

The Ice Maiden

Hans Christian Andersen

Let us visit Switzerland. Let us take a look at that magnificent land of mountains, where the forests creep up the sides of the steep rocky walls; let us climb to the dazzling snow-fields above, and descend again to the green valleys below, where the rivers and streams rush along as if afraid they will be too late to reach the ocean and disappear. The burning rays of the sun shine in the deep dales and also on the heavy masses of snow above, so that the ice blocks which have been piling for years melt and turn to thundering avalanches or heaped-up glaciers.

Two such glaciers lie in the broad ravines under the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, near the little mountain town of Grindelwald. They are strange to look at, and for that reason, in summertime many travelers come here from all parts of the world. They cross the lofty, snow-capped hills, and they come through the deep valleys; then they have to climb for several hours, and as they ascend, the valleys seem to become deeper and deeper, until they look as if they are being viewed from a balloon. Often the clouds hang around the towering peaks like thick curtains of smoke, while down in the valley dotted with brown wooden houses, a ray of the sun may be shining brightly, throwing into sharp relief a brilliant patch of green, until it seems transparent. The water foams and roars, and rushes along below, but up above the water murmurs and tinkles; it looks as if silver ribbons were streaming down over the rocks.

On both sides of the ascending road are wooden houses. Each house has its little potato garden, and this is a real necessity; for within those doors are many hungry mouths - there are many children, and children are often wasteful with food. From all the cottages they swarm out and besiege travelers, whether these be on foot or in carriages. All the children are little merchants; they offer for sale charming toy wooden houses, replicas of those that are built here in the mountains.

Some twenty years ago there often stood here, but always somewhat apart from the other children, a little boy who was also eager to do some business. He would stand there with an earnest, grave expression, holding his chip-box tightly with both hands, as if afraid of losing it; but it was this seriousness, and the fact that he was so small, that caused him to be noticed and called forward, so that he often sold more than all the others - he didn't exactly know why himself.

His grandfather lived high up on the mountain, where he carved out the neat, pretty little houses. In a room up there he had an old chest full of all sorts of carved things - nutcrackers, knives, forks, boxes with cleverly carved scrollwork, and leaping chamois - everything that would please a child's eye. But little Rudy, as he was called, gazed with greater interest and longing at the old gun that hung under the beams of the roof. "He shall have it some day," his grandfather had said, "but not until he's big and strong enough to use it."

Small as the boy was, he took care of the goats. If knowing how to climb along with the goats meant that he was a good goatherd, then Rudy certainly was an excellent goatherd; he could even go higher than the goats, for he loved to search for birds' nests high up in the tops of the trees. He was bold and daring. No one ever saw him smile, except when he stood near the roaring waterfall or heard the rolling of an avalanche.

He never played with the other children; in fact, he never went near them except when his grandfather sent him down to sell the things he had carved. And Rudy didn't care much for that; he would much rather climb about in the mountains or sit home with his grandfather and hear him tell stories of ancient times and of the people at nearby Meiringen, where he

was born. This race, he said, had not always lived there; they were wanderers from other lands; they had come from the far North, where their people still lived, and were called "Swedes." This was a good deal for Rudy to learn, but he learned still more from other teachers - the animals that lived in the house. There was a big dog, Ajola, which had belonged to Rudy's father, and there was a tomcat. Rudy had much to thank the tomcat for - the Cat had taught him to climb.

"Come on out on the roof with me!" the Cat had said one day, very distinctly and intelligibly, too. For to a little child who can hardly speak, the language of hens and ducks, cats and dogs, is almost as easily understood as that of fathers and mothers. But you must be very young indeed then; those are the days when Grandpa's stick neighs and turns into a horse, with head, legs, and tail.

Some children keep these thoughts longer than others, and people say that these are exceedingly backward, and remain children too long. But people say so much!

"Come on out on the roof with me, little Rudy!" was one of the first things the Cat said, and Rudy could understand him.

"It's all imagination to think you'll fall; you won't fall unless you're afraid! Come on! Put one of your paws here, and another there, and then feel your way with your forepaws. Use your eyes and be very active in your limbs. If there's a hole, jump over it the way I do."

And that's what little Rudy did. Very often he sat on the sloping roof of the house with the Cat, and often in the tops of the trees, and even high up among the towering rocks, where the Cat never went.

"Higher! Higher!" the trees and bushes said. "Can't you see how we climb - how high we go, and how tightly we hold on, even on the narrowest ledge of rock?"

And often Rudy reached the top of the hill even before the sun; there he took his morning draught of fresh, strengthening mountain air, that drink which only Our Lord can prepare, and which human beings call the early fragrance from the mountain herbs and the wild thyme and mint in the valley. Everything that is heavy in the air is absorbed by the overhanging clouds and carried by the winds over the pine woods, while the essence of fragrance becomes light and fresh air - and this was Rudy's morning draught.

Sunbeams, daughters of the sun who bring his blessings with them, kissed his cheeks. Dizziness stood nearby watching, but dared not approach him. The swallows from his grandfather's house below (there were at least seven nests) flew up toward him and the goats, singing, "We and you, and you and we!" They brought greetings from his home, even from the two hens, who were the only birds in the house; however, Rudy had never been very intimate with them.

Young as he was he had traveled, and quite a good deal for such a little fellow. He was born in Canton Valais, and brought from there over the hills. He had recently traveled on foot to the near-by Staubbach, that seems to flutter like a silver veil before the snow-clad, glittering white Jungfrau. And he had been to the great glaciers near Grindelwald, but there was a sad story connected with that trip; his mother had met her death there, and it was there, as his grandfather used to say, that "little Rudy had lost all his childish happiness." When he was less than a year old he laughed more than he cried, as his mother had written; but from the time he fell into the crevasse his whole nature had changed. His grandfather didn't talk about this very much, but it was known all over the mountain.

Rudy's father had been a coach driver, and the big dog that now shared the boy's home had always gone with him on his journeys over the Simplon down to Lake Geneva. Rudy's relatives on his father's side lived in the Rhone valley, in Canton Valais, where his uncle was a celebrated chamois hunter and a famous Alpine guide. Rudy was only a year old

when he lost his father, and his mother decided to return with the child to her own family in the Berner Oberland. Her father lived a few hours' journey from Grindelwald; he was a wood carver, and his trade enabled him to live comfortably.

With her infant in her arms she set out toward home in June, accompanied by two chamois hunters, over the Gemmi toward Grindelwald. They had made the greater part of the journey, had climbed the highest ridges to the snow fields and could already see her native valley with the familiar scattered cottages; they now had only to cross the upper part of one great glacier. They newly fallen snow concealed a crevasse, not deep enough to reach the abyss below where the water rushed along, but deeper than a man's height.

As she was carrying her child the young woman suddenly slipped, sank down, and instantly disappeared. Not a shriek or groan was heard, only the wailing of a little child. It was over an hour before her two companions could obtain ropes and poles from the nearest house to pull her out; and after tremendous labor they brought from the crevasse what they thought were two dead bodies. Every means of restoring life was tried, and at last they managed to save the child, but not the mother. Thus the old grandfather received in his house, not a daughter, but a daughter's son, the little one who laughed more than he cried. But a change seemed to have come over him since his terrible experience in the glacier crevasse - that cold, strange ice world, where the Swiss peasant believes the souls of the damned are imprisoned till doomsday.

The glacier lies like a rushing stream, frozen and pressed into blocks of green crystal, one huge mass of ice balanced on another; the swelling stream of ice and snow tears along in the depths beneath, while within it yawn deep hollows, immense crevasses. It is a wondrous palace of crystal, and in its dwells the Ice Maiden, queen of the glaciers. She, the slayer, the crusher, is half the mighty ruler of the rivers, half a child of the air. Thus it is that she can soar to the loftiest haunts of the chamois, to the towering summits of the snow-covered hills, where the boldest mountaineer has to cut footrests for himself in the ice; she sails on a light pine twig over the foaming river below, and leaps lightly from one rock to another, with her long, snow-white hair fluttering about her, and her blue-green robe glistening like the water in the deep Swiss lakes.

"To crush! To hold fast! That is my power!" she says. "And yet a beautiful boy was snatched from me - one whom I had kissed, but not yet kissed to death! He is again among human beings - he tends his goats on the mountain peaks; he is always climbing higher and still higher, far, far from other humans, but never from me! He is mine! I will fetch him!"

So she commanded Dizziness to undertake the mission; it was in the summertime and too hot for the Ice Maiden in the valley where the green mint grew; so Dizziness mounted and dived. Now Dizziness has a flock of sisters - first one came, then three of them - and the Ice Maiden selected the strongest of those who wield their power indoors and out. They perch on the banisters of steep staircases and the guard rails of lofty towers; they run like squirrels along the mountain ridges and, leaping away from them, tread the air as a swimmer treads water, luring a victim onward to the abyss beneath.

Dizziness and the Ice Maiden both reach out for mankind, as the polypus reaches after whatever comes near it. The mission of Dizziness was to seize Rudy.

"Seize him, you say!" said Dizziness. "I can't do it. That wretched Cat has taught him its skill. That human child has a power within himself that keeps me away. I can't touch the little fellow when he hangs from branches out over the abyss, or I'd be glad to tickle his feet and send him flying down through the air. I can't do it!"

"We can seize him!" said the Ice Maiden. "Either you or I! I will! I will!"

"No! No!" A whisper, a song, broke upon the air like the echo of church bells pealing; it was the harmonious tones of a chorus of other spirits of Nature, the mild, soft, and loving

daughters of the rays of the sun. Every evening they encircle the mountain peaks and spread their rosy wings, which, as the sun sinks, become redder and redder until the lofty Alps seem blazing. Mountaineers call this the Alpine glow. When the sun has set, they retire into the white snow on the peaks and sleep there until they appear again at sunrise. Greatly do they love flowers and butterflies and mankind, and they had taken a great fancy to little Rudy.

"You shall not catch him! You shall not have him!" they sang.

"I have caught greater and stronger ones than he!" said the Ice Maiden.

Then the daughters of the sun sang of the traveler whose cap was torn from his head by the whirlwind, and carried away in stormy flight. The wind had power to take his cap, but not the man himself. "You can seize him, but you cannot hold him, you children of strength. The human race is stronger and more divine even than we are; they alone can mount higher than our mother the sun. They know the magic words that can compel the wind and waves to obey and serve them. Once the heavy, dragging weight of the body is loosened, it soars upward."

