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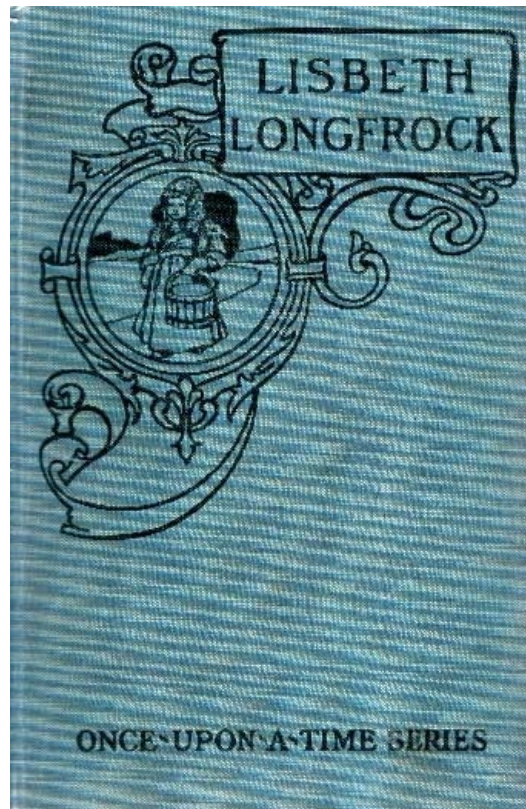
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LISBETH LONGFROCK

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TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN OF
HANS AANRUD

BY

LAURA E. POULSSON

ILLUSTRATED BY

OTHAR HOLMBOE

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PREFACE

Hans Aanrud's short stories are considered by his own countrymen as belonging to the most original and artistically finished life pictures that have been produced by the younger *literati* of Norway. They are generally concerned with peasant character, and present in true balance the coarse and fine in peasant nature. The style of speech is occasionally over-concrete for sophisticated ears, but it is not unwholesome. Of weak or cloying sweetness—so abhorrent to Norwegian taste—there is never a trace.

Sidse! Sidsærk was dedicated to the author's daughter on her eighth birthday, and is doubtless largely reminiscent of Aanrud's own childhood. If I have been able to give a rendering at all worthy of the original, readers of *Lisbeth Longfrock* will find that the whole story breathes a spirit of unaffected poetry not inconsistent with the common life which it depicts. This fine blending of the poetic and commonplace is another characteristic of Aanrud's writings.

While translating the book I was living in the region where the scenes of the story are laid, and had the benefit of local knowledge concerning terms used, customs referred to, etc. No pains were spared in verifying particulars, especially through elderly people on the farms, who could best explain the old-fashioned terms and who had a clear remembrance of obsolescent details of sæter life. For this welcome help and for elucidations through other friends I wish here to offer my hearty thanks.

Being desirous of having the conditions of Norwegian farm life made as clear as possible to young English and American readers, I felt that several illustrations were necessary and that it would be well for these to be the work of a Norwegian. To understand how the sun can be already high in the heavens when it rises, and how, when it sets, the shadow of the western mountain can creep as quickly as it does from the bottom of the valley up the opposite slope, one must have some conception of the narrowness of Norwegian valleys, with steep mountain ridges on either side. I felt also that readers would be interested in pictures showing how the dooryard of a well-to-do Norwegian farm looks, how the open fireplace of the roomy kitchen differs from our fireplaces, how tall and slender a Norwegian stove is, built with alternating spaces and heat boxes, several stories high, and how Crookhorn and the billy goat appeared when about to begin their grand tussle up at Hoel Sæter.

Sidse! Sidsærk has given much pleasure to old and young. I hope that *Lisbeth Longfrock* may have the same good fortune.

LAURA E. POULSSON

HOPKINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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LISBETH LONGFROCK

CHAPTER I

LISBETH LONGFROCK GOES TO HOEL FARM

Bearhunter, the big, shaggy old dog at Hoel Farm, sat on the stone step in front of the house, looking soberly around the spacious dooryard.

It was a clear, cold winter's day toward the beginning of spring, and the sun shone brightly over the glittering snow. In spite of the bright sunshine, however, Bearhunter would have liked to be indoors much better than out, if his sense of responsibility had permitted; for his paws ached with the cold, and he had to keep holding them up one after another from the stone slab to keep from getting the "claw ache." Bearhunter did not wish to risk that, because "claw ache" is very painful, as every northern dog knows.

But to leave his post as watchman was not to be thought of just now, for the pigs and the goats were out to-day. At this moment they were busy with their separate affairs and behaving very well,—the pigs over on the sunny side of the dooryard scratching themselves against the corner of the cow house, and the goats gnawing bark from the big heap of pine branches that had been laid near the sheep barn for their special use. They looked as if they thought of nothing but their scratching and gnawing; but Bearhunter knew well, from previous experience, that no sooner would he go into the house than both pigs and goats would come rushing over to the doorway and do all the mischief they could. That big goat, Crookhorn,—the new one who had come to the farm last autumn and whom Bearhunter had not yet brought under discipline,—had already strayed in a roundabout way to the very corner of the farmhouse, and was looking at Bearhunter in a self-important manner, as if she did not fear him in the least. She was really an intolerable creature, that goat Crookhorn! But just let her dare—!

Bearhunter felt that he must sit on the cold doorstep for some time longer, at any rate. He glanced up the road occasionally as if to see whether any one was coming, so that the pigs and goats might not think they had the whole of his attention.

He had just turned his head leisurely toward the narrow road that came down crosswise over the slope from the Upper Farms, when—what in the world was that!

Something *was* coming,—a funny little roly-poly something. What a pity, thought Bearhunter, that his sight was growing so poor! At any rate, he had better give the people in the house warning.

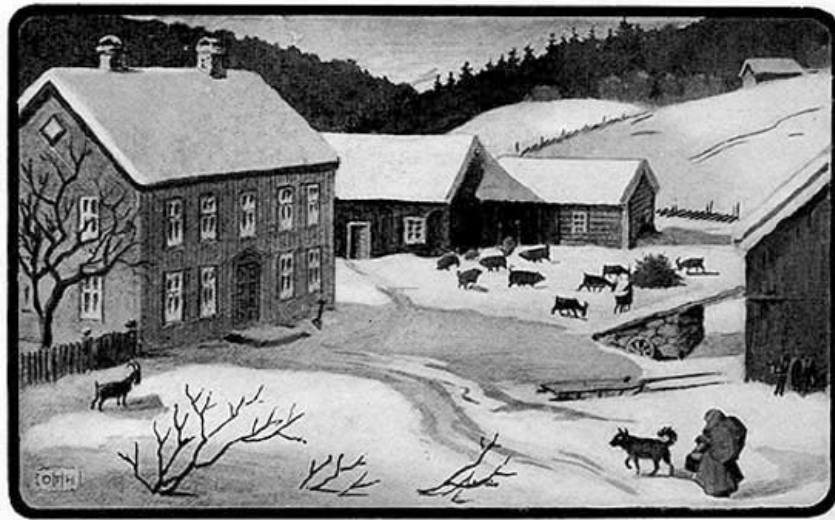
So he gave several deep, echoing barks. The goats sprang together in a clump and raised their ears; the pigs stopped in the very midst of their scratching to listen. That Bearhunter was held in great respect could easily be seen.

He still remained sitting on the doorstep, staring up the road. Never in his life had he seen such a thing as that now approaching. Perhaps, after all, it was nothing worth giving warning about. He would take a turn up the road and look at it a little nearer. So, arching his bushy tail into a handsome curve and putting on his most good-humored expression, he sauntered off.

Yes, it must be a human being, although you would not think so. It began to look very much like "Katrine the Finn," as they called her, who came to the farm every winter; but it could not be Katrine—it was altogether too little. It wore a long, wide skirt, and from under the skirt protruded the tips of two big shoes covered with gray woolen stocking feet from which the legs had been cut off. Above the skirt there was a round bundle of clothes with a knitted shawl tied around it, and from this protruded two stumps with red mittens on. Perched on the top of all was a smaller shape, muffled up in a smaller knitted shawl,—that, of course, must be the head. Carried at the back was a huge bundle tied up in a dark cloth, and in front hung a pretty wooden pail, painted red.

Really, Bearhunter had to stand still and gaze. The strange figure, in the meantime, had become aware of him, and it also came to a standstill, as if in a dilemma. At that, Bearhunter walked over to the farther side of the road and took his station there, trying to look indifferent, for he did not wish to cause any fright. The strange figure then made its way carefully forward again, drawing gradually closer and closer to its own side of the road. As it came nearer to Bearhunter the figure turned itself around by degrees, until, when directly opposite to him, it walked along quite sidewise.

Then it was that Bearhunter got a peep through a little opening in the upper shawl; and there he saw the tip of a tiny, turned-up red nose, then a red mouth that was drawn down a little at the corners as if ready for crying, and then a pair of big blue eyes that were fastened upon him with a look of terror.



HOEL FARM

Pooh! it was nothing, after all, but a little girl, well bundled up against the cold. Bearhunter did not know her—but wait a bit! he thought he had seen that pail before. At any rate it would be absurd to try to frighten this queer little creature.

His tail began to wag involuntarily as he walked across the road to take a sniff at the pail.

The little girl did not understand his action at once. Stepping back in alarm, she caught her heels in her long frock and down she tumbled by the side of the road. Bearhunter darted off instantly; but after running a short distance toward the house he stopped and looked at her again, making his eyes as gentle as he could and wagging his tail energetically. With Bearhunter that wagging of the tail meant hearty, good-natured laughter.

Then the little girl understood. She got up, smiled, and jogged slowly after him. Bearhunter trotted leisurely ahead, looking back at her from time to time. He knew now that she had an errand at Hoel Farm, and that he was therefore in duty bound to help her.

Thus it was that Lisbeth Longfrock of Peerout Castle made her entrance into Hoel Farm.

Peerout Castle was perched high above the Upper Farms, on a crag that jugged out from a barren ridge just under a mountain peak called "The Big Hammer." The real name of the little farm was New Ridge,¹ and "Peerout Castle" was only a nickname given to it by a joker because there was so fine an outlook from it and because it bore no resemblance whatever to a castle. The royal lands belonging to this castle consisted of a little plot of cultivated soil, a bit of meadow land here and there, and some heather patches where tiny blueberry bushes and small mountain-cranberry plants grew luxuriantly. The castle's outbuildings were a shabby cow house and a pigsty. The cow house was built against the

steep hillside, with three walls of loosely built stone, and its two stalls were dug half their length into the hill. The tiny pigsty was built in the same fashion.

As for the castle itself, that was a very, very small, turf-roofed cabin lying out on the jutting crag in the middle of the rocky ridge. It had only one small window, with tiny panes of glass, that looked out over the valley. And yet, in whatever part of the surrounding country one might be, by looking in that direction—and looking high enough—one could always see that little castle, with its single window peering out like a watchful eye over the landscape.

Since the castle from which Lisbeth Longfrock came was no more magnificent than this, it may easily be understood that she was no disguised princess, but only a poor little girl. Coming to Hoel Farm for the first time was for her like visiting an estate that was, in very truth, royal; and besides, she had come on an important "grown-up" errand. She was taking her mother's place and visiting Hoel as a spinning woman.

Lisbeth's mother, whose name was Randi,² had worked hard for the last four years to get food for herself and her children up at Peerout Castle. Before that the family had been in very comfortable circumstances; but the father had died, leaving the mother with the castle, one cow, and the care of the two children. The children were Jacob, at that time about six years old, and Lisbeth, a couple of years younger. Life was often a hard struggle for the mother; but they had, at any rate, a house over their heads, and they could get wood without having to go very far for it, since the forest lay almost within a stone's throw.

In the summer Randi managed to dig up her tiny plots of ground after a fashion, so that she could harvest a few potatoes and a little grain. By cutting grass and stripping off birch leaves she had thus far managed each year to give Bliros, their cow, enough to eat. And where there is a cow there is always food.

In the winter she spun linen and wool for the women on the farms far and near, but as she had lived at Hoel Farm as a servant before she was married, it was natural that most of her spinning should be for Kjersti³ Hoel.

In such ways had Randi been able to care for her family. Meanwhile Jacob, now ten years old, had grown big enough to earn his own living. In the spring before the last a message had come from Nordrum Farm that a boy was needed to look after the flocks, and Jacob had at once applied and been accepted. He and Lisbeth had often knelt on the long wooden bench under the little window at Peerout Castle, and gazed upon the different farms, choosing which they would work on when they were big enough. Jacob had always chosen Nordrum Farm,—probably because he had heard Farmer Nordrum spoken of as the big man of the community; while Lisbeth had always thought that it would be pleasanter at Hoel Farm because it was owned by a woman.

When autumn came Farmer Nordrum had concluded that he would have use for such a boy as Jacob during the winter also, and so Jacob had stayed on. This last Christmas, however, he had gone home for the whole day and had taken with him a Christmas present for his sister from a little girl at Nordrum. The present was a gray woolen frock,—a very nice one.

Jacob had grown extremely pleasant and full of fun while at Nordrum, Lisbeth thought. When she tried the frock on and it reached way down to the ground before and behind, he called her "Lisbeth Longfrock" and Lisbeth Longfrock she had remained from that day.

After Christmas, times had been somewhat harder at Peerout Castle. Bliros, who generally gave milk the whole year round, had become dry, and would not give milk for several months. She was to have a calf in the early summer. During the last few weeks there had not been milk enough even for Randi's and Lisbeth's coffee.

To go to Svehaugen,⁴ the nearest farm, for milk was no short trip; and milk was scarce there too, as Randi well knew. Besides, she could not spare the time to go. She had to finish spinning Kjersti Hoel's wool. When she once got that off her hands, they could have plenty of milk for their coffee, and other good things besides. What a relief it would be when that time came!

So Randi worked steadily at her spinning, Lisbeth being now big enough to help in carding the wool. For a week she spun almost without ceasing, scarcely taking time for meals, but drinking a good deal of strong black coffee. Not until very late one evening was Kjersti Hoel's wool all spun and ready. By that time Randi was far from well. Whether or not her illness was caused, as she thought, by drinking so much black coffee, certain it is that when Kjersti Hoel's wool was all spun Randi felt a tightness in her chest, and when she got up the next morning and tried to get ready to go to Hoel with the spinning, she was seized with such a sudden dizziness that she had to go back to bed again. She was too weak for anything else.

Now it was the custom in Norway for the spinning woman to take back to the different farms the wool she had spun, and for the farmers' wives to praise her work, treat her to something good to eat and drink, pay her, and then give her directions about the way the next spinning was to be done. All this Randi would have to give up for the present—there was no help for it; but she wondered how it would do to send Lisbeth to Hoel Farm in her stead. The little girl would find her way safely, Randi was sure, although Randi had never as yet taken her to that farm because it was so far off. The payment for the spinning was to be in eatables as well as money, and Lisbeth could bring home part of what was due. Then, though they still might lack many things, their drop of coffee could have cream in it, as coffee ought to have. The remainder of the payment and the directions for the next spinning Randi herself could get when she was better.

If she could only be sure that Lisbeth would behave properly and not act like a changeling, a troll child!

Lisbeth eagerly promised that if her mother would allow her to go she would behave exactly as a spinning woman should,—she would, really! And she remembered perfectly well just how everything was done that time she had gone with her mother to one of the nearer farms.

So Lisbeth put on her long frock, which was used only for very best, and her mother wrapped her up snugly in the two shawls. Then the bundle of yarn was slung over her back, the pail was hung in front, many directions were given to her about the road, and off she started.

And that is the way Lisbeth Longfrock happened to come toddling after Bearhunter to Hoel Farm on that clear, cold winter's day toward the beginning of spring.

CHAPTER II

LISBETH LONGFROCK AS SPINNING WOMAN

When Lisbeth found herself in the farm dooryard, with the different buildings all about her, she really had to stand still and gaze around. Oh, how large everything was!—quite on another scale from things at home. Why, the barn door was so broad and high that Peerout Castle could easily go right through it, and each windowpane in the big house was as large as their own whole window. And such a goat!—for just then she caught sight of Crookhorn, who had come warily up to the doorway, and who only saw fit to draw back as Bearhunter approached. Not that Crookhorn was afraid of Bearhunter,—no, indeed!

The goat was larger than most goats,—about as large as a good-sized calf. If the cows belonging to Hoel Farm were as much larger than ordinary cows, thought Lisbeth, they would be able to eat grass from the roof of Peerout Castle while standing, just as usual, on the ground.⁵ She glanced searchingly at the cow-house door. No, it was not larger than such doors usually were, so the cows were evidently no bigger than other cows.

Bearhunter had followed after Crookhorn until the latter was well out of the way; then he had come back again, and now stood wagging his tail and turning toward the house door as if coaxing Lisbeth to go in. Yes, she must attend to her errand and not stay out there staring at everything.

So she followed after Bearhunter and went into the hall way. She lifted the latch of the inner door, turned herself around carefully as she went in so as to make room for her bundle, fastened the door behind her—and there she stood inside the big kitchen at Hoel!



THE BIG KITCHEN AT HOEL FARM

There were only two people in the kitchen,—one a young servant maid in the middle of the room spinning, and the other the mistress herself, Kjersti Hoel, over by the white wall of the big open fireplace, grinding coffee.

Both looked up when they heard the door open.

Lisbeth Longfrock stood still for a moment, then made a deep courtesy under her long frock and said in a grown-up way, just as she had heard her mother say, "Good day, and God bless your work."

Kjersti Hoel had to smile when she saw the little roly-poly bundle over by the door, talking in such a grown-up fashion. But she answered as soberly as if she also were talking to a grown-up person: "Good day. Is this a young stranger out for a walk?"

"Yes."

"And what is the stranger's name, and where is she from? I see that I do not know her."

"No, you could not be expected to. My mother and Jacob call me Lisbeth Longfrock, and I am from Peerout Castle. Mother sent me here with the woolen yarn she has spun for you. She told me to say that she could not come with it before, for she did not get the last spool wound until late last night."

"Indeed! Can it be a spinning woman we have here? And to think that I wholly forgot to ask you to sit down after your long walk! You really must take off your things and stay awhile."

What a pleasant woman Kjersti Hoel was! She got up from her own chair and set one forward for Lisbeth.

"Thank you; I shall be glad to sit down," said Lisbeth.

She took off the pail and the bundle of wool and put them down by the door, and then began to walk across the floor over to the chair. It seemed as if she would never get there, so far was it across the big kitchen,—nearly as far as from their own door to the cow-house door at Peerout Castle. At last, however, she reached the chair; but it was higher than the seats she was accustomed to and she could barely scramble up on one corner of it.

Kjersti Hoel came toward her.

