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## Honor Bright

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“YOU HAVE SENT MARIA TO COVENTRY: I GO WITH HER! GOOD-BY!” (See [page 218](#))

# Honor Bright

A STORY FOR GIRLS

BY

LAURA E. RICHARDS

Author of

"The Hildegard-Margaret Series," "Captain January,"  
"Melody," "Five Minute Stories," "Mrs. Tree,"  
"Geoffrey Strong," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

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TO  
ELIZABETH SHAW  
WITH MUCH LOVE

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# HONOR BRIGHT

1

## CHAPTER I

### AT PENSION MADELEINE

Honor Bright was twelve years old when her parents died, and left her alone in the world. (Only, as Soeur Séraphine said, Honor would never be wholly alone so long as the earth was inhabited.) Six of the twelve years had been spent at school in Vevay, at the Pension Madeleine, the only home she knew. She was too little to remember the big New York house where she was born, and where her toddling years were spent. She was only two when her father accepted the high scientific mission which banished him to the far East for an indefinite time. Of the years there she retained only a few vague memories; one of a dark woman with tinkling ornaments, who sang strange old songs, and whom she called "Amma"; one of an old man-servant, bent and withered like a monkey, who carried her on his shoulder, and bowed to the ground when she stamped her little foot. All beside was a dim mist with curious people and animals moving through it. Long robes, floating veils, shawls and turbans; camels and buffaloes, with here and there an elephant, or a tiger (stuffed, this, with glaring eyes, frightening her at first, till Amma bade her be proud that Papa Sahib had shot so great a beast); ringing of bells, smell of incense and musk and flowers, stifling dust and drowning rain; all part of her, in some mysterious dream-way.

2

When the child was six, the climate began to tell upon her, as it does on all white children, and her parents were warned that she must leave India. They brought her to Switzerland, to Vevay, the paradise of schoolgirls, and left her there with many tears. Since then she had seen them only twice or thrice; the journey was long and hard; her mother delicate.

3

The last time they came, it was a festival for the whole school. Mrs. Bright, beautiful and gentle, "like a jasmine-flower," as Stephanie Langolles said; Mr. Bright, kind and bluff, his pockets always full of chocolate, his eyes twinkling with friendliness; they were in and out of the Pension constantly, during the month they spent at the Grand Hotel in Vevay. It was destructive to school routine, but as Madame Madeleine said to Soeur Séraphine, what would you? The case was exceptional. How to deny anything to these parents, so tender, and so desolated at parting from their cherished infant? Happily another year would, under the Providence of God, see this so affectionate family happily and permanently united.

"One more little year," said Mrs. Bright, as she embraced Honor at parting. "Then Papa's long task is done, and we shall go home, and take you with us. Home to our own dear country, my little one, where children can live and be well. No more pensions for you, no more strange lands for us. Home, for all three; home and happiness!"

4

"And now," sighed Soeur Séraphine. "At twelve years old, an orphan! Our poor little one! And she has seen them so seldom; what tragedy!"

Madame Madeleine shook her head sorrowfully. "As for that, my sister," she said, "it appears to me less tragic than if these so-honored parents had surrounded, as it were, the daily life of the child. *Tiens!* She has been with us four years, is it not so? In that period she has seen her parents thrice, a week each time. What would you? A child is a child. Honor weeps to-day; to-morrow she will dry her tears; after to-morrow she will smile; in a month she will forget. And there, if you will, is tragedy!"

Madame Madeleine was right. A week after the sad news came, Honor was telling Stephanie (who had been away for a fortnight) all about it: I must not say with enjoyment, for that would be untrue: but with a dramatic interest more thrilling than sorrowful.

5

"Figure to yourself!" she said. "We are in the classroom: it is arithmetic, and I am breaking my head over a problem wholly frightful. On the estrade is Madame, calm as a statue, her little white shawl over her shoulders, *comme ça*. Vivette is making signs to Loulou: it is the peace of every day. Enter Margoton, a *telegramme* in the hand. Madame opens it; reads; a cry escapes her. Calming herself on the instant, she bids us be *très sages*, and leaves the room. Shortly appears our Sister, and calling me tenderly to her side, takes my hand and conducts me to Madame's boudoir. There I hear the fearful tidings. My parents are in Paradise!"

Honor paused, and drew a long breath, shaking her hair back with a dramatic gesture. Stephanie clasped her hands.

6

"Chérie, how terrible! But continue! What—how did this happen? An accident?"

"Cholera!" (I fear Honor was enjoying this part!) "The *choléra Asiatique*, most terrible of all

diseases, bringing death in an instant. Two days ago,—figure to thyself, Stephanie: two days ago, they were in health: Mamán, whom you remember, all beautiful; Papa, good as bread, who overwhelmed us with chocolate—the pestilence breathed upon them, and Heaven opened to receive them. Ah! that is terrible, if you will!”

The two girls were sitting together in Honor’s little room. Ordinarily, they would have sat on the floor, but to-day her mourning was to be considered. The waxed floor shone with a brilliant polish; no speck of dust was visible anywhere in the spotless cell (it was hardly more in size); still, one could not be too careful.

“Black is very becoming to thee, my poor dear!” said Stephanie. “Thy hair is like a cloud of golden fire above it. Nothing could be more beautiful, I assure thee.”

7

Honor looked anxiously in the little mirror that hung over the chest of drawers. It was a pleasant image that she saw; a round rosy face, with a pretty, wilful mouth, dark blue eyes heavily fringed with black lashes, a straight little nose, and, as Stephanie said, a perfect cloud of curly red-gold hair. All this, I say, was pleasant enough; but Honor did not notice the general effect; what she saw was a collection of small brown spots on the bridge of the straight little nose, and extending to the cheeks. Freckles! No one else at Madame Madeleine’s had freckles. Patricia Desmond, with her complexion like moonlight on ivory; Vivette, with the crimson glow mantling in her brown cheeks, Stephanie herself with her smooth, pale skin—

“Ah!” cried poor Honor. “This hideous disfigurement! Shall I ever outgrow it, I wonder? Maman said I should, but I know not!”

8

Stephanie thought the freckles quite as dreadful as Honor did, and looked her sympathy.

“*Tiens!*” she said. “We have the appearance that the good God gives us.”

Here she glanced at her own reflection, with complacent approval of her brown velvet eyes and black satin hair.

“My poor Honor! But your hair is always beautiful, and there are no eyelashes like yours in Vevay. Take courage! In the story your hair is dark, is it not? The story marches always? When shall I hear another chapter?”

Honor’s face brightened. The story was always a comfort when the freckles became too afflicting. It was to be a romance, in three volumes: the story of her life, beginning when she was sixteen. (She was now twelve!) It opened thus:

“I was young; they called me fair. My mirror revealed masses of jet-black hair which rippled smoothly to the floor and lay in silken piles on the velvet carpet. My eyes—there was one who called them starry pools of night. My cheek was a white rose.”

9

Stephanie thought this a wonderful description. Honor, as I say, always found comfort in it, and forgot the freckles while she was following the fortunes of her dark-eyed counterpart.

“To-morrow, perhaps! Now—Stephanie, thou must help me in a sorrowful task. It is to put away —”

“Thy colored dresses, *chérie*? But surely! but thou wilt wear white, Honor? It is everywhere admitted as mourning, thou knowest!”

“Fiordispina and Angélique!” Honor spoke with sorrowful dignity and resolve. “Yes, Stephanie, it must be so! While my parents lived, do you see, I was a child; now—” An eloquent shrug and wave completed the sentence. “I am resolved!” she said. “These dear ones, with whom my happy childhood has been passed, must retire to—finally, to the shades of memory, Stephanie!”

10

“How noble!” murmured Stephanie. “Thou art heroic, Honor!”

Shaking her head sadly, Honor opened a cupboard door, and with careful hands drew out—certainly, two of the most beautiful dolls that ever were seen. Maman had chosen them with her own exquisite taste, in Paris and Rome. Angélique, the Parisian maiden, was blonde as Patricia herself, with flaxen hair and eyes of real sky-blue; Fiordispina, on the other hand, might almost stand for Honor’s dream-self. Her hair did not reach the ground, much less lie in silken piles on the velvet carpet, but it was long enough to braid, and it was real hair: moreover it was hair with a story to it. Maman had bought it in Rome, from a woman whose daughter had just entered a convent, and had her beautiful hair cut off. The woman wept, and assured Mrs. Bright that there was no such hair in Rome. Most of it had been purchased by two noble Princesses whom age had deprived of their own *chevelure*; there was but this little tress left. She had thought to preserve it as a memento of her child, but for the *puppazza* of so charming a *donzella* as the—finally—she named a price, and Fiordispina received her head of hair, in place of the bit of fuzzy lamb’s wool which had disfigured her pretty head.

11

Honor looked long and tenderly at the doll; then, dipping her hand into the pitcher of water that stood on the commode close by, she sprinkled some crystal drops on the calm bisque face.

*"Tiens!"* she said. "She weeps, my Fiordispina! how lovely she is in affliction, Stephanie! If I dressed her in mourning, but deep, you understand—do you think I might keep her? But no! I have resolved. The sacrifice is made!"

She produced two neat box beds, and laid Fiordispina, serenely smiling through her tears, in one, while Stephanie tucked Angélique snugly in the other. They were covered with their own little satin quilts, embroidered with their names; the boxes were closed and tied with satin ribbon.

"The sacrifice is made!" repeated Honor. "It is accomplished. Don't tell the other girls!"

And she burst into tears, and wept on Stephanie's shoulder.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW HONOR FOUND HER NEW NAME: AND HOW THEY LIVED AT THE PENSION MADELEINE

"Black and red!" said Patricia Desmond. "You look like a Baltimore oriole, Honor!"

"What is that?" asked Vivette. "Bal-ti-moriole? *Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?*"

"Baltimore—oriole! Roll your 'r' twice, Vivi! More—ori-ole!"

"Moro-morio—bah! That does not say itself, Patricia. Moriole, that is prettier, not so?"

"Have it your own way! It's a bird, and Honor looks like one in her black dress, that's all. She moves like a bird too; 'flit' is the word there, Vivi."

"Fleet?" Vivette repeated carefully. "Is that co-rect, Patricia?"

Patricia yawned; Vivette was rather tiresome with her English.

"'Fleet' will do," she said. "She's that too. No, I can't explain: I'm busy, Vivette."

"Bee-sy? Like a bee, is that, Patricia? *Trés occupée, n'est-ce pas?*"

"It does; and if you don't go away, Vivette, I'll show you with a hatpin what a bee does!"

"*Tiens!*" murmured Vivette; "none the less, 'Moriole' is pretty, and far more facile to say than 'Honor!'"

That was how Honor came to be called "Moriole" among the girls; the name clung long after the black dress had been laid aside.

Two years passed; years of calm, peaceful, happy days. Two years of study in the gray classroom, with its desks and blackboards, and its estrade where Madame Madeleine or Soeur Séraphine sat benevolently watching, knitting or rosary in hand, ready to encourage or reprove, as need should arise. They were sisters, the two ladies of the Pension Madeleine, though, as the girls often said, no one would have thought it. Madame Madeleine was the elder by many years. She was more like a robin than one would have thought a person could be; round and rosy, with bright black eyes and a nose as sharp as a robin's bill. She wore black always, with a little white knitted shoulder shawl; and flat shoes of black cloth which she made herself, no one knew why.

Soeur Séraphine was slender and beautiful, so beautiful in her gray dress and white coif, that every new girl longed to dress like her, and all the girls made up romances about her, no one of which was true. Both ladies were "good as bread," and everybody loved them, even people who loved no one else; old Cruchon, the milkman, for example, who announced boldly that he hated all human kind.

Two years of *récreation* in the garden, with its high box hedges, and its brick-paved alleys from which the girls were set once a week to remove the weeds and mosses that came sprouting up between the small bright red bricks. (Thus they learned, Madame would explain, the ceaseless industry and perseverance of Nature, overcoming every obstacle; besides strengthening the muscles of the back in a manner altogether special.)

It was a delightful garden, with its square plots of flowers and vegetables, alternating along both sides of the broad central *allée* which ran its entire length; its fruit trees fastened primly to the brick walls, "like one's hair in curl-papers," as Patricia said; its currant and gooseberry bushes, and the great grapevines that buried the lower wall in a mass of heavy green.

The *grande allée* was not bricked, but was covered with sand, white and firm and delightful to run on. Was it not rolled every morning by Margoton, daughter of Anak, the gigantic gardener and chorewoman? Here the girls might run at will (within bounds of health, prudence, and good taste, as Madame explained) either for mere pleasure and exercise, or by way of preparation for the *Courses*, which were held here; the races for the *Pommes d'Atalante*, the little gilded apples which were more coveted than any other school prize. Of this more hereafter.

Two years of quiet evenings in Madame's own parlor, the dim, pleasant room with its dark shining floor and old tapestries, its wonderful chandelier of Venetian glass and the round convex

mirror that was so good (said Soeur Séraphine) for repressing the sin of vanity in the breast of the Young Person. We sat upright on cross-stitch tabourets, and knitted or embroidered, while Madame or the Sister read aloud, "Télémaque," or "Paul et Virginie," or "La Tulipe Noire."

It was a happy time. Dull, some of the girls found it; Stephanie, for example, who pined for excitement; Rose-Marie, who was desperately homesick for Aigues-Mortes (thought by some the dullest place in Europe); Loulou, who considered all study a forlorn waste of time.

Honor loved it all, and was happy; but as Madame Madeleine frankly said, Honor would be happy anywhere.

"She carries her world with her!" Madame would shrug her kind shoulders under their little white shawl. "We are but scenery, *ma mie!*"

Whereupon Soeur Séraphine would sigh and murmur, "Poor Honor! poor dear child!" and say a special prayer to Ste. Gèneviève for her favorite pupil.

There were ten of them: three Americans, Patricia Desmond, Maria Patterson, and Honor herself, the rest French or French-Swiss. Rose-Marie was the oldest and had been there longest; poor Rose-Marie, so good, so dull, so despair of all except Soeur Séraphine, who never despaired of any one. Loulou was the youngest, a little mouse-like girl afflicted with a devouring curiosity, which was always getting her into scrapes: scrapes, for which Stephanie, who, I am sorry to say, was somewhat similarly afflicted, was apt to be partly responsible.

Stephanie was pretty, lively, sentimental, and always in love with somebody. She had tried worshipping Patricia, when she first came, but that, Patricia intimated to her quietly, was a thing she could *not* endure, and the sooner she, Stephanie, dropped it, the better for all concerned. Since then there had been little love lost between the two girls. Stephanie transferred her adoration to Honor, who took it simply, as she took most things, and thought it was wonderful of Stephanie to care for her.

Vivette was pretty, too,—indeed, most of the girls were pretty, a fact which gave Soeur Séraphine more pleasure than she felt it quite right to take in anything so temporary and ensnaring as flesh and blood. But, she would reflect, Vivette, for all her beauty, was serious. *Tiens!* If she should prove to have a Vocation! When this thought first came to her, Soeur Séraphine felt her heart sink in a strange and certainly a very sinful manner. She loved her vocation; for herself, it had been a heavenly refuge from certain tragic sorrows of her youth. When her convent had been broken up a few years ago, she had been at first like a homeless bird, till the good elder sister, long widowed, had come to her, and folded her in strong, tender arms, and taken her away to Vevay, to share her home, her work, and all her good, peaceful life.

Yes; but why then did Soeur Séraphine's heart sink at thought of Vivette's having a vocation for the cloister? Well, because the little Sister desired that everybody might be happy; and in her heart of hearts she would have liked to see every young girl blissfully married to a young man without fault, of marvelous beauty, large fortune and irreproachable lineage. That was all. Of course, where a young person had a real vocation, it was another matter. Vivette had hitherto shown no signs of special piety, but what would you? She was yet young. If even an unuttered thought should in any mysterious way turn her from heavenly paths, that would be grievous sin on the part of the thinker. Satan was very watchful, and her own heart, Soeur Séraphine reflected, was desperately wicked. The Sister did penance for this, and fasted on a feast day, to the amazement of the girls and the great distress of Madame Madeleine.

She need not have disturbed her sweet self; Vivette had no vocation whatever, except for teaching. She was a very practical girl, and had, at the age of fifteen, mapped out her life methodically. She explained it all to Honor: somehow they all explained things to *la Moriole*; she was sympathetic, you understood.

"I also shall *bee*-come an *orphanne!*" she said in her careful English. "For you, my all-dear, this was unattended,—*hein?* 'Unexpected?' *Merci bien, chérie!*—your honored parents being still in the middle ages. *Ainsi—hein?* I have again made fault?"

Honor explained patiently; "middle ages" meant something wholly different; it meant Charlemagne and Lorenzo de Medici and all that kind of thing; in short, the Feudal System! Besides, she said, Maman was really young, but quite young for an old person; nor was Papa so old as many.

"But go on, Vivi! Why should you become an orphan?"

Vivette explained in turn. Her parents had married late; her father was already bald as a bat, her mother in feeble health. What would you? They had told her all simply that it would be necessary for her to earn her own living when they joined the Saints, or else to make an advantageous marriage.

"It is like that!" said Vivette, simply. "I assure thee, Moriole, I have observed, but with a microscope, every desirable *parti* in Vevay. There is not one with whom I would spend a day, far less my life. Enough! I desire to teach. To master the English tongue, to go to *Amérique*, to instruct the young in my own language—*voilà!* it is my secret, *chérie!* I confide it to thee as to the

priest.”

Honor, with shining eyes, promised to keep the secret, which, by the way, half the school knew. It was very noble of Vivette, she thought. How strange, how incomprehensible, to be able to teach! To write, now, that was different. That was as natural as breathing.

It was noble also of Jacqueline de La Tour de Provence to accept the lot which Fate had in store for her. This also was confided to Honor, in a twilight hour in the garden. Jacqueline was a slender, lily-like girl, too pale and languid, perhaps, for real beauty, but graceful and highbred, aristocrat to her fingertips. She was a Royalist, she told Honor. How could it be otherwise with one of her House.

24

“What is your house?” asked Honor innocently. “Is it in Vevay? Is it one of the *chateaux* on the hill?”

Jacqueline laughed her pretty silvery laugh; that also was high-bred, if her speech did not always match.

“The Americans are incredibly ignorant, are they not?” she said amiably. “It is that you have no *noblesse*, my poor Honor. Every Frenchman knows that in the veins of the family of La Tour de Provence runs the blood royal of France.”

“Oh, Jacqueline! not really? How thrilling!” murmured Honor.

“A La Tour de Provence married a cousin of the Grand Monarque!” said Jacqueline, acknowledging the murmur with a regal bend of the head. “But that is nothing; the Bourbons, you understand, are of yesterday. On my mother’s side—” she paused, and proceeded slowly, dropping each word as if it were a pearl—“I am a daughter of St. Louis, and of those from whom St. Louis sprang. I am directly descended from *la reine Berthe*!”

25

“Jacqueline! What do you tell me? Not Bertha Broadfoot?”

Jacqueline again bent a regal head. “Wife of Pepin d’Heristal!” she said calmly. “Mother of Charlemagne! From that royal and sainted woman descends the House of La Tour de Provence!”

She paused to enjoy for a moment Honor’s look of genuine awe and astonishment; when she continued, it was with a touch of queenly condescension, which might have moved to unseemly mirth any one less direct and simple-minded than Honor.

“We were not in the direct line of succession; our ancestor was a younger brother, you understand, of the Emperor. We have never reigned! But we know our descent, and we never stoop. Such as you see me here—” Jacqueline made a disparaging gesture—“in a tiny pension (though the Madeleines are well-born, it goes without saying, otherwise were I not here!) surrounded by a little *bourgeoisie* like this, I remain Myself.”

26

Jacqueline was silent a moment, contemplating her polished finger-nails.

“I have the Capet hand, you perceive!” she raised a very pretty, useless-looking hand; not to be compared for beauty with Patricia’s hand, thought Honor, that combination of white velvet and steel, but pretty enough.



“I HAVE THE CAPET HAND, YOU PERCEIVE!”

“Was—was Queen Bertha really lame?” asked Honor timidly; it was really astonishing to be talking with a Capet; she wondered whether she ought to bow when she spoke. “And did she really spin?” And Honor repeated the familiar rhyme that every French child knows:

“Ah! the good time for every one  
When good Queen Bertha spun!”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“*Ah! le bon temps que c’était  
Quand la reine Berthe filait!*”

“My sainted ancestress,” replied Jacqueline, “was all devoted to her people. Her time was principally passed in spinning and weaving garments for the poor. So great was her industry that she spun even on horseback, carrying her distaff with her. Her constant labors at wheel and loom caused one foot, that which worked the treadle, to become larger than the other; this at least is the legend in our House. You can figure to yourself, Moriole, my feelings at seeing, as lately among these children of unknown people, the holy and venerable Queen made part of a childish game.”

Honor blushed to her very ears. She and Stephanie had been playing only that day with Loulou and Toinette, the two youngest pupils, the old nursery game, never dreaming of harm.

“*Avez-vous bien des filles, cousin,  
Cousine la reine boîteuse—*”

She hoped Jacqueline had not seen her. Madame Madeleine had asked her to amuse the little ones for half an hour. Next time they would play something else, “*Compagnons de la Marjolaine,*” or “*Nous n’irons plus au bois!*”

“How does your—your family” (Honor could not somehow bring herself to say “House”; it sounded so undemocratic!) “feel about the Republic?”

“We do not recognize it!” said Jacqueline calmly. “For us, it does not exist. We serve his sacred Majesty Louis Philippe Robert, whom you probably know only as the Duc d’Orleans.”



"I don't know him at all!" said poor Honor.

Jacqueline gave her a compassionate smile. "His Majesty lives in retirement!" she said. "Little people like thee may be excused for an ignorance which is rather the fault of others than of thyself, Moriolo. For the rest, we bide our time! We follow the customs of our House, and mate—so nearly as may be—with our equals."

She then went on to tell Honor of the Fate that awaited her. She was to remain another year at school. Then, when she was eighteen, she was to be married, to the Sieur de Virelai, a nobleman of their own neighborhood, a friend of her father's. He was somewhat older than her father, but a *grand seigneur*, with one of the historic castles of France.

"When I am the Lady of Virelai, my poor Honor," said Jacqueline, "you must visit me, you must indeed. I shall receive you with pleasure."

The supper bell rang just then, and the future Lady of Virelai jumped up with more animation than she often showed.

"There are to be apple fritters for supper!" she cried. "Margoton told me so! Quick, Moriolo, or those greedy children will get the top ones."

"Why shouldn't they?" asked Honor, as they sped up the *allée*. "There'll be plenty for every one."

Jacqueline turned a look of surprise on her.

"The top ones," she said, "are the last off the griddle; naturally, one desires them!"

## CHAPTER III

### THE MOUNTAINEERS

It was Madame's birthday, a bright June day; it was also the feast of St. Zita.

Every girl, Catholic and Protestant alike, had laid a flower on the Saint's shrine, the pretty little marble shrine at the end of the garden, with the yellow roses climbing over it. Every girl had presented her gift to Madame at breakfast, to the good lady's unbounded astonishment. They had been making the gifts under her benevolent nose for a month past, but she had seen nothing; Soeur Séraphine said so, and she ought to know. The steel beads of Honor's neck chain (Honor was not skilful with her needle, but she could string beads with the best!) had flashed in sun and lamp light, had dropped on the floor and been rescued from corners and cracks; Madame never noticed. She did not even notice when Maria Patterson's handkerchief case fell into the soup, which, as Patricia said, served Maria right for tating at table. Soeur Séraphine saw, and Maria got no pudding, but Madame Madeleine never so much as looked that way, and never faltered in her recital of the virtues and sufferings of St. Zita.

32

She almost wept with pleasure over her gifts; never, she declared, were such charming objects seen. And of a utility! *Tiens!* this beautiful blotter, how it would adorn her desk! And the exquisite chain! Would it not sustain her spectacle case, which in future would never, as had so often happened, become wholly lost? And—"Ma Patricia! this beautiful scarf cannot be for me: tell me not so, my child! It is for a princess rather!" etc., etc.

Dear Madame Madeleine! Surely her birthday was the happiest day of the happy year for herself and all of us.

After the presentation, all was joyous bustle and hurry: baskets to pack, shawls and cloaks to collect, *fiacres* to summon; all for the annual expedition to the *Rochers de Meillerie*, the most wonderful picnic place in the world. The *fiacres* (three of them! it made quite a procession!) took the party down to the lake, where the little steamer lay at her pier, the smoke pouring from her funnel. What terror lest they should be late! What frantic signals waved from the six windows of the procession of *fiacres*! The steamer gave no sign, but puffed away stolidly; they had been on board half an hour, sitting on their camp stools in a serried phalanx, before she rang her bell, shrieked thrice through her whistle and began her leisurely progress across the lake.

33

What a voyage of wonder that was! The morning was crystal clear, the mountains stood in dazzling white and resplendent green, the lake was a great sparkling sapphire studded with gold and diamonds.

Honor, sitting near the stern, watched the swirling wake, stretching far behind, saw the rainbow bubbles rise, dance, break, fall away in silver showers. She was fascinated, could not even look up at her beloved mountains.

34

"*Tiens!*" whispered Stephanie. "This tall stranger, very distinguished, who regards us, Moriole!"

Honor shook her shoulders a little impatiently. Stephanie was always seeing distinguished strangers; they seldom, if ever, were distinguished in Honor's eyes.

Suppose, she thought, an Arm should suddenly appear, rising from the bosom of the lake,

"Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful!"

Suppose Undine were there—no! she lived in a fountain; well, other nymphs then! There must be ever so many. But it was to be some time yet before Honor came to her water world.

"Regard the mountains, my child!" said Madame. "They also are dressed to welcome us, is it not so?"

35

Honor looked up, and the mountains took possession of her again. One could hardly look at the white giants themselves, they were too dazzling, midway between the vivid blues of sky and lake, the blinding sunlight beating on them. Instinctively one's eyes blinked, fell, rested on the lovely green of the lower forest-clad heights; lower still, on the mellow brown huddle at their feet, on the very edge of the water, the Rocks of Meillerie.

"Behold!" said Madame. "The good rocks which await us!"

The good rocks, basking in sunshine as soft as it was warm, neither dazzled nor blinded; they welcomed. They were actually warm under the feet, as, released from the steamer, the happy

girls clambered over them, laden with baskets, shawls, campstools.

"This way!" the brown rocks invited: "to the left here, my children, under our shadow, for the sun is hot! here rather to the right, since the footing is better. Yonder is a place of treachery; avoid always that emerald patch! Unknown depths lurk beneath."

36

And so on, and so on! Did the rocks actually speak, or was it Soeur Séraphine panting in the rear, cautioning, adjuring? Never mind! Here they were at last in the picnic place, their own place, discovered by the two good sisters, Madame Madeleine and Soeur Séraphine, hundreds of years ago, when they were girls themselves. No one else knew of it, they were sure; except, of course, Atli and Gretli, and they were safe. It was a family affair, the rock parlor, with its brown walls and its carpet of softest moss. No treachery here! The moss was as dry as it was soft; a wonderful moss, like tiny velvet ferns; Honor and Stephanie agreed it could grow nowhere else in the world. Here and there baby rocks jutted through the green, making perfect stools; there was even an armchair for Madame; it was arranged, Soeur Séraphine assured them gaily. Nature, the good Mother Superior of the White Sisters yonder—she indicated the towering giants above them—had designed this place for them.

37

"Sit down, my children! My sister, this cushion for thy back, is it not so? *Voilà!*"

The snowy cloth was laid on the moss before Madame's rock armchair; the baskets were unpacked, amid squeaks of rapture. Oh! the great pie! ah! the *brioche*s, the *galette*, the Lyons sausage, all the good, good Swiss dainties! how wonderful they were, eaten here in the rock parlor, at the very foot of the mountains! And when the girls were thirsty—Ah! at the good hour! Here were Atli and Gretli.

Down through the brown rocks, stepping as sturdily and easily as if on level ground, came the gigantic twins, Margoton's brother and sister; he bearing a shining milkcan, she a comb of golden honey in a blue bowl. This also was a part of the regular programme. Never were twins more alike. Clip Gretli's flaxen hair and put her into Atli's white shirt, broad green breeches and worsted stockings; furnish Atli with two heavy braids hanging to his waist, and dress him in bodice and petticoat—Madame asked you—was there a difference? They were superb, even Patricia allowed that. Their massive, regular features, their blue eyes, the flash of their white teeth, the ruddy brown of cheek and chin, contrasting with the milk-white strip of forehead when the shady hat came off—all this with the figure of a Norse viking and—"Is there such a word as 'vi-queen'?" asked Patricia. Soeur Séraphine thought not: the idea, however, was admirable. That was certainly what our good Atli and Gretli resembled. Vee-king! vee-quin—: ki—veen! my faith! That was difficult, if you would! a majestic language, but of a complexity!

38

Honor thought silently that they were more like the Norse Gods: Baldur the Beautiful, Nanna the Fair: there was a story about them in a little brown book—

39

Atli, all unconscious of either kinglike or godlike attributes, poured the rich, foaming milk into the tin cups held out by a dozen eager hands: Gretli dispensed the honey with golden smiles; then the twins sat down simply, and had their share of *galette*, *brioche*, and all the rest of it, and answered the questions showered upon them by the two ladies. Yes, the cows were well, with thanks to the holy ladies for their interest; that is, the present time found them in health. La Dumaine had been ill in the spring; but desperately ill! They had despaired of her. During a week they had watched beside her as those expecting the end. She was good as bread, the poor sufferer; her moans were as eloquent as words. When she said "Moh!" one knew she had thirst, one brought water on the instant; when she sneezed, it expressed affection.

"It is that we understand!" said Gretli simply; "she is our sister, do you see?"

40

Atli nodded gravely.

"It is like that!" he confirmed her. "We are all creatures of the good God. Few human beings have the virtues of La Dumaine. The Duchesse, now, is of another quality; that cow is malicious, if you will. Figure to yourselves, my ladies, her endeavoring to snatch from our poor Dumaine the tuft of clover that I had found for her (with difficulty, for the season was late) and brought up from the valley. An evil beast! my faith, she was well paid for that, the Duchesse; good strokes of the cudgel rewarded her."

"And the goats?" asked Soeur Séraphine. "They have wintered well? The little white one lives always, that you named for me, kind young persons that you are?"

The twins threw back their heads—their movements were apt to be not only identical but simultaneous—and their laughter rang among the rocks; every one else laughed, too, from sheer infection of merriment.

41

"If she lives?" chuckled Atli.

