

LAGERLÖF SELMA, HOWARD  
VELMA SWANSTON

# JERUSALEM

Selma Lagerlöf

**Jerusalem**

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# Selma Lagerlöf

## Jerusalem

### INTRODUCTION

As yet the only woman winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the prize awarded to Kipling, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann, is the Swedish author of this book, "Jerusalem." The Swedish Academy, in recognizing Miss Selma Lagerlöf, declared that they did so "for reason of the noble idealism, the wealth of imagination, the soulful quality of style, which characterize her works." Five years later, in 1914, that august body elected Doctor Lagerlöf into their fellowship, and she is thus the only woman among those eighteen "immortals."

What is the secret of the power that has made Miss Lagerlöf an author acknowledged not alone as a classic in the schools but also as the most popular and generally beloved writer in Scandinavia? She entered Swedish literature at a period when the cold gray star of realism was in the ascendant, when the trenchant pen of Strindberg had swept away the cobwebs of unreality, and people were accustomed to plays and novels almost brutal in their frankness. Wrapped in the mantle of a latter-day romanticism, her soul filled with idealism, on the one hand she transformed the crisp actualities of human experience by throwing about them the glamour of the unknown, and on the other hand gave to the unreal – to folk tale and fairy lore and local superstition – the effectiveness of convincing fact. "Selma Lagerlöf," says the Swedish composer, Hugo Alfvén, "is like sitting in the dusk of a Spanish cathedral ... afterward one does not know whether what he has seen was dream or reality, but certainly he has been on holy ground." The average mind, whether Swedish or Anglo-Saxon, soon wearies of heartless preciseness in literature and welcomes an idealism as wholesome as that of Miss Lagerlöf. Furthermore, the Swedish authoress attracts her readers by a diction unique unto herself, as singular as the English sentences of Charles Lamb. Her style may be described as prose rhapsody held in restraint, at times passionately breaking its bonds.

Miss Lagerlöf has not been without her share of life's perplexities and of contact with her fellowmen, it is by intuition that she *works* rather than by experience. Otherwise, she could not have depicted in her books such a multitude of characters from all parts of Europe. She sees character with woman's warm and delicate sympathy and with the clear vision of childhood. "Selma Lagerlöf," declared the Swedish critic, Oscar Levertin, "has the eyes of a child and the heart of a child." This naïveté is responsible for the simplicity of her character types. Deep and sure they may be, but never too complex for the reader to comprehend. The more varied characters – as the critic Johan Mortensen has pointed out – like Hellgum, the mystic in "Jerusalem," are merely indicated and shadowy. How unlike Ibsen! Selma Lagerlöf takes her delight, not in developing the psychology of the unusual, but in analyzing the motives and emotions of the normal mind. This accounts for the comforting feeling of satisfaction and familiarity which comes over one reading the chronicles of events so exceptionable as those which occur in "Jerusalem."

In one of her books, "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils," Miss Lagerlöf has sketched the national character of many Swedish people in reference to the various landscapes visited by the wild goose in its flight. In another romance, "Gösta Berling," she has interpreted the life of the province at Vermland, where she herself was born on a farmstead in 1858. A love of starlight, violins, and dancing, a temperament easily provoked to a laughing abandon of life's tragedy characterizes the folk of Vermland and the impecunious gentry who live in its modest manor halls. It is a different folk to whom one is introduced in "Jerusalem," the people of Dalecarlia, the province of Miss Lagerlöf's adopted home. They, too, have their dancing festivals at Midsummer Eve, and their dress is the most gorgeous in Sweden, but one thinks of them rather as a serious and solid community given to the plow

and conservative habits of thought. They were good Catholics once; now they are stalwart defenders of Lutheranism, a community not easily persuaded but, once aroused, resolute to act and carry through to the uttermost. One thinks of them as the people who at first gave a deaf ear to Gustaf Vasa's appeal to drive out the Danes, but who eventually followed him shoulder to shoulder through the very gates of Stockholm, to help him lay the foundations of modern Sweden. Titles of nobility have never prospered in Dalecarlia; these stalwart landed peasants are a nobility unto themselves. The Swedish people regard their Dalecarlians as a reserve upon whom to draw in times of crisis.