"I really think I must open this roly-poly bundle and see what is in it," said she; and she began to take off Lisbeth's red mittens and to undo the knitted shawls. Soon Lisbeth sat there stripped of all her outer toggery, but nevertheless looking almost as plump and roly-poly as ever; for not only did her long frock barely clear the ground at the bottom, but its band reached almost up under her arms.

Kjersti stood and looked at her a moment.

"That is just what I thought,—that I should find a nice little girl inside all those clothes. You look like your mother."

At this Lisbeth grew so shy that she forgot all about being a spinning woman. She cast down her eyes and could not say a word.

"But what is the matter with Randi, your mother?" continued Kjersti. "Why could she not

come herself?"

"She was a little poorly to-day."

"Indeed! Randi not well? And her health is generally so good. What ails her?"

"Oh, she thought that very likely drinking strong coffee without milk had not been good for her."

"So you have no milk at your house. Perhaps that is why you have brought a pail with you."

"Yes; what do you think! Bliros has stopped giving us milk this winter."

"Has she, indeed! That is rather inconvenient, isn't it? How long before she can be milked again?"

"Not until the beginning of summer, after she has had her calf."

"H'm," said Kjersti thoughtfully. By and by, as if to herself, she said: "I have often thought of going to see Randi, but have never done so. Before this spring is over, I must surely pay her a visit."

Lisbeth Longfrock stayed a long time at Hoel that day. Although she had come in the important character of spinning woman, she had never imagined that a great person like Kjersti Hoel would be so pleasant and kind to her. Kjersti treated her to coffee and cakes and milk and other good things, just as if she had been an invited guest, and chatted with her in such a way that Lisbeth forgot all about being shy. And oh, how many curious things Kjersti showed her!

The cow house was the finest of them all. There were so many cows that Lisbeth could scarcely count them. And then the pigs and sheep and goats! and hens, too, inside a big latticework inclosure,—nearly as many of them as there were crows in autumn up at Peerout!

And Kjersti wanted to know about *everything*,—whether Lisbeth could read and write (she could do both, for Jacob had taught her), and how they managed about food up at Peerout Castle, and how it went with the farming.

Lisbeth could tell her that in the autumn they had gathered three barrels of potatoes, and one barrel and three pecks of mixed grain; and that they had stripped off so many birch leaves that they had fodder enough to carry Bliros through the winter,—in fact, much more than enough.

When Kjersti had shown Lisbeth the sheep and the goats, she declared that she should certainly need a little girl to look after her flocks when spring came; and then Lisbeth, before she knew what she was saying, told Kjersti how she and Jacob used to look at the farms from the window at home, and how she had always chosen Hoel as the place where she should like to work when she was big enough.

"Should you really like to go out to work?" Kjersti inquired.

"Yes, indeed," Lisbeth said, "if it were not for leaving mother."

"Well, we will not think about that any more at present," said Kjersti, "but I will go up and talk with your mother about it some time in the spring. We certainly ought to go into the house now, so that you can have time to take a little food before leaving. It is drawing toward evening and you will have to start for home soon."

So they went into the house again, and Lisbeth had another feast of good things. While she was eating she noticed that Kjersti brought from the cellar some butter and cheese and other things and packed them in the dark cloth in which the wool had been tied. The milk pail she did not touch at all; but Lisbeth saw that she said something about it softly to the servant maid, after which the maid left the room.

When Lisbeth had eaten and had said "Thanks and praise for both food and drink," Kjersti remarked: "Now you must lift the bundle over there and see if you can carry it."

The bundle *was* rather heavy. Still, Lisbeth thought she could manage it. But the pail! Not a word did Kjersti say, even now, about the pail! She only added, kindly, "Come, and I will help you put on your things."

She drew on Lisbeth's mittens, wrapped her up snugly in the two little shawls, and, in a trice, there stood Lisbeth Longfrock looking exactly as she did when she had come to Hoel

that morning.

Slowly and reluctantly Lisbeth went toward the door, where the pail still stood. How strange that Kjersti had not even yet said a single word about it! Lisbeth stood for a moment in doubt. After receiving so much, it would never do to remind Kjersti about the pail; but she would much rather have gone without the good things she herself had been treated to than to go home without any milk for her mother's coffee.

She took up the bundle, drew her face with its turned-up nose tip back into its little shawl as far as she could so that Kjersti should not see the tears in her eyes, and then bent down and lifted the pail.

At that Kjersti said: "Oh, yes! the pail! I quite forgot it. Are you willing to exchange pails with me if I give you one that will never get empty?"

Lisbeth dropped her pail plump on the floor. She had seen and heard many curious things on this eventful day,—things she had never seen or thought of before; but that Kjersti, besides everything else, had a pail that would never get empty! She stood and stared, open-mouthed.

"Yes, you must come and see it," said Kjersti. "It stands just outside the door."

Lisbeth was not slow in making her way out. Kjersti followed her. There stood the servant maid, holding the big goat, Crookhorn, by a rope.

"The goat is used to being led," said Kjersti, "so you will have no trouble in taking it home. Give my greetings to your mother, and ask her if she is satisfied with the exchange of pails."

Kjersti was not a bit displeased because Lisbeth Longfrock forgot to express her thanks as she started off with Crookhorn. Bearhunter followed the little girl and the goat a long distance up the road. He did not understand matters at all!

It is not to be wondered at that Randi, too, was greatly surprised when she saw Crookhorn following after Lisbeth as the little girl approached the castle.

There was not time for Lisbeth to tell about everything at the very first, for her mother and she had to clear up the stall next to the one Bliros occupied, and put Crookhorn into it. When this was done they felt exactly as if they had two cows. The goat took her place in the stall with a self-important, superior air, quite as if she were a real cow and had never done anything else but stand in a cow stall. Bliros became offended at this remarkable newcomer, who was putting on such airs in the cow house that had always belonged to herself alone, and so she made a lunge with her head and tried to hook the goat with her horns; but Crookhorn merely turned her own horns against those of Bliros in the most indifferent manner, as if quite accustomed to being hooked by cows.

Bliros gazed at her in astonishment. Such a silly goat! She had never seen such a silly goat. And with that she turned her head to the wall again and did not give Crookhorn another look.

That evening Lisbeth Longfrock had so many things to tell her mother that she talked herself fast asleep!

CHAPTER III

LEAVING PEEROUT CASTLE

The next time Lisbeth Longfrock came to Hoel Farm, she did not come alone; and she came—to stay!

All that had happened between that first visit and her second coming had been far, far different from anything Lisbeth had ever imagined. It seemed as if there had been no time for her to think about the strange events while they were taking place. She did not realize what their result would be until after she had lived through them and gone out of the gate of Peerout Castle when everything was over. So much had been going on in those last sad,

solemn days,—so much that was new to see and to hear,—that although she had felt a lump in her throat the whole time, she had not had a real cry until at the very end. But when she had passed through the gate that last day, and had stopped and looked back, the picture that she then saw had brought the whole clearly before her, with all its sorrow. Something was gone that would never come again. She would never again go to Peerout Castle except as a stranger. She had no home—no home anywhere. And at that she had begun to weep so bitterly that those who had been thinking how wisely and quietly she was taking her trouble could but stand and look at her in wonder.

The last two months of the winter had passed so quickly up at Peerout Castle that Lisbeth really could not tell what had become of them; and this was owing not a little to the fact that, besides all her other work, she had so much to do in the cow house.

Crookhorn had become, as it were, Lisbeth's cow, and consequently had to be taken care of by her. Bliros showed very plainly that she would not like at all to have Randi's attentions bestowed upon a rascally goat. That would make it seem as if the goat were fully as important a person in the cow house as Bliros herself; whereas the whole cow house, in reality, belonged to her, and that other creature was only allowed there as a favor.

So Lisbeth took care of Crookhorn exactly as she saw her mother take care of Bliros. In fact, before long she had more to do in the cow house than her mother had; for she soon learned to milk Crookhorn, while Bliros, her mother's cow, could not then be milked.

And Crookhorn gave so much milk! Three times a day Lisbeth had to milk her. There was no longer any scarcity of cream for coffee or milk for porridge. Indeed, there was even cream enough to make waffles with now and then.

Springtime came. It always came early up at Peerout Castle. The slopes of heather, directly facing the sun, were the first in the whole valley to peep up out of the snow. As soon as the heathery spots began to show themselves, Lisbeth was out on them, stepping here and there with a cautious foot. It seemed so wonderful to step on bare earth again instead of snow! Day by day she kept track of the different green patches, watching them grow larger and larger, and seeing how the snow glided slowly farther and farther downward,—exactly as her own frock did when she loosened the band and let it slip down and lie in a ring around her feet. When the snow had slipped as far down as the big stone where she and Jacob used to have their cow house (using pine cones for cows and sheep), the outermost buds on the trees would swell and be ready to burst,—she knew that from the year before; and when the buds had really opened (she kept close watch of them every day now), then, *then* would come the great day when Crookhorn could be let out. Lisbeth's mother had said so.

That great day was what she was waiting for, not only because it would be so pleasant for Crookhorn to be out, but because no food was equal to the first buds of spring for making goats yield rich milk.

Lisbeth's mother had been far from well ever since the day that Lisbeth went over to Hoel Farm for the first time. But Lisbeth thought that as soon as Crookhorn had fresh buds to eat and gave richer milk, her mother would of course get entirely well.

It is very possible that a little streak of snow was still lying by the upper side of the big stone (in spite of Lisbeth's having scattered sand there to make the snow melt faster) on the bright spring day when Lisbeth went into the cow house, unfastened Crookhorn, and led her out of the stall.

As for Crookhorn, she followed her little mistress very sedately until they reached the cow-house door. There she stopped short, looking around and blinking at the sun. Lisbeth pulled at the rope, trying to drag her over to the part of the ridge where the birch tree with the fullest leaf buds stood. But Crookhorn would not budge. She merely stood stock-still as if nothing were being done to her; for she was so strong that, however hard Lisbeth pulled, it did not even make her stretch her neck. Lisbeth then went nearer, thinking that she could pull better without such a length of rope between her and the goat; but at that, quick as a wink, Crookhorn lowered her head and butted Lisbeth, causing the little girl to fall back against the hillside with a whack. Upon which, Crookhorn stalked in an indifferent manner across the road.

Lisbeth picked herself up and started to go after her charge; but, if you please, as soon as she came near enough and tried to seize Crookhorn, away would that naughty goat dart, not galloping as a goat usually does, but trotting like a cow or an elk. She trotted by the house and turned off on the road leading to Svehaugen Farm. Lisbeth pursued swiftly; but, run as she might, she could not gain upon Crookhorn. At last, stumbling over a stone,

the little girl fell at full length, having barely time, while falling, to look up and catch a glimpse of Crookhorn's back as the goat, trotting swiftly, disappeared over the brow of a hill.

There was no other way out of it,—Lisbeth would have to run home and get her mother to help her. This she did, and they both set out in full chase. It was a long run, for they did not overtake Crookhorn until they had reached the Svehaugen gate. There stood the goat gazing unconcernedly through the palings. She evidently felt herself superior to jumping over fences,—she who imagined herself to be a cow!

Randi had become much overheated from running, and at night, when she went to bed, she said she felt cold and shivery. That seemed very strange indeed to Lisbeth, for when she laid her face against her mother's neck, it was as hot as a burning coal.

In the morning Lisbeth's mother woke her and told her to get up and go over to Kari Svehaugen's and ask Kari to come to Peerout Castle. Randi felt so poorly that there was no use in her even trying to get up. She was not able.

Not able to get up! That also seemed very strange to Lisbeth, for never before had she seen her mother with cheeks so red and eyes so shining. The child did not say anything, however, but got up, dressed herself quickly and quietly, and ran off to Svehaugen.

After that there came several wonderful days at Peerout Castle. When Lisbeth Longfrock thought about them afterward, they seemed like a single long day in which a great many things had happened that she could not separate from one another and set in order. In her remembrance it was as if shadows had glided to and fro in an ugly yellow light, while the sound of a heavy, painful breathing was constantly heard, penetrating all other sounds.

She seemed dimly to see Kari Svehaugen gliding about and taking care of things in the home and out in the cow house. She herself had climbed a birch tree several times and picked leaf buds for the animals to eat. One day Lars Svehaugen had flitted along the road in front of the house, swiftly, as if he had not a moment to spare. Soon after this, some one dressed in furs and with big boots on came driving to the house, and all the neighbors flocked around him, listening to what he said. And he brought such a curious smell with him! It filled the whole house, so that, even after he had gone away, he seemed to be still there.

She thought, too, that once she had seen Kjersti Hoel sitting on a chair, taking many good things out of a big basket, and Jacob standing by Kjersti's side with a great slice of raisin cake in his hand. And Jacob had kept chewing and chewing on his raisin cake, as if it was hard work to get it down. What she remembered chiefly, though, was Jacob's eyes,—they looked so big and strange.

Then one morning she had awakened in a clear gray light, and from that time she remembered everything very distinctly. She was lying in the little trundle-bed that Jacob had slept in when he lived at home,—she must, of course, have slept in it all these nights,—and Kari Svehaugen was standing beside it, looking down upon her. The house was oh! so still,—she did not hear the heavy, painful breathing any longer. The only sound was a slight crackling in the fireplace, out of which a stream of warmth issued.

Kari said very quietly: "Your mother is comfortable and happy now, little Lisbeth; better off than she has ever been before. So you must not cry."

And Lisbeth did not cry. She merely got up and went about the house very, very quietly all that first day. Afterwards there were so many preparations being made for some solemn festival that she did not seem to get time to think about the great change that had taken place.

Lars Svehaugen came from the storekeeper's with ever so much fine white, shining cloth,—she had never seen the like. Then a woman came to help Kari cut out and sew, and they made pillows and a fine white garment that mother was to have on when she lay upon the pillows. And Lars Svehaugen began to make a new wooden bed for mother to lie in; and Bliros had her calf, and the calf was slaughtered; and Lars Svehaugen brought some small pine trees and nailed them at the gateposts and outside the house door, one at each side, and he strewed pine branches all the way from the door to the gate. And there came presents of food—oh! so many good things—from Kjersti Hoel and others. Lisbeth had never tasted such delicious food before.

Then came the day when mother was to be taken to the church and buried. Many people came to the house that day,—among them Jacob in a bright new suit of gray woolen homespun; and there was a feast for them all, and everything was very still and solemn. Even the schoolmaster came; and oh, how beautifully he sang when Lars Svehaugen and three other men carried mother out through the door and set her couch upon a sledge.

Then they all went slowly away from the house, down the hill,—the sledge first and the

people walking slowly behind. But down at the bottom of the hill, in the road, there stood two horses and wagons waiting; and, just think! Lisbeth and Jacob were invited to sit up in Kjersti Hoel's broad wagon and drive with her.

Then they came to the white church; and as they carried mother in through the big gateway the church bells up in the tower rang, oh, so beautifully!

After that Lisbeth did not see things quite so clearly, but they lowered mother down into the earth in the churchyard and strewed wreaths of green heather over her, and then the schoolmaster sang again, and all the men took off their hats and held them a long time before their faces.

After that the people went out of the churchyard, and Lisbeth and Jacob climbed into Kjersti Hoel's broad wagon again and drove away,—only this time they drove much faster. It looked as if the boards in the fences ran after each other in an opposite direction from the one in which she and Jacob were going. They both tried to count them, but could not.

All the people came back with them to Peerout Castle,—Kjersti Hoel, too. Kari Svehaugen, who had not gone to the church, had covered the table with a white tablecloth, and set it with plates and good things to eat. And all the people ate and talked,—but they did not talk very loudly.

When the meal was over, Lisbeth got Jacob to go out into the cow house to look at Crookhorn. Jacob conceded that the goat was an extremely fine animal, but she was a vixen, he was sure,—he could tell that by her eyelids.

Then they went over to the hill to look at the mill wheel that Jacob used to have there; but it had fallen into complete decay because he had been away from home so long. Such things need a boy's personal attention.

After that they were called into the house again and everybody drank coffee. When they had finished the coffee drinking, Kari began packing into baskets the food that was left; and when that was done, Kjersti Hoel said: "Well, now we have done everything that we can here. You may bring Crookhorn with you, Lisbeth, and come to live with me. That was the last thing I promised your mother."

Thus had it come about that Lisbeth Longfrock, holding Crookhorn by a rope, stood outside the gate at Peerout Castle with Kjersti Hoel and Bearhunter; and then it was that she looked behind her and began to cry.

On one road she saw Kari Svehaugen with a big basket on her arm and Bliros following her; and on the other she saw the back of Jacob, with whom she had just shaken hands, saying, "May you fare well." He looked singularly small and forlorn.

Last of all she saw Lars Svehaugen put a pine twig in the door latch as a sign that Peerout Castle was now closed, locked, and forsaken.

CHAPTER IV

SPRING: LETTING THE ANIMALS OUT TO PASTURE

One morning, a few weeks after the sad departure from Peerout Castle, Lisbeth Longfrock awoke early in the small sleeping room built under the great staircase at Hoel. She opened her eyes wide at the moment of waking, and tried to gather her thoughts together. She was conscious of a delightful, quivering expectancy, and felt that she had awakened to something great and new,—something that she had waited for and been exceedingly glad over; but she could not at once remember just what it was.

The little room, whose only furniture consisted of a bed, a chair, a stove, and a small wooden shelf with a mirror over it, was filled with daylight in spite of the early hour. The sun fell slanting down through a window set high up in the wall directly over Lisbeth's bed, and the windowpanes were pictured in bright yellow squares on the floor near the tiny stove. The corner of one square spread itself against the stove, and Lisbeth traced it with her eyes as she lay in bed. At the tip of the corner glimmered something light-green and shiny. Was it from there that a fine, wonderful fragrance came floating toward her? She sniffed a little. Yes, indeed! now she remembered. The fragrance came from the fresh birch twigs she had decorated the room with yesterday. Out of doors it was spring,—the

sprouting, bursting springtime. To-day the cattle were to be let out and the calves named. To-day she would begin work in earnest and be a responsible individual. In short, she would be the herd girl at Hoel Farm.

It was now a month since Lisbeth had come to Hoel Farm, but up to this time she had been treated merely as company. She had walked about the place, sauntered after Kjersti here and there in the house, ground the coffee, and brought out from a bowl in the pantry the small cakes that they ate with their coffee every afternoon. Frequently, too, she had had pleasant talks with Kjersti.