"The marvel is that others still survive!" cried Gretli. "It is we that owe you a thousand apologies, my Sister, for giving your holy and beautiful name to such a creature. She is mistress—what do I say? She is tyrant of the whole flock. She drives them before her like lambs of a month old; they have no peace, the unhappy ones. Only the two he-goats, old Moufflon himself, and his son, our handsome Bimbo, can withstand her. These, also, however, she conquers, but with wiles,

you understand. She has charm, *la Séraphine*; my faith, yes! Even Atli gives her her own way, when I would give her the stick rather."

"The creature!" said Atli indulgently. "She is of a beauty, my ladies! White as cream, and her eyes so dark and appealing. My ladies will graciously visit the *châlet*, as of custom? There will be great rejoicing at sight of them."

42

But yes, said Madame; that was one of the chief pleasures of this happy day, long looked forward to. On the instant even, it would be well for them to begin the ascent. Already it was two o'clock, and the steamer left at five. Also, though young persons could imitate the goats in their manner of ascent, for those of advanced years it was necessary to allow time. Forward then, my children! to the *châlet* of the Rocks!

In the twinkling of an eye the baskets were repacked and safely stowed beneath an overhanging rock; every scrap of paper and crust of bread picked up and burned, under Soeur Séraphine's watchful eye; then the whole party began the ascent, Gretli leading the way with Soeur Séraphine, whose slight figure was as active as that of her namesake, Atli bringing up the rear, carefully guiding and supporting Madame Madeleine. Between the two couples went the girls in a hubbub of delight, skipping, slipping, leaping, chattering French and English as they went.

43

"He is far more handsome than last year!" sighed Stephanie. "Regard his moustache, how it embellishes him! What king was that thou callest him, Patricia? *Le roi Vi, n'est-ce pas?*"

"No king at all! The Vikings were sea-rovers, pretty much pirates, I suppose."

"Pirate? That is *corsair?*" asked Vivette, who was getting on nicely with her English. "My ancestor was a corsair of St. Malo. He captivated three British ships—"

"By his beauty?" asked Patricia. "You mean 'captured,' Vivi!"

"Cap-ture, capti-vate, is it not the same thing? A captive, is he not captivated? How then?"

"Catastrophe of a language!" murmured Stephanie, who detested English.

"Hop, Froggy!" said Patricia and Maria in one breath.

Seeing battle imminent, Honor broke in hastily, "Oh, look, girls! *Regarde, Stephanie!* The *châlet*! Race to it!"

44

No more words were spoken. Panting, breathless, the girls pressed on. Soon they overtook Gretli and Soeur Séraphine, and some would have passed them, but Patricia made an imperious gesture.

"Manners?" she suggested; "one doesn't rush ahead of one's hostess, I *think*; or does one, Stephanie?"

Honor did wish they would not quarrel so. Of course Patricia was right, but—she slid her hand into Stephanie's, and they dropped back behind the others.

"I hate her!" said Stephanie.

"No, you don't," said Honor stoutly. "You dislike her, and that is a pity, because she is splendid, and if you didn't dislike her, you would like her so tremendously; but you don't hate her."

"The same thing!" muttered Stephanie.

"No!" Honor's cheek flushed and her eyes flashed. "To dislike, that comes to every one; to hate, that is wicked, and the good God is vexed."

45

"My children," called Soeur Séraphine. "Behold us arrived! forward then! Our Gretli has a surprise for us, of which I learn but on the instant. Follow me!"

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OUTGOING

The *Châlet des Rochers* (I hope it is still standing!) wore an air of high festivity. Garlands wreathed the open door and swung in festoons from the low thatched roof. Around the door stood a group of young men and maidens, all in the old-time Swiss costume, one of the prettiest in the world; the girls with dark bodices laced over the full white blouse, short full skirts of bright green, blue or red, snowy stockings and well-blackened shoes; the youths in knee-breeches, white shirts, short jackets and pointed hats.

"Are we at the *Opéra Comique*?" whispered Patricia. "They will begin to yodel in a moment!"

And they did! As the School advanced, the whole group broke out in—song, shall I say? Certainly into a sound as musical as it was strange. "A-i! o-oh! u-u-u—" No! it may not be described. It must be heard, and heard in the mountains.

"It is the *Ranz des Vaches*!" cried Soeur Séraphine. "I heard it—how many years ago? When I was a little young girl! What pleasure! what delight! What means this, my Gretli?"

Gretli's face was aglow; she clapped her hands and laughed, joyously.

"It is the Spring Festival, my Sister!" she cried. "The festival of the Outgoing, when the animals go to the mountain pastures. Hearing that the gracious Ladies would be with us to-day, we held back the outgoing that they might see. These are our neighbors, come to help us and join our simple feast. Marie, Madelon, Jeanne, here are the gracious Ladies of whom you have heard so much. Ah! *à la bonne heure*! And here is our Zitli himself to welcome you."

A boy stood in the doorway, beaming welcome; a boy of fifteen, also wearing the gay Swiss dress, but otherwise contrasting strangely with the stalwart, sunburnt shepherds and farm maidens. He leaned on crutches; his face was white and drawn, with lines of pain that should not belong to so young a creature; yet no face in all the group shone more brightly than that of Zitli, the younger brother, the joy and pride of the mighty Twins.

Now Atli hastened forward to bring stools for the Ladies. Soon the whole group was established before the *châlet*, the Ladies sitting in dignity on their stools, the girls at their feet, on rugs and shawls carefully spread by the Twins and their friends; "To protect from dampness!" explained Gretli. "And from chill!" chimed in Atli. "My faith! our Mountain's heart is warm, but his bones are cold. Now! my ladies find themselves in comfort? At the good hour! The creatures become impatient. Hark to la Duchesse! That one is in a temper!"

An angry bellow was heard from the farmyard, where we could see white horns tossing over the rough stone wall. It was answered by a "Moo!" in a very different tone: a moo full of quiet dignity, with a touch of rebuke.

"Well done!" cried Gretli. "La Dumaine responds; she puts that other in her place. Is it not well done, friends?"

There was a general murmur of applause, amid which Atli, making a sign, vanished into the yard, followed by the other young men. Presently the sound of bells was heard, first one, then another, then a chime, all on different notes, all in harmony. A lovely melody! And now the girls, led by Gretli's powerful voice, began to sing: a quaint air, with quainter words, which may be roughly translated as follows:

"Ten young maidens fair and free;  
All the ten would married be:  
There was Dine, there was Chine,  
There was Claudine and Martine;  
Ah! ah! Cath'rinette and Cath'rina:  
There was beautiful Suzon;  
Duchess fair of Montbazon;  
There was Célimène;  
There was La Dumaine."

As they sang, the farmyard gate opened, and out came the cows. Usually the herd was already in the mountain pastures by the time of the Birthday Fête; the School had never seen it before. Honor gazed in silent wonder and delight at the superb creature who led the way: a cow white as cream, graceful as a deer, holding her head like a queen. Round her neck was a broad collar of leather, richly embroidered in bright-colored silks, from which hung a large bell. As she moved,

she tossed her beautiful head, and the deep mellow notes of the bell rang out sweetly on the quiet air. "Ting! ling-a-ling! ling-a-ling!"

"Ling-ling!" responded another bell! another, and another. The two cows following the leader were also beauties: one a delicate fawn color with white feet and a white star on her forehead; the other—

"But this is the Purple Cow!" cried Patricia.

"I never saw a purple cow,  
I never thought to see one!"

But now I do!"

Honor had never read "The Lark," never, poor Continental child, so much as heard of it; but there was no doubt about it; here was a purple cow, or one of so deeply violet-tinted a gray that purple was the one idea suggested.

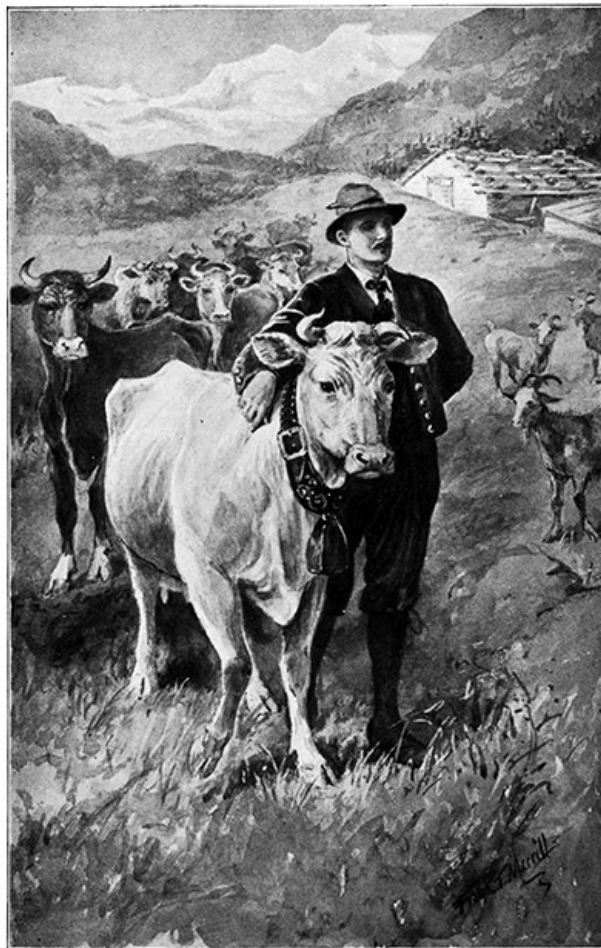
"What an original tint has this!" cried Madame Madeleine. "And what a beauty! Truly, Gretli, she rivals La Dumaine herself!"

As if she understood the words, the purple cow flung up her head with an angry movement; then lowering it, jostled rudely against the leader as if trying to push past her. La Dumaine paid no heed, but continued to advance slowly, her beautiful eyes turned lovingly toward Atli, who walked beside her, his arm on her neck. The fawn-colored cow, however, with a quiet but firm shove of her powerful shoulder, jostled the purple one back into her place.

"Aha!" cried Gretli. "Well done, Célimène! This, my ladies, is a creature of discernment, and of judgment. Célimène, I am content with thee, my friend!"

The purple cow bellowed angrily; Gretli replied with asperity, "As for thee, thou wilt do well to be silent. No one desires speech of thee, be assured!"

"What is her name?" asked Patricia. "The purple one; she is the handsomest of all, I think."



"ATLI ... WALKED BESIDE HER, HIS ARM ON  
HER NECK"

"It is the Duchesse de Montbazon, Mademoiselle! An animal of beauty, as all acknowledge, but

of an evil and envious disposition. Her jealousy of La Dumaine passes bounds. The truth is, two years ago our beloved Queen had an illness, was not able to seek the mountains with the rest. Wishing to be entirely just, we allowed La Duchesse to lead the herd, as in beauty and in quality of milk she properly ranked next. Figure to yourself that a month later, when Atli led the wholly-recovered Dumaine to the mountain pasture, this one refused to yield her place. She roared, she tore up the ground—there was a scene, I promise you! Atli was forced to belabor her well with the milking-stool before she could be brought—I say not to reason,—she is incapable of it—but to simple obedience. There again our worthy Célimène was of assistance; she, loving La Dumaine like a sister, advanced to the attack of that other, who was threatening our queen in a manner wholly savage, and overthrew her.”

“Ah!” cried a shrill voice behind her. “That was a thing to see! Paff! and there she rolled, the four legs in the air.”

Gretli turned smiling to the boy who, leaning always on his crutches, rubbed his hands with delight, while a glow spread over his pale face.

“Thou saw’st it, Zitli, didst thou not?” she said approvingly. “As thou sayst, it was a thing to see. Regard, my Ladies! La Dumaine comes to pay her respects to our honored guests!”

Stepping daintily over the short turf, guided by Atli’s hand on her neck, the beautiful creature advanced to within a few paces of the group before the door, and stretching her neck, sniffed inquiringly, fixing her great violet-brown eyes on Soeur Séraphine with an appealing look.

“Beautiful one!” the little Sister patted the snowy muzzle gently. “What wouldst thou?”

Zitli thrust into her hand a saucer containing a lump of salt. “She desires bonbons!” he said. “Behold the bonbons of La Dumaine, my Ladies!”

Honor, curled up at the Sister’s feet, watched entranced as the pink tongue curled eagerly round the salt. She was in such a state of wonderment and rapture, she was conscious of nothing save the cows; but suddenly a hand clutched hers, and a voice whispered,

“Moriolo, I faint! I die! I can bear no more!”

Honor, turning in amazement, beheld Stephanie, white as chalk, her eyes starting from their sockets, her teeth absolutely chattering.

“But what is it?” she cried. “Stephanie, what ails thee? My Sister, Stephanie is ill!”

“My child!” Soeur Séraphine turned in anxiety. “You find yourself ill?”

“She’s afraid of the cows!” said Patricia bluntly.

“But no! of these gentle creatures? Can it be? Come, my child! Lay your hand on the beautiful head! Observe her gentleness! A lamb is less mild!”

She tried to draw Stephanie toward her: and in so doing drew back the saucer a little. La Dumaine pursued it, snuffing and blowing appreciatively: at this Stephanie uttered a wild shriek, and springing up, rushed to one side to escape the terrible animal, who, she cried out, would devour her.

Alas! Stephanie had recently had a present of a scarlet parasol, of which she was inordinately proud. So proud that she had brought it with her to the *fête*, regardless of the gibes of the other girls. In her sidewise rush, the parasol, still clutched in her hand, was presented full to the view of the Duchess of Montbazon, within two feet of her purple nose. The Duchess, in no mood to endure this, lowered her head with a furious bellow, and leaving her place in the ranks, advanced upon Stephanie, who fled with shrieks that rent the air. The other cows, startled, huddled together: at the rear, Le Roi, the splendid young bull, raised his great head, crowned with the milking-stool, and uttered a loud moo of inquiry.

It was a bad moment; but Atli and the Queen were equal to the emergency. A touch on the neck, a word in the ear; La Dumaine turned from her “bonbons” and with regal pace and head lifted high, started across the plot of greensward and up the track that led to the mountain pasture. After a moment’s confusion, the other cows, aided by voice and hand of the farm maidens, followed in their regular order. Gretli rescued the shrieking Stephanie and carried her bodily into the house. The shepherds, shouting with laughter, corralled the Duchess of Montbazon in a corner of the yard, and drove her, still bellowing rage and defiance, after the herd. She followed for some paces behind Le Roi, who, conscious of his duty to guard the rear, turned his head frequently to utter snorts of rebuke and remonstrance. Finally, jealousy and ambition triumphed over the sulks. Breaking into a clumsy gallop, La Duchesse plunged past the bull, past Dine and Chine, Claudine, Martine and the rest, and shouldered her way in behind La Dumaine and beside Célimène. The former pursued her serene way, taking no notice; the latter—well, cows cannot laugh, but Célimène’s carriage was very expressive as with a whisk of her tail and a “wallop” of her hind-quarters, she made place for the rebel beside her. So the herd swept out and away, Atli still walking beside his Queen: and after them, shouting and laughing, went the neighbor boys and girls, to finish their holiday with a feast of curds and whey, cheese and

black bread in the mountain pasture.



## CHAPTER V

### BIMBO

The living room (kitchen, sitting room and dining room in one) of the Châlet was also in festal trim as Gretli ushered her guests in; good, faithful Gretli, who had planned all, gladly giving up her part in the mountain feast for the sake of entertaining her "honored patrons" and their pupils. The floor was white with scrubbing; the little windows gleamed like diamonds; the sunbeams darting through them made lively play among the brass and copper vessels ranged on the dresser, or hanging on the whitewashed walls.

The only dark thing in the room was the fireplace, and that had a good right to its warm sootiness. All about it hung hams and flitches of bacon, and strings of sausages, the pride of the thrifty Twins: there was bread, too, though some people might not have recognized it in the large flat round cakes with a hole in the middle, strung on ropeyarn and hanging in festoons from the rafters. Madame Madeleine glanced upward and nodded approval.

"A fine showing, my Gretli! Thou hast provision for many winters there."

Gretli beamed with modest pride. "We do our possible!" she said. "Atli is indeed a marvel of strength and industry; and we have our Zitli!" she added, glancing at the lame boy, a lovely look in her face. "Without Zitli, where should we be? He turns the hams, he keeps the fire at the proper height, he stuffs the sausages; unaided he does it! As for the cheese—it is well known that he is called the little Prince of Cheesemakers. Let my gracious Ladies descend, if they will have the condescension, and inspect the cheese room!"

The cheese room was dark and cool—and dripping! No ice in mountain châteaux, but through the middle of the room ran a little crystal stream whose water needed no ice.

"It comes down from the Alps!" Zitli explained. "My brother persuaded it, with a wooden conduit; my faith, the good Nix was willing enough; ever since then she sends her stream; in the driest summer, it never fails. No other châteaux has such a stream. It is because of the virtue of my brother and sister!" he added simply.

"Zitli!" Gretli spoke in gentle reproof. "These are not words to say before honorable guests, though I love thee for them, my little one. See, my ladies! here stand the pans, thus, on either side the stream; these are for the cream cheeses, the other for those of milk alone. Observe now the cheeses!"

She led the way proudly to the end of the room—it was really more like a cavern—where, on broad shelves, stood the great round cheeses, tier on tier, all neatly marked with date and weight.

"I didn't suppose there was so much cheese in the world!" said Honor.

Gretli laughed merrily. "My faith, mademoiselle! Twice in the year we send forth this quantity, from this one châteaux, by no means one of the largest of this Alp."

"But assuredly one of the best!" said Madame Madeleine.

"Madame is kindness in person! We do our possible. Consider then, mademoiselle, that in fifty châteaux on this single Alp, equal numbers or larger are made, are sent out twice in the year; and that there are countless Alps in our dear country; mademoiselle sees, without doubt, that there is no danger of the world being without cheese. Look! on this shelf, behold the little cheeses of cream, called *Neufchâtel* from that good town where first they were produced. If Madame permits, we would like, Zitli and I, to present to each of the demoiselles one of these small objects."

"Oh!" cried the girls in chorus. "Oh, Gretli! Oh, Madame, may we?"

Madame looked doubtful. "It is too much—" she began.

"With respect!" cried Gretli. "They are made entirely of cream; is it not so, Zitli? Yesterday we made them, Zitli and I, expressly for our demoiselles. Quite frankly, the new-born infant might eat them without injury. They are even thought to be stomachic in their quality."

"That was far from being my thought," Madame explained graciously. "I feared we might rob you, my Gretli; but since you have made this charming present for my pupils—come, my children! you have permission to accept—not forgetting, I trust, the thanks that are due!"

A chorus of delight and thanks broke out, as the neat little rolls of silver-papered cheese, each

stamped *Châlet des Rochers*, were dealt out. Maria Patterson and Vivette proposed to eat theirs on the spot; Loulou tried to stuff hers into her pocket.

Gretli offered a better suggestion. "This basket," she said, "will hold all, and my young ladies will, I trust, enjoy at their supper the little fruits of the Châlet. For the moment, I will ask you to mount once more to the room."

Then, bending down from her towering height, she whispered in Honor's ear. "In the basket is already a *fromage Camembert* for the evening repast of my Ladies. It is their favorite cheese; we send it, Atli, Zitli and I, as a little surprise, Mademoiselle understands."

Honor nodded comprehension, and took the basket, in which the silver rolls were now neatly stored.

Zitli had preceded them some minutes ago, up the ladder-stair which led down to the cheese room. As they came up blinking into the strong sunlight, they saw his beaming face behind a little table, on which was a plate of curious little biscuits or cookies stamped in the shape of a cow, a glass pitcher of rich cream, and a number of little wooden bowls and spoons.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried the girls in chorus.

"A little *goûter!*" (luncheon) Gretli hastened forward to explain. "Before making the descent! My Ladies remember well the *biscuits des Rochers*, to be eaten with cream; sustaining, you observe, and wholesome—ah! *par exemple!*"

"Remember them!" cried Soeur Séraphine. "Could we forget? Regard, my children! When we were young girls of your age, the good grandmother of our friends prepared this feast yearly for us. We came with our honored parents, now in glory; it is to make weep with pleasure and remembrance, the sight of them!"

And indeed, the little Sister actually wiped a tear from her blue eyes.

Tears were far from the eyes of Honor, Patricia, and the rest, as they clustered round the table. It is highly improbable that any of my readers ever tasted the cream of the *Châlet des Rochers*; I, therefore, declare boldly that they do not know what cream is. As for the biscuits, made of cream and honey and wheat flour—they also are not to be described.

"And *how* do you make them like a cow?" asked little Loulou, a newcomer to the school. "*Tiens!* they resemble La Dumaine!"

Gretli cast a proud glance at her brother, who blushed crimson and dropped his eyes.

"It is a portrait of our Queen!" she said. "Behold the cutter, carved by our Zitli. All unconscious, La Dumaine sat—I should rather say stood—for her portrait—while he carved it. The former one, made by our honored grandfather in his youth, had lost its clearness of outline; through age and long use, you understand. Nor—with respect to our venerable ancestor be it said—did it ever equal in beauty the present one."

I trust that the *Madeleinettes*, as the Vevay children called our girls, were no more greedy than other young persons of their age. They had certainly eaten a great deal of luncheon barely two hours before; yet they fell upon the biscuits and cream, and on the shining combs of honey which supplemented them, "as if after a three days' fast," said Soeur Séraphine in gentle reproof.

"*Voyons!* they are young!" said motherly Madame Madeleine.

"It is like that!" cried Gretli, who was manifestly enjoying every mouthful they ate. "Youth, my Ladies," (Gretli was twenty-two!), "demands nutrition. If simple and wholesome, can there be too much of it? For example! did my Sister ever try to fill a young goat to repletion? There, if you will, is gluttony!"

The little feast over, Madame declared that it was time to begin the descent. They must go slowly, more slowly even than in ascending, and they had no more than time to reach the pier in good time. Every one knew that Madame's "good time" meant a full half hour before the boat started, so it was without too much haste that the girls took leave of Zitli and the châlet. Gretli, as they knew, would see them safe at the foot of the Alp before saying good-by.

"Oh!" said Honor, as they came out on the green space before the house, "but we have not seen the goats, Gretli!"

"*A la bonne heure!*" said Gretli. "And on the instant, Mademoiselle Honor, here the creatures come!"

The goats knew it was not yet supper-time. Very leisurely they came up the track, old Moufflon in advance, young Bimbo bringing up the rear. Between them the she-goats, twenty or thirty of them, straggled along, stopping here to nibble a tuft of grass or clover, there to investigate a bush or stone. They are inquisitive creatures, goats. Now and then a shrill bleat was heard, and some goat would canter a few paces ahead, then fall to nibbling again.

"It is Séraphine who annoys them!" Gretli said. "The creature! Look, my demoiselles. Nanni, her own aunt, you observe, has found a green tuft of the most succulent, and begins to take her pleasure. Now in a moment—regard! comes la Séraphine! biff! it is over! Poor Nanni flies, and that one enjoys the morsel. My faith, she is really of an evil nature, the Séraphine, and gluttonous beyond description. Again, I make my heartfelt apologies to my Sister for giving her holy name to this creature. For example! if I had named La Dumaine for her, now, it would be different!"

Soeur Séraphine laughed heartily at the antics of her namesake, and declared that she had had much the same disposition in her youth. "But not the beauty!" she added. "As Atli says, it is difficult to be severe with so charming a creature."

70

"It's funny that the best cow and the worst goat should be white, isn't it?" said Vivette.

"As mademoiselle says! A thing very curious. Bimbo, now! a black goat may by right be mischievous, is it not so, my ladies? Yet Bimbo also is handsome, we think."

As if he heard and understood, Bimbo, the young he-goat, lifted his head, and reconnoitered the party standing on the green; then, slowly and with an air of elaborate carelessness, he detached himself from the flock, and began a circuitous approach, pausing to nibble—or to make a pretence of nibbling—at every other step. He was jet black, with white horns and hoofs; a superb animal, already larger than Moufflon, his father and leader.

"He *is* a beauty!" said Patricia. "I should like to have a pair of him to drive, wouldn't you, Moriolo? We'd take Stephanie out—and upset her into the lake!" she added in an undertone.

71

Stephanie did not hear her. Her eyes were fixed in terror on the advancing flock, and especially on Moufflon, a goat of great dignity, with wide-branching horns and a notable beard.

Stephanie was naturally afraid of all animals. Their size mattered little; a cow or a mouse threw her into almost equal agonies of terror. Indeed, the mouse was the more to be dreaded of the two, since—horror! it could, and certainly would if given the opportunity—run up one's sleeve, in which case one would die on the spot, on the instant. Moreover, the poor child's nerves had been thoroughly upset by the Purple Cow episode (which naughty Patricia was already turning into verse in her mind!). She had made up her mind that Moufflon meant to attack her. Pressing close to Gretli's side, shaking in every limb, she kept her eyes fixed on him in the fascination of terror. Ah! but she did not notice—*nobody* noticed Bimbo! Gretli herself, keeping a watchful eye on the mischievous Séraphine, prepared to check and punish any outbreak on the part of that obstreperous young beauty, had no eye for the black goat, quietly circling to the rear of the party, quietly moving forward, with a sharp glance now and then through his forelock. If any one had cast a glance at Bimbo, he would have been seen nibbling grass, serenely unconscious; the catastrophe might have come just the same: but no one did cast a glance.

72

Presently, Madame Madeleine called Gretli to her, to ask some question about the descent. Gretli, stepping forward some paces, left Stephanie for the moment standing alone, still holding the unlucky red parasol. Directly in front of her stood Honor, her eyes fixed on the mountains, lost in a dream of the Norse gods. Bimbo's moment had arrived. Two at a time! glorious sport. Lowering his head, he advanced at a smart gallop. Biff! *bang!* a wild shriek rang out. Stephanie and Honor were rolling together at the feet of Soeur Séraphine, and the others, turning in bewilderment, saw the black goat quietly nibbling grass, apparently unconscious of them and of the world.

73

Stephanie sprang up and rushed sobbing and screaming to throw herself into the tender arms of Madame Madeleine. Honor lay still. The air was black and full of sparks; there was a pain somewhere, a rather sickening pain.

Gretli and Soeur Séraphine ran to raise her, and she uttered a little cry.

"It's all right!" she said. "I hit my head, I think, and my ankle—but it's all right!" Here she tried to get up, and instead crumpled into a little heap and fainted away.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE CHÂLET OF THE ROCKS

When Honor opened her eyes, it was to look round her in amazement. Where was she? Certainly not at home in the Maison Madeleine. This bed, with its fragrant sheets of coarse heavy linen and its wonderful quilt, was not her own, nor was the little room with its bare white walls and dormer windows.

A quaint little room, homely, yet friendly. Along one wall ran a shelf, on which were many pieces of wood-carving, some of exquisite delicacy. Honor's still-bewildered eyes rested with delight on a miniature ch<sup>^</sup>alet, with tiny cattle and goats, half the length of her little finger, browsing round it, with a fairy sennerin smiling in the doorway. A wonderful piece of work it seemed to her. There must be a very skilful carver here. The wooden bedstead on which she lay was carved too, and its four tall posts were surmounted by four heads, with smiling, friendly faces. What a curious, delightful place!

75

"Where am I?" said Honor.

Soeur S<sup>^</sup>raphine was bending over her, her face full of tender anxiety.

"Thank God!" she said. "My little one, you are yourself again, is it not so? But no!" she added, as Honor tried to rise, and sank back with a little moan. "It is to lie quite still, my child! You have sprained your ankle, and must remain tranquil till it restores itself. Our Gretli will care for you, as tenderly as we ourselves could do. A few days only; then Atli will fashion a carrying chair and bring you down the mountain and home to us. Madame left her fondest love for you; she was forced to go, you understand, and now I must follow, lest the boat depart without me. My child, with no one save Gretli and Atli could we possibly have left thee, thou knowest that. The ankle is well bandaged, and Gretli is a skilful nurse; adieu, my little Honor! Thou wilt be good and not unhappy? Adieu!"

76

The Sister's kind blue eyes were full of tears as she kissed Honor's forehead and hurried away. A few moments after, Gretli appeared, and sat down by the bedside with an air of business-like cheerfulness.

"*Voilà!*" she said. "I have seen her well started, the holy Sister. My faith, she is a good mountaineer; she leaps like a goat. She will soon overtake Madame, who, being of a certain age, must proceed more cautiously. And how does mademoiselle find herself? Not too ill, I hope?"

Honor was still looking about her in a bewildered fashion. "I am all right," she said, "only my head aches, and my ankle hurts when I try to move. What happened, Gretli? Did somebody knock me down? Why?"

"That," said Gretli, "is a thing known only to the good God, who created goats. With sorrow and shame I avow it, Mademoiselle Honor; Bimbo, that child of Satan, attacked Mademoiselle Stephanie, from the rear, you understand, with a violence not to be credited had one not seen it. She was flung forward upon you, who stood before her; a loose stone, it would appear, turned under your foot. You fell to the ground, striking your head on another stone. I ran to raise you; you swooned in my arms, poor child. Ah! what confusion! Mademoiselle Stephanie shrieking to the skies that she was killed; Zitli belaboring the misguided beast with his crutch; the *demoiselles* clustering together in affright; my Ladies full of anxiety and distress. What would you? It was the hour of departure; there is no other boat to-day, and though all would be more than welcome to the Ch<sup>^</sup>alet, they could not pass the night in comfort.

77

"They proposed to carry you between them, these benevolent ladies; I respectfully begged them to reconsider. 'Leave the little one'—I demand pardon, mademoiselle; it is only yesterday, it appears, that I carry you in my arms!—'leave her with us!' I said. 'My faith, I am well used to the care of sprains; she will be safe as in Ste. G<sup>^</sup>nevi<sup>^</sup>ve's pocket. I will give her soup of cream and onion with cheese, a restorative not worse than another; for her amusement Zitli will tell stories—but, *par exemple!* he is a story-teller, that little one! The creatures will all be at her feet, except that ruffian Bimbo, who will not be suffered to approach her. By and by, when all is well, Atli will carry her down the mountain like an egg of glass, will deposit her by your side. *Et voilà!*' My Ladies perceived the reasonableness of the idea. They wept, but finally consented to leave their cherished pupil to make a good and beautiful recovery in the *Ch<sup>^</sup>alet des Rochers*. Finally, mademoiselle, behold us here, three of us—four, when Atli returns to-morrow from the higher Alp. We shall do well, is it not so? And now, to prepare the soup! It will be good, I promise you!"

78

Left alone, Honor looked round her, and tried to take in the situation. She remembered the sudden impact of some soft body—that was poor Stephanie, of course; then—*crash!* a sharp blow from something hard—that was the stone!—a shower of stars, red, blue, green,—then darkness.

79

That was all, till this wonderful awakening to find herself in the ch<sup>^</sup>let of her dreams, among the great mountains themselves. Ah! there they were; close, it seemed, outside the little window. Without moving her head, she saw a green giant towering, and behind him, looking over his shoulder, a white one.