Thus sounded the glorious bell-like chorus.

And every morning the sun's rays shone on the sleeping child through the one tiny window of the old man's house. The daughters of the sun kissed the boy; they tried to thaw, to wipe out the ice kiss given him by the queen of the glaciers when, in his dead mother's arms, he lay in the deep ice crevasse from which he had only been rescued as if by a miracle.

THE JOURNEY TO THE NEW HOME

Now Rudy was eight years old. His uncle, who lived in the Rhone valley on the other side of the mountain, wanted to take the boy, so that he could have a better education and be taught to take care of himself. The grandfather thought this would be better for the boy, so agreed to part with him.

As the time for Rudy's departure drew near, there were many others besides Grandfather to take leave of. First there was Ajola, the old dog.

"Your father was the coachman, and I was the coachman's dog," said Ajola. "We often traveled back and forth, and I know both dogs and men on the other side of the mountains. I never had the habit of speaking very much, but now that we have so little time to talk to each other, I'll say a little more than I usually do, and tell you a story that I've been thinking about for a long time. I can't understand it, and you can't either, but that doesn't matter. I have learned this: the good things of this world aren't dealt out equally either to dogs or to men; not everyone is born to lie in someone's lap or to drink milk. I've never been accustomed to such luxury. But I've often seen a puppy dog traveling inside a post carriage, taking up a human being's seat, while the lady to whom he belonged, or rather who belonged to him, carried a bottle of milk from which she fed him. She also offered him sweet candy, but he wouldn't bother to eat it; he just sniffed at it, so she ate it herself. I was running in the mud beside the carriage, about as hungry as a dog could be, but I had only my own bitter thoughts to chew on. Things weren't quite as they ought to be, but then there is much that is not! I hope you get to ride inside carriages, and ride softly, but you can't make all that happen by yourself. I never could either by barking or yawning."

That was Ajola's lecture, and Rudy threw his arms around the dog's neck and kissed his wet nose. Then he took the Cat in his arms, but he struggled to be free, and cried, "You're getting much too strong for me, but I won't use my claws against you. Climb away over the mountains - I've taught you how to climb. Never think about falling, but hold tightly; don't be afraid, and you'll be safe enough."

Then the Cat ran off, for he didn't want Rudy to see how sorry he was.

The hens were hopping about the floor. One of them had lost its tail, for a traveler, who thought himself a sportsman, had shot it off, mistaking the poor hen for a game bird.

"Rudy is going over the mountains," said one of the hens.

"He's in a hurry," said the other, "and I don't like farewells." So they both hopped away.

And the goats also said their farewells. "Maeh! Maeh!" they bleated; it sounded so sad.

Just at that time there happened to be two experienced guides about to cross the mountains; they planned to descend the other side of the Gemmi, and Rudy would go with them on foot. It was a hard trip for such a little fellow, but he had considerable strength, and was untiring and courageous.

The swallows accompanied him a little way, and sang to him, "We and you, and you and we."

The travelers' route led across the foaming Lüttschine, which falls in many small rivulets from the dark clefts of the Grindelwald glaciers. Fallen tree trunks made bridges, and pieces of rock served here as steppingstones. Soon they had passed the alder thicket, and began to climb the mountain near where the glaciers had loosened themselves from the cliff. They went around the glacier and over the blocks of ice.

Rudy crept and walked. His eyes sparkled with joy as he firmly placed his iron-tipped mountain shoes; it seemed as if he wished to leave behind him an impression of each footstep. The patches of black earth, tossed onto the glacier by the mountain torrents, gave it a burned look, but still the blue-green, glassy ice shone through. They had to circle the little pools that seemed damned up by detached masses of ice. On this route they approached a huge stone which was balanced on the edge of an ice crevasse. Suddenly the rock lost its balance and toppled into the crevasse; the echo of its thunderous fall resounded faintly from the deep abyss of the glacier, far, far below.

Upward, always upward, they climbed; the glacier stretched up like a solid stream of masses of ice piled in wild confusion, wedged between bare and rugged rocks. For a moment Rudy remembered what had been told him, how he had lain in his mother's arms, buried in one of these terrible crevasses. But he soon threw off such gloomy thoughts, and considered the tale as only one of the many stories he had heard. Occasionally, when the guides thought the way was too difficult for a such a little boy, they held out their hands to help him; but he didn't tire, and he crossed the glacier as sure-footedly as a chamois itself.

From time to time they reached rocky ground; they walked between mossless stones, and sometimes between low pine trees or out on the green pastures - always changing, always new. About them towered the lofty, snow-capped peaks, which every child in the country knows by name - the Jungfrau, the Eiger, and the Mönch.

Rudy had never before been up so high, had never before walked on the wide ocean of snow with its frozen billows of ice, from which the wind occasionally swept little clouds of powdery snow as it sweeps the whitecaps from the waves of the sea. Glacier stretched beside glacier, almost as if they were holding hands; and each is a crystal palace of the Ice Maiden, whose joy and in whose power it is to seize and imprison her victims.

The sun shone warmly, and the snow dazzled the eye as if it were covered with the flashing sparks of pale blue diamonds. Countless insects, especially butterflies and bees, lay dead in heaps on the snow; they had winged their way too high, or perhaps the wind had carried them up to the cold regions that to them meant death. Around the Wetterhorn there hung a threatening cloud, like a large mass of very fine dark wool; it sank, bulging with what was concealed within - a foehn, the Alpine south wind that foretells a storm, fearfully violent in its power when it should break loose.

This whole journey - the stops for the nights high up in the mountains, the wild route, the

deep crevasses where the water, during countless ages of time, had cut through the solid stone - made an unforgettable impression on little Rudy's mind.

A deserted stone hut, beyond the snowfields, gave them shelter and comfort for the night. Here they found charcoal and pine branches, and a fire was soon kindled. Sleeping quarters were arranged as well as possible, and the men settled near the blazing fire; they smoked their tobacco and drank some of the warm, spiced beverage they had prepared - and they didn't forget to give Rudy some.

The talk turned to the mysterious creatures who haunt the high Alps: the huge, strange snakes in the deep lakes - the night riders - the spectral host that carry sleepers through the air to the wonderful, floating city of Venice - the wild herdsman, who drives his black sheep over the green pastures: these had never been seen, although men had heard the sound of their bells and the frightful noise of the phantom herd.

Rudy listened to these superstitious tales with intense interest, but with no fear, for that he had never known; yet while he listened he imagined he could hear the roar of that wild, spectral herd. Yes! It became more and more distinct, until the men heard it too. They stopped their talking and listened to it, and then they told Rudy that he must not fall asleep.

It was a foehn that had risen - that violent tempest which whirls down from the mountains into the valley below, and in its fury snaps large trees like reeds, and tosses the wooden houses from one bank of a river to the other, as easily as we would move chessmen.

After an hour they told Rudy the wind had died down and he might go to sleep safely; and, weary from his long walk, he followed their instructions and slept.

Early next morning, they set off again. That day the sun shone for Rudy on new mountains, new glaciers, and new snowfields. They had entered Canton Valais, on the other side of the ridge of mountains visible from Grindelwald; but they still had a long way to go to his new home.

More mountain clefts, pastures, woods, and new paths unfolded themselves; then Rudy saw other houses and other people. But what kind of human beings were these? They were misshapen, with frightful, disgusting, fat, yellowish faces, the hideous flesh of their necks hanging down like bags. They were the cretins- miserable, diseased wretches, who dragged themselves along and stared with stupid, dead eyes at the strangers who crossed their path; the women were even more disgusting than the men. Were these the sort of people who lived in his new home?

THE UNCLE

When Rudy arrived in his uncle's house he thanked God to see people such as he was accustomed to. There was only one cretin, a poor imbecile boy, one of those unfortunate beings who, in their poverty, which amounts to utter destitution, always travel about in Canton Valais, visiting different families in turn and staying a month or two in each house. Poor Saperli happened to be living in the house of Rudy's uncle when the boy arrived.

This uncle was a bold hunter, and a cooper by trade, while his wife was a lively little person, with a face somewhat like a bird's, eyes like an eagle's, and a long, skinny, fuzz-covered neck.

Everything was strange and new to Rudy - dress, customs, employment, even the language, though his young ear would soon learn to understand that. A comparison between his grandfather's little home and his uncle's domicile greatly favored the latter. The room they lived in was larger; the walls were decorated with chamois heads and brightly polished guns; a painting of the Virgin Mary hung over the door, with fresh Alpine roses and a constantly burning lamp before it.

As you have learned, his uncle was one of the most famous chamois hunters of the canton, and also the most experienced and best guide.

Rudy became the pet of the house, but there was another pet too - a blind, lazy old dog, of not much use any more. But he had been useful once, and his value in former years was remembered, so he now lived as one of the family, with every comfort. Rudy patted him, but the dog didn't like strangers and still considered Rudy one. But the boy did not long remain so, for soon he won his way into everyone's heart.

"Things are not so bad here in Canton Valais," said his uncle. "We have plenty of chamois; they don't die off as fast as the wild goats. Things are much better now than in the old days, however much we praise the olden times. A hole has been burst in the bag, so now we have a little fresh air in our cramped valley. When you do away with out-of-date things you always get something better," he said.

When the uncle became really talkative, he would tell the boy about his own and his father's childhood. "In those days Valais was," he called it, "just a closed bag full of too many sick people - miserable cretins. But the French soldiers came, and they made excellent doctors - they soon killed the disease, and the patients too. They knew how to strike - yes, to strike in many different ways; even their girls knew how to strike!" Then he winked at his wife, who was French by birth, and laughed. "The French knew how to split solid stones if they wanted to. It was they who cut out of solid rock the road over the Simplon Pass - yes, and made such a road that I could tell a three-year-old child to go to Italy! You just have to keep on the highway, and there you are!" Then the uncle sang a French song, and ended by shouting "hurrah!" for Napoleon Bonaparte.

It was the first time Rudy had ever heard of France or of Lyons, that great city on the Rhone which his uncle had visited.

In a few years Rudy would become an expert chamois hunter, for he showed quite a flair for it, said the uncle. He taught the boy to hold, load, and fire a gun; in the hunting season he took him up into the hills and made him drink warm chamois blood to ward off hunter's giddiness; he taught him to know the times when, on different slopes of the mountains, avalanches were likely to fall, in the morning or evening, whenever the sun's rays had the greatest effect. He taught him to observe the movements of the chamois and copy their leaps, so that he might light firmly on his feet. He told him that if there was no footing in the rock crevices, he must support himself by the pressure of his elbows, and the muscles, of his thighs and calves; if necessary even the neck could be used.