As for helping with the animals,—the sheep and the goats had been let out, to be sure, but nevertheless they did not need her care because they were allowed, so early in the season, to run about everywhere except in the garden, and that Bearhunter stood guard over. In the cow house there was nothing for her to do, for a milkmaid and an under-milkmaid did the work there. Of course the girl who tended the flocks ought really to be able to help in milking the cows; but it was thought that Lisbeth had better wait a year before she tried to do that,—her hands being rather too small as yet. Lisbeth had kept measuring her hands every now and then and pulling her fingers to make them grow; and after a while she had asked the milkmaid if she did not think they had grown large enough, but the milkmaid did not see that they were any larger. She could not have very good eyes!

Lisbeth had, of course, expected to take care of Crookhorn,—Kjersti and she both thought she ought to do that; but it had proved to be impossible. Crookhorn had become so freakish that sometimes they almost thought her out of her wits. In the building shared by the sheep and goats she ranged back and forth from wall to wall, knocking against the sheep and the other goats so hard as she went that their ribs rattled. At last she had to be tied to one of the walls, and with the shortest rope possible at that. Nor would she allow herself to be milked peaceably in that building. The first time Lisbeth tried it, Crookhorn, with a toss of the head, gave a kick that sent Lisbeth and the pail rolling off in different directions. Afterward the milkmaid herself took Crookhorn in hand at milking time; but even for her it was always a feat of strength, and she had to have some one to help her by holding the goat's horns.

When Crookhorn was let out with the other goats, would she ramble with them over the fields and meadows, seeking food? No, indeed! She would station herself poutingly by the cow-house door and stand there the livelong day,—"bellowing like a cow" the farm boy said; and then in the evening, when the other goats came home plump and well fed, there Crookhorn would stand as thin and hungry as a wolf.

Lisbeth thought that Crookhorn, if provided with a stall in the cow house, would act like a reasonable creature again. But neither Kjersti nor the milkmaid would consent to the removal; they thought a goat ought not to be humored in such unreasonable fancies.

Thus it was that Lisbeth had not had much to do during her first month at Hoel Farm. The only thing that Kjersti had required of her was to keep her own little room under the hall staircase in nice order, and that she had done. Every day she had made the bed herself, and every Saturday she had washed the floor and the shelf, and spread juniper twigs about. Last Saturday Kjersti had come out to take a look at it, and had said to her that she kept her room in better order than the grown-up girls in the south chamber kept theirs; and Lisbeth knew that this was true, for she had noticed it herself.



LISBETH'S ROOM UNDER THE STAIRS

But now everything was going to be different. Kjersti Hoel had come to Lisbeth's room the night before and said that the cows were to be let out early in the morning, and that Lisbeth, like all the rest of the Hoel Farm people, must be up early to help. Later in the day the calves that had been born in the cow house during the winter were to be let out for the first time, and Lisbeth would have to look after them for that afternoon at any rate. Kjersti had said also that Lisbeth was to be allowed to give the calves their names,—names that they would keep all their lives, even after they had grown to be full-sized cows.

The next day after the letting out of the animals Lisbeth was to take a lunch bag and begin her spring work of going into the forest all day to watch the sheep and goats. It would not do to have them running about the fields at home any longer, Kjersti said.

Suddenly Lisbeth recollected what it was that she had pondered over so long as she lay awake the evening before,—it was the names of the calves. In spite of all her pondering she had got no farther than to wonder whether the cow with the red sides and white head and the gentle but bright-looking face should not be called Bliros. That idea, however, she had given up; it seemed to her that only one cow in the world could be called Bliros. Then she had determined to think no longer about Bliros or the names of the calves, and so had fallen asleep.

What if she had overslept herself now! She hoped not, with all her heart, for she had heard Kjersti Hoel say that she did not like girls to lie abed late and dally in the morning. How mortifying it would be for her not to be on the spot as early as the others to-day, her very first working day!

Wide-awake now, Lisbeth hopped quickly out of bed and popped into her long frock. Then, having made her bed⁶ with all haste, she opened the door, went out through the hall way, and stood on the outside steps.

The sun had just risen above the highest spruce tops over the edge of the eastern hills, and the light was flooding the sides of the valley like a waterfall. In the meadows and on the sloping fields the sunbeams quivered in the dew. They sifted in gold, they glittered in green, they silvered the clear brooks that babbled down the hills. From every bush came a twittering and chirping and clapping of wings. From everything, everywhere, came a message of joy and activity and sprouting life. Mingled in one great morning effervescence, single sights and sounds were lost; only the call of the cuckoo, far up on the birch-clad slope, was heard above the other sounds, and from every shining window glanced a big, serene eye of reflected sun rays.

And just as there were thousands of different sounds, so were there also thousands of different odors,—from the steaming earth, from the growing grass, from buds and blossoms; and above them all, like the cuckoo's call that was heard above the thousands of blended sounds, rose the fine, penetrating fragrance of newly sprouted birch trees.

Lisbeth stood still awhile, drawing deep breaths and letting the sweet air and the effervescence of spring stream in upon her. Then she looked around at the different farm buildings. Quiet brooded within them and every door was shut. Of all the living creatures belonging to the farm, not one was to be seen except Bearhunter, who got up slowly from the flat stone where he had been lying, comfortably sunning himself, and came over to her, looking up into her face and wagging his tail.

Truly, she believed she was the first one up on the whole farm to-day.

Well, of course she would have to wait. So she sat herself down on the steps.

Oh, no; it was just as she might have known it would be. Kjersti Hoel was up. Lisbeth heard her come out of her own room into the kitchen, take a big stick, and knock three times on the ceiling to waken the girls in the south chamber.

In a moment Lisbeth heard a thump! thump! as the girls hopped out of bed, and then a clattering noise as they put on their shoes. Soon Kjersti came out of the house. She was going over to the building where the men slept to waken them.

Catching sight of Lisbeth, she exclaimed: "No! this cannot be Lisbeth already up. What a wide-awake little girl! I think I shall have to make you head milkmaid."

At this Lisbeth became so shy that she could not raise her eyes to look at Kjersti; but it must be acknowledged that when the head milkmaid and the other girls came downstairs a certain small nose was tilted a little higher than usual.

Soon there was life and motion over the whole farm. The activity was very different from that of ordinary days, for everything was done with extra haste, and all that was done seemed to have some connection with the cow house. The doors at both ends of this building stood wide open, and every one seemed to have an errand which obliged him to pass through. The spring air streaming in made the cows turn around in their stalls, stretch their nostrils, and look out. When Kjersti herself appeared on the scene, after the girls had begun milking, and talked to the cows and patted the neck of the bell cow, the creatures at once realized what day it was. The bell cow threw up her head and bellowed till the cow house echoed. That was a signal for all the other cows. They pulled at their chains, swung their tails, and one after another, along the whole row, joined in a manifold bellow of joyful expectancy that shook the entire cow house and seemed as if it would never end. Above the many-voiced chorus could be heard the bellowing of the big bull, deep and even and good-natured, as if he did not need to exert himself in the least in order to be heard.

Although everything went so much more speedily to-day than usual, the time seemed long to Lisbeth Longfrock. When the farm people went into the house to eat their early breakfast, she could not understand how they could sit at the table so long. She finished her meal very quickly and asked if she might not go and let out the smaller animals,—the sheep and the goats,—so that that would be done. Yes, Kjersti said she might. In a trice, therefore, she had them out, and as usual they scattered in every direction, leaping and capering,—all except Crookhorn, who seized her chance to slink into the cow house through the open door; but Lisbeth was so busy that she did not notice this.

All at once there came an instant's stillness, as if everything listened. Then from the farmhouse the tuneful clanging of a deep-toned bell was heard, and in a moment this was answered by such a joyful lowing and bellowing, such a sniffing and rattling of chains, that it seemed as if a thunderstorm were passing over the farm; for when the animals recognized the sound of that deep-toned bell, which they had not heard since they were shut up in the cow house the autumn before, they knew that the time for being let out into the open air was close at hand.

A formal procession now issued from the farmhouse. Kjersti marched at the front, carrying the big iron-bound cow collar to which the deep-toned bell was fastened; next came the head milkmaid, followed by the under-milkmaid; then the girls who worked in the farmhouse; and then the two farm hands, with thick sticks, which they afterwards dealt out to the company, giving one to Lisbeth as well as to the rest. Last of all came Bearhunter, who also wanted to have a part in what was going on.

When the procession reached the cow house there was again a sudden silence. The cows, one and all, turned their heads toward the people as they came in, and looked at them with large, expectant eyes.

The procession then divided into groups, and definite work was assigned to each person. The head milkmaid was to unfasten the cows; Lisbeth and the under-milkmaid and the housemaids, each with her stout stick, were to steer the cows out through the door; the farm hands were to stand in the cow lane to meet the creatures and guide them into the right road (they were to be pastured up in the north meadow) and to separate those who fought with each other; and Kjersti and Bearhunter were to watch everything from the

gateway.

All was ready. The moment for the start had come.

Kjersti went into the stall of the cow who was to wear the bell. The cow straightened herself up, lifted her head as high as she could, and then stood stock-still. She knew very well that she was the principal cow of the herd, and that the first place when they went out and in through the cow-house door belonged to her; but she knew also that even she had to be on her best behavior when Kjersti, the mistress of the whole farm, did her the honor of clasping around her neck the cow collar with its bell,—emblem of dignity and power,—and of unfastening the chain that held her in the stall. Kjersti clasped on the bell and unloosed the chain, which fell rattling to the floor; and then the bell cow swung slowly and deliberately out of the stall, like a big, heavy ship out of its dock, and wended her way with solemn dignity toward the door. She carried her head so high and so stiffly that you could not see the least swaying of her horns, and her bell gave only a single decided stroke at each step.

The next to be let out was the big bull. The head milkmaid unloosed him, and he sailed out just as stiffly and heavily as the bell cow had done, with horns so high that they nearly touched the cow-house roof, and so wide apart that they seemed to stretch across the whole passageway. Lisbeth had never realized before how large the bull was.

And then, one by one, in regular turn, the rest of the cows marched out. They were Brindle, Morlik (which means "like its mother"), Goldie, Speckle, Blackie, Pusher, Summer-Leaf, Darkey, Wee Bonny, Trot-About, Wreathie, and Moolley.⁷ Wreathie was so named because the white marks on her hide looked something like a wreath.

Beyond the cow stalls, now empty, were the stalls of the heifers, whose names no one quite remembered as yet, and of the half-grown bulls, who did not have any names at all.

When it came to the unloosing of the heifers and young bulls, the scene grew livelier and livelier. They stretched their necks and rubbed against their chains. They fell on their knees as soon as the unlooped chains slipped from their necks, and as they sprang up again you could hear their legs creak,—so stiff were they from standing in the stall all winter. They ran plump against the side wall or up into the wrong passageway. They dashed noisily against the door, two reaching it at the same time and trying to rush through together but getting wedged by their fat sides; while those who had been set free after them came close on their heels, pushing, clashing their horns, butting and bellowing,—until suddenly, the blockade being broken, out rushed the whole throng.

Directly in the wake of the heifers and young bulls, to Lisbeth's extreme surprise, followed Crookhorn, who, kicking up her heels, made a swift dash out through the doorway.

Outside the cow house, too, all was life and stir. As the animals came into the lane, they lifted their heads, sniffed the air from the mountain side, and became eager and excited. Stiff-legged old cows, as well as young calves, kicked up their hind legs and made frolicsome leaps this way and that. They rushed playfully or angrily at each other, clashing their horns, and giving a short bellow if worsted in the tussle; then they dashed off to assail other members of the crowd. Everything combined to form a hubbub of lowing and bellowing, horn clashing and fence creaking, whacking of sticks and shouting of people; while back and forth through all the confusion, with his horns high above all the other horns, went the big bull, like a great heavy snowplow, clearing the way. Of the whole herd, only one cow stood undisturbed amid the wild uproar, calmly waiting and looking about. That was the bell cow, whom, of course, none of the other cows dared to disturb.

At last the head milkmaid came to the front and gave a call. The bell cow threw up her head and with a loud, echoing bellow started to follow her. Next came Brindle, still sniffing with anger after her many encounters. She had got the best of all who were worth getting the best of, and if she could not be the bell cow, she would, at any rate, stand next to her.

Directly after Brindle came Crookhorn, with a self-important air and making herself as tall as possible. But Brindle was in no mood for seeing the funny side of things to-day, so she lunged out with one of her long hind legs and gave Crookhorn a blow on the head that made the prideful goat see stars. But Crookhorn merely tossed her head and went on as if nothing had happened. Such actions, she thought, were probably customary among cows.

The head milkmaid kept on calling, and the cows, one after another, hearing her voice, started toward her. Soon the whole noisy herd, led by the deep-toned bell and urged by shouts and flourishing of sticks, was going in full swing toward the north meadow.

Up in the meadow, which they reached after a while, the ground was level and there was plenty of room, so that the danger of collisions and other accidents was lessened. The young creatures danced around in wild play, and those of the cows who had not settled

the question of mastery fought now a battle that was to be decisive for the whole summer. Soon, however, everything became quiet again, and in a couple of hours all of the animals, even the worst combatants, were grazing placidly side by side.

After this the farm people began to go home,—all except the head milkmaid and Lisbeth, who were to remain a while longer so as to be on hand in case anything happened. And something did happen. Brindle, whose quiet behavior had been only temporary, soon began to rove uneasily back and forth, sniffing hard. *She* was really the one who ought to be wearing the bell, she sniffed to herself; and then suddenly, with a violent rush, she hurled herself at the bell cow. Such a fight as there was then! The turf flew in all directions. Soon a sharp crack was heard, and a short, wild bellow, and one of Brindle's horns hung dangling.

Brindle shook her head till the blood splashed; then, giving another bellow, she turned and ran the shortest way home as fast as her legs could carry her, never stopping until she had reached the cow-house door. There she gave vent to a terrible bellowing, as if she wanted to bring all the farm buildings down over the people's ears.

After dinner the calves were let out. Lisbeth had finally named the three cow calves Yellow Speckle, Redsides, and Young Moolley, but as yet she had found no name to suit her for the bull calf. Lisbeth saw plainly that Kjersti wondered why she had not called any of the calves after Bliros (Gentle Cow), but she gave no sign of having noticed Kjersti's thought.

This is the way the calves were induced to leave their pen and to cross the cow-house floor. To begin with, a good-sized pail with a little milk in it was held out to each calf. In their eagerness to get the milk the calves thrust their heads clear into the pails; and when the persons holding these began to run, the calves ran too, with the pails over their heads like hats. Outside the cow-house door the pails were snatched off and there stood the calves, who had never before been beyond their pen, in the very midst of the great, wonderful new world.

The startled creatures gave an amazed look and then began to back, just as if they felt themselves suddenly standing at the head of a steep stairway; but soon they ventured to put one foot carefully forward, then another, and another. It was slow work, one step at a time; but at length they found that there was firm ground in this new region. They concluded that the world was only a larger calf pen, after all; but it was a wonderfully light calf pen, and its walls were certainly a long way off. Swish! up went their tails into the air and away they scampered like the wildest of forest animals.

Then began a great race in the big field,—from fence to fence, this way and that, crosswise, and round and round. Every time the calves jumped over a hillock Kjersti and Lisbeth saw their tails stand straight up against the sky like tillers. Lisbeth thought she had never seen anything so funny. But they could not keep together long. They soon ran off in various directions, and in the evening Lisbeth had to go to the farthest corners of the field with a pail and coax them home one by one; for of course they did not have sense enough to know when to go home,—they who were out in the world for the first time!

Lisbeth was lying again in her little room. It was the evening of her first working day. She had said her simple evening prayer, as usual, and then stretched herself out on the bed, feeling how good it was to rest, for her body was tired through and through.

What a day it had been! A long day, too, she knew; nevertheless, she could not imagine where it had gone. She felt that she must think over all that had happened. But drowsiness came stealing upon her and threw the scenes of the day into confusion. She saw a pair of big horns that plowed like a snow plow through a swarming crowd, and then she saw Brindle standing in her stall with her head on one side and a big bandage over one of her horns, looking exactly like an old peasant woman with a kerchief tied around her head for a headache; and then she thought she saw, written in the air, a couplet that she had once heard:

Rearing its tail against the sky,
Danced the calf on the hilltop high.

And then Lisbeth Longfrock fell asleep.

The next day, with the lunch bag upon her back, Lisbeth Longfrock set out for a forest that lay not far off, taking the sheep and goats with her. She had not succeeded in getting Crookhorn to go along, however. The self-willed goat had taken the shortest cut up to the north meadow, where the cows were again pastured.

Lisbeth's second working day, like her first, seemed a very long one, for the forest was wonderfully lonesome and still. The little girl had time to think of many, many things,—of her mother and Jacob and Peerout Castle; and it must be acknowledged that she cried a wee bit, too.

CHAPTER V

SUMMER: TAKING THE ANIMALS UP TO THE SÆTER

Upward over the open slope across the valley from Hoel Farm a lengthy procession was taking its way.

Kjersti Hoel stood at the window of her room, following the procession with her eyes as long as she could, for soon it would vanish from the open slope into the wooded part of the mountain. The herds belonging to Hoel Farm were that day being taken up to the sæter,⁸ to spend the summer grazing on the rich grass which grows in sunny spaces here and there on the mountain heights.

At the head of the procession rode the milkmaid on the military horse,⁹ which for this occasion had a woman's saddle upon its back. The saddle had a high frame, so that it looked almost like an easy-chair; and the milkmaid sitting aloft on it, dressed in her best, and with a white linen kerchief on her head, was rosy, plump, and also somewhat self-conscious, for was not she the most important person in the company, the one who was to give all the commands?

After her came two farm hands, each leading a horse whose back fairly curved in under its heavy load. Then followed the herds in order of rank. First came the bell cow, then Brindle with her wounded horn that had grown on awry, then Crookhorn, then Darkey, and behind Darkey the whole long train of cows,—all except two, old Moolley and the pet, Wee Bonny, who were to stay at home to furnish milk for the people there and to teach the new calves to follow. After the cows stalked the big bull, as if acting as rear guard for his herd.

Next came the goats, hurrying along and trying to get ahead; then the sheep in a tight clump; and behind these, four great pigs and a few calves; while at the very end of the train came the under-milkmaid, and Lisbeth Longfrock with her lunch bag on her back.

In the beginning all had gone as gayly as a dance, for almost every one had pleasant memories of the summer before, and it seemed impossible to reach the mountain top quickly enough; but as they mounted, the way became steeper and steeper, and the sun rose higher and higher, burning their backs. The pigs began to lag behind, trying to branch off at every side path so as to get a little nap in the shade or cool themselves in a mudhole. The sheep and goats, feeling the need of something in their stomachs, slipped aside whenever they spied a young birch tree whose leaves they could nibble, or a fence to peep through, or a plot of green grass. The last year's calves, who had not been to the sæter before, saw no reason at all for hurrying, and made no attempt at it except when the stick was used upon them.