“The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts!”

Certainly Honor’s thoughts were long to-day. Lying there in the narrow bed, they floated back to the wonderful day—was it a week ago, or a month?—when she had, as she solemnly declared to herself, “discovered the mountains.”

80

It all came, curiously enough, from English Literature. The mountains had always been there, but somehow she had taken them for granted, while the four walls of her room held the thrilling drama she enacted with Ang<sup>^</sup>lique and Fiordispina. She could recall the very day when she first came to her mountain world. She was in the garden, studying her English Literature. Soeur S<sup>^</sup>raphine was a great lover of English poetry, and the pupils, French and Anglo-Saxon, must, she maintained, be thoroughly grounded in the language of “*le grand Shekspire et le sublime Meel-ton*.” This was hard on Stephanie, to whom English was, as she expressed it, like throwing all the fire-irons downstairs together. Patricia Desmond, who had a keen sense of the ludicrous, had difficulty sometimes in keeping the twinkle out of her beautiful eyes and the smile from the corners of her perfect mouth, when dear Soeur S<sup>^</sup>raphine, erect as a little gray marionette on the estrade, recited, for example, the “Ancient Mariner”:

81

“Eet ees un ancien marin<sup>^</sup>re,  
And ’e stopess von of sree;  
’By zy longr<sup>^</sup>e birrd and gleetring eye,  
No verefore stopp’st zou me?”

Honor saw nothing funny in it; French-English was as natural to her as the Anglo-Saxon variety; she thrilled with Soeur S<sup>^</sup>raphine, her romantic little soul went forth with the Mariner over the perilous seas; for her as for him, the fair wind blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free.

“Ve vare ze foorst zat evare boorst—”

shrilled Soeur S<sup>^</sup>raphine— “If necessary, Patricia, go, my child!”

For Patricia had flung up an imploring hand and burst into a fit of coughing; she now scuttled (her own word, not mine!) from the room, and gaining the shelter of her own, flung herself on the bed in paroxysms of laughter.

82

Honor did not stir; she was hardly conscious of the interruption. The “silent sea” absorbed her, soul and body.

The “Choix de Po<sup>^</sup>sies Anglaises” contained two other poems by Coleridge, “Kubla Khan” and the “Hymn at Sunrise in the Valley of Chamounix.” Honor already knew the former by heart; she was learning the latter, and had permission to study in the garden. Sitting on the bench under the great pear-tree, she murmured the opening lines over and over, all unconsciously following the familiar pronunciation.

“Hast zou a sharm to stay ze morningstar  
In his stipp courrse?”

She lifted her eyes.

It was not Mont Blanc that towered in the distance across the blue lake, but the *Dent du Midi*, white and austere. It was not the morning star, but Hesperus, that glittered in the rosy sunset light: but these details did not matter. The spirit of the mountains seemed to pass into the child’s heart; it seemed to be herself, not the poet, who was chanting the great Hymn.

83

At first, it was as if she had never seen them before; she could only gaze and wonder. By and by they grew familiar again, but with a difference; they were her friends now, beloved and revered. Soon she began to weave webs of fancy about and about them, as was her way about everything.

The *Dent du Midi* himself was a vast giant; like Atlas, only snow-white, instead of earth-brown as she had always pictured the latter. He was not a king, Mont Blanc was the king, as “Lor’ Birron” told her in the one specimen of his poetry enshrined in the *Choix*. “Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains: they crowned him long ago”; yes, doubtless. But the *Dent* was one of the great princes of his court; held indeed a court of his own, with the *Dent d’Oche* and the *Dent de*

84

*Morche* for his attendant dukes or marquises, and a host of other nobles who wore green robes under their white stoles. Some of these were lady-mountains, Honor loved to think; lovely maidens, with flashing jewels (those were the streams that danced and shone in the sunlight) and delicate trailing robes and veils of mist. They ministered to the Prince, singing to him with their musical voices—the streams again: it was quite simple to change them from jewels to voices—veiling and unveiling their beauty at his pleasure. But in the evening, the great star, Hesperus, who was Venus herself, Madame Madeleine said (which one did not understand, but that did not matter) rose out of the sunset over the Prince's shoulder, kissed him, hovered radiant above him; and then the mountain maidens bowed their heads under their white veils and paid homage to their Queen.

All this Honor had dreamed, sitting there in the garden, when she ought to have been studying.

85

The dream came back to her to-night, with power; it seemed to fill the world. They were not, they could not be, mere masses of earth, these glorious forms towering into the sky. They surely were mighty beings, wrapped in their own deep thoughts, holding their own high converse one with another.

And now, she had come to the mountains. Not only were they her own, but she was theirs. Not a mountain child, like the mighty Twins, or even like Zitli—happy Zitli, who knew no other world than this glorious one; but an adopted child, say! She had come to visit them; they would be kind to her, would accept her love and reverence. It was very wonderful.

The *châlet* stood half way up one of the lesser Alps, on a ledge which jutted out from the green wooded slope. All around were other Alps, some green to the top, others capped or mantled with snow; others again, which seemed to scorn all covering, and towered gaunt and bare, their rocky sides seamed and scarred. These were dead giants, Honor thought. She did not love to look on them, they were too terrifying; she lifted her eyes to the loftiest summit of all, that of the *Dent du Midi* himself, the mighty Prince of her dreams. How glorious he was; how noble!

86

As she lay watching, a glow stole over the brow of the white giant; the green of the nearer ones grew warmer; the sun was going down, and the world was turning to rose and gold. A level shaft flamed through the window and fell on Honor's bed, lighting up the quilt. "Look!" it seemed to say. "This too is wonderful!"

It certainly was; heaviest linen, so covered with embroidery that the groundwork could hardly be seen. All in white; yet with a bewildering variety about it, somehow. Looking closer, Honor saw that it was divided into five compartments, a round one in the centre, the others fitting into it. The centre-piece displayed the sun, moon and stars, beautifully wrought in shining linen. In one of the others were delicate shapes of Alpine flowers, so lovely that one hardly missed the color. Another held ferns and mosses, while a third was covered with birds, in full flight or perched on twig and bough. The fourth—at first Honor thought it was entirely empty, but soon she spied in one corner a bit of work, evidently the beginning of a design. She was puzzling over it when a sudden whiff struck her nostrils, a pungent, aromatic whiff which made her exclaim unconsciously, "Oh, how hungry I am!"

87

"*A la bonne heure!*" Gretli stood beaming in the doorway, carrying a tray; on the tray was a blue bowl, steaming, fragrant. "Behold the soup of Mademoiselle! Our mountain air brings the appetite; cream and onions, with a little of our oldest cheese—behold!"

88

Standing on one side, arms akimbo, the benevolent giantess watched the consumption of the "restorative" soup, and which face was brighter, hers or the consumer's, it would have been hard to say.



“STANDING ON ONE SIDE, ARMS AKIMBO”

## CHAPTER VII

### ZITLI

Honor did not sleep the first part of the night; her ankle was stiff and painful, and she was a little feverish. She had a vision, in the middle of the night, of Gretli, towering like an Alp beside her in a mammoth nightgown, holding a cup to her lips and murmuring, "*Tisane!* to make sleep well. Taste! but taste then, my child!"

Honor tasted, sipped, drank deep of the pleasant cooling draught, herbs and honey and whey mysteriously mingled; then sank back on the pillow. Was it really Gretli or a mountain? The *Dent d'Oche*, come to visit her and accept her homage? Why not? Hesperus came! Mountains—maidens—*tisane*—

The next thing Honor knew the morning sun was shining in on her: not directly in her face, but reflected through the open door in the little mirror opposite the foot of her bed. She sat up, blinking and rubbing her eyes.

"Where am I?" she said again, as she had said the day before; the next moment she knew, for there was Gretli in the doorway, beaming broad and bright as the sun itself. She carried a basin—a very small one—and a towel of homespun damask fit for a duchess.

"It is to wash the face, is it not?" she said. "Before breakfast; such is the custom of the honored Ladies, one is aware."

"Oh, thank you, Gretli! What a pretty towel!"

Gretli beamed broader still. "It is of my trousseau!" she said. "I chose it for mademoiselle, because it is the pattern I like best; observe! the double-basket weave; that is not ugly, *hein?* I spun and wove that when I was of the age of Mademoiselle."

"Your trousseau!" cried Honor. "Are you going to be married, Gretli? Oh, how exciting! Does Madame know? May I tell the girls? Who is he? Is he as handsome as—but he couldn't be!"

"Mademoiselle must not excite herself before breakfast!" said Gretli demurely. "All girls make their trousseau, is it not so? Then if the good God sends a husband, *voilà!* one is not unprepared. Permit that I brush the hair of mademoiselle; the brush is entirely new, a present from my godmother. But, what hair! Verily, it curls like the flames on the hearth. A fire of gold, is it not so?"

"Isn't it horrid?" sighed Honor. "I'd give everything I have in the world to have it black, Gretli!"

Gretli cried out in horror.

"Mademoiselle! the wonderful hair; beautiful enough, with reverence be it said, for the tresses of Ste. Gèneviève herself. But mademoiselle jests, of a surety. She is doubtless thankful, as she surely ought to be, for this gift of the good God, which might be desired by queens. *Voilà!* Mademoiselle is tidiness itself; a little moment, and I bring her breakfast!"

What a breakfast that was! *Café-au-lait*, a whole bowl of it, smoking, fragrant, delicious; crisp rolls, fresh butter, honey and cream, and a little tea-rose-colored egg, which Gretli declared the youngest pullet had laid on purpose not half an hour before. All this neatly arranged on a wooden tray so beautifully carved that Honor cried out at sight of it. Gretli glowed responsive.

"Zitli's work!" she said proudly. "It took the prize at the carvers' exhibition last year; in the department of young persons, be it understood. He was offered much money for it, but no! it was for me, he said, the good child! I value it highly, mademoiselle."

"I should think so!" said Honor. "Why, I never saw anything so lovely. What are the flowers?"

"*Edelweiss* and *alpenrosen*; they are my flowers. But now let mademoiselle eat, lest her breakfast cool! I return shortly."

Honor ate her breakfast with right good will, enjoying every mouthful as a healthy girl should. Between bites and sups, she exchanged morning greetings with the mountains, which showed as friendly a face as the night before, though no rosy veil softened their morning splendor of white and green.

"Did you bring me the *tisane* last night, Royal Highness?" said Honor. "Or was it really Gretli? She looked quite as big, you know! Are any of your mountain ladies as handsome as she is? Wouldn't they look funny in blue skirts and black bodices? How many yards do you suppose it would take—"



A light cloud-shadow drifted over the shining face of the *Dent du Midi*; it was as if he said, "Don't talk nonsense, child!"

Honor accepted the rebuke, and devoted herself to her honey and rolls.

94

By and by came Gretli again to inspect the ankle. It was better, but still swollen and painful. After examining it carefully, the good giantess vanished, and presently reappeared, carrying carefully a glass bowl in which were two black objects about two inches long. At first sight Honor thought they were stones or bits of black wood: but looking carefully at them, she saw one move.

"Gretli!" she cried. "They are alive! What hideous, horrible creatures! Take them away, please!"

"In truth they are alive!" Gretli nodded contentedly. "Have no fear of them, Mademoiselle. They are good creatures, and understand their business well. See how your ankle is swollen, is it not? I apply my good little *sangsue* (leech), and in a few moments—but mademoiselle will see!" and without more ado she clapped first one leech and then the other on the offending ankle.

95

Honor shrieked aloud at the touch of the cold, clammy creatures; shrieked louder still when they applied themselves, in a quiet but efficient way, to the work in hand. The two shrieks rent the air; startled the browsing goats outside, brought Zitli to his feet in the outer room, to see what was the matter. Looking up, in the act of opening her mouth for a third, Honor saw Gretli's face of demure amazement, and stopped short.

"Why—why do you look at me like that?" she faltered. "They *are* horrible and disgusting, and they hurt me! I never heard of anything so dreadful!"

"Is it so?" Gretli spoke gravely. "Mademoiselle is young. There are many things more dreadful than a *sangsue*, which was made by the Divine Hand, and given for the use of man. Mademoiselle observes that we live upon a mountain, where physicians do not abound; thus, we employ the remedies that Nature imparted to our fathers, and are thankful. To the *montagnard*, the *sangsue* is a good friend. Zitli went before daybreak to the little pond to bring these fresh and lively for mademoiselle."

96

Honor blushed scarlet, and hung her head.

"I am sorry!" she murmured. "It—it was very kind of Zitli. Don't tell him, please, Gretli! I am so ashamed!"

"Assuredly, no!" Gretli was her own beaming self again; a slight shake of her head as she glanced toward the door warned Zitli to make no sound; he vanished silently.

"Friend *sangsue* is not beautiful!" she admitted cheerfully. "Also, he surprised mademoiselle. I should have explained in advance—but in that case mademoiselle might not have permitted; so all is well, and now I remove these gentlemen, who have breakfasted to heart's content—*voilà!* Back to your bowl, messieurs! Now a little massage, and we shall see!"

97

Wonderful massage that, with the strong, supple fingers! The pain seemed to melt away under them. When it was over, and the ankle firmly bound in bandages of strong homespun linen (no "gauze" in mountain *châlets!*) Honor declared it felt almost entirely well.

"I believe I could walk on it! May I try, Gretli?"

"On no account, Mademoiselle! It is great happiness to have relieved you of the pain, but for strength, time and patience are required. It will be several days before mademoiselle can stand on that foot; meantime—behold her conveyance."

She held out her massive brown arms with a delightful smile. Ten minutes later, Honor was reclining, well propped with pillows, on the seat that ran the length of the broad window in the living room. Her lame ankle, swathed in its bandages, contrasted oddly with her other foot in its stout little walking shoe. Honor had pretty feet. Stephanie admired them greatly (her own feet being large and flat) and was constantly praising them. Soeur Séraphine heard her one day, and said gravely that both girls should be simply thankful that their feet were not deformed.

98

"It would have been fully as easy for the good God to give you club feet," she reminded them, "and it is through no merit of yours that this was not ordained. If a foot is good to walk on, that is all we should ask of it."

The Sister walked away up the *allée*. Stephanie, shrugging her shoulders, pointed at the footprint she left on the white sand.

"But regard!" she murmured. "It is well for the Sister to speak; her foot was considered the most beautiful in Paris, my mother has told me so."

Honor was glad Stephanie could not see her foot now; the next moment she forgot all about it.

99

The broad window looked out upon the green in front of the *châlet*, a shelf, as it were, of the mountain, which fell steeply away below it, and rose no less steeply behind. There was just room

for the buildings (the ch<sup>^</sup>let, the cowhouse and various small outbuildings), and for this pleasant green space. The grass was short and close as turf, though no lawn mower had ever touched it. The goats attended to that; here they were now, nibbling busily away, as if they had no time to spare. In the middle of the green sat Zitli, on a low stool, milking one of the she-goats. His crutch lay on the grass beside him; he was whistling gayly, and looked bright as the morning. Presently Honor, watching, saw him give a quick little glance over his shoulder, and then very quietly take a crutch in one hand, while he went on milking with the other. Following his glance, Honor was aware of Bimbo, standing a few paces in the rear of Zitli, his beautiful head thrown back, his eyes measuring the distance between him and the boy. Now he cast a wary glance around him; nibbled grass for a moment with an air of elaborate detachment; then dropping his head swiftly, he sprang forward like arrow from the bow.

Whack! the crutch caught him full on the muzzle: he rolled over with a shrill bleat of amazement, rage and pain.

Honor clapped her hands in delight.

"Hurrah!" she shouted.

Zitli looked up and laughed back at her.

"*Bon jour*, mademoiselle!" he cried, waving his victorious crutch. "He has his breakfast, that one, not so?"

"Look out, Zitli!" cried Honor. "There comes S<sup>^</sup>raphine, on the other side!"

She-goats do not butt; nevertheless, S<sup>^</sup>raphine, sidling quietly up, evidently meant mischief. She stretched her neck toward the brimming pail; another moment, and—*whack!* the crutch caught her too, and she retired shaking her head violently.

"What possesses the creatures?" cried Honor.

"The pixies are riding them, mademoiselle!" replied Zitli. "*Oh<sup>^</sup>*, Gretli! the pail is full, and the creatures are ridden."

Gretli came hastening out to lift the heavy pail, and scold the unruly goats, which scattered in every direction at sight of her; some up the mountain, some down, away they went, leaping from stone to stone, till not one was to be seen save old Moufflon, standing on a point of rock and gravely bleating reproof to his troublesome flock.

Zitli followed Gretli into the house, and while she disappeared into the dairy, he came and sat down by Honor's window-seat. He hoped mademoiselle had slept well; pain, that was not agreeable, no indeed. He rejoiced to hear that it was nearly gone this morning.

"Are the goats always so mischievous, Zitli?" asked Honor.

"Not always! often, yes; but I hold it not wholly the fault of the creatures. To-day, for example, they are pixy-ridden, that sees itself easily."

"What *do* you mean, Zitli?"

"Mademoiselle knows about the pixies? No? True, they are of the mountains; in cities, one hears, they are not known, but here—yes, indeed! They are like men, only small, small, and full of mischief. At times, they are visible to mortals, at others not; it is as they please. Mademoiselle permits that I bring my work-bench, yes? Like that, I can talk better; that is, if mademoiselle would care to hear?"

Seeing Honor all eagerness, he hobbled across the room, and returned, pushing before him a small table covered with bits of wood and carving tools.

"Like that!" he repeated, settling himself, and taking up his work. "While the hands work, the tongue may play; if it speaks no evil!" added the boy, crossing himself gravely.

"Tell me about the pixies!" cried Honor. "Did you ever see one, Zitli?"

Zitli glanced toward the dairy.

"The sister holds it not well to speak of them," he said uneasily; "but so long as one says no harm—Brother Atli thinks it was a dwarf I saw, mademoiselle, a mortal being, only small, like a tiny child. There are such, he says, and all he says is true. Nevertheless—" he paused.

"Nevertheless? Do go on, Zitli!"

"He was *very* small!" Zitli spoke in a half-whisper. "Smaller than any child I ever saw; and he wore a green coat. Mademoiselle can judge for herself. Certain it is that he had a bag full of money, hung from his belt. There was a hole in it, and some coins had fallen out, gold and silver pieces. There they lay in the road, and he all unknowing. I called to him, and he turned and gave me a look of anger truly frightful. I began to pick up the coins, and brought them to him as

quickly as I could; then, quite suddenly, his look changed. He thanked me as a father might, and gave me—look, mademoiselle!”

He drew from under his shirt a small bag that hung round his neck, and opening it, displayed a gold coin.

“Oh, Zitli, how wonderful!” cried Honor. “And you think—you really think he was a pixy? May I look? Oh! but—but this is a real coin, isn’t it? A ten-florin piece. Would a pixy have that, do you think, Zitli?”

Zitli nodded thrice, gravely. “Mademoiselle,” he said, “those people can have what they like—or the appearance of it. Never while I live will I spend this gold; and—mademoiselle may think this strange, but it is true—since I have had it my back has given me no pain; but none at all, compared with former times. It is true, as my sister says, that the doctor at Lucerne gave also some help; yes, I am not ungrateful to him; but—” he nodded several times, gravely, as he replaced the bag around his neck.

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“Are they often seen?” queried Honor. “Could—do you suppose a girl could see them, Zitli?”

“But assuredly! indeed, some hold that they are kinder to maidens than to men. There is the story of Magdalen of Pilatus. Mademoiselle has never heard that? She lived at the foot of that dreadful mountain—” Zitli crossed himself again—“and she was a good girl, and beautiful, but very poor. Higher up on the mountain lived her mother’s cousin Klaus, and he was very rich, and his gold, men said, come by in no honest way, but of that I know nothing. Once the mother fell sick, and felt a longing for a certain kind of cheese, which they were too poor to buy. Magdalen went to the rich Klaus, and asked for a piece of this cheese, of which it was known that he possessed a large store, but he would not give her so much as would lie on the point of a pin, and drove her away with cruel words. Then she went to her betrothed, Alois, a good youth, but little richer than herself. He gave her what cheese he had; but as she was returning home down the mountain, her foot slipped, and she dropped the cheese, which rolled down the precipice and was lost. Magdalen sat down and wept bitterly; as she wept, she felt a pull at her sleeve, and looking up, lo! there was a little green man with a long beard and a cheese on his shoulder. In his hand he held a green plant, and he bade Magdalen give over her weeping.

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“‘Take this plant,’ he said, ‘and make of it a *tisane* for your mother; it will cure her of her sickness. As for cheese, here is one that will do instead of that you lost!’

“He then disappeared like a mist of night. Magdalen hastened home and made the *tisane* and gave it to her mother, who recovered her health at once. And when they cut open the cheese, mademoiselle, it was all pure gold within. So they became rich, and Magdalen and Alois were married, and bought many fine pastures and cows, and became the happiest couple in Switzerland. But from that day the wicked Klaus began to lose his riches, and at last he died a beggar whom Magdalen fed out of her bounty.”

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MOUNTAIN FIRESIDE

Honor will never forget as long as she lives the next evening at the *Châlet des Rochers*. Indeed, every hour she spent there was a life-long treasure of memory, but that evening was perhaps the most wonderful.

To begin with, Atli came. At five o'clock the farmyard dog, a huge St. Bernard, began to bark; deep, regular barks, like the booming of distant cannon. Zitli looked up from his carving, Gretli turned from her frying-pan; both faces were bright with a look which, Honor was to find out, meant always one thing.

"Atli comes!" said the boy.

"Is that why the dog barks?" asked Honor. "Can he see him?"

Gretli laughed. "Not so, mademoiselle! Probably Atli has set his foot on a stone at the bottom of the Alp; possibly there has been no sound at all, and Tell knows because he knows, all simply. Soon you will hear the goats; they have less intelligence, you understand."

Sure enough, a few minutes later came bleatings, at first faint and scattered, then gathering in strength and volume, till at last the whole herd, Bimbo leading, Moufflon bringing up the rear, came scampering over the rocks and formed in an eager huddle on the greensward, facing the climbing path. Again a few minutes, and an object appeared, at sight of which a perfect chorus of bleats broke out, while the barking of Tell grew louder and more eager. First the top, then the whole, of a green pointed hat; then a brown, ruddy, smiling face; then a pair of massive shoulders; finally the whole (which means a great deal) of Atli.

"Atli comes!" repeated the brother and sister in happy duet, and both hastened out, with a glance of smiling apology at the young guest who could not follow, could only gaze with all her eyes from her window, could only thrill through all her being at the really splendid vision of the young giant. It was as if one of her mountains had taken human shape and come a-visiting; only, no mountain could look so friendly or smile so kindly. She could hear the eager questions, the gay laughing answers. Had all gone well? Was the clover sufficient? Were the children content with the pasture?

"My faith, yes! they might well be. The clover is thick as—as thy hair, my Gretli! Not one of them but desired two mouths that she might eat the faster."

"La Dumaine led the way well? But why do I ask? Surely she did!"

Atli nodded emphatically.

"She is a queen indeed! There is no such leader in these Alps. Once only that one—" a jerk of the head conveyed, somehow, one could not tell how, that "that one" was the Duchess of Montbazou—"tried to push ahead, and got a thrust in the side from our Queen's horn that sent her back roaring, I promise you. *Saperli poppette!* in the home yard La Dumaine is the *gentille demoiselle*, see you; on the Alp she is General as well as Queen."

"And thou hast left Jean and François in charge? Didst sleep in the hut? All was well?"

"All well, my sister! except—I have brought the appetite of a wolf! But who is that at the window? *Tiens!* the little mademoiselle with golden hair! How then, my sister?"

"Zitli will tell you!" cried Gretli. "I must prepare supper on the instant. Hast had nothing, I'll warrant, for a day and a half, but bread and cheese, and I stand here chattering!"

She hurried in. Zitli told in eager detail, with many gestures, the story of Bimbo's assault and its consequences, and Atli hastened to greet Honor and to express his sympathy and regret.

"That nefarious beast! he should be sewed in his own skin turned inside out. But what would you, mademoiselle? A goat, that has no moral sense. The good God, in making this beast, omitted it, for reasons known only to Himself. I am desolated; yet I trust mademoiselle is not too uncomfortable? What honor for the *Châlet des Rochers* to receive such a guest! Be still, creatures! I come!" This to the goats, who were bleating and leaping about him, making soft runs and butts against his columnar legs. "A moment, my sister, while I feed the creatures and greet our Tell, who barks his head off in calling me; then I come, a wolf indeed!"

The table was drawn up beside Honor's window-seat, that she might join the family party. Gretli laid the plates of heavy dark green crockery, and the carved wooden cups, Zitli's

handiwork, as she proudly explained. There were sausages for supper, and ham, black bread and cheese, with honey and cream and *biscuits des Rochers* for dessert. No great variety is to be looked for in a Swiss *châlet*, but everything was so good, Honor thought she would never ask for anything different.

They supped by daylight; but by-and-by, when the sunset glory faded and the air grew cold and thin, doors and windows were shut, the big lamp lighted, and the evening began in earnest. First, Honor must be moved nearer the fire, Atli and Gretli declared. The reclining chair that Atli had made when Zitli was so ill, and had to lie extended like a piece of wood; was it not so, Zitli? Let Atli bring it from the shed; like that! Now carefully—ah, but carefully! in manner not to disturb a bird upon the nest.

Honor felt “like a small bit of thistledown,” she told Stephanie afterward, in those powerful arms. Atli took her gently by the shoulders, Gretli by the feet; she was wafted across the room, and deposited in the cushioned chair beside the glowing hearth. Ah! for example! that was as it should be, said Gretli, beaming broadly. Atli nodded approval, and hoped mademoiselle found herself not too badly off.

“Oh, but it is delightful,” cried Honor. “So comfortable! and really, I feel perfectly well—*oh!*” She had moved her foot, and was promptly reminded that however the rest of her might feel, her ankle had its own sensations. Then what sympathy was showered upon her! Mademoiselle was of a delicacy! Gretli explained. Like that, the nerves were sensitive, one understood. Let her, Gretli, but rub the ankle a little, *n’est-ce-pas?* Honor protesting it was all right again, truly, *truly*, Gretli announced that in that case a little diversion was what was needed.

“A little music, is not so? Zitli, bring thy zither! I have some yarn to wind, and Atli and I will sing to thy playing.”

“Oh, let me hold the yarn!” cried Honor. “Mayn’t I, Gretli?”

So Honor held the blue yarn, and Gretli wound mightily, her strong brown arms moving with machine-like regularity. Atli brought his own work-bench, and fell to shaping wooden shoes; while Zitli tuned his zither. Presently he struck a chord, nodding to his brother. The shepherd threw back his head, opened his mouth wide, and poured forth in a rich and mellow tenor a ditty which, roughly translated, might run thus:

“On the Alp the grass is sweetest,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!  
Thou whose beauty is completest,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!  
Crop thy fill of honey clover,  
Crop and crop it o’er and over,  
On the Alp thou fairest rover,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!”

Atli closed his powerful jaws with a snap on the last word, and Gretli took up the song, her rich, deep contralto ringing out nobly.

“I will follow at thy calling,  
O my master dear!  
Where the mountain streams are falling,  
O my master dear!  
Follow past the rushing torrent,  
Past the precipice abhorrent,  
Trusting in thy faithful warrant,  
O my master dear!”

In the third verse the two voices blended, Zitli adding, in a sweet clear treble, a *yodel* with no articulate words, only a melodious combination of vowels.

“Follow Queen and follow Master,  
Cows and heifers all!  
Fear no trouble nor disaster,  
Cows and heifers all!  
On the Alp is richest feeding,  
Thither then with cautious heeding,  
Follow where the Queen is leading,  
Cows and heifers all!”

The words were mere doggerel, the air simple and primitive, but somehow the effect was magical. Honor felt the very spirit of the place enter into her. It was good to be here! If she might

only stay always! Why not? She was a poor orphan, with no kin that she had ever seen; she could not stay in school all her life. What more delightful than to become a *sennerin* of the Alps? To live here, with the Twins and Zitli: to learn to spin and weave, to make butter and cheese. She would be their little sister; it would be heavenly!

Honor glanced up shyly under her long eyelashes at Atli where he sat opposite her. How splendid he was! Just so, and no otherwise, must Hercules have looked; or Roland, or Lancelot—no, Lancelot's hair was black! Siegfried, then! or Baldur the Beautiful! Yes, that was best; if only Baldur were a prettier name—it made one think of baldness, and his hair was so wonderful. She glanced again: Atli was intent on his shoemaking. The firelight played on his crisp yellow curls, turning them to threads of gold; on his broad white forehead, his brown cheeks, his massive yet shapely arms and hands. Truly, a splendid figure of a man. Honor's heart fluttered a little, as fourteen-year-old hearts will flutter. If—if only she had dark hair! if some day—

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Half consciously she dropped into her story, neglected now these many days; began "telling" to herself, while the yarn flew over her hands, and the fire glowed and crackled.

"While yet little more than a child I met him who was thenceforth to dominate my life. It was among the Alps, in a simple *châlet*, humble, yet more delightful than many a turreted castle I have seen. Around were all the glories of Nature (and then I can put in a description of the sunset last night, you know), and he was like his own mountains, rugged and grand and glorious. He was my opposite in every way, though our souls were alike. (Here followed an accurate description of Atli.) Something in me—it may have been my night-black tresses and starry eyes—attracted him. He turned his flashing glance upon me—"

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At this moment Atli looked up and his eyes met Honor's. They did not flash, but they were very pleasant and friendly.

"Perhaps mademoiselle will sing for us!" he said; "a song of her great country, is it not so? Last summer I guided an American Monsieur over the Weisshorn, and he sang a song of America. How was it, then? 'I-an-kidoodel?' Mademoiselle is acquainted with that song?"

Honor laughed outright; dreams and story—for she was really a sensible child when not dreaming—flew up the chimney.

"'Yankee Doodle!' oh, yes!" she cried. "I know that; Papa taught me, and some others too."

She sang "Yankee Doodle" in a very sweet, fresh voice, and the Twins—I was going to say "cooed," but "mooed" would be more like it—with pleasure, and demanded more. So she gave them the "Suwanee River" and "America," to their great delight. The first, Gretli declared, melted the heart to softness, while the latter—

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"That elevates the soul, *hein?* The blood stirs, as at the sound of a trumpet. But mademoiselle must not fatigue herself. A glass of buttermilk, is it not so? Behold that I bring it, on the instant, cool, cool, from the stream!"

She brought it, and stood over Honor with smiling authority.

"Every drop!" she commanded. "It is stomachic, mademoiselle understands, and nourishing as well. Now mademoiselle shall rest, and Zitli shall tell us a story, since it is not yet bed time. Or is mademoiselle weary? On the instant I transport her—"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Honor. "A story, please! I am not one scrap sleepy."