"Jerusalem" begins with the history of a wealthy and powerful farmer family, the Ingmarssons of Ingmar Farm, and develops to include the whole parish life with its varied farmer types, its pastor, schoolmaster, shopkeeper, and innkeeper. The romance portrays the religious revival introduced by a practical mystic from Chicago which leads many families to sell their ancestral homesteads and – in the last chapter of this volume – to emigrate in a body to the Holy Land.

Truth is stranger than fiction. "Jerusalem" is founded upon the historic event of a religious pilgrimage from Dalecarlia in the last century. The writer of this introduction had opportunity to confirm this fact some years ago when he visited the parish in question, and saw the abandoned farmsteads as well as homes to which some of the Jerusalem-farers had returned. And more than this, I had an experience of my own which seemed to reflect this spirit of religious ecstasy. On my way to the inn toward midnight I met a cyclist wearing a blue jersey, and on the breast, instead of a college letter, was woven a yellow cross. On meeting me the cyclist dismounted and insisted on shouting me the way. When we came to the inn I offered him a krona. My guide smiled as though he was possessed by a beatific vision. "No! I will not take the money, but the gentleman will buy my bicycle!" As I expressed my astonishment at this request, he smiled again confidently and replied. "In a vision last night the Lord appeared unto me and said that I should meet at midnight a stranger at the cross-roads speaking an unknown tongue and 'the stranger will buy thy bicycle!'"

The novel is opened by that favourite device of Selma Lagerlöf, the monologue, through which she pries into the very soul of her characters, in this case Ingmar, son of Ingmar, of Ingmar Farm. Ingmar's monologue at the plow is a subtle portrayal of an heroic battle between the forces of conscience and desire. Although this prelude may be too subjective and involved to be readily digested by readers unfamiliar with the Swedish author's method they will soon follow with intent interest into those pages that describe how Ingmar met at the prison door the girl for whose infanticide he was ethically responsible. He brings her back apparently to face disgrace and to blot the fair scutcheon of the Ingmarssons, but actually to earn the respect of the whole community voiced in the declaration of the Dean: "Now, Mother Martha, you can be proud of Ingmar! It's plain now he belongs to the old stock; so we must begin to call him '*Big Ingmar*.'"

In the course of the book we are introduced to two generations of Ingmars, and their love stories are quite as compelling as the religious motives of the book. Forever unforgettable is the scene of the auction where Ingmar's son renounces his beloved Gertrude and betroths himself to another in order to keep the old estate from passing out of the hands of the Ingmars. Thus both of these heroes in our eyes "play yellow." On the other hand they have our sympathy, and the reader is tossed about by the alternate undertow of the strong currents which control the conduct of this farming folk. Sometimes they obey only their own unerring instincts, as in that vivid situation of the shy, departing suitor when Karin Ingmarsson suddenly breaks through convention and publicly over the coffee cups declares herself betrothed. The book is a succession of these brilliantly portrayed situations that clutch at the heartstrings – the meetings in the mission house, the reconciliation scene when Ingmar's battered watch is handed to the man he felt on his deathbed he had wronged, the dance on the night of the "wild hunt," the shipwreck, Gertrude's renunciation of her lover for her religion, the brother who buys the old farmstead so that his brother's wife may have a home if she should ever return from the Holy Land. As for the closing pages that describe the departure of the Jerusalem-farers, they are difficult to read aloud without a sob and a lump in the throat.

The underlying spiritual action of "Jerusalem" is the conflict of idealism with that impulse which is deep rooted in the rural communities of the old world, the love of home and the home soil. It is a virtue unfortunately too dimly appreciated in restless America, though felt in some measure in the old communities of Massachusetts and Virginia, and Quaker homesteads near Philadelphia. Among the peasant aristocracy of Dalecarlia attachment to the homestead is life itself. In "Jerusalem" this emotion is pitted on the one hand against religion, on the other against *love*. Hearts are broken in the struggle *which* permits Karin to sacrifice the Ingmar Farm to obey the inner voice that summons her on her religious pilgrimage, and *which* leads her brother, on the other hand, to abandon the girl of his heart and his life's personal happiness in order to win back the farm.