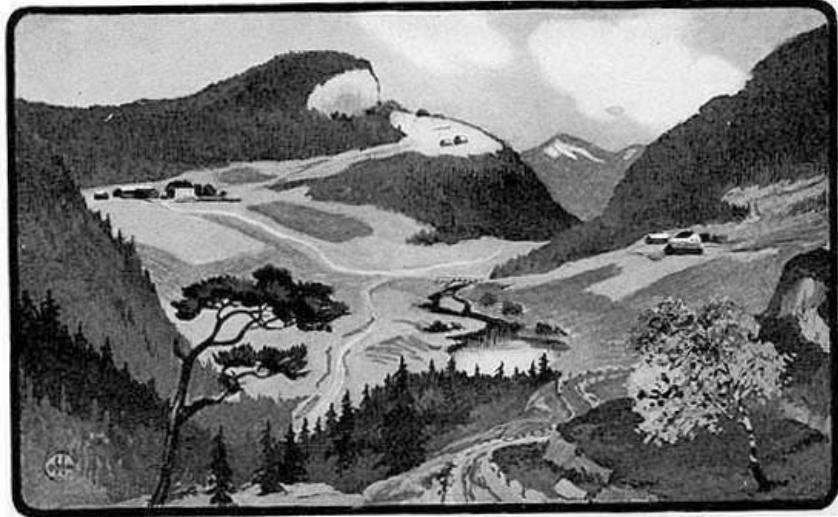
So Lisbeth Longfrock had to keep rushing off the road into side paths, behind bushes, into forest thickets and boggy marshes, to drag the various creatures back into line; and scarcely did she get them safely into the road from one side before they slipped out again on the other.

She had to take off one of her long knitted garters and tie it around her waist so that she could tuck her long frock up out of the way; for she was constantly on the run, coaxing, shouting, and circumventing.

It was a hard struggle. Her light hair became dripping wet and her face was as red as a half-ripe mountain cranberry; but Lisbeth did not notice her discomfort, so absorbed was she in what she had to do. The under-milkmaid would return to the farm with the men when the sæter was reached. It was Lisbeth who was to have the responsibility for the

smaller animals during the whole summer, and who was to bring them home in the autumn fat and glossy. She and the head milkmaid had their special responsibilities, each at her own end of the line, as it were; and even if Lisbeth's was only the tail end, she did not wish to have the disgrace of being unable to keep it in order.

The procession continued mounting higher and higher, and soon the whole valley lay below, deep and wide and delicately green. The fir trees became smaller and more scattered, the slender birches grew closer together. Before long the first specimens of black crowberries and "old woman's switches" (dwarf birch trees) were seen; and with that the procession was up over the crest of the mountain side.



THE VALLEY AND THE FARMS

Then, all at once, it seemed as if a heavy weight slipped off; as if all weariness was smoothed away from man and beast. The whole mountain sent its freshness and peace streaming over them. They were in a new world. Before them, with its boundless surface broken into level spaces and undulating slopes, lay the mountain top, stretching itself far, far away, until lost in the deepening blue of a snow-streaked summit. If they looked back, the valley seemed to have sunk out of sight; but on the mountain top across the valley they could see wide expanses of open land dotted with shining water and grassy sæter districts.

Drawing a long breath, all gazed silently around. What a tranquillity lay over everything! Of their own accord the animals fell into order along the stony road curving endlessly beyond them. They made no more attempts to branch off into side paths, but walked slowly along at an even pace. That gave Lisbeth a little time to view her surroundings. She had never seen a place so broad and open. And up here she was to spend the whole bright summer.

All at once, in the midst of this vastness and space, Lisbeth felt herself so wonderfully little! But she was not at all terrified; she only felt very solemn and peaceful.

She began to think of the future,—of the rest of the day, the coming summer, and the many summers that would follow. Sometime she herself would be big and grown up, like the head milkmaid, whom she could now see sitting on the high saddle far ahead. Sometime she herself would sit up there, perhaps, and ride at the front.

The pack horses refused to go slowly now, even under their heavy loads. They forged ahead, passed the mounted milkmaid, and soon disappeared over a distant ridge. The procession followed slowly. Hour after hour it wound its curving way over ridges and brooks, past sæters and shining mountain lakes. Lisbeth had the honor of sitting up in the saddle and riding awhile, the milkmaid feeling that she would gladly walk a little.

Evening began to draw nigh. They took their way high up through a gap in the mountain which they had seen in the distance early in the morning. After that the road began to descend. They met with birch trees again and one single warped fir tree; and from below they heard the rushing sound of a large river.

They reached at last the edge of the sæter valley to which they were bound, and stood still to look down. Below them lay a comparatively level space, peaceful and green, with its three sæter huts, belonging to Høegseth,¹⁰ Lunde,¹¹ and Hoel farms. From the chimneys of two of the huts smoke was ascending in the still afternoon air.

The gazers were filled with delight. This, then, was the spot where they were to spend the

summer! The cows began to bellow. The smaller animals, one and all, started on a run past the cows and down the hill.

Early the next morning Lisbeth was on her way across the mountain pasture with the small animals in her charge. She did not have the lunch bag on her back now, for while she was up at the sæter she was to take dinner at the hut every noon.

The sunshine was brilliant. The cows had been turned loose and were walking away on the nearest cow path, going in single file as if strung on a line. The leader's bell rang deeply and regularly, its tone mingling with others quite as deep from the neighboring sæters; and in upon this solemn ringing broke the delicate, brisk dingle-dangle of the smaller creatures' bells.

The time had now come when Lisbeth Longfrock was to make her first entrance into the vast unknown. The milkmaid had told her that while tending her animals this first day she should not wander too far, lest she might not be able to find her way back. She was to listen to the other herders and keep near them. The milkmaid did not know whether the other herders were boys or girls this year.

Lisbeth kept looking back every now and then to keep track of the way she had come, and was apparently loath to lose sight of the hut; but the animals drifted rapidly off in the distance and she had to follow so as not to lose sight of them altogether, and after a while, when she looked back, the hut could not be seen. Around her were only the unending wastes of hill and marsh and the faraway mountain peaks. How spacious and silent it was! Not a sound was to be heard except that of the bells; not even the river's rushing harmonies reached up to where she stood.

She suddenly felt herself so utterly alone and remote and had such a longing to caress some living creature that she went among the flock and petted now this one and now that. The bell goat became so envious that it butted the others out of the way and stood rubbing itself against her.

All at once there came a call, "Ho-i-ho! ho-i-ho!" so loud and clear that the mountains echoed with it. The goats pricked up their ears, and Lisbeth, too, listened breathlessly. The call was so unexpected that she had not distinguished from what quarter it came. It sounded near, and yet, because of the echoes, from all directions.

"Ho-i-ho! ho-i-ho!" This time the call was still louder. Presently she heard bells, several bells, and then she saw a large flock of sheep and goats come straggling over the crest of a hill.

Very likely it was the other herders who were calling. Lisbeth saw two straw hats rise above the hill, and by degrees two tall boys seemed to grow up out of the hilltop,—boys about as big as Jacob.

At sight of them Lisbeth felt so shy that she kneeled down and hid herself behind a bushy little mound.

The boys shaded their eyes with their hands and looked down from the hilltop.

"Ho-i-ho!" they called, and then listened. "Ho-i-ho!"

No answer. All was still.

Then one of the boys cried out:

Oh, ho! you boy from Hoel, don't you hear?
If you have pluck, we call you to appear!

They stood awhile, watching. Then they darted forward, turned two or three somersaults, and ran down the hill toward her, repeating their call and shouting. Again they stopped and listened, as if uncertain.

"Ho-i-ho!" Again they challenged:

If you lie hid behind some bush or stone,
Come out and show there's marrow in your bone!

Then the two boys came to the bottom of the hill, where Lisbeth's flock was, and looked around. No, they did not see any one. The new herder from Hoel, who dared to lose track of his flock the first day, must be a reckless young scamp—a fellow it might be fun to get acquainted with. Very likely he had heard of their bathing place in the Sloping Marsh. Probably that was where he had gone now.

Well, they would take his animals with them and go there themselves; but first they would give another call. Perhaps he was not so far away but that he might hear if they gave a good loud one.

"Ho-i-ho!" From far away echo repeated the sounds in "dwarf language," as the Norwegian boys call it.

When all was still again, there sounded close at hand, as thin and clear as the peep of a bird, "Ho-i-ho!"

This was from Lisbeth, who, when she heard that they were going to take her flock away, felt that she ought to call out, although it was extremely embarrassing.

The boys stopped short, greatly astonished. From behind the bushy little mound there arose something small, just like a tiny "hill woman," in a plaid neckerchief and a long frock, who stood stock-still and looked at them with large, shy eyes.

At sight of her the boys were somewhat abashed. It was a little embarrassing for them to find that their boastful, taunting rhymes had been directed against a poor timorous "young one," and a girl at that; but it was exasperating, too, for they had expected to see a comrade of their own size.

Humph! any one could see that Hoel Farm had women folk at the head of it. The mistress was not willing that even the herder should be a boy.

If the "young one" had only been bigger,—bigger than themselves,—they could have shown their contempt for her and chased her; but that little midget! no, indeed, grown-up fellows like them did not waste either words or blows on such small fry! It would be a good plan, however, to talk with her a bit and hear whether another herder was not coming to take her place. After that they would have nothing more to do with her. They could get along by themselves for one summer. All that was necessary was to frighten her a little, so that she would keep out of their way.

They came over to Lisbeth and stood before her, big-boy-like, with their hands in their pockets. Then one of them said, "Are you going to be the Hoel herder this summer?"

"Yes," answered Lisbeth. Then, as if to excuse herself, she added quickly, "Kjersti wanted me to."

"What is your name?"

"Lisbeth; and Jacob calls me Longfrock."

"Where are you from?"

"From Peerout."

"Are you Jacob Peerout's sister? We went to school with him last winter."

"Yes, I am."

"What a nuisance that Jacob himself did not come! We haven't any use at all for young ones like you up here."

The speaker, who was the larger of the two boys, stood awhile waiting for a reply; but Lisbeth did not know what answer to make to his remark and therefore said nothing. So he continued: "Well, we only wanted to say to you—I'm Ole Hægseth and that fellow over there is Peter Lunde—that you must keep out of our way. You must not dare to come a step beyond a line running from Pancake Stone down around the Sloping Marsh to the Pointing Stump near the Hægseth cow path. If you let your animals graze beyond that line, your brother Jacob, next winter, shall get all the thrashings you ought to have this summer."

Lisbeth was dreadfully frightened and her mouth began to tremble. Then the second boy said to the larger one, "Yes, but Jacob is so strong that he will get the best of you."

"Not when I have brought myself into good training. Hoi!" and he turned a handspring.

"Now you know what Jacob may expect, so take care what you do! We boys are going up to the Sloping Marsh to bathe. Ho-i-ho!"

With shout and call they took their way up over the hill again. At the top they looked back and then glanced a little dubiously at each other. Lisbeth Longfrock was still standing where they had left her, and—she was crying!

Lisbeth felt very small and forlorn as she stood there. She certainly did not want to do anything that Jacob would get a thrashing for. If she only knew where it was that she was not allowed to go! but she had not the least idea where either the Pointing Stump or the

Sloping Marsh lay. All that she could do would be to keep with her animals and find out about these places later.

Sometime afterwards, when Lisbeth had mounted a small round hill, she heard the bells of the boys' flocks again. That gave her a fright, and she began to chase her animals off in another direction. But as she turned around to do so she saw, far, far down the marsh, two white figures running, jumping, and playing leapfrog in the sunshine beside a gleaming pond. The boys had let their flocks stray away from them!

Lisbeth dreaded incurring more displeasure, but surely something ought to be done. There was no help for it; she would really have to take care of the stray animals for a while. The boys could not be angry at that, she knew, because the greatest disgrace that can befall a herder is the losing of his flock, and for boys so big as these to go back to the sæter without any animals would be especially humiliating.

So Lisbeth went to work gathering the flocks together, jumping up on a mound every now and then to see if the boys were not ready to come; but they appeared to have forgotten everything except their play.

At length she saw that the boys suddenly stood still and listened, peering about in all directions. Then they started into activity again, snatched up their clothes, put them on in great haste, and started off on a run toward the opposite edge of the marsh. Every little while they would stop and listen, and then run on again. They were so far off that there was no use in Lisbeth's shouting to them or trying to give the call "Ho-i-ho!"

When the boys reached a round hill that lay on the other side of the marsh, they ran to the top and again peered in all directions for a long time. Then, as fast as their legs could carry them, they made their way back across the marsh straight toward the small round hill where Lisbeth was. As they neared it Lisbeth thought that now was the time to give the herder's call, for the flocks were on the other side of the hill and their bells could not be heard by the boys. Her first call was too weak. She gave another somewhat stronger.

The boys stopped and answered.

Lisbeth called again, "Ho-i-ho!" and then the boys came up the hill. They found it a little difficult to break the silence. It was rather annoying to be obliged to question that "young one" about their flocks; but there was no other way.

"Have you seen our animals?"

Lisbeth looked at them pleadingly. "They are here at the foot of the hill. I have been taking care of them, but you must not thrash Jacob for it."

The boys looked as they felt,—rather crestfallen. But they had to say something, so Ole remarked, as they turned and left her, "Oh, well, we 'll let him off for this one time."

When Lisbeth went to fasten the gate of the fold that evening Peter Lunde came bobbing along outside the fence.

"You haven't a strange sheep here, have you?"

"No; I have counted mine."

"Well, perhaps I counted mine wrong. Very likely they are all there."

The two stood looking at each other for a while; then both grew shy and had to turn their eyes away. At last Peter said: "Lisbeth, if you want to, you may tend your flock wherever we tend ours, and you may come to our pond. I understood Ole to say that he is willing, too; but if he makes any fuss about it, why I *can* thrash him if I really want to."

"Yes, I will come gladly, you may be sure."

"Well, then, I will come after you to-morrow morning, back of the hill here."

Lisbeth did not get a chance to say anything more, for Peter was off like a flash around the corner. He had seen Ole coming.

Ole came lounging along in his usual fashion, with his hands in his pockets.

"You haven't seen a strange sheep, have you?"

"No."

"Humph!"

"Is one of yours missing?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. Humph! I thought I would tell you that you need not bother yourself about what I said to-day. I did not mean anything by it. It was Peter that made me say it; and if you want me to, I can thrash him for it to-morrow."

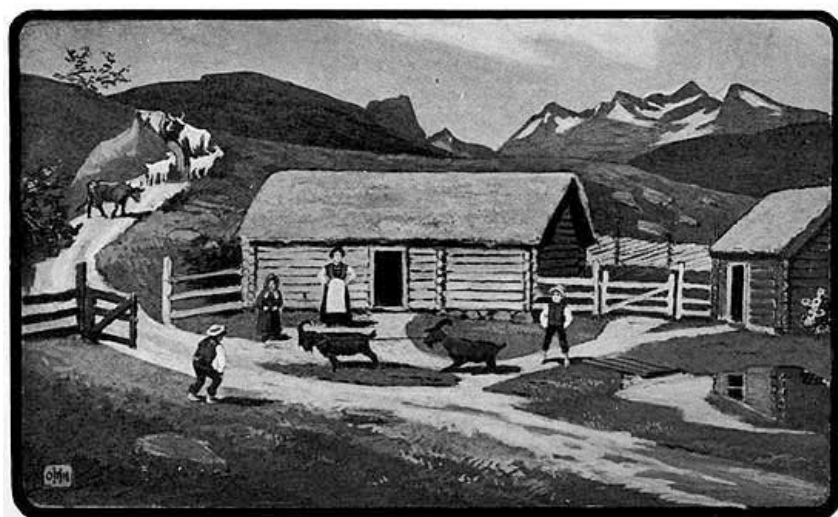
CHAPTER VI

THE TAMING OF CROOKHORN

It was early morning in the latter part of the summer, and the sun was shining brightly over Hoel Sæter.

Lisbeth was alone inside the fold, milking goats. All was quiet and peaceful. Not a bell was heard. The only sounds were the gentle rush of the river far below and an occasional soft thud from the cow house when a cow bumped her horns against the wall in getting up. The milkmaid was inside the cow house, milking the cows. Lisbeth's hands were still too small for that work, so it had been arranged that she should have entire charge of the goats instead of helping with the larger animals.

Suddenly from the hill above the sæter rang out "Ho-o-i-ho!" and in a few minutes the call was answered a little farther off with a touch of irritation in the tone, "Ho-o-i-ho!"



UP AT THE SÆTER

Lisbeth looked up and listened. Then with a smile of happy satisfaction she went over to the fence and called, "Ho-o-i-ho!" Now she could send out the tones with vigor, so that they rang back from all the hills around; her voice no longer trembled when she answered the big boys' call.

To-day she knew that they were calling especially to summon her, and that they dared to come close to the sæter with their animals because they had an errand,—something that they had planned with the milkmaid and Lisbeth.

By the sound of the bells she could tell that the boys were driving the animals as fast as they could. The boy that was behind—Peter, of course—was provoked at not being first.

But, if you please, they would have to wait until she had finished her work. They were out extremely early to-day!

However strange it may seem, Lisbeth Longfrock, soon after her arrival at Hoel Sæter, had become a prime favorite with the other herders. The day after her first painful experiences the boys, as proposed, had met her behind the hill, Peter first and then Ole. No reference was made to the previous day; it was merely taken for granted that in future

she would be with them. Ole said that she could look after their animals, together with her own, while they went off to bathe. Peter thought she could, too. So she agreed to the arrangement.

But the boys did not play very long on the bank of the pond that day when they had finished bathing. It was not much fun, after all, to be down there by themselves.

So it had come to pass that Lisbeth and her animals never came strolling over the hill in the morning without meeting the boys. They generally came at nearly the same time, each from the direction of his own sæter, apparently trying to see who could be the first to give the call. But when they met each did his best to make out to the other that he had come there by the merest chance, both sheepishly realizing that the very evening before they had put on big-boy airs about "that young one whom they could never get rid of," and had said that they would go off in an entirely different direction the next day, to avoid her if possible.

Often the boys would have athletic contests, turning handsprings and wrestling from one meal-time to another because neither boy was willing to give up beaten. More than once in a single morning or afternoon would Lisbeth have to remind them to look after their animals, because, completely forgotten by the boys, the flocks had strayed nearly out of sight.