"At the good hour! Attend, Zitli, till I bring my knitting! Behold, thy table! Thou talkest always best with thy tools in hand, not so? *Voilà!* proceed then, my son!"

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Zitli, with frowning brow, pondered, taking up one tool and then another, examining them minutely and laying them aside. Finally, he found one to his mind; selected a bit of wood with like care, and fell to work.

"Shall it be of Pilatus?" he asked; and went on without waiting for reply. "Pilatus, as mademoiselle knows well, is far over yonder!" He nodded toward the northeast. "We cannot see it from here, but from the *Dent du Midi* it sees itself plainly. That mountain is always wrapped in clouds, and these clouds are sent, some say, by the other mountains round about, because they do not wish to see a place of such shame and sorrow; but others claim that the mountain himself grieves for the curse put upon him, and veils his face because of it. Which of these sayings, if either, is true, is not known to me. There—*plâit-il, mademoiselle?*"

Honor had looked up with such evident inquiry in her eyes that the boy stopped.

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"I didn't mean to interrupt," she said, "I only wondered—what is the curse, Zitli?"

Atli and Gretli were too polite to look their astonishment, but Zitli was younger; besides, he was a story-teller.

"Mademoiselle does not know?" he cried. "In America, one is ignorant of that? *Tenez*, that is something of the remarkable. That mountain, mademoiselle, is accursed and has ever been so.

After the death of the Saviour of Mankind—" the three crossed themselves devoutly—"Pontius Pilatus, the wicked Governor of Jerusalem, found himself so ill at ease because of the sin and remorse that was in him that he took flight from the Holy Land, and tried to hide himself, now here, now there. But everywhere he was driven out with maledictions, until he came to our beloved country, where, do you see, there were not many people in those days, and all honest Christians attending to their own affairs and minding their flocks and herds as Christians should. So no one saw that accursed one, and he took refuge on that mountain and there he has been ever since. He cannot die, because neither Heaven nor Hell will receive him. He wanders about the mountain, and wherever he goes the green herb withers and the leaves of the trees shrivel and drop off. The mountain groans and would fain be rid of him. Now it lets fall an avalanche, hoping to bury him fathoms deep and so make an end; but the snow falls away from him on either side and leaves him bare. Now it gathers a thunderstorm and tries to strike him dead with lightning bolts, but all in vain; he opens his breast, inviting death; the bolt turns aside and will not touch him. Often has he tried to drown himself in the gloomy lake on the top of the mountain, but the waves rise and cast him on shore. So he lives, accursed of God and man."

"It is an ancient legend!" said Atli quietly. "What would you? In the course of centuries, many things come to be believed. It is certain that Pilatus is a stormy mountain, but that may come from many causes."

"But when people have seen him!" cried Zitli, his blue eyes flashing. "When he is seen by mortal men, my brother!"

"Ah! if he is seen, that is another matter. Hast thou seen him, for example, my little one?"

The giant spoke kindly, but there was evident amusement in his tone. Zitli blushed deeply.

"Not I myself," he admitted; "but when I was over there—thou knowest, at the hospital in Lucerne—I heard of those who had seen him. The uncle of one of the nurses—look! one of his goats strayed from the flock and wandered on to the lower slope of that mountain, to the westward. The shepherd went in search of the creature, greatly fearing, but what would you? It was his duty! As he searched, suddenly from the wood stepped out a man, old, old, wearing a red robe of strange fashion, and with a terrible look spoke to the shepherd."

"Oh!" cried Honor. "Oh, Zitli, how thrilling! What did he say?"

"He spoke in a strange tongue! No word of it was to be understood."

"And—did he look like a Roman?"

Zitli shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands abroad with a quaint gesture. "Can I tell, mademoiselle? I never saw a Roman, nor, we may suppose, did the shepherd. He looked, that one said, like Uncle Kissel."

Gretli gave a little murmur of deprecation; Honor pressed on, all eagerness.

"Who is Uncle Kissel?"

"He is an old miser, mean and hateful, and ugly as sin—"

Zitli stopped short. Atli had laid down his tools, Gretli her knitting; both were looking at him very gravely. The blood rushed into the boy's face, and his eyes dropped.

"I—I ask your pardon, brother and sister!" he said. "I forgot!"

Atli spoke, more sternly than Honor had thought he could speak.

"Uncle Kissel is a man of honesty and probity. He has never robbed or cheated any man."

"He wastes nothing upon luxuries!" Gretli added; her tone, though gentler, was still one of distinct rebuke. "His fare is that of a hermit, and hermits are holy men."

A silence followed. The Twins continued to look at Zitli, but their look was now one of expectation. It was evident that they waited for him to speak. But Zitli's brow was clouded, and a dogged look crept over his thin, intelligent face. Honor looked from one to the other in wonder, but dared not break the silence.

"Come, my little one!" said Gretli, presently, in an encouraging tone. "A word, is it not so? We wait, thy brother and I. Thou art not wont to make us wait, Zitli."

"There is nothing more to say!" muttered Zitli sullenly. "You have said all there was."

The silence fell again: Honor began to be frightened. What was going to happen? The Twins sat like two mighty statues, grave, austere, expectant. Zitli sat looking at his tools, the picture of mute obstinacy. The clock ticked on the wall. There was no other sound.

Suddenly, from nowhere, as it seemed, a cat appeared, leaped lightly up on Zitli's table, proceeded to turn round and round, purring loudly, finally curled herself up in a gray ball among

the tools and went to sleep. At first sight of the creature, the boy's face relaxed. He bent over her, caressing, murmuring words of affection, then suddenly he looked up, and his own sunny smile broke out.

"He has a cat!" he announced. "Uncle Kissel has a cat, and he feeds her; I saw him one day. Will that do, Brother and Sister?"

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Gretli was her own beaming self again; she threw an appealing glance at Atli, and met one equally benign.

"Kindness to animals!" she cried. "That is a virtue, if you will. All is now well, little one beloved; thy word is the best of the three. And now," she added, rising, "it is thy bed-time, Zitli, and also Mademoiselle Honor must seek rest. Let us thank the all-merciful Father for another day!"

The three knelt down, while Honor, forbidden by a gesture to move, bowed her head; Atli gave thanks as simply and heartily as if the Father he adored were present in mortal guise; in the silence that followed, Honor felt her heart lifted higher than it had ever been before.

A little later, while rubbing her ankle, Gretli explained to Honor. Mademoiselle did not wholly understand, was it not so? That was but natural; it was a matter of family, did she see? It was a rule of their beloved mother, now with the saints, that if any ill were spoken of a person, it must be followed by some good.

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"As is but just!" Gretli nodded emphatically, rubbing away methodically. "'We are compact of good and evil,' the mother would say, 'no human creature but has something of both. Since the good God made us, there must be more of good than of evil, yet it often chances that we see the evil first, because it thrusts itself forth, like a loose stone on a slippery Alp, hoping to do mischief; thus, it is our duty at once to look for the good.' Thus said our sainted mother; and thus it is our custom to allow no evil to be spoken of any person without a good word being added by each one of the family."

"It is a beautiful custom!" said Honor. "I shall try to remember that, Gretli, all my life."

Gretli's smile was radiant as she tucked the blankets in around Honor's shoulders.

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"Mademoiselle Honor would never speak evil of any one, it is most probable!" she said. "Yet to any of us—since we are mortal,—that may arrive. Our Zitli, for example; it is rarely—oh, but very rarely—that he has any such trouble as to-night. He is not strong, do you see, mademoiselle, and—at Lucerne—there are things that—that it is better to forget!" she concluded cheerfully. "Since now he is so well, and suffers seldom and little by comparison, all that is gone. 'Look not mournfully into the past, it returns not!'—that is well said, not so? Good-night, my little *demoiselle*! Sleep well, and all saints have you in their holy keeping!"



## CHAPTER IX

### STORY-TELLING

The next day was so beautiful, and Honor's ankle was so much better, that Gretli declared she must not stay in the house. The reclining chair was brought out on the green plot, and there Honor was established, an improvised awning (two sticks and a counterpane) over her head, a table beside her, a piece of knitting to occupy her hands. Here she was spending the happiest of mornings, Zitli on one side, with his table and tools, on the other William Tell, who had been introduced to her only that morning, but who was already her faithful friend and—I was going to say "slave," but there was nothing servile about Tell. He happened to have four legs and a tail, and he had not learned articulate speech; otherwise, he was a gentleman and a scholar—in various lines neglected in most schools.

Gretli came out from the *châlet*, with her inevitable tray; it was time for *goûter*, she announced; a glass of buttermilk, a fresh roll, a bit of cheese. Like that, mademoiselle would not grow thin, was it not so?

"Indeed, Gretli, I shall grow fat!" cried Honor. "So fat that I can't move, and shall have to stay here always. Wouldn't that be lovely? How I wish I could!"

Gretli, arms akimbo, watching with satisfaction every mouthful Honor took, glowed responsive. For example! that would be a pleasure indeed for them; the honored Ladies, it was to be feared, would regard the matter differently. Ah! pardon! mademoiselle must not do that! unless the cheese was not to her taste?

Honor looked up wondering. "It is delicious!" she said. "I was only taking out these green spots, Gretli."

"But—a thousand pardons, Mademoiselle Honor! The green spots, that is the best part of the cheese. He is an old one, you understand; ripe, but of a ripeness! I chose him with peculiar care, that mademoiselle might note the rich flavor that comes with age. With cheese as with man, my sainted mother used to say, the time of ripeness should be the best of life. Taste, then! but taste the green spot, mademoiselle! *n'est-ce pas?* Am I not right?"

Honor tasted the green cheese; gingerly at first, then with confidence, finally with eagerness.

"And I have always cut it out!" she lamented. "Why did no one ever tell me before? It is the best part, of course!"

"Mademoiselle resembles the good Emperor!" said Zitli, looking up with a smile.

"For example! of a surety!" exclaimed Gretli. "Tell her that, Zitli. I have to prepare the *soupe*." She vanished into the house.

"What *do* you mean, Zitli?" asked Honor. "Why am I like an emperor, and how? And what emperor?"

"The Emperor Charlemagne; who else? That great and good prince was fond of cheese, as was natural in a person of taste. There is an old story that traveling once through our beloved country, he came to the dwelling of a certain bishop and there took shelter for the night. The day was Friday; the good bishop was poor, the sea far off. Briefly, he had no fish. He served for the emperor's supper some poor fry of vegetables, and a piece of old cheese, with bread of the country, and good whey. The emperor, being in royal appetite, hurled himself, as one might say, upon the cheese, but seeing green spots in it, began even as mademoiselle just now, to pick them out with his knife. Thereupon the bishop, like our Gretli, made respectful protest, telling his sovereign that he was discarding the best part; like mademoiselle again, Charlemagne tasted and found this to be the case. Thereupon he commanded the bishop to send him yearly, at his palace of Aix-la-Chapelle, two cases of cheese of that same kind. 'And be sure that all have green spots!' said the emperor.

"'But, Majesty,' the bishop protested, 'how can I do that? It is only when a cheese is cut open that one can tell whether it has green spots or not!'"

"'Nothing is easier,' replied the emperor, who saw an obstacle only to overcome it. 'Cut every cheese in two! When one has green spots, lay the two halves together, pack them up, and send them to me!'"

"The amiable sovereign! a good cheese was to him the finest of all feasts."

"Oh, splendid!" cried Honor. "Do you know any more stories about Charlemagne? He is one of

my favorite heroes.”

The boy’s face kindled, his eyes flashed.

“Of mine also!” he cried. “So great a king, mademoiselle! so brave, so wise!”

“So kind and generous!”

“And so—*tenez!* ready always to laugh. He could conquer with a sword or a smile, as he would, is it not so? Mademoiselle knows the story of the mouse? No? Ah! that is a good one. There was a certain bishop, very different from that good poor prelate of the cheese. This one was vain and greedy, loving fine things, and caring more to feed his own stomach than the souls of his people. The good emperor marked this, and laid his plans accordingly. He called to him a certain Jewish merchant, who traded in rare and costly objects. ‘Take,’ he said, ‘a mouse alive in a trap; paint it all over with lively colors; then go to that bishop and offer it for sale, saying you have brought it from far Judea.’

“The Jew obeyed the royal command. The bishop at sight of the painted mouse was filled with joy, and offered three silver pounds for it; but the Jew replied he would rather throw it into the sea than sell it for such a price. The bishop then offered ten pounds, but no! then twenty; all in vain. The merchant made no further answer, but wrapping his mouse tenderly in a precious silk, turned his back to depart.

“‘Come back!’ cried the bishop. ‘I must have this rare creature! Leave him with me and you shall have a full bushel of silver!’

“To that the merchant agreed, and leaving the bishop enchanted with his mouse, took the money to the emperor, who rewarded him suitably for his service. Then Charlemagne sent for all the bishops and priests of the province, among them the vain and greedy one, and laid the matter open before them. ‘My bishops and pastors,’ said the emperor, ‘you are supposed to minister to the poor, not to expend the revenues of your office upon vain and foolish things; yet there is one among you who has paid to a Jew more silver than would feed many worthy families, and that for no precious object, but for a common mouse painted divers colors.’

“Upon that, the guilty bishop fell at his feet, confessing his sin and praying for pardon, which the gentle emperor gave him, suffering him to depart without further punishment.”

Honor laughed heartily. “I think perhaps he had enough!” she said. “He must have been laughed at all the rest of his life. Do you suppose they called him the mouse-bishop? Oh no! that was Bishop Hatto, the dreadful one, you know, in the Mouse Tower on the Rhine. That story always frightens me, doesn’t it you, Zitli?”

But Zitli, who knew so many stories and legends, had never heard that one. So then Honor must tell the fearful tale of Hatto, archbishop of Mentz; how when the grain harvest was blighted and the starving people cried to him for food, knowing his granaries to be well-filled, he summoned them to his great barn to receive a dole, and then shut them up and burned them to death.

“And then—” Honor’s eyes deepened till they were almost the black she sighed for, “the wicked bishop laughed, and said it was a good bonfire; he went laughing to bed, and slept as if nothing had happened. But—Zitli, next morning, when he came to where his own portrait hung, he turned pale, for *the rats had eaten it out of its frame!*”

“My faith!” cried Zitli. “For example! that was well done of them. And what happened then, mademoiselle?”

“Oh, his people came running, one by one, and told him dreadful things: first, that the rats had broken into his granaries and eaten all the corn; then that a great army of rats was coming, coming, nearer and nearer. When Bishop Hatto heard that, he fled away, to a strong tower he had, on a little island in the Rhine. It is there still, Zitli, think of it! Madame Madeleine has seen it. Of course it is ruined, but—well, the tower was very strong and he shut himself up in it, and barred all the doors and windows, and there he stayed, trembling and saying his prayers.”

“*Saperli poppette!* fine prayers those must have been!” said Zitli. “As if the good God had no knowledge, *hein?* Proceed, Mademoiselle, I beg of you!”

“They swam across the Rhine; they climbed up to the tower; he heard their sharp teeth gnawing, gnawing at the woodwork; they seemed even to gnaw at the stones; and nothing could stop them! They gnawed their way through, and they swarmed up the stairs, and there was the wicked bishop, and they ate him *all up!* Did you ever hear of anything so dreadful?”

“For example!” said Zitli in a tone of great satisfaction. “Bravo, Brother Rats! That was well done indeed. Good appetite to you!”

“But, Zitli!” Honor was shuddering even while she told the ancient tale that has existed in many forms, in many lands, for hundreds of years. “It is *terrible!* How can you laugh?”

"*Saperli!* I can laugh well. He was rightly served, that one. To burn up people like straw, did he deserve better? No, my faith! I am all for Brother Rats, mademoiselle. And in these ancient things," added the boy with sudden gravity, "we see the finger of God, is it not so? If we would trust more in Him, it would be better for us, as my sister says. He for the great things, we for the little ones. As my grandfather in Botzen—Ste. Gêneviève have him in her holy keeping—inscribed over the door of his shop:

"I trust in God, and let Him reign;  
I make new files, and mend the old again."

"Is Ste. Gêneviève your patron, Zitli?"

"Assuredly, mademoiselle! that holy saint was a shepherdess, you understand. It is true that we have chiefly cattle and goats, and only a few sheep, which besides are stupid creatures. A goat is at least amusing, if he has no conscience, as my brother says. But since there is no sainted goatherd in our knowledge, we commend ourselves to the protection of the holy Gêneviève."

"I thought she became a nun before she was seven!" said Honor, thoughtfully. "Could she have been a shepherdess before that, do you think, Zitli?"

"With the blessed saints," replied Zitli gravely, "many things are possible which would be difficult for ordinary persons. Is it not so, mademoiselle?"

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Atli came home to dinner that day; they must make a *fiesta*, Gretli declared, for he seldom appeared at the noon meal. Accordingly, the table was brought out on the green; Zitli, who was extraordinarily active on his crutches, brought green boughs from somewhere to adorn the table; from her precious, carefully tended little flower bed, Gretli produced a bright blossom to lay by each plate.

Atli, when he came up the mountain path, had held his hands carefully behind him, and had vanished into the cellar without coming to greet Honor; now he appeared smiling broadly, carrying a basket of Alpine strawberries, crimson and fragrant.

"My contribution to the *fiesta!*" he announced. "They are the first of the season, mademoiselle! May you enjoy our mountain fruits, the gift of the Father of all fruits!"

"Oh, how beautiful they are!" cried Honor. "And—oh, how sweet! they perfume the whole air. I wish I had something to bring to the *fiesta!*"

"Mademoiselle brings herself!" said Atli, with a quaint bend of his broad shoulders. "That in itself makes a *fiesta* for the *Châlet des Rochers!*"

How gracefully he said it! How wonderful, Honor thought, that these simple shepherd people should speak and move with such grace and dignity. No prince, surely, could surpass Atli!

Here was another picture for memory to treasure. The simple feast spread in the open, on the little space of gold-green turf: the Twins in their massive beauty, beaming friendliness; the lame boy, his plain, keen face no less radiant; the goats nibbling and frisking, the great dog watching all with calm benignity.

It was a pity Honor's picture could not include herself, softly glowing with happiness, the faint wild-rose color in her cheeks, the lovely light in her dark blue eyes, the glory of red gold rippling on her shoulders; she might possibly have ceased for the moment to sigh for night-black tresses (lying in piles on the velvet carpet!) and eyes that were starry pools of night. Dear little Honor!

And from the friendly, smiling spot of brightness one had but to look up, and all around stood the mountains in their majesty; height upon height, peak upon peak, soaring into the intense blue of the sky.

"Oh!" sighed Honor, drawing a long breath of delight. "How wonderful it is! How can anyone ever live anywhere else?"

Zitli's eyes twinkled. "Nevertheless, mademoiselle," he said, "other places are perhaps necessary. Our country is without doubt the fairest country in the world, but to place here all the various nations, it would be perhaps a little crowded."

"Other countries are doubtless necessary, since they exist!" Atli spoke with grave conviction. "But Mademoiselle Honor is also right; no one—no Swiss, at least,—would ever wish to live elsewhere. Without mountains, it is to make life flat, not so? Like a pancake!"

"Speak no ill of pancakes!" cried Gretli merrily. "We are going to have them for supper to-night."

Atli's face fell, like that of a disappointed child.

"To-night?" he repeated. "When I shall be away? Gretli, that is ill done!"

"Take courage, dear one!" Gretli replied. "Shalt have them the next night, thou! And who knows," she added slyly, "what Madelon may have for thee to-night?"

Atli smiled, a little sheepishly; then lifted his glass of whey.

"Let us drink a toast!" he cried; "to our mountains! the home and the heart of the Switzer; the good God's guard and rampart around the fairest country of the world!"

All drank the toast: as they did so, Honor looked across the plateau at the *Dent du Midi*, towering in noonday splendor so bright that it dazzled her eyes, and she shaded them with her hand. As she looked, a gleam of still brighter whiteness sprang from the mountain side, flashed downward, and was lost among the dark pines at its foot; a moment after, a sound came to their ears as of distant thunder, or the sea breaking on a rocky shore.

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"Ah!" cried Zitli, whose eyes had followed Honor's. "Our father Mountain replies, he pledges us! To thee again, thou great Beloved!" He waved his glass and tilted it to get the last drop.

"An avalanche!" said Gretli, in reply to Honor's eager question. "Often they seem to answer us, our beloved mountains. It may be chance, as brother Atli thinks; Zitli, on the other hand—"

"Zitli knows what he knows!" The boy nodded soberly. "It would be strange indeed if so great a lord as our father yonder had not the courtesy to respond to a toast. He has not to learn manners, that one; on the contrary, he teaches them."

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After dinner, and when he had carried in table and dishes (as if they were toys!) Atli disappeared for a while. When he came out again, he was resplendent in a huge green coat with tails and brass buttons, a brand new hat, and shoes polished like mirrors. In his snowy shirt-front was stuck a curious nosegay of brightly dyed *edelweiss*, tied with a scarlet ribbon. His hair was shining with pomatum, and brushed as nearly smooth as its nature allowed. Honor felt a pang of disappointment; he was not nearly so handsome, dressed up in what was evidently his best, as in the loose shirt and breeches of every day. But Gretli gazed at him with fond delight.

"Magnificent! Superb!" she cried. "What heart could resist thee, my Atli? Surely none that thou wilt meet to-day! A happy time, a safe return, and God be with thee!"

"God be with thee!" cried Zitli, waving his crutch, and Honor, blushing crimson, murmured the wish under her breath as she watched the shepherd striding off down the path.

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"Where is he going, Gretli?" she asked timidly.

"Where but to see his maiden?" cried Gretli, laughing. "Does one dress like that for any other thing? Our Atli goes a-wooing, Mademoiselle Honor! Seest thou that brown roof yonder, where the sun shines on something red? That is Madelon's red scarf; she hangs it from her window every Thursday afternoon if all is well with her and the mother can spare her from the cheese-making. Then—zip! like a chamois goes our Atli leaping—as you see!"

Lying in her little white bed, that night, the moon a gleaming crescent over the *Dent du Midi*, the whole world turned to black and silver, Honor began another chapter of her story.

"Years passed. Silver threads shone in the raven mantle of my tresses. The stars in my eyes were drowned in tears; time and sorrow had chiseled lines in the smooth ivory of my brow. My heart alone was ever young, ever young, ever faithful; with every throb it pledged its troth anew to the one who—"

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Here, I regret to say, Honor fell asleep.

## CHAPTER X

### COURTSHIP AND CASTLE-BUILDING

There was a spare pair of crutches, it appeared; Zitli himself had made them, "in case!" he said with a shrug. If it was good to have one pair, it was better to have two; as now, for example, behold!

For next day, the ankle was so greatly better that Honor could keep still no longer, she declared. The crutches were brought, and fitted to a marvel; she hobbled about gayly, delighted to be in motion again. Never in her life had she been still for so long a time.

"Zitli, I'll race you to the barn!" she cried.

Zitli kindled responsive; but Gretli vetoed the proposition with massive calm.

"With respect, nothing of the kind!

"He who goes slowly, goes safe and fair;  
He who goes hastily goes to despair."

It is a proverb, mademoiselle. Well I should look facing my Ladies and telling them that you had injured yourself again racing to the barn on crutches. Besides which, there are other ways of getting there."

Without more ado, she whipped up Honor, laughing and protesting, in her arms, marched across the green and through the barnyard, and deposited her on a block of wood that did duty for a stool. It stood in the doorway of the wide, low building. Sitting there, one had a new view, no less beautiful than that from the *châlet*; moreover, one got the full benefit of the *châlet* itself, with its wide spreading eaves, its thatched roof, with big stones here and there to keep it in place when the winter storms blew; its shining windows and green-painted door.

"Oh, how pretty!" cried Honor, in delight. "Oh, how *lovely* pretty! Why aren't all houses built so, I wonder, instead of tall and ugly, with horrid laddery stairs?"

"It would appear that people know no better!" said Zitli, who had followed on his crutches and now seated himself in the doorway beside her. "I have heard that only in our blessed country are *châlets* to be found; and even here, in our cities, the houses are otherwise, to one's sorrow and shame. It is thus one should live!" he added, with a nod of conviction. "A staircase, that is more suitable for monkeys than for men, *hein?* The barn is pleasant also, to my mind. Mademoiselle finds it not otherwise, I trust?"

Honor nodded emphatically, glancing around her at the low white-washed walls, at the fragrant trusses of hay and the shining pile of straw in the corner. A carpenter's bench stood on one side, with tools ranged in precise order; on the other were the empty stalls where the cows spent their peaceful winters.

"It is perfectly delightful!" she said. "It is one of the dearest places I ever saw. Atli must be a *very* good farmer, isn't he, Zitli?"

Now it was Zitli who nodded, like a very mandarin.

"There is no such farm on this Alp," he said; "none better in this canton. Our herd is one of the first in the Book. Also our cheeses lead the way," he added proudly, "but for those our Gretli is to thank. She also is a wonder, nor are we the only ones who think so. Ask Big Pierre; and there are others!" Zitli waved his hand with a sweeping gesture which seemed to include multitudes.

"Who is Big Pierre, Zitli?"

"Gretli's bachelor, who else? I preferred another, Jacques the hunter, but he saw a white chamois and died within the year. In any case Gretli would have had none of him, because his nose was long. The longer the nose, the better the wit, I told her, but she would not listen. And Pierre is a good fellow, not too stupid. Mademoiselle will see for herself; yesterday was Atli's day, to-day is Gretli's. Love, that makes a great deal of trouble, *hein?*"

Both! they were both engaged, the great splendid Twins! They would both marry, and the lame boy would be left alone. Alone on the Alps! Oh! Honor's heart beat quickly; dream-threads began to flash through her mind, weaving a fantastic pattern. To be his sister, to keep house for him here, make the cheese, be in very truth a *sennerin*. In a thought she saw herself in full Swiss costume, moulding perfect cheeses with exquisite grace. She could do it all, and take care of Zitli

beside; she was very strong, if not very big. The Brother and Sister; one in heart, though not in blood; how lovely!

"What—what will you do when they are both married, Zitli?" Honor spoke slowly; her eyes were shining as they did when she saw visions.

"Me?" Zitli gave his quaint shrug. "If Madelon makes good pancakes, I remain here—for a time! If not, I go with Gretli. It is not far, to big Pierre's, only the next Alp. By and by, when I am a man—" he paused; his eyes too shone, as he looked straight before him. He too saw visions.

Honor felt a shock; felt the blood rising to her cheeks. She had never thought of the possibility of Zitli's growing up. It had seemed as if he must always be as he was now.

"I shall not marry!" the boy announced, and shook his head decidedly. "No! Love, that makes trouble! Not though maidens in rows besought me!"

Again he swept his arm; Honor had an instant's vision of ranks of kneeling maidens with outstretched arms, imploring; she laughed outright.

"How funny you are, Zitli! What will you do?"

"I shall make musical-boxes!"

Zitli spoke rapidly and decidedly; his supple hands shaped the boxes as he spoke. His plans were evidently well matured.

"Mademoiselle has seen musical boxes in Vevay? Long, thus? Round, thus? Again, square, thus, with perhaps a dancing figure on the top? Naturally! When I am sixteen, I go to Vevay to learn that trade. Already I can make the cases, of course; that is for a child; the inside, that requires instruction, *hein?* I am apprenticed to M. Morus, it is the uncle of Big Pierre; Margoton by then has married her cheese-merchant, I lodge with them."

Honor interrupted him.

"How then? Margoton marries a cheese-merchant?"

Never in her life, she thought, had she heard so much of marrying and giving in marriage. At Madame Madeleine's, one did not marry. And what would they do without Margoton?

"But naturally!" Zitli shrugged and smiled. "The world marries, is it not so? Only not I! If the good God had designed it, he would not have suffered me to fall down the Alp."

"Oh, Zitli! was that—how did— But perhaps you'd rather not talk about it!" Honor's cheeks were crimson, her eyes dark and brimming with tears of sympathy.

Zitli cocked his head with a whimsical glance. "But yes! Why not, when that springs to the eye? I was little, see you, mademoiselle, little like a young cat, and I would go hunting chamois with Brother Atli. I ran away, without knowledge of my sister, well aware she would forbid; our parents were already with the saints. I had a little stick which I called my gun; I thought if I said, 'Bang!' loud enough, the chamois would fall dead. I creep, I run, I follow my brother, wholly without noise, you understand; he has no knowledge of me. He comes to a steep crag; above— behold! a herd of chamois go bounding! He mounts, strong, strong, himself a goat. I follow; my foot slips; I fall! *et voilà!*"

Honor shuddered, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"And—and then?"

"Then? For a while I knew nothing. My brother hears my cry as I fall; he descends, picks me up, brings me home. My faith, I was well served, mademoiselle; but those two—" the boy's gay voice faltered a moment, but only a moment. "Me, I would have whipped that little rascal well!" he cried. "But they are different, my brother and sister. Never one word, mademoiselle, to reproach or rebuke me; never one word! All to help, to care for, to spend their money—ah! finally, that is not to speak of. To be a saint, it needs not always to be dead, *hein?* In my calendar—with reverence be it said—are always St. Atli and St. Gretli."

Honor was silent. She felt that it was a very rare thing for Zitli to show his feelings thus. His gay smiling way was the one which best enabled him to bear what he had to bear. She laid her hand on his arm a moment; he nodded.

"Thanks, mademoiselle!" he said briefly. "To return! Once I am perfect in the insides—"

"What *do* you mean, Zitli?" Honor wiped her eyes furtively, and tried to speak as cheerily as the boy did. "Was there some internal injury as well as—"

Zitli stared. "The insides of the musical boxes, naturally! What else, mademoiselle? Once I am perfect, I return to my Alps, since boxes may be made equally there, and nowhere else would life be agreeable to me. I think—" he knit his brows, and spoke slowly, as if considering; "I *think* to

build a *châlet*—small, you understand, for one person—though there would be room for a guest always—I paint it green, the outside. That blends with the trees, you understand. The stones on the roof I paint white. That is contrast, variety. Inside, all is white, white as La Dumaine or that wicked *Séraphine*. Look, but look, *mademoiselle*! even now she tumbles poor Nanni over, her own aunt. Go, thou villain!”

He threw a stick at *Séraphine*, who bounded into the air with a shrill bleat and disappeared around the corner of the barn.

“There I live. Gretli has taught me to cook. I have the books that the good priest gave me, three or four magnificent books. There are none like them in this Alp. I have my tools, my zither, my mountains about me. I am happy as the day is long. Ah, that is a life to look forward to—always since the brother and sister must marry. That is natural, is it not so? But see, Gretli waves to us. It is to see her in her fine dress before Pierre comes.”