The tragic intensity of "Jerusalem" is happily relieved by the undercurrent of Miss Lagerlöf's sympathetic humour. When she has almost succeeded in transporting us into a state of religious fervour, we suddenly catch her smile through the lines and realize that no one more than she feels the futility of fanaticism. The stupid blunders of humankind do not escape her; neither do they arouse her contempt. She accepts human nature as it is with a warm fondness for all its types. We laugh and weep simultaneously at the children of the departing pilgrims, who cry out in vain: "We don't want to go to Jerusalem; we want to go home."

To the translator of "Jerusalem," Mrs. Velma Swanston Howard, author and reader alike must feel indebted. Mrs. Howard has already received generous praise for her translation of "Nils" and other works of Selma Lagerlöf. Although born in Sweden she has achieved remarkable mastery of English diction. As a friend of Miss Lagerlöf and an artist she is enabled herself to pass through the temperament of creation and to reproduce the original in essence as well as sufficient verisimilitude. Mrs. Howard is no mere artisan translator. She goes over her page not but a dozen times, and the result is not a labored performance, but a work of real art in strong and confident prose.

HENRY GODDARD LEACH.

Villa Nova, Pennsylvania.

June 28, 1915.

## BOOK ONE

### THE INGMARSSONS

#### I

A young farmer was plowing his field one summer morning. The sun shone, the grass sparkled with dew, and the air was so light and bracing that no words can describe it. The horses were frisky from the morning air, and pulled the plow along as if in play. They were going at a pace quite different from their usual gait; the man had fairly to run to keep up with them.

The earth, as it was turned by the plow, lay black, and shone with moisture and fatness, and the man at the plow was happy in the thought of soon being able to sow his rye. "Why is it that I feel so discouraged at times and think life so hard?" he wondered. "What more does one want than sunshine and fair weather to be as happy as a child of Heaven?"

A long and rather broad valley, with stretches of green and yellow grain fields, with mowed clover meadows, potato patches in flower, and little fields of flax with their tiny blue flowers, above which fluttered great swarms of white butterflies – this was the setting. At the very heart of the valley, as if to complete the picture, lay a big old-fashioned farmstead, with many gray outhouses and a large red dwelling-house. At the gables stood two tall, spreading pear trees; at the gate were a couple of young birches; in the grass-covered yard were great piles of firewood; and behind the barn were several huge haystacks. The farmhouse rising above the low fields was as pretty a sight as a ship, with masts and sails, towering above the broad surface of the sea.

The man at the plow was thinking: "What a farm you've got! Many well-timbered houses, fine cattle and horses, and servants who are as good as gold. At least you are as well-to-do as any one in these parts, so you'll never have to face poverty.

"But it's not poverty that I fear," he said, as if in answer to his own thought. "I should be satisfied were I only as good a man as my father or my father's father. What could have put such silly nonsense into your head?" he wondered. "And a moment ago you were feeling so happy. Ponder well this one thing: in father's time all the neighbours were guided by him in all their undertakings. The morning he began haymaking they did likewise and the day we started in to plow our fallow field at the Ingmar Farm, plows were put in the earth the length and breadth of the valley. Yet here I've been plowing now for two hours and more without any one having so much as ground a plowshare.

"I believe I have managed this farm as well as any one who has borne the name of Ingmar Ingmarsson," he mused. "I can get more for my hay than father ever got for his, and I'm not satisfied to let the weed-choked ditches which crossed the farm in his time remain. What's more, no one can say that I misuse the woodlands as he did by converting them into burn-beaten land.

"There are times when all this seems hard to bear," said the young man. "I can't always take it as lightly as I do to-day. When father and grandfather lived, folks used to say that the Ingmarssons had been on earth such a long time that they must know what was pleasing to our Lord. Therefore the people fairly begged them to rule over the parish. They appointed both parson and sexton; they determined when the river should be dredged, and where gaols should be built. But me no one consults, nor have I a say in anything.

"It's wonderful, all the same, that troubles can be so easily borne on a morning like this. I could almost laugh at them. And still I fear that matters will be worse than ever for me in the fall. If I should do what I'm now thinking of doing, neither the parson nor the judge will shake hands with me when we meet at the church on a Sunday, which is something they have always done up to the



present. I could never hope to be made a guardian of the poor, nor could I even think of becoming a churchwarden."