The chamois is cunning and places sentinels on guard, so the hunter must be still more cunning, and scent them out. Sometimes he could cheat them by arranging his hat and coat on his alpine staff, so that the chamois would mistake the dummy for the man. The uncle played this trick one day when he was out hunting with Rudy.

It was a narrow mountain path - indeed, scarcely a path at all; it was nothing more than a slight ledge close to the yawning abyss. The snow there was half thawed, and the rock crumbled away under the pressure of a boot; so that uncle lay down at full length and inched his way forward. Every fragment of rock that crumbled off fell, knocking and bouncing from one side of the wall to the other, until it came to rest in the depths far below. Rudy stood on the edge of the last point of solid rock, about a hundred paces behind his uncle, and from there he suddenly saw, wheeling through the air and hovering just above his uncle, an enormous vulture, which, with one stroke of its tremendous wings, could easily have hurled the creeping form into the abyss beneath, and there feed on his carcass.

The uncle had eyes for nothing but the chamois, which had appeared with its young kid on the other side of the crevasse. But Rudy kept watching the bird, with his hand on his gun to fire the instant it became necessary, for he understood its intention. Suddenly the

chamois leaped upward; the uncle fired, and the animal was hit by the deadly bullet; but the kid escaped as skillfully as if it had had a lifelong experience of danger and flight. The huge bird, frightened by the report, wheeled off in another direction; and the uncle was saved from a danger of which he knew nothing until Rudy told him about it later.

As they were making their way homeward in high good humor, the uncle humming an air he remembered from his childhood; they heard a strange noise very close to them. They looked all around, and then upward; and there, on the slope of the mountain high above, the heavy snow covering was lifted up and heaving as a stretched linen sheet heaves when the wind creeps under it. Then the great mass cracked like a marble slab, broke, and changed into a foaming cataract, rushing down on them with a rumbling noise like distant thunder. An avalanche was coming, not directly toward Rudy and his uncle, but close to them - much too close!

"Hang on, Rudy!" he cried. "Hang on with all your might!"

Rudy threw his arms around the trunk of a near-by tree, while his uncle climbed higher and clung to the branches of the tree. The avalanche roared past a little distance away, but the gale of wind that swept behind it, the tail of a hurricane, snapped trees and bushes all around them as if they had been dry rushes, and hurled them about in wild confusion. Rudy was flung to the ground, for the trunk of his tree looked as if it had been sawed in two, and the upper part was tossed a great distance. And there, among the shattered branches, Rudy found his poor uncle, with a fractured skull! His hands were still warm, but his face was unrecognizable. Rudy turned pale and trembled, for this was the first real shock of his life, the first terror he had ever experienced.

Late that evening he brought the fatal news to his home - his home, which was now to be the home of grief. The wife stood like a statue, uttering no word, shedding no tear; it was not until the corpse was brought home that her sorrow found utterance. The poor cretin crept into his bed, and was not seen throughout the whole next day. But the following evening he came to Rudy.

"Write a letter for me please!" he said. "Saperli can't write. Saperli can only take letter to post office."

"A letter for you?" Rudy asked. "To whom?"

"To our Lord Christ!"

"What do you mean?"

And the half-wit, as he was called, looked at Rudy with a touching expression, clasped his hands, and said solemnly and reverently, "Jesus Christ! Saperli would send Him a letter to pray Him that Saperli lie dead, and not the master of the house here."

And Rudy pressed his hand. "That letter wouldn't reach up there. That letter wouldn't restore him to us."

He found it very difficult to convince Saperli how impossible his request was.

"Now you must be the support of the house," said his aunt. And Rudy became just that.

BABETTE

"Who is the best hunter in Canton Valais?" The chamois knew well. "Beware of Rudy!" they might have said to each other. And, "Who is the handsomest hunter?" "Oh, it's Rudy!" the girls said. But they didn't add, "Beware of Rudy!" And their serious mothers didn't say so either, for he bowed as politely to them as to the young girls.

He was so brave and happy; his cheeks were so brown, his teeth so white, his dark eyes so sparkling! He was a handsome fellow, just twenty years old. The most icy water never seemed too cold for him to go swimming; in fact, he was like a fish in water. He could

outclimb anyone else; he could cling as tightly as a snail to the cliffs. There were steel muscles and sinews in him; that was clear whenever he jumped. He had learned how to leap, first from the Cat, and later from the chamois. Rudy was considered the best mountain guide, and he could have made a great deal of money in that vocation. His uncle had also taught him the trade of a cooper, but he had no inclination for that. He was interested in nothing but chamois hunting; that was his greatest pleasure, and it also brought in good money. Everybody said Rudy would be an excellent match, if only he didn't set his sights too high. He was the kind of graceful dancer that the girls dreamed about; and more than one carried him in her thoughts while she was awake.

"He kissed me while we were dancing!" the schoolmaster's daughter, Annette, told her dearest friend; but she shouldn't have told it, even to her dearest friend. Such secrets are seldom kept; they ooze out, like sand from a bag that has holes in it. Consequently, however well behaved and good Rudy was, the rumor soon spread about that he kissed his dancing partners. And yet he had never kissed the one he really wanted to kiss.

"Watch him!" said an old hunter. "He has kissed Annette. He has begun with A, and he's going to kiss his way through the whole alphabet!"

A kiss in the dance was all the gossips so far could find to bring against Rudy; but he certainly had kissed Annette, and yet she wasn't the real flower of his heart.

Down at Bex, among the great walnut trees near a small rushing mountain stream, there lived a rich miller. His home was a large house, three stories high, with small turrets; it was made of wood, and covered with tin plates, which shone both in sunshine and moonlight. On the highest turret was a weather vane, a shining arrow piercing an apple - an allusion to Wilhelm Tell's famous arrow shot. The mill was prominent and prosperous looking and allowed itself to be sketched and written about, but the miller's daughter did not permit herself to be described in painting or writing, at least so Rudy would have said. Yet her image was engraved on his heart; her eyes sparkled in it so that it was quite on fire. This fire had, like most fires, begun suddenly. The strangest part of it was that the miller's daughter, the lovely Babette, had no suspicion of it, for she and Rudy had never spoken so much as two words to each other.

The miller was rich, and because of his wealth Babette was rather high to hope for. "But nothing is so high," Rudy told himself, "that one may not reach it. You must climb on, and if you have confidence you won't fall." This was how he had been taught as a child.

Now it so happened that Rudy had some business in Bex. It was quite a journey, for in those days there was no railroad. From the Rhone glaciers, at the very foot of the Simplon, the broad valley of Canton Valais stretches among many and often-shifting mountain peaks, with its mighty Rhone River, whose rising waters often overflow its banks, covering fields and roads, destroying everything. Between the towns of Sion and St. Maurice the valley bends sharply like an elbow, and below St. Maurice it narrows until there is room only for the bed of the river and the narrow carriage road. Canton Valais ends here, and an old tower stands on the side of the mountain like the guardian of the canton, commanding a view across the stone bridge to the customhouse on the other side, where Canton Vaud commences. And the closest of the near-by towns is Bex. Fruitfulness and abundance increase here with every step forward; one enters, so to speak, a grove of chestnut and walnut trees. Here and there cypresses and pomegranates peep out; it is as warm here as if one were in Italy.

Rudy reached Bex, and after finishing his business he took a walk about town; but he saw no one belonging to the mill, not even Babette. And that wasn't what he wanted.

Evening came on; the air was heavy with the fragrance of the wild thyme and the blossoming lime trees; a shining veil of skyblue seemed to lie over the wooded green hills; and a stillness was everywhere. It was not the stillness of sleep or of death - no, it was as

if nature were holding here breath, as of posing, for her image to be photographed on the blue surface of the heavens above. Here and there among the trees in the green field stood poles that carried the telegraph wires through the silent valley. Against one of them there leaned an object, so motionless that it might have been the dead trunk of a tree; it was Rudy, standing there as still as the world around him at that moment. He wasn't sleeping, nor was he dead; but just as great events of the world, or matters of the highest importance to individuals often are transmitted through the telegraph wires without those wires betraying them by the slightest movement or the faintest sound, so there passed through Rudy's mind the one, mighty, overwhelming thought that now constantly occupied him - the thought of his life's happiness. His eyes were fixed on a single point before him - a light that glimmered through the foliage from the parlor of the miller's house, where Babette lived. Rudy stood as still as if he were taking aim at a chamois; but at that moment he was like the chamois itself, which could stand as if chiseled from rock, and in the next instant, if only a stone rolled past, would spring into life and leave the hunter far behind. And so it was with Rudy, for a thought passed through his mind.

"Never give up!" he said. "Visit the mill; say good evening to the miller, and good day to Babette. You won't fall unless you're afraid of falling. If I'm going to be Babette's husband, she'll have to see me sooner or later!"

Then Rudy laughed, and in good spirits, he went to the mill. He knew what he wanted; he wanted Babette!

The river with its yellowish-white water was rolling along, overhung with willows and lime trees. Rudy went along the path, and, as the old nursery rhyme says,

*Found to the miller's house his way;
But no one was at home
Except a pussycat at play!*

The cat, which was standing on the steps, arched its back and mewed, but Rudy was not inclined to pay my attention to it. He knocked at the door, but no one heard him; no one opened the door. "Meow!" said the cat. If Rudy had still been a little boy, he would have understood the cat's language, and known that it said, "No one is home!" But now he had to go over to the mill to find out; and there he was told that the miller had gone on a long journey to Interlaken - "Inter Lacus, among the lakes," as the highly learned schoolmaster, Annette's father, had explained the name. There was going to be a great shooting match held there, to begin the next morning and last for eight days. The Swiss from all the German cantons were assembling there, and the miller and Babette had gone too.

"Poor Rudy" we may well say. It wasn't a lucky time for him to have come to Bex. He could only go home again, which he did, taking the road over St. Maurice and Sion to his own valley, his own mountains. But he wasn't disheartened. The next morning when the sun rose he was in good spirits, for they had never been really depressed.