Boy and girl hobbled back to the *châlet*, Zitli going carefully and slow, and insisting that Honor keep pace with him. They found Gretli magnificent indeed in her Sunday dress; this was not clumsy like Atli’s, but the prettiest costume imaginable: the bright blue skirt very full, the black velvet bodice laced with crimson across the full white chemise. The latter was of heavy creamy linen, with wide sleeves coming to the elbow, the round neck embroidered in blue. Gretli’s superb hair hung in two heavy plaits below her waist, and perched on her head was an elaborate structure of stiff muslin, quaint but extremely becoming. A heavy necklace of silver beads and long silver ear-rings completed the gala dress of the mountain maiden. At sight of her, Honor clapped her hands with delight.

“Oh, Gretli, how beautiful you are! It is the prettiest costume I ever saw. Oh, how I wish Madame Madeleine would let us wear mountain dress!”

Gretli smiled with pleasure. She was delighted that it pleased *mademoiselle*. To be neat, to be not too ugly, it was to thank the good God for that; but not to dwell upon these matters, since, as her sainted mother had said, the spirit knows nothing of clothes, either red or blue.

“Oh,” cried Honor, “you have brought out the wonderful quilt. Gretli, are you going to finish it?”

Gretli nodded, blushing and smiling.

“Aha!” said Zitli, “that means that the wedding-day approaches. Is it not, my sister? Tell *mademoiselle* about that!”

Gretli turned to the great quilt which was spread out elaborately on the back of a high settle. She seated herself, taking the unfinished corner in her hands, and began to work with swift, skilful stitches.

“I should have told *mademoiselle* before about the quilt,” she said. “It is a thing of family, *mademoiselle* sees. It was begun by my grandmother, of sainted memory, who in her maidenhood designed the whole and worked with her own hands the centre. My mother and her two sisters worked the three corners. The sisters, alas, are no longer with us. They died in youth. To me, then, my mother left the quilt, with directions that I should finish it before my marriage. If I had decided not to marry, I should have left it to my nearest relative, a little cousin far away in the valley. As it is—”

“As it is,” cried Zitli, “here is Big Pierre, who, I fancy, is impatient to see it finished!”

A long shadow fell in the doorway, and was followed by a very tall young man of singular aspect. He was as slender as the Twins were massive, yet strength and vigor were in every line. He was tanned all one color, a deep russet brown, and his eyes were only a shade deeper. He was dressed in bright green, very much like Atli’s Sunday dress, and in his shirt frill was a similar stiff nosegay of dyed *edelweiss*; in his hand he carried a huge nosegay of *alpenrosen*.

“Greeting to this house!” said the young man. “Greeting to Gretli, to Zitli, and to the strange young lady!”

“Greeting to thee, Pierre!” said Gretli. “Come in quickly, and be presented to *Mademoiselle Honor*—the name of *mademoiselle*’s honored father is not for me to pronounce. We call her *Mademoiselle Honor, Pierre*. She is of the pupils of our honored Ladies.”

Briefly, she told the story of Honor’s accident, and Big Pierre glowed with sympathy. To turn the ankle, that was painful. He knew well. He himself—here he extended a leg of really unreasonable length—had sprained his, a while ago. Verily, it appeared that he would grow to his chair before he was able to walk again.

Gretli and Zitli chimed in with stories of sprains and other accidents, until Honor felt that she had been very fortunate indeed to get off so easily. Indeed, in her heart of hearts, she was deeply grateful to Bimbo. Without him and his wickedness, she would never have known the delight and wonder and unbelievableness of these days.

Friendly as Big Pierre was, Honor felt shy; felt too that the lovers should be left to themselves. There was only the one living-room. She was about to ask permission to slip into her own room on some pretext of a nap or the like, when Zitli came to the rescue. Would Mademoiselle come with him and see his perch? It was but a few steps. He would guide her carefully.

"You can trust me, my sister," he said. "She shall not fall, she shall not make the slightest stumble; as for the goats, I will shut them up in the yard and they shall not come near her."



"HONOR COULD HARDLY SPEAK HER  
DELIGHT"

With many cautions, Gretli consented, and as the boy and girl went out, they saw her take her seat at her embroidery, while Big Pierre drew his chair to her side and sitting down, seemed to shut up his enormous length like a jack-knife.

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"All persons more than a mile high to leave the court!" said Honor to herself. "Which way, Zitli?"

Zitli led the way round the corner of the ch<sup>^</sup>alet to the north, to a spot she had not seen before. It was a curious nook in an angle of the rock wall. A jutting ledge, just the right height for a seat, was thickly covered with the same beautiful green moss that the girls had found in their rock parlor down below. In the crannies of the rock ferns waved, and delicate harebells nodded. A few feet below a little crystal stream fell, foaming and flashing down the rocks with a silver tinkle. It was a fairy place.

Honor could hardly speak her delight. A murmured "oh!" half under her breath and a glance told Zitli all he wanted to know. The boy's face fairly shone with pleasure.

"I have kept this for mademoiselle!" he said. "I would not let Gretli show her. It is my own place."

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"It is the most beautiful place I ever saw in my life," said Honor simply.

"*Tiens!*" said the boy, with his quaint twinkle. "These are very large words, mademoiselle. Nevertheless, I am glad it pleases you. It is my own, do you see? When I was all little, after—after I hunted the chamois, you understand—there was more of pain than anything else for me. I was little, the pain was large. I saw no sense in that. What would you? A child does not understand. I cried, I was not to console. I made much trouble for that good brother and sister. When the pain seemed too large, one of those good ones would bring me here, would set me down, and would say,

"My child, behold the glory of God! Behold how it is wide, how it is great, how it is beautiful.



Do not let the pain that is in thy body destroy in thy soul the sense of thankfulness!

"Mademoiselle, that was the chief lesson of my childhood, that I was to be thankful. Since that, all my life I am thankful. I have no more pain, or not often and not great. It is no longer larger than I am. On the contrary, it is small, small, by comparison. I laugh at it! It goes like that!"

He picked up a pebble and sent it skipping down the mountain-side.

They were silent for a time. Then Honor said very timidly,

"It is good to be here with you, Zitli. I have learned things here that I shall never forget. The next time you have pain, perhaps you will remember that."

The boy gave her a quick look of pleasure.

"*Merci, mademoiselle!*" he said. "I thank you from my heart."

"I have never had a boy friend," said Honor. "I should like very much to have you for a friend, Zitli. Will you have me?"

A flush rose to the boy's brown cheek.

"And I," he said, "have never had a friend of my own age at all. What happiness for me, mademoiselle! Friends then, is it not so?"

They shook hands gravely, and Honor drew a long breath of contentment.

"Since you are my friend, I can tell you my thoughts about the mountains. I could never tell anybody before."

## CHAPTER XI

### FAREWELL TO THE CHÂLET

At fourteen, conditions establish themselves quickly, and become—to the fourteen-year-old mind—permanent. Honor had been a short week at the *Châlet des Rochers*, and it seemed her home; Vevay, the Pension Madeleine, the girls, even dear Madame Madeleine and Soeur Séraphine, were like a dream. A pleasant dream—some day, she supposed, she must go back, for a time at least; she was not yet old enough or strong enough to be a *sennerin* of the Alps, she realized that. How surprised they would be when she told them—

To the outward eye, on this beautiful June morning, Honor appeared an extremely pretty, red-haired child in a blue dress, curled up comfortably in the barn doorway with bright musing eyes looking out over the mountains. In reality—*her* reality—she was a woman, tall, grave and beautiful, dressed in full Swiss costume, velvet bodice, embroidered apron, silver earrings and all the rest of it. She was receiving with dignified cordiality her former friends, the friends of her childhood: the Lady of Virelai with her lordly husband; Stephanie, Patricia and the rest; was answering their eager questions with simple grace and candor. Yes, she was happy, very, very happy. This was the life she had chosen. Gay cities had beckoned to her, throngs of knights and heroes bold had sighed to do her homage. “The mountains called me and I came. My brother Zitli and I dwell apart, in the sanctuary of Nature, at peace with all men!”

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Then she would bid them be seated, and would bring them cream and honey and *biscuits des Rochers*, and they would marvel at the exquisite daintiness of all her surroundings; “the simplicity which is perfection!” as Soeur Séraphine said; at the calm majesty of her mien and carriage. Her magnificent hair was braided now, and hung in two heavy dark ropes—

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“Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle Honor! where art thou? Come, my child, and see who is here!”

Alas! the dignified *sennerin* vanished; not even a strand of her magnificent hair, not even a twinkle of her silver earrings remained. Only little Honor in her blue dress, her curly gold mane tossing about her shoulders, pulled herself up by the barn door, and limped across the green (no need of crutches now!) to meet—Fate, in the person of Margoton!

Not an unkindly Fate, it would appear. Margoton’s massive face was radiant, Margoton’s columnar arms were outstretched; she was altogether a pleasant figure in her neat Sunday dress, with the pink ribbon in her snowy cap.

“Ah, my little mademoiselle! Ah, but it is good to see thee again. We have missed thee—ah, for example! my faith, it seemed to us all a year that thou hast been away. Thou art all pale, little cherished one! *Tiens!* thou regardest me with great eyes, as if I were a wolf! How, then! Thou art not glad to see Margoton?”

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“I—I was startled!” faltered Honor. “I—didn’t know—dear Margoton, forgive me! but—have you come—”

She could not say it. She could smile through her tears on the kind giantess, could press her hand in genuine affection, but she could not speak.

Margoton replied with a shower of nods. But yes, assuredly, she was come for mademoiselle, to take her home; what else?

“Has the time seemed long to thee also, my little cabbage? Ah! Mademoiselle Stephanie, for example, has been a fountain of tears, desiring thee. A fête awaits thee *là-bas*—but—chut! that is not to tell. Gretli has been good to thee, yes? She is not all bad, our Gretli!”

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The sisters beamed on each other affectionately.

“One does one’s possible!” said Gretli.

“She has been an angel,” cried Honor. “A perfect angel, Margoton! I never can tell—”

“*Tiens!*” said Gretli cheerfully. “The holy angels are probably less solid than I, Mademoiselle. For example! it would take a strong pair of wings to sustain me, is it not so? You are to tell my honored Ladies, sister, that M’lle Honor has been good as—bread, I do not say! *galette* could not be better. And the ankle—naturally it is not yet of like strength with the other, that comes slowly; but it marches, it marches. A little week or so more, and Mademoiselle will be running and leaping like—but like that evil-disposed Séraphine, whom behold yonder, annoying poor Nanni as of custom!”

Good Gretli! she had seen the tears in Honor’s eyes, had marked the tremor in her voice; she

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talked on easily, giving the child time to recover from the surprise. To leave the mountains, thought Gretli, even after a short week; naturally that rent the heart. Margoton had lived so long down there, she had forgotten—though never ceasing to love the mountains—how desolating it was to leave them. Ah, yes! and the little one had a mountain heart, that was to say a heart of gold.

“Figure to thyself what Mademoiselle has done this morning!” she cried, as they walked slowly toward the châlet, the sisters regulating their powerful stride by Honor’s limping little steps. “She has made a cheese!”

“My faith!” cried Margoton. “For example! that was well done.”

“Well done indeed!” Gretli nodded sagaciously. “When I tell thee that it is a cream cheese of the most perfect! Had she passed her life on the Alp, it could have been no better.”

“You helped me, Gretli!” said downright Honor. “I couldn’t have done it by myself.”

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“Naturally! that understands itself. A little advice here or there, what is that? I tell thee, sister, friend Gruyère has no better cheese in his shop this day; and were it not that my honored Ladies might like it for their supper, I would send it to him, demanding a fancy price, my faith!”

M. Gruyère was the cheese merchant to whom Margoton was betrothed. Honor knew him well by sight, a little dried-up, snuff-colored man, who might go into Margoton’s pocket, she thought.

“He goes always well, this good Gruyère?” asked Gretli.

Margoton shook her head. Not too well, it appeared. He had been assassinated by rheumatism this past week; in the legs it seized him, in the arms, everywhere. To hear his cries, that lacerated the heart.

“He needs a wife, that one!” said Gretli slyly.

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Margoton assented calmly. It was true, she said. He had no sense. Another year or so, when the garden had so to speak grown up a little more, understood itself as it were, one might begin to think about that. At present, with the cabbages what they were, and the snails devastating the cauliflowers, and the peas annihilated by a malediction of black rust, it was out of the question.

“Mademoiselle asks nothing about the *pension*?” Margoton dismissed the unfortunate Gruyère with a wave of the hand, and turned smiling to Honor. “These other demoiselles are in a despair till they behold her; as I said. M. le Professeur, when he came yesterday—for the lesson of French history, as Mademoiselle knows—actually his venerable countenance was to make weep when he found no M’lle. Honor. ‘Where is my Fair One with golden locks?’ demands that poor gentleman. ‘I have prepared a genealogy of the Merovingians for her; she has the historical sense, that young person.’ I heard it with my ears, Mademoiselle.”

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“What is that, Merovingian?” asked Gretli. “It sounds like a cheese, but I know of no such.”

“They were early kings of France!” said Honor, brightening a little. “First the Merovingians, then the Carolingians, then the Capets. St. Louis was a Capet, you know.”

Both sisters nodded vigorously. “That was a very holy saint!” said Gretli. “His goodness to the poor was well known. He also washed the feet of holy pilgrims. Also there was Louis XVI, a martyr, as every child knows. Ah! that unhappy France! what terrible histories! To be Swiss,” she added; “that is to pray for, if these things were in our hands, which the good God has in nowise permitted. M’lle Stephanie found herself not too ill, Margoton, after the attack of that thoughtless animal?”

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“Oh, yes!” Honor’s heart smote her. What a selfish creature she was! she had not thought of poor Stephanie all these days.

“Do tell us how Stephanie is, Margoton! I hope she was not really hurt.”

It was Gretli who answered, a shade of asperity in her kind voice.

“She was hurt, Mademoiselle, as much as a flea is hurt that falls on a featherbed. Precisely so much, and no more. Did she not knock you down and descend upon your prostrate form? I ask you! Not of her free will, I grant you, but so it was. She was frightened, she rent the air with her shrieks, the mountains rang with them; but of injury—ah! for example! not one particle of that, believe me!”

Margoton demurred; was not her sister perhaps a trifle severe? There was a bruise on the child’s forehead, that was visible to the eye. There was no doubt that Bimbo was an evil beast. To attack from behind like that; Margoton asked you, was that well-conducted?

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“He had provocation!” cried Gretli. “I do not wholly defend our Bimbo; he has the faults of youth, and of his nature. A goat, that is not a philosopher, *hein*? But, it is a fact that he had provocation. Who in her senses would bring a scarlet parasol to a châlet of the Alps? No! my faith, that was not well done. A bruise on the forehead? That is a small matter indeed; while

behold our little Mademoiselle here a prisoner for a whole week, deprived of her studies, of her companions, of—”

“But yet,” added Gretli quickly, seeing Honor’s eyes starry with tears again, “she has not been altogether unhappy, *hein*, M’le Honor? And to stay once at the *Châlet des Rochers*, that is to stay again; it is like that. Mademoiselle will come again in the autumn, is it not so, to see the homecoming of the herd? That is another festival of our mountains, dear to our hearts. Now—a little *gôûter*, is it not so? Before making the descent; a glass of cream, a little honey, a biscuit—hold! that I bring them on the instant!”

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There was little packing to do. M’me Madeleine had sent a few necessaries by post, and these were all too quickly made into a neat roll. A basket must be packed, with Honor’s cream cheese for the Ladies’ supper, a bottle of whey and a packet of biscuits in case of hunger or thirst during the journey. While Gretli was bustling about on these matters, chatting the while with her sister of affairs here at the *châlet*, there at the *Maison Madeleine*, Honor stole into her little room to say good-by. How homelike it had grown! how she loved the little bed with its four faces smiling from the posts! Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, she named them; they had certainly blessed the bed that she lay on. The carvings on the narrow shelf, Zitli’s work, as she now knew; the windows through which the mountains greeted her so kindly morning, noon and evening, with a new glory for every time of day or night; even the bare walls, with their fresh rough plaster, white as snow, were dearer to her than any imaginable hangings or tapestries of queens’ palaces.

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“Good-by!” said Honor softly. “Good-by, dear room! good-by, dear little *châlet*, and all the tiny cows and goats! I’ll come back to you some day!”

“On the Alp the grass is sweetest,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!”

Zitli’s voice sounded clear and sweet from the garden patch where he was working. Honor leaned out of the window. “Zitli, wait!” she cried. “I am going! I am coming!”

Zitli looked up with a twinkle. “How then, Mademoiselle? Coming and going, both at once?”

In another moment Honor had joined him, and with trembling voice and brimming eyes was telling her sad little story. Margoton had come for her. As soon as Atli came from the Alp, she must go; must leave the *Châlet des Rochers* and go back to the hot, dusty town, to schoolbooks and school talk. How could she bear it?

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Zitli’s bright face grew sober; he pondered a moment, leaning on his hoe.

“*Sapperli poppette!*” he murmured. “This is an apoplexy for us indeed, Mademoiselle.”

“Say ‘Honor,’” cried the girl. “We are friends, Zitli. Why should you call me Mademoiselle?”

Zitli shook his head decidedly. As to the why, he was not altogether clear. To begin with, that did not say itself in his tongue; not, at least, with any degree of comfort. And besides, the sisters and brother called her Mademoiselle, doubtless because it was fitting; he would prefer to do as they did, with Honor’s permission.

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“And for the departure,—” the boy looked up, and his face was bright again,— “My brother and sister,” he announced, “have instructed me thus, Mademoiselle. That which we do ourselves, for that we may be glad or sorry, according as it is done well or ill. That which the good God sends, for that we are to be thankful, whatever it is, since He sends nothing without reason. It was thus my revered grandmother instructed them, and they me in turn. So, though—” he made a quaint grimace,— “though it is very grievous for me to have Mademoiselle go away, still I say to myself, ‘She goes to school,’ to learn wonderful things out of books. Ah! Mademoiselle, what happiness! hold! but when I am apprenticed to the maker of musical boxes, I, too, shall have some schooling, he has promised it. Not, of course, such as Mademoiselle has with the holy Ladies, but in some measure, yes! Books! ah, my faith! that is to dream of, *hein?*”

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Honor looked at him, wondering. His face was like a lamp. Books? Of course, one always had books; some of them were good, but others were dull.

“But—but you have the mountains, Zitli,” she cried.

A perfect shower of nods responded. “Ah! yes! I return to the mountains, that understands itself. But with a little learning, too, all I can get, my faith! I shall love my mountains the better for it, and they also will understand. They are not ignorant fellows, those!”

He nodded toward the grave giants, who seemed to watch them kindly. “And—who knows, Mademoiselle? We may meet some day in Vevay. I might even sell Mademoiselle a cheese, if old Gruyère would permit it. My faith! if my sister Margoton waits too long, that one will dry up and blow away. Better might she marry a cockchafer, to my thinking. But he is a kind man, and a sober,” he added hastily. Honor knew he was thinking of Uncle Kissel.

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Now Gretli was heard calling.

"I must go!" cried Honor. "We will surely meet in Vevay, Zitli. You will come to see me, won't you? And you'll tell me—"

Both were hobbling as fast as they could, for Gretli sounded imperative, though cheerful. Sure enough, when they reached the front of the châlet, there was Atli, smiling his broadest (which was very broad!) and holding in his hands a curious kind of chair; canvas seat, wooden arms, with an arrangement of straps and buckles fastened to the top. These straps, he explained, went round his neck and waist; one even encircled his head. As thus!

Suiting the action to the word, with Gretli's help he assumed the harness, shifting a strap here, a buckle there, till, he said, it was easy enough to sleep in.

"Now if Mademoiselle will take her seat, she will find herself as if in the pocket of Ste. Gêneviève!" he declared, as Gretli had declared a week ago. Ah! a week ago!

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Honor flung herself into Gretli's arms, murmuring in a half-choked voice her good-by, thanks, love, many things that at fourteen one feels as never before or after. The good giantess was quite overcome, and returned the caress heartily.

"Au revoir, my little Mademoiselle," she cried. "Till thou comest again, my cabbage! ah! for example! thou takest our hearts with thee, little one!"

"Good-by, Zitli!" said Honor, making a brave effort to steady her voice. She *would not* cry any more!

"Don't forget me, Zitli!"

"*Sapperli poppette!*" Zitli's own eyes were suspiciously bright, and he was blinking hard. "Does one forget the sunshine, Mademoiselle? And—and remember the cheese I am to sell you!"

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"All ready, Atli! oh, yes, as comfy as can be, thank you! Good-by, dear, dear châlet! Good-by, Gretli! good-by, Zitli! don't forget me! Oh! there are the goats! good-by, Nanni, Séraphine, Moufflon! where—oh, there is Bimbo! Good-by, dear Bimbo! and thank you, oh, thank you a hundred thousand times, for knocking me down!"

A waving hand; a bright head turning ever backward for a last look; a clear voice calling, faint and fainter as the big shepherd strode down the mountain path; so Honor left her Alps, and went back to her other world.

## CHAPTER XII

### STORMY WEATHER

"What is it?" asked Honor. "Is it a birthday? Whose, then?"

"Goose!" said Patricia Desmond. "It is a re-birthday, don't you see? You died up there—or any one else would have died—of sheer dullness; now you are alive again, that's all. Don't be stupid, Moriolo!"

The dining room of the Pension Madeleine was ablaze, with lights; there must have been fully a dozen candles, where ordinarily two sufficed. The table was decked with flowers and *bonbons*; the best china was displayed, that with the roses and the gold sprig, even to the four tall *compotières* which seldom emerged from their cupboard. Now they stood at the four corners of the table, filled with translucent preserves of Madame's very best; peach, apricot, greengage, nectarine. Little Loulou heaved a sigh of rapture, and clasped her hands.

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"Ah! Moriolo," she cried, "how we are glad of thy return!"

Seeing Honor stand bewildered, Madame came forward and took her by the hand.

"It is for thee, little one!" she said in her kind, cordial voice. "It is thy festival of return. Welcome back, my child, to our home and to our hearts!"

She *must* not cry! it would be wicked, not to say ridiculous. She *must* be glad, and thankful. Honor clenched her hands and shook herself; no tears fell, though her eyes brimmed with them. Her voice trembled as she stammered out her thanks, but it was full of real affection and gratitude. How dear it was of them! how kind they all were! and how could they possibly know?

She sat in the place of honor at Madame's right hand. Next her was Patricia, regally beautiful in pale green organdie, which set off her exquisite fairness to perfection. Opposite was Stephanie, in her best frock of red silk, with narrow black velvet ribbon—three rows of it—on skirt and bodice. (Floods of tears had been shed over this ribbon. Stephanie wanted five rows; her thrifty mother considered two enough; it was Honor who suggested the compromise of three, and restored harmony to the household.)

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Vivette, too, was in her best, the black alpaca which was only less rusty than the one she wore every day. Vivette, so pretty, who might be made so *chic* if one could only dress her properly. How often had Honor and Patricia debated as to how they would dress Vivette had they but the power! Patricia was for apricot velvet with topazes; Honor maintained that Nile green satin with emeralds was the *only* thing. Vivette, stolidly French, smiled, and thanked them both, but was entirely satisfied with the suitability of her sober dress.

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Jacqueline de la Tour de Provence sat next Vivette, all in white. It was the gala costume of her House, she whispered to Honor. The La Tour de Provinces never rejoiced in colors. She spoke gravely, conveying the impression that the wearing of white had originated in, and was confined to, the House of which she spoke. A smile trembled on Honor's lips, but she suppressed it, and gave a glance of appreciation instead. This too was kindly meant.

Among all the bright faces glowing with pleasure and affection was one which startled Honor as she glanced round the table. Maria Patterson sat in her accustomed place between Rose Marie and little Loulou, both of whom were bubbling with joyous talk; she paid no attention to them, nor, it seemed, they to her. Her eyes were bent on her plate; her face was dark and gloomy. Never an attractive girl, there was, it struck Honor, something tragic in Maria's face now. What could be the matter? Had she had bad news from home, or was she ill? Honor's sympathy was ready to flow in any direction; sad at heart herself, she felt strangely out of place in this gay party. Was poor Maria sad too? Honor tried to catch her eye, but without success; the girl never looked up from her plate, but ate her supper in sullen silence.

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The dessert appeared; a wonderful *Charlotte Russe*, Honor's favorite dish; orange jelly with whipped cream; little cakes in profusion, white, pink, brown.

"Ah! Moriolo," sighed the descendant of good Queen Bertha; "would you might return to us every day, cherished one!"

Now appeared pretty, smiling Sophie, trimmest and most correct of maids, bearing a great jug of crystal and gold, the glory of the Pension. It had been given to Madame by the Countess of Lablache-Tournay, "her affectionate and ever-grateful pupil," as the inscription read. It was filled with "nectar," Madame's own special compound of *orgeat*, raspberry syrup and lemon, which must be tasted to be appreciated. The tall glasses were filled; Madame Madeleine rose, and in a few simple words welcomed "their beloved young friend, pupil, *compagne*", whose absence had

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darkened the horizon of their family life, whose return once more brought light and joy to their little circle. As was well known, Madame had little knowledge of the majestic language which was the native speech of their dear Honor, and of several other of her young friends. She would ask her sister to express for them both, in English, the sentiments which at the present auspicious moment filled their bosoms.

With an affectionate glance and a wave of her kind hand, Madame sat down, and Soeur Séraphine rose to her feet. There was a flush on the clear rose-white of the little Sister's cheek; her voice trembled as she began.

"My dear Honor, and young ladies; eet ees wiz *grand plaisir*—pardon! eet ees wiz 'eart-felt pleasure zat I bid you vonce more vell come to Pension Madeleine. We 'ave meessed you treestfulli. Ze 'ouse vas not ze semm wizout *La Moriolo*, ze birrd of *plumage d'or*, of golden fezzaires I should to say. And zou, *petite*, hast also been long for ze *pension*, *n'est-ce pas?* As says ze poète Jonovard Payne,

"Be eet evair so ombel,  
Zere's no place like 'ome!"

And ze immortel Shakspire, 'e say also—*n'importe!* zat escape from my mind. We ozzaires, in Pension Madeleine, ve are not poète, ve 'ave not ze *génie*, but our 'earts zey seeng wiz joy, and yet von time ve bid vell-come back our dear Honor!"

Soeur Séraphine kissed her hand to Honor, and sat down amid tumultuous applause.

"Speech!" cried Patricia. "Speech!" cried all the girls, echoing the cry in varying shades of English; all save Maria Patterson, who still sat, an image of gloom, staring at her plate.

Blushing and tearful, Honor rose.

"Thank you! oh, thank you all!" she cried. "I am so—so glad to see you all again. Dear Madame, dear Sister, you are perfectly angelic to give me this lovely party. I—I can't say anything *but* thank you, but I do, with all my heart!"

She could at least say this. She *was* glad to see them, all the dear good friends. Not to come back—no! no! to say that would be telling a lie; but to see the kind, friendly faces, to hear the welcoming voices—of course she was glad! she would be a wicked, wicked girl if she were not.

At last the feast was over, and after grace and *réverénces*, the girls swept out laughing and chattering, into the garden. Here they surrounded Honor, seizing her hands, pulling her this way and that, all talking at once.

"This way, Honor! come with me!"

"*À moi, Moriolo!* I have a thousand things to say to thee. Ah! for example, Loulou, cease thy pushing, little imbecile!"

"There's no particular sense in smothering Honor to death!" drawled Patricia. "I prefer her alive myself. Sit down here on the bench, Moriolo! I'll keep them off you with this rake."

Honor sat down, out of breath, and looked round. Stephanie, Patricia, Rose Marie, Vivette,—were they all here? No!

"Girls," she asked abruptly, "what's the matter with Maria Patterson?"

Silence. The girls all looked at each other; then they looked at Patricia. No one except Honor was very fond of Patricia; her tongue was too biting, and she was too openly contemptuous of them all—still excepting La Moriolo; but they admired as much as they feared her, and were accustomed to follow her lead, even Stephanie, who detested her.

Patricia now looked up with a peculiar smile that Honor knew well, and gave a little shrug of her graceful shoulders.

"Maria Patterson? My dear, she has ceased to exist, for us. As to what is the matter with her"—another shrug. "What does it matter what is the matter with her? Pouf! I blow her away. Tell us about your exile, child! we are all dying to hear."

"Not till I know about Maria!" Honor's tone was resolute; she was not in the least afraid of Patricia.

"And why this sudden interest in Maria Patterson, if I may ask?" Patricia was still smiling in the way Honor knew and did not like. "She never was your heart's own that I know of, *chérie*. What, I say, does it matter about her? We are all happy, aren't we?"

"*Voyons*, Patricia! tell her!" said Vivette. "We know our Moriolo. When her face sets in that manner, she is Gibraltar in person. If we want to hear anything, we must first tell; that sees

itself."

"Tell yourself, then!" Patricia yawned delicately. "The subject fails to interest me."

Honor turned to Vivette, whose honest face was pleasanter to look on at this moment than that of the school beauty.

"Marie is—away!" said Vivette. "She is vat you call in Cov-en-tri. There are six days, we speak her not, we look her not."

"But why? What has the poor thing done?"

"She has thieved!" Vivette spoke low, with a glance over her shoulder. "*Chut!* Madame knows not, nor our Sister. Solely of ourselves we de-cide to—vat vord is dat, Patricia? Carve? Cot?"

"Oh, do hush, Vivette!" said Patricia rather rudely. "You make my ears ache. If you *must* know, Honor, the poor thing—as you call her—and as she certainly is—stole a ring from my jewel-box. There! are you satisfied? We were not sent here to consort with thieves, so we have simply—shall I say eliminated her? As I told you, she no longer exists."

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"Oh, Patricia! Oh, girls! there must be some mistake!"

Genuinely distressed, Honor looked from one face to another. But now an excited babble broke out, the shrill young voices rising higher and higher.

Maria had always been a sneak, Moriolo knew she had. She was a tale-bearer, a meddler, a spy. She was always poking her nose into other people's affairs; and so on and so on.

Honor listened, her eyes growing wider and wider, as they did when she was troubled. Suddenly her cheeks flushed; her heart began to beat violently. She seemed to hear a voice speaking; a rich, mellow voice, with the sound of bells in it.

"And thus it is our custom to allow no evil to be spoken of any person without a good word being added by each one of the family."

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Honor covered her face with her hands.

"If I had dark hair," she said to herself, "I could do it! If I had dark hair, I could do it!"

Then suddenly she looked up, first at Patricia's beautiful, scornful face, then at the others, all excited, all full of anger.

"Maria is *very* tidy!" she said. "Her bureau drawers are beautiful, and you know she got the prize for the best-made bed last year."