Occasionally it happened that one boy would reach Hoel Sæter ten or fifteen minutes before the other and would find Lisbeth ready to set out. In that case the first comer would insist that he and Lisbeth should start out by themselves, urging that the other boy had probably gone somewhere else that day. Such times were almost the pleasantest, Lisbeth thought, for then the one boy had always so much to show her that the other boy did not know about,—a marshy ledge, white as snow with cloudberry blossoms, where there would be many, many berries in the autumn (that ledge they could keep for themselves,—it was not worth while to let the other boy know about everything they found); or a ptarmigan nest with thirteen big eggs in it; or a ridge where scouring rushes¹² grew unusually long and thick.

Each boy talked more with her, too, when by himself, and was less boastful and rough. And the one boy would climb trees and get spruce gum for her, while she would seek scouring rush for him. Scouring rush is something that requires a special knack in the one who is to discover it, and the boys had never seen Lisbeth's equal in spying it out. Peter said that if there was a single spear growing anywhere, you might be sure that she would find it; to which Ole jokingly responded that, for his part, he believed she could find one even where there wasn't any!

And how many, many things both boys thought of that they could make! One day when it rained Ole made Lisbeth a hat out of birch bark, and the next day Peter came with a pair of birch-bark shoes for her. The milkmaid must have laughed when she saw Lisbeth coming home that second day wearing the birch-bark hat and shoes, and carrying her ordinary shoes in her hand. Another day Ole gave her a pocketknife. She ought to have something to whittle with, he thought, and he did not need that knife because he had one with a sheath that he always wore in his belt. The next day Peter brought her a musical horn that he had made in the evenings from a goat's horn. It had an unusually fine tone. You could manage to play that funny tune, "Old Woman with a Stick," on it after a fashion.

Ole speculated a while as to what he could do to beat that, and then he hit upon an idea,—he would tame Crookhorn!

They had often seen Crookhorn going with the cows as if she were one of them; and they knew that though she was Lisbeth's own goat there was no use in trying to make her go with the other goats. The little girl had told them how impossible it had been to manage the creature at the farm, and that Kjersti had said the men would have to make an end of her when winter came.

So Ole offered to tame Crookhorn. He was sure that he could teach her to go with the others. There had never been a goat yet that had not been forced to yield when he attempted to master it.

Yes, indeed, Lisbeth was more than willing for him to try. If he succeeded, she would gladly give him all she owned.

No, Ole did not want any payment for doing it; but if she insisted on giving him something, he would like the goat's horns after the goat was slaughtered, as it would have to be some day. They would make matchless horns to blow upon.

But Peter, too, wanted to have a share in the undertaking. If the goat proved to be very cross and obstinate, two persons would surely be needed to tame her. Then they could have one horn apiece.

Ole did not know whether he would agree to that or not, for it was he who had thought of the plan.

Yes, but how could he carry it out? Peter did not believe that Crookhorn could be made to go with the other goats unless there was a stronger goat for her to be fastened to. Ole did not have such a one. It was Peter who had the big billy goat, the only one strong enough for the task.

Yes, that was true; so Peter might help in taming Crookhorn if he would lend his billy goat.

Lisbeth, for her part, thought they ought all to help; that was the only proper way. And her suggestion was finally followed.

Ole's taming of Crookhorn was the errand that brought the boys to the Hoel Sæter on the morning that Lisbeth and the milkmaid were doing their milking so early.

The two flocks came pushing and crowding over the hill; but as soon as the animals realized that they were to be allowed to go close to the sæter, they began to run at full speed. It was always such fun to go to a strange place! They would be sure to find something new to see and to stick their noses into,—perhaps a little milk stirabout in the pig trough, a little salt on the salting stone, or a hole in the fence where one could get a chance to squeeze through without being seen.

The bells clanged, the boys ran about shouting and hallooing and giving their musical calls, trying to keep the worst goats in order, but perhaps making a little more noise than was necessary.

Where all had been so still before there was now the liveliest commotion. The milkmaid could not resist going to the cow-house door to look out; and Lisbeth would surely have forgotten to milk the last of her goats if it had not come over to her of its own accord and stood directly in her way as she was going out of the fold.

When Ole saw the milkmaid at the cow-house door he called out, "Shall you not let out your cattle soon?"

"Yes; I am just ready to," answered the milkmaid. "Are you ready, Lisbeth?"

"I am milking my last goat."

Soon everything was done, and the animals stood waiting to be let out.

Ole had with him a strong band woven of willow withes, with an ingeniously fastened loop at each end. One loop was for Peter's billy goat, the other for Crookhorn. Ole thought it was a very fine apparatus indeed.

"Where is Crookhorn?"

"In the cow house."

"Then I had better go in and get her myself. Bring your goat, Peter, and hold him ready."

Peter called his big billy goat. It knew its name and came at once.

"Let me see how strong you are," said Peter. He took hold of its horns, held its head down, and pushed against it. The billy goat bunted, took a fresh start, bunted again,—they often played in this way,—and sent Peter against the fence.

"There!" exclaimed Peter, picking himself up; "I rather think that billy goat is strong enough to drag any goat along, no matter how big a one." Peter fairly glowed with pride.

Ole, too, wanted to try the strength of the goat. Yes, it was an amazingly strong goat.

Then Ole went into the cow house, and in a few moments came back leading Crookhorn by the band of willow withes. The next step was to fasten the other loop around the billy goat's neck, and behold! there stood the two goats harnessed together. But neither of them seemed to notice that anything had been done.

Lisbeth and the milkmaid and the boys waited a while expectantly; but the billy goat rather enjoyed being looked at, and would not budge so long as they and the flocks were near by. He merely stood still and wanted to be petted.

So Ole said: "Let your animals out, Lisbeth, and start ours on the path, Peter. Then we shall see a double-team grazing contest."

Lisbeth opened the gate and her animals crowded out, taking their customary way up over the hill. Peter drove his own flock and Ole's after them.

Seeing this, the billy goat thought it was high time for him to be jogging along, so he took a step forward; but something was the matter. He looked back. Who was playing tricks and hindering him?

He saw Crookhorn with all four legs planted fast on the ground and her neck stretched out.

"Pooh! nothing but that," thought the billy goat, taking a couple of steps forward. Crookhorn found herself obliged to follow, but she laid her head back and struggled. Then the billy goat gathered all his force, set his horns high in the air, and tugged at the band. He would show her that he was not to be kept back by any such foolery!

Crookhorn again found herself obliged to follow, but she resisted and resisted with all her might. At length her fore legs doubled up under her and she sank upon her knees; but the billy goat went on as if nothing had happened, and Crookhorn had to follow on her knees across the whole flat part of the sæter field.

Lisbeth and the boys shrieked with laughter, and even the milkmaid found it impossible not to join in.

When Crookhorn reached the beginning of the hill, where the ground was more uneven, she thought it wiser to get up and trot along on her four feet; but although she yielded thus far for the sake of her own comfort, she still continued to struggle against being forced to go at all.

The animals took the customary path leading farther over the mountain. Little by little Crookhorn seemed to conclude that she must submit to the inevitable. During the first part of the morning she was sullen and contrary, merely allowing herself to be dragged along; but as the day wore on and her stomach felt empty and slack, she grew more subdued and began to walk quietly forward, eating as she went like any other goat,—only looking up once in a while when she heard the heavy cow bell in the distance.

The fun was gone when Crookhorn took to behaving well, so the boys began as usual to wrestle and turn somersaults; and this they kept up until it was nearly time to go home for their nooning. Then Ole said: "Now let us slip her loose on trial. I think she must be cured by this time."

Yes, the others agreed to that.

So they called to the billy goat coaxingly. He came jogging along with his big horns straight up and Crookhorn trailing after him. Ole first set the billy goat free, and then, kneeling down before Crookhorn, he took hold of her beard. Crookhorn pawed with her feet as goats do when they want to get rid of this hold, but Ole would not let go. He wished to give her a few admonitions first.

Now that she had found her master, he told her, she need no longer imagine that she was a cow. Hereafter she was to behave like other goats or she would have him to deal with; and at this he gave her beard a wag, as if to add force to his words. That hurt Crookhorn, and she made a bound straight at him and sent him rolling backward. Then, passing directly over him, with the willow band trailing behind her, she set out on a trot across the marsh in the direction from which the sound of the cow bell had come.

Ole scrambled up again, stamped the ground with rage, and started after her.

Lisbeth and Peter were already on the way. They shouted and screamed as they ran, and threatened Crookhorn with all sorts of punishments if she did not stop; but Crookhorn acted as if she did not understand. She ran, and they after her. The boys became more and more angry. It had never happened before that they had been unable to capture a goat; and besides, each boy was eager to get ahead of the other. So they ran faster and faster. Although Lisbeth Longfrock was light-footed, especially with her birch-bark shoes¹³ on, she lagged behind. It was like wading in deep water to try to run in that long frock of hers, which, in the hasty start of the morning, she had forgotten to tuck up in her belt as usual.

Soon she caught a last glimpse of the boys as they disappeared over a hill on the other side of the marsh. Peter was ahead (she believed he really was the faster runner of the two). But she herself was only in the middle of the marsh.

So she stopped. Certainly the best thing that she could do was to go back and get the animals together; otherwise all three flocks were likely to stray away.

She turned back, recrossed the marsh, and had climbed the hill a little way when she heard a rumbling and thudding noise, which grew constantly louder and louder, while the

ground seemed to roll in waves under her feet. What could it be? Around the foot of the hill came a big herd of horses¹⁴—oh, what a big herd! There were horses old and young, and foals running beside their mothers; horses brown, dun-colored, black, and white; and all of them were so bright and shiny and fat and skittish! They trotted and ran, with heads tossing,—those ahead being passed by others, then those behind getting ahead again,—making a noise almost like the booming of thunder.

Lisbeth stood still and watched them, half afraid. She had never seen so big a herd before. They noticed her, too, but they did not run at her at all. Only two or three stopped, pricked up their ears, and gazed at her, trying to make out what kind of little creature she could be. Then they ran on again, and in an instant the whole herd had gone past. Lisbeth could only hear the thunder of their hoofs as they galloped into the path leading to the sæter.

But her animals! and the boys' flocks! Naturally the horses had frightened them. Lisbeth could see no trace of them anywhere. She ran from hill to hill, stopping to listen and then running again.

It was all of no use; she could not find them. The only wise course for her was to go back to the sæter.

This was the first and only time that Lisbeth Longfrock went home without taking her animals with her.

But when she reached the sæter there lay the whole flock peacefully within the fold, chewing the cud. They had gone home of their own accord. The horses that had given Lisbeth such a fright were there also, walking about and licking up the salt which the milkmaid had strewn for them.

In the afternoon the milkmaids from the other sæters came to inquire after the boys, for their goats had also come home of themselves long before the usual time.

It was not until much later that Ole and Peter arrived, dragging Crookhorn between them.

When the milkmaids laughed at them the boys could not help feeling a little chagrined. That they had let their flocks stray away could not be denied; but no one could say that they had come home without any animal at all,—although two big boys *did* seem a rather liberal number to be in charge of a single goat, however large that goat might be.

Things had gone wrong for that day, Ole acknowledged; but Crookhorn was not to think that she had seen the end of the struggle. They would take her with them again the next day. She should get her deserts.

But it turned out otherwise. Crookhorn knew better than to let such a thing happen. When they took off the willow band she stood still awhile with her neck stretched up, looking at the horses which were at that moment going out of the inclosure. Suddenly she kicked up her hind legs in real horse fashion, and then away she went after the herd as fast as she could go.

The milkmaids, as well as the boys, could do nothing but stand and gape when they saw her join the horses.

"Probably she imagines now that she is a horse," thought they.

For a while they stood in silence watching the receding herd. Then Ole said in his dry fashion, "If there had been any elephants here, it would have been just like Crookhorn to imagine herself an elephant."

CHAPTER VII

HOME FROM THE SÆTER

Summer, with its light nights and brilliant days, comes rapidly to full power on the mountains in Norway. The season is brief but intense.

It begins with a creeping of light green over the gentle slopes and unending marshes, and a trickling of light green down around each *tue*, or little mound of earth covered with moss and tiny berry plants. Ptarmigans roam about in solitary pairs, murmuring when any

one comes too near their nests; gnats and horseflies buzz through the air; and cows, with tails set straight up, scamper friskily about, trying to escape the irritating stings.

Over everything lies a thick, warm, dark-blue haze, hindering a free outlook.

But soon come the blueberries, the marsh wool or cotton grass, and later the cloudberry; and on some fine day when the mother ptarmigans go out to walk, peeping sounds are heard around them, here, there, and everywhere. The mother birds scold more than ever, now that their young ones are whirling like so many feathery balls a yard or more upward, and two or three yards forward, and then tumbling down into the heather again, head foremost. By this time the cows roam about quietly and meditatively over the mountain, seeking the juiciest, best-flavored herbage to nibble; the warm haze melts away and the air becomes so sparkingly clear that mountain peaks miles distant are as delicately and sharply outlined as the nearest little mound. Then the cloudberry blossoms fall, and soon the marshes grow yellow and red, the tiny blossoms of the heather color all the knolls and rocky places, the greenness vanishes, and over the patches of white reindeer moss, which shine out like snow here and there on the mountain, comes a blush of red and a tinge of brown. Autumn is now drawing near.

Much of the time the sun shines brightly, and when it does, how glorious to be the herder of a flock!

But there come days also when the fog spreads itself like a close gray blanket, under which the ground, with its mounds and bushes and heather, creeps stealthily, disappearing a few yards away. And out of the fog comes a fine, mist-like rain, which deposits itself in tiny gray beads on every blade and every pine needle, so that wherever any one goes there is a little sprinkling of water.

In such weather it is far from pleasant to be in charge of a flock. If the animals move forward quietly, the herder must seek shelter under every bush, with a piece of sacking over his shoulders to shield him from the wet. But it is far more likely that he will be obliged to run about, with the water squeezing in and out of his shoes, trying to keep track of his animals; for in weather like this the mushrooms spring up plentifully and the animals scatter eagerly in all directions to find them, scorning other food when these may be obtained. Sometimes when the herder is speeding along the edge of the marsh, a pair of large, powerful cranes, who are on their journey south, will loom suddenly before him out of the fog. This startles him greatly, for the cranes seem to the herder much larger than they really are. They look like a couple of great sheep with wings on.

Later in the season comes a morning when all is glistening white. A little snow has fallen during the night,—not enough to last, however; it melts away as the day goes on. But after this the animals no longer like to go up on the higher parts of the mountain. The cows stand lowing at the gate of the sæter inclosure; they know that sooner or later they will be allowed to slip in there to enjoy the last of the mountain's good grazing. The goats look inquiringly backward as they are let out of the fold. Summer is over. Every one longs to go down again to the home farm.

At last a day comes when the gate is opened and the cows rush into the sæter inclosure. They know now that they will not have to go up on the bare mountain again this year. Then the farm hands come up with pack horses, and other horses that have been running wild on the mountain all summer are found and taken home. The packs are tied up; there is a great washing, a clearing away of rubbish and putting things in order for the next summer, and at last *Bufar* day, the long-expected day of returning to the home farm, arrives.

On *Bufar* day Lisbeth Longfrock stood up on the ridge of the turf-covered cow-house roof, taking a final look at the surrounding scene. She was all ready for the journey. Her lunch bag was on her back, her birch-bark hat on her head, and the goat horn which Peter had given her hung on a string around her neck. In her hand she carried a stout stick. Within the sæter inclosure the cows and smaller animals were roving back and forth from fence to fence impatiently. They knew that *Bufar* day had come, for along the wall of the sæter hut, in a row, stood the horses' packs, filled with butter tubs, cheese tubs, and cheese boxes; and tied to the fence were the horses themselves. All of these had pack saddles on, except the military horse, which stood foremost among them, bearing a woman's saddle. The farm hands stood outside, too, smoking their pipes. They were all ready, and were only waiting for the milkmaid, who was inside the hut making the last batch of cheese from the morning's milk, which she could not allow to be wasted.

While Lisbeth was standing on the ridge of the cow house Ole and Peter came bobbing along past the fence of the fold. They were not so boisterous as usual to-day, and stopped at the gate, looking at Lisbeth without saying a word at first. Then Peter asked, "Are you

going back to the farm to-day, Lisbeth?"

"Yes, I am all ready."

With one impulse Lisbeth and the boys gazed over the mountain's familiar expanse.

"The mountain begins to look barren now," said Peter; "but I shall be here a week longer."

"So long as that?" said Lisbeth. "And you, Ole?"

"I am going day after to-morrow."

All three were silent again for a while. Then Lisbeth said: "I suppose I must go with the others now. They surely must be ready."

She descended from the roof and went over to where the boys were. The conversation came to a standstill again; they could not think of anything to say. Finally Peter spoke.

"Are you coming again next summer, Lisbeth?"

"Yes, if Kjersti Hoel is pleased with me; but that can hardly be expected, since I am going home without Crookhorn."

"It would take a horse trainer to look after her," said Ole.

Again there was silence. Then Ole said: "We did not go up to Glory Peak this summer, to see the spot the king once visited."

"No, we didn't."

"We two boys are coming here again next summer, both of us."

"Perhaps we can go to Glory Peak after all then, even if it is so far away."

"Yes, we can," said Ole. "And I can tell you a good deal about the king's visit, for my father went with him and drove."

"Drove the king's carriage?"

"No, not the king's; the county magistrate's."

"My father went with him, too," said Peter, "and drove; so I can tell about it as well as you."

"Yes, but whose carriage did he drive? A homely old woman's!"

"But that homely old woman was next in rank to the queen. She was the one who went off to walk with the queen at the foot of Glory Peak."

Just then came a call for Lisbeth. She hesitated a moment, then stretched out her little hand and said: "Good-by. May you both fare well. Thanks for this summer."

"Thanks to you for the same," said Ole. "We are to meet again, then, next summer?"

"Yes."

"May you fare well," said Peter.

He stood holding her hand awhile; then, thinking he ought to say something more, he added, "I will greet Jacob from you, Lisbeth."

After that the boys vanished along the fence as noiselessly as they had come.

Inside the sæter inclosure the farm hands were putting the packs on the horses, and the military horse had been led to the gate. Lisbeth ran into the inclosure, drove her animals together and counted them, certainly for the tenth time that day. Soon everything stood ready for the homeward march.

The milkmaid appeared in the doorway, clad in her Sunday best, as on the day she came. She closed the sæter door with a bang, turned the large key solemnly in the lock, took it out and put it in her pocket. That key she would not intrust to any one else; she wanted to deliver it to Kjersti Hoel with her own hand. After trying the door vigorously to be sure that it was securely locked, she went to the window and looked in to assure herself that everything was in order and the fire entirely out. Then, going over to the military horse, she climbed into the saddle. One of the farm hands opened the gate for her as if she had been a queen, and out she rode.