"Babette is in Interlaken, a good many days' journey from here," he said to himself. "It's a long way if you follow the highway, but not so far if you cut across the mountain, and that's the best way for a chamois hunter. I've traveled that route before; over there is my first home, where I lived with my grandfather when I was a little boy. And there are shooting matches at Interlaken; I'll show I'm the best one there, and I'll be with Babette there too, after I've made her acquaintance."

With his musket and gamebag, and his light knapsack packed with his Sunday best, Rudy went up the mountain; it was the shortest way, though still fairly long. But the shooting matches would only begin that day, and were to last more than a week. During all that time, he had been told, the miller and Babette would be staying with their relatives at Interlaken. So Rudy crossed the Gemmi; he planned to descend near Grindelwald.

Happily and in good health he walked along, enjoying the fresh, pure, invigorating mountain air. The valley sank below him; the horizon widened, showing here one snow-capped summit, there another, until the whole of the bright shining Alpine range was visible. Rudy well knew every snow-covered mountain peak. He was now approaching the Schreckhorn, which pointed its white, powdered stone finger high toward the blue vault above.

At last he had crossed the highest mountain ridge. Now the pasture lands sloped down to the valley that was his old home. The air was light, and his thoughts were light; mountain and valley were blooming with flowers and foliage, and his heart was blooming with the bright dreams of youth. He felt as if old age and death would never approach him; life, power, and enjoyment would be before him always. Free as a bird, light as a bird, was Rudy; and as the swallows flew past him they sang as in the days of his childhood, "We and you, and you and we!" Everything was light and happy.

Down below lay the green-velvet meadows, dotted with brown wooden houses; and the river Lütchine murmured and rolled along. He could see the glacier, with its edges like green glass bordering the dirty snow, and looking down into the deep crevasses, he saw both the upper and lower glacier. The pealing of the church bells came to his ears, as if they were welcoming him to his old home. His heart beat faster, and so many old memories filled his mind that for a moment he almost forgot Babette.

He was again passing along the same road where, as a little boy, he had stood with the other children to sell the carved wooden toy houses. His grandfather's house still stood over above the pine trees, but strangers lived there now. As in the olden days, the children came running to sell their wares. One of them offered him an Alpine rose, and Rudy took it as a good omen, thinking of Babette. Soon he came to the bridge where the two Lütchines unite; here the foliage was heavier and the walnut trees gave grateful shade. Then he could make out waving flags, the white cross on the red ground - the standard of Switzerland as of Denmark - and before him lay Interlaken.

To Rudy it certainly seemed like a wonderful town - a Swiss town in its Sunday dress. Unlike other market towns, it was not a heap of heavy stone buildings, stiff, cold, foreign looking. No, it looked as if the wooden chalets from the hills above had moved down into the green valley below, with its clear stream rushing swiftly as an arrow, and had ranged themselves in rows, somewhat unevenly, to be sure, to form a street. And most beautiful of all, the streets, which had been built since Rudy had last been there as a child, seemed to be made up of all the prettiest wooden houses his Grandfather had carved and that had filled the cupboard at home. They seemed to have transplanted themselves down here and to have grown very much in size, as the old chestnut trees had done.

Every house was a so-called hotel, with carved wooden grillwork around the windows and balconies, and with projecting roofs; they were very neat and dainty. Between each house and the wide, hard-surfaced highway was a flower garden. Near these houses, though on only one side of the road, there stood other houses; if they had formed a double row they would have cut off from view the fresh green meadows where cattle grazed, their bells jingling as in the high Alpine pastures. The valley was surrounded by high mountains, with a little break on one side that revealed the glittering, snow-white Jungfrau, in form the most beautiful of all the Swiss mountains.

What a multitude of gayly dressed ladies and gentlemen from foreign countries! What crowds of country people from the near-by cantons! The marksmen carried the number of their posts in a garland round their hats. There were shouting and racket and music of all kinds, from singing to hand organs and wind instruments. The houses and bridges were decorated with flags and verses. Banners waved, and shot after shot was being fired; to Rudy's ears that was the best music. In all this excitement he almost forgot Babette, though it was for her sake alone that he had gone there.

The marksmen were crowding around the targets. Rudy quickly joined them, and he was the best shot of them all, for he always made a bull's-eye.

"Who's that strange fellow, that very young marksman?" people asked. "He speaks the French of Canton Valais; but he can also express himself fluently in our German," said some.

"He is supposed to have lived in the valley, near Grindelwald, when he was a child," someone explained.

The lad was full of life; his eyes sparkled; his aim and his arm were steady, so his shots were always perfect. Good luck brings courage, and Rudy always had courage. Soon a whole circle of admirers was around him; they showed him their esteem and honored him. Babette had almost disappeared from his thoughts. But suddenly a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a deep voice spoke to him in French.

"You're from Canton Valais?"

Rudy turned and saw a fat man with a jolly face. It was the rich miller from Bex, his broad body hiding the slender, lovely Babette; however, she soon came forward, her dark eyes sparkling brightly. The rich miller was very proud that it was a marksman from his own canton who proved to be the best shot, and was so much admired and praised. Rudy was truly the child of good fortune; that which he had traveled so far to find, but had nearly forgotten since his arrival, now sought him out.

When in a far land one meets people from his own part of the country, it is easy to make friends, and people speak as if they were well acquainted. Rudy was the foremost at the shooting matches, as the miller was foremost at Bex, because of his money and his fine mill. So, though they had never met before, the two men shook hands warmly. Babette, too, gave the young man her hand frankly, and he pressed it and gazed at her in such a way that it made her blush.

The miller spoke of the long trip they had made and of the many large towns they had seen; it had been quite a journey, for they had traveled partly by railroad and partly by post.

"I came the shorter way," said Rudy. "I came over the mountains. There's no road so high that you can't try it."

"But you can also break your neck," said the miller. "And you look as if you probably *will* break your neck some day; you're so daring."

"One never falls so long as one doesn't think of it," said Rudy.

The miller's relatives at Interlaken, with whom he and Babette were staying, invited Rudy to visit them, since he came from the same canton as their kinfolk. It was a wonderful invitation for Rudy. Luck was running with him, as it always does with those who are self-reliant and remember that "Our Lord gives nuts to us, but He does not crack them for us!"

And Rudy sat with the miller's relatives, almost like one of the family. They drank a toast in honor of the best marksman; Babette clinked glasses with Rudy too, and he in return thanked them for the toast.

In the evening the whole party walked on the lovely avenue, past the gay-looking hotels under the walnut trees, and there was such a large crowd that Rudy had to give Babette his arm. He explained to her how happy he was to have met people from Canton Vaud, for Vaud and Valais were good neighbors. He expressed himself so cordially about this that Babette could not keep from squeezing his hand. As they walked there, they seemed almost like old friends, and she was such a lively, pretty little person. Rudy was greatly amused at her remarks about the absurd affectations in the dress of some of the foreign ladies, and the airs they put on; but she really didn't mean to make fun of them, because

there must be some nice people among them - yes, some sweet and lovely people, she was sure, for her godmother was a very superior English lady. Eighteen years before, when Babette was christened, that lady had lived in Bex, and had given Babette the valuable brooch she was wearing. Her godmother had written her twice, and this year they were to have met her here at Interlaken, where she was bringing her daughters; they were old maids, almost thirty, said Babette - she herself was just eighteen.

Her pretty little mouth was not still for an instant, and everything she said appeared to Rudy to be of the greatest importance, and he in turn told her all he had to tell, how he had been to Bex, and how well he knew the mill, and how often he had seen her, though, of course, she had never noticed him. He told her he had been too disappointed for words when he found she and her father were far away; but still it wasn't far enough to keep him from climbing the wall that made the road so long.

Yes, he said all this, and a great deal more, too. He told her how fond he was of her, and how it was for her sake, and not because of the shooting matches, that he had come to Interlaken.

Babette became very silent now; all this that he confided to her was almost too much to listen to.

As they walked on, the sun set behind the mighty peaks, and the Jungfrau stood in all her glory, encircled by the dark green woods of the surrounding mountains. The big crowd stopped to gaze at it; even Rudy and Babette enjoyed the magnificent scene.

"Nowhere is it more beautiful than it is here!" said Babette.

"Nowhere!" agreed Rudy, with his eyes fixed on Babette.

"Tomorrow I must leave," he said a little later.

"Come and visit us at Bex," Babette whispered. "My father will be very pleased!"

ON THE WAY HOME

Oh, what a load Rudy had to carry the next day, when he started his return home over the mountains! He had two handsome guns, three silver cups, and a silver coffeepot - this last would be useful when he set up his own home. But these valuable prizes were not the heaviest burden he had to bear; a still weightier load he had to carry - or did it carry him? - across the high mountains.

The weather was dismal, gloomy, and rainy; the clouds hung like a mourning veil over the mountain summits, and shrouded the shining peaks. The last stroke of the axe had resounded from the woods, and down the side of the mountain rolled the great tree trunks. From the vast heights above they looked like matchsticks, but were nevertheless as big as masts of ships. The Lütchine River murmured its monotonous song; the wind whistled, and the clouds sailed swiftly by.

Suddenly there appeared next to Rudy a young girl; he had not noticed her until she was quite near him. She also was planning to cross the mountain. Her eyes had a peculiar power that compelled one to look into them; they were so clear and deep - bottomless.

"Do you have a sweetheart?" asked Rudy, whose thoughts were filled with love.

"I have none," she laughed, but it seemed as if she were not speaking the truth. "Let us not take the long way around; let us keep to the left - it is shorter."

"Yes, and easier to fall into some crevasse," said Rudy. "You ought to know the route better if you're going to be the guide."

"I know the way very well," she said, "and I have my thoughts collected. Your thoughts are down there in the valley; but up here you should think of the Ice Maiden. People say she is not friendly to the human race."

"I'm not a bit afraid of her," said Rudy. "She couldn't keep me when I was a child, and she won't catch me now that I'm a grown-up man."

Now it became very dark. First rain fell, then snow, and its whiteness was quite blinding.

"Give me your hand, and I shall help you climb," said the girl, touching him with her icy fingers.

"*You* help me?" said Rudy. "I don't yet need a woman's help in climbing!"

Then he walked on away from her quickly. The falling snow thickened about him like a curtain, the wind moaned, and behind him he could hear the girl laughing and singing. It sounded very strange. Surely it must be a specter in the service of the Ice Maiden; Rudy had heard of these things when, as a little boy, he had spent that night on the mountain, during his trip across the mountains.