For a moment all the girls stared, open-mouthed; then Patricia laughed her little silver laugh.

"Even if so?" she said. "We allow her that lofty virtue! My ring was in her pocket, you understand, my dear. Come, Moriolo!" she added in a different tone. "A promise is a promise. We have told you what you wanted, now it is your turn. *What* did you do in that place during seven whole days? We *must* know!"

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"I cannot!" thought Honor. And then—"I *must!*"

"Come then!" she said. "Sit down, all of you! The sand is as dry as dry. Loulou, I cannot tell if you hop on one foot. Listen then!"

She told them about the spinning and knitting; about the bridal quilt; about pretty Madelon, whom she had not seen, and Big Pierre, whom she had; about the carving, and all the marvels and mysteries of cheese-making.

About her three friends themselves she could not talk, she found. And no one knew, no one cared, no one could possibly understand—

"And I made the cheese all myself, the one we had for supper. Was it good?"

"Good? It was mirific! You made it yourself? Ah! Bah! Gretli let you stir it, pat it a little, like that!"

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"Gretli did not touch it with the end of her finger! She told me, of course, what to do. 'Take this and that! do thus and so!' but not a finger did she put to it. Wait a little! When Margoton next has sour cream, I will make another, and you will see."

"It must have been rather fun!" said Vivette. "I should like to make cheese, I think. Will you teach me, Moriolo?"

"My dear! it would ruin your hands!" Jacqueline examined her own pearly fingertips, over which she spent much of the "meditation hour" when we sat alone in our little rooms and were supposed to think of holy things. Then with a glance at Vivette's brown, rather stubby hands, she



added, "But it might not after all make so much difference!"

"But, Moriolo!" said Stephanie, who had been listening eagerly, "the animals! all those terrible animals! were you not in perpetual terror? Me, I never expected to see you alive again. I wept the whole of every night—"

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"Thou snoorest prettily in thy sleep all the same, Stephanie!" cried Rose Marie. "Heavens! it was a litany to all the saints at once!"

"You shan't tease my Stephanie!" Honor was slipping back naturally into her school attitude of championing the weak. "Stephanie dear, the animals were darling; but perfectly darling! You have only to learn to know them. Why, Bimbo ate bread from my hand, and danced for me when I held his forefeet. It is true he tried to butt me every day, but he never succeeded. Zitli was too quick, and always caught him over the nose with his crutch."

"The lame boy? Was he possible at all, Honor?" It was Jacqueline who asked. "Of course the big Twins are very nice in their way: but to be shut up a whole week in a peasant hovel with—"

Honor's eyes flashed; she felt the blood surging into her cheeks, and she clenched her hands tight in the vain effort to keep it down.

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"A hovel?" she cried, and her voice trembled, spite of all she could do. "The *Châlet des Rochers* is simply the most delightful house I ever was in. The people are the dearest and best people—except Madame and our Sister—I have ever seen, and the week I spent there was the happiest time of my whole life!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WAY TO COVENTRY

Honor lay awake a long time that first night after her return. Her mind was too full of what Vivette called "thinks." ("Oftentimes," said poor Vivi, "I have in the night sorry thinks!" That was when she had the toothache, which explained matters.) Her body lay in its own bed—the plain little white enameled bed; no quaint faces of friendly apostles to bless it! Her mind was away at the Châlet; the eyes of her spirit were gazing through the little square window at the great snow mountain, towering in the blue-black sky thick-set with stars, "rising like a cloud of incense from the earth." In her ears was the low tinkle of musical bells, as the goats moved hither and thither, browsing on the short turf.

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"If only I could hear it always!" sighed Honor. "If only every night I could go back, like the Enchanted Fawn! I would sing, as she did, only change the words a little:

"Say, how is my Gretli,  
And how are they all?  
Oh, say but the word,  
And I'll come at your call!"

How cool and sweet the air came in at the window, the breath of the Mountain himself! (Honor was nearly asleep now, and really fancied herself at the Châlet!) How clear and—silvery—the bells—hark!—who was crying? Gretli was asleep; goats could not cry—

All of a sudden Honor came wide awake, and sat up in bed, listening. Some one *was* crying! not far from her; long, heavy sobs, full of a dull, hopeless pain. Where—what—who? Honor put out her hand and encountered the smooth iron of her bed. Of course! she was at home, in Pension Madeleine! In the cell on her right was Stephanie: in that on the left—Maria Patterson.

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It was from the left that the sobs came. Honor listened intently; dreadful sobs; her heart ached to hear them! She slipped quietly out of bed, turned the handle of the door noiselessly, groped for the next handle—another moment and she was beside Maria, where she sat sobbing in her bed; her warm arms were pressing close the cold, shivering body, her smooth cheek was laid against the other, wet with bitter tears.

"Maria! don't, my dear! don't cry! hush! oh, poor thing, hush! there! there!"

Honor rocked back and forth, as if she were soothing a little child. Pity flowed from her like a warm current; she felt the rigid form relax, the head sink on her shoulder. The sobs continued, but they were less heavy and dreadful, more like natural crying.

"There! there!" repeated Honor. "Now you are better, dear. Let me cover you up a little; you are half frozen."

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"Is it—is it Honor?" Maria spoke in a broken whisper.

"Yes! but let me rub your hands, Maria! I'm going to get my hot-water bottle!"

"No! no! don't leave me! stay just a little longer! You don't know—or did they tell you?"

"You shall tell me!" Honor gently forced Maria to lie down, and tucked the bed-clothes round her. "Lie still a moment, and I'll come back."

In three minutes she was back with the hot-water bottle.

"There! it's not very hot, just right to hold in your hands. Now tell—no, I won't take cold; I have my wrapper on, and it's warm as soup. Tell me all about it, Maria!"

Maria drew a long sobbing breath.

"How good you are!" she said. "But you won't believe me, Honor: nobody would; and then you will go, and I shall be all alone in the world!"

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"Nonsense!" said Honor decidedly. "I *shall* believe you! Go ahead!"

Brokenly, in a voice shaken by sobs, with bursts of bitter weeping, Maria told her piteous story; how she had seen and admired the ring on Patricia's finger; a curious little ring, a circle of gold wire with a tiny golden mouse running loose on it. She wanted to see how it went; Patricia hated her so, she could not ask. Then—one day—Patricia's door was open, and Maria knew she was in

the garden.

"Honor, I didn't mean any harm! I swear to you I didn't mean any harm. I went in, and the ring was on the pincushion, and I tried it on, and—and—just then Sophie came in, and I didn't want her to see me with it, and I slipped it into my pocket, meaning to put it back when she had gone out—oh, dear! oh, dear! how *could* I?" The wailing sobs broke out again.

"Quiet! quiet!" Honor was stroking her forehead with a firm soft hand. "There! there! Go on! You meant to put it back; of course you did. And then—"

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"The bell rang for class, and Sophie was still there, sweeping, you know—and I had to go. It was *dictée*, and you know that takes all there is of me, and then I can't do it decently! Honor, could any one believe I could forget it—the ring, I mean? I did! oh, truly, truly I did! And out in the garden at recess—I pulled out my handkerchief, and—and—"

"And out it came!" Honor finished for her. "Of course I believe every word, Maria. Of course any one would who had any sense. Didn't you tell Patricia? Didn't you tell them all, that moment?"

"I *couldn't*!" Maria's voice fell into an agonized whisper. "I *couldn't*, Honor! Patricia looked at me—oh, pray to God that no one will ever look so at you as long as you live!" cried the poor girl. "And she said—"

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"What did she say? Quiet, my dear! quiet! words never killed anybody!"

"She said, '*Tiens!* are there two mouse-rings in the Pension? Or perhaps only one?' Then she picked it up and went away, and I saw her telling the other girls. None of them has spoken to me since then!"

"You poor child! what a wicked, wicked shame!"

"Do you—do you really believe me, Honor?"

Maria spoke timidly, and in the half darkness of the room, Honor could feel her eyes peering anxiously into her own.

"Of course I believe you!" she cried. "Every single word, Maria. Nobody could possibly doubt you. Of course it was a pity, and a silly thing to do, and all that; but—why—there's nothing  *dreadful* about it, Maria. It has only to be explained, and every one will understand in a minute, and everything will be all right. You see if it isn't!"

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"But I can't explain! How can I, when no one will speak to me? It's no use, Honor!"

"I'll explain! I'll tell the girls all about it to-morrow, after breakfast, and then everything will be all right. Now you must go to sleep like a good girl. Shut your eyes and let go, and I'll sing to you."

Exhausted with misery and weeping, Maria was only too glad to shut her eyes and "let go," while Honor, still stroking her forehead, crooned softly,

"On the Alp the grass is sweetest,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!"

It was midnight when Honor, chilly but happy, crept back to bed, leaving Maria fast asleep. She nestled down on her pillow cozily.

"Play the heads are here!" she murmured. "Play they are smiling at me:

"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on!"

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Honor was sleepy enough next morning after her vigil; but the thought of what she had to do soon roused her. She ran into Maria's room, hairbrush in hand; it was not permitted, but she could explain; the Sister would understand.

"Hush! listen!" she cried. "Don't come out in the garden after breakfast, Maria! Come straight back here, and wait till I come for you. It will be all right, see if it isn't!"

Poor Maria, her eyes swollen with weeping, gave her a look of such dog-like devotion and gratitude that Honor could only give her a pat in return, and hurry away. Her heart was beating high. It was a shame; but they had not known; they had not understood; in a little hour now, all would be well.

How slow they were at breakfast! It seemed as if the meal would never end. Nobody looked at Maria; none of the girls at least. Soeur Séraphine cast a keen glance at her swollen, discolored

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face; one, and then another; but said nothing. Madame called from the head of the table, "Marie, thou dost not eat, my child! How then! It is necessary to eat; finish at least thy little bread!"

Maria crumbled her roll, and made a pretence of eating.

"*Tiens!*" said Soeur Séraphine. "The child is without appetite, my sister. I myself will give her a cup of tea presently. That encourages the stomach."

After what seemed a really interminable time, the girls streamed out once more into the garden. It was the custom after every meal in good weather. Honor, breathless with eagerness, led the way, beckoning the others to follow. They flocked to the seat under the great trumpet vine.

"What is it?" they all cried. "More tells, Moriolo? We haven't heard half enough!"

"Sit down, girls! I'm out of breath. I want to tell you all—you first, Patricia, but all together—you are all wrong about Maria. Poor thing, she meant no harm. Listen!" and she poured out Maria's story, the words tumbling over one another with eagerness; the girls listening with wide-open eyes.

"So you see," she concluded, "it wasn't wicked, it was only silly; very silly, of course, and she knows it, and is—oh, so *dreadfully* sorry and ashamed! Pat, you can't be angry with her any more; you must forgive her, and take her back, don't you see?"

Patricia laughed. "I'm afraid I don't see!" she said. "Stealing is stealing, Moriolo, my child! No doubt she is sorry. Thieves are apt to be—when they are found out. They are also apt to trump up a pretty story to tell to sympathetic people. This is a very pretty story, my dear, but I don't see that it alters the facts of the case. The ring was in Maria's pocket. *Et voilà!*"

"You—you mean—that you do not believe what Maria says?"

Honor spoke slowly, as if bewildered.

"I mean precisely that! I don't believe one solitary word!"

Honor looked from one to another.

"Girls! Vivette! Stephanie! You believe it?"

No one spoke; all looked embarrassed, except little Loulou, who was pirouetting about, paying little attention.

"I see—you don't!"

Honor was silent for a moment, thinking. Then, suddenly, a flame seemed to surge up within her. She did not need dark hair this time; red hair would do to be angry with. She sprang to her feet. Her blue eyes flashed, and she clenched her hands, facing them all.

"Very well!" she said. "Then—that is all! You have sent Maria to Coventry: I go with her! Good-by!"

She was gone. The girls looked at one another with blank faces.

"Oh, Patricia!" cried Stephanie. "We can't send Moriolo to Coventry! She has just come back to us, and we all missed her so dreadfully! Do make up with Maria!"

"Pooh!" said Patricia. "She'll come back. Honor isn't going to leave us and take up with Maria Patterson. I give her half an hour!"

Honor flew to Maria's room, her eyes blazing, her cheeks on fire. As she entered, Maria looked up, a spark of hope in her eyes; but at sight of Honor's face, she cowered down in her chair and covered her face with her hands, with a broken moan.

"You couldn't!" she said. "I knew you couldn't! I knew they wouldn't believe you. Thank you just as much for trying, Honor!"

"Hateful, hateful creatures!" Honor stamped her foot and clenched her hands. "I never want to speak to any of them again. Come, Maria, come out with me! They needn't speak to us, and we certainly will not speak to them. We'll live in Coventry together!" And she laughed a defiant laugh.

Maria shook her head drearily.

"No! I can't go out; and I will not keep you from them. Go, please, Moriolo! I will not bring disgrace on you. Please go!"

Honor stood her ground hotly, determined to carry her point; finally the school bell settled the matter by summoning all hands to the classroom.

It was a wretched morning. Maria drooped in her corner. Honor blazed and flashed in hers like a Catherine wheel. She flung her scornful glances here and there, and all quailed beneath them, except Patricia, who only laughed. Stephanie was on the verge of tears and made sad work of her lessons.

“What then ails these children?” said Madame to Soeur Séraphine at recess. “Do they conspire, or are they sickening? There is a fever in the suburbs, Margoton tells me. Perhaps it would be well to send for the doctor?”

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“Wait a little, my sister! We shall soon know.” Soeur Séraphine was her usual serene self. “Our little casserole bubbles furiously; soon it will overflow, and we shall learn all about it. They are like that, our dear children! No, they are not sickening: I have examined tongue and pulse of all; all are perfect, except this poor Maria, who is the root of the trouble, I am convinced, and who as yet can tell me nothing. To-morrow I look to know all.”

That was the Sister’s way. She never “poked the nose,” as we said. She hardly ever asked a question; she simply waited and things came to her.

This time she had not long to wait.

The day wore through somehow; a dreadful day. Honor never liked to recall it. In the afternoon walk, she stalked ahead of the rest, her arm round Maria, her head thrown back defiantly, her heart full of rage and bitterness. If only Maria had a particle of spirit, it would be easier, she felt; but Maria had no thought of anything but despair, with the added misery of having involved Honor in her disgrace. She was not in the least a bad girl, poor Maria; only a silly, inquisitive one.

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“Look, Maria! what a strange-looking old lady! Isn’t she beautiful? She is looking at us, so don’t stare, but just glance as you go by!”

Maria did not even glance. “I don’t care!” she said, “and how can an old lady be beautiful, anyhow? I don’t dare about anything; I wish I were dead!”

“*That*,” said Honor, “is wicked! You are a goose, Maria, but there is no need of your being wicked, and you shan’t, either. And old ladies are some of the most beautiful in the world, when they *are* beautiful! Look at our Sister!”

Soeur Séraphine was thirty-three, to be precise; but fourteen takes little count of degrees in age.

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A wretched afternoon. A wretched evening, Maria’s forlorn face casting a gloom over the pleasant reading hour, a gloom only accentuated by Honor’s flame of anger, which still burned brightly. Soeur Séraphine, reading aloud peacefully, looked benignant over the top of her “*Télémaque*,” and felt that a crisis was approaching. These dear children! By to-morrow all would clear itself, and they would be themselves once more. But for this poor Maria, and our Moriole, it was indeed desolating; nor was Stephanie less unhappy. A special prayer must be offered for these three.

Bedtime came. The girls separated without the usual merry chirping over their lighted candles. Honor, after a brief but energetic effort to make Maria “cheer up,” gave it up in despair for the moment, and hurried to bed, thereby saving five minutes of the allotted fifteen, of which half was usually spent in happy fluttering and twittering from room to room. Placing her candle on the little bedside table, she drew from under her mattress a square leather-bound volume, and settling herself among the pillows, began to write hurriedly.

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“My young life was full of sorrows. Treacherous friends deserted me because I just tried to behave decently. My cheek grew pale and thin, but my spirit was undaunted. My tears flowed like a crystal fountain—” Here Honor blinked hard and thought she did perhaps feel something like a tear in one eye—“My silken pillow was wet with them. The poor thing I tried to rescue was no help at all, but of course that made no difference, and I spurned the others from me with flashing eye and regal gesture. One of them was my bosom friend. I never thought she would desert me—”

“Who’s there? Maria? Come in! Anybody else, stay out!”

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But Stephanie was already in: Stephanie was flinging herself on Honor’s neck, weeping, begging for forgiveness.

“Moriole darling! Speak to me! look at me! Do be friends! Won’t you, Moriole? I can’t bear it without you!”

Did Honor spurn her with flashing eye and regal gesture? No! she hugged her close, and they cried together, and kissed and “made up” like the affectionate creatures they were.

“But—but you forgive Maria?” cried Honor. “You’ll take her back, Stephanie? You can’t have me without her!”

“I’ll take twenty Marias!” whispered Stephanie, “to get back my own, own Moriole!”

Ting! ting! went the bell. Lights out! One parting hug; off flew Stephanie; back went the book

under the mattress; out went the candle. Honor nestled down in bed with a warm heart, for the first time since leaving the Châlet.

"Thank you, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!" she murmured. "You *have* blessed the bed that I lie on!" and she fell happily asleep, to dream of the Twins and Zitli.

Never yet in all her peaceful years had Honor had two broken nights in succession; but there is a first time for everything.

Late in this second night she was again waked suddenly; not by sobbing this time: not by any noise; all was still. What was it, then? Why was she sitting up in bed, frightened? She sniffed: a strange smell was in her nostrils: acrid, pungent—fire? She was springing out of bed, when she heard some one enter the next room hurriedly; heard a smothered cry; heard the window flung violently open; heard her own name called, low but urgently.

"Honor! Honor! come!"

Honor flew, to find the strange odor pouring out of Maria's room; to see, by the moonlight which flooded it, Maria lying apparently unconscious, and bending over her, dragging her from the bed—Patricia!

"Help me get her to the window!" said Patricia briefly. "So! Now call the Sister, and get my salts! Quick!"

Again Honor flew, down the corridor, at the end of which a light glanced from the crack under Soeur Séraphine's door. The little Sister, kneeling at her *prie-Dieu*, turned as the door opened. Her eyes widened at sight of Honor's horrified face; her delicate nostrils expanded as the pungent odor crept into them; all this Honor saw *afterwards*. It seemed hardly a breathing-space before the Sister had flashed past her, flashed down the corridor, and had Maria in her arms by the open window, while Patricia knelt beside her with the salts. A pure cool breeze blew into the room, driving out the choking vapor. A few anxious moments, a convulsive movement, a quiver of the eyelids: Maria opened her eyes, and looked feebly about her.

"Let us thank the merciful Lord and the blessed saints!" said Soeur Séraphine. "My child, behold you restored to us! How do you find yourself?"

"Oh, dear!" said Maria. "Am I not dead? oh, dear!"

At this moment she caught sight of Patricia's pale face close beside her. She shrank back with a cry.

"Why couldn't you let me die?" she cried. "Don't—don't laugh at me, Patricia! Please go away, and let me die!"

Patricia was about to speak, but Soeur Séraphine signed to her to be silent.

"A little later!" she murmured. "Go now, my child! Thou also, Honor; return in ten minutes."

As they turned to go, a piece of paper blew off the table and fell at Patricia's feet. She picked it up mechanically, and saw her own name on it. The two girls passed into Patricia's room, which was on the other side of Maria's. Patricia lighted her candle, and read,

"Patricia, it is true, what I told Honor. I did not mean to steal the ring. Please take Honor back. I will not disgrace her when she was so good to me.

"MARIA PATTERSON."

"Oh, Patricia!" cried Honor. "What—what did she do? What was that dreadful smell? Patricia! you are white as a sheet! Are you going to faint? Don't—don't cry, my dear!"

"I am not crying!" Patricia wiped two large tears from her cheeks. "What did she do? She tried to kill herself. If it had not been for you, I should have been a murderess!"

"Patricia, don't say such dreadful things! And what have I to do with it?"

"You kept me from going to sleep!" said Patricia curtly. "You little thing—" Patricia laid her hands on Honor's shoulders, and held her at arm's length a moment. "You little thing!" she repeated. "You have saved me, as well as Maria!"

"Oh, Patricia!" faltered Honor, her own eyes bright with tears. "What was it? was it poison?"

"Charcoal! The poor creature must have taken some from Margoton's brazier. Mercifully she didn't know enough to stop up the keyhole between her room and mine. I smelt it, and then I saw a thin blue thread come creeping through the keyhole; and then—all in a minute I knew! Hark! the Sister calls us. Honor, I can't talk about it, but I never shall forget this night!"

Honor was almost awe-stricken as Patricia pressed a warm kiss on her cheek; Patricia, who never kissed any one. She returned the caress shyly, but tenderly, and hand in hand the two entered Maria's room.

Soeur Séraphine's lovely face was more nearly stern than they had ever seen it. She was sitting on the bed, Maria's hand in hers. She addressed the two girls gravely.

"Here we have," she said, "one who has sinned and repented. Her first sin was not grievous, as it appears to me; her repentance was deep and sincere, but it has not been accepted—save by thee, my little Honor! Thy part in this affair has been all that I could wish. Patricia, of thee I would ask, art thou entirely without sin thyself?"

"No, my Sister!" Patricia's voice was low, her eyes were bent on the floor.

"Thou art right. Pride, vain glory, envy—no, perhaps not that!" as Patricia made an involuntary movement; "hatred, malice and all uncharitableness. Of these thou hast been guilty; is it not so, my child?"

"Yes, my Sister!"

"Dost thou repent of these thy sins? Are they hateful in thine eyes?"

"Oh, yes! yes!"

Soeur Séraphine's face softened; her eyes shone with their own kind light. She said no word, but with a lovely gesture held out Maria's hand. Patricia clasped it, and knelt down by the bedside.

"Maria," she said, in a low, stifled voice, "I have been wicked and hateful, and I beg your pardon!"

"Oh, don't, Patricia!" gasped Maria. "Oh, please don't! I—of course it was horrid of me; of course you thought—oh, *do* get up, Patricia! Oh, of *course* I forgive you, if you forgive me!"

"So!" The Sister raised Patricia, and seated her beside her. "That is well. Now you are friends once more, and that part of this sad matter may be forgotten. For her second and far more grievous sin, that of attempting to renounce the gift of life given her by the good God, Maria is deeply repentant; is it not so, my child?"

"Oh, yes!" murmured Maria, clasping her hands over her face. "I don't see how I *could* have done it!"

"Fitting penance will be devised for thee!" the Sister went on serenely. "Thou preferest to leave it to me and Madame, and it is well. For thee, Patricia; wouldst thou prefer to choose thine own penance, or shall we devise one for thee also?"

"I think—" Patricia spoke slowly, but with something of her usual assured tone: "I think, my Sister, that I will go to Coventry myself!"

"Go to—Cov—what is that, my child? A city of England, is it not? We could not permit—"

Patricia hastened to explain.

"Sending a person to Coventry means—not speaking to her, not having anything to do with her. We—I—sent Maria to Coventry, and made all the other girls do it—except Honor! she wouldn't! Now I will go myself, for a week. I will not speak to anybody, and nobody shall speak to me. Will that do, my Sister?"

"Oh, Patricia!" cried Honor and Maria in one breath. "You shall not! You must not!"

But Soeur Séraphine nodded approval.

"The idea," she said, "appears to me admirable!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE STRANGE OLD LADY

Patricia performed her penance faithfully. At her request, Soeur Séraphine explained matters briefly to the girls next morning; so far, that is to say, as she considered explanation desirable. Patricia, she told them, had become convinced that she had been unjust to Maria, and had taken upon herself the punishment which she and they had inflicted upon that imprudent but well-meaning young person. For the space of a week, they would hold no communication with Patricia, nor she with them: Madame approving this entirely. After that time, their happy relations with one another would be resumed, and never again, the Sister trusted, would their clear horizon be clouded in such manner. The girls were to remark that a little folly, arousing the evil passions of our sinful nature, had brought about this sad state of affairs. Let them pray without ceasing for truth, courage and kindness, since these three formed the tripod on which humanity must stand. Dismissed!

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As the girls left the classroom, Patricia, who was standing at the door, shook hands with each of them, as if taking leave. She did not speak, nor did any one dare speak to her. Her face was grave, but the scornful look was gone; the insolence of her beauty was veiled, as it were, by a thoughtful, almost a sorrowful look. She gave Honor a lovely smile; Honor's arms were open in an instant to embrace her, but Patricia shook her head, and laid her finger on her lips.

"I don't see how I *can*!" said Honor to herself, as she passed out, "but I *must*!" she added, "and so I will!"

This sensible resolve she communicated to the other girls, as they clustered round her under the trumpet vine. Patricia was walking by herself at the other end of the garden, pacing up and down in a sober, business-like way.

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"How *can* we?" cried one and another. "Maria made no difference one way or another: but Patricia—it will be like losing you over again, Moriolo!"

"We just plain *have* to!" said Honor stoutly. "That's all there is about it. And mind you be good to Maria, girls! It's the least you can do, after treating her so horribly. Poor thing! she is really sick this morning, so our Sister made her stay in bed; but she will be down to dinner, and I say, let's all try to make her forget about it."

All agreed, though without any special enthusiasm. They were ashamed of the part they had played, but after all, Maria was Maria.

"*Tiens, la Moriolo!*" It was Jacqueline de la Tour de Provence who spoke, in her languid, graceful drawl. "Why this sudden interest in Maria,—for thee, I mean? Thou hast never shown it before. She is *bourgeoise* to a degree! She cannot belong to even the lowest order of *noblesse*!"

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"We are Americans!" said Honor shortly. "We have no *noblesse*. And if we had—how about *noblesse oblige*, Jacqueline?"

Jacqueline blushed slightly, and murmured something about her House; but it was noticed that she was moderately civil to Maria, when the latter, still depressed, and sniffing at intervals, appeared at dinner.

"But, Maria," cried Honor, dragging her into a corner after dinner, "you simply *must* buck up! You *can't* go round cringing and sniffing like—like a poodle that's just been shaved! Hold up your head! Look them in the eye! Show them that you are as good as they are!"

"But I am not!" said poor Maria, who did seem to be made of putty, as Patricia once said, and poor putty at that.

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"You *are*! a great deal better than some of them. Buck up, I tell you!"

"*Bokope!*" Soeur Séraphine, passing, paused with a smile of inquiry. "Eet ees to me a word wholly new, la Moriolo. It means—vat, for example?"

Honor colored hotly, and hung her head.

"It's—it's *argot*, my Sister!" she confessed meekly. "Slang, you know, we call it. It means to—to collect oneself—to—to take a brace—oh, dear! that's slang too! I'm afraid 'buck up' is really what it does mean, my Sister. Papa used to say it!" she added timidly.

The little Sister glowed sympathetic.

"*Tiens!* If thy honored father used the expression, it is without doubt a valuable one. *Bokope!* it



is to remember, that!"

She passed on, leaving Honor struggling between amusement and remorse.

The days passed quickly, as days do; they missed Patricia woefully. Even Stephanie confessed to missing her, though she declared, pacing the Garden, arm in arm with her newly-recovered Moriolo, that this was nothing compared with the desolation of last week.

"Patricia has behaved nobly, I grant that!" she said. "I forgive her much, even her pride, which is insufferable. But to have thee back, my cherished one, that makes to bound the heart; I could better do without all than to lose thee, my Moriolo!"

Was Stephanie always so sentimental? Had she herself been so, before she went to the Châlet? Honor wondered; then she fell to wondering what they were all doing up there. It was four o'clock. The goats would be coming home soon. Perhaps Big Pierre was there, courting Gretli. In that case Zitli would be in his own nook behind the garden, sitting alone, looking at the mountain, thinking perhaps a little of his friend. She must write to them to-night. She had already written once, but Zitli said letters were a rare treat, and she loved to write them.

"Look, Honor! that old lady again who regards thee. My faith, but her eyes devour thee. One would say she was hungry, not so?"

Honor looked up, to find a pair of bright dark eyes fixed on her with singular intentness. They belonged to a lady whom the girls had seen several times of late in the Garden; an old lady, richly dressed, who sometimes drove slowly in a victoria, sometimes, as to-day, sat on a garden chair under the trees. She was accompanied by a trim, rosy little person, who might be nurse, companion or courier. She seemed interested in all the girls, but specially in Honor, whose looks and motions she studied openly and deliberately.

To-day, after a prolonged look which yet was not a stare, she said a few words to her companion, who stepped forward and in turn addressed Soeur Séraphine, who was shepherding her little flock. The Sister looked up in surprise; glanced toward the lady on the garden chair; then hastily adjuring the girls to be extremely *sage* and to observe well the beauties of Nature, she advanced with an air of respectful interest toward the old lady, who, with a civil nod, beckoned her to a seat beside her. The nurse, companion or courier retired to a discreet distance. The girls, devoured by curiosity, paid scant attention to the beauties of nature.

"Stephanie, you *must* not stare!" whispered Honor. "Look at that swan; he is pecking the young one as hard as he can."

Stephanie glanced anxiously at the swan. "They are savage creatures!" she said. "A swan once pecked my grandmother, tearing large portions of flesh from her bones. It was a frightful thing; she turned black with terror. Observe her dress, Moriolo! It is richness itself, though sombre, and in distinguished taste."

"Your grandmother's? Or the swan's?" Honor laughed.

"A squirrel! a squirrel!" cried little Loulou. "Where are the nuts, Vivette?"

Squirrel and nuts made a brief diversion, but it was hard not to glance more often than one should at the couple on the garden chairs. They were talking earnestly; the Sister with her pretty, fluttering gestures, the other with an occasional wave of a delicate ringed hand, or an emphatic nod. Finally—oh, wonder! oh, thrill upon thrill!—the Sister rose and beckoned—to whom? Jacqueline de la Tour de Provence rose with dignity, and was gliding forward, swanlike, when the Sister's voice was heard, silver clear.

"Honor! Approach, my child!"

Jacqueline drew back with an air of elaborate unconcern. Honor, with a deprecating glance at her, and a round-eyed flash at Stephanie, advanced timidly.

"Honor, my little one," the Sister's voice trembled; "that I present thee to Madame—"

"Mrs. Damian!" The lady spoke in an odd, abrupt tone. "How do you do, child? Your grandfather Bright was my first cousin; you are therefore my second cousin once removed. Sit down! If you open your eyes too wide, they might drop out. I asked you how you did!"

Honor blinked and sat down hastily, trembling and amazed.

"I am very well, I thank you, madame!" she answered. "I trust your distinguished health is also good."