After her followed the pack horses, one by one, and the cows in the same order as when they came up,—the bell cow, Brindle, and the whole long line. Behind the cows came the smaller animals, and, last of all, Lisbeth Longfrock with a stick in her hand, her birch-bark hat on her head, and her lunch bag on her back.

Lisbeth turned and looked at the scene she was leaving. There lay the sæter, desolate now. The mountain, too, appeared lonely and forsaken. Of course she, like all the others, had longed for home during these last days; but it was strange, after all, for her to be going away from everything up here. A little of the same feeling she had had when leaving Peerout Castle crept over her. How singular that she should happen to recall that sad time just at this moment! She had not thought of it at all since coming up on the mountain,—not once during the whole long summer.

Nor would she think of it now; there were other and happier things to remember. God be praised, all had gone well at the sæter, and the whole procession was on its way home. She was taking her animals safely back,—all except Crookhorn. Of her she had seen nothing since that day when the boys had tried to tame her; but she had heard that far off on the mountain a big goat went about with a herd of horses.

All day long the great procession went on its way over the mountain in steady, plodding fashion. The animals were fatter and heavier than in the spring; they trod the hills with a brisker and firmer step, and none showed any sign of being tired or lagging behind. The milkmaid was rosy-cheeked and plump ("Butterpack" she was always called in the autumn). As she and Lisbeth looked at the procession, one from the front and the other from the rear, they agreed in thinking that the animals, as well as the butter and cheese, were such as they need not be ashamed to take home to Kjersti Hoel.

Evening was drawing near, when suddenly the road pitched down over the edge of the mountain, the valley began to open before them, and they could even catch a glimpse of the slope on the other side. Every one looked over there, but all that could be seen as yet was a strip along the uppermost edge. The only one to distinguish a house upon the strip was Lisbeth Longfrock. Away up and off to one side she saw the setting sun glittering on a little pane of glass in a low gray hut. That hut was Peerout Castle.

Then all at once they came out upon the open mountain side, and the whole valley lay before them, broad and peaceful, with its yellow fields and stacks of grain, its green spaces, and its slope of birch trees flaming in yellow, with here and there a red mountain ash among them. And over across they spied Hoel,—large, substantial, and well cared for,—with its broad, shining windows and its general air of comfort. Smoke was issuing from its chimney,—such an inviting, coffee-suggesting, welcoming smoke! Kjersti had probably hung the coffee kettle over the fire already, so as to receive them in a suitable manner.

The whole procession now began to show more life. Every member of it knew that Kjersti Hoel stood over there in the window watching the long line as it curved down the open slope. All moved forward more quickly. The horses hurried ahead; the cows began to trot, the bell cow sending out an eager Moo-oo! across the valley; the bells jingled merrily; and Lisbeth Longfrock trilled a vigorous call through her little goat horn. They wanted every one to hear that the great company of animals belonging to Hoel Farm was now coming back again.

Thus they hastened down to the bottom of the valley and then up the opposite side. It was not long before they were actually at home.

Kjersti Hoel herself stood at the cow-house door and opened it for them. The cows recognized her, and each one of them, as they went by her in turn, received a word or a pat on the head; after which, proud and satisfied, they went to their separate stalls,—not a single cow making a mistake. They went swiftly, too, for they knew that there was something good in the mangers to welcome them. And they needed something, surely, for there had not been time to eat anything along the road that day.

When the milkmaid had dismounted from her horse Kjersti took her hand and said, "Welcome home!" Then Kjersti went over to the door of the sheep barn, opened that also, and counted the goats and sheep as they went in; and when Lisbeth Longfrock came following in their wake, Kjersti took her hand also and said, "Welcome home!"

"But," faltered Lisbeth, "I have not brought Crookhorn back with me."

"No, I see that you have not; and it is a good thing. Now we shall be rid of her capers for a while. You have been a faithful and capable little worker, there is no doubt of that. And how you have grown! Why, your long frock is far above your toes now!"

Then the milkmaid and Lisbeth fastened the cows in their stalls, while Kjersti went to

watch the unloading of the packs and to look at the tubs and boxes containing the butter and cheese that had been made at the sæter.

After that Kjersti came to them again and asked them to "Please walk in," exactly as if they were grand strangers. And when they had gone into the house they were invited into Kjersti's own sitting room, both Lisbeth and the milkmaid. Here the table was set with a welcoming meal, and oh, how delicious the food smelled! There were large hot pancakes as thin as paper, and pease bread, and hot new potatoes,—the finest feast you can give to people just home from a sæter. And Kjersti herself poured coffee for them and begged them to help themselves. Then they had to give an account of everything that had happened on the mountain; to tell about the cows,—which of them had given the most milk and which of them had stopped giving; about the sheep, goats, and pigs; and about the butter and cheese that had been made. And then Kjersti praised her two servants for their faithfulness and industry, and the trio rejoiced together over the success of the summer.

That evening when Lisbeth Longfrock again lay stretched out on her little bed in her room under the hall stairs and thought back over the summer and about the mountain, it seemed to her that she had had a glorious time, as delightful as could be thought of; but, all the same, it was pleasant to come home again, too,—especially when one was welcomed by such an unusually fine woman as Kjersti Hoel.

Autumn was passing away. The leaves had fallen and the trees spread out naked branches into the cold air. In the fields where grain had grown stood only the poles, now bare and slanting, on which the crops had been stacked. The verdure of the meadows was changed to yellowish brown.

There was no more food for the animals out of doors, so slaughtering day had come. That is the end of the season for the young herder, for on that day he gives up his responsibility. Thenceforward he is no longer a person with a special duty; he must be at every one's beck and call. And when winter comes with its long evenings, when the wood fire gleams out over the huge kitchen from the great open fireplace, while wool is being carded and the spinning wheel whirs, and the farm hands make brooms out of twigs and whittle thole pins and ax handles, then must the herder sit by the pile of twigs and logs at the side of the fireplace and feed the fire so that the rest can see to work while he studies his lessons.

By the pile of wood in Kjersti Hoel's big kitchen Lisbeth Longfrock had her place on the long winter evenings. She studied and listened, and heard so many curious things talked about that it seemed as if the evenings were too short and the days too few, in spite of the long, dark Norwegian winter. Before she knew it spring had come again; and when she looked down at her long frock she found that the hem reached no farther than the tops of her ankles.

CHAPTER VIII

ON GLORY PEAK

It was again high summer, and the sun shone bright on all the mountain tops when, one morning, an ear-splitting call played on three goat horns rang suddenly out from the inclosure belonging to Hoel sæter. One call was thin and fine, the other two were heavier.

That triple signal meant "Forward, march!" Lisbeth Longfrock, Ole, and Peter were going to take their trip to Glory Peak to see the spot that had been visited by the king.

The boys now owned goat horns to blow on, and they were good ones, too; for Lisbeth Longfrock had kept her word about Crookhorn's horns and had given one to each boy.

After Crookhorn's running off with the herd of horses, things had not gone any better with that proud-minded goat. When she finally came home, late in the autumn, with the last of the horses, she was so conceited that there was no getting her to live in the barn with the other goats. They had to put her in the cow house; but not even the cow house was good enough for her after her summer experiences. Every time she got an opportunity, out she

bounded, trotting over to the door of the stable as if she belonged in there. The stable boy insisted that he had even heard her neigh. One day, when the men were feeding the horses, they saw her dash in, and, with her usual self-important air, attempt to squeeze her way into the stall of the military horse. But that she should not have done. It was dark, and the military horse failed to see that it was only Crookhorn at his heels; so up went his hind legs and out went a kick that landed plump on Crookhorn's cranium and sent her flying against the stable wall. That was the last of Crookhorn.

It cannot be said that any one, except perhaps Lisbeth Longfrock, sorrowed particularly over her; but Lisbeth could not help remembering that Crookhorn had given them milk for their coffee that winter up at Peerout Castle. At any rate, if not much sorrowed for, the queer, ambitious creature was held in honorable esteem after her death. Such horns as hers Ole had never seen. Not only were they extremely large, but they gave out a peculiarly fine sound. Any one would know at once that they were not the horns of an ordinary goat. There had always been something about Crookhorn that no one understood, Ole said. Yes, Peter had noticed that too. Afterward, when he had thought a little more on the subject, he said he believed that horses' horns would have exactly the same sound as those of this remarkable goat, if there were any horses with horns!

On the day of the visit to Glory Peak the goat horns, as musical instruments, were brand-new, being used that day for the first time. In fact, the trip had been put off until they were ready.

But new goat horns were not the only things the travelers were provided with. All three wore their best clothes, and each carried a lunch bag full of food on his back and a stout stick in his hand. The trip was so long that it would take a whole day.

Once more they blew their horns,—all three together. The animals looked up in surprise at the unusual volume of sound, and the milkmaid came to the cow-house door with a smiling face. Then off the party started. The flocks were mingled together to-day, and driven straight ahead,—no time for them to graze by the wayside with Glory Peak lying so far away, blue against the sky. This excursion was a much longer one than Lisbeth had ever before taken, and even Ole and Peter had been to Glory Peak but once.

It was drawing on toward dinner time when they came to the last gentle ascent leading to the top of Glory Peak. There the juniper bushes and "old woman's switches" (dwarf birch) grew so high that the animals were quite lost to sight among them. Lisbeth and the boys could only see the course of their charges by a wavelike movement that passed over the tops of the bushes and by the sticking up of a pair of horns here and there. Ole thought that this was a good place to leave the flocks for a time, while they themselves went on ahead. The animals were so tired and hungry that they would stay there quietly for an hour or so; then, when rested, they would be sure to follow to the peak, for a goat was never satisfied until it had mounted to the highest possible point, where it could look about in all directions. Ole's plan was assented to, and it proved to be a good one.

Ole led Lisbeth and Peter around a curve toward the north. He wanted to show them exactly where the king and queen came up on the day of their visit. To be sure, they were not really king and queen that day, but they were on the very point of being: they were crown prince and crown princess. They had left their horses down on the mountain side where the road grew too steep for driving, and had walked the rest of the way. Oh, what a large company they had with them!—the county magistrate, the district judge, and officers so richly dressed that they could scarcely move. Seven or eight of the principal farmers of the district were also in the company, and first among these were Nordrum, Jacob's master, and the master of Hoel Farm, who was then living. These two wore queer old-fashioned swallow-tailed coats. All around over the whole mountain top were crowds of other people gazing at the lively scene.

"The king looked wonderfully fine, didn't he?" asked Lisbeth.

"No. The county magistrate looked much finer, and so did the officers, and even the people who waited upon them. But it could easily be seen that he was the king, for he was a head taller than any of the others."

"The king must be tremendously strong," said Peter.

"Strong! Of course he is! And he must have use for every bit of his strength, too, for he has to govern all the others."

"Was the queen also very large?" asked Lisbeth.

"No, she was not much larger than an ordinary woman. She was unusually earnest and modest-looking, father said. There was not so much fuss and feathers with her as with the

other women folk."

"No," said Peter; "the old frump that my father drove laughed even at the magistrate, and found fault because his hands were too big."

"Humph!" said Ole; "that *was* a joke. As if a grown-up fellow should not have big fists! Anyhow, I don't see how she could have seen them, for the magistrate wore his white gloves, although it was high summer."

Ole resumed the part of showman.

"Next they came up over this way,—the whole company, close by that very stone there; and then the king ran on ahead of them. He wanted to be the first to reach the top, as one might know. And now I will show you exactly what he did. Follow me. I will be the king, and you, Lisbeth, may be the queen. Come along!"

Ole walked hastily over the last spur of the ground, the others following. Then, running the last few steps, they found themselves suddenly on the very top of the mountain! Ole threw out his hand and stood a long time in silence.

The others stood still also, involuntarily, impressed by the wonderful sight. Here and there over the endless expanse of mountain shone glistening lakes and mountain pools, and away off in the distance rose snow-clad peaks. On every open slope lay green sæters; and toward the south, as far as the eye could reach, were beautiful farming districts and dark-green, forest-clad ridges.

Ole, in his character of king, threw out his hand again. "This is the most beautiful spot I have ever seen!" he cried. Then, after a short pause, "Come, Sophie, and see!" Ole took Lisbeth's hand and drew her forward.

"Yes," assented Peter, "that is exactly the way the king did. I have heard about it, too."

"Of course it was," said Ole. "Don't you think I know?"

"What else did he do?" asked Lisbeth.

"The king and queen then went around and spoke to all the other people, who began to take out long spyglasses and gaze in all directions and ask the name of everything.

"The county magistrate, as the highest of the local officials, stood near the king and queen and pointed things out to them.

"'See that group of distant white peaks,' said the magistrate; 'and there to the north is Snow-Cap, although I am not sure that you can distinguish it; and that little black thing farthest away' (Ole pointed as the magistrate had done) 'is the highest peak in Norway.'¹⁵

"After a while the company turned around, facing the south. When they saw the view in that direction,—with the great shining lake lying so far away down there, and the forests stretching farther and farther in the distance,—even the king himself was astonished. He thought that the forests must reach almost to Sweden. He had never seen so vast an extent of forest at one view, king though he was. When they had finished looking at the surrounding landscape, Nordrum went to that patch of reindeer moss over there and gathered a whole handful of it. A good many of the people wondered, of course, what he was going to do with it. He went over to the king, showed it to him, and then said, 'Should you like to see the moss that we mixed with birch bark to make bread during the war?'

"The king took a piece and chewed it. 'Yes, there is bird lime in it,' he said.

"Nobody else had moved or spoken since Nordrum picked the moss,—they were so surprised. At last father heard one of the officers say, 'It is astonishing how tactless these farmers can be!'"

"What is *tactless*?" asked Lisbeth.

"Oh, I don't know; but no doubt it is something pleasant, for the king clapped Nordrum on the shoulder and said: 'Thanks, my good man. We can all thank God that there are happier days in Norway now.'

"That was what I was thinking of when I showed you the moss,' said Nordrum.

"Then they took the king to the great heap of stones that was piled up as a memorial of his visit, and asked him to scratch his name upon the stone slab beside it. And so he did, '*O. S.*,' which stands for Oscar and Sophia; and then the number of the year, too,—see, here it is! It was all cut into the slab afterwards, exactly as the king himself had scratched it."

The three looked at the letters. Yes, indeed, that was beautiful writing, almost like print. How remarkably well the king must be able to write on paper, when he could write like that on stone!

Just then the animals came crowding up over the edge of the mountain top. They also went to the pile of stones and the big flat stone, like a table, that stood beside it. They began to lie down, for now, after eating, they wanted to rest.

"What else did the king and the others do?" asked Lisbeth.

"There wasn't much more. Oh, yes! after the king had finished writing, he seemed to think that they needed something to eat; so he began singing to the magistrate a line from an old song that they all knew. The king had a good voice and it rang out with jolly zest:

Oh, have you a drop in your bottle?

Then they laughed, and came forward with a basket, and set the table on the stone here. And they had something to drink, and some little cakes, and after that they went away again. And now," concluded Ole, "I think that we also need something to eat. Let us sit here at the king's table and have our lunch, too."

They took their lunch bags from their backs and sat down on the big, thick stone table, while the animals lay around them chewing the cud. When the bags were opened many good things came out. There was butter, and pork, and pease bread, and, in Lisbeth's, cream waffles besides. In each bag there was also a bottle of milk, except in Ole's—he had forgotten his. But that did not matter, for the others had plenty. They shared their food with each other, and when Ole wanted milk he merely sang,

Oh, have you a drop in your bottle?

And so he got rather more than his share, after all.

They did not talk much at the beginning of the meal, for it was so good to get a chance to eat; but when they had eaten quite a while, and their jaws began to work more slowly, Peter said, as if he had been pondering upon it, "I wonder what the king has to eat,—for every day, I mean."

"Loppered-cream¹⁶ porridge, all day long," said Ole with conviction.

"Yes; but when he wants a little solid food, once in a while?" asked Lisbeth.

Peter had just put a very delicious piece of pork on some pease bread. He looked at it with real enjoyment before eating it.

"I am sure that he has pork and pease bread," said he.

Lisbeth took the last waffle and bit a piece off. Then she said, "Yes; but the queen,—she certainly does not eat anything but cream waffles!"

While they sat there on the stone, eating and talking, they saw a figure far off on the mountain. It was coming in the direction of Glory Peak. So unusual is it to meet another person up on the mountain that it gives one a strange feeling when it happens. Soon they could think of nothing except this stranger.

"It must be a man trying to find his horses," said Ole.

"Yes, it must be, surely," said Peter. "But what farmer could be sending up for his horses now?"

"Let me see,—it must be Nordrum."

"Yes, that is true. They have only Old Blakken¹⁷ at home now, and they will have to begin their haymaking soon."

"Yes; but this man is going on a wild-goose chase to-day. The Nordrum mare is over on the other side of our sæter. I saw her a fortnight ago."

"If we set him right he can find her to-morrow."

"Yes, easily."

They sat still and watched, for they knew it would be a long time before the figure could reach them. It is so strange to watch any one coming toward you on the mountain. He walks and walks, and it can be seen from his motions that he is walking quickly, too, but he does not appear to be getting the least bit nearer. He continues to seem small and far away, and to increase very slowly in size, because the distances from point to point are so great.

The animals had risen and had begun to descend the peak in the direction of the sæter;

but they concluded to lie down again and await the stranger's approach.

At last he reached them.

They had guessed aright. He was walking about trying to find the Nordrum horses. The boys told him what they knew, and said that although he could not get them that day, he could the next day, surely.

When the question of the horses was settled the man turned to Lisbeth.

"Isn't it you who are called Lisbeth Longfrock?"

"Yes," answered Lisbeth, "they do call me that."

"Then I bring you a greeting from Jacob, your brother. I have a letter with me from him. He wants me to bring him an answer, but there is no hurry about it until to-morrow. I shall spend the night at Hoel Sæter, whether I find the horses to-day or not. But now I must look around a little before evening comes on. I want to be sure that the horses are not on this side of the sæter." So off he went.

Lisbeth was still sitting on the king's table. It was the first time she had ever received a letter. Indeed, even Ole and Peter had never received any. They were entirely overwhelmed with respectful surprise and took their stand at a suitable distance.

On the outside of the letter stood:

*Salve Titel.*¹⁸

To the Highly Respected Maiden,
Lisbeth Jacob's-daughter Longfrock,
at Hoel Sæter, on the West Mountain.

At Convenience, by Messenger.

Post Free.

Lisbeth broke the seal solemnly and opened the letter. Then she read, half aloud:

NORDRUM SÆTER, 15th of this month.

Salve Titel.

TO THE MAIDEN LISBETH LONGFROCK.