The snow no longer fell so thickly, and the clouds lay far below him. He looked back, but there was no one to be seen; he could only hear laughing and jeering that did not seem to come from a human being.

When at last he reached the highest part of the mountain, where the path led down into the Rhone valley, he saw in the clear blue heaven, toward Chamonix, two glittering stars. They shone brightly; and he thought of Babette, of himself, and of his good fortune. And these thoughts made him warm.

THE VISIT TO THE MILL

"What grand prizes you have brought home," said his old foster mother. And her strange, birdlike eyes sparkled, as she twisted her thin, wrinkled neck even more strangely and faster than usual. "You carry good luck with you, Rudy. I must kiss you, my dear boy!"

Rudy allowed himself to be kissed, but one could read in his face that he did not enjoy this affectionate greeting.

"How handsome you are, Rudy!" said the old woman.

"Oh, stop your flattery," Rudy laughed; but still the compliment pleased him.

"I repeat it," said the old woman. "And fortune smiles on you."

"Yes, I think you're right there," he said, thinking of Babette. Never before had he longed so for the deep valley.

"They must have come home by now," he told himself. "It's more than two days past the day they intended to return. I must go to Bex!"

So to Bex he went, and the miller and his daughter were home. He was received in friendly fashion, and many messages of remembrance were given him from the family at Interlaken. Babette spoke very little; she had become quite silent, but her eyes spoke, and that was enough for Rudy. The miller, who usually had plenty to say, and was accustomed to making jokes and having them laughed at, for he was "the rich miller," seemed to prefer listening to Rudy's adventures - hearing him tell of the hardships and risks that the chamois hunters had to undergo on the mountain heights, how they had to crawl along the treacherous snowy cornices on the edges of cliffs, attached to the rocks only by the force of wind and weather, and cross the frail bridges cast by the snowstorms over deep ravines.

Rudy looked very handsome, and his eyes flashed as he described the

life of a hunter, the cunning of the chamois and the wonderful leaps they made, the powerful foehn, and the rolling avalanche. He noticed that every new description held the miller's interest more and more, and that he was particularly fascinated by the youth's account of the vulture and the great royal eagle.

Not far from there, in Canton Valais, there was an eagle's nest, built cleverly under a projecting platform of rock, in the face of a cliff; and in it there was an eaglet, but it was impossible to get at it.

A few days before an Englishman had offered Rudy a whole handful of gold if he would bring him the eaglet alive.

"But there is a limit to everything," said Rudy. "You can't get at that eaglet up there; it would be madness to try."

As the wine flowed freely, and the conversation flowed just as freely, Rudy thought the evening was much too short, although it was past midnight when he left the miller's house after this, his first visit.

For a little while the lights shone through the windows, and through the green branches of the trees, while out from the open skylight on the roof crept the Parlor Cat, and along the drainpipe the Kitchen Cat came to meet her.

"Is there any news at the mill?" said the Parlor Cat. "There's some secret love-making in this house! The father doesn't know anything about it yet. Rudy and Babette have been stepping on each other's paws under the table all evening. They trod on me twice, but I didn't mew; that would have aroused suspicion.

"Well, I would have mewed," said the Kitchen Cat.

"What would go in the kitchen wouldn't do in the parlor," said the Parlor Cat. "I certainly would like to know what the miller will say when he hears about this engagement."

Yes, what would the miller say? That Rudy also was most anxious to know; and he couldn't make himself wait very long. Before many days had passed, when the omnibus crossed the bridge between Cantons Valais and Vaud, Rudy sat in it, with his usual self-confidence and happy thoughts of the favorable answer he would hear that evening.

And later that evening, when the omnibus was driving back along the same road, Rudy was sitting in it again, going home, while the Parlor Cat was running over to the mill with the news.

"Look here, you kitchen fellow, the miller knows everything now. The affair has come to a fine end. Rudy came here towards evening, and he and Babette found a great deal to whisper about, as they stood in the hallway outside the miller's room. I lay at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me.

" 'I'll go straight to your father,' said Rudy. 'My proposal is perfectly honorable.'

" 'Do you want me to go with you?' said Babette, 'to give you courage?'

" 'I have enough courage,' said Rudy, 'but if you're with me he'll have to be friendly, whether he likes it or not.'

"So they went in. Rudy stepped hard on my tail - he's awfully clumsy. I mewed, but neither he nor Babette had any ears for me. They opened the door, and went in together, and I too. I jumped up on the back of a chair, for I didn't know if Rudy would kick me. But it was the miller who kicked - and what a kick! Out of the door and back up to the mountains and the chamois! Rudy could take care of them, but not of our little Babette!"

"But what was said?" asked the Kitchen Cat.

"Said? Oh, they said everything that people say when they're wooing! 'I love her, and she loves me; and if there's milk in the can for one, there's milk in the can for two.'

" 'But she's much above you,' said the miller. 'She sits on heaps of grain, golden grain - as you know. You can't reach up to her!'

" 'There's nothing so high that one can't reach it, if one has the will to do it!' said Rudy, for

he is a determined fellow.

" 'But you said a little while ago that you couldn't reach the eaglet in its nest! Babette is still higher than that.'

" 'I'll take them both,' said Rudy.

" 'Yes,' said the miller. 'I'll give her to you when you bring me the eaglet alive!'" Then he laughed until the tears stood in his eyes. 'But now, thank you for your visit, Rudy. Come again tomorrow; then you'll find nobody home! Good-by, Rudy!'

"Then Babette said farewell too, as meekly as a little kitten that can't see its mother.

" 'A promise is a promise, and a man's a man!' said Rudy. 'Don't cry, Babette. I'll bring the eaglet.'

" 'I hope you break your neck!' said the miller. 'And then we'll be spared your visits here! That's what I call kicking him out! Now Rudy's gone, and Babette just sits and cries; but the miller sings German songs he learned in his travels. I'm not going to worry myself about the matter; it wouldn't do any good.'

" But it would look better if you pretended," said the Kitchen Cat.

THE EAGLE'S NEST

From the mountain path there sounded lively yodeling that meant good humor and gay courage. The yodeler was Rudy; he was going to see his friend Vesinand.

"You must help me," he said. "We'll take Ragli with us. I have to capture the eaglet up there on the top of the cliff!"

"Better try to capture the moon first. That would be about as easy a job," said Vesinand. "I see you're in good spirits."

"Yes; I'm thinking about marrying. But now, seriously, you must know how things stand with me."

And soon Vesinand and Ragli knew what Rudy wanted.

"You're a daring fellow," they said. "But you won't make it. You'll break your neck."

"One doesn't fall, so long as one doesn't think of it!" said Rudy.

They set out about midnight, with poles, ladders and ropes. The road led through brushwood and over loose stones, up, always up, up through the dark night. The water roared below, and the water trickled down from above; damp clouds swept heavily along. At last the hunters reached the edge of the precipice, where it was even darker, for the rock walls almost met, and the sky could only be seen through the narrow opening above. Close by was a deep abyss, with the hoarsely roaring water far beneath them.

All three sat quite still. They had to await daybreak, for when the parent eagle flew out, they would have to shoot it if they were to have any hopes of capturing the young one. Rudy was as still as if he were a part of the rock on which he was sitting. He held his gun ready; his eyes were fixed steadily on the highest part of the cleft, where the eagle's nest was hidden under the projecting rock. The three hunters had a long time to wait.

But at last they suddenly heard high above them a crashing, whirring sound, and the air was darkened by a huge object. Two guns took aim at the enormous eagle the moment it left the nest. A shot blazed out; for an instant the outspread wings fluttered, and then the bird slowly began to sink. It seemed that with its tremendous size and wingspread it would fill the whole chasm, and in its fall drag the hunters down with it. The eagle disappeared in the abyss below; the hunters could hear the crashing of trees and bushes, crush by the fall of the bird.

And now the men began to get busy. Three of the longest ladders were tied tightly together. They were supposed to reach the last stepping place on the margin of the abyss, but they did not reach far enough; and the perpendicular rock side was smooth as a brick wall on up to where the nest was hidden under the highest projecting rock overhang. After some discussion they agreed that the only thing to do was to tie two more ladders together, let them down into the chasm from above, and attach these to the three already raised. With immense difficulty they dragged the two ladders up, binding them with ropes to the top; they were then let out over the rock and hung there swaying in the air over the bottomless abyss. Rudy was already seated on the lowest rung. It was an icy-cold morning, and the mist was rising heavily from the dark chasm below. Rudy was like a fly sitting on some bit of a straw that a bird, while building its nest, might have dropped on the edge of a tall factory chimney; but the insect could fly if the straw gave way, while Rudy could only break his neck. The wind howled about him, while far below in the abyss the gushing water roared out from the melting glacier - the palace of the Ice Maiden.

He then made the ladder swing to and fro, like the spider swings its body when it wants to catch anything in its slender thread; and when he, for the fourth time touched the top of the ladders set up from below, he got a good hold on them, and bound them together with sure and skillful hands, though they swayed as if they hung on worn-out hinges.

The five long ladders, which now reached the nest, seemed like a swaying reed knocking against the perpendicular cliff. And now the most dangerous part of the job was to be done, for he had to climb as a cat climbs. But Rudy could do that, for a cat had taught him. He never noticed the presence of Dizziness, who floated in the air behind him, and stretched forth her embracing arms toward him. At last he reached the last step of the highest ladder, and then he found that he was still not high enough even to see into the nest. He would have to use his hands to raise himself up to it; he tried the lowest part of the thick, interwoven branches, forming the base of the nest, to learn if it was sufficiently strong; then having secured a firm hold on a heavy, strong branch; he swung himself up from the ladder, until his head and chest were level with the nest. Then there swept over him a horrible stench of carrion, for putrefied lambs, chamois, and birds littered the nest.

Dizziness, who had little power over him, blew the poisonous odor into his face to make him faint; while down below, on the dank, foaming waters of the yawning ravine, sat the Ice Maiden herself, with her long pale-green hair, staring at him with eyes as deadly as two gun barrels. "Now I will catch you!"

In a corner of the nest Rudy could see the eaglet sitting - a big powerful bird, even though it could not yet fly. Staring straight at it, Rudy somehow held on with one hand, while with the other he cast a noose around the bird. Thus it was captured alive; its legs were held by the tightened cord, and Rudy flung the noose over his shoulder, so that the bird hung a good distance below him. Then he held on to a rope, flung out to help him, until his toes at last touched the highest rung of the ladder.