"My distinguished health is as good as can be expected, I thank you!" with an amused twinkle. "Your name is Honor? So is mine! There is always an Honor in the family. You never heard your father speak of me, I suppose? No! how should you? I haven't seen him for twenty years. He was a nice boy then. Well! you wonder what sky I have dropped from, eh? I heard of your parents' death a year or more ago; I was in Russia at the time. I am a traveler, child; I have been traveling for many years. I was in Russia, and since then I have been in the East. I have always meant to

look you up; I wrote your guardian, Mr. Stanford, that I would. You have never seen Mr. Stanford?"

Honor shook her head. "He writes to Madame," she said. "Twice a year he writes, to make inquiry for me, and to send money; he comes never."

"Busy man! You'll see him—" Mrs. Damian spoke in short, abrupt sentences, each one punctuated with a nod. The last sentence remained unfinished, and she nodded twice.

"Folly!" she spoke over her shoulder, and the rosy person approached. "This is the little cousin! Honor, this is Miss Folly, who keeps me alive. A ridiculous fuss she makes about it, too. What now, Folly? Why do you look at me?"

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"It's time to come home, Mrs. Damian!" Miss Folly spoke in a cheerful, cordial voice which struck Honor's ear like music. "Shall I call the carriage?"

"Do so! Honor, your teacher gives you permission to take supper with me at the hotel this evening. Will you come?"

Honor faltered her thanks; with great pleasure would she do herself the honor—

"That's good! Miss Folly will come for you at a quarter before six. *Au revoir*, child!"

She nodded dismissal. Honor's head was spinning; her heart was beating fast; but she made her best courtesy, and murmuring, "*Au revoir, madame! Au plaisir, mademoiselle!*" she turned and scurried away toward the group of girls, who, at the further end of the Gardens, were turning eager heads in her direction. On the way, she caught sight of Patricia, taking her solitary walk in a shady by-path, and stopped short, her heart beating louder than ever. She could not—how *could* she pass Patricia without a word?

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A squirrel was hopping along the path, expectant of nuts.

"Squirrel!" cried Honor. The squirrel stopped; Patricia turned, saw her, and stopped too. "Give my love to Patricia!" Honor addressed Master Frisky, breathlessly. "Tell her we miss her dreadfully! And—squirrel—tell her I am going to supper at the hotel with my grandfather's cousin, Mrs. Damian, who has been in Russia. Tell her it's that beautiful old lady we saw the other day. That's all!" and kissing her hand—but not to the squirrel—Honor ran on.

The girls surged round her like a wave; questions flew like spray. What? Who? Why? How? She was explaining as well as she could, when Miss Folly appeared, very bright-eyed, a little out of breath from walking quickly.

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"Excuse me!" she said with a smile, as the girls drew back in confusion. "Miss Honor, Mrs. Damian asks what you like best to eat."

Honor fairly gasped. "Oh! oh, mademoiselle, it is of no import! Anything that Madame—"

Miss Folly dismissed the remark with a gesture. "What do you like best?" she repeated. "Mrs. Damian wishes to know."

"Oh! oh, dear! ice-cream!" faltered Honor.

Miss Folly smiled again. "That, naturally! but before ice-cream?"

"Oh! Oh, must I? Broiled chicken! I thank madame most respectfully—"

Miss Folly nodded cheerfully, and departed. Nine pairs of eyes, opened to their roundest extent, gazed at one another. Then Honor held out her arm, solemnly.

"Pinch me, Stephanie!" she said. "Quite hard, please—ow! that will do. Because if I am not asleep and dreaming, then we are all in a fairy story, that's all."

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Still more fairy-like it seemed when at a quarter before six o'clock, punctually, Miss Folly appeared, like a matter-of-fact fairy godmother, and whisked Honor off in the victoria with the long-tailed black horses, the very carriage in which—*hélas!* poor pretty Maman and kind Papa used to take her on those long drives. There had been a solemn consultation over Honor's dress for the occasion. She felt in her heart that black velvet, with a long train and point lace flounces, was the fitting attire. Diamonds, of course; her superb dark tresses woven into a stately coronal (she had just discovered "coronal," and thought it a beautiful word) with a single ostrich plume, snowy white, curling above it. These decorations not being at hand, she turned her mind with a sigh to the actual choice, the dark blue cashmere with crochet buttons, or the white embroidered muslin, Maman's last gift, now let down to its fullest extent; a trifle short in the sleeves, but still "all that there was of most gracious!" Soeur Séraphine declared. Madame was rather in favor of the cashmere; it was more composed, she said; more sedate, and wholly suitable. Stephanie, who assisted at the conference, affectionately pressed upon Honor her own best dress, the red silk

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with black velvet ribbon. Soeur Séraphine suppressed a shudder, and promptly decided on the white, for which Honor thanked her with an eloquent glance. It was darling of Stephanie, but—and, besides, Maman had told her *never* to wear red or pink; “Unless, when you are forty, my darling, a deep red velvet; your hair will be darker by then, and it will suit your tint.”

Honor did not feel as if she would ever be forty; why not four hundred at once? But she knew that this infliction of her hair could be made better or worse by her choice of colors. She gladly put on the white dress, and was pondering the question of a sash, when she heard a light step in the corridor; then a soft rustle as of silk; a touch on the handle of the door, and the step retreating again. She flew to the door and opened it, to see the last flutter of a skirt disappearing, and hanging on the doorhandle—Patricia’s beautiful new sash of pale-green brocaded ribbon, with the shoulder-knots to match.

“Oh, my Sister, see!” cried Honor, the tears springing to her eyes. “See what Patricia has done! her very best sash! Oh, mayn’t I just run and give her a hug for thanks?”

“On no account!” The Sister’s face was shining with pleasure. “Our dear Patricia is making her salvation with assured steps; let no one cause her to stumble! Be tranquil, my child, that I arrange for thee this charming garniture! It completes to perfection a costume wholly *jeune fille!*”

In the little, richly gilt private *salon* of the hotel, Mrs. Damian received Honor with abrupt cordiality. She wore the costume of Honor’s dreams, minus the flounces and the ostrich plume. Her dark eyes were as bright as her diamonds, Honor thought, and the rich velvet set off her ivory skin and delicate high-bred features to perfection. As to the point lace, it was gathered in graceful folds at her throat, and crowned her snowy hair in a quaint and charming cap. Altogether, Honor thought her one of the most beautiful things she had ever seen. Admiration was evidently no new thing to Mrs. Damian, but it as evidently gave her pleasure; she smiled as Honor made her pretty reverence, and held out her fragile hand.

“You are prompt!” she said. “That is good! You have been taught not to waste other people’s time. There is not time enough in the world to go round, and yet—ring the bell, will you, Folly?—people waste it—or steal it—as if it were water. Do you understand?”

Honor started at the sudden question, which was like the swoop of a hawk.

“Not—not altogether, madame!” she faltered. “To waste time; we are taught that that is at once foolish and sinful; to steal—how then?”

“Listen! If you waste your own time, that is your own affair. If you had been half or even a quarter of an hour late, you would have wasted my time. It does not belong to you; therefore you steal it! Do you see?”

“I see, madame!” Honor glanced thankfully at the little gilt clock on the mantel, which had struck six as she entered the room. Miss Folly had kept her waiting in the ante-room five minutes before ushering her in; she wondered why. Was that—

“To come too early,” Mrs. Damian continued, with her abrupt nod, “is no better. In that case also it is my time you take. If I had wanted you at half-past five, I should have said so. Do you see?”

She swooped again.

“Yes, madame!” murmured Honor, this time with a grateful glance at Miss Folly, who gave her an enigmatic smile and poked the fire.

“I allowed five minutes for arrival and reception; it is now—ah! on the moment, here comes supper!”

Such a wonderful supper! The dishes were white and gold, like the *salon*; the broiled chicken, the fried potatoes, the crisp rolls, all showed various tints of brownish gold. Mrs. Damian watched with keen eyes as Honor ate, with the wholesome appetite of vigorous girlhood, yet with the delicate nicety which was part of the education at Pension Madeleine. She herself supped on a cup of soup and a roll; but it was a gold cup, and the soup looked very good. She talked easily, telling of her recent travels; now and then asking a question in her odd, pouncing way, but mostly, it seemed, content to watch the child and enjoy her enjoyment.

“I wonder how you would like a Japanese dinner, Honor! I was in Japan last winter, and I dined several times with a friend of mine. We sat on mats on the floor—but yes!” as Honor raised wide eyes of astonishment—“there is nothing else to sit on in my friend’s house; she does not care for European customs. My table was like your doll’s table, about ten inches high. I wore Japanese dress, for I was expected to carry food away—but yes! in my sleeves. Eat your supper, child, and don’t open your eyes too wide; as I said before, they might drop out. The sleeves are very wide—a kimono, in short—and have large pockets in them, lined with something easily cleaned; I forget its name. The last time I took away—let me see!—a fried fish, a crab, some rice-balls, a quantity of dried ginger and some ripe lychee nuts. Catch Miss Honor’s eyes, Folly; they *are* dropping out!”

Mrs. Damian laughed, the prettiest little dry laugh.

"Many countries, many customs!" she continued. "You will find that out, when you begin to move about, child. If I had not taken away these things, I should have affronted my hostess by appearing not to like her delicacies. You see? Some ice-cream in your pocket?" as the waiter handed the *café mousse* a second time. "Your sleeves are too small! Alphonse, bring more of these little cakes, and a box; mademoiselle will take some to her companions."

"Oh, madame, you are too kind!" Honor had just been wishing that Stephanie and Vivette could see these marvelous little cakes, with the pink and green frosting. "You—you *comble* me!"

Honor meant "overwhelm"; when she forgot an English word, she Anglicized the French one; it was quite simple, when one understood. Mrs. Damian appeared to understand, for she repeated "comble" with her rustling laugh.

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"I was a schoolgirl myself before the Flood! Would your teacher let the girls have some ice-cream? Alphonse, a mold of this—two quarts—in the carriage at eight o'clock, with the cakes. My compliments to—what's her name? Madame Madeleine, and I trust she will permit a little treat, before bed-time. So! Now, Honor, come and sit beside me on this sofa. I have done all the talking hitherto; now I must rest, and you shall talk."

Honor was stricken dumb: she gazed at her hostess, mute and round-eyed.

"Talk!" said Mrs. Damian sharply. "You are not deaf? Nor dumb? Very well!" She settled herself among a pile of satin cushions.

"Pardon, madame!" faltered Honor. "Of what shall I talk? I—I know so little—"

"Talk of what interests you! Talk to Miss Folly; I shall take forty winks. Tell her what you want to do when you leave school!"

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"I shall like to hear that!" Miss Folly spoke in her pleasant, cordial voice. "I used to make all kinds of plans when I was at school. For some time, I meant to be a circus rider, but I decided to be a lion-tamer instead. What is your ambition, Miss Honor?"

"I wish to be a *sennerin* of the Alps!"

Singular it is, that so often a strange hand is needed to turn the key of a heart! Not to Madame or Soeur Séraphine, the friends of all her child-life; not to Stephanie or Vivette, her friends and intimates; not—no, not even to the mountain friends themselves, toward whom her heart was constantly yearning, could Honor have opened the door of her longing hope; but here was a bright-eyed stranger, who with a glance, a few kindly questions, plucked out the heart of her mystery. Out it came, pouring in a torrent all the swifter for the weeks of silence.

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"And—and I am strong, you see; and there is no one in all the world who needs me—but no one! and I love it so; and—and when Atli and Gretli are married, Zitli will be all alone, and he is lame, and I would be his sister, and keep house and cook while he takes care of the stock; I can make cheese already, and pancakes—and—"

"Good gracious!"

Mrs. Damian was sitting bolt upright amid her cushions. Honor started violently. Mrs. Damian spoke again quickly, but now in her usual kind, abrupt tone.

"Honor, child, it is eight o'clock, and the carriage will be coming. Goodnight, little creature! You will come again soon; tell Madame What's-her—oh! Madeleine—that I will do myself the honor of calling on her to-morrow. Miss Folly will see you home; goodnight, my dear!"

And when Honor, bewildered, had stammered her thanks and adieux and been whisked away by Miss Folly, Mrs. Damian, still sitting bolt upright, repeated several times with emphasis, "Good gracious!" Then after a pause she added: "It's high time I came! Lord forgive me for staying away so long!"

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE BOMBSHELL

Calm before storm! In after days, Honor often looked back to that week that followed her first interview with Mrs. Damian. It was a peaceful week, memorable—it seemed then—only by the return of Patricia from Coventry; a softened, chastened Patricia, who had found, she declared, the remedy for most of the ills of life.

“Silence and solitude! Nothing like them, my dear. I shall be a Trappist nun as soon as I am old enough!”

Madame Madeleine and Soeur Séraphine went to return Mrs. Damian’s call; went again, by special invitation, to tea; came back looking very grave. After the second visit they showed—it was recalled later—peculiar tenderness toward Honor. Always kindness itself, it seemed as if they could not now do enough for her. A pat on her shoulder, a reconstructive touch on her hair-ribbon, an anxious eye on her appetite. Honor was deeply touched, but was also conscience-stricken. They did not dream, these dear ladies! Ought she to tell them, that her heart was no longer in the school? That all day long she was thinking of her mountains, and of her mountain friends? Was she false-hearted, ungrateful, wicked?

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Then, one day, the bombshell exploded. Mrs. Damian had come, it appeared, with authority from Honor’s guardian, the mysterious Mr. Stanford, to take her away, if she judged it wise, to take her to America, to—virtually—to adopt her. Not only did Mrs. Damian think it wise, but Madame Madeleine and Soeur Séraphine agreed with her. With tears in her eyes, the little Sister tried to explain.

“Eet ees for zy well-to-be, my all-cherished one! Zy own contree—zy own pe-ople to zee—zou understandest?”

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But Honor did not, could not understand. She could only cling round the Sister’s neck, weeping bitterly, begging, with choking sobs, not to be sent away.

“It isn’t my own country!” she sobbed. “They aren’t my own people; I don’t know anything about them, and I don’t want to. My country is here, where I have always lived. I shall die if you send me away! And I won’t—I won’t be a burden!” cried the child. “I’ll work, my Sister! I can make b-b-butter and cheese; I can knit and spin and sew. Don’t—don’t send me away! And when I grow up, I want—I want to be a sennerin, my Sister; and then I can make—all kinds of things—”

It was a bitter hour. The little Sister’s tender heart was torn, as she strove to quiet the distracted child. Finally, no way remained but the quiet, direct command which was never questioned.

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“Go to thy room, my child! There pray for strength and guidance, and remain till thou hast composed thyself!”

Meantime the class-room simmered like a covered pipkin. It was History Hour, and M. Arnoult was on the estrade, blue-eyed and benign. He noticed Honor’s absence, and was distressed at hearing that she was indisposed. For the rest, he noticed little, the dear gentleman. Notes circulated under his very nose, that patrician feature of which he was gently proud; notes conveying varied information. Mrs. Damian was Honor’s grandmother in disguise; her great-aunt; a friend only of her family; a stranger who saw and loved her from afar. (This was Stephanie’s version, naturally.) She was *Américaine*, enormously rich, very aristocratic, all that there was of most *chic*. She would adopt La Moriolo; would make her her heir; would cause her to be enveloped in bank-notes as it were a cloak.

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On the contrary, a life of stern austerity awaited our unfortunate comrade. To attend the failing hours of a person undoubtedly “born” (i.e., well-bred), but of an age transcending that of the everlasting hills; was that, Jacqueline asked, a smiling prospect?

“And what relation, mesdemoiselles, was the elder of these two to the younger?” asked Professor Arnoult in his calm, sonorous voice.

“Great-aunt!” promptly answered Stephanie.

“Grandmother!” cried Vivette.

“How then? Behold what would be of singularity indeed! My young ladies are apparently not aware that I am speaking of King Louis XI and the Duke of Burgundy, surnamed Charles the Bold. They were cousins, but in what degree? Ah! at the good hour, behold Mademoiselle Honor!”

Here was Honor indeed, very pale, and with dark circles round her eyes, but quiet and composed. She could not fail her dear old Professor. She was the only one who really loved history, and he knew it. Amid suppressed titters, she straightened out the relationship between the two princes, related briefly but clearly the principal events of Louis' reign, and wound up with the comment of Philippe de Comines (with which she wholly disagreed)—“in fine, for a prince, not so bad!”

The Professor's face, which before her entrance had exhibited a network of puzzled and exasperated wrinkles, relaxed into its usual calm benignity.

“Behold a recital of the highest order!” he declared. “I take heartfelt pleasure in marking it A.”

Honor thanked him in what she tried to make a cheerful tone. It was not easy, when her heart was beating the refrain: “It is the last time; the last, last time!”

As a matter of fact, this was not the last history lesson. After much agitated thought, Madame and Soeur Séraphine had written a joint note to Mrs. Damian, beseeching that, if it were possible, their beloved pupil might remain long enough to take part in the closing exercises of the school. It was now the first of June. Two little weeks, and Honor could not only finish her course for the year, but could take part in those exercises of which she could hardly fail to be the brightest ornament. If Mrs. Damian would in her graciousness permit this delay—

“Of course! of course!” said Mrs. Damian, tossing the note to Miss Folly. “Poor good souls, they think me an ogress, naturally, if not a cannibal. Tell 'em—no! give me my writing things! here! Take this note over when you take the box; and see what you can do, Folly, will you? The child couldn't bear to see me just now, and I certainly cannot cope with tantrums; but see what you can do! We'll go over to Montreux, and get that lace I wanted—I know now why I didn't get it when I was there—and leave 'em to simmer down for a week. We'll be back in time for the close, tell 'em! Take plenty of bonbons,” she added; “and hand over the Russian dictionary before you go!”

The Box which Miss Folly was to take over was a large one, stamped with the magic words, “*Au Bon Marché*.” Being opened, it displayed various wonderful things; frocks as simple and exquisite as those Maman used to bring; sashes, ribbons,—all the dainty *frou-frou* which a month before would have filled Honor's heart with rapture. Now she watched listlessly, as Miss Folly laid them out on the bed. They were very pretty, she said; Madame was all that was most kind and generous. Yes, the green muslin was altogether charming.

“It is the shade of the sash you wore the other night,” said Miss Folly. “Mrs. Damian liked it, and bade me match it as nearly as might be.”

“She is very kind!” repeated Honor mechanically.

Miss Folly looked at her, and dropped the green muslin.

“Yes!” she said. “She is very kind, and very much interested in you. You will be fond of her when you come to know her. She likes to make young people happy.”

Honor looked up, a faint gleam in her heavy eyes.

“Would she—mademoiselle—would she like to make me happy—but really happy? Then—” her voice shook so that she could hardly bring out the words—“then ask if she will leave me here, in my home. I shall die, do you see, if she takes me away, and that will only be troublesome to her. A funeral, that is very expensive, and much trouble besides.”

“Nonsense!” Miss Folly sat down deliberately on the foot of the bed, and folding her hands, fixed her bright, sharp blue eyes full on Honor. “You are talking nonsense, my dear,” she repeated, “and selfish nonsense at that.”

“Selfish?” repeated Honor. “I—I only ask to be left in my home, mademoiselle. Here, I give no trouble to any one; grown a woman, I go to my Alps. You will—”

“Stuff—and—nonsense! You cannot go to your Alps. You will see, by and by, why it is impossible; now, others must decide for you. But, Honor (I'll drop the 'Miss,' if you don't mind!), I don't want to talk about that now; I am not the person to decide for you. I want to show you the other side, about which you seem to take no thought at all.”

“The other side?” repeated Honor vaguely.

“Mrs. Damian's side. You have not thought of that at all, eh? Let me show it to you. Mrs. Damian is an old woman, as you see. More than half of her long life has been spent in foreign travel. Professor Damian, her husband, was a famous traveler and scientist, and she went with him everywhere, all over Europe and Asia, into Africa even. She has seen many wonderful places, many interesting people. Wherever she went, she was welcomed, admired, fêted; first as a beautiful and brilliant woman, later as a wise and witty one. Now, she is old; most of her friends are dead; her health begins to fail; she must give up the life she loves, and take up that of an old woman and—I fear—an invalid. This is bitter to her; the days before her look very dark. Honor,

you can brighten those days, if you will."

"I, mademoiselle?"

"You! You are young, and of her own blood, bearing her own name. She is interested in you, more interested than she has been in anything since she decided to go back to America—to die, as she says. You can—when you have pulled yourself together—make the world a brighter place for her. How old are you?"

"Fourteen." Honor's eyes were very wide, as she kept them fixed on those keen blue ones. 272

"H'm! I was twelve when my father died and my mother took to her bed. I brought up—under God, and with my uncle's help—my five brothers and sisters, and took care of my mother besides. You are old enough to think about something beside your own pleasure. That's all!" said Miss Folly, rising. "Think it over! Good-by!"

With a friendly nod, she was turning to go, but Honor caught her arm.

"Mademoiselle! one moment! I will—I will go!"

"Good!" Miss Folly paused, her hand on the door. "But—understand! It must be a cheerful going, Honor. There must be no tears nor tantrums!"

"Tan-trom? What is that? As of a trumpet—tan-ta-ra? But assuredly not, mademoiselle! But—yes, I will be cheerful, believe me!"

When Honor said "Believe me!" it meant something. Miss Folly saw this, and held out her hand. 273

"Good child," she said, rather gruffly. "We shall be friends, you and I. Good-by, my dear!"

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"My brow was marble, my heart was ice!" wrote Honor in her book. "I locked my secret in its frozen depths, and turned on the world a smiling face. Courage, cold heart! Soon Death will come to set thee free; till then, you must beat for the happiness of others, and wear a gay smile while in your frozen depths—"

Here Honor paused, perceiving that she had written "frozen depths" twice. While she was hesitating between "icy caverns" and "marble tomb"—only she had said both "ice" and "marble" before—the supper bell rang, and she went down and made an excellent meal on sweet omelette and ginger preserves.

Bureau Drawer Week! An uneasy feeling pervaded the Pension Madeleine. Girls lingered in their rooms till the last possible moment before meals, flying downstairs on the last stroke of the bell, almost late—but not quite, for that meant no dessert. After class, after recess, there were hurried flights upstairs, for a peep, a touch, a straightening here or there; it was an anxious time. At any moment, whenever it pleased them, Madame or Soeur Séraphine might inspect the bureau in any room. The *Prix de Propreté*, the prize for neatness, a much coveted work-box of blue morocco, with silver fittings, awaited the pupil whose drawers showed on several occasions a neatness and order such as, Soeur Séraphine said, befitted the surroundings of a young girl well brought up. 274

Honor sighed. Tidiness was not her strong point. She admired it, but found it difficult to attain. She was usually in a hurry, and her things had a fatal way of catching on knobs and hooks. Suppose that (as actually happened several times) she straightened her top-drawer to admiration: collars in their box, handkerchiefs in their case, ribbons folded neatly. The very first time thereafter that she came to get a handkerchief, her cuff-button would catch—say, in the fringe of her blue scarf. With her quick, bird-like motion, out came the scarf, dragging after it ribbons, belts, gloves; pell mell went all in a heap on the floor. It was supper time—or class time, or bed-time; back went everything pell mell, into the drawer, and off flew La Moriolo, with never another thought. Accordingly, her top drawer was apt to resemble rather the nest of a field-mouse, said Soeur Séraphine severely, than the drawer of a pupil of the Pension Madeleine. Honor was truly sorry. She would try; she *did* try, whenever she could bring her mind to such things as bureau drawers. But with the History Prize to be really studied for—not so much for its own sake as to please the dear Professor, and for love of the study itself—and with her other lessons, and the visits to Mrs. Damian and the daily practicing for the Race—how *could* she remember her top drawer? And even if she should have the most perfect drawer in the world, it would be too mean to take the prize away from poor old Maria, when it was the only prize she could ever get. 275

There had been some doubt in the minds of the Ladies whether Honor ought to be allowed to run in the race for the golden apples. It would break her heart not to do so, but was her ankle strong enough? The doctor was anxiously consulted. After a thorough examination, he decided that she might run if two weeks of daily practice produced no ill effect. The ankle was upon probation. Every day Honor ran so many times along the *allée*; every evening the probationary member was rubbed and kneaded, to the accompaniment of a running fire of questions. 276

"Here, my child, there is no pain? You are positive? How when I press on *this* spot?" etc., etc. But there never was any pain, and with every practice run, Honor declared she felt stronger and stronger.

Bureau Drawer Week drew toward its fateful close, and hearts beat high with hope or low with discouragement; all but Honor's, which found it impossible to be deeply interested. One day she and Patricia were in Stephanie's room, discussing the matter—in whispers, for it was "quiet time." Stephanie confessed that she "perished with desire" for the prize. It was so charming: hush! she had tried on the thimble, and it fitted her to a marvel. "And Maria has had it two years running! What can she do with three work-boxes?"

"It isn't the box, it's the getting it!" said Honor. "I wish there were two prizes, Stephanie. Of course I want you to have one, and your drawer is lovely; but it means so much to Maria, and—and she is so forlorn, poor thing!"

"She is a poor-spirited granny," said Patricia, "but you are right, Moriole, and I hope she will get it. You can get the arithmetic prize, Stephanie!" she added wickedly. "Hark! what's that? Some one in your room, Honor!"

Stephanie's room, as we know, was next to Honor's. The three girls listened intently. They heard a light step, then a soft sliding sound with a squeak at the end.

"Some one is opening my top-drawer!" whispered Honor. "There is no mistaking that squeak. Is it Madame, do you suppose, or our Sister?"

"Easy enough to find out!" Patricia bent quietly forward.

"Patricia! You are not going to look through the keyhole?"

"And why not? It's Stephanie's keyhole, I believe! If she doesn't mind—Well! did-you-ever?"

She gazed a moment; then silently beckoned to Honor.

Honor was a human child of fourteen; if the keyhole was Stephanie's, the bureau in the room beyond was her own. She sank on her knees, and applied her eye to the keyhole.

In front of the bureau stood—Maria Patterson! She had pulled the drawer out to its fullest extent, and was contemplating its disorder, which certainly was extreme. Honor had recently been hunting for her purse, with disastrous results. A breathless moment passed; Honor's heart was beating fast. Could it—no, it could *not* be possible! Maria was *not* a thief. But what was she about?

Swiftly, noiselessly, Maria's hands moved here and there. She was taking everything out, laying everything on the bed. Now—what was that in her hand? Her own silk duster, one of her prized possessions. She wiped the drawer out carefully, prodding the corners with a hairpin wrapped in a fold of the silk. She examined the duster anxiously, evidently seeking a speck of dust; finding none, she began to lay the various articles back methodically, arranging them in piles with exquisite precision. Her plain face was illuminated with a look which made it almost lovely.

The tears were rolling down Honor's cheeks. Silently, she beckoned to Patricia, and then in turn to Stephanie. They looked and drew back. Patricia's eyes were very bright, one might almost have thought with tears, only of course she never cried; Stephanie's were large and round. She opened her lips to speak, but Honor made her an imperious sign to be quiet. Still as mice they listened; heard the squeak of the closing drawer; heard a contented sniff—poor Maria always sniffed, whatever she did—heard the door shut, the quiet footstep retreat along the corridor.

For a moment the three girls stood looking at one another. Then, before the others could speak, Honor flung open the door between the two rooms; flashed bird-like to the bureau; pulled open the drawer; scattered the contents right and left, "as if she were making a pudding!" said Stephanie afterward; flashed back again, and closing the door noiselessly, faced her companions, breathless, but with a shining face.

"Hush!" she whispered. "I thought I heard our Sister's door open. Listen! Yes, she comes. I was only just in time."

Again they listened; again heard a quiet footstep enter Honor's room; again heard the squeak of the top drawer. Silence, and then a gentle sigh, a murmured, "Alas! what to do with this dear child?" Then once more the sounds of closing and departure.

"Moriole!" gasped Stephanie, "You must let me speak, or I shall burst! Why—*why* have you done this? Have your senses left you?"

Honor stared. "I thought I heard her door open; I was right, you see. I had to get it done before she came."

"Done! for example! Get it *undone*, you mean! It was done, and perfectly done, by this poor Maria. For friendship she did it; I find that beautiful, I. You destroy her work, restore the confusion as of a rat's nest—finally, will you tell me *why*?"



"Stephanie," Honor spoke gently, "it was my drawer, not Maria's. I couldn't let the Sister think I had put it in that beautiful order. I hadn't, you see."

"Quite right!" said Patricia shortly. "Of course you couldn't, you little thing—being the little thing you are!"

"You do see, don't you, Stephanie dear?" continued Honor anxiously. "I couldn't take the credit that didn't belong to me: and if I had waited to explain afterward, I might have got Maria into trouble, when she had done this lovely thing to help me, as she thought."

"My faith, I do not see at all!" Stephanie spoke doggedly. "Your drawer was at four pins" (*à quatre épingles*; as we should say "in apple-pie order") "when our Sister inspected it. What more is required? I think you are all mad together, you Americans and English. And now Maria will get the prize!"

"I sincerely hope she will!" said Honor.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE APPLES OF ATALANTA

The day of the Race dawned clear and bright; as perfect a day as heart could desire. Long before the hour the guests began to arrive; fathers, mothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, all in their best, all with shining faces of expectation. The *Fête d'Atalante* was Prize Day, Class Day, Commencement, all in one, at Pension Madeleine. The garden was in order; in saying that, one says a great deal. For a week past Margoton had been at work with rake, broom, trowel and shears; for a week the girls, in every spare moment, had diligently weeded the brick alleys, snipped off faded leaves and blossoms, tied up vines, etc., etc. The result was a perfection altogether dazzling, said Madame, making her final round of inspection. Let one but observe these bricks! They shone as if—but as if each one had been waxed.

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"*Parbleu!*" said Margoton. "The reason of that, my faith? It is that they *have* been waxed, saving the honor of Madame."

The strip of lawn on either side of the broad alley was covered with benches, which filled rapidly as the hour approached. Here was Stephanie's family, her stout, comfortable father, with frock coat, and double chin; her thin, anxious little mother, whose bead-like eyes were already measuring the paces that must be run, and comparing her child's legs with those of the other girls. Here were the Marquis and Marquise de la Tour de Provence, very high-nosed and aristocratic, also—it must be confessed—very vacuous in expression. Here was Madame Poirier, Vivette's mother, in maroon cashmere with an eruption of shiny black buttons along every seam. These buttons had been fashionable some years ago, but were now no longer so, and the good lady had used them, as she fondly imagined, to produce an effect "altogether of gentility." Here at one side, was a little group that caught the eye at once: a handsome lady, richly dressed, beside her a singularly beautiful girl. Mrs. Damian, entering the garden with Miss Folly, saw them, and made her way toward them at once.