Good Sister: Since time and opportunity permit, I now take my pen in hand to write to you and tell you that I have nothing to write about except that it is a long time since I last saw you. But I have a spare day due to me from Hans. I took care of his animals for him when he went to his mother's burial. It was really two days, but I only reckoned it as one, because it was his mother. And now I will take that day from him on the next Sunday of this month. In case you have a day due to you from Peter or Ole, I write to ask if you cannot take it from them. But if you have not, you can take a day, all the same, because I am stronger; but I did not mean anything by it when I gave Peter a thrashing last winter. So I wanted to write to you and ask if we could not meet at Peerout Castle, for I have not been there since—

You are requested to come to the meeting in good season. Bring something to eat with you.

With much regard,

Respectfully,

Jacob Jacob's-son Nordrum, Esq.

P.S. Please answer.

That evening Lisbeth Longfrock sat with her tongue thrust into one corner of her mouth, and wrote her response.

HOEL'S SÆTER, 17th of this month.

TO BACHELOR JACOB JACOB'S-SON NORDRUM.

Good Brother: I will now write a few words to you, and thank you for your welcome letter which I have duly received. I am glad to see that you are in good health. The same can be said of me, except for toothache. But I will

gladly come, and the milkmaid says I may be away over night, because it is too far. And so Ole and Peter can each have a day from me. For I have not had any day from them. They wrestle almost all the time, but Peter is nearly as strong.

I must now close my poor letter to you, with many greetings from them. But first and foremost are you greeted by me.

Your affectionate sister,

Lisbeth Jacob's-daughter
Longfrock.

P.S. Excuse the writing. Burn this letter, dear.

CHAPTER IX

THE VISIT TO PEEROUT CASTLE

Late on Saturday evening Lisbeth Longfrock went jogging slowly up over the hilly road to Hoel Farm. The milkmaid had given her leave to go to the farm and to stay away until Monday evening.

She had risen early that day, for she would not think of such a thing as leaving the sæter before she had done her morning chores, and milked the goats, and let out the cows. And she had had to do this very early, not only because she was in a hurry to get away, but also because she knew that Ole would not oversleep himself after having insisted so strongly that he should take care of her flock the first day. She had barely finished when Ole came. Peter was not with him; but she had had a talk with Peter the evening before, and he was quite as well pleased to take her flock on Sunday by himself, and then on Monday he and Ole could watch all the flocks together.

Ole had been very modest and ceremonious with Lisbeth as he bade her good-by. He had shaken hands and asked her to greet Jacob from him, and to say that he, Ole Høegseth, would not keep close account of these days Lisbeth was taking, since Jacob really needed to speak with his sister. He did not know, of course, that Peter had said the very same thing the evening before.

And then she had given her animals over to Ole's care and had begun her long walk down the mountain. She walked and she walked, hour after hour. She had now gone over this sæter road several times, but had never before noticed that it was so long as it seemed to-day. She rested by a brook, took out her lunch, ate it and drank some water with it, and then set out again. In order to forget how slowly time was passing, she began to count her steps, first by tens and then by hundreds, and each time she had finished counting, she looked back to see how far she had walked; but this did not avail in the least, so she made up her mind to count to a thousand. When she had counted almost up to a thousand, she could not remember whether it was eight or nine hundred she had had last, so she counted four hundred more in order to be altogether certain that she had counted enough.

But even that did not make the time pass any more quickly, and she did not reach the point where she could look down into the valley until the sun was setting. The shadow had begun to creep up on the opposite side. Above the dark shadow line the slope was still bathed in the rosy evening sunlight, but the shadow steadily ate its way upward.

Then Lisbeth forgot to count her steps any more. What fun it would be to try to reach the sunshine again before the shadow had passed Hoel, which lay shining so brightly up there!

She went down the long slope on a run; but, run as fast as she might, it took time, and when she had reached the bottom of the valley and started up the hilly road on the other side, the sun had gone down. She could only catch its last gleam through the tops of the spruce trees, and a last tiny reflection as it left the window of Peerout Castle.

She stopped to get her breath after running. It was so still and warm and close down there in the valley,—so different from what it had been up on the mountain. It seemed as if the earth sent out a deep breath the moment the sun went down,—a strange, heavy

fragrance that made her, all at once, feel anxious and downhearted, just as if she had done something wrong which she could not remember. Then it came into her mind that she ought to have sent word to Kjersti Hoel that she was coming. People in the valley were always afraid that something was the matter when a person came from the sæter unexpectedly; and it would be too shameful for any one to give Kjersti Hoel a fright.

That was the reason she was now jogging so slowly up over the hilly road leading to Hoel Farm. She was in hopes that some one would catch sight of her, or that at least Bearhunter would give warning of her approach; for then they would see that she was not coming in haste, and that she therefore could not be bringing any bad news.

But no one caught sight of her, and no one was stirring on the farm; so she would have to go right in, after all.

Yes, Kjersti Hoel was really startled when she saw her. Lisbeth had no time to offer a greeting before Kjersti said: "What in the world! Is this a mountain bird that has taken flight? There is nothing the matter at the sæter, is there?"

Lisbeth made haste to answer: "Oh, no, indeed! I was to greet you from the milkmaid and say that you must not be frightened at seeing me, for everything is going very well with both man and beast. I have only come down to make a visit and meet Jacob, my brother."

"God be praised!" said Kjersti. "And now you are heartily welcome."

At these words all Lisbeth's downheartedness vanished, and she felt only how festive and cozy it was to be at home again. And Kjersti was in the best of humors. She gave Lisbeth something good to eat, and treated her with as much ceremony as if she had been the milkmaid herself. When the time came for Lisbeth to go to bed, Kjersti went with her all the way to the little sleeping room under the hall stairs, which looked just as neat and orderly as when she had left it. And Kjersti sat on the edge of the bed and asked after every single one of the animals,—she remembered them all. And Lisbeth told about everything. There was only one provoking thing that she shrank from confessing (it might as well be acknowledged first as last, however, for it was sure to come out sometime), and that was her mistake in naming one of the calves. She had called it Young Moolley,¹⁹ but the name had proved not at all suitable, for the calf's horns had begun to grow, although Lisbeth had done her best to prevent it by strewing salt upon them.

The next day was Sunday, and Lisbeth thought it certainly began well when no less a person than Kjersti Hoel herself came out into the little hall room carrying a big tray with coffee and cakes on it, for Lisbeth to indulge in as she lay in bed. Such grandeur as that Lisbeth had never before experienced. She scarcely believed that such a thing had ever happened to the milkmaid herself. And what was more, when she hopped into her long frock Kjersti said that she must hurry up and grow, for there would be a new dress for her as soon as this one had crept up to her knees. And although Lisbeth had not said a word about where she was going to meet Jacob, it seemed just as if Kjersti knew that, too; for she made up a package with a remarkably fine lunch in it, and told Lisbeth that she must treat Jacob to some of it, because he would probably have to go back to Nordrum Sæter that evening and would not have time to come down to Hoel. But after the lunch was put up Kjersti did not seem to see any necessity for further haste. In fact, she thought that it would not be possible for Jacob to get to Peerout Castle very early, because he would have to come all the way from Nordrum Sæter that morning. So, finally, Lisbeth had to show Kjersti her letter and point out the place where it said, "You are requested to come to the meeting in good season." Then, of course, Kjersti understood that there was no time to spare.

Shortly afterward Lisbeth was on her way to Peerout Castle, Bearhunter following her up the road to where the slope of birch trees began; then he turned around and jogged home with the blandest and prettiest of Sunday curls in his tail.

The valley lay before her in its quiet Sunday-morning peace. No one was out on the road or in the fields. Here and there in the farmhouses across the valley could be seen a man leaning against the frame of the doorway, bareheaded, and in shirt sleeves as white as the driven snow. From all the chimneys smoke was slowly arising in the still air. Lisbeth looked involuntarily up at Peerout Castle. There everything appeared gray and desolate. No smoke ascended from its chimney; and the window eye that gazed out over the valley looked as if it was blind, for the sunlight did not shine upon it now. And that brought to mind a blind person whom Lisbeth had once seen and whose strange, empty eyes made her shiver. She felt just the same now, and her pace slackened. She did not wish to get to the house before Jacob did.

When she finally reached Peerout Castle the first thing she saw was the pine branches

that had been nailed to the gateposts the last time she was there. They stood in their places still, but they were dry, and the pine needles had fallen off. She glanced hastily at the door of the house. Yes, the pine trees stood there, too, just the same, but a fresher twig had been stuck in the doorlatch,—some one had evidently been there since that last day. The path that led from the gate to the door and from there over to the cow house had vanished; grass covered it. The cow-house door had fallen off, and around the doorposts had grown up tall stinging nettles. No trace was to be seen of the foot of man or beast.

Lisbeth had rejoiced at the idea of coming back to her old home. It had never entered her mind that Peerout Castle could be anything but the pleasantest place in the whole world to come to. Now, on the contrary, she felt all at once very, very lonely, more lonely than when on the mountain or in the forest. She felt like one who, afraid of the dark, is obliged to walk in it; as if every step must be taken warily, that no creaking be heard.

Without realizing it she veered away from the castle and the cow house, feeling that she would rather go over to the big stone by the brook, where she and Jacob used to have their playthings. Perhaps it was not so desolate there.

When she came to the heather ridge she saw Jacob already sitting on the stone. At the sight of him Lisbeth felt as if there was life again in all the desolation. She was so happy that she was about to run toward him; but then she remembered that such behavior would not be suitable at a ceremonious meeting like this, and that really it was so long a time since she had seen Jacob that he was almost a stranger to her. When he saw her, he jumped down from the stone and began to brush his gray breeches with his hands and to set his cap straight,—he wore a cap with a visor now, and not a straw hat like hers. Both of them were as embarrassed as if they were entire strangers to each other, and they could not look each other in the eye while shaking hands. He made a heavy bob with his head, while she courtesied so low that her long frock drooped down to the ground. After that, each dropped the other's hand and they remained standing a long time, looking around. It was not easy to find something to say, although both had fancied that they had a great deal to talk about. At last Jacob thought of something. He looked about for quite a while longer, and then said, as if he had weighed the matter deliberately and thoroughly, "It is delightful weather to-day."

"Yes, really delightful."

"If it holds out a fortnight longer, it will not be bad weather for haying."

"No, it will not be at all bad."

"But we can scarcely expect that."

"Oh, no! scarcely."

Then there was silence again, for not much more could be said on that subject. Lisbeth stole a look at Jacob. She thought of saying something about his having grown so large; but then again it did not seem to her quite proper for her to speak first, he being the elder. The package of food caught her eye,—she could certainly begin to speak about that.

"Kjersti Hoel sent you her greetings, and bade me ask if you would not try to put up with the lunch she has sent to-day."

"Yes, thank you; but I have some with me, too."

"You must be hungry after your long walk."

"Yes, I can't say that I'm not."

"Then we will set the table here on the stone."

Little by little Lisbeth set out on the stone all the good things which Kjersti had put in the package; and then she said, as she had heard was the custom when one entertained strangers, "Be so good as to draw up your chair, Jacob."

And Jacob hesitated, also according to custom, and said, "Oh, thanks! but you should not put yourself to any trouble on my account."

They sat down. Ceremonious manners were kept up during the first part of the meal, and Lisbeth did not forget to say "please" whenever it was proper. But when Jacob had eaten one of Kjersti's pancakes (a large, very thin kind, spread with fresh butter or sweetmeats) and was just beginning on the second, he forgot that he was at a party, so to speak, and said quite naturally and with conviction, "That was a remarkably good pancake!"

"Yes, of course; it is from Hoel."

At that it was as if they suddenly knew each other again; as if it had been only yesterday that they had kneeled on the bench under the window and looked over the valley and

made up their minds where they would like best to live when they went out to service; as if they had never been parted from each other. And an instant after they were in eager dispute about which was the better place to live at, Nordrum or Hoel. Agree upon that question they could not; but when Jacob's appetite had been more than satisfied he finally admitted that they were both fine places, each one in its own way, and that, at any rate, those two were the best in the whole valley.

And now there was no end to all they had to talk over together and to tell each other. Jacob told about Nordrum and the Nordrum Sæter and the goats there; and Lisbeth told about Ole and Peter, and gave Jacob their greetings. She had much to tell about them both, but Jacob thought it was queer that she had more to say about Ole than about Peter; for while Ole was a straight-forward fellow, it could not be denied that he was a bit of a boaster.

Then they talked about their future. Jacob was going to stay at Nordrum Farm until he was grown up, and perhaps longer. Nordrum had said that when Jacob was a grown man and married he could take Peerout Castle, with the right of buying it as soon as he was able. But Jacob thought that very likely Nordrum meant it only as a joke; and anyway it was a little early for him to be thinking about marriage. Nordrum was getting on in years, however; he would be sure to need a head man about the place by that time. Lisbeth said that she was going to stay at Hoel. She was as well off there as she could expect to be, for Kjersti was exceedingly kind to her. Lisbeth did not say anything about her ambition to become a milkmaid. Indeed, that goal was so far off that she did not dare to set her heart upon reaching it.

When they had talked thus freely for a while they began to look around and call to mind all the plays they used to play and all the places they used to frequent. There, right by the castle itself, they had had their cow house with its pine-cone animals—why, yonder lay the big bull even now! And there, on the other side of the heather ridge, had been their sæter, where they had driven their animals many times during the summer. And there on the hill Jacob had had his sawmill, that Lisbeth was never to touch; and farther down she had had her dairy, where he came and bought cheese in exchange for planks made out of carrots that he had sliced in his sawmill. Not a stone or a mound could be seen the whole way up to the stony raspberry patches on Big Hammer Mountain that did not have some memory connected with it.

The brother and sister now felt themselves much older than when they had lived at Peerout Castle. Lisbeth thought that Jacob had grown to be very large, and he secretly thought the same about her. It was therefore like holding a sort of festival for them to be visiting the scenes together and talking of their former life as of something long gone by, saying to each other now and then, "Do you remember?" What is talked of in that way assumes unwonted proportions and appears to be without flaw.

Thus they went about the whole day,—they had even been close up to Big Hammer itself, —and it was already late in the afternoon when they again drew near Peerout Castle. They did not seem to be in any haste to reach it. They lingered by brook and stone to say, "Do you remember?" often both at once and about the same thing. They chased each other in aimless fashion. Their chief idea seemed to be to think continually of something new to do, so that there should come no silent pause, and so that the time of getting back to the castle should be put off as long as possible. Neither of them had yet mentioned a single memory connected with the castle itself or with the cow house. They had not visited either of these places yet, and they had avoided all mention of their mother.

But now they knew that the time had come when these sad things could be avoided no longer. They dragged themselves slowly down over the last ridge, talking more rapidly and nervously, and with loud and forced laughter. Then suddenly their laughter ceased as if it had been cut straight across,—they had come out on the ridge just back of the cow house. They became very, very quiet, and stood awhile with heads cast down. Then they turned toward each other and their eyes met. It did not seem at all as if they had just been laughing,—their eyes were so strangely big and bright. While they stood looking at each other there came suddenly the "klunk" of a bell over from Svehaugen. At that Jacob shook his head, as if shaking himself free from something, and said in a most indifferent manner, "Do you think that is the Svehaugen bell we hear over there?"

Lisbeth answered as unconcernedly as she could, "Yes, it is; I remember it."

"What cow do you believe they have at Svehaugen now for their home milking?"

"We could go over there and see whether it is—Bliros."

That was the first time since her mother's death that Lisbeth had spoken Bliros's name aloud. But to do that was easier than to name her mother.

It was not long before Lisbeth and Jacob were on their way over to Svehaugen. They had

gone round the castle and the cow house without going very near them,—it was not worth while to tread down the grass, Jacob said. As they had expected, they found Bliros at Svehaugen; she was standing close by the gate. And they really thought that she knew Lisbeth again. They petted her, and talked to her, and gave her waffles and pancakes. It was just as if they wanted to make amends for not having had courage to stir up the memories connected with their old home itself. Jacob's heart was so touched at the last that he promised to buy Bliros back and give her to Lisbeth as soon as he was grown up. At that Lisbeth could contain herself no longer. She put her arms around Bliros's neck, looked at her a long time, and said, "Do you believe, Jacob, that Bliros remembers mother?" And then she began to cry.

That question came upon Jacob so unexpectedly that at first he could say nothing. After a moment's struggle he, too, was crying; but he managed to declare with decision, "Yes; if she remembers any one, it certainly must be mother."

CHAPTER X

SUNDAY AT THE SÆTER

Five summers had passed away since Lisbeth Longfrock first went up on the mountain; and no one who had not seen her during those years could have guessed that she had grown into the tall girl sitting by herself one Sunday on the stone which, so far back as any herder could remember, had been called the Pancake Stone, and which lay hidden away in a distant and lonely part of the mountain. She had grown so tall that the long frock, now used as a petticoat, came above her knees, and she no longer wore the birch-bark hat and birch-bark shoes. On this special Sunday her Sunday kerchief was on her head, and she sat with a book in her lap; for in the winter she was to go to the priest to be prepared for confirmation and in the spring she was to be confirmed. The reading did not progress very rapidly. The book had sunk down into her lap, and her calm blue eyes, now grown so womanly and earnest, were roving from one to another of the dear familiar places about her. Her flock lay quietly around the stone, chewing the cud. Indian summer was near its close. The sky was high vaulted and the air clear and cool. As far as the eye could reach all things were sketched in sharpest outline. Hills and marshes already glowed in autumnal tints, for these make their triumphal entry on the mountains earlier than below. The sun shone tranquilly and, as it were, a little coolly also. Everything was very still. Not even the sound of a bell was heard, for the animals were taking their afternoon rest; and no movement was discernible except far, far away, where Lisbeth spied a falcon flapping out from Glory Peak.

Just as it was now had Lisbeth seen the mountain at the close of each summer all these years. It had become familiar and dear to her, and she thought to herself how unchanging it was through all its variableness, while so much else altered never to be the same again. For much had changed since she first sat on this same stone and looked out over this same landscape. Few of the animals she now took care of had belonged to her original flock; the oldest had gone out and new ones had come in. The unlucky Morskol (Mother's Moolley) was now a full-grown cow, with horns of more than usual beauty. The former milkmaid was gone and another had taken her place. Ole and Peter, with whom Lisbeth in earlier years had tended her flock almost daily, were her companions no longer. They had not been up at the sæter since they were confirmed,—two years ago. Ole had even sailed to America. Lisbeth had missed the boys very much, and had many a time been lonely during the last two summers, for no new herders had come from the Høegseth or Lunde farms. At home, too, at the Hoel Farm, there had been changes among the people, and Bearhunter had become blind. Lisbeth herself no longer occupied her old place by the heap of firewood in the great kitchen on winter evenings, but sat beside Kjersti on the wooden carving bench; that is, she sat there when she did not have to study her catechism or learn her hymns to be ready for school the next day.