"Hold tightly; don't be afraid of falling and you won't fall!" That was his early training, and Rudy acted on it. He held tightly, climbed down, and believing he couldn't fall, he didn't fall.

Then there arose loud and joyous yodeling. He stood safely on the firm rocky ledge, with his eaglet.

WHAT NEWS THE PARLOR CAT HAD TO TELL

"Here's what you asked for!" said Rudy, as he entered the miller's house at Bex, and placed a large basket on the floor. When he took the lid off two yellow eyes surrounded by dark rings glared out, eyes so flashing, so fierce, that they looked as though they would burn or blast anything they saw. The neck was red and downy; the short strong beak opened to bite.

"The eaglet!" cried the miller. Babette screamed and sprang back, but could not tear her eyes from Rudy and the eaglet.

"Nothing frightens you!" said the miller to Rudy.

"And you always keep your word," said Rudy. "Everyone has his principles."

"But how did it happen that you didn't break your neck?" asked the miller.

"Because I held tightly," said Rudy. "And so I'm doing now - holding tightly to Babette."

"Better wait till you get her!" laughed the miller; and Babette knew that was a good sign.

"Let's take the eaglet out of the basket; it's horrible to see its eyes glaring. How did you manage to capture it?"

And Rudy had to describe his adventure. As he talked the miller's eyes opened wider and wider.

"With your courage and good luck you could take care of three wives!" said the miller.

"Thank you! Thank you!" cried Rudy.

"But you won't get Babette just yet!" said the miller, slapping the young hunter good-humoredly on the shoulder.

"Do you know the latest news at the mill?" said the Parlor Cat to the Kitchen Cat. "Rudy has brought us the eaglet, and takes Babette in exchange. They have actually kissed each other, and her father saw it! That's as good as an engagement! The old man didn't make any fuss at all; he kept his claws pulled in, took his afternoon nap, and left the two of them to sit and spoon. They have so much to tell each other that they won't have finished until Christmas!"

And they hadn't finished by Christmas, either. The wind shook down the yellow leaves; the snow drifted up in the valleys as well as on the high mountains; the Ice Maiden sat in her stately palace, which grew larger during the winter. The cliffs were covered with sleet, and icicles, big and heavy as elephants, hung down. Where in summer the mountain streams poured down, there were now enormous masses of icy tapestry; fantastic garlands of crystal ice hung over the snow-covered pine trees. Over the deepest valleys the Ice Maiden rode the howling wind. The carpet of snow spread down as far as Bex, so she could go there and see Rudy in the house where he spent so much time with Babette. The wedding was to take place the following summer; and their ears often tingled, for their friends often talked about it.

Then everything was sunny, and the most beautiful Alpine rose bloomed. The lovely, laughing Babette was as charming as the early spring itself - the spring which makes all the birds sing of the summertime and weddings.

"How those two do sit and drool over each other!" said the Parlor Cat. "I'm tired of their mewling now!"

THE ICE MAIDEN

Spring has unfolded her fresh green garlands of walnut and chestnut trees which burst into bloom, especially in the country extending from the bridge at St. Maurice to Lake Geneva and along the banks of the Rhone. With wild speed the river rushes from its sources beneath the green glaciers - the Ice Palace, home of the Ice Maiden, from where she allows herself to be carried on the biting wind up to the highest fields of snow, there to recline on their drifting masses in the warm sunshine. Here she sat and gazed down into the deep valleys below where she could see human beings busily bustling about, like ants on a sunlit stone.

" 'Mental giants,' the children of the sun call you," said the Ice Maiden. "You are only

vermin! One rolling snowball, and your houses and villages are crushed, wiped out!" Then she raised her proud head still higher, and stared with death-threatening eyes about and below her. Then from the valley there arose a strange sound; it was the blasting of rocks - the labors of men - the building of roadbeds and tunnels for the coming of the railroad.

"They work like moles," she said, "digging passages in the rocks, and therefore are heard these sounds like the reports of guns. If I move my palaces, the noise is stronger than the roar of thunder itself."

Then up from the valley there arose thick smoke - moving forward like a fluttering veil, a waving plume - from the locomotive which on the new railway was drawing a train, carriage linked to carriage, looking like a winding serpent. It shot past with the speed of an arrow.

"They think they're the masters down there, these 'mental giants!'" said the Ice Maiden. "But the powers of nature are still the real rulers!"

And she laughed and sang, and it made the valley tremble.

"It's an avalanche!" the people down there said.

But the children of the sun sang still more loudly of the power of mankind's thought. It commands all, it yokes the wide ocean, levels mountains, fills valleys; the power of thought makes mankind lord over the powers of nature.

At that moment a party of climbers crossed the snow field where the Ice Maiden sat; they had roped themselves together, to form one large body on the slippery ice, near the deep abyss.

"Vermin! she said. "You the lords of the powers of nature!" And she turned from them and gazed scornfully into the deep valley, where the railway train was rushing along.

"There they sit, those thoughts! But they are in the power of nature's force. I see every one of them! One sits alone like a king, others sit in a group, and half of them are asleep! And when the steam dragon stops, they climb out and go their way. Then the thoughts go out into the world!" And she laughed.

"There's another avalanche!" said the people in the valley.

"It won't reach us!" said two who sat together in the train - "two minds with but a single thought," as we say. They were Rudy and Babette, and the miller was going with them.

"Like baggage," he said. "I'm along with them as sort of extra baggage!"

"There sit those two!" said the Ice Maiden. "Many a chamois have I crushed, millions of Alpine flowers have I snapped and broken, leaving no root behind - I destroy them all! Thoughts! 'Mental giants,' indeed!" Again she laughed.

"That's another avalanche!" said those down in the valley.

THE GODMOTHER

At Montreux, one of the near-by towns which, with Clarens, Bernex, and Crin, encircle the northeast shore of Lake Geneva, lived Babette's godmother, the highborn English lady, with her daughters and a young relative. They had been there only a short while, but the miller had already visited them, announced Babette's engagement, and told them about Rudy and the visit to Interlaken and the young eagle - in short, the whole story. It had pleased them greatly, and they felt very kindly toward Rudy and Babette, and even the miller himself. They insisted upon all three of them coming to Montreux, and that's why they went. Babette wanted to see her godmother, and her godmother wanted to see her.

At the little village of Villeneuve, at the end of Lake Geneva, lay the steamboat which, in a voyage of half an hour, went from there to Bernex, a little below Montreux. That coast has

often been celebrated by poets in song and story. There, under the walnut trees, beside the deep, blue-green lake Byron sat, and wrote his melodious verses about the prisoner in the dark, mountain Castle of Chillon. There, where Clarens is reflected amid weeping willows in the clear water, Rousseau wandered, dreaming of his Héloïse. The Rhone River glides beneath the lofty, snow-capped hills of Savoy, and near its mouth here there is a small island, so tiny that from the shore it looks as if it were a ship floating in the water. It is just a patch of rocky ground, which a century before a lady had walled around and covered with earth, where three acacia trees were planted, which now overshadowed the whole island. Babette was enchanted with this little spot; to her it was the loveliest place to be seen on the whole trip. She said they ought to land there - they must land there - it would be so charming under those beautiful trees. But the steamer passed by and did not stop until it reached Vernex.

The little party passed up among the white sunlit walls that surrounded the vineyards before the little mountain town of Montreux, where the peasants' cottages are shaded by fig trees, and laurels and cypresses grow in the gardens. Halfway up the mountain was the hotel where the godmother lived.

The meeting was very cordial. The godmother was a stout, pleasant-looking woman, with a smiling, round face. As a child she must certainly have resembled one of Raphael's cherubs; it was still an angel's head, but older, with silver-white hair. The daughters were tall and slender, well-dressed and elegant looking. The young cousin with them, who had enough golden hair and golden whiskers for three gentlemen, was dressed in white from head to foot, and promptly began to pay devoted attention to little Babette.

Beautifully bound books and music and drawings were on the large table. The balcony door was open, and from the balcony there was a lovely view of the calm lake, so bright and clear that the villages, woods, and snow-peaks of Savoy were reflected in it.

Rudy, who was generally so lively and gay, found himself very ill at ease. He moved about as if he were walking on peas over a slippery floor. How slowly the time passed - it was like being in a treadmill! And now they had to go out for a walk! And that was just as tiresome. Rudy had to take two steps forward and one back to keep abreast of the others. They went down to Chillon, the gloomy old castle on the island, to look at dungeons and instruments of torture, rusty chains hanging from rocky walls, stone benches for those condemned to death, trap doors through which the doomed were hurled down onto iron spikes amid the surge. They called it a pleasure to look at these things! It was a dreadful place of execution, elevated by Byron's verse into the world of poetry - but to Rudy still only a place of execution. He leaned out of one of the great windows and gazed down into the blue-green water, and over to the lonely little island with the three acacias. How he longed to be there, free from the whole chattering party!

But Babette was very happy. She had had a wonderful time, she said later; and the cousin she thought was perfect!

"Yes, perfectly flippant!" said Rudy; and that was the first time he had ever said anything to her that did not please her.

The Englishman had given her a little book as a souvenir of Chillon; it was Byron's poem, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, translated into French so that she could read it.

"The book may be all right," said Rudy, "but the finely combed fellow who gave it to you didn't make a hit with me."

"He looks like a flour sack without any flour!" said the miller, laughing at his own wit.

Rudy laughed too, and said that he was exactly right.

THE COUSIN

When Rudy went to visit the mill a couple of days later, he found the young Englishman there. Babette had just set a plate of boiled trout before him, which she herself had decorated with parsley, to make it look appetizing, no doubt. Rudy thought that was entirely unnecessary. What did he want there? What was his business? To be served and pampered by Babette? Rudy was jealous, and that pleased Babette. It amused her to see revealed all the feelings of his heart - the weak as well as the strong.

Love was still an amusement to her, and she played with Rudy's heart; but it must be said that he was still the center of all her thoughts, the dearest and most cherished in the world. Still, the gloomier he looked the more merrily she laughed at him with her eyes. She would even have kissed the blond Englishman with the golden whiskers if it would have made Rudy rush out in a fury; for it would have shown her how much he loved her.

This was not the fair nor the wise thing for little Babette to do, but she was only nineteen. She had no intention of being unkind to Rudy; still less did she think how her conduct would appear to the young Englishman, or how light and improper it was for the miller's modest, newly betrothed daughter.