Thinking is never so easy as when one follows a plow up a furrow and down a furrow. You are quite alone, and there is nothing to distract you but the crows hopping about picking up worms. The thoughts seemed to come to the man as readily as if some one had whispered them into his ear. Only on rare occasions had he been able to think as quickly and clearly as on that day, and the thought of it gladdened and encouraged him. It occurred to him that he was giving himself needless anxiety; that no one expected him to plunge headlong into misery. He thought that if his father were only living now, he would ask his advice in this matter, as he had always done in the old days when grave questions had come up.

"If I only knew the way, I'd go to him," he said, quite pleased at the idea. "I wonder what big Ingmar would say if some fine day I should come wandering up to him? I fancy him settled on a big farm, with many fields and meadows, a large house and barns galore, with lots of red cattle and not a black or spotted beast among them, just exactly as he wanted it when he was on earth. Then as I step into the farmhouse – "

The plowman suddenly stopped in the middle of a furrow and glanced up, laughing. These thoughts seemed to amuse him greatly, and he was so carried away by them that he hardly knew whether or not he was still upon earth. It seemed to him that in a twinkling he had been lifted all the way up to his old father in heaven.

"And now as I come into the living-room," he went on, "I see many peasants seated on benches along the walls. All have sandy hair, white eyebrows, and thick underlips. They are all of them as like father as one pea is like another. At the sight of so many people I become shy and linger at the door. Father sits at the head of the table, and the instant he sees me he says; 'Welcome, little Ingmar Ingmarsson!' Then father gets up and comes over to me. 'I'd like to have a word with you, father,' I say, 'but there are so many strangers here.' 'Oh, these are only relatives!' says father. 'All these men have lived at the Ingmar Farm, and the oldest among them is from way back in heathen times.' 'But I want to speak to you in private,' I say.

"Then father looks round and wonders whether he ought to step into the next room, but since it's just I he walks out into the kitchen instead. There he seats himself in the fireplace, while I sit down on the chopping block.

"'You've got a fine farm here, father,' I say. 'It's not so bad,' says father, 'but how's everything back home?' 'Oh, everything is all right there; last year we got twelve kroner for a ton of hay.' 'What!' says father. 'Are you here to poke fun at me, little Ingmar?'

"'But with me everything goes wrong' I say. 'They forever telling me that you were as wise as our Lord himself, but no one cares a straw for me.' 'Aren't you one of the district councillors?' the old man asks. 'I'm not on the School Board, or in the vestry, nor am I a councillor.' 'What have you done that's wrong, little Ingmar?' 'Well, they say that he who would direct the affairs of others, first show that he can manage his own properly.'

"Then I seem to see the old man lower his eyes and sit pondering. In a little while he says: 'Ingmar, you ought to marry some nice girl who will make you a good wife.' 'But that's exactly what I can't do, father,' I reply. 'There is not a farmer in the parish, even among the poor and lowly, who would give me his daughter.' 'Now tell me straight out what's back of all this, little Ingmar,' says father, with such a tender note in his voice.

"'Well, you see, father, four years ago – the same year that I took over the farm – I was courting Brita of Bergskog.' 'Let me see' – says father, 'do any of our folks live at Bergskog?' He seems to have lost all remembrance of how things are down on earth. 'No, but they are well-to-do people, and you must surely remember that Brita's father is a member of Parliament?' 'Yes, of course; but you should have married one of our people, then you would have had a wife who knew about our old customs and habits.' 'You're right, father, and I wasn't long finding that out!'

"Now both father and I are silent a moment; then the old man continues: 'She was good-looking, of course?' 'Yes,' I reply. 'She had dark hair and bright eyes and rosy cheeks. And she was clever, too, so that mother was pleased with my choice. All might have turned out well but, you see, the mistake of it was that she didn't want me.' 'It's of no consequence what such a slip of a girl wants or doesn't want.' 'But her parents forced her to say "yes."' 'How do you know she was forced? It's my candid opinion that she was glad to get a rich husband like you, Ingmar Ingmarsson.'

"'Oh, no! She was anything but glad. All the same, the banns were published and the wedding day was fixed. So Brita came down to the Ingmar Farm to help mother. I say, mother is getting old and feeble.' 'I see nothing wrong in all that, little Ingmar,' says father, as if to cheer me up.