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"Desmonds!" she explained to Miss Folly. "I should know a Desmond if I met him in the desert of Sahara; this must be Mrs. Clifford. How do you do, Mrs. Clifford Desmond? I am Mrs. Damian. I came very near marrying your father-in-law a hundred years ago—or perhaps it was only fifty. Is this your elder daughter? I have seen the younger one; knew her for a Desmond across the Public Garden."

"Is it possible that I have the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Damian?" cried the lady. "A most unexpected privilege! May I present my daughter Helena? Helena, my love, Mrs. Damian!" Mrs. Desmond spoke with great *empressement*. "It was my little Patricia you saw in the garden; my baby! She is a pupil here. Patricia, this way, darling! I wish to present you to Mrs. Damian."

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Patricia made her graceful reverence; greeted her mother civilly, though without enthusiasm, and turned to her sister.

"Hello, Imp! I'm as tall as you!"

"I believe you are, Pixie!" said Helena Desmond, known as Imperia to her friends and schoolmates. "Great weeds do grow apace, you know! I don't believe you can wear the dress we have brought you from Paris. Who is the girl with red hair? She looks like a duck."

"She speaks but to quack!" replied Patricia. "That is Honor Bright. She is going away—"

Patricia stopped abruptly. To her amazement and disgust, something seemed to swell up in her throat, choking her; at the same time her eyes began to blur and smart.

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"Good-by!" she said. "I must go!" and she fairly ran away.

Honor now came flying up to greet Mrs. Damian. She, like Patricia, was in her running dress, a simple white tunic, reaching just below the knee; her bright hair floated on her shoulders. Mrs. Damian surveyed her with evident pleasure.

"Mrs. Clifford Desmond, this is my little cousin!" she said. "Seymour Bright's daughter. I am taking her home with me soon. Well, Honor, and do you expect to win the apples? Eh?"

"It is that I shall do my possible!" Honor had made her pretty courtesy to both ladies, and was casting shy, admiring glances at Helena. She spoke now carefully, anxious to have her English correct; and naturally fell into the mistake of over-carefulness. "It is Patricia, who runs bestly, my aunt; we strive, each as we can, in our *manière*. Ah!" she started, and her hands came together with a clasp. "Graciously will to excuse me, mesdames! I see—"

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She was gone; Mrs. Damian looked after her complacently.

"They call her 'Oriole,' I believe, or some such name. She certainly moves like a bird. Your daughter will have to do *her* possible, Mrs. Desmond, to win the race."

"Pat's legs are longer," said Helena Desmond judicially, "but the little one has the pace. I shall put my money on her."

Whither had Honor flown? To the garden gate, that opening from the kitchen garden, in which three figures now appeared. Two of them were tall, massive figures of women, resplendent in full Swiss costume, their broad, comely faces alight with pleasure: the third, that of a boy, slight and delicate, walking with crutches.

"Zitli! Gretli! Oh, I am so glad, so glad to see you! Oh, how angelic of you to come!"

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"And we, then, my little mademoiselle!" cried Gretli, seizing the outstretched hands. "Are we glad, do you suppose? Eh, Zitli? Have we missed her, our little guest? Say then, thou!"

Zitli nodded emphatically.

"As one misses the sunlight!" he said. "We are happy to be here, mademoiselle. We come to see you win the apples—which behold!" he added, drawing a parcel from his pocket. "May I not show them, my Sister?"

"But no! certainly not!" Gretli shook her head vehemently. "I must take them at once to Madame. Well then," seeing the disappointment in both faces, "it may be that a tiny peep—since after all it is Mademoiselle Honor who will finally possess them—But turn thy back, that no one else see!"

Shaking out their wide skirts, the sisters stood before Honor and Zitli, screening them effectively from sight. Eagerly Zitli opened the neat wooden box; eagerly Honor bent forward, to peep at the trophy, the three golden apples shining on their bed of green satin.

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"But it is a jewel!" she cried. "Zitli, how beautiful! A queen might wear it."

"No jewel, mademoiselle; wood simply, and gold leaf; but there are strokes in it, that I confess!"

Zitli spoke modestly, but his eyes shone; he was proud, as he well might be, of his work.

"Behold my Ladies, who approach!" cried Gretli. "Give me quickly the box, my little one! I will return to find thee a place, fear not!"

The sisters moved away, and the boy and girl were left together.

"Zitli," cried Honor, "tell me quickly! How is everybody? How is Atli? And La Dumaine, and Séraphine, and Bimbo, and Moufflon, and Tell, and—"

"*Sapperli poppette!*" cried Zitli, laughing. "One moment, mademoiselle! One at a time, not so? My brother, he is altogether well. He is in the high Alps, hunting the chamois, in manner that he could not come with us to the fête. The animals? Figure to yourself that La Dumaine has a calf! the image of herself, white as the moon, altogether beautiful. Mademoiselle, we have taken the liberty—my sister thought you would not object—briefly, we have named her La Moriole."

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"*No!* you haven't! Oh, Zitli, how perfectly *darling* of you! Oh, I am so delighted! Oh, how I should like to see her!"

"For example! We are hoping, my sister and I—my brother also, if he were not absent—that mademoiselle will soon do us the honor to visit the Châlet again, to see her namesake, and—"

He stopped short, seeing Honor's face change.

"Zitli," she cried, "I shall never see the Châlet again! never, never, never! I am going away, across the ocean, to America. My heart is broken, so I shall not live long, do you see? I am glad of that, of course, because I have to be cheerful, and that is not easy with a broken heart—Zitli! you are laughing at me!"

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A quick flush swept over Honor's face. Zitli, instantly responsive, seized her hand.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle! I implore your forgiveness!" he cried. "I was not laughing, only smiling. Mademoiselle looks so—in fine, so other than heart-broken."

"Looks mean little!" Honor was really hurt. She had thought Zitli would understand. She longed to quote to him the lines which seemed so appropriate to her condition:

"When hollow hearts shall wear a mask  
'Twill break thine own to see,  
In such a moment I but ask  
That you'll remember me!"

Patricia laughed at them, and said they made neither sense nor poetry, but Maria thought them lovely.

"Looks mean little!" she repeated. "I thought you would understand, Zitli!"

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"Dear mademoiselle, I do understand, indeed I do. It grieves me to the heart that you must go, and that you are unhappy. Only—to cross the ocean! To see that great wonderful country of America—ah! *sapperli!* Think how many would give all they possess for a chance!"

"But—but to leave Switzerland, Zitli! You couldn't bear it yourself?"

Zitli gave his quaint shrug.

"My faith, mademoiselle, I do not know. Not, of course, unless I was sure, sure, of returning to my own country. But it appears to me that America is *your* own country, Mademoiselle Honor. One has—forgive me, but you have said we are friends—one has a duty to that, not so?"

Honor hung her head.

"I never thought of that!" she said. "How could a great country need a girl like me?"

Zitli looked at her with kind grave eyes; she had not realized before how like he was, on his small scale, to the Twins.

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"My brother Atli says, my sister Gretli also, that a country has need of all her children. They should be always ready—pardon, mademoiselle! One beckons you yonder, the ancient lady, very beautiful, on the bench."

"It is my aunt—at least I am to call her aunt!" explained Honor. "Come, Zitli, come and be introduced to her! She is strange, but so kind and good; I want you to know her.

"My aunt," she cried, when Zitli, making his best speed on his crutches, had reached the corner where Mrs. Damian sat, and had made his bow, "this is Zitli, my friend! I am glad for him to know you; and for you to know him!" she added, her cheeks glowing with loyal affection.

Mrs. Damian held out her delicate hand with its weight of costly rings; Zitli took it reverentially in his brown, slender fingers and bowed again over it.

"This is Zitli-my-friend, is it?" said the old lady. "How do you do, Zitli-my-friend? Are you a good boy?"

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Her dark eyes pierced him, Zitli told Gretli afterward, like a sword; never had he encountered such a gaze. He colored high, but met the look bravely.

"As to that, madame, with reverence be it said, it would be necessary to ask the Eternal Father. To be good is my desire, but not yet my accomplishment."

Mrs. Damian nodded. "Well answered! We may all say the same, Zitli-my-friend. Honor has told me about you; will you and your sister come to see me at my hotel before you go home? Good! You spend the night in Vevay? To-morrow then!"

She gave him a nod of dismissal, curt but kindly; Zitli bowed again and stumped away to join his sisters.

"You allow your little—a—charge—to make acquaintance with the peasantry?" Mrs. Desmond spoke in a tone of airy silver, like that Patricia used in her bad moments.

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"I allow—and desire—my little charge to make the acquaintance of good people, wherever she meets them!" Mrs. Damian spoke dryly, with a nod at each clause. "Folly, the sun is in my eyes. Move my chair over yonder, will you?" She indicated a spot at some distance, and with a ceremonious bow to Mrs. Desmond, moved off.

"I should have bitten that woman in another moment!" she explained. "My Professor never liked me to bite in company. This will do! What? Sun here too? Woman, try to have a *little* sense! What did you bring the parasol for?"

She seated herself, with a sweep of satin draperies, and continued,

"And it is to the society of people of that description that you are forcing me back. Forcing me back, do you hear? After fifty years of freedom! For the last ten of them, the desolate freedom of the wild ass, as you say—and I hope you think it is a proper remark for you to make—"

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"I will not repeat it, Mrs. Damian," replied Miss Folly, who had not opened her lips.

"See that you don't! Look! They are going to start. Folly, I—I hope the child will win!"

"I hope she will. It is between her and the Desmond girl, certainly."

"Trip up the Desmond girl! Throw a stone in front of her, can't you? You have no invention, Folly. My Indian Amma would have had a snake up her sleeve, at the very least. Western civilization—so-called—is abhorrent to me, do you hear? There they go!"

The girls were ranged at the head of the broad *allée*; five of them: Patricia, Honor, Stephanie, Vivette, and Desirée de Laval, who, though only thirteen, was tall and long-legged. A pretty sight they were, in their white tunics and sandals. A silver whistle sounded a single clear note; they stood at attention, tense as a strung bow, waiting for the start; a second note, and with a flutter of white garments, a shimmer of bright hair, they were off.

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The *allée* was one hundred yards long; the course was twice the length of it. For the first fifty yards the girls kept well together; after that, practice, weight, and form began to tell. Vivette had no chance from the first, and knew it; she "went in" for every prize as a matter of principle and policy, and pounded along doggedly, bent on doing her best, whatever might be the result. Stephanie made a dash for the lead, but not attaining it, soon lost courage.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, usually the kindest of writers, has shot one barbed arrow at my sex.

"The cow began to run," he says, "as only cows and—it would not be safe to say it—can run."

I wish the dear Doctor could have seen Honor and Patricia run. Vivette was cow-like, if you will; Stephanie was swift, but jerky, and with "not one particle of style!" as Helena Desmond murmured to herself. As they came down the *allée* on the first lap, these two were already dropping behind. Desirée, who was to make in time a notable runner, had not yet found herself, and was leaping like a colt, arms and legs flying like the sails of a windmill.

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"But the other two," said Imperia; "my word, they can run!"

Heads high, arms held close at the side, every muscle in play, yet in perfect control—Patricia and Honor sped down the course, side by side, light as thistle-down, swift as flying arrows, a lovely sight. So Atalanta herself ran, with

"... feet  
That make the blown foam neither swift nor white  
Though the wind winnow and whirl it."

They rounded the turn. Patricia was a step in advance, but only a step; the little breeze that frolicked beside them blew their floating hair together as they ran, the pale gold mingling with the red. Desirée, just behind, gave a wild leap, and dropped on the grass at the side; Stephanie and Vivette were far behind. The excitement grew intense as the two girls came down the home stretch; neck and neck now, not a pace between them.

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"Moriolo! Moriolo!" the girls' voices broke out in a shrill clamor. "Moriolo wins! No! It is Patricia! No, Moriolo! Ah, ah! *Vive la Moriolo!*"

What happened? Certainly Miss Folly had nothing to do with it, for her arms were folded under her neat mantle. At the very end, when almost touching the goal, Patricia seemed to stumble, as if over a loose stone. She recovered herself in an instant, but that instant had carried Honor past her to the finish, just one pace ahead.

A storm of applause broke out, but Honor did not seem to hear it. Panting, breathless, she stared at her rival, who returned her gaze with a smile which was not quite so gay as she meant it to be.

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"Patricia! You are hurt? What was it? But it is not fair! You would have won; I shall tell our Sister! The prize shall be yours!"

"Don't be grotesque, my dear!" Patricia was entirely herself now, and her speech, though still panting, was her own. "It was a close thing, and a pretty race, and I congratulate you. That's all there is to it!"

Still bewildered, Honor examined the ground carefully. The hard white sand showed hardly a trace of the flying feet; there was no sign of any stone.

"It must have rolled away," said Patricia carelessly. "Come on, little thing, and get your prize. And don't be afraid," she added, in an enigmatic tone; "I'll get it next year! No fairy godmother for me, to whisk me overseas. I'll get the apples next time, little Blackbird!"

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## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BLAZE OF GLORY

"There are two ways of doing it!" said Mrs. Damian. "There is the dark lantern, hole-and-corner way, and there is the Blaze of Glory."

Miss Folly looked up inquiringly. She seldom spoke when a look sufficed.

"We can pack the child up at the Pension," Mrs. Damian continued, "sneak off in a cab to the station, leaving a trail of tears and sniffs behind us, and depart as if we were all going to the penitentiary together; or we can give her a Party and a Send-off, and go—as I said—in a Blaze of Glory. What do you say?"

"If I were the child, I should prefer the dark lantern," said Miss Folly thoughtfully.

"Of course you would!" Mrs. Damian swooped like a hawk. "You have not red hair; and you are a mouse. A trained and intelligent mouse—*no!* I have it! You are a mongoose, Folly. Exactly! There is *no* difference. 'The Wild Ass and the Mongoose, an Indian Fable.' What is the plural of mongoose?"

"Mongooses!" replied Miss Folly promptly.

"Right! My former Affliction—I should say companion—would persist in saying 'mongeese.' I corrected her seventeen times; the eighteenth time I threw a sofa-pillow at her, and she left. Egypt was glad at her departing. As I was saying, Mongoose, you have not red hair, nor the dramatic temperament. This child has both. Therefore I decide on the Blaze of Glory. Bring pencil and paper, and we will make a list of the fireworks."

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So it came to pass that the day after the final examinations, when the girls were packing their trunks and exchanging last tokens and protestations of affection, they were told that they were all invited to the Hotel Royal, to spend the evening with Mrs. Damian.

"And with Honor, naturally!" said Soeur Séraphine. "Our Moriolo has already gone to join her venerable relative. Mrs. Damian most kindly sends carriages for us at a quarter before seven o'clock precisely; be ready, my children!"

Honor had gone an hour before, after a talk with Madame Madeleine which she was to remember as long as she lived. The dear lady might have been parting with her own child, so tender was she, so full of affectionate solicitude. She repeated again and again her injunctions; to be good, to be happy; to think sometimes of the friends who loved her.

"Happy?" said poor Honor. "I will try to be good, dear Madame; I will be cheerful, because I have promised; but—happy? I shall never be happy again; never, never, never!"



“OH!” CRIED HONOR. ‘OH, HOW LOVELY!’”

She burst into wild weeping. Madame Madeleine watched her for a little in silence, letting the tears take their way. Then she rose, and opening a drawer of her little *escritoire*—they were sitting in her own room, to which we were admitted only on special occasions—took out a small object.

“Dry thy tears, my child!” she said, in her grave, kind voice. “I have something to show thee!”

It was a miniature-case that she held in her hand. She opened it, and Honor, wiping her swollen eyes, bent to look. A girl smiled at her; a girl older than herself, yet still in the freshness of youth: joyous, frank, beautiful as a flower, the eyes alight with happiness, the perfect mouth trembling to a smile.

“Oh!” cried Honor. “Oh, how lovely! how exquisite! Who is it, Madame?”

“It is my sister!” said Madame gravely. “It is Soeur Séraphine, whom you see every day and all day long, Honor.”

Honor looked again.

“I see it is!” Her voice was full of awe. “Of course it is! But—oh, Madame! What—what happened to our Sister?”

Madame Madeleine paused, as if communing with herself.

“Why not?” she said finally. “It may help! Listen, Honor! This was my sister Marie Séraphine at eighteen; that is, so much of her as could be caught and fixed in color. Of herself, the spirit of gayety and mirth that she was, it gives but the shadow. She was betrothed, to a man whom she tenderly loved; a man of whom one can but say that he seemed sent to earth to show what man could be. They were happy; they were to be married, from this very house, where then my beloved husband was still with me. A week before the wedding day—”

The kind voice faltered a moment; then went quietly on,

“The two young people were in Paris, visiting friends. A great Bazaar was being held for charity, in a certain chapel. They—they went—” the voice broke.

“Oh, madame! I know! I have heard—That terrible fire! So many lives lost—Oh! they were not there?”

Madame bowed her head.

"When the flames broke out, they were near a window. By God's mercy, he—René—was able to break the window, and thrust my sister out into the street. Another woman, and yet another, he rescued; then—the crowd found him; they clung to him, they dragged him—he fell back—"

Honor covered her face with her hands, shuddering.

Madame Madeleine was silent for a few moments; then she went on.

"It is not to agonize thee, my child, that I tell this sad tale. Listen still! At first, my sister prayed for death, as one prays for the morning. God did not send her that relief. Then she sought the religious life, and found therein a measure of peace. Time and work and prayer scarfed over the wound that never could wholly heal. For some years she continued in this, till the convent was broken up; then she came to me.

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"That is the story, my Moriolo, of my sister's life. I do not often speak of it. I tell it to thee, that thou may'st know what real sorrow is, and how it may be borne. Take this knowledge with thee, my child, and may it prove profitable to thee!"

She kissed Honor's forehead gravely, then made a little gesture of dismissal, and turned to replace the miniature.

Creeping away with bowed head and beating heart, Honor met Soeur Séraphine coming along the corridor with her light, swift tread. At sight of her, the Sister's face, tranquil and beautiful, broke into its lovely smile, and Honor started, it was so like the pictured face that had smiled at her a moment; so like, yet—ah, how different!

"*Tiens!*" said Soeur Séraphine. "My little Moriolo, I was seeking thee. The hour approaches, and thy toilette is not yet made. Thou hast been weeping, my child. I could well weep too, at losing thee, but the smile is the better fashion, see'st thou! As Monsieur thy father observed, 'Bokope,' my Moriolo! Come then, and I will tie thy ribbon for thee!"

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"First," said Mrs. Damian, "we will inspect the tokens."

"The tokens?" repeated Honor, slightly bewildered; Mrs. Damian was in one of her most swooping moods, and had already taken her breath away twice.

"Of affection!" replied the lady. "Tokens of affection; souvenirs; gimcracks; anything you choose to call them. This way, my dear!"

She led the way into a little boudoir, which seemed to be furnished largely with tissue paper and parcels, and motioned Honor toward a table on which lay a number of small objects. Honor bent over them in wonder and delight. Nine heart-shaped lockets of rock-crystal, each containing a tiny likeness of herself. Beside them, a larger print of her in a silver frame.

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"Oh! how lovely!" cried Honor, clasping her hands. "How *perfectly* lovely! Are they—do they—"

"They are for your schoolmates, naturally. You said there were nine of them? 'Nine homesick puppies, in nine vehicles, straying sadly down the road to Peking.'<sup>2</sup> Quotation; contains a buried city. H'm! Well! Yes. The large one is for the two good ladies, who do not wear gimcracks. Well? Are you pleased?"

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Hugh Fraser.

"But I am enchanted! They are exquisite. And all the girls have been begging me for my picture. But when were they taken, my aunt?"

"Folly snapped her kodak at you, the day of the race, and had the print enlarged. I found the lockets at Interlaken. Now you know as much as I do. Glad you like them!"

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"And—oh! and my hair looks dark!" cried Honor. "It really does!"

"Yes, that is the only trouble with the likeness. Red hair should be powdered before photographing, or it looks perfectly black."

"Oh, if it only were!" cried poor Honor. "I have always longed so for dark hair, madame. In America—would it be wicked if I blacked it, my aunt? It is wicked in Switzerland, our Sister says."

"It would be idiotic," said Mrs. Damian, "which is more to the point. Don't be an idiot, child, whatever else you are. Look! Here is your dressing-case. Like it?"

But here Honor became speechless. Darkest green morocco, lined with satin, fitted with brushes, combs, and innumerable bottles, all in warm-white ivory, all marked—H.B. What could fourteen-year-old Honor say at sight of this marvel? She could only gasp, and clasp her hands together. It was some minutes before she managed to stammer out,

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"I am combled! I am altogether combled, madame! What generosity, what goodness!"

"You like it?" repeated Mrs. Damian, watching her with evident pleasure.

"I have dreamed of such a thing!" said Honor. "I never thought to see one. Can it possibly be actually mine, madame?"

"It not only can, but is. Nobody else would want it, you see, with your initials on it."

"I thank you! Oh, I thank you a hundred thousand times, for the beautiful, beautiful things, but, ah, how much more for your kindness! It enlarges me the heart! I—I—" Honor faltered.

"*Don't cry!* If you cry, I'll break all the bottles. Here! take these chains and put the lockets on them!" Mrs. Damian held out a box containing a number of slender gold chains. "When the girls come, you may put them round their necks and make a pretty speech to each one. I have no time for pretty speeches. H'm! Folly, how about the emeralds? Pretty, with the white frock and the hair, eh?"

"Pretty, but very unsuitable!" said Miss Folly briefly.

"True! though I don't know what business it is of yours. No ornaments at all, eh? Much better so! Put the diamond stars in my cap, will you? *Some one* must dress up a little; if you say much more, Mongoose, I'll make you wear the emeralds yourself, and a pretty sight you'd be!"

Honor privately thought that Miss Folly needed nothing more to make her a pretty sight. In her simple dark blue dress, with the fichu of soft net and the old-fashioned topaz brooch, she was pretty enough, in all conscience. She seemed never in the least discomposed by Mrs. Damian's abrupt speeches. She smiled now and went away, presumably to arrange the diamonds.

"H'm!" said Mrs. Damian. "Sit down, my dear. Don't fidget! Your friends will be here soon. The last party I gave—let me see! Was it in Russia? After the last one I gave there, I remember, the servants ate up all the candles. But—no! the very last one was in Africa, in the Great Desert. My dear! would you like to hear about it? Fold your hands in your lap—lightly! Don't clasp them. I am not Grand Opera. And don't turn in your toes! So! We were quite a caravan, and there had been a sandstorm which came very near being the final party for all of us—h'm! yes! Well—so when we got to the nearest oasis and found we were all alive, it seemed proper to celebrate. You see?"

Mrs. Damian swooped; Honor blinked and caught her breath, then nodded eagerly.

"I see, my aunt! Continue, I pray you!"

"We ranged the camels and horses in a circle; after watering them, naturally. The mats were spread, and the Mohammedans said their prayers: well, I said mine too, only without demonstration. I am too old to show you how a Moslem prays; he kneels, tumbles forward on his forehead, then back on his heels. Very singular! I'd make Folly do it for you, but she has scruples." This, as Miss Folly entered with the cap. "Thanks, Folly! Put it on for me, will you? Straight, please! None of your piratical rakishness! I believe you are a Buccaneer in disguise! Well, we supped on fresh dates, locusts and wild honey—I felt like John the Baptist—I had a garment of camel's hair, too, though probably different from his— What is it, my dear? Keep your eyes in your head; they look better there."

"Pardon me, my aunt! But—locusts? Really?"

"Really! fried in olive oil; crisp, and not at all bad. The Sheik could not eat with us, we being Infidels, but he sent us coffee, and was very friendly. Indeed, he offered to buy me. I was too old for a wife, he said, but he liked my talk, and thought I would do for a mother. I never was so flattered in my life; but my Professor decided to keep me. We had water that night to wash in; a small pitcherful, but still water, a great luxury. For a week we had washed in sand. But yes, certainly!" at Honor's exclamation of amazement. "It is often so in the desert, where there isn't water enough to drink. Sand is efficacious, but gritty. Ah! here come our friends."

The girls entered on the stroke of seven, blushing and twittering, shepherded by Soeur Séraphine in her gray dress and spotless coif.

"She looks like a Princess of the Blood!" murmured Mrs. Damian. "Learn to hold yourself like that, Honor, and your hair may be red or green or piebald, it will not matter. Good evening, my Sister! I am delighted to see you. Young ladies, you are very welcome."

Mrs. Damian's French was that of one who to a natural gift has added fifty years of practice; nevertheless, she spoke English now, having divined with her lightning instinct that the Sister's one little heavenly vanity was her English.

"Ze plaisir—pardon!—ze pleasure is teetotally to oz, madame! Be'old oz gazzered as von 'eart, von speerit, von sentiment, to greet you and our beloved young friend. Honor, all to thee, my little one! My children, *English!*"

The last words were a swift aside to the girls, and brought comfort or disaster, according to one's nationality. All very well for Patricia and Maria, though the latter could only mumble, not

having the gift of tongues, scarcely even of her own. Vivette enunciated neatly her "Good evening, Mrs. and Miss. 'Ow do you carry yourself?" and passed on, swelling visibly with modest pride. Rose Marie and most of the others escaped with a polite murmur which might have been English or Choctaw. But poor Stephanie! she had hoped to escape speech altogether by keeping well behind the Sister's ample robes. English was to her an "apoplexy of a language," and she rather made a point of not knowing any. But now little Loulou, who had spoken very nicely, and who had her own idea of what was proper, gave a shrewd pinch to Stephanie's arm, at the very instant when Soeur Séraphine, extending a firm hand, drew her inexorably forward into full view.

"Aie! goodnight!" shrieked Stephanie, bobbing a distracted courtesy.

The girls tittered; Soeur Séraphine flushed. Mrs. Damian's lips twitched for a moment, but she rose to the occasion.

"I am glad to see you, my dear!" she said cordially. "You are Stephanie Langolles, I think? You are to sit next Honor at supper. And there is the bell this minute!" she added. "Let us come in without ceremony; Honor, lead the way with the Sister, will you?"

Honor would never acknowledge that the Feast of Departure surpassed the *Fête de Retour* at the Pension, but Soeur Séraphine declared she had never seen anything so charming. Mrs. Damian nodded, well pleased. It was a feast of birds, she explained; of orioles, as nearly as Miss Folly could make it with crêpe paper and black pins. Beside each plate stood a little black and orange bird, holding a card in his bill. The soup was in swan-shaped cups, the long necks curving to form the handles.

"It should be birds' nest soup, of course," said the hostess, "but there were no nests in the market."

The potato balls that accompanied the roast duck were bird-shaped, too, golden-brown ducklings, with peppercorn eyes. And when it came to the dessert—oh! oh! could it be possible? Who ever saw a mother hen of strawberry ice-cream, with pink and white chickens clustering round her? Long before this point was reached, the girls' tongues were loosened, and they were chattering like a flock of sparrows.

When it came to "second helps," Mrs. Damian nodded to Honor, who slipped quietly out and returned, bringing the "tokens." She went round the table, with a kiss and a murmured word for each girl as she clasped the chain round her neck. Her eyes were bright with tears, but she would not let them fall. Mrs. Damian watched her keenly, and nodded to herself well pleased. The child was thoroughbred; no danger of a scene!

As the girls burst into exclamations of wonder and delight, Honor slipped out again, in obedience to a signal from Miss Folly, who without a word led her into the tissue-paper room. On the bed lay a traveling costume of russet wool, tasteful and simple; beside it the prettiest of hats to match. Gloves, belt, shoes of russet suède; nothing was wanting.

"Dress yourself quickly," said Miss Folly. "I must go and help Mrs. Damian. *Don't stop to think!* Time for that afterwards. You have twenty minutes!"

She vanished. Honor never could remember how she got through those twenty minutes. She only knew that before they were over, she was ready, and stood trembling in every limb, unable, it seemed to her, to speak or move. The door opened; there stood Mrs. Damian, Miss Folly behind her, both dressed for traveling.

"Good!" said Mrs. Damian. "You will make a traveler! Come!"

She took Honor's hand in her firm, cool grasp, and led her back to the dining room. The girls were deep in the mysteries of costume crackers, putting on paper caps and bonnets, shrieking with laughter. At sight of the three, they sprang up in amazement.

"Oh!" cried Stephanie. "Oh, Moriolo! No! no! It cannot be. You do not leave us!"

"Hush!" Mrs. Damian's tone was kindly, but final. "No tears or tantrums! Nothing of the sort. The Sister will explain all. Kiss her, and say good-by!"

All their mirth gone in a moment, the girls flocked round Honor, with tears, embraces, broken words of affection.

"Don't forget me, little thing!" whispered Patricia. "You've done a lot for me, though you don't know it. *Au revoir* in New York some day!"

"Moriolo," cried Stephanie, "my heart breaks! I perish!"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Damian.

"Compose thyself, my child!" said Soeur Séraphine. "This is the inevitable, to which we must bow. Adieu, Honor! The good God be with thee, little beloved one!"

"Adieu! Adieu, Moriolo! Do not forget us! Come back to us!"

They were all at the door now, clustering like bees, waving hands and handkerchiefs. Looking back for the last time, Honor saw Soeur Séraphine's face, with its heavenly smile of patience and kindness. She smiled back bravely; the carriage started, rolled swiftly on.

What followed was all like a dream. The station a gleam with lights; the train standing panting in slow, regular breaths, ready for the start; the guard's cry, "In the carriage, gentlemen and ladies, if you please!"; the smiling porter who took possession of them and their belongings, even the precious dressing-bag, to which Honor would fain have clung. Here it was, though, a moment later, in this little fairy-like cabin with its two white berths, one above the other.

"Folly prefers the upper berth," said Mrs. Damian. "I can't imagine why, unless from mungoosiness. Good night, child! Sleep well! Remember, the train will say *anything you want it to say*. Try 'good luck'!"

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What *was* the train saying? Lying in the white berth, her brain still throbbing, her heart still beating fast, Honor tried to listen, tried to fit words to the rhythmic sound.

"Good luck! good luck!" That did not quite fit. "Clank-clank—good luck! clank—clank—buck up!"

Good-by, ah, good-by!

"On the Alp the grass is sweetest,  
Li-u-o, my Queen!"

That went better, but still—

The locomotive found its stride; the train settled into a smooth rhythmic movement, which steadily, insensibly, straightened out the twisted nerves, quieted the throbbing brain, soothed, lulled, comforted.

"Tumpty tum, tumpty tum,  
Tumpty, tumpty, tumpty tum!"

And as sleep came softly stealing, drawing her veil of quietness over the tired child, she murmured, half awake, half in slumber, the old, old words:

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"Four corners to my bed,  
Four angels round my head,  
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on!"

THE END

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Transcriber's Note:

Punctuation has been standardised. Spelling, hyphenation, accents, and, on page 234, "isnt" for "isn't" have been retained as in the original publication.

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