And now still further changes were in store for her. This was to be the last summer she would be sitting up here tending her flock. What would come next? Kjersti Hoel had not said anything to her about the future,—perhaps Kjersti would not want her any longer. But Lisbeth put these thoughts aside,—she would not allow her mind to dwell on such perplexing subjects when all was so delightfully peaceful and beautiful around her. Whatever her lot might be, or wherever she might go, of one thing she was certain,—she would never forget these mountain scenes nor this stone which had always been her favorite resting place, especially since she had been so much alone; and she gazed around

her again.

As her eyes wandered about she caught sight of a man far off on the marsh, sauntering along in her direction, stopping once in a while and stooping down, apparently to pluck an occasional cloudberry, for they were now beginning to ripen. This sent her thoughts into another channel.

Who could it be coming over the marsh? Not a man looking for horses, for no one goes out for that purpose on Sunday; nor a cloudberry picker, for the berries were not yet ripe enough to pay for the trouble of seeking. Surely it was some one who had made the ascent of the mountain for pleasure only. What if it should be Jacob! She had not seen him since the last autumn, and he had said then that he would come up to see her this summer. Nevertheless the young man did not look like Jacob; and Jacob, not being very well acquainted on the western mountain, would not be trying to find the Pancake Stone. Yet this person was steering his course exactly toward where she sat, and it was plain that he knew the marsh thoroughly,—where the cloudberreries grew, and where it was not so wet but that you could get across. It could not possibly be—? She blushed the instant she thought of the name, and at the same moment the stranger disappeared behind a hill, so that she saw no more of him for the time.

Involuntarily she tied her kerchief freshly under her chin, stroked her light hair under the edge of the kerchief, and smoothed out the folds in her skirt. Then, sitting with her back half turned to the quarter where he might be expected to appear, she took up her book and bent her head over it as if reading.

Shortly afterward a young man shot up over the hill behind her. He had on brand-new gray woolen clothes, a "bought" scarf around his neck, and top-boots outside his trousers. He was not tall, but his figure was well knit and manly. In his youthful face, on which the merest shadow of down could be distinguished, was set a pair of brown eyes, trusting and trustworthy. He stopped a moment and looked down at the open space where Lisbeth sat upon the stone with the flock of animals around her. It was evident that he had a memory of the scene,—that he had seen that picture before. Lisbeth did not look up, but she knew he was there,—felt in her back, so to speak, that he was standing there gazing at her. He smiled and then swung his course around so as to approach her from the side, and so that the animals might have time to become gently aware of his presence and not scramble up in a flurry. Silently he drew near to her, until at last his shadow fell upon her book. Then she looked up and their eyes met. At that both of them flushed a little, and he said hastily, "Good day, Lisbeth Longfrock."

"Good day. Why, is it you, Peter, out for a walk?"

They shook hands.

"Yes; I thought it would be pleasant to have a look at the old places again; and since Jacob was coming up to visit you, I made up my mind to keep him company."

"Is Jacob with you?"

"Yes, but he is waiting down at the sæter, for he was tired. We were out early to-day, and tomorrow we are to take home a pair of nags to Høegseth Farm. He sent you his greeting and will see you this evening."

"Were you sure that you could find me?"

"Oh, yes! I knew just about where you would be in such weather. And, of course, it is more fun for me to ramble around here than for him, I being so familiar with the region."

He sat down beside her on the stone and gazed slowly around.

"Does it look natural here?"

"Yes, everything is unaltered. It seems only yesterday that I was here taking care of the Lunde flocks. But I hardly recognized *you* again. You have grown so large."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. But still it is two years since I last saw you."

There was a short pause. Then Peter continued: "I walked over Sloping Marsh, by our bathing pond. The water has all run out."

"Yes, it has."

"I wondered if it would not be a good plan for me to build the dam up again, so that you could use the pond."

"No, you need not do that, for I have my bathing place somewhere else,—a place that no

one knows about."

"Oh, have you?"

"Yes; I had it the last year that you and Ole were here, too."

"So it was there you used to be on the days that you kept away from us?"

"Yes, sometimes."

The animals began to get up and stray off, thus attracting attention. Lisbeth made Peter look at the older goats to see if he recognized them, and she was glad to find that he did remember them all. Then she told him about the new ones; but soon that topic was exhausted and there was apparently nothing more to talk about. They still remained seated on the stone. Then Peter said, "You haven't that birch-bark hat any longer, have you, Lisbeth?"

"No; it was worn out long ago."

"But what is it you have on this string?"

He took hold carefully of a string she wore around her neck, and, pulling it, drew out from her bosom the little goat horn he had given her.

"I did not think you would have that horn still," said Peter.

A deep blush covered Lisbeth's face at the idea of appearing childish to Peter. She hastened to say, "Oh, yes; I carry it with me sometimes."

"I have mine, too. It is the only thing I have left from my herding days." And he drew one of Crookhorn's horns out of an inner pocket. "Shall we try them?"

Then they both laughed and played "The Old Woman with a Stick" together, as they had so often done in the old days. It did not sound as if either of them had forgotten it in the least. When the tune was finished there was another pause. At last Lisbeth said, "I must look after the animals a little now, or I shall lose track of them."

"Can't you let them go home alone to-night? It is time for them to seek the fold, and they will surely find the way safely. Then we can walk to the sæter more at our leisure."

"Yes, I will gladly. I can trust them to find their way home, I am sure."

Again there was silence for a time. Then Lisbeth rose, saying, "I think we must go now."

Peter did not stir. He merely said very quietly: "Can't you sit a little longer? There was something I wanted to ask you."

Lisbeth bowed her head and seated herself again without speaking.

"I have a greeting to you from Ole. I received a letter from him a fortnight ago. He asked me very particularly to give you his greetings."

"Thank you. Is all going well with him?"

"Yes, it seems so from his letter. He has a good place and earns large wages."

"Ole deserves it. He grew to be a fine fellow."

"Yes, he did. He asks me whether I will go to America in the spring. He will send me a ticket, if I will."

On hearing that Lisbeth looked up at Peter for an instant, then drooped her head again without saying a word. Peter continued: "It was that I wanted to ask you about. Do you wish me to go?"

A dead silence ensued, during which Peter sat looking inquiringly at her. For a long time she was motionless; then, suddenly lifting her head, she fastened her blue eyes upon him and said, "No, I do *not* wish you to go."

There was no more conversation on that subject, and soon they were on their way to the sæter. They went around by all the familiar, memorable places, including both the bathing pond and Pointing Stump; and all these places had so many reminders for them of the time when they watched their flocks together there, that more than once they said how much they pitied Ole, who would perhaps never be able to come to Norway again. The sky arched high and clear above them, the mountain stretched beyond them with its unending, silent wastes; and Lisbeth and Peter felt strangely buoyant and glad. Although

they had made no agreement, they felt as if they had a hidden bond between them—as if they two had a wonderful secret that no one, not even Jacob, could share.

CHAPTER XI

LISBETH APPOINTED HEAD MILKMAID

It was the first Sunday after Easter, early in the morning. Lisbeth sat by the small table in her little sleeping room, with one elbow leaning on the table and her hand under her chin, while she stared down at a big black book which lay open before her. The book was the New Testament, and Lisbeth's lips moved softly as she read. That morning, for the first time in several years, she had not gone into the cow house. Kjersti Hoel had said that she was to have a couple of hours in which she could be alone. No one was to disturb her.

She sat there somewhat stiff and helpless, in a long black dress with a strip of white in the neck. The dress seemed to her rather tight, so tight that she held her elbows close to her side and hardly dared to bend her back. It was the first time she had had a close-fitting dress on,—her usual costume being a jacket and skirt. Her light hair was drawn smoothly back and twisted into a knot at her neck. That was for the first time, too. She was a trifle paler than usual, and her lips, as she moved them, were dark red and dewy; but her eyes shone with peace. All in all, she was beautiful, as she sat there in her little room waiting for church time to come. This was the day that she was to be confirmed.

A knock was heard at the door, and in stepped Kjersti Hoel. She also was dressed in her very best,—an old-fashioned black dress with a gathered waist, and a freshly ironed cap with a frill around the face and strings hanging down. In her hand she carried the big psalm book, a handsome one printed in large type, which she used only on the greatest occasions. On top of the psalm book lay a neatly folded pocket handkerchief.

Standing still for a moment and looking earnestly at Lisbeth, Kjersti said, "Do you think you are ready now, Lisbeth?"

Lisbeth answered quietly, "Yes, I think so."

"Then it is time for us to start. Come, let me tie your kerchief, so that your hair will not get untidy."

She tied the kerchief on Lisbeth's head and then they went slowly out through the hall way. Outside, at the door, stood the broad wagon with the military horse harnessed to it.

"You may come and sit up here by me, Lisbeth," said Kjersti.

So they both got into the wagon and drove off. Not a word was spoken the whole way. As they drove down the hill from the farm and out on the main road, they were encompassed by all the effervescence of the spring,—its myriads of sights, sounds, and odors. The brooks and rivers rushed tunefully along, birds by the thousands were singing and calling, insects were buzzing, trees and plants of many sorts were pouring their fragrance over the whole valley; and above it all stood the sun, shedding down its glittering light. But these things failed to arouse in Lisbeth the feelings they usually awakened. They had, instead, the effect of a roar and a disturbance, of something inharmonious that caused her to quiver with discomfort. Involuntarily she drew nearer to Kjersti on the wagon seat. She felt a longing for one thing only,—silence. Thus they drove for a while along the sunlit valley road.

Then suddenly a broad wave of sound came rolling toward them. The church bells were adding their tones—broad, peaceful, sure—to the general chorus. They did not drown the sounds of the spring, but took them up, as it were, and ordered them, harmonized them, used them as a gentle accompaniment; so that the whole seemed like a great psalm singing and organ playing.

At the sound of the bells there came to Lisbeth a feeling of peace, solemnity, and holiness, such as she had never known before. She felt lifted up. A change came over the world about her: everything became lighter, loftier, as if prepared for a sacred festival. She felt a mighty gladness within her.

From that time on she had but a confused consciousness of what took place. On arriving at the church she thought that the gathering of people around it had never been so large

or so reverent in demeanor, and that the church had never looked so tall and shining.

As she went inside and walked up the church aisle she felt very erect and free. The same wonderful light was within the church, too. And when she looked down the lines of those who were to be confirmed with her, as they stood with bowed heads on each side of the middle aisle, she thought that their faces were strangely radiant.

When the priest came into the chancel it seemed to her that he was much larger than ever before, and that his face was, oh, so mild! He began to speak; and though she did not really hear or understand what he said, she felt that it was something great and good, and it thrilled her like music.

As soon as the psalm singing began she joined in with a stronger voice than usual, her breast swelling involuntarily. When it came her turn to be questioned she hardly knew whether she had heard what the priest asked or not, but she was sure, nevertheless, that her answer, which came forth clear and firm, was the right one. And when she knelt down and gave the priest her hand, as the ceremony required, it seemed to her that the awkward figures in the old altar pictures smiled benignantly upon her.

She did not come wholly to herself until the confirmation ceremony was entirely over and she had gone to her seat beside Kjersti Hoel in one of the church pews.

As Lisbeth drew near, Kjersti took her hand and said half aloud, "May it bring you happiness and blessing, Lisbeth!"

Lisbeth stood a moment, looked up at Kjersti as if just awakening, smiled, and whispered softly, "Thanks, Kjersti Hoel."

Then, when the service was over, they walked out of church.

Outside the church door stood Jacob and Peter. They lifted their caps to Kjersti and shook hands with her. Afterward they shook hands with Lisbeth, lifting their caps to her, too, which had not been their custom before her confirmation. They also said to her, "May it bring you happiness and blessing!"

After that Kjersti and Lisbeth walked about the grassy space in front of the church. They made slow progress, because there were so many people who wanted to greet the mistress of Hoel and to ask what girl it was that she had presented for confirmation on that day. At last they reached the broad wagon, to which the horse had already been harnessed, and, mounting into it, they set forth on their homeward way, returning in silence, as they had come. Not until they had reached home did Kjersti say, "You would like to be alone awhile this afternoon, too?"

"Yes, thank you," responded Lisbeth.

In the afternoon Lisbeth Longfrock again sat alone in the little room in the hall way. Bearhunter, who had now become blind, lay outside her door. Whenever he was not in the kitchen, where, as a rule, he kept to his own corner, he lay at Lisbeth's door, having chosen this place in preference to his old one on the flat stone in front of the house. To lie on the doorstep where so many went out and in—and nowadays they went so rudely—was too exciting for him; but Lisbeth always stepped considerately.

As Lisbeth sat there in her room she was not reading in any book; in fact, she was doing nothing at all. Spread out on the bed before her lay her long frock, which she had not used that winter. It looked very small and worn.

When she had come into her room, where the afternoon sun fell slantwise upon the coverlet of her bed, picturing there the small window frame, she had had a wonderful feeling of peace and contentment. It seemed to her that there was not the least need of thinking about serious things or of reading, either. She felt that the simplest and most natural thing to do was merely to busy herself happily, without putting her thoughts on anything in particular. She had no earthly possessions of value, but she did have a small chest which she had received in the second year of her stay at Hoel, and in this chest there was a tiny side box and also a space in the lid where she had stored away the little she owned that seemed worth keeping. She had pulled the chest forward and opened it. To take the things out, look at each one, and recall the memories connected with them was very pleasant.

There was a good-for-nothing old pocketknife that had been given to her by Ole the first summer on the mountain. There was a letter from Ole, too, that she had received the last autumn, and that no one knew about. In it he had asked if he might send her and Jacob tickets to America after she had been confirmed. She had not answered the letter yet, but

she would do it soon now, and thank him, and say that she was not coming,—for she knew that she could never leave Norway.

And then she took out the goat horn that Peter had given her. She was seized with a strong desire to play on it, but did not dare to, because it would sound so strange in the house. Next to the place where the goat horn had lain was a silk neckerchief that Peter had given her for Christmas. He had sent it by Jacob. She herself had not seen or spoken with Peter since that Sunday last year when he had found her on the mountain, until to-day at the church.

And there was the letter she had received from Jacob in regard to their meeting at Peerout Castle. It was the only letter she had ever had from him,—Jacob was not one to write much; but she had a few small gifts that he had sent her.

Down at the very bottom of the chest lay a kerchief that she had never taken out before,—her mother's kerchief. It seemed to Lisbeth that now was the first time she had really dared to think about her mother. She took out the kerchief and spread it on the bed; and when, as she did so, her eye caught sight of her old long frock hanging on the wall, she spread that, too, on the bed. Then she seated herself and gazed upon these simple objects. The time had arrived when it was possible for her to look back without becoming hopelessly sorrowful; when she could ponder over the rich memories which these poor relics hid,—the memories from Peerout Castle not being the least precious. She sat nourishing these thoughts a long time, beginning at the beginning, as far back as she could remember, and going forward to this very Sunday. The memories came easily and in regular succession, and all of them were good memories. Everything that had seemed hard at the time either had been forgotten or was seen now in a softer light.

Suddenly there came a knock at the door; and before Lisbeth had had time to conceal the things, or presence of mind enough to rise from her chair, in walked Kjersti Hoel.

Lisbeth saw that Kjersti noticed the things at once, but she was not in the least embarrassed, for Kjersti only smiled kindly and said: "I see that you are thinking about your mother to-day, Lisbeth, and that is right; but now come with me into my room. There is something I wish to talk with you about."

Lisbeth was half alarmed at this, for never before had Kjersti spoken so seriously to her; but she rose quietly and did as she was bidden.

Kjersti went ahead, through the kitchen and across to the door of her own room, Lisbeth following close behind her. The others in the kitchen looked at them curiously, wondering what was going to happen.

Once in her room, Kjersti took a seat beside the table and asked Lisbeth to sit at the opposite side. Then said Kjersti: "You are now grown up, Lisbeth Longfrock, and hereafter you will be free to decide things for yourself. I have kept the last promise I made to your mother, and I can to-day say that it has been only a pleasure for me to do so. You have turned out well, as may be expected of every good girl; if you do as well in the future, I really believe that your mother would be satisfied with both you and me. But from to-day I have no longer any right to decide things for you. You must decide for yourself what you will do and what you think is right. I will therefore ask you—and you are to choose with entire freedom—whether you wish to stay here with me any longer, or whether, now that you are to earn your own living, you would rather try something else. I can add that I should like very much to have you stay here."

For a while there was a deep silence. Then Lisbeth looked up with big tears in her eyes and said, "I should like to stay with you, Kjersti Hoel, as long as you are pleased with me."

"That is what I thought, and therefore I have also thought of another thing. Of course you are very young yet, but it is not always unwise to put responsibility on young shoulders. You have shown yourself so faithful and capable, not only at the cow house but at the sæter as well, that I have no fear in intrusting both to your care. If you wish it to be so, I will now appoint you head milkmaid at Hoel Farm."

Footnotes

¹ It is customary in Norway for each farm, however small, to have a name.

² (In the original, Røennaug.) This was the mother's first name. Her full name would be Randi Newridge, or Randi Peerout.

³ Kyare'-stee.

⁴ Sva-howg-en.

⁵ Norwegian children in country districts are accustomed to see goats walking about on the roofs of turf-covered huts, nibbling the herbage; but the idea of a creature so large as to be able to eat from the roof while standing on the ground was very astonishing to Lisbeth.

⁶ Lisbeth meant to be very neat and tidy, but she should have let her bed air longer before making it!

⁷ Mulley (cow without horns).

⁸ Pronounced (approximately) say'ter.

⁹ In some districts of Norway the farmers are required to keep one or more horses subject to the needs of the government, under certain conditions of use and payment.

¹⁰ Pronounce the *æ* like the *e* in *her* and *th* like *t*.

¹¹ Loond'eh (*oo* as in *good*).

¹² A species of horsetail rush (*Equisetum hyemale*), having a rough, flinty surface. It is used for scouring and polishing.

¹³ Lisbeth's ordinary shoes were clumsy wooden ones.

¹⁴ Horses, as well as other animals, are sent up on the mountains to graze during the summer. They roam about at will, and sometimes go home of their own accord at the end of the season, if no one has been sent to fetch them.

¹⁵ The mountain referred to is Galdhøpiggen.

¹⁶ Cream that has been allowed to stand until it has attained a jellylike consistency. Loppered milk is sometimes called bonnyclabber.

¹⁷ A pet name for the dun-colored Norwegian horses.

¹⁸ An expression from the Latin, often used in old-fashioned Norwegian correspondence. It meant, in a general way, "Pardon any error in the address."

¹⁹ See note on page 45.

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