"'But that year nothing seemed to thrive on the farm; the potato crop was a failure, and the cows got sick; so mother I decided it was best to put off the wedding a year. You see, I thought it didn't matter so much about the wedding as long as the banns had been read. But perhaps it was old-fashioned to think that way.'

"'Had you chosen one of our kind she would have exercised patience,' says father. 'Well, yes,' I say. 'I could see that Brita didn't like the idea of a postponement; but, you see, I felt that I couldn't afford a wedding just then. There had been the funeral in the spring, and we didn't want to take the money out of the bank.' 'You did quite right in waiting,' says father. 'But I was a little afraid that Brita would not care to have the christening come before the wedding.' 'One must first make sure that one has the means,' says father.

"'Every day Brita became more and more quiet and strange. I used to wonder what was wrong with her and fancied she was homesick, for she had always loved her home and her parents. This will blow over, I thought, when she gets used to us; she'll soon feel at home on the Ingmar Farm. I put up with it for a time; then, one day, I asked mother why Brita was looking so pale and wild eyed. Mother said it was because she was with child, and she would surely be her old self again once that was over with. I had a faint suspicion that Brita was brooding over my putting off the wedding, but I was afraid to ask her about it. You know, father, you always said that the year I married, the house was to have a fresh coat of red paint. That year I simply couldn't afford it. By next year everything will be all right, I thought then.'"

The plowman walked along, his lips moving all the while. He actually imagined that he saw before him the face of his father. "I shall have to lay the whole case before the old man, frankly and clearly," he remarked to himself, "so he can advise me."

"'Winter had come and gone, yet nothing was changed. I felt at times that if Brita were to keep on being unhappy I might better give her up and send her home. However, it was too late to think of that. Then, one evening, early in May, we discovered that she had quietly slipped away. We searched for her all through the night, and in the morning one of the housemaids found her.'

"'I find it hard now to continue, and take refuge in silence. Then father exclaims: 'In God's name, she wasn't dead, was she?' 'No, not she,' I say, and father notes the tremor in my voice. 'Was the child born?' asks father. 'Yes,' I reply, 'and she had strangled it. It was lying dead beside her.' 'But she couldn't have been in her right mind.' 'Oh, she knew well enough what she was about!' I say. 'She did it to get even with me for forcing myself upon her. Still she would never have done this thing had I married her. She said she had been thinking that since I did not want my child honourably born, I should have no child.' Father is dumb with grief, but by and by he says to me: 'Would you have been glad of the child, little Ingmar?' 'Yes,' I answer. 'Poor boy! It's a shame that you should have fallen in with a bad woman! She is in prison, of course,' says father. 'She was sent up for three years.' 'And it's because of this that no man will let you marry a daughter of his?' 'Yes, but I haven't asked anyone, either.' 'And this is why you have no standing in the parish?' 'They all think it ought not to have gone that way for Brita. Folks say that if I had been a sensible man, like yourself, I would have talked to her and found out what was troubling her.' 'It's not so easy for a man to understand a bad

woman!' says father. 'No, father, Brita was not bad, but she was a proud one!' 'It comes to the same thing,' says father.

"Now that father seems to side with me, I say: 'There are many who think I should have managed it in such a way that no one would have known but that the child was born dead.' 'Why shouldn't she take her punishment?' says father. 'They say if this had happened in your time, you would have made the servant who found her keep her tongue in her head so that nothing could have leaked out.' 'And in that case would you have married her?' 'Why then there would have been no need of my marrying her. I would have sent her back to her parents in a week or so and the banns annulled, on the grounds that she was not happy with us.' 'That's all very well, but no one can expect a young chap like you to have an old man's head on him.' 'The whole parish thinks that I behaved badly toward Brita.' 'She has done worse in bringing disgrace upon honest folk.' 'But I made her take me.' 'She ought to be mighty glad of it,' says father. 'But, father, don't you think it is my fault her being in prison?' 'She put herself there, I'm thinking.' Then I get up and say very slowly: 'So you don't think, father, that I have to do anything for her when she comes out in the fall?' 'What should you do? Marry her?' 'That's just what I ought to do.' Father looks at me a moment, then asks: 'Do you love her?' 'No! She has killed my love.' Father closes his eyes and begins to meditate. 'You see, father, I can't get away from this: that I have brought misfortune upon some one.'