Where the road from Bex passes beneath the snow-clad peaks, which in the language of the country are called *diablerets*, the mill stood, near a rushing, grayish-white mountain stream that looked as if it were covered with soapsuds. It wasn't that stream that turned the mill wheel, but a smaller one which came tumbling down the rocks on the other side of river. It ran through a reservoir dammed up by stones in the road beneath, and forced itself up with violence and speed into an enclosed wooden basin, formed by a wide dam across the rushing river, where it turned the large mill wheel. When the water had piled up behind the dam it overflowed, and made the path so wet and slippery that it was difficult for anyone who wanted to take this short cut to the mill to do so without falling into the water. However, the young Englishman thought he would try it.

Dressed in white like a mill worker, he was climbing the path one evening, following the light that shone from Babette's window. He had never learned to climb, and so almost went head first into the stream, but escaped with wet arms and spattered trousers. Soaking wet and covered with mud, he arrived beneath Babette's window, climbed the old linden tree, and there began to make a noise like an owl, which was the only bird he could even try to imitate. Babette heard it and peeped out through the thin curtains, but when she saw the man in white, and realized who he was, her little heart pounded with fright, but also with anger. Quickly she put out her light, made sure the window was securely fastened, and then left him to his hooting and howling.

How terrible it would be, she thought, if Rudy were now at the mill! But Rudy wasn't at the mill - no, it was much worse - he was standing right under the tree. Loud words were spoken - angry words - they might come to blows, or even murder!

Babette hurried to open her window, and called down to Rudy to go away, adding that she couldn't let him stay there.

"You won't let me stay here!" he cried. "Then this is an appointment! You're expecting some good friend - someone you'd rather see than me! Shame on you, Babette!"

"You are very nasty!" said Babette, and started to cry. "I hate you! Go away! Go away!"

"I haven't deserved anything like this," said Rudy as he went away, his cheeks burning, his heart on fire.

Babette threw herself on her bed and cried. "And you can think that of me, Rudy, of me who loves you so!"

She was angry, very angry, and that was good for her; for otherwise she would have been deeply hurt. As it was, she could fall asleep and enjoy youth's refreshing slumber.

EVIL POWERS

Rudy left Bex, and started homeward, following the mountain path, with its cold fresh air, and where the snow is deep and the Ice Maiden reigns. The trees with their thick foliage were so far below him that they looked like potato tops; the pines and bushes became smaller; the Alpine roses were blanketed with snow, which lay in isolated patches like linen put out to be bleached. A single blue gentian stood in his path, and he crushed it with the butt of his gun. Higher up two chamois became visible, and Rudy's eyes sparkled as his thoughts turned into another course, but he wasn't near enough for a good shot. Still higher he climbed, to where only a few blades of grass grew between the rocks. The chamois passed calmly over the snow fields as Rudy pressed on.

The thick mists enshrouded him, and suddenly he found himself on the brink of a steep rock precipice. Then the rain began to fall in torrents. He felt a burning thirst; his head was hot, and his limbs were cold. He reached for his hunting flask, but found it was empty; he had not given it a thought when he rushed away, up the mountain. He had never been sick in his life, but now he suddenly felt that he was ill. He felt exhausted, and wanted only to lie down and sleep; but the rain was streaming down around him. He tried to pull himself out of it, but every object seemed to dance strangely before his eyes.

Suddenly he became aware of something he had never before seen in that place - a small, newly built hut leaning against the rock; and in the doorway stood a young girl. First he thought she was the schoolmaster's daughter, Annette, whom he had once kissed while dancing with her; but she wasn't Annette. But he was sure he had seen her before, perhaps near Grindelwald the evening he went home from the Interlaken shooting matches.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"I'm home," she said. "Watching my flocks."

"Your flocks! Where do they find grass? There's nothing here but snow and rocks!"

"You know a lot about it!" she said and laughed. "A little way down behind here is a very nice pasture, where my goats go. I take good care of them, and never lose one. What's mine is mine!"

"You're very brave," said Rudy.

"And so are you," she answered.

"If you have any milk, please give me some; I have a terrible thirst."

"I have something much better than milk," she replied, "and you may have some. Yesterday some travelers came here with guides, and left half a flask of wine behind them, such wine as you have never tasted. They won't come back for it, and I don't drink it, so you may have it."

She brought the wine, poured some into a wooden goblet, and gave it to Rudy.

"That's fine!" he said. "I have never tasted a wine so warming and reviving!" His eyes sparkled with life; a glowing thrill of happiness swept over him, as if every sorrow and vexation had vanished from his mind; a carefree feeling awoke in him.

"But surely you are Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter!" he exclaimed. "Give me a kiss!"

"Yes, but first give me that pretty ring you're wearing on your finger!"

"My engagement ring?"

"Yes, just that ring," said the girl, then refilling the goblet, she held it to his lips, and he drank again. A feeling of joy seemed to flow through his blood. The whole world was his,

he seemed to think, so why torture himself! Everything is created for our pleasure and enjoyment. The stream of life is the stream of happiness; let yourself be carried away on it - that is joy. He looked at the young girl. She was Annette, and yet *not* Annette; but still less was she the magical phantom, as he had called the one he had met near Grindelwald. This girl on the mountain was fresh as newly fallen snow, as blooming as an Alpine rose, as lively as a young lamb; yet still she was formed from Adam's rib, a human being like Rudy himself.

He flung his arms about her and gazed into her marvelously clear eyes. It was only for a second, but how can that second be expressed or described in words? Was it the life of the soul or the life of death that took possessions of his being? Was he carried up high, or did he sink down into the deep and deathly icy crevasse, deeper, always deeper? He beheld the ice walls shining like blue-green glass; bottomless crevasses yawned about him; the waters dripped, sounding like the chimes of bells, and were as clear as a pearl glowing with pale blue flames. Then the Ice Maiden kissed him - a kiss that sent an icy shiver through his whole body. He gave a cry of pain, tore himself away from her, stumbled, and fell; all went dark before his eyes, but he opened them again. The powers of evil had played their game.

The Alpine girl was gone, and the sheltering hut was gone; water streamed down on the bare rocks, and snow lay everywhere. Rudy was shivering with cold, soaked through to the skin, and his ring was gone - the engagement ring Babette had given him. His gun lay on the snow beside him, but when he took it up and tried to fire it as a signal, it missed fire. Damp clouds filled the chasm like thick masses of snow. Dizziness sat there, glaring at her helpless prey, while there rang through the deep crevasse beneath her a sound as if a mass of rock had fallen, and was crushing and carrying away everything that obstructed its course.

Back at the miller's Babette sat and wept. It was six days since Rudy had been there - Rudy, who had been in the wrong, and should ask her pardon, for she loved him with all her heart.

AT THE MILLER'S HOUSE

"It's lot of nonsense with those people!" said the Parlor Cat to the Kitchen Cat. "It's all off now between Babette and Rudy. She just sits and cries, and he doesn't think about her any more."

"I don't like that," said the Kitchen Cat.

"I don't either," said the Parlor Cat. "But I'm not going to mourn about it. Babette can take golden whiskers for her sweetheart. He hasn't been here since the night he tried to climb onto the roof!"

The powers of evil carry out their purposes around us and within us. Rudy understood this, and thought about it. What was it that had gone on about him and inside him up there on the mountain? Was it sin or just a feverish dream? He had never known illness or fever before. While he blamed Babette, he also searched his own heart. He remembered the wild tornado, the hot whirlwind that had broken loose in there. Could he confess everything to Babette - every thought which in that hour of temptation almost brought about his action? He had lost her ring, and by that very loss she had won him back. Would she be able to confess to him? When his thoughts turned to her, so many memories crowded his mind that he felt that his heart was breaking. He saw her as a laughing, happy child, full of life; the many loving words she had addressed to him from the fullness of her heart gladdened his soul like a ray of light, and soon there was only sunshine there for Babette.

However, she would have to confess to him, and he would see that she did so.

So he went to the mill, and there was a confession; it began with a kiss, and ended with Rudy's being the sinner. His great fault was that he could have doubted for one moment Babette's faithfulness - *that* was very wicked of him! Such distrust, such violence, might bring misery to both of them. Yes, that was very true! Babette preached him a little sermon, which pleased her greatly and which was very becoming to her. But Rudy was right about one thing - the godmother's nephew was a babler. She'd burn the book he had given her, and wouldn't keep the slightest thing that would remind her of him.

"Now that's all over with," said the Parlor Cat. "Rudy's back again, and they've made up; and they say that's the greatest of happiness."

"Last night," said the Kitchen Cat, "I heard the rats saying that their greatest happiness was to eat candle grease and have plenty of tainted bacon. Which of them should we believe, the lovers or the rats?"

"Neither of them," said the Parlor Cat. "That's always the safest."

Rudy's and Babette's greatest happiness was drawing near, the most beautiful day, as they call it, was coming - their wedding day!

But the wedding was not to take place in the church at Bex, nor in the miller's house; the godmother had asked that the party be held at her house, and that the ceremony be performed in the pretty little church at Montreux. And the miller was very insistent that they should agree to this arrangement, for he alone knew what the godmother intended giving the young couple - her wedding gift would be well worth such a small concession to her wishes. The day was agreed upon. They would go to Villeneuve the evening before, then proceed to Montreux by boat the next morning, so that the godmother's daughters would have time to dress the bride.

"I suppose there'll be a second ceremony in this house," said the Parlor Cat. "Or else I know I wouldn't give a mew for the whole business."

"There's going to be a feast here, too," said the Kitchen Cat. "The ducks have been killed, the pigeons plucked, and a whole deer is hanging on the wall. My mouth waters when I look at all the food. Tomorrow they start their journey."

Yes, tomorrow! That evening Rudy and Babette sat in the miller's house for the last time as an engaged couple. Outside, the evening glow was on the Alps; the vesper bells were chiming; and the daughters of the sun sang, "That which is best shall come to pass!"

