, Cecily, just one more word. I know you looked for something else. Didn’t you, child? Admit it and I won’t scold you. But please don’t tell a lie.”

“ No, really, aunt, I don't lie. I looked for a string. But it is late and I have to go now.”

“ You have lots of time yet, child,” said Mrs. Krause firmly, looking at Cecily and seizing her hand. “ You lied after all, and not only that, you stole, too. You have taken money and you have done it several times before. You had better admit it, for I know.”

“ No, aunt, I didn't take anything,” she cried. But her voice shook and she could not raise her eyes.

For answer Mrs. Krause put her hand in Cecily's pocket. The child tried to hold it shut but she did not succeed. The missing coin came forth.

Mrs. Krause said nothing further but showed her the money. The girl turned quickly about and said obstinately:

“ I want to have money, too, like the other children. I don't want to stand there always like a beggar-girl when the others buy candy for themselves.”

“ Oh, so you rob me for that! You are a nice, sweet little girl,” replied the widow. “ Doesn't your conscience tell you that is wrong? ”

“ My conscience! No, that doesn't say anything,” answered Cecily, shaking her head.

Mrs. Krause quickly turned, for she could hardly keep herself from laughing aloud over this incorrigible girl. “ Go to school, now,” she broke off; “ we'll talk about it later.”

Cecily swiftly bounded away, glad of her present escape from judgment. She hoped in her heart that Aunt Krause would forget her misdeed and was quite

amazed when the widow took her by the hand on her return and said seriously:

“ A child who lies and steals can't run round free. Come with me, Cecily.”

Here she led her to a tiny room in the top story of the house, pushed her in and locked the door behind her without saying another word.

This was Cecily's first severe punishment. Whenever she had been sulky, obstinate or lazy before she had just been scolded or Mrs. Krause had given her little tasks for punishment. Horrified in the highest degree, the child gazed at the fast-locked door. She jumped at it and shook it violently, calling the while to Mrs. Krause. But the widow went away and left her.

Cecily madly beat the door, kicked it and screamed at the top of her voice. But all in vain, for no one came to free her. She had often been punished at the circus with blows, for there had been no time or room for locking her up. She could scarcely realize that she was a prisoner now. It was unbearable to be left in a garret with nothing but a heap of boards, strings, boxes, and other truck. Just then the dinner bell rang. Grandfather and Grandmother Poole were coming to the table as well as Uncle Gottfried and Christian, and as they sat down they would ask why she was not there too. Aunt Krause would have to tell them that she had lied and stolen and was locked up for punishment. Oh, it was abominable! She wondered if Uncle Gottfried would plead for her and fetch her down.

She listened and waited breathlessly, but no one

came. The door downstairs opened repeatedly as the call came to dinner. Only she was left out. She might even get no dinner, which would be specially annoying because they were to have a very good dessert that day. Perhaps her Aunt Gusti would keep something for her, or grandmamma, who was always so good to her. But she did not mind hunger much, for she had often experienced this at the Strianskis'. It never happened to her now, for there was always plenty.

With a surly face she stepped to the window and opened it. Under her was Gottfried's bird-room. She could distinctly hear the twittering and calling of the many little creatures, and would have given anything to be with them.

She might be able to climb out of the window. No, that was impossible, for the wall was smooth and had no projections for her feet. She could not have gotten into the bird-room, either, because all the windows were closed.

She therefore remained where she was and waited, but a terrible impatience drove her to and fro. She felt like a prisoned bird and sometimes violently shook the door again. A heavy step was heard on the stairs now, but it halted below and then went into one of the little rooms. It must have been Gottfried going to see some of his birds after dinner as was his custom. How she would have loved to be with him! He might yet come to fetch her. Calling his name loudly, she knocked at the door, but all in vain. After a while she heard him go downstairs again and then everything was still.

But no, someone came after all. It was a light step this time. She counted step after step; now the door opened. With a single leap Cecily was at the door and wanted to rush out. But a vigorous gesture held her back.

“ Stop, child! you stay here,” said Mrs. Krause, shutting the door again. “ I have brought you something to eat, for you must not starve.”

She now placed a little dish on a wooden box near the window.

Cecily hardly looked at it, for her only idea was to escape. But when Mrs. Krause left her again as quickly as she had come, and she was locked up once more, such passionate grief took hold of her that she raved and screamed and beat her hands quite bloody at the door.

Finally she sat down on a ball of oakum in a corner and cried. It was very seldom that she cried. She had often enough laughed at cry-Gabriele, who had recourse to her tears so easily. They came to her very seldom, for the cruel treatment she had received from the Strianskis had made her hard and indifferent. From sheer obstinacy she had not wanted to cry and had nearly forgotten how. But she sobbed passionately now. First it was an uncontrollable screaming and raving, but by and by she calmed down and at last sobbed quietly.

Then she felt very hungry, for she had had no lunch. The food Aunt Gusti had brought her had probably cooled off by now. What might it be? Probably some-



thing from their dinner. That might console and entertain her a little, as it was her favorite dessert.

She stepped to the box and uncovered the dish Mrs. Krause had put there. But instead of dumplings and stewed fruit, which she had expected, she found nothing but a dry piece of bread and a cup of water.

“ What a horrid lunch! ” she cried violently, angrily pushing the dish aside. “ Bread and water like a prisoner! I’d rather not have anything! I won’t even touch it! ”

She settled back once more on the bundle of oakum, and having grown very tired from crying, she leaned her head against the wall and fell asleep.

She might have slept two hours when the afternoon bell from the works awoke her. Looking about confused, she could not remember where she was. Then she jumped up. How long was she to be imprisoned here? The afternoon bell was already ringing. Had she slept so long? How hungry she was!

She went unhappily to the dry bread and broke off a little piece. How nice it tasted when one was hungry! The water also refreshed her very much. She already felt better, and decided that when Mrs. Krause came to fetch her she would beg her pardon for being wicked. If only she came soon! Too bad that there had been no school this afternoon! Then they would have had to let her out.

She waited on and on and sometimes stepped to the window to see if someone was going by that she might

call. But the little garret lay at the back of the house and hardly anyone ever came here, for only a few old coach-houses bordered the yard. But a beautiful linden tree with broad branches stood opposite the window and happy birds hopped to and fro.

Oh, how happy they were to be free and be able to fly where they wished while she sat locked up hour after hour! If the tree only stood near enough to swing herself across! But she would need a trapeze for that. How could she have fastened it anyway from such a distance? A board like the one she had used at the bear-pit would have helped her, but there were none in the room. In a corner lay a heap of rubbish. She would see what she could find. It would at least pass the time.

“ A rope, a rope! ” she exclaimed. “ I can let myself down with that.”

But the rope held fast and wouldn't move. As she eagerly pulled, she fell backwards, and a whole pile of rags and oakum which clung to the rope flew up. Only now she saw that a strong iron hook was fastened to its end. It was a rope used for loading and unloading bales, and having become worn, was now lying here with other rubbish.

Cecily thoughtfully held it in her hand for a while.

“ If I could throw the hook to the tree, I'd have the best trapeze in the world,” she said to herself. “ But the question is if it will hold to a branch. But I must try, for I can always get down with it from the window.

It would be glorious to fly over to the tree. But I must find a cross-bar for the other end.”

This was soon accomplished, for many short pieces of wood lay about. Cecily fastened one to the rope and kept it in her hand while she cleverly threw the other towards the tree. She had chosen a projecting branch opposite the window and after several vain efforts she succeeded. The hook gripped the branch firmly.

Cecily gave a cry of triumph, which she checked immediately. No one must come and watch her. She climbed to the window-sill and sat down on the cross-bar, tightly gripping the rope. Giving a smart push with her feet, she flew over to the tree like a bird.

With great agility she seized a hanging branch, holding fast before she swung herself to the top. Then she climbed like a squirrel from branch to branch and finally sat down cosily in the green leafage her back propped against the trunk.

“ I can stand it better here than in the horrid garret,” she said exultantly. “ How astonished Aunt Krause will be when she wants to fetch me, and the bird has flown.”

From her prison she had been able to see only the shut coach-houses and the old linden tree, but from her present airy seat she looked over a strip of the garden and beyond it at a part of the yard where workmen ran busily to and fro. She recognized some of them and even saw Grandpapa Poole scolding some of the boys. From the forge she heard some mighty blows.

“ That’s Uncle Gottfried’s hammer; he is the best of them all,” she said proudly, listening to his heavy strokes. But her attention was soon engaged by little Hans, who played near the house and gradually came nearer and nearer to the tree.

“ Hans, where am I? ” Cecily called in a low voice and climbed to a branch lower down.

The child looked up, amazed.

“ Cecily, Cecily! ” he cried merrily, and toddled nearer. “ Come to Hans, Cecily! ”

The little girl really climbed down and then gazed cautiously round to the house to see who was with him. If it was Grandmother Poole, she might risk showing herself, but not with Aunt Gusti.

In fact Mrs. Poole sat on the bench before the house, but her head was sunk on her breast and her knitting lay in her lap; she had fallen asleep. Hans, making use of his freedom, had run farther from the house than he was allowed and had found Cecily.

“ Shall I swing you a little, Hans? ” said Cecily, as soon as she knew that she was safe.

“ Yes, swing! Hans wants to swing,” said the little boy, running after Cecily.

“ I’ll carry you piggy-back,” said Cecily, taking the child on her back. “ But hold on tight, so you won’t fall down.”

Cecily ran back to the tree and with an effort lifted Hans to one of the branches. Then she climbed up the tree to a place where she could reach the swinging rope.

Pulling it towards her, she placed the cross-bar between his little legs.

“ You are sitting on a horse. Hold tight to the rope, for it will jump away,” she said, placing it in his hands. He bravely held on while she softly swung him to and fro. Hans floated gently about, laughing and crowing with delight.

“ Fly again, Cecily!” he cried, whenever she stopped. She swung him higher, for he had grown quite bold.

Suddenly with a crash, little Hans, who had been swinging very high, fell to the ground. With the violent motion the hook had broken the branch, and the rope had fallen down.

For an instant everything was still. Cecily, petrified with fear, gazed at Hans, then flew down the tree.

The little boy lay on the ground without making a sound. A stream of blood poured slowly over his pale still face, which rested on the plastered floor of the yard.

Cecily uttered a shriek and took the child into her arms. The next moment, however, Mrs. Krause hastened to the spot, followed by her mother .

“ My child, my child!” she cried out, frightened, rushing up to Hans. “ What has happened? Oh God, he is bleeding! He is dead!”

Snatching Hans violently out of the arms of Cecily, whose presence she did not even notice, she rushed with him into the house.



Cecily ran up quietly, deathly pale, to Mrs. Poole as she started to follow her daughter.

“ Where do you come from, Cecily ? ” she said absent-mindedly, her thoughts being with her grandchild.

“ I jumped down from the window, grandmother, ” she replied. “ I swung Hans on the rope and he fell down. Oh, grandmother, I am so frightened! Is Hans really dead ? ”

“ May God preserve us ! ” cried the woman horrified. “ But as this has been your fault, you wicked child, you had better not show yourself to Gusti now. Quick! get out of the way ! ”

Leaving her standing there, she rushed into the house.

Cecily shook in all her limbs. Would Hans really die through her wickedness? A great terror seized her and she knelt down on the bench outside the house she was not allowed to enter, her face pressed to the window.

She saw Mrs. Krause holding the child on her knees, trying to stop the blood flowing from the wound in his head. Mrs. Poole knelt before her, holding a basin with water, which was already brightly colored. But little Hans still lay pale and with closed eyes in his mother's arms.

“ The doctor! have the doctor brought, mother! Be quick! Otherwise he'll die, if he is not dead already! ” cried the widow, sobbing in her sorrow. Mrs. Poole quickly rose from her knees to send for help.

Cecily, who had anxiously listened at the window, had already rushed away to fetch the doctor, only calling back hastily a few words to Mrs. Poole.

After a few minutes she met the doctor's carriage on the highway.

"Oh, doctor, come quickly, quickly! Hans is dying and it is my fault!" she cried, beside herself, hanging on to the carriage. It was the same physician who had treated Cecily after her accident, and he followed the girl in a friendly manner to the yard. He had the incident related to him on the way, and while he blamed Cecily severely, at heart he tried to comfort her, for she was shaken with fear and horror.

When the physician had examined the boy, he calmed the mother by saying that the wound in his head was bad but probably not fatal. When the boy finally recovered from his faint, it was discovered that he had also broken his arm. The plaster in the yard to which he had fallen from such a height had unfortunately been very hard.

In deadly fear Cecily listened once more from her post at the window, which stood open now in order to let in fresh air.

"If I only knew how the accident happened," said Mrs. Krause, unhappily, while Hans was being bandaged and lay on his bed moaning feebly. "What really happened?"

Mrs. Poole related in the most sparing manner what she had heard from Cecily, and while she spoke, the lit-

the girl entered the room, pale and frightened, to ask Mrs. Krause's pardon.

But the widow had hardly laid eyes on Cecily when she jumped up and violently pushed the child out of the room.

"Never come near my boy again!" she shouted, completely crazed. "If he dies or is left a cripple, it will be your fault, you fearful creature. Away with you, unlucky child, get quickly out of my sight!"

With this she shut the door and left Cecily standing outside.

The child gazed with horror at the frightfully agitated woman, for she had never seen her like that. Even in anger she had always been calm and controlled, and Cecily seemed to see an entirely different person before her from the quiet, gentle Aunt Krause. The good face was distorted with anger and fear and the serious, mild eyes sparkled dangerously.

A boundless fear took hold of Cecily and like a scared bird she hid under a bush near the garden door, from where she could observe the windows of the house without herself being seen.

Mrs. Krause's brothers and old father hastened to the house to inquire what had happened, and with beating heart Cecily imagined what they would say about her, the origin of it all. They must hate and blame her bitterly, for even the grandmother, who was always so kind, had only spoken angry words and had told her to go away. And were they not right? She, the poor circus

child who had been kindly taken into their midst, had as thanks brought down this misfortune upon them.

“ Oh, God,” she prayed in the fear of her heart, “ don’t let Hans die and don’t let me be his murderer! ” And with anxiously cramped hands she stared towards the windows behind which Hans moaned and cried. She wanted to look in once more and then hide away somewhere.

She was just sneaking up to the house when Gottfried stepped outside.

“ What are you doing here, Cecily? ” he said sadly, pulling her hand away from the window-sill.

“ Oh, Uncle Gottfried! ” she whispered, afraid, “ I am not allowed inside and I wanted to see little Hans once more before . . . ”

“ Before what? ” Gottfried replied hoarsely.

“ Before I go away,” she said timidly.

“ Away? where are you going? ”

“ I don’t know myself, uncle, but Aunt Gusti said she never wants to see me any more. She was so angry, uncle, and I am so afraid of her.”

Clinging to Gottfried’s side, she glanced anxiously through a window where she could see Mrs. Krause’s figure.

Gottfried drew the little girl away from the window and said thoughtfully:

“ Come with me to the forge. The evening bell will ring soon; then I’ll have time for you. It is true, you must not go in now.”

Cecily sat down quietly in a corner of the forge and waited till the bell announced the end of work. Gottfried then threw down an iron pole he had been hammering, washed his face and hands in a bucket, and put on his coat.

Taking Cecily's hand he said, "Come!"

They walked towards the city, Gottfried with a sombre face and without saying a word, and Cecily also silent, for Uncle Gottfried's serious face was something new for her. They at last came into the street where the Bolandts lived and entered the shop.

"Is Riki at home, father?" asked Gottfried. When Mr. Bolandt answered yes, the blacksmith bade Cecily wait in the shop while he saw his betrothed.

He had a long talk with her and also called William, who had been in his room reading a book.

"So she can stay here for the present. Thank you, Riki. I am so glad," he concluded at last, rising from a chair. "Gusti, in her great anxiety about the child, is completely crazed. The boy is really the only happiness the poor young thing has in the world and nobody can blame her. The sight of Cecily is unbearable to her at present. That's why I am glad that she can stay here a few days till Hans is out of danger. We can talk the rest over later."

He called Cecily in and handed her over to Riki, then he and William retired, leaving the two alone. Riki met Cecily affectionately but with a serious look on her bright face.



“ You can sleep here on my sofa, child,” she concluded, after telling her that she was to stay with her for the next few days. “ I suppose you will be good and get into no more mischief.”

“ Oh, Aunt Riki! ” cried Cecily, clinging closely to the friendly girl in her fear. “ I am so glad I can stay here! I am so terribly unhappy.”

Riki took her in her arms and spoke kind, loving words to her, but it took long before Cecily could calm down. Finally a flood of tears relieved the fear in her heart, and Riki gently pulled down the weeping child into her lap.

## CHAPTER XV

### OTHER PATHS

Two weeks had elapsed, and in the overseer's house peace had returned with the confidence that little Hans would recover without bad consequences from his fall. But the desperate mother had lived through weary, anxious hours at her boy's bedside. She often feared that the slender spark of his life was sinking when she saw it growing weaker and weaker.

She would then despairingly sink to her knees beside her lad and lift her hands in hot supplications to God, begging Him to preserve the only treasure she still had left in the world. What else was there to live for when all her happiness had vanished with both child and husband? She only lived for her boy's happiness, thinking and planning for his future. Everything else had grown worthless to her now.

God heard the earnest prayers of the despairing mother and gave her back her child. She was allowed to hope again and once more look into her darling's bright eyes. They had been shut for days and days, darkened by fever and unable to recognize even her.

The terrible ban which had gripped her the moment of the accident went from her soul, also the wild feeling of grief she had experienced when she first held Hans, streaming with blood, in her arms. She became again the gentle, quiet woman, who gazed about her

kindly and always had a friendly word and glance for everyone.

She also thought of Cecily again without the bitter hate that had filled her heart against the cause of her sorrow. She remembered her after the first two terrible weeks and inquired after the child. She had not missed her till then and was glad to hear that Riki had taken charge of the girl. She was also relieved when she found that Cecily was to stay there for the present, for she was afraid of renewed troubles from the restless, incomprehensible child while Hans still lay ill in bed.

One day as she was busy at a task in the living-room and Hans lay asleep in the next room, Gottfried came to her.

“ Am I disturbing you, or have you time to talk over something with me ? ” he asked, placing a chair beside her.

“ No, I have time; Hans is quiet, ” she replied. “ What is it, dear brother ? ”

“ It is about Cecily, ” said Gottfried, thoughtfully, twisting his mustache. “ After what has happened you probably do not want to take her into the house again. With her habits, which only time will cure, if anything, one can hardly persuade you to do it. ”

“ Is it really you saying that, Gottfried, ” replied Gusti, surprised; “ you, who always took her part and always fulfilled her foolish wants. Do I quite understand you ? ”

“ You do, Gusti. I have had such thoughts even before your boy's accident, ” said Gottfried dejectedly.

“ I think you were right when you wanted to bring up Cecily in a stricter manner than I approved. The great freedom she has had here is not the right thing for her. I see that more and more. She remains the wild, untamable circus-child, and God knows what new misfortune she might bring upon us, for which we might reproach ourselves all our lives. I did not tell you what gave me these thoughts long before Hans’s accident, but you might just as well hear it now.”

He now told her of Cecily’s wild exploit at the bear’s pit, which had constantly troubled his mind.

“ Just think if the child had lost her life then! The danger was horribly close,” he ended. “ What reproaches I should have made to myself for leaving her a few moments! It is impossible for us in our position to watch her constantly. I have often talked to Riki and William, too, about it and he entirely agrees with me.”

“ What does William think? ” asked Gusti quickly.

“ He thinks we should send her to St. Mary’s,” replied Gottfried, sighing. “ You have already suggested it sometimes, because Cecily’s uncle approved of it. But I pitied the poor, happy little thing and could not endure robbing her of her freedom. The children are kept strictly there, in fact terribly strictly. William says so himself, though otherwise he praises the institution. But I can see for myself now that that is just what Cecily needs. And as we get no money for her schooling from Uncle Melau, we’ll have to put her in the orphanage sooner or later. I couldn’t pay for more

than her schooling, especially when I get married, and who else will do it? ”

“ The chief point is that Cecily is better provided for in St. Mary’s than with us. Nothing else should really matter,” said Gusti gently. “ I am so grateful you have said it, dear Gottfried, and spared me from suggesting it. You can imagine that I shrank from taking back into the house a girl who has brought my son’s life into such danger. But it would have seemed too cruel to send her away on account of that. It is not her bad intention, but the wild circus blood that tempts Cecily to those mad exploits. But can she be entered soon? ”

“ William will talk with the chief trustees of the institution, the director and Mr. von Moller. They may make an exception and receive Cecily right away,” answered Gottfried. “ It would be much better if she did not come back here at all. Riki kept her very strictly and that is a better transition for her than from the free, unfettered life here on the yard.”

The next day William brought the news that the trustees of the orphanage made no objection to Cecily’s admission, because a place had become vacant recently. It was decided to make use of this chance immediately. Cecily’s stay with Riki had grown very troublesome, because Mrs. Bolandt had begun to speak of useless boarders who ate too much and paid her nothing.

Cecily had grown noticeably quieter in the last two weeks and her usual restlessness and gaiety had given



place to a thoughtful seriousness. The anxiety about Hans, to whom she was desperately devoted, troubled her frightfully. Whenever Gottfried came to see them, she hastened to him from afar in order to have news of the boy. Countless times she set out to go to the yard herself, to listen near the house and perhaps see Hans; but fear always brought her back again. Aunt Krause's angry words resounded in her ears and she still saw the furious look with which she had received the command never to appear before her eyes again. Could she have really meant it? Was she never to go back to the little house where she had passed such happy days? It oppressed her heart to think how little she had appreciated all the good she had enjoyed there and how much sorrow and grief she had brought upon Aunt Gusti. She did not deserve to be taken back, but what was to become of her if they didn't? What was to happen then? She could not possibly stay with Riki, as Aunt Bolandt very unkindly complained of her day after day. If only Uncle Melau would come and take her away! But Aunt Gusti had not heard anything from him for a long while. Nobody knew where he was wandering about with the troupe.

Riki and especially William made use of the serious soft mood of the child to prepare her for the change which was in store.

One day she exclaimed, quite frightened, "Oh, Uncle William, I am so afraid I can't ever go back to Aunt Gusti. You had better tell me."

In the most friendly and sparing way he said that it was so and informed her of their plans for the future.

Cecily grew deathly pale at the news.

“ Uncle Gottfried won’t ever let me! ” she cried, after a while.

“ Uncle Gottfried especially wants you to, ” answered William. “ He knows it will be for your good, and I know it, too. I know the life at St. Mary’s and I sincerely hope you’ll grow into a good, industrious girl there. Your uncle wants you to be one, and wanted to send you there as soon as he left. ”

“ Oh, why didn’t he take me with him? ” cried Cecily, breaking into passionate sobs. “ Oh, Uncle Melau, Uncle Melau, come to your poor, small Cecily! ”

“ So you would like to go back to the Strianskis, who beat you and let you starve and who made you do circus tricks like an ignorant child? ” asked William gently, drawing her up to his knee. “ Would you like that, Cecily? ”

“ Oh, no, no, I wouldn’t do that again for anything! ” cried Cecily, eagerly. “ I’d rather go to St. Mary’s. Is it true that Uncle Melau wanted me to go there? ”

“ Surely it is true, Cecily, ” said William. “ And think how nice it will be! If you learn a great deal there you’ll be able to look after your uncle some day. ”

“ Can I learn a lot there? as much as in our school? ” she asked thoughtfully.

“ Yes, indeed, and many useful things besides, dear Cecily. ”

“ Then I’ll go in order to learn something for Uncle Melau. Then he won’t always have to be a circus clown, which he hated. He often cried about it in the evening when we were alone together. But he had to earn money. If I really can earn a lot I’ll be able to do it for him. Won’t I, Uncle William? ”

“ Of course you will, dear child.”

More willingly than anyone had thought possible, Cecily, holding Gottfried’s hand, went one morning to St. Mary’s orphanage. Mr. von Moller had most willingly donated the small sum for her entrance because he knew people would hear of it and praise his generosity. He loved to boast of these deeds. Besides, if Cecily went to St. Mary’s his children would not attend the same school with the circus-girl. This had proved a constant annoyance to him, and to be rid of it proved easily worth the trifling expense.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SAINT MARY'S HOUSE

QUITE near the town limits and not far from the smelting works rose a large building with many windows, which in its plainness resembled barracks. A high wall surrounded the narrow, long yard, which looked as bare and ugly as the building. Only at the end of it a few trees belonging to a neighboring garden had dared to stretch a few branches over the high wall, as if trying to bring with them a little beauty.

The neighboring factory buildings also were bare and dirty. While the other quarters of town were thickly populated and showed signs of life, great quietness reigned here, only interrupted occasionally by the sound of engines in the factories. This large, many-windowed building was St. Mary's Orphanage.

It looked uninhabited from outside, for no curtains framed the little windows and no face could ever be spied there. Only one room on the lower floor had white curtains, as well as a few flower-pots, and here an old, wrinkled face could be seen sometimes, framed by a little cap.

These belonged to Mrs. Volkmann, the so-called orphan-mother, who with her daughter, Martha, had charge of the domestic side of the institution.

When Gottfried rang the bell of St. Mary's, Cecily clung to his coat in fright. It sounded extremely shrill

and thus gave her a curious, unfathomable fear of her new residence. The old face in the big cap which looked into the room gave her new courage, though, for the woman looked kind-hearted and in a friendly way bade her enter.

“ I suppose this is the new pupil,” she began, taking Cecily’s hand. When Gottfried confirmed this, she led the two into her little room with the plants and curtains. “ Please wait here a moment. I want to call my daughter Martha,” she said, pointing to a tiny sofa where she wanted them to sit.

Soon she returned, accompanied by her daughter, an elderly spinster, who entered the room in a stiff and serious fashion. There was not much kindness in that pointed, thin face.

When Gottfried had presented Cecily as the new pupil, Martha took the child’s hand and said in a hard and disagreeable voice, “ Say good-bye to Mr. Poole, child. I must take you to the other girls, for I can’t stay long.”

Cecily violently embraced Gottfried with both arms and trembled with emotion as she took her leave. He heartily kissed her once more and in an undertone entreated her to be good. Then he left the room.

The child had not much time to give way to her sudden unhappiness. As soon as she found herself alone, Martha conducted her at once through an adjoining room into a large, bare chamber where at least eighty girls were assembled. The big as well as the little ones



sat at long tables shelling heaps of dried beans which lay before them.

When Martha entered with Cecily, all eyes looked up curiously at the novice. Cecily felt so embarrassed that she hid behind her guide. But the latter placed her in front of her and said in a commanding voice:

“Listen, girls! Here is a new sister. She is called Cecily Melau. I want you to get along well together. Mary Brunnow, you take charge of her! See to it that I hear no complaints about her. Take her to the cloak room, where her clothes are ready, and help her to get dressed. The others will please go back to work. When you are ready, Mary, come back here! Be quick!”

A tall, thin girl with reddish hair stepped up to Cecily and took her hand.

“Come with me,” she whispered, and the little one followed.

They came to a room where clothes hung on pegs around the wall. Mary helped Cecily to take off her clothes and put on others which hung over a chair.

“Watch well how I do it,” said Mary. “You’ll have to do it alone tomorrow.”

“Why don’t I keep my own clothes?” asked Cecily, examining her new costume.

“Because it is not the custom here. We all dress alike,” replied Mary.

Cecily only realized now why the girls had made such a curious impression on her. It was their funny uniforms—dark brown dresses with dark blue aprons. She now received such a brown dress and also such a

linen apron. Her own dress had been quite as simple but much daintier and more childish. The brown skirt hung down to her ankles and covered her arms and neck. She had worn short dresses with her neck and arms partly bare. The apron was not small and dainty, either, like the one she had taken off. It was wide and long like a work-apron with a large bib. Instead of a white collar a large woolen shawl was given her, which was placed folded under the bib of the apron.

The whole uniform was clean and serviceable, but the dainty, small Cecily looked many years older. She seemed so ridiculous to herself in the large woolen shawl that she did not know whether to laugh or cry.

But there was no time for thinking, for she was barely dressed when Mary led her back to the work-room. She placed Cecily, who now looked like all the others, beside her and showed her how to shell and sort the beans into various dishes that stood before them.

Cecily kept on gazing about to examine her new companions, but Mary promptly forbade her to do this. She was not allowed to speak, either, for as soon as a conversation was heard, Martha, who sat at the head of a table in the middle, turned her sharp gray eyes scoldingly to the offender and a harsh, "Quiet, no talking while at work," immediately enjoined silence. Only the crackling of the pods was heard, or the steps of those who replaced the empty pods with beans.

Finally a loud bell resounded in the corridor and Martha as well as all the girls rose from their wooden seats.

“ Those who are chosen for cleaning, do your task,” Martha commanded.

About ten of the girls remained in the work-room to sweep it and set things in order. The others went upstairs where the school-rooms were, just such bare, unfriendly compartments, with long tables and wooden chairs as in the work-room.

The pupils were divided into two classes, and Cecily, of course, was put in the lower class with the younger girls. They had two teachers, Mr. Black, the head teacher, and William Bolandt, his assistant.

Cecily hoped very much that her beloved Uncle William would have charge of her class, but it was the hour for religious instruction which Mr. Black gave in both divisions himself.

When he entered, all the children rose in a body and only settled down again when he had stepped to his desk and had waved his hand.

Cecily, as novice, was put at the bottom of the class and sat on her chair completely absorbed in contemplation of the odd-looking teacher.

Mr. Black was a rather stout man with a short neck and a large spongy face, in which the long, broad nose was very prominent. His lips were also thick and ugly, and his eyes, resembling narrow slits, nearly disappeared in his head. His hair, which was really red, was hidden under a black wig; but this, proving too small for his huge head, did not quite cover the hair at the back of his neck, where it treacherously peeped forth. Countless freckles on his face and hands gave him a

tiger-like appearance. He wore a shabby black dress-suit, buttoned up to his neck, only revealing a black neckcloth which hid his short neck and prevented any sign of white collar from showing. He had huge top-boots on his big feet and the tops were drawn over the trousers. This was partly to guard him against wet and mud, but also to serve as a case for a slight rod or broad ruler, which had their permanent place there. Sometimes Mr. Black preferred to hide these in his sleeve or under the tails of his long coat in order to let them fly out from there in punishment for some misdeed.

Cecily was so absorbed in the contemplation of the black figure at the desk that she did not notice what the teacher had just said in a nasal, rattling voice. Her neighbor gave her a slight push and told her in a whisper to step forward.

As Cecily did not immediately comprehend this, Mr. Black said with a still more sharp and rattling voice, "Have I not been heard? The new pupil is to step forward."

Cecily rose quickly and placed herself beside the desk.

"What are you called?" rattled Mr. Black.

"Do you mean me, Mr. Teacher?" Cecily asked ingenuously.

"What are you called?" came forth more sharply still.

"Elf Goldihair," replied Cecily, raising her large brown eyes.

"One is to talk no nonsense!" cried the hard

teacher without even turning his stiff neck. "I ask once more, What are you called?"

"Cecily," she said loudly.

"Cecily is no calendar name. One is to say one's whole Christian and family name," snarled Mr. Black, still more fiercely. "What are you called?"

"Cecily Melau," she cried.

"The girl Cecily Melau can go back to her seat, but I enjoin her to great attention and quiet," Mr. Black concluded his examination. Cecily hopped back to her seat.

"The girl Cecily Melau is to go decently as is becoming," snarled Mr. Black behind her. Cecily, frightened, slowed down the rapid steps with which she was accustomed to dance through the world and sat down quietly in her seat.

The lesson now began. It was Bible history, and Cecily wondered at all the girls knew in this subject.

She was rather ignorant in Bible stories and hardly knew any of the Old Testament, which her comrades apparently had studied thoroughly. She was very uncertain about the Catechism besides, only having learned it since her arrival in N——, and no one had ever spoken to her of these things before.

"One will take great pains to learn these things," said Mr. Black, gazing sharply at Cecily with his little eyes, when she could give no answer to any of his questions.

With these words he came close to her seat. It was





his habit to wander about the room incessantly during the class. Suddenly striking the table violently before her with his stick he commanded, "One is to fold one's hands on the table and do no mischief."

Cecily, quite scared, did as she was bidden. She gazed astonished at the stick, which she had not noticed before. Where did it come from? Where had it disappeared to so quickly again?

Her neighbor saw her surprise and whispered, smiling, "It is stuck in his coat sleeve."

Cecily in fact saw the black coat sleeve revealing its mystery again. As quick as lightning the little rod flew out over the fingers of another pupil. This surprise was prepared for every scholar who drew Mr. Black's dissatisfaction upon herself.

Finally the lesson was over and William Bolandt, the under-teacher, entered the classroom. Cecily rushed toward him and greeted him with delight. It was a tremendous consolation to her to see his dear, known face among all these strangers.

"Uncle William," she cried, clinging tenderly to him, "I am so glad you came. It is not a bit nice here. I am so afraid of Mr. Black. You had better give us all our lessons."

William kindly stroked Cecily's hair and whispered, "Go back to your seat, Cecily. You must not talk like that. Never let Mr. Black hear anything like that."

The other girls put their heads together and laughed

and whispered, for Cecily's speech had amused them greatly. Since Mr. Black's departure an entirely different tone had come into the class. Even their carriage had changed completely; instead of sitting with head bent forward, eyes humbly dropped, they leaned back in their chairs, even rocked a little to and fro. The expression of timid humility gave way to careless and youthful gayety. They even talked and laughed a little despite his presence, and when he had begun his class, there was still evidence of great restlessness. It seemed as if they had to make up for the restraint Mr. Black had laid upon them.

The class took on a much more cordial tone, and while it was not as still as during the religious lesson, all the pupils were attentive and polite and apparently hung on their teacher with great devotion. His friendly face and the pleasant tone of his voice was a great relief after Mr. Black's disagreeable presence.

When the lessons were over, William gave Cecily his hand in farewell, speaking a few friendly words to her before he left the room.

"Are you related to each other?" asked one of the older girls, who had a pretty, but impudent face, and sparkling, lively eyes. Her name was Grete Müller.

"No, we are not related," answered Cecily.

"Then why do you call him uncle?" asked Grete.

"Because Hans calls him that and I call Gottfried and Christian uncle, too."

"Hans and Gottfried and Christian!" the other

mocked. "I suppose you think we know all the chickens and geese you have at home. Who are Hans and Gottfried and Christian?"

"They all live in the smelting works where I was," said Cecily. "Hans is Aunt Krause's child, and Gottfried and Christian, the sons of the overseer."

"Mr. Poole?"

"Oh, is that where you come from?" Grete exclaimed, surprised. "Then you'll know if it's true that Mr. Bolandt would like to marry the widow there, if the few pennies he gets for his teaching here prove sufficient."

"You mean Aunt Krause? He wants to marry her?" cried Cecily, opening her eyes wide with astonishment. "No, I know nothing about it. She never told me, neither did Uncle William."

"I can believe that, you simpleton. I suppose they didn't tell you," mocked Grete, laughing. "She is said to be a very proud and serious madam. I suppose she was very strict with you, small grasshopper?"

"Aunt Krause is very good, and you need not say such things about her. I won't have it!" cried Cecily, impudently stepping up to the speaker and threateningly raising her hand.

"Just look at the little scratch-bush!" laughed Grete. "She has courage for ten such little pigmies."

"Leave her alone, Grete!" remonstrated Anna Ring, a gentle, fair-haired girl. "Come out now or it will ring for dinner before we are out in the open air. It is our only free time."

Cecily followed the others to the yard where the lit-

tle ones soon began to play tag and hide-and-go-seek, while the older ones walked up and down arm in arm. Cecily joined the younger ones and attracted everyone's admiration by her agility in running.

But soon the inexorable bell gave forth its command, the same which loudly rang between the lessons. At this sound the girls hastened to the dining-hall, which had served as work room that morning. The long tables were set in the most simple fashion, and after one of the pupils had said a lengthy grace, they sat down to eat.

On each table stood a few dishes, and two of the older girls had to serve the rest at their table. At the middle table sat Martha and her mother.

"Those frightful blue groats again," said Grete Müller in a low voice, nudging Cecily, who sat beside her, with her elbow. "Can you eat this? I can't. It tastes as mouldy as rotten cellar doors."

Cecily had never eaten rotten cellar doors and laughed. But as soon as she tasted the first mouthful, she was tempted to get rid of it again, for the groats were most abominable.

"She buys all the spoiled things she can get. They practically give them to her. I suppose they are good enough for us," Grete said in an undertone.

"Who?" asked Cecily, "Mrs. Volkmann?"

"She? God forbid! The orphan-mother is good," whispered Grete, sticking her spoon into the thick dish. "The house-dragon, of course."

"Who is that?" asked Cecily again.

“Martha, you infant! Didn't you notice yet that she is a dragon,” retorted Grete. “Do like me if you can't swallow this awful paste.”

Cecily watched her neighbor in astonishment while she apparently upset the plate and in the same moment slipped the thick groats into her ready handkerchief. Then she quickly stuck it into her pocket.

“I succeeded, hurrah!” she exclaimed under her breath, triumphantly looking at Cecily. “I am rid of the vile stuff.”

“But won't you be hungry now?” whispered Cecily.

“Bread and potatoes must do for today,” said Grete indifferently. “We get meat tomorrow and I'll lay in stores then. It's horrid to have meat three times a week only.”

“I often got no meat for a whole week,” replied Cecily, as she bravely swallowed her portion. The thick, stiff groats with only dry potatoes were indeed hard to eat.

“The whole week?” retorted Grete. “Is your beautiful Mrs. Krause such a miser? The poor under-teacher won't get much fatter then if he lives with her.”

“No, not there,” said Cecily. “I meant with the troupe.”

“The troupe, what troupe?” cried Grete, with astonishment.

But she waited an answer in vain, for Martha's voice called over to their table:



“What has Grete Müller to talk about all the time? Don't you know you are not to speak at meal-time? Why don't you keep better order at your table, Marie Brunnow?”

Then Mrs. Volkmann rose, as well as the young girls, and grace was said again.

“To thank the good God for *such* a meal,” murmured the incorrigible Grete, pulling Cecily after her. “At St. Mary's we do nothing but pray and work and for reward we get wretched food and drink. Come, you didn't tell me yet what you meant by the troupe. I want to be your friend, but you always must tell me everything.”

Cecily was flattered that this bold girl, who was several years older than she, meant to be her friend. In return she related numerous experiences of her young life. Grete listened quite amazed.

But there was little time for talking, and the bell rang for work as soon as those chosen for the task had washed the dishes and cleaned the room. Under the tuition of Mrs. Volkmann and her daughter the next period was spent in sewing shirts for the inhabitants of St. Mary's, but they were of such coarse linen that Cecily could hardly believe her eyes.

It proved a hard task for her small fingers, as she had only learned to sew a very little with Mrs. Krause. She was expected to make a long seam on very stiff, unwieldy linen. In deep discouragement she held it in her hands and looked despairingly at Mary Brunnow when the latter came to see how she got along.

“ But you are not doing anything, Cecily,” scolded Mary.

“ I can't make that seam, Mary,” sobbed the child.

“ Why didn't you say that before, you stupid little thing? ” laughed Mary, good-naturedly. “ Come! I'll show you.”

This was done and Cecily tried her best. When Martha came to examine the work, however, she was so displeased with Cecily's stitches that the child had to rip the whole thing out again and got a violent scolding. Mary Brunnow tried to excuse her, but Martha would not listen. She told Cecily that she would have to sew in their recess if she did not do it better.

“ Come, I'll sew yours. Mine is easier,” whispered the blonde Anna Ring, exchanging shirts. Cecily really succeeded better with Anna's seam than with her own difficult one.

Sewing lasted for two hours, and Cecily hardly knew how to hold her little fingers, they hurt her so. She had never before sat still two hours at such work. Sighing, she longed for the end and thought with inexpressible craving of the beautifully free time she had had at the Pooles'. As soon as sewing was done, the bell called again to other classes. Then came a short pause, when they received black bread and milk. This short recreation was followed by a study-hour and then some more domestic occupation till the evening. Some of the girls picked lentils for their next lunch, some cut the sharp edges away from soap, but most of them had a heap of goose feathers before them, which they had

to tear off from the hard quills in order to make them suitable for bed-feathers.

"That is funny work. I never did that before," said Cecily to her neighbor, Anna Ring. "Did you eat all the geese from which these feathers came?"

"We? Oh, of course! We poor children don't get roast goose," laughed Anna. "We work for money; pulling feathers is well paid."

"For money!" asked Cecily, surprised. "How much will I get today?"

"You? Nothing. The institution gets it," exclaimed Anna. "Saint Mary's is poor. We often pull horse-hair or oakum, but that is horrid work. Weaving straw is the most agreeable."

"I don't know how to do any of those things," sighed Cecily.

"You'll learn it all in time," Anna whispered. "But quiet! we are not supposed to talk."

To sit still, be silent and work were all fearful tasks for the spoiled and restless child. Till now she had always jumped and chattered as much as she pleased and had only kept quiet a short stretch of time.

"It's a nice day for us today. We are going for a walk," whispered Anna at last to comfort Cecily, who impatiently wriggled on her chair. "We stop working sooner today."

"Where are we going?" asked Cecily joyfully.

"We'll take a walk on the highway."

This walk proved to be a comfort. When Martha

gave the sign, Cecily quickly leaped up from her chair and got ready for it.

This was soon done. A small, black hat and a brown shawl was the costume in which St. Mary's children, as they were called, appeared outside the house. Martha marched ahead of the line and behind her in pairs walked the eighty girls.

Cecily walked beside Grete Müller, who was tireless in her efforts to hear all she could about Cecily's life with the Strianskis. She always called her Elf Goldi-hair, a name to which she had taken a great fancy, and Cecily was very happy to hear herself called by it again, for she had been very proud of it.

They were in deep conversation when Cecily saw Lothar and Gabriele coming toward them. With a joyous cry she ran away to greet her friends.

They hardly recognized Cecily at first in her strange garb, for they did not even know that she was living at St. Mary's. After they had barely shaken hands in great astonishment, a sharp call from Martha brought Cecily back to her place.

Lothar only had time to call to her that she was to visit them on Sunday before their playmate flew back to the other pupils, who wound along the highway like a long brown caterpillar.

"How hideous Cecily looked in the ugly long dress," said Gabriele, going after them. "I wish Cecily could live with us while little Hans is ill. We'll beg papa to let her come."

But their father shook his head, explaining to his





MARTHA MARCHED AHEAD OF THE LINE





children that Cecily was a poor orphan who must not be spoiled by the kind of life she would have at their home. She would have to earn her livelihood some day.

"I am not a rich man and have to look after my own family," he concluded, kindly. "The training she gets at St. Mary's is the best for Cecily. It was also her uncle's wish to have her brought up there."

"But can't she come to see us, papa?" said Gabriele. "Can't she come very often?"

"She won't be able to do that," answered the director, "because the pupils only get every second Sunday off. But I have nothing against her coming then."

When Cecily had rejoined her comrades, she walked along sad and depressed, and even Grete's cheerfulness could not make her talk.

All the fine and happy days she had spent with her friends had risen before her, and she suddenly realized the horrible contrast of her present life to her former happy existence. The first day in her new abode was not yet over, and how much unpleasantness she had already experienced! How would it be after a week or a month, yes, even a year? She was shocked at the thought. That could never be. Uncle Melau would surely come to take her away from this horrid place.

The walk pleased Cecily very little. It was frightfully tiresome to walk along the road in a straight line like soldiers. She was accustomed to run about as she pleased, sometimes leaping across a ditch, chasing butterflies or collecting flowers and grasses. They were not even allowed to linger long enough in the meadow

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through which they were passing to pick a few flowers. Martha walked straight ahead and the procession after her.

Cecily returned home weary and unhappy; all her joy in the longed-for walk had vanished. She felt she had rather stay home where she could at least jump freely about. She unfortunately realized that her wishes counted for nothing. She had to bow to the rules of the house in all things as in the walk.

Thin soup and a piece of dry bread formed their thrifty supper. Then the whole company settled at the tables again with some knitting, while Martha read for at least an hour out of the lives of the fathers of the church. A short prayer concluded the day.

During the reading Cecily had fallen asleep. The horrible knitting, which she always hated, sank gradually out of her little hands and her lids closed despite all her efforts to keep them open. Grete Müller pushed her a few times to keep her awake, but it was of no avail. With her head sunk to her breast she leaned back in deep slumber against the back of the chair.

Mary Brunnow, who had charge of the table, looked at first a trifle annoyed at the little sleeper. But finally, pity for the poor child got the better of her and when she made sure that Martha had not noticed Cecily, she let the child sleep on. The others all longed to follow her example, for the reading tired them all.

Only the noise of the chairs being pushed back awoke her. Looking up, afraid, she could not remember where she was. Heavy with sleep, she heard the

evening prayer and then willingly followed Mary Brunnow, who took her by the hand and went with all the rest towards their sleeping chamber.

In a huge room, supplied on two sides with windows, the eighty beds stood in rows. They were very close together and just left room for a chair between, where the clothes were to be laid. On a long side table, brown basins and pitchers were placed. The girls washed here in the morning, one after the other, very hastily indeed, because there were only about a dozen for them all.

Cecily's bed stood between Mary Brunnow's and Grete Müller's. Overcome by weariness, she quickly slipped off her clothes and sank down on her hard bed. Grete Müller still tried to ask her a few questions, but received no answer. Mary interdicted this, as chatting in the bedroom was strictly forbidden.

"I'd like to know what our mouths are really for," growled Grete, settling down on her pillow. "They are surely not for talking."

## CHAPTER XVII

### LIFE AND ACTIVITIES

THE penetrating sound of the bell which roused the sleepers early next morning mingled with Cecily's dreams. She only awoke when Mary Brunnow called her and seized her hand.

The child gave a jump and sat straight up in bed. She had just dreamed that the bell had called Uncle Gottfried to his work and that he had passed her, gaily whistling. She had then called to her dove, Sidi, who was leaning tenderly against her cheek and looking at her beseechingly.

"Sidi, my dear Sidi!" she cried, half dreaming, "What is the matter?"

A laugh beside her completely woke her and, perplexed, she looked at Grete, who was bending over her.

"Elf Goldihair, I suppose you are dreaming of the circus," she whispered. "Quick! get out of bed or you won't be done in time for morning prayers."

Cecily quickly rose and put on her clothes. When she saw that all the basins were taken, she remained undecided what to do.

"You can braid your hair in the meantime, Cecily," said Mary, looking at her.

"My hair!" retorted Cecily, "I can't do that by myself."



“ That is bad, you must learn to,” said Mary. “ I’ll do it for you today. Pay attention so you’ll learn how.”

Cecily’s hair was her most beautiful possession. To it she owed her name. Glinting in brown and gold, it surrounded the pretty little girl’s forehead in light curls and lay like a soft, thick veil on her back. Mrs. Krause had tamed it in a knot or braided it. But now when Cecily alone had the care of it it became a source of annoyance to her. After several vain efforts to get the mastery of the tangled mass, which caused her tears practically every day, she one day cut off her beautiful hair with a pair of large scissors. It now lay around her head in short curls which she could easily master. That at least gave her peace in one direction, for alas, there were troubles enough besides. What did she care for the loss of her beautiful hair when she had so many difficulties to cope with ?

“ You have to make your bed, Cecily,” said Mary, when she had braided her hair that day.

“ I ? How can I do that ? ” cried the little one, in amazement.

“ Look how I make mine,” said Mary, shaking the pillows and smoothing out the cover.

Cecily, trying her best, did not succeed, for her arms seemed too small for the work. Mary willingly helped her.

“ Go, little thing ! I’ll make it for you,” she said good-naturedly. But Cecily thought with amazement of all the things she had to do here, which had never been expected of her till now.

The breakfast, which was eaten after morning devotions, was thin coffee with bread. It was wretched, but Cecily being hungry, was glad to get it.

“It is a shame to call such stuff coffee,” said the ever-discontented Grete to Cecily, while they swallowed it down with sighs.

“Isn't it coffee?” she asked.

“Carrots and chicory, nothing else,” mocked Grete. “Not the shadow of a coffee bean in it. I already see the dishes over there with the stuff we have to grind afterwards.”

Cecily and Grete, as well as a few other girls, had to grind up curious brown roasted discs in coffee-mills. Grete called them roasted carrot slices. Other girls peeled potatoes or cleaned roots, still others cleaned the bed and schoolrooms as well as Mrs. Volkmann's and her daughter's. Some even swept the stairs and corridors of the house. The life going on was as active as in a beehive, for all the work of the house was done by the pupils and no servants were employed. Everywhere Martha's harsh voice could be heard, commanding and controlling everything under her eyes, from the coffee-grinding to the sweeping of the hallways.

She did the cooking herself with her mother's help, but even there she ruled alone. Often the good old woman tried to procure the children better food, as she could not bear to give them horrid groats, rank butter and other disgusting things. But it never helped, for

the weak old woman to get angry about these things; Martha ruled supreme.

“ We have to economize, mother. Mr. Black preaches this every month after going over the accounts,” she replied unkindly. “ Where can I do it except with the food? The girls are not to be brought up as princesses, and if they are hungry they can eat those things.”

When the girls had reassembled in the schoolroom before class, Grete Müller called out loud. “ Elf Goldihair! Elf Goldihair! Come here! ”

“ Why do you call Cecily Melau by such a funny name? ” asked Klara Stolze, one of the younger pupils.

“ It’s her circus-name,” laughed Grete. “ She was a little circus-rider.”

“ Is it true? ” asked Anna Ring, surprised.

“ I don’t believe it at all,” said another.

“ Show us one of your tricks, Cecily, so they’ll believe it,” cried Grete Müller. “ Please jump over all our heads.”

“ Surely, if you want nothing more,” laughed Cecily, running to the bench farthest back and leaping on top. “ Watch! I’ll jump all the way to the desk now. One, two and—three! ”

At “ three ” the small light figure flew the whole length of the narrow room over all the heads on the benches.

A resounding “ Bravo! ” rewarded this accomplish-

ment, but their delight soon died on their lips, for through their noisy exclamations came the snarling voice of the head teacher:

“ Quiet! What unheard-of behaviour is this? The girl Cecily Melau is to step forward.”

Cecily promptly obeyed this demand and stepped to the teacher's side.

“ What was this just now, Melau? What was done? ” he snarled, holding Cecily's shoulder fast with one hand.

“ What was that, Mr. Black? ” repeated Cecily, innocently, “ It is called the king's leap in the circus.”

“ Where? What? In the circus? ” he stammered, opening his little eyes wide.

“ Well, yes, where I used to be. In the Circus Strianski,” replied Cecily with a light in her eyes.

“ No one in the troupe could do it as well as I.”

Mr. Black still stared for a few moments, speechless, into the girl's pretty flushed face. Then he pushed her before him to a narrow high desk at the side of the room. He took out some heavy twine and before Cecily knew what was happening, he tied her fast, each arm to the legs of the narrow desk.

“ Well, I suppose one will not jump now,” he said, turning his back to the perplexed new pupil. “ That will happen every time one might have circus-ideas again. Remember, no jumping is allowed at St. Mary's. One behaves decently here.”

Cecily was beside herself. To be tied like a bad ani-

mal, strapped on both arms. It was terrible! And why? Because she wanted to do her comrades a favor and show them one of her tricks. All their eyes turned upon her; they must pity her heartily, for she had surely not earned such punishment. Timidly and glowing with shame, she looked about her. To her great amazement none of them looked either sad or horrified. Some even laughed and nodded secretly to her. They probably knew this punishment so well that it had lost all terror for them. But Cecily could not calm herself. To rob her of her freedom was the worst one could do to her. She had already despaired at her imprisonment by Mrs. Krause and how much worse it was to be robbed of the free use of her limbs. The inexorable teacher had even threatened to punish her that way every time she jumped. Then she probably would be tied up every day. Jumping and dancing were the whole elements of her life and she hardly knew when she did it.

Despite her despair she had to endure the standing desk. Only when Mr. Black came down from his desk he said to the oldest girl in the class:

“ Vorberg, Cecily Melau may be untied.”

Cecily flew away from her place like a prisoned bird from a cage. She moved her arms violently up and down, for they had grown completely lame. Even the room proved too narrow and she rushed out into the corridor.

“ Isn't our head teacher a lovely man? ” said Grete



Müller, joining her and linking her arm to Cecily's. "Doesn't he look just like a crow? He bought his old dress-suit from a waiter who would not wear it any more, I am sure. I made a little verse about him. Would you like to hear it?"

"A verse?" said Cecily. "The horrid man doesn't deserve a poem. It was cruel of him to tie me just because I showed you how well I could jump."

"Don't get gray hairs from that, darling," laughed Grete. "It happens ever so often. I think we have all been tied up already. He is not allowed to beat us except a rap on the fingers with his little rod. That's why he invented that punishment. But do you want to hear my poem? We have often sung it, but of course no one of our torturers must ever hear it. Listen!" Half singing, she declaimed:

"Black pastor, school master,  
Your stick is well hidden,  
No girl can tell where  
Till she's done what's forbidden,  
In your sleeve or your boot  
Or your coat-tail so black,  
Till out it jumps nimbly  
And hits her a smack."

Grete was so eager in her recitation and Cecily listened so attentively that neither of them noticed that the assistant teacher had come upstairs and had stopped near them.

"But Grete," he exclaimed in a low, reproachful voice. "Are you not ashamed?"

The girl turned round frightened and saw William

Bolandt standing before them. Cecily had never seen him with such a serious, angry face.

“ Oh, Mr. Bolandt, my dear good Mr. Bolandt,” cried Grete, seizing both his hands, “ for goodness sake don’t give me away! I didn’t notice you were behind us. Please don’t tell on me! Oh, you are my very best and dearest Mr. Bolandt! What a dreadful punishment I would get! ”

“ I should really do it, Grete. You have nothing but mischief in your head and might even corrupt my little Cecily,” said William Bolandt. “ But if you promise never to repeat the abominable verse again I’ll pretend not to have heard it and be silent about it.”

“ Too bad about my pretty poem,” sighed Grete with a half-tragic, half-comic air. “ But what is the good? I’ll have to promise. A thousand thanks, dear Mr. Bolandt. You are the best of everybody in St. Mary’s, after all.”

“ Yes, and only too weak with all your naughtiness, wild girls,” laughed William. “ But hurry to your class now. What are you doing out here? ”

“ Oh, Uncle William, I had to run about a little. Mr. Black tied me up for a whole long hour,” lamented Cecily.

“ Why, have you been bad? ” asked William, his pale face flushing in displeasure.

“ I only showed the girls in the class the king’s leap, when they begged me for a circus trick,” she answered.

William flushed more deeply.

“ You must not think about the circus any more and not talk about it, either,” he said seriously, taking the little’s one’s hand in his. “ Will you promise me to do that, Cecily ? It is absolutely necessary. You must not do it, dear, good child.”

She gazed at him surprised ; William’s tone was so urgent, so pleading and commanding all at once. Nodding her head, she promised to try her best, though it would need a great effort on her part. But William was probably right, her tricks were not suitable for St. Mary’s.

When the lesson was over and the pupils had recess in the yard, Cecily was called to Mrs. Volkmann’s room.

To her inexpressible delight she found her Uncle Gottfried there. He had come to inquire after her. Kind Mrs. Volkmann, after nodding, left them alone together, for she could imagine how much Cecily had to tell him.

The time left for them was in fact not long enough for the many things she found to relate and describe about her first day at St. Mary’s. Gottfried exhorted her in a friendly, serious manner to be good. If she would bravely conquer everything she would soon realize that she could learn much more here and also feel at home as soon as she got over the strangeness of it. She here sadly shook her head. She felt she could never be happy or at home in this hideous place.

“ They’ll probably strap me up every day, Uncle

Gottfried. You'll see!" she complained, with tears in her eyes. "Why should I like it here? There is nothing here to give me pleasure."

"Well, I have brought you something which will give you pleasure," said Gottfried, reaching for a basket behind him. "Take off the lid and see what's inside."

Cecily knelt down and did as she was bidden. With a cry of joy she jumped up again.

"My dove, my dear little Sidi!" she cried, beside herself with joy, pressing the bird, which had fluttered towards her, to her lips. "Oh, Uncle Gottfried. You are so good to bring me Sidi. I was longing for her. If only I could keep her here. But they will not let me."

"But you can keep her, for Mrs. Volkmann said so," replied Gottfried, rejoicing in Cecily's delight. "She can live in the little stable, and I'll bring her food from time to time."

"Oh, how good of Mrs. Volkmann!" cried Cecily. "If only Martha lets me, uncle. They say Mrs. Volkmann has nothing to say here."

"Martha has nothing against it, either. Don't worry!" Gottfried consoled her. "But be a good, industrious girl, Cecily, otherwise you can't keep her. Next Sunday I'll come for you and you can see Hans a little while. Aunt Gusti has allowed it. Good-bye, my brave, good girl! Hold up your head! A courageous girl like you won't be beaten by a bit of strictness! My little Cecily won't do that, otherwise I don't know her."

She threw her arms as tightly about Gottfried as if she would never let him go. But, freeing himself, with tender words he was gone after nodding to her once more.

The child anxiously stretched out her arms towards him and cried aloud when the door closed behind him. It seemed as if she simply must go with him, far away from this dreadful place.

Sidi tenderly rubbed her soft head against its mistress's neck, and with a low sob she pressed the little creature to her lips.

"You shall be my consolation. Uncle Gottfried is right," she whispered lovingly, "I am not entirely forsaken if I have you, darling."

Mrs. Volkmann came into the room now and bade Cecily follow her to the stable. She was shown a small enclosure where several chickens were kept. Sidi was to live here and Cecily could visit her in her free time, feed her and let her fly about if she was not afraid to lose her.

"Sidi never flies away, you don't need to be afraid, Mrs. Volkmann. My dove always stays where I am."

The little creature was really an immense consolation to her little mistress in all the hard weeks and months that followed. Each day passed like the first, occupied with heavy work, supervised by strict discipline. The only variety consisted in changing these tasks which kept them busy from early till late. The



younger girls did the easier work, but even this proved hard enough for Cecily. Sitting still during the long periods proved the most difficult of all. Sometimes she preferred punishment and violent scoldings in order to leap about and shake off this dreadful ban.

She was frequently strapped, for her restless behaviour drew Mr. Black's dissatisfaction down upon her all the time. Martha had unfortunately adopted the same punishment. Cecily could have gotten used to all the disagreeable things, the continuous, hard work, the bad food and the hideous clothes, but the greatest of all horrors was to be robbed of the freedom of her limbs.

Cecily's first free Sunday, to which she had looked forward, did not prove as enjoyable as she had hoped.

It was wonderful, of course, to leave at Uncle Gottfried's side instead of creeping along as part of the brown caterpillar. But the thought of having to return that night spoiled her whole pleasure.

She was only allowed to visit Hans for a very little while, for he still lay pale and sick in bed. An inflammation of the brain had been the last result of his fall and had brought the child once more to the brink of the grave. Aunt Krause also looked pale and sick and Grandmother Poole's eyes had such a sad look that Cecily's heart grew heavy again over all the anxiety her carelessness had caused them. She was glad to leave the little house and visit the two friends who had invited her so kindly.

She was greeted enthusiastically but she felt clearly she did not belong here any more. She was a St. Mary's orphan now and not the children's proper play- and schoolmate. It was very kind of Lothar and Gabriele to want her, but she knew now that she belonged to another class.

Only with Riki did the girl feel completely happy, for Uncle Gottfried always came there and Uncle William, with whom she could talk about the orphanage. She gradually grew quite estranged from all her other friends.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A VISIT

AS REGULAR as machine wheels the days at St. Mary's rolled on, each resembling the other in tiresome sameness. The Fall had brought raw winds and from a leaden sky fell the first small flurry of snow, announcing winter.

When the pupils assembled in the workroom long before sunrise, lamplight had to be used. Cecily was often still so tired at that hour that she only worked mechanically. In the evenings, too, when Martha read aloud from mission-books or the Scriptures her eyes often closed from sheer weariness. She usually only understood half of what was read, and the matter interested her therefore very little.

Through the continuous strain on her strength she became more weak and tired than she had ever felt in her life. Even when at the circus and doing strenuous exercises she had always had long rests while they travelled from town to town. She never had a relaxation now, as the few hours on Sunday counted for very little. They had to go to church afternoons as well as mornings. Sitting there so long tired her dreadfully, though she loved the beautiful church and the solemn tones of the organ. The fine old clergyman was nice to hear, too. But weariness always overcame her during the sermon. The girls could not keep awake by looking

around, for Martha punished everybody who had not kept completely motionless and silent during service. But for a child of Cecily's years this proved a hard demand.

The longer she remained at the orphanage the more quiet and serious she became. A kind of disgusted indifference had taken hold of her, with which she bore all things. What availed all struggles and complaints? They only made things worse instead of better. The world in which she used to live lay far, far off like an unattainable paradise. It was better even not to visit her friends at all, then the pain of coming back was spared to her.

Only once in a while the old childish gaiety would break through and lead her into mischief. Generally the punishment following on its heels plunged her into her usual apathy.

One day Cecily was playing ball, a game considered unwomanly by Martha and only allowed to the smallest girls. While doing this her ball fell over the wall into the neighboring garden. Cecily had always gazed at the overhanging trees with a terrible desire. She had often wished to be just once on the other side of that horrible wall and had longed to walk about the pretty garden. She found the hard stone plaster and bare walls so hideous and repelling that this neighboring spot of green had become the goal of her hopes.

The ball Uncle Gottfried had given her had fallen over. If only she might fly after it, how wonderful it

would be! And why not? She had learned to climb well, and the rough wall should not be an obstacle. It would be easy to get down the other side as long as there were trees. She must not by any means give up her ball. But what would Martha say if she found her climbing over? She would, however, be willing to bear hard punishment for such delight.

As easily as a little cat she climbed up on a hidden part of the wall, where a small stable lent its roof to her endeavor. She had slipped off her heavy leather boots, and cleverly putting her feet on each projecting stone, she easily reached the top of the wall.

Grete Müller stood below laughing, while Anna Ring pleaded with Cecily to come down before anyone should see her. But all her prayers were in vain. Cecily had already swung herself into the overhanging branches and disappeared on the other side.

The few leaves of the trees were already yellow and lay scattered, and only a flower here and there stood covered by snow in the withered beds which stretched along a broad path across the garden. But however wintry and bare things looked, Cecily gazed with shining eyes at the yellow trees, the dried-up flowers and leaves. Never had a corner seemed so desirable to her as this simple, faded garden which had been the goal of her wishes ever since she had come to St. Mary's.

How often she had longed to be on the other side of those hideous walls! The shady green trees whose branches temptingly hung across had seemed to call,



“Come over here. You can be happy here. Here you can find flowers, birds and butterflies and all the freedom you can want for jumping.”

But alas, she had had to remain in the ugly yard where no little leaves could grow and all the grass which sprouted between the stones was carefully weeded out.

Drunk with joy, she ran along the paths of the forsaken garden. All the flowers were faded, the fruit and grapes were gathered. Looking about her undisturbed, she lay down on the withered grass and collected the few flowers which were left. She dug her unshod feet deep into the yellow leaves lying heaped on the ground. They rustled magically when she stepped on them.

She found many bugs and other small creatures on the wild plants on the lonely paths, and a small numbed butterfly with faded colors overjoyed her. Taking it in her hands, she examined it with leisure. She carefully placed the little creature on some broad leaves in the sun. How happy she was when it gaily spread out its wings and enjoyed the warmth!

Yes, she was herself a poor, numb butterfly which longed for air and sunshine. At last her heart had found what it had incessantly longed for. This forsaken garden was like a fairyland into which she was transported. It was just like the stories Gabriele had read to her, and she would not have been in the least surprised if a golden bird with glittering eyes and tail had flown down to her from heaven or sweet fairies had bewitched her with songs.

But suddenly she started. This was not sweet fairy music, but the harsh warning of the bell, calling the girls to their midday meal. How terrible! Here she was still sitting in the pretty garden, dreaming of beautiful, fair things.

She quickly picked up the ball and in a few leaps had reached the trees and from there the top of the wall. Still hearing Anna Ring's timid summons, she cautiously climbed down to the sloping roof, which she reached unseen.

When she gazed up to look over the last stretch, she became terribly frightened. Instead of Anna Ring whose voice she had just heard, she saw Martha close beside the stable. After she had hesitated a moment, Martha's severe call compelled her to climb down as quickly as she could.

Like a little sinner she stood before the woman and timidly asked for pardon. She had only fetched her ball, which had fallen to the other side of the wall. To her great astonishment Martha did not give her as severe a punishment as she had feared. She was only locked up during lunch in the little stable and got no dinner.

"You can be glad you didn't have to eat with us, Cecily," said Grete in an undertone, when the little one had been released after a sharp lecture. "We had turnips, hard enough for calves, and the fat was as rancid as ever. One could not get rid of them on account of the horrid gravy. There, I kept my bread for you! I suppose you had no feast in the garden over there. Did

you perhaps see some of the rich family Kunz, who own the garden and the factory? You stayed over there so long. We were so afraid Martha would see you climbing down. Of course, if you paint the devil on a wall, he comes.”

Cecily gratefully ate the dry bread, for she was hungry. But when she could tell Grete nothing of the rich Kunzes, in whom Grete was very interested, the latter found Cecily's wanderings in the garden very stupid and could not comprehend why she had remained so long.

But Cecily gazed with heightened longing at the overhanging trees and felt more than ever like a prisoner. This week, especially, disagreeable tasks had to be done, and Mr. Black let his little rod dance oftener than usual on his pupil's fingers. Finally Cecily was even caught in telling a lie, in her endeavor to escape punishment. She was therefore tied longer than ever to the high desk.

She had grown so unhappy through all these trials that she lost her merriness completely. One Sunday afternoon she leaned indifferently against the wall instead of getting ready for her Sunday visit.

The doorbell rang and soon after Mrs. Volkmann came to Cecily asking her to come into her room. A visitor was here to see her.

“Just go in! I'll call Martha,” she said. The child followed these directions, thinking that Uncle Gottfried had come to fetch her, because she had not come of her own accord.

When she entered Mrs. Volkmann's room a woman in Silesian peasant dress stood before her. The big bow of the black silk shawl was on her forehead and long ribbons lay on her back.

She stepped up to the girl and stretched out her hand.

"Don't you recognize me, Cecily?" she questioned laughingly.

The child looked at the woman puzzled. Then she cried out, astonished, "Mrs. Strianski! Is it possible? But in these clothes?"

Quickly shutting Cecily's mouth with her hand she said hastily, "Be still, little Cecily! I am called Mrs. Forster and I am a peasant woman from L——, a neighboring village. If I told them my real name they would not have let me see you. Nor your Uncle Melau, either, who sends me here to fetch you. He wants to see you again."

"Uncle Melau?" cried Cecily, beside herself. "Is Uncle Melau here? But why doesn't he come himself?"

"I have told you already that they would let in a clown as little as me if they knew I was Mrs. Strianski," she replied under her breath. "Uncle Melau is sick and can't come. The old one is going to ask her daughter if you can come with me to L—— to see your uncle there. Here she comes and the other one with her. Don't give me away and be quiet if you want to see your uncle."

Mrs. Strianski cleverly answered Martha's further

inquiries about the uncle. She gave herself out as one of Cecily's relatives in whose house her uncle lay ill. He insisted on seeing his niece, she said. The child would not stay there long, and she herself would bring Cecily back that same evening.

Neither Mrs. Volkmann nor Martha had an adequate reason for denying this wish. Cecily therefore left the institution soon after at Mrs. Strianski's side, trembling with joy and impatience to see her beloved uncle again.

She quickly called to her dove, which she wished to take along and show to her uncle. Hiding the little creature under her shawl, she hastened along beside her companion, who seemed eager to turn her back upon the town as rapidly as possible.

They walked so fast that she hardly found time to talk with Mrs. Strianski. All her questions were answered only curtly.

Cecily wondered at the distance they left behind and began to worry that she might come back too late that evening. The law of the house required all the pupils to be present for evening prayers on Sunday evening.

They reached a village at last, but it still did not seem to be their goal. It must have been further than Mrs. Strianski had said, because they took a carriage here in order to make better headway. Despite her joyous anticipation, Cecily grew more anxious. But when Mrs. Strianski promised to let her come back all the way by carriage, she grew calmer. It was really



glorious to drive freely about instead of marching in a row with the other girls. The sky was intensely blue and the trees looked so gay along the highway with the remnants of their red and yellow leaves. The cold, wintry air made her feel more happy and bright than she had felt for ages.

Mrs. Strianski gave Cecily some cake she had in a basket and also offered her a few drops of wine. Cecily willingly complied, for the brisk walk and the cold air had given her an appetite. Also cake and wine tasted delightful after the bad food at St. Mary's. But soon after this she grew intensely tired. Before she could fight against it, sleep had overcome her. Her head sank heavily to the back of the carriage, which, grinding the sand, slowly drove along.

When she awoke she did not know how long she had slept. The carriage had stopped. She looked about her sleepily, but her head and limbs were still so heavy that she could not collect herself.

"Are we here?" she asked wearily, hardly opening her eyes. When Mrs. Strianski led her into a room, she was glad to be able to sit down on a sofa. In a few minutes she had dropped off to sleep again.

A head cautiously peeped into the room now.

"You can come in, husband, she sleeps like a marmot. I put a bit of morphine into her wine," said Mrs. Strianski, laughingly pointing to the child. "It seems to have been a trifle too much, even."

"So much the better, if she leaves us in peace for a

while. But won't they easily follow you?" asked the husband, entering the room.

"It will prove a sour task. I named a village in the opposite direction and they expect the girl back quite late. If she doesn't come, they'll think her uncle kept her over night. They'll only begin to search for her tomorrow. But then we'll be away over all the seven hills."

"Is she well again or has her accident done her any harm?" inquired Mr. Strianski.

"Hale and lightfooted as ever and as clever as we need her," replied the woman. "She proudly told me that she had learned to read and write and do arithmetic as well. So that is provided for. Only she has grown a lot and the automaton will prove too narrow for her."

"She can squeeze up a bit," grinned Mr. Strianski. "That is no obstacle. A young body like hers is still soft and pliable like wax. But let us hurry now. The train leaves right away. The further from N—— we are the better. We must get across the border first, for they are sure to search for her. But if she is once in our Turk, no one shall find the girl. We are not going to be so stupid as to let her appear again as Elf Goldihair."

He carefully lifted the sleeping child in his arms and carried her into a compartment of the train. They had been in a railroad station. Cecily quietly slept on and the train steamed out, carrying them off with lightning speed.

The dose of morphine had been so powerful that Cecily still slumbered when they reached their destination. They went into a house where both the Strianski children stayed as well as a few other members of the troupe.

Despite the fact that it was night, Strianski immediately started off in a wagon containing the utensils of the much-diminished troupe. Cecily was laid on several soft covers and slept on.

Only when the sun rose did she awake.

In the morning when they arose at St. Mary's at this season it was still very dark. She started up afraid, therefore, thinking she had overslept, which would mean a punishment. How astonished she was when she found herself in the Strianski's wagon, in which she had travelled so much in the old days, instead of in the huge bedroom at the orphanage.

"But gracious! how did I get here?" she cried, jumping up and rubbing her eyes as if she was still dreaming. "What has happened? I must go back to St. Mary's. Is it still Sunday? Where is Uncle Melau? I was to go to him. I don't understand it."

"Uncle Melau has gone ahead and we'll meet him in the next village," said Mrs. Strianski kindly, sitting down on the cover which had served Cecily for a bed. "Don't you enjoy driving about in our wagon again? You used to love it so."

"But I am not allowed. I must go back to St. Mary's," she cried, anxiously. "Oh, you don't have

an idea how strict they are there. How did I sleep so tight? What shall I say when I get back? Oh, let me out, please, so I can quickly run back there."

"An hour more or less won't matter now, little Cecily," Mrs. Strianski consoled her. "And don't you want to see your uncle? And all your other old friends, the pony and the old white horse?"

"Oh, yes, uncle, I must see him first!" cried Cecily joyfully. "And the pony is still alive, and the poor old white horse? Are the Chinese jugglers still with the troupe, too, and the snake-charmer? And are Alfred and Lena well? Do you think they will know me again?"

As by a magic wand Cecily was transported again into the past. All the terrors the life with the troupe had held for her had faded at the joy of seeing again everything she had held dear. One is always glad to forget unpleasantness and remember the beautiful and good side of life. So it was with Cecily's childish mind. The delightful memories of those days had been greatly enhanced by all the restriction of the past few months.

When Mrs. Strianski cleverly reminded the child of everything she had loved, her eyes glowed with pleasure. She saw her pony, and the old white horse which still pulled the wagons. Everything, in fact, appeared to Cecily in a rosy light. Seizing the little one's hand, Mrs. Strianski said sweetly:

"Would you like to stay with me a little while, Cecily? Or do you like it better at St. Mary's?"

“ Oh, no, it's horrible at St. Mary's! ” cried the child, pressing her hands before her face as if to keep out the vision.

“ Then don't go back there, foolish child! ” laughed Mrs. Strianski. “ Who wants you to? ”

“ Aunt Krause and Uncle Gottfried and everybody at the works,” she sighed. “ They are all so good. But I can't go back to them.”

“ Then stay here with us, Cecily. Why should you work so hard at St. Mary's? ” cried Mrs. Strianski, tenderly, putting her arm around her. “ You are a pretty, talented child. I don't think you should be brought up for a mere servant-girl. You shall be happy here, Cecily. My husband long ago repented of having beaten you and treated you so badly. He won't ask much from you, either, I'll promise you that. Give me your hand, child, and stay. You won't repent it, I know. Then all your troubles at St. Mary's will be over.”

Cecily had grown pale. She meditated deeply and the inward struggle showed in her mobile features.

“ No, I mustn't,” she said, sighing. “ What would they all think of me at the works if I ran away? ”

“ But if it is not your own fault. They are bound to hear that I took you away, you little simpleton,” said Mrs. Strianski.

“ Then they'll fetch me back and I'll have a still harder time at St. Mary's,” replied Cecily, hesitating. “ Oh, how much rather I would stay here! ”



“ Then don’t worry. They can’t easily fetch you back. Don’t be afraid of that,” laughed Mrs. Strianski. “ You were so tired and slept so soundly that you did not notice how far we came in the train. N—— is a whole day’s trip from here and it would be hard for you to get back. Your Uncle Melau will be so pleased to see you. He was gone from the village yesterday when we reached where he expected you. A message called him on.”

“ So you don’t think he’ll be angry if I went away from St. Mary’s? ” Cecily inquired further.

“ Surely not,” Mrs. Strianski assured her. “ He repented long ago of having left you at that place. That’s why he’ll be so glad to have you back again. If you don’t like it, you can go back to N——. We won’t keep you against your will.”

“ To St. Mary’s, after I ran away? Oh, never, never! ” cried Cecily, shuddering. “ I don’t think they would ever take me back. They would probably strap me up all day. No, I must stay here now, for I can’t go back to the works. Where else should I go? I want to be with Uncle Melau again as before.”

She sat silent in the corner, looking very pale and depressed. The thought of what Uncle Gottfried, William and Aunt Krause, and all who had been so good to her, would say to her flight tortured her terribly. But she did not want to return to St. Mary’s under any condition. She would rather appear again in the circus and patiently bear all the troubles, for here she

was at least free and unfettered. In that horrible institution endless torments had to be borne with not a single pleasure and no freedom for compensation. She would have to write her friends a letter. Probably her Uncle Melau would say a good word in her behalf, so they wouldn't be so angry. If Uncle Melau was satisfied that she remain, they couldn't possibly object. After all he was her guardian.

While Cecily, lost in these thoughts, was leaving N—— further behind her every minute, great anxiety was felt there on her behalf.

When she did not return that night Mrs. Volkmann thought it had probably grown too late and the peasant woman had kept her over night. She took the child's part against Martha, who was terribly indignant at such a crime against the strict rules of the house. She even regretted having given her permission.

When the next forenoon and even afternoon passed without Cecily returning, even Mrs. Volkmann grew angry with her. But William Bolandt, whom Martha told about it, could not understand it. He knew that the child had an uncle she loved very dearly, but it seemed improbable to him that the latter would keep the child so long, even if he had grown more ill.

He consulted Riki and she immediately set out for the village the peasant woman had named as her abode. She wanted to bring Cecily back herself, or find out what was keeping her. But the name of Forster, by which the peasant had called herself, was totally

unknown in the hamlet. No one of that name lived there and nobody had heard of a stranger who was supposed to be ill there. The uniform of St. Mary's orphans was well known in the whole neighborhood. It had been Sunday afternoon, and young and old had been out of doors in the village street, but no person had seen such a little girl.

Riki, thinking that the village named was probably wrong, hastened to another hamlet. But she got the same information everywhere. No family called Forster lived there and no pupil of St. Mary's had been seen. In great anxiety and sorrow Riki at last returned home, immediately informing Gottfried of what had happened. All the villages of the environs were carefully searched now, for Gottfried, as well as his sister Gusti, formed the immediate suspicion that Cecily had been stolen by Mrs. Strianski, who wanted the talented child back with the troupe at any price.

"I am afraid she went only too willingly," said Mrs. Krause sadly. "Despite all our efforts the little thing has the blood of a vagabond in her veins. She was frightfully unhappy at St. Mary's and the restrictions were probably much too hard for a child so used to freedom. It is a great pity about the girl. There are fine and noble traits in her which will now be ruined. I don't believe her uncle wanted to see her; it was just a means to lure her away. God knows if he is still alive. If he were, I should have news from him."

All search and inquiry even on the part of the police

were fruitless. In a single village somebody remembered having seen a peasant woman and a St. Mary's orphan pass on the highway. But no one could say where they had gone or what had become of them. The unsuccessful search had to be given up at last. Even if Cecily was found, she probably would not willingly return to St. Mary's, and no one but her guardian could compel her to do so. But it remained as great a riddle where Mr. Melau was.

## CHAPTER XIX

### NEW FETTERS

WHEN Strianski at last arrived in the town where his circus was to appear, Cecily again asked for her uncle. He had probably been kept in the village where he was staying, said the director to comfort her. But he would soon join them, because he had promised to take part in the performance.

The child's heart grew terribly anxious when she still could not see her uncle. She waited for him from day to day with painful longing, but alas! Uncle Melau did not appear.

"Is your uncle the hunchback who used to blow the big trumpet?" asked Alfred, Strianski's little son, one day. Cecily happened to be alone in the room with him and his little sister.

"Yes, he is. You know my Uncle Melau, Alfred" said Cecily.

"He has not been with us for ages," replied the boy with a sly look. "Not since you fell down from the trapeze and remained behind in that town. Mamma forbade me to tell you, but I tell you just the same. Why did she beat me so hard this morning? You can wait for him a long while, Cecily; he'll never come back to us. Wild Jimmy, with the big long nose and the red hair blows the trumpet now. But he can't do it as well as your hunchbacked uncle. I can't stand him, either, for he is horrid."



Cecily stared into the sly face of the boy. The words she had heard were so incredible she could not comprehend them.

“ Alfred, what did you say? ” she asked unbelievably. “ Uncle Melau not with the troupe any more? He won’t come again? Don’t talk such nonsense.”

“ It’s no nonsense. Ask Lena! she knows it, too,” laughed Alfred.

“ But we are not supposed to tell Cecily. Mamma will get frightfully angry with us,” whispered the little girl, who lay ill in bed. “ Don’t betray that you know it, Cecily, or we’ll get dreadful blows.”

Cecily threw up her hands and sank down in a chair. Everything whirled about in her head. What had she heard? Uncle Melau away as long as she and no word of his coming back! How could this be? His name had been the magnet to lure her away from N——. She had only wanted to come back to be with him again. Had they really deceived her? Was it all fraud and cunning? Had Mrs. Strianski only invented everything? And to what purpose? Why had the woman been in such feverish haste not to be overtaken? These thoughts whirled through Cecily’s head. She felt like going mad. Nothing was clear to her except the one horrible certainty that Uncle Melau would never come and that she had been cheated. With a heart-rending cry she jumped up from her chair and out by the door.

“ Is it really true, Mrs. Strianski,” she cried breathlessly, flying into the other’s room, “ that Uncle Melau is not with you any more? Isn’t he coming again?”

Please say that the children told me wrong. He is coming back, isn't he?"

Mrs. Strianski pushed the child roughly from her. Cecily, passionate and excited, had wildly grasped the woman's arm.

"What is there to shriek about, silly thing? If you know it, I don't have to tell you. It is true. He isn't coming back and God knows where he is wandering about."

"You have tricked me, Mrs. Strianski!" cried Cecily. She seemed to have lost her senses from desperation and again held the woman's arm. "You lured me away from St. Mary's so I can earn money for you again. I know it. I want to go away from you, you bad, deceitful woman!"

"Go back to N—— and to your darling orphanage," cried Mrs. Strianski, shaking off the passionate girl once more. "I suppose the police won't lock up a little tramp like you, when they find you begging. Or have you pockets full of money to make the journey back to N—— with four post-horses? Why such wild and senseless behaviour? You should be glad I fetched you away from that horrid place. It is much nicer here. You don't need to do any more neck-breaking tricks for us, for you have probably grown too stiff by now. Hurry up and take yourself off! Leave this silly whining! I have had enough!"

Here she pushed the crying child out of the room. Cecily returned to little Lena, beside herself with sorrow, and sank beside the little one's bed, sobbing.

It seemed as if her heart would break with pain and sorrow.

“ Uncle Melau, Uncle Melau! ” she whimpered, “ come to me, come to your poor little Cecily. ”

She felt a small hand softly caress her face, which was wet with tears.

“ Cecily, poor little Cecily! Don't cry or Lena will have to cry, too, ” said a soft voice tenderly.

Cecily looked up confused.

“ Is it you, little Lena? ” she said desolately, looking up at the pallid child. “ Leave me alone! I am very, very unhappy. I wish I were dead and with my mother in heaven. ”

“ In heaven? ” said Lena, surprised. “ Does one go to heaven when one is dead, Cecily? ”

“ Yes, to God and the good angels, and there one is blissful and happy and does not need to cry any more, ” replied Cecily, folding her hands with a sob. “ How wonderful it must be! I shall find both my parents when I get there. Aunt Krause told me that. ”

“ Don't you know, Cecily, that I will soon go to heaven? ” cried the little girl with sparkling eyes. “ They always say I will die soon. I think papa and mamma would be glad, for I am really in their way. Alfred can already help in the circus. He can stand quite straight on papa's head and arm and isn't a bit afraid when papa catches him. But I am so ill since I fell and have such pain. Papa has often said I am a cripple and it would be better if I died. I was always so afraid to die. But if I'll be an angel in heaven, I

can look forward to it. Then I won't have any more pain and won't have to lie in bed."

"Where are your pains, Lena?" asked Cecily, embracing the little one and for the moment forgetting her own sorrow.

"Oh, everywhere, Cecily," complained the child. "My back hurts me and my feet and my head, everything, everything. Mamma has to carry me, because my legs are so weak. She says I am as light as a feather now."

"Where did you fall, little Lena?" asked Cecily with deep sympathy. She thought with horror how easily the same fate could have been hers by falling from the trapeze.

"Papa and mamma were throwing me to each other, and I always had to stand up straight on papa's hand or shoulder," related the child. "I could do it quite well, but when I had to stand on his head I fell down. It was very awkward of me, for papa's head is quite big. But I grew dizzy and fell. Papa said at once I was no more good, for nobody is who gets dizzy. Then I was to go inside the automaton papa bought. I was meant soon to learn how to read and write and do arithmetic, but since I have been so ill they can't use me for that either. That's why they fetched you, Cecily. But the place is much too small for you. I am only seven and could have found room in it, but you are so big already."

Cecily suddenly realized why Mrs. Strianski had

lured her away from N——. They needed a small person who could write well and answer the questions put by the public to the automaton; they had chosen her for that. Mrs. Strianski had herself said that she need do no more tricks. What else was she to do, then? She knew only too well they wanted her to earn money and they had stolen her away for that sole purpose.

“Have you seen the automaton yet?” asked Lena, startling Cecily out of her meditations. “He is called Solin Pasha and looks like a Turk. He is quite ridiculous! He writes down answers to people’s questions; of course he can’t do it himself, so some one has to creep inside and guide his arm for writing. You can hear and see everything from inside. Papa showed him to me once, but then I grew sick and since then he stands in the shed. Papa said at that time that he could earn a lot of money with him. He wanted me to hurry and get well. It has taken too long, now, I am afraid. That’s why they had to get you, Elf Goldihair. Where have you been so long? Have you brought your dove along?”

“Yes, Lena, I’ll bring her to you,” said Cecily, hastening away, for the little creature could comfort her the best. Soon afterward the two little girls were bending over the bird. They stroked its shining feathers and the smooth, gleaming head, which Sidi sometimes leaned against Cecily’s and then against Lena’s neck. It seemed as if it wanted to show them its affection.

“Oh, Cecily, can’t you leave Sidi with me?” begged Lena. “It is so tiresome to lie in bed and be alone all day. She would be company for me. You can



always have her when you come to me. Will you do it, Cecily?"

"Gladly, Lena, if your mother lets you. She couldn't be with me in the Turk anyway. Just keep her with you."

Just then Mr. Strianski's shrill voice called Cecily's name. He wanted to show her the automaton and tell her what to do. She kissed her dove tenderly before setting her on Lena's shoulder.

"Love Lena, my little Sidi," she said, and the tears streamed down her face once more. "I have to go to the black chest now and can't take you along. Oh, how I looked forward to showing you to Uncle Melau!"

On the circus posters the marvellous and clever answers of the famous Solin Pasha were announced in huge letters. The director had changed his name to Laporte in order to be spared further search. Soon the automaton proved such a magnet to the public that large numbers surrounded him from day to day. They delighted in asking him manifold questions and giving him arithmetic problems to solve.

Gravely sitting on his cushions, Solin Pasha looked down on the crowd. After every question he slowly nodded his turbaned head and immediately wrote the answer on a little slip which lay before him. The problems in arithmetic gave him no difficulty either, and everybody marvelled at the clever Turk. No one could understand how a doll could give such answers.

"If he leaned against a cupboard or sat over a covered table, one might think the person who gives the

answer was hiding there," said the people, examining the figure from all sides. "But the little chest on which he sits can only give room for a tiny child and not possibly a person who can write and add. I can't understand it."

After such words a sigh might have been heard coming from the chest. It was true that the room inside was barely enough to hold a tiny child. But a growing girl had to sit there hour after hour and answer the questions for the Turk. Pressed together so that her forehead touched her knees, she squatted there. She only got air from a few openings, artificially hidden, through which she could hear the questions of the crowd. She had to direct a little machine from below, which moved the Turk's arm while writing. Her clear brain and perfect knowledge in writing and arithmetic enabled her to do this perfectly.

She was only expected to work a few hours daily in the chest, but the director made her practise after hours. She needed more speed, he said.

The young, pliable limbs of the child really squeezed up so tight that the narrow space seemed room enough for her. But when Cecily was out of her prison, she was actually unable to move. Her limbs refused to obey her and seemed completely paralyzed. The lack of air oppressed her and the exertion to hasten the automaton's activity brought her into the most miserable condition. She often broke down exhausted, covered with perspiration, beside the Turk after they had lifted her out.

It was true the director made no other demands upon her and she needed to take no other part in the performance. But how much rather she would have appeared as Elf Goldihair again, instead of enduring tortures in the Turk.

She begged and supplicated to be spared this torture, and asked for at least a few days' rest, but the cruel director was inexorable. His cash-box never filled more rapidly than in the hours when the automaton entertained the public. Before this magic all other considerations melted. If the public began to grow weary of Solin Pasha, the troupe went on and lured a crowd from another town. In this way Cecily never had any peace and no time to rest from the terrific strain.

Soon she began to complain of pains in her chest, which for hours was cruelly pressed together and robbed of air. Her feet, allowed no proper room, either, also refused to serve her. She often sat quietly in a corner dreaming, for she was unable to talk or run about. Her strength and gaiety were completely broken.

Her thoughts would fly back to the best days of her life then, the happy days at the smelting works. Like fair dreams all the friendly people who had surrounded her there passed before her, as well as the happy experiences of those times. Oh, they were gone forever! She would never see those dear faces again and not enjoy another day out of doors under green trees and the radiant skies.

If she had been allowed to go back to Aunt Krause's

dear little house, how quietly and industriously she would have done all the tasks demanded of her! No wild or wanton exploit of hers should ever frighten her Aunt Krause any more. On her knees she would beg forgiveness and be a changed child henceforth.

Even St. Mary's did not appear so dreadful to her now. Even if she had to work and study hard and only had an ugly yard for relaxation or a walk in pairs, it was a thousand times better than here. Her present exertions would soon be her ruin, she felt sure of that.

She often thought secretly of running away. But they had travelled further and further from N——. How could she ever find her way back without money, with her poor, miserable body and in the middle of winter? Mrs. Strianski was right. They would arrest her as a vagabond and send her back to the troupe from which she had flown. Soon she had not enough courage even to entertain this plan. She gave herself up quietly and indifferently to everything which was demanded.

Her only joy was being with little Lena. This gentle child, who was failing from day to day, clung with the greatest affection to Elf Goldihair, as she still loved to call her. As soon as her friend came to her bedside, she stretched out her arms in loud demonstrations of delight. If Cecily was not too exhausted, she told the little one of the happy days she had spent in N——. Lena in the end knew all Cecily's best friends and knew how they lived and worked. Uncle Gottfried was for her also the dearest, best friend, who might have given her, too, a pretty pink dress. She loved him and Uncle

William, Hans and his mother, as well as all the other friends in the yard and in the shop; even at St. Mary's.

Cecily told the sick child many of the Bible stories she had learned at the orphanage. Quite often she talked of God and Jesus Christ, who had to suffer so much on earth; much more than either of them. Lena had never heard of it till now. The story of our Lord, who as a little baby had lain in a stable, then had had to flee with His parents from the bad people, Cecily was obliged to tell over and over again. In the evening before going to bed she prayed regularly with Lena just as Aunt Krause had taught her. Even the otherwise wild, unruly Alfred folded his hands then, and quietly repeated the words of the prayer Cecily taught to Lena.

All the good seeds which had been planted in Cecily's soul during her stay in N—— among the upright people there began to blossom forth. The rough, wild life of the troupe had never seemed bad to her before, for she knew no better. But it frightened her now and she found it abominable. Often she hid in the furthest corner in order not to hear the godless curses and words, the ugly shrieks and foul jests. She would even implore some of the troupe not to say such words, not to drink and fight so much. But a mocking laugh was always the only answer. Red Jimmy even threatened in his brutal way to beat her with his knout if she talked such nonsense.

Then Cecily was silenced by horror and fled to Lena, her only refuge from those fearful men. But the long-



ing to get away from these surroundings and live again with good, decent people grew stronger and stronger. She thought, aghast, that she might have become as rough and wild as some of the women of the troupe if she had not known a better life.

“ Oh, God, save me from getting bad and rough! ” she often prayed, terrified by the ugly goings-on around her. “ Please let me go back to good people! ”

With disgust she observed that many of the troupe did not mind stealing from and deceiving each other. A lie, indeed, was an allowed thing and no one was given the slightest reproach on account of it. She had lied herself in N——, had taken sugar and money secretly, and other things. She had thought nothing of it at the time and had felt that the punishment was extreme. Now, when she saw these things done by her companions, she found them abominable. The fear of growing like them seized her so violently that she would rather have borne the worst torture than be untrue or unfaithful a single time.

One evening, as she stepped up to little Lena's bedside, she found the sick child in a state of great excitement. Holding the dove pressed close in her arms, she drew Cecily down to her.

“ Elf Goldihair, mamma will kill and roast your dove tomorrow, ” she whispered, trembling with fear. “ She told papa so today, when the doctor ordered roast meat for me. I heard it. Take her, Cecily, and hide her, or let her fly away. Otherwise they'll take her and kill her. And I was to eat the poor, dear creature. Oh,

I'd rather starve than eat you, dear, dear little Sidi."

Crying and sobbing, she once more pressed the bird to her lips before giving it to Cecily, who received it, perplexed.

"You are right, Lena," she said finally, kissing Sidi with pale, trembling lips. "I'll let her fly. That way we can save her from being killed. I heard once that doves fly back to places where they have lived a while, even if the place is far away. Maybe Sidi will fly to her box in N——, where she was so happy. I'll tie a little letter round her neck with a greeting from me. Then they'll know that I have not forgotten them in case Sidi should really get there."

She pulled a piece of paper and a pencil from her pocket, something she always carried with her now for constant practice. She wrote:

"I send all my loved ones in N—— the warmest greetings from far away. Please forgive me for what I have done; I have been dreadfully punished. Think therefore with some love and pity of your poor, unhappy Cecily.—B, 16th of Febr. 18——."

She tied the folded slip carefully under the dove's wing, kissed her tenderly once more and held her out to Lena for a last farewell. Stepping up to the open window, she said, "Fly away, Sidi, and return to where we used to be so happy." Then she gave Sidi her freedom and sent her off with mourning eyes.

The dove at first fluttered uncertainly to and fro, as if not knowing where to turn. But suddenly she shot away like an arrow and was gone from Cecily's sight.

“ She has gone, Lena. Oh, I wish I could fly with her,” she cried, returning to the child’s bedside. Here her sorrow overcame her at the loss of her last comfort. Breaking out into sobs, she hid her face in Lena’s pillows. The little one cried, too, and wound her arm round Cecily. Thus the two children lay still beside each other for a considerable time.

“ I’ll ask God to help me through Sidi, Lena! ” said Cecily softly at last. While she folded her hands, an eager prayer mounted to Him on high who is the Father of the oppressed and sorrowful.

## CHAPTER XX

### MR. VON RHEIN

BEFORE the dainty iron fence, surrounding a stately house in the neighborhood of Hamburg stood a short, deformed man with wretched clothes. Hesitating a little, he laid his hand on the brass door knob, while his eyes searched the windows for a sign of life. But no one was visible. The house, as well as the garden, lay distinguished and calm in its wintry setting. Soon after the bell was rung the garden door opened automatically from the house and the visitor walked over brightly-colored flagstones to the front door. Here an old serving woman waited.

“Can I see Mr. von Rhein?” asked the short stranger with a timid air. He, at the same time examined the old woman, who with her white neck ruffle and silver cap, which only half hid her graying hair, was the picture of neatness itself.

“Mynheer von Rhein is in his study,” she said kindly, while she examined the deformed, wretched figure with pity in her honest light-blue eyes. “Do you want something from him, dear sir, or can I give him a message? I am his housekeeper, Miss Koenig, in case you want to tell me your errand.”

“No, I need to speak to Mr. von Rhein himself,” replied the stranger. “Would you be so kind as to

tell your master that I have something important to tell him? ”

The servant disappeared and soon after bade the hunchback enter the room. Mr. von Rhein was already waiting.

When the stranger followed this request, he found himself opposite an old gentleman, whose figure looked very powerful. His full, red face was framed with snow-white hair and he carried his head proudly erect. The expression of his features also spoke of a lack of gentleness and softness.

“ You wish to sit? ” he asked his visitor, approaching him by a step.

“ I beg permission, Mr. von Rhein, to speak to you of your granddaughter,” said the stranger, hesitating. “ I am Job Melau, the brother of her deceased father. Besides you, Mr. von Rhein, who are the child’s grandfather, I am her only remaining relative.”

The old gentleman stared into the speaker’s wrinkled, sad face. His hand grasped the back of a chair as if he were afraid of fainting.

“ Granddaughter ” he threw out, “ I have neither child nor granddaughter. What gives you the right to talk to me that way, sir? ”

“ My love for the poor, forsaken child,” said Job Melau, rapidly passing his hand over his eyes. “ I know that you disowned your poor daughter when she followed my brother into the world against your will.



The sorrow over your anger made poor Jenny's life so bitter that she often felt as if she could not bear it any longer. She was frequently on the point of coming back to you and begging your forgiveness; but fear held her back till it was too late, and she died in sorrow and misery soon after her husband. She placed her little daughter in my care and implored me on her death-bed to beg for a grandfather's pity. She wanted me to get what she never obtained herself, forgiveness. The poor, innocent child is not to blame for her parent's fault. But as long as I was able to care for Cecily, I didn't want anybody else's help. I was jealous of her love, too, and could not stand having to give over the child to one who had cast off her mother. But I am poor now, as poor in fact as a beggar, and sick, too. I can't look after Cecily any longer, and soon she won't have me any more. I come to you, Mr. von Rhein, before it is too late. Take pity on your poor granddaughter."

The old gentleman had listened to Melau's communication in sombre silence, without interrupting by a single word. But his red face grew redder and redder and his gray eyes nearly started from their sockets.

"My daughter knew what the consequences would be if she became the wife of that circus-rider," he said now in a freezing tone. "She was not my daughter from that moment. A child belonging to her and that vagabond won't ever be acknowledged by me. This is the answer I make to your request and I also beg

never to be bothered by like demands in future. Away, I say! There is no room in my house for vagabonds like you."

But before Job Melau could leave the room in his indignation, he saw the proud man stagger. He would have sunk to the floor if Melau had not quickly caught him in his arms. The fearful inward excitement had brought on a lurking enemy that long ago had threatened the old man. A stroke of apoplexy stopped his heartbeat the moment he had closed his heart against the soft feeling of pity.

While Job Melau knelt on the floor, perplexed, waiting in vain for a sign of returning life, the old serving-woman rushed into the room. She had heard a heavy fall just after the angry voice of her master. Fearing the worst, she had hastened to the room. It was not the first time the old gentleman had had bad attacks in consequence of agitation.

"Oh, my master, my dear, good master!" she cried desperately, sinking down with a sob beside the lifeless figure. "He is dead! What we feared long ago has really happened. Oh, my poor, poor master!"

"Send for the doctor. He may still be saved," said Job Melau, trying in vain to raise the heavy body. The serving-maid rushed off. But whatever means the doctor used, life did not return.

"What brought about this sad event?" asked the doctor. He gazed a trifle searchingly at the suspicious-

looking stranger in whose presence the mishap had taken place.

“ I asked Mr. von Rhein to have pity on his poor little granddaughter, the child of his cast-off daughter,” said Job Melau sadly. “ But he denied me everything and sent me angrily out of his house.”

“ His daughter’s child! ” cried Lore Koenig, the old woman, folding her hands, pale and trembling. “ Oh, God! My dear, dear Jenny has a daughter! Where is she? Where does she live? Where is the poor, unhappy mother? ”

“ In her grave for two years,” said Melau quietly. “ Her child still lives, but her grandfather did not wish to hear about her.”

“ That was God’s judgment following on the heels of his hard words,” sobbed the old woman, wringing her hands. “ Oh, how often have I tried to soften his heart towards his daughter, but all in vain. I was not allowed even to breathe her name and was always afraid to provoke his fearful anger. But the child, the innocent child! How could he punish her for his daughter’s fault? It is inconceivable. Tell me, dear sir, where is the little one, my dear Jenny’s daughter? Oh, I want to love and honor her to the end of my life, as I loved and honored her mother. Take me to her! ”

“ She had an accident in Silesia and I left her there in the home of good people,” said Melau, sighing. “ I have taken care of her since her mother’s death as well

as I could. But I am completely destitute and wretched now, with no resources left me. I can do nothing further for her. That is why I used the last means of helping her. But my journey here was fruitless. I gave my last remaining strength to it and with no result. May God take care of the poor, forsaken child now!"

"But, my dear sir, the little one is heiress to a large fortune," said the physician, placing his hand on Melau's shoulder. "Mr. von Rhein never made a will as far as I know, though he often said he meant to. If you have proofs that your charge is the child of his only daughter, nobody can fight the inheritance. Stay here a few days till you see how affairs stand."

The doctor's words were really true. There was no will, and the considerable fortune fell to the only heir of the deceased, his granddaughter, Cecily Melau

What a tremendous change this incident brought about in the child's prospects! The happy Job Melau could hardly believe that his little darling was freed all of a sudden from poverty and could lead a comfortable, care-free life. As soon as it was possible he set out on his return to N——. He wished to bring the wonderful news to Cecily himself.

In the first joy and longing to see her beloved Jenny's child the old servant promised to accompany Job Melau. She had been for years both servant and friend to the orphan's mother. But she soon gave up this resolution. In all her life she had never left the house of Mr. von Rhein, with whom she had moved

from Holland to Hamburg, and had grown old and gray there.

She therefore preferred to await the child in these rooms and get everything ready for her reception. Uncle Melau was to fetch her new mistress as quickly as possible and together with her, look after the well-being and education of the little heiress.

Job Melau, who had made the trip to Hamburg by foot and with the greatest privation, still felt exhausted and very ill. But he had no peace till he could see Cecily again and tell her of the happy change in her fortunes. He had only written twice to Mrs. Krause since Strianski had discharged him. As long as his prospects were so hopeless he preferred not to write at all, for he had been unable to secure another engagement. Therefore he had no means to pay Cecily's foster-mother. He suffered the greatest poverty himself and hardly knew how to earn the most necessary means of subsistence.

He had kept absolute silence and had laid his darling's fate in the hands of the Heavenly Father, who surely would not forsake her. By His kind providence she had been led to kind people, where she was better cared for than by the Strianski troupe.

But now, when the circumstances had been so marvellously altered, the noble fellow felt so eager to thank the kind family himself. He was also anxious to repay them a hundredfold in Cecily's name what they had done for her.



Giving the faithful Lore Koenig his hand in farewell, he set out as rapidly as possible to N——, where he had left the child. Sick and weak as he was, he allowed himself no rest. In the comfortable way he was travelling now he did not think it could injure him very much. The joy over Cecily's happiness had already strengthened him a little. Looking about him brightly and gaily, he hoped soon to be over his weakness and exhaustion.

## CHAPTER XXI

### JOB MELAU

AT N—— the young blacksmith Gottfried crossed the yard one evening, obviously sunk in gloomy thought. His sister Gusti watched him from far and went to meet him. She carried her boy on her arm, for he still looked frail and delicate and was recovering rather slowly.

“ Well, Gottfried, so serious and thoughtful again? ” she said pleasantly, putting her hand on her brother’s shoulder. “ You take these things too much to heart. You must not loose all your gaiety. First, you worry over my poor boy, then over Cecily’s disappearance, and now it is Christian. It really does no good, for he is much better already. Of course the wounds he got from the glowing iron were terrible. But he is wonderfully well looked after in the new hospital and was able to walk a few steps today. I have just seen him. He really is quite bright and well.”

“ Thank God this trouble is over! It was heavy to bear,” said Gottfried, sighing. “ It really seems as if sorrow and misfortune had followed us these last months.”

“ And is my happiness nothing to you, Gottfried? ” retorted Mrs. Krause, gazing at her brother with sparkling eyes.

“ Of course. It has been the only ray of hope in

these last dreary days," said the brother, stroking the widow's dark, shiny hair. "Riki and I have wished for your and William's engagement for ever so long and couldn't understand what kept you back."

"You know that William's small salary at St. Mary's did not allow him to think of marriage," replied Gusti. "But as soon as this good position was offered to him he came to me at once to ask me to be his wife. Now Hans is well again and Christian is better there is no further reason to be unhappy. We ought to be grateful to God."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Gusti," answered Gottfried, thoughtfully pushing back the hair from his forehead. "If only . . ."

That instant old Mrs. Poole entered the room and said eagerly:

"Christian has just sent here. He begs you to come to him at once, Gottfried. He has something to tell you."

"Good, I'll go right away," said Gottfried, absent-mindedly, while he turned in the direction of the large new hospital, built near the works.

As Mrs. Krause had mentioned, Christian Poole had been there the last few weeks. While he was standing near the furnace, a workman running by him with an over-full ladle had poured liquid iron over his foot. At first the wound seemed so dangerous that it was uncertain if the foot of the sufferer could be saved. Soon, however, it got better, and this anxiety disappeared. The slow healing process bound Christian to his bed

now, but all the sympathy and love shown him, not only by his family, but also by his comrades, lightened this trying time. It had had a most favorable influence on the rather sombre, harsh temperament of the young man. The two brothers especially had been drawn closer together, therefore Christian's wish to see Gottfried that night had nothing unusual in it. But Christian had a special reason for this request. While he sat chatting in the convalescent room that night, a sick man was carried into the house. A servant soon after came in, relating to everybody that the new arrival had been brought from the post, with which he had arrived a short time before, unconscious and very ill. His destination apparently was N——, for his ticket showed it to be his goal. He was a small, much-deformed man, whose name he had forgotten. In raving fever he often mentioned the name of Cecily and constantly wanted to go to her.

“ A small deformed man, who wishes to come to Cecily? ” said Christian thoughtfully. “ Is the sick man's name possibly Melau? ”

“ Yes, I think that was the name written on the bag I carried for him, ” replied the servant. “ Do you happen to know the man, Mr. Poole? ”

“ It is possible, I'll see him myself, ” said Christian, requesting the servant to push his rolling-chair to the sick man's chamber.

When he arrived there, the fever-flushed patient had just opened his eyes and confusedly gazed about.

“Where am I? What has happened to me?” he asked, half master of his consciousness, glancing at Christian, whose chair was rolled up to his bedside. “I want to go to N——. I have no time to lose here. I must see Cecily.”

“Be calm, dear Mr. Melau,” said Christian kindly, seizing his hot hand. “You are in N—— already.”

“Who are you? How do you know me?” cried the sick man, looking at Christian in surprise.

“I am Christian Poole. Cecily was taken into our home, don’t you remember, Mr. Melau?” replied Christian gently, trying to soothe the sick man. “In the smelting works.”

“Yes, yes, near the works, I know,” said the patient, closing his eyes with a sigh. “That’s where I wanted to go and tell Cecily that her grandfather has died and that she has become a rich heiress. Yes, yes.”

Christian, convinced that the sick man was still raving, gently stroked his hand. Then he said:

“Just sleep quietly, dear Mr. Melau. She shall soon come to you. She would be frightened to see you so ill. Therefore, it is better for you to rest a little first. You are well taken care of here.”

“Yes, yes, I want to get well first and sleep it off,” whispered Job Melau, again in the clutches of the fever. He turned over to the other side in order to sleep it off, as he had said. But days went by before he regained his senses, and also when the delirium was past the doctor forbade excitement. As the patient had apparently for-



gotten why he had come to N——, it was not difficult to conceal Cecily's disappearance from him at first.

Finally after a slow recovery, having regained consciousness, he repeated to Christian the story which he had revealed at first, and the young man then felt that it was the truth. He dared not tell the poor man yet of Cecily's disappearance, fearing to make him more ill again. Often the brothers consulted together how to break the bad news to the uncle.

Just then Gabriele and Lothar, who had been playing in the neighborhood, came to the house quite excited.

"Gottfried, Gottfried, come quickly to the pigeon-cote!" cried Lothar. "Elf Goldihair's dove has come back. It must be Sidi, for I remember her very well."

A light-gray dove sat on the dove-cote, exactly resembling Cecily's pet.

"Sidi!" cried Gottfried, calling to her. The little creature at once fluttered down and sat on Gottfried's shoulder. But she seemed so spent and tired that her wings hung down wearily.

"Look, Gottfried, there is a little note under her wing," cried Gabriele. Gottfried undid Cecily's sad little letter from the faithful messenger's neck. In spite of the great distance the bird had found the dove-cote where she had been so happy.

But the dove must have been detained somewhere, for the letter was quite old. Despite the immediate efforts to locate the child in that town, all questions proved fruitless. Everybody supposed her to be with

the Strianski troupe again, but such an one with another name had long ago left the town. No one had seen a little girl with them, either, and it was unknown where the troupe had gone.

“ Poor little Cecily! ” said Mrs. Krause, while tears rolled down her cheeks upon reading the sad little missive. “ How severely she has been punished! She was probably not to blame for her flight after all.”

By that time it was impossible to conceal her disappearance any longer from Uncle Melau. As soon as the doctor assured them that the agitation would not injure his condition, he was told the news. The poor man cried like a child at first, but gaining new courage he said confidently:

“ We must find her, and perhaps even quicker than we think. After all, we have a mighty talisman to help us; money is sure to do it. Cecily’s rich inheritance shall help us to open the doors which have concealed her.”

Not long afterwards an announcement appeared in all the newspapers. A reward of two thousand thalers would be paid to any person restoring to her family a little girl of eleven, whose appearance was minutely described. She was presumably traveling with a circus troupe, with whom she had appeared formerly as Elf Goldihair. If the director would willingly give up the child he was assured of the above-named sum and the promise to hold him free of punishment.

But all expectations were in vain.

“ They must take me for stupid indeed, if they think their promise will tempt me,” said Strianski, laughingly to his wife after having read the advertisement. “ The little thing earns us money in a sure way. I couldn’t trust their promise not to punish me, and I’ll take care not to walk into their trap. Our Solin Pasha sees to it that no one can find the girl whom people might remember as Elf Goldihair. No one suspects her to be in that little chest.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### A MEETING

GOTTFRIED's grave, thoughtful air, which his sister had already noticed several times, grew worse from day to day. As he gave evasive answers to every question, no one knew what was troubling the gay young man.

Only Riki knew, and she tried to dispel his fears, not believing in them herself.

"I am glad you came," she said hastily one evening, when Gottfried came to take her for a walk. The weather was not fair but he knew how much the industrious girl needed a relaxation.

"What is it? Is there news from the coal mine where we invested our money?" asked Gottfried quickly. "You look so pale and troubled, dearest Riki."

"Yes, we got fresh news," replied Riki faintly. "Your worries were well founded. If only I had listened to you! Now it is too late. The director has disappeared with all the company's money and they are declared bankrupt. Father has just heard it."

"Really! It went even quicker than I feared. I am certain we have lost everything, all our hard-earned pennies. You'll see," cried Gottfried, staring before him. "I always thought it would happen. Unfortunately I preached to deaf ears and was weak enough to half share your hopes. A little while ago we might have been able to get back some of the money. Now we

won't get a single penny. It is simply hopeless. All my anticipations of being able to make my first payment on the forge outside the town are over. I am doomed to remain forever the poor blacksmith-apprentice who can't even support a wife."

"We'll have to start at the beginning again. Be brave and hold up your head, Gottfried; oh, please," said Riki, while bright tears rolled down her cheeks. "Poor father! he is much worse off. Through mamma's persuasion he was foolish enough to invest quite a large sum in the enterprise, all he possessed and some borrowed money besides. He, as well as we, completely trusted those people, who knew how to present the enterprise as very advantageous. He hoped to be able to pay back those debts within a short time and have a large profit besides. It was nothing but fraud. Many credulous people have been cheated and many others as well as we will lose their hard earnings. Few will be hit harder than father, though."

"I somehow guessed it, though he never wanted to admit it," said Gottfried, completely cast down. "How does mother bear up under this dreadful blow?"

"Better than I feared," replied Riki. "The consciousness that it was her fault makes her quiet and dejected. If it had not been for her, father would never have borrowed money. Instead of complaining and reproaching him all the time, she tries to calm him and give him courage. There is something quiet and firm in her behaviour; I never saw her so soft and gentle. But she is frightfully unhappy at heart, for she is afraid



they are completely ruined. The creditors will want their money back as soon as they hear of the company's failure. And where can father get it? He'll have to sell everything, the house as well as the shop. It is a dreadful misfortune."

"Well, perhaps we'll all be able to save something. Don't despair, dear Riki." Gottfried took the rôle of comforter now that he saw the girl could not hide her sorrow any longer. Pressing her hands before her face, she laid her head on Gottfried's shoulder and gave free vent to her grief in violent sobs.

"I can't show father how anxious I am about him," she said, drying her tears, which, however, constantly broke out anew. "William is so happy about his engagement to Gusti that I don't want to make his heart heavy. Please forgive me, therefore, Gottfried, if I pour out my trouble to you, for you have enough sorrow through your own losses. We are both young and able to work, but poor old father—what will become of him?"

"You are right, Riki. It was cowardly and mean of me to think only of our loss," said Gottfried, stroking Riki's cheek. "But the prospect of waiting God knows how long till we can marry absorbed all my thoughts. You are better than I am, for you are hit as hard as I. But you women are a curious folk. Who would have suspected Mamma Sali of being so brave and strong as she shows herself now in her misfortune? It might even prove a blessing for your father that he married her despite his age. The poor, soft-hearted

man would despair completely if he did not have her support."

"Yes, Gottfried," replied Riki thoughtfully, "it is true. But I believe, nevertheless, that it is good for him to have William and me about him to show him affection. He would miss this if he were alone with mother. Therefore it is better that we shouldn't marry yet, Gottfried. I must not leave father for a while, I know that."

"You are a good, faithful girl, and there is no better in all the world," said Gottfried, drawing his betrothed to his heart. "The good God won't let affairs go too badly for your sake, I am sure. Let's have courage, whatever may come. Shan't we, my dear girl?"

Riki smiled in the midst of the tears which still rolled down her cheeks. Giving Gottfried her hand, she said firmly, "Yes, we will, Gottfried."

But their courage and steadfastness were put to a harder test than they had thought. The loss all investors suffered through the shameful bankruptcy was as great as Gottfried had feared. Neither he nor Riki got back any of their hard-earned money. The well-established grocery shop belonging to poor Nikodemus Bolandt was closed by his creditors and he was allowed only to live in his little house by compassion till it was sold. The sum for its sale would at least cover a part of his debts.

Quiet and sad, poor little Nikodemus sat in his dark chamber behind the small red curtain. His short legs, which had run about so eagerly in the shop beyond in

order to wait on customers, could rest every day now, for there was nothing to do.

Even the noisy outbreaks of little Victor did not rouse him from his constant gloomy thoughts. He had not noticed that the small boy had climbed to the sofa and had taken the crocheted green cap from his head, making his bald head gleam in the sunshine.

Madame Bolandt just then entered the room with a letter in her hand. She looked very overheated, but energetic just the same. She had given up scolding and, as Riki had related, mostly had a kind encouraging word for her desolate husband.

“ Well, that at least is decided,” she said, stepping up to Nikodemus, replacing the green cap on his head and giving Victor at the same time a little slap on his naughty fingers. “ My brother writes we should come to America as soon as possible. He says it is the best thing we can do. His brewery in St. Louis is going splendidly, and help would be very welcome to him, as he knows little about the business end. You are to relieve him of that, old Demus. If your son-in-law wishes to join you, he can find plenty of work, too, as they lack an able blacksmith, and his earnings would be very good.” Nikodemus answered with a deep sigh.

“ I suppose it has to be, dear Sali,” he said quietly, “ and we can’t thank God enough for this chance. But it is hard for an old man like me to emigrate to a far country and start all over again.”

“ So it is, my poor Demus. You are right! God knows, I’d much rather stay here, too, in our little

town," answered Sali, with unusual gentleness. "Unfortunately the harm cannot be undone, so we won't worry about it further, but make use of this timely help. My brother is a good man, with whom you won't have any difficulty, Demus. If he really advances us the traveling money as he has offered, we'll accept it. We must do our best to get away from here as promptly as possible, for you'll only worry yourself to death. If it had not been for Riki and Gottfried, who cheer you up with their sense of humor, I don't know how you could have stood it all. It is a real blessing both want to go with us."

"Yes, yes, a real blessing," replied Nikodemus gloomily. "If only everything here were all settled."

"Just let me look after that, old Demus," replied Mrs. Bolandt cheerfully. "You travel ahead to Hamburg with Riki and get everything there we still need for our trip. As soon as I am done here, I'll come after you with little Victor and perhaps Gottfried, if he is able to get away so soon. Riki is soon coming home and I'll talk everything over with her. She is a sensible, resolute girl, who will attend to things in Hamburg as well as possible."

"But William's wedding must take place before everything else; I won't go away till then," said Nikodemus. "The poor lad would otherwise be broken-hearted. If Gusti is his wife, he'll bear the separation from us much better."

"Yes, yes, Riki just told me that they are getting married Sunday week," replied Mrs. Bolandt. "We

can have everything to suit you, good old Demus. Take a little walk with Victor now! The sun is shining and the air will do you good. The poor boy gets out so little, too, since we sent Bertel home, on account of there being nothing here for him to do. Go out to the works and tell your future daughter-in-law of our plans! She takes such a lively interest in everything, and Victor loves to play with little Hans. Perhaps you'll hear some news about little Cecily. What a pity it is that old Melau can't find the child, despite travelling all the way here. Dear God, how changeable fortune is in this world. The poor little beggar-girl is now suddenly a rich heiress and we at whose table she ate are beggars in her stead. Luck and fortune are unstable things."

"Oh, well, the scales may go up for us again, Sali, who knows?" said Nikodemus as soon as he noticed that his wife had grown melancholy at these words. "We'll take your advice and won't give up. That's the most important thing."

Two weeks after this conversation Mr. Nikodemus and his daughter Riki wandered one evening along a street in Hamburg.

"No, father," said Riki, sighing, "however things are going I was determined not to leave you, and Gottfried was of the same opinion. It is natural that it was hard for us to separate for so long, but it was the best we could do. If, when we have got well settled in America, everything is as favorable as Sali's brother writes, he can come after us and I'll become his wife. There is no use marrying when things are so uncertain.



We are both young and can wait. Don't trouble about that, father! William and Gusti were of our opinion, too. They waited patiently and at last have come together."

"Yes, you may be right, Riki. I suppose it was the best thing to do," said the father sadly. "But my heart feels heavy at the thought that you, too, are leaving our dear home for my sake. Oh, Riki, I am afraid I'll not be able to stand it when the dear land where I have grown old fades from my sight. Oh, my dear, dear home in N——! I'll never be as happy anywhere in the world as there."

"Listen, father! Didn't somebody call me?" said Riki suddenly, holding back Mr. Nikodemus. "But no, who should know me here? It must have been the wind that brought queer sounds from the harbor. It is quite frightening in these little harbor streets. We had better go to more frequented parts."

"Riki, Aunt Riki!" somebody called again in a low voice, and full of surprise, Riki felt her dress held fast.

Quickly turning about, she saw that the hand stretched out from a dark doorway. It was a miserable little hand, but despite that it held on so tight to Riki's dress that she could not budge from the spot.

She went behind the door which hid the figure and found a little creature squatting on the floor, crying:

"Aunt Riki, oh, Aunt Riki! I am your Cecily," she said. "I hid here till the boat leaves, for I want to go there and hide. They can't fetch me back from the water."



"AUNT RIKI, OH, AUNT RIKI! I AM YOUR CECILY"



Riki bent down to the little one, who was trembling like an aspen leaf, and embraced her.

“Cecily, my little Cecily!” she cried in astonishment, at the same time lifting the child, who could hardly stand on her feet. “Where do you come from and who won’t fetch you back?”

“Mrs. Strianski, who is called Benony here, or Laporte,” whispered the child. “She or Red Jimmy always finds me when I have run away. I don’t want to go back to the Turk, no, never, not if they beat me ever so hard. That’s why I want to hide on the boat, for they won’t look for me there. They can’t send me back if I am on the ocean. If I had had money I should have come back to you long ago, and I am sure you wouldn’t have sent me away again, would you, Aunt Riki? I’d have been so quiet and good, for I can’t jump any more and sometimes I can’t even breathe. Oh, I have such frightful pains here.”

Pressing her hands to her chest, she sank back whimpering and lay nearly fainting in Riki’s arms.

“My poor, poor little Cecily,” the latter said, crying. “What have they done to you? Father, look, this wretched, miserable little creature is our gay, bright Cecily.”

Cecily had come to again and was hiding once more behind the door.

“It’s too bright on the street and Red Jimmy will find me right away. He is so sly!” she whispered, terrified. “Come into the dark, Aunt Riki! What are



you doing in Hamburg? Is Uncle Gottfried here, too? Oh, my good, good Uncle Gottfried!"

Suddenly she sobbed aloud and threw both arms about Riki, who lifted and wrapped her in a large shawl.

"Nobody will recognize you that way, little Cecily, not even Red Jimmy. But be quiet now!" she said, taking the slight figure on her arm. "Your Uncle Melau has been looking for you for a long time, and I'll bring you to him. That will be better than leaving with the ship, won't it?"

"Is it really true? Is he really here, Aunt Riki?" whispered Cecily, clinging to her protector. "Mrs. Strianski said that, too, and he never came."

"Did I ever lie to you, Cecily?" asked Riki, reproachfully. "Am I like Mrs. Strianski?"

"Oh, no, no! You are good; all of you are good and never lie like those at the troupe," replied Cecily, holding on tightly. "Only my little Lena didn't do it. She was good, too, and is now a little angel in heaven. Oh, I'd love to be an angel, too, Aunt Riki. Then my chest wouldn't hurt me so much, nor my limbs, either. Is that Uncle Bolandt beside you? Where are you going?"

"I have told you already, to Uncle Melau," replied Riki. "He lives in a beautiful house here and father and I are staying with him. An old lady is there, too, who looks forward to seeing you. She loved your mother very much."

"What is she called? Do I know her?" asked Cecily, surprised.



“ She is called Aunt Koenig, and she brought up your mother when she was a little girl like you,” explained Riki. “ But don’t talk any more or you’ll get more pains. The wind is so icy.”

Cecily did as she was told and shut her eyes, for she was faint with weariness.

Soon Riki felt, that, leaning against her shoulder, she had fallen fast asleep. Thus she brought the poor child into her grandfather’s house. Job Melau had returned there a short time before after long, fruitless efforts to trace Cecily. He had succeeded in discovering Strianski’s troupe and had followed it, but with insolent cheek the director declared that the child had long ago run away. He had even no idea where she was roving. The disconsolate man had despairingly gone from place to place, but his hope of ever regaining Cecily had grown weaker from day to day.

Riki entered the room and silently laid the sleeping child in Job Melau’s arms.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ELF GOLDIHAIR'S GRATITUDE

A FEW days later in a beautifully furnished room of her new home Cecily rested on soft pillows, while Lore Koenig, sitting beside her, was carefully mixing her a cooling drink. The old woman's eyes turned always anew towards her little charge, who was quietly smiling and admiring her Dutch silver cap.

"How much you resemble your mother, dear little Cecily! It is incredible," said Lore, at last, offering the child the drink. "I feel as if I had grown young again and was looking after my little Jenny, who was sick so much when she was little. She looked just like you when we came to Holland first, and Jenny, your grandfather and I moved into this house. She soon grew well and strong, however, and we were so happy. You'll see, your strength will soon come back, too, under my care and you'll lose the bad cough and your troublesome breathing."

"I think so, too, Aunt Lore," said Cecily happily. "When little Lena Strianski died I implored God to take me to Heaven, too, with Lena and to my dear parents. I was so dreadfully unhappy! But it is lucky God didn't do it; Uncle Melau would have been too sad and I never should have known you. You are so good to me and love me, don't you, Aunt Lore?"

The old woman kissed her and tenderly smoothed

out her gold-brown hair which had grown quite long again.

“Your hair, too!” said Lore in a low voice, “the identical color and the same soft curl of my Jenny’s.”

“They always called me Elf Goldihair because my hair is so shiny,” replied Cecily. “But Uncle Melau doesn’t want to hear that name any more, because it reminds him of the bad Strianskis. They will wonder where I went. Red Jimmy won’t look for me in this beautiful house, will he? If they hear it, they’ll want to fetch me away again, but you won’t let them into the house, will you? Oh, they are so bad! You can’t have any idea how wicked.”

“Don’t worry, darling, they won’t dare to come here,” said Lore Koenig, stroking Cecily’s hand. Uncle Melau will see to it that they get punished for leading you away secretly and then treating you so cruelly. Don’t be afraid of them any more.”

Job Melau now entered the room, together with Riki Bolandt.

“The doctor has allowed me at last to see you, darling Cecily,” Riki cried with animation. “I can’t possibly go away without telling you how incredibly happy you have made us all. Uncle Melau says you won’t hear about our gratitude, but I am sure you can’t mean that. Oh, goodness! my head turns round when I think of it all! Oh, you dear, good child! How can we ever repay you for what you are doing? It is like a blessing fallen down to us from heaven.”

“Oh, Aunt Riki,” said Cecily, while the tears

streamed suddenly from her eyes, "you mustn't talk that way. What you did for me was a hundred times more. All my life I can't be grateful enough for that. Only when I was away from you again did I realize what a blessing my stay with you was. How much that is compared with what I did! Uncle Melau said I was only giving a small part of all the money I have to keep you from going to America. It is perfectly natural I should arrange for you to stay in dear N——. Your father would rather stay in his nice shop, wouldn't he, than go across the ocean? And you, too, Aunt Riki, and dear, good Uncle Gottfried. Has he bought the forge and are you going to be married at once?"

"Here, read for yourself how full of gratitude his heart is towards his beloved little darling," said Riki, laying a big, fat pack of letters on the table. "They have all written to you, William and Gottfried as well as Gusti and Sali; yes, also the director's children, Lothar and Gabriele. There is even a letter from St. Mary's for you. The delight at having you with us again and having thought of us all with such affection is beyond words. You can see from the letters how much we always loved you and how we have always considered you one of us since Uncle Melau brought you, sick and weak, to the foundry."

"Oh, I wish I could go to N—— with you right away, Aunt Riki," cried Cecily. "I long to see them all again, but the bad doctor won't let me. He said that if I don't obey him and Aunt Lore and keep completely quiet I'll never get well again, and I want to so very

much. I'll come as soon as the bad pains in my chest are better and my feet are stronger. Is Aunt Krause, no, I mean Aunt Bolandt, really not angry with me any more? Is Hans entirely well again? And at St. Mary's—did they forgive me there for running away?"

"All only think of you with affection, dear Cecily. Read the letters and they will show you," said Riki heartily. "But I must go and pack now, for father can hardly wait to return to his dear little house, in which he can remain now for the rest of his days, thanks to your kindness. You made Uncle Gottfried and me so happy by your large present, dear Cecily, but what you have done for dear old father is worth more than anything. God in Heaven will bless you for it your whole life long, dear child! And now good-bye, dearest little girl, and stay fond of your Aunt Riki, still."

With tears they parted, while Cecily kept on sending message after message to everybody. Finally Lore Koenig seized Riki's hand, urging her to depart.

"She'll get too excited and that must not be," said the old servant anxiously, as she accompanied Riki outside.

"What does the doctor say as to her condition?" Riki asked, concerned. "She looks better today."

"He is more satisfied and has more hope that she will recover," replied Lore Koenig. "What worries him most is that her chest has suffered so dreadfully. If that gets better he thinks her general condition will improve, though her delicate limbs seem almost para-



lyzed. It is outrageous how they must have treated the poor child."

"It certainly is," said Riki, with tears still gleaming in her eyes. "I should never have recognized our bright, light-footed Cecily in that tiny little skeleton if she had not called to me. How lucky we went by there before she fled to the boat. In that way a great blessing came from our misfortune. God's ways are marvellous."

When the old servant returned to Cecily, she found her busy with the letters Riki had brought. They proved the best consolation for the separation from the dear young girl to whom Cecily now clung with redoubled devotion.

"It seemed to me as if I had seen you in a dream, Aunt Riki," she had said that evening after waking from the deep sleep in which Riki had brought her to her grandfather's house. "I wanted to call out loud, but my voice gave way and you would have gone by me if I hadn't clutched your dress. Oh, Aunt Riki, no one in the world can love you more than I now, for you brought me back to dear Uncle Melau and all the good people I should otherwise have not seen again."

The letters of all these good people, as Cecily called her friends in N——, were full of lovely kind words. Sometimes she laughed and sometimes she cried from joy and longing while reading them. Gottfried could not find enough words to express his gratitude and delight that he was not only to own the forge, but the house and garden that went with the little property.

How his little wife would soon reign there and what a splendid bird-chamber he could fit out, which would delight Cecily when she came to see them! He was looking after her faithful dove, which flew happily about again, for she had been quite wretched after her long journey. Gottfried wanted Cecily to improve, too. They all wanted to see her well and bright again so she herself could fetch Sidi, who was kept as hostage till then.

Aunt Gusti's letter was so affectionate and kind that Cecily secretly pressed it to her lips, as if it were the hand that had often lain on her severely and had tried to guide her to righteousness. Oh, how she repented all the wicked things she had done in those days and how she looked forward to showing Aunt Gusti that all her good words had not been lost! These ideas completely filled her thoughts now.

How charmingly Uncle William wrote, too! Lothar and Gabriele told her many things about the life at the foundry. In the terrible days after her departure from N—— the time spent there had stood before her soul like a small paradise.

The last letter in the pack was from Grete Müller, her friend at St. Mary's. Her letter sounded just as bright and mocking as she had always been. It brought news of everybody who had lived there and gave Cecily great pleasure. Ever since she had experienced such heavy troubles her dread of the institution had completely vanished.

“Before everything else,” wrote the amusing girl,

“ you’ll be interested to hear that our head-teacher has changed over to a boys’ school, for which he is much better fitted, because boys’ fingers won’t feel his ruler so much. But in order that we should not forget him I have just heard that he left the ruler to our class as a memento. From now on it will float over the standing desk to which the girl Cecily Melau was tied so often. Do you remember it, poor little grasshopper? I’ll nail up my beautiful poem beside it. Martha has not quite gotten over the fright you gave her by running away. She really needn’t have been surprised after your excursion to the neighboring garden. In fear that her other little lambs might run away, too, some day and leave her alone on the highway instead of wandering along like a long, brown caterpillar, she cooks the blue groats rather more seldom nowadays. But they still taste of rotten cellar-doors and always wander into my handkerchief instead of into my poor stomach. The best news I can give you is that our dear Mr. Bolandt has been promoted to Mr. Black’s place, which has made us all feel happier. I was right about his quiet flame, do you see, my little lady!!! She has become his dear wife and now looks as young and pretty as our oldest pupil here, your protector in a thousand troubles, Mary Brunnow. But come here soon or you won’t have the pleasure of seeing me any more. One of my aunts has had the clever idea of adopting me as her child, after having lost her own daughter. I don’t see how they’ll get along at St. Mary’s without the two gay young per-

sons, Grete Müller and Cecily Melau. But I can't help them. I am going to do like you—I'll just bolt."

Cecily saw her again, after all. The careful nursing and a cure taken at some healing baths, performed real miracles on the young, exhausted body of the child. When Fall had come, she felt so much strengthened that Uncle Melau could start at last on the longed-for journey to N——.

Gottfried and Riki had eagerly begged to have Cecily stay with them in their pretty house. They had moved in there as husband and wife in the early summer and daily thought in gratitude of her who had made their happiness possible.

Cecily had given this promise most gladly and flew rejoicing into their arms when they met her. They had brought along her faithful dove, which flew to her mistress's shoulder as soon as she got out of the carriage. Uncle William and Aunt Gusti immediately came to greet her, too, with red-cheeked little Hans. Even Uncle Christian did not stay away, for he had grown attached to Job Melau during their time at the hospital.

When Cecily again saw all these dear people with whom she had been so happy that the memories of those times had remained in her soul like rays of sunshine, her eyes gleamed with joy. The moment she came to the yard of the foundry and saw the little overseer's house again, her heart beat violently and seemed to burst with aching.

But when old Mrs. Poole also met her with open arms and let the child embrace her, the ache in Cecily's

heart gave way to a stream of tears. Then all the bitterness was forgotten. She could go about again with a happy face and rejoice in seeing her friends and the dear places again. Uncle Melau had to see every spot in the little house and garden, the swallows' nest, the dove-cote to which Sidi had returned, and finally the disastrous linden tree to which she had climbed from the window and where the misfortune had happened which had driven her from the house.

From here they went to the yard with the smelting works and all the many buildings and workshops belonging to it, especially the forge where Gottfried's hammer had resounded from early till late. Here also were the barrels with ore and coal on which she had often driven to the furnace, damaging her dress thereby. Yes, on the first day she had even been hoisted high up where the coal was unloaded. Oh, no, she would never do such wild things again. She actually shuddered at the thought of jumping and climbing as of yore, for a weakness had remained in her legs and with her still rather delicate chest she was obliged to move more slowly and sedately. Besides, all these things reminded her of the troupe, a thought which was dreadful to her. For that reason she had decided never to jump and climb as in the old days, even if she should regain full strength.

A happy reunion took place between her and Lothar and Gabriele, who were only too glad to show her all the objects she had loved so much: the bees in their hives, the rabbits in the stable, the fox under the stairs, the



lame stork and outside on the meadow the frogs she had chased and the birds' nests in the bushes Uncle Gottfried had often pointed out to her.

She also went to town, passing the school which she had attended with her friends, then to William Bolandt's and Aunt Gusti's little house, and finally to St. Mary's, where, in spite of her secret dread, she was not only greeted joyously by Mrs. Volkmann and the pupils, but even by Martha herself.

A great joy thrilled her upon seeing the golden sugar-loaves again and the laughing Moor on his bag of coffee. After all Mr. Nikodemus's delicatessen and grocery shop had reawakened to this fine new life through her own assistance. When Cecily entered the shop, as usual fragrant with the smell of roasted coffee, she saw the little merchant industriously running to and fro on his short legs. He still wore the green cap on his bald head, and his fat face gleamed with pleasure as in the days when Riki had thrown a handful of candies into her apron because she had no pennies like the other children.

The red curtain was still there, and behind it reigned Mrs. Bolandt with Victor and the awkward Bertel, who once more had taken charge of the little fellow. But Mrs. Bolandt had forgotten how to scold since their sad experiences, and radiant days had come for Mr. Nikodemus. He also had a modest assistant in his shop, for Riki and William could not help him any more. Since the gloomy period of rest the shop had blossomed to new life.

When Cecily returned from these visits, she sat down quietly by her uncle and thoughtfully gazed before her.

“ Tell me, Uncle Melau,” she began at last, “ is much of our money left after having given so much to Uncle Gottfried and Mr. Bolandt ? ”

Job Melau laughed heartily.

“ Do you wish to become economical all of a sudden and are you afraid I squander too much, darling ? ” he teased her.

“ Oh, no, no, uncle, that’s not my reason for asking,” said Cecily eagerly. “ You don’t have to keep much for me. I don’t care any more whether my dress is made of pink barège like the one Uncle Gottfried gave me, or of brown wool like the one I wore at St. Mary’s. I want the money for something else.”

“ Well, then, tell me ? You have so much left, dear heart, that you can’t possibly spend it all yourself,” replied Job Melau, more seriously. “ Do you wish to give some more away ? ”

“ Yes, uncle, to those to whom I owe the most; I mean Aunt Gusti and St. Mary’s,” said the child with a trembling voice. “ Aunt Gusti really was very strict, but she brought me up to be good and to abominate lies and stealing. At St. Mary’s I had to learn lots of things that seemed difficult then. But I am thankful to them both now and would like to show how grateful I am. If I had money enough I’d like to buy a pretty house here for Aunt Gusti and Uncle William. I’d give it to them with the request that I be able to stay there

a little while every year. It's quite nice in Gottfried's forge, but the house is so small that they barely have room in it for themselves. I couldn't stay there as often as I wish. Aunt Gusti's house is dreadfully narrow and Hans hasn't even a bit of garden to play in. I thought all three would be glad to have a pretty house near St. Mary's, which would be so convenient for Uncle William."

"That is a lovely thought, darling," said Uncle Melau happily. "Do you know of such a house?"

"I think the one I mean must be for sale because nobody ever lives there," answered Cecily. "It stands at the end of the large garden beside St. Mary's. I mischievously climbed over one day because I couldn't stand it within those bare, ugly walls. The garden seemed to beckon to me like a paradise. Now I come to my second plan, uncle."

"And what is it?"

"Only part of the garden is to belong to Aunt Gusti, because I want St. Mary's to own the rest," said Cecily with gleaming eyes. "Then the poor girls needn't go to the ugly yard at recess or out on the highway like a long, brown caterpillar. They'll have a pretty garden to play in and that will be much better than the dusty road. Don't you think so, uncle?"

"Excellent, my precious, simply excellent!" cried Job Melau, pleased. "One would never think you had such wonderful ideas in your little head."

"Oh, uncle," said Cecily, sighing, "when one longs as I did for a few green trees and a place to jump about

in, such thoughts come of themselves. If there is enough money left, I'd like to give St. Mary's a nice sum in gratitude. They are so poor and that's why Martha gives the poor children such horrid food. I guess she can't do any better with what they have. Poor things are naturally cheaper than good things, but it is dreadful to eat them. I'd also like to give the pupils something else, uncle, but you mustn't laugh."

"I laugh at you, darling?" cried Job Melau indignantly, "what are you thinking about? What would you like to give them?"

"White collars instead of their woolen shawls," said Cecily, smiling. "I and many of the girls found the big shawls so ugly. With small white collars they would all look nicer, and if I gave a special sum for that purpose they would surely get collars instead of shawls. Don't you think so, uncle?"

"Surely, surely, that wouldn't need to break us," said the uncle. "Here comes Uncle Gottfried from the forge, and see how Riki runs to meet him on the steps as usual! Let's talk it over with them."

To Cecily's great delight no difficulties presented themselves to her plans. The pleasant house and garden became her property while she was still in N—. From early till late workmen were busy in the hitherto quiet abode. Wagon after wagon brought new furnishings for the rooms, the kitchen and the cellar, and finally the blissful child led her beloved Aunt Gusti, Uncle Gottfried and Hans into the pretty, charming place.

As she had done everything secretly and not told

anyone that she was the purchaser of the property, it came as a complete surprise. But she would not hear a word of gratitude. What she had said to Riki in Hamburg when the young girl had come to her full of thanks, she repeated now to her faithful foster-mother: "You all did a hundred times more for me, and I can't ever repay you all my life."

There was now an end of the ugly wall that had separated the yard from the splendid garden, as this had become St. Mary's property. For its opening Cecily gave a big garden-feast. A great many flowers bloomed in the beds despite the late season, and it was a merry sight to see all the brown-clothed pupils racing about the paths. In honor of the feast the ugly brown shawls had disappeared, giving place to fresh white collars. Thus the brown caterpillars could hardly be recognized. Cecily appeared in her uniform as pupil, too, and with delight fastened the plain white collar round her slender white throat. All the girls were to wear it from now on.

"We really must not call you 'Elf Goldihair' any more, but 'Elf Goldihand,'" said the amusing Grete Müller, while she and Cecily wandered arm in arm about the garden. "You pour down a golden blessing on everybody who was ever kind to you. You have a grateful heart. I myself don't think I'd ever put on this brown cowl again if I once escaped. Neither do I intend to buy myself a house so near the paradise popularly known as St. Mary's. I'll be glad when I needn't see it any more."



But Cecily thought differently. Year after year she returned to her beloved N—— and spent a great part of the most important periods of her life there. However her destiny shaped itself later on, however careful was the education she received in her brilliant position now, she never forgot the days spent with her dear friends in N——. They had planted all the good, noble seeds in her young heart and she never forgot that fact.

Those friends remained dear to her forever.

When she returned again in after years to her dear old home, as she called N——, many wondered who was the charming, distinguished-looking young lady who walked beside a small, deformed man. Her dearest friends in the town were the Bolandts and Pooles, both belonging to modest circles.

Then came the happy answer, often spoken by a young workman at the foundry: “This lovely young girl with the shiny, golden hair? That is the benefactor of our dear N——, our beloved Elf Goldihair.”