"The old man sits quite still and does not answer.

"The last time I saw her was in the courtroom. Then she was so gentle, and longed so for her child. Not one harsh word did she say against me. She took all the blame to herself. Many in that courtroom were moved to tears, and the judge himself had to swallow hard. He didn't give her more than three years, either.'

"But father does not say a word.

"It will be hard for her when fall comes, and she's sent home. They won't be glad to have her again at Bergskog. Her folks all feel that she has brought shame upon them, and they're pretty sure to let her know it, too! There will be nothing for her but to sit at home all the while; she won't even dare to go to church. It's going to be hard for her in every way.'

"But father doesn't answer.

"It is not such an easy thing for me to marry her! To have a wife that menservants and maidservants will look down upon is not a pleasant prospect for a man with a big farmstead. Nor would mother like it. We never invite people to the house, either to weddings or funerals.'

"Meanwhile, not a word out of father.

"Of course at the trial I tried to help her as much as I could. I told the judge that I was entirely to blame, as I took the girl against her will. I also said that I considered her so innocent of any wrong that I would marry her then and there, if she could only think better of me. I said that so the judge would give her a lighter sentence. Although I've had two letters from her, there's nothing in them to show any changed feeling toward me. So you see, father, I'm not obliged to marry her because of that speech.'

"Father sits and ponders, but he doesn't speak.

"I know that this is simply looking at the thing from the viewpoint of men, and we Ingmars have always wanted to stand well in the sight of God. And yet sometimes I think that maybe our Lord wouldn't like it if we honoured a murderess.'

"And father doesn't utter a sound.

"Think, father, how one must feel who lets another suffer without giving a helping hand. I have passed through too much these last few years not to try to do something for her when she gets out.

"Father sits there immovable.

"Now I can hardly keep back the tears. 'You see, father, I'm a young man and will lose much if I marry her. Every one seems to think I've already made a mess of my life; they will think still worse of me after this!'

"But I can't make father say a word.

"I have often wondered why it is that we Ingmars have been allowed to remain on our farm for hundreds of years, while the other farms have all changed hands. And the thought comes to me that it may be because the Ingmars have always tried to walk in the ways of God. We Ingmars need not fear man; we have only to walk in God's ways."

"Then the old man looks up and says: 'This is a difficult problem, my son. I guess I'll go in and talk it over with the other Ingmarssons.'

"So father goes back to the living-room, while I remain in the kitchen. There I sit waiting and waiting, but father does not return. Then, after hours and hours of this, I get cross and go to him. 'You must have patience, little Ingmar,' says father. 'This is a difficult question.' And I see all the old yeomen sitting there with closed eyes, deep in thought. So I wait and wait and, for aught I know, must go on waiting."

Smiling, he followed the plow, which was now moving along very slowly, as if the horses were tired out and could scarcely drag it. When he came to the end of the furrow he pulled up the plow and rested. He had become very serious.

"Strange, when you ask anyone's advice you see yourself what is right. Even while you are asking, you discover all at once what you hadn't been able to find out in three whole years. Now it shall be as God wills."

He felt that this thing must be done, but at the same time it seemed so hard to him that the mere thought of it took away his courage. "Help me, Lord!" he said.

Ingmar Ingmarsson was, however, not the only person abroad at that hour. An old man came trudging along the winding path that crossed the fields. It was not difficult to guess his occupation, for he carried on his shoulder a long-handled paint brush and was spattered with red paint from his cap to his shoe tips. He kept glancing round-about, after the manner of journeymen painters, to find an unpainted farmhouse or one that needed repainting. He had seen, here and there, one and another which he thought might answer his purpose, but he could not seem to fix upon any special one. Then, finally, from the top of a hillock he caught sight of the big Ingmar Farm down in the valley. "Great Caesar!" he exclaimed, and stopped short. "That farmhouse hasn't been painted in a hundred years. Why, it's black with age, and the barns have never seen a drop of paint. Here there's work enough to keep me busy till fall."

A little farther on he came upon a man plowing. "Why, there's a farmer who belongs here and knows all about this neighbourhood," thought the painter. "He can tell me all I need know about that homestead yonder." Whereupon he crossed the path into the field, stepped up to Ingmar, and asked him if he thought the folks living over there wanted any painting done.

Ingmar