VISIONS IN THE NIGHT

The sun had gone down, and the clouds lay low in the valley of the Rhone between the tall mountains; the wind blew from the south, an African wind; it suddenly sprang up over the high summits like a foehn, which swept the clouds away; and when the wind had fallen everything for a moment was perfectly still. The scattered clouds hung in fantastic shapes between the wooded hills skirting the rushing Rhone; they hung in the shapes of sea monsters of the prehistoric world, of eagles hovering in the air, of frogs leaping in a marsh; they settled down on the swift river and seemed to sail on it, yet they were floating in the air. The current swept along an uprooted pine tree, with the water making circles around it. It was Dizziness and some of her sisters dancing in circles on the foaming stream. The moon lighted up the snow-covered mountain peaks, the dark woods, and the strange white clouds - those visions of the night that seemed to be the powers of nature. The mountain peasant saw them through his window; they sailed past in great numbers before the Ice Maiden, who had come from her glacier palace. She was sitting on a frail boat, the uprooted pine, as the waters from the glacier carried her down the river to the open lake.

"The wedding guests are coming!" was sung and murmured in the air and in the water.

There were visions outside and visions inside. And Babette had a very strange dream.

It seemed to her that she had been married to Rudy for many years. He had gone chamois hunting, leaving her at home; and the young Englishman with the golden whiskers was sitting beside her. His eyes were passionate, his words seemed to have a magic power in them. He held out his hand to her, and she was obliged to follow him; they walked away from her home, always downward. And Babette felt a weight in her heart that became heavier every moment. She was committing a sin against Rudy - a sin against God Himself. And suddenly she found herself alone; her dress had been torn to pieces by thorns, and her hair had turned gray. In deep grief she looked upward, and saw Rudy on the edge of a mountainous ridge. She stretched up her arms to him, but dared neither pray nor call out to him; and neither would have been of any avail, for she soon discovered it was not Rudy, but only his cap and shooting jacket hanging on an alpenstock, as hunters often place them to deceive the chamois. In miserable grief Babette cried, "Oh, if I had only died on my wedding day - the happiest day of my life! Oh, Lord, my God, that would have been a blessing! That would have been the best thing that could have happened for me and Rudy. No one knows his future!" Then in godless despair she hurled herself down into the deep chasm. A thread seemed to break, and the echo of sorrowful tones was heard.

Babette awoke; the dream was ended, and although partly forgotten she knew it had been a frightful one, and that she had dreamed about the young Englishman whom she had not seen or thought of for several months. She wondered if he still was at Montreux, and if she would see him at the wedding. A faint shadow passed over Babette's pretty mouth, her brows knitted; but soon there came a smile, and the sparkle returned to her eye. The sun was shining brightly outside, and tomorrow was her and Rudy's wedding day!

When she came down he was already in the parlor, and soon they set off for Villeneuve. They were both so happy, and so was the miller. He laughed and joked, and was in excellent humor, for he was a kind father and an honest soul.

"Now we are the masters of the house," said the Parlor Cat.

THE CONCLUSION

It was not yet evening when the three happy people reached Villeneuve, and sat down to dinner. The miller settled himself in a comfortable armchair with his pipe, and had a little nap. The young bridal couple went out of the town arm in arm, along the highway, under the wooded hills by the side of the deep blue green lake. The clear water reflected the gray walls and heavy towers of gloomy-looking Chillon. The little island with its three acacias seemed quite close, looking like a bouquet lying on the lake.

"How lovely it must be over there!" said Babette, who again felt a great desire to go to the island; and her desire could be satisfied at once, for a boat was lying near the bank, and it was easy to undo the rope securing it. There was no one around of whom they could ask permission, so they got into the boat anyway.

Rudy knew how to use the oars. Like the fins of a fish, the oars divided the water, so pliant and yet so powerful, with a back for carrying and a mouth for swallowing - gentle, smiling, calmness itself, yet terrible and mighty in destruction. Foamy wake stretched out behind the boat, and in a few minutes they arrived at the little island, where they landed. There was just room for the two of them to dance.

Rudy whirled Babette around two or three times. Then they sat on the little bench under the drooping acacia, and held each other's hands and looked deep into each other's eyes, while the last rays of the setting sun streamed about them. The pine forests on the mountains took on a purplish-red tint like that of blooming heather, and where the trees stopped and the bare rocks began, they glowed as if the mountain itself were transparent. The clouds in the sky glowed a brilliant crimson; the whole lake was like a fresh, blushing rose petal. As the shades of evening gathered, the snow-capped mountains of Savoy

turned a dark blue, but the highest summits still shone like red lava and for a moment reflected their light on the mountains before the vast masses were lost in darkness. It was the Alpine glow, and Rudy and Babette thought they had never before seen so magnificent a sight. The snow-covered Dent du Midi glistened like the disk of the full moon when it rises above the horizon.

"Oh, what beauty! What happiness!" both of them said.

"Earth can give me no more," said Rudy. "An evening like this is like a whole life. How often have I realized my good fortune, as I realize it now, and thought that if everything ended for me at once now I have still had a happy life! What a blessed world this is! One day passes, and a new one, even more beautiful than the other, begins. Our Lord is infinitely good, Babette!"

"I'm so happy!" she said.

"Earth can give me no more," exclaimed Rudy. Then the vesper bells sounded from the Savoy mountains and the mountains of Switzerland. The dark-blue Jura stood up in golden splendor in the west.

"God give you all that is brightest and best!" exclaimed Babette.

"He will," said Rudy. "Tomorrow I shall have that wish. Tomorrow you'll be wholly mine - my own lovely, little wife!"

"The boat!" Babette suddenly cried.

For the boat that was to take them back had broken loose and was drifting away from the island.

"I'll get it!" said Rudy, and he stripped off his coat and boots, plunged into the lake, and swam with vigorous strokes after the boat.

The clear blue-green water from the mountain glacier was icy and deep. Rudy looked down into the depths; he took only a single glance, and yet, he thought he saw a gold ring trembling, glittering, wavering there! He thought of his lost engagement ring, and the ring became larger and spread out into a glittering circle, within which appeared the clear glacier. Endless deep chasms yawned about it, and the dropping water tinkled like the sound of bells and glowed with pale blue flames. In a second he beheld what will take us many long words to describe!

Young hunters and young girls, men and women who had once fallen into the glacier's crevasses, stood there as in life, with open eyes and smiling lips, while far below them arose from buried villages the chimes of church bells. The congregation knelt beneath the church roofs; icicles made the organ pipes, and the mountain torrents furnished the music. And the Ice Maiden sat on the clear, transparent ground. She stretched herself up toward Rudy and kissed his feet, and there shot through his limbs a deadly chill like an electric shock - ice and fire, one could not be distinguished from the other in that brief touch.

"Mine! Mine!" sounded around him and within him. "I kissed you when you were little - kissed you on the mouth! Now I kiss you on your toes and your heels - now you belong to me!"

And he disappeared in the clear blue water.

All was still. The church bells had ceased their ringing; their last tones had died away with the glow on the red clouds above.

"You are mine!" sounded from the depths below. "You are mine!" resounded from beyond the heights - from infinity itself!

How wonderful to pass from love to love, from earth to heaven!

A thread seemed to break, and sorrowful tones echoed around. The icy kiss of death had conquered what was mortal; the prelude to the drama of life had ended before the play itself had begun. And discord had resolved itself into harmony.

Do you call this a sad story?

Poor Babette! For her it was the hour of anguish. The boat drifted farther and farther away. No one on the mainland knew that the bridal couple had crossed over to the little island. Evening came on, the clouds gathered, and darkness settled down. Alone, despairing and crying, she stood there. A storm broke out; lightning flashed over the Jura mountains and over the peaks of Savoy and Switzerland; from all sides came flash after flash, while one peal of thunder followed the other for minutes at a time. One instant the lightning was so vivid that the surroundings were bright as day - every single vine stem was as distinct as at high noon - and in the next instant everything was plunged back into the blackest darkness. The lightning formed circles and zigzagged, then darted into the lake; and the increasing noise of the rolling thunder echoed from the surrounding mountains. On the mainland the boats had been drawn far up the beach, while all living things sought shelter. And now the rain poured down in torrents.

"Where can Rudy and Babette be in this terrible storm?" said the miller.

Babette sat with folded hands, her head in her lap, utterly worn out by grief, tears, and screams for help.

"In the deep water," she said to herself, "far down there as if under a glacier, *he* lies!"

Then she thought of what Rudy had told her about his mother's death, and of his escape, how he was lifted up out of the cleft of the glacier almost dead. "The Ice Maiden has him again!"

Then there came a flash of lightning as dazzling as the rays of the sun on white snow. Babette jumped up; at that moment the lake rose like a shining glacier; there stood the Ice Maiden, majestic, bluish, pale, glittering, with Rudy's corpse at her feet.

"Mine!" she said, and again everything was darkness and torrential rain.

"Horrible!" groaned Babette. "Ah, why should he die when our day of happiness was so near? Dear God, make me understand; shed light into my heart! I cannot understand the ways of your almighty power and wisdom!"

And God enlightened her heart. A memory - a ray of mercy - her dream of the night before - all rushed vividly through her mind. She remembered the words she had spoken, the wish for the best for herself and Rudy.

"Pity me! Was it the seed of sin in my heart? Was my dream, a glimpse into the future, whose course had to be violently changed to save me from guilt? How miserable I am!"

In the pitch-black night she sat weeping. And now in the deep stillness around her she seemed to hear the last words he had spoken here, "Earth can give me no more." They had been spoken in the fullest of joy; they echoed in the depths of great sorrow.

A few years have passed since that night. The lake smiles; its shores are smiling; the vines yield luscious grapes; steamboats with waving pennants glide swiftly by; pleasure boats with their two sails unfurled skim like white butterflies over the mirrored water; the railway beyond Chillon is open now, leading far into the valley of the Rhone. At every station strangers get out, studying in their little red guidebooks what sights they should see. They visit Chillon, see the little island with the three acacias, and read in their books about a bridal couple who in 1856 rowed over to it one evening - how not until the next morning could the bride's despairing cries be heard on the mainland.

But the guidebooks tell nothing about Babette's quiet life in her father's house - not at the

mill, for strangers live there now - in the pretty house near the railway station, where many an evening she gazes from her window beyond the chestnut trees to the snowy mountains over which Rudy had loved to range. In the evening hours she can see the Alpine glow - up there where the daughters of the sun settle down, and sing again their song about the traveler whose coat the whirlwind snatched off, taking it, but not the man himself.

There is a rosy glow upon the mountain's snow fields; there is a rosy tint in every heart in which lives the thought, "God wills what is best for us!" But it is not always revealed to us as it was revealed to Babette in her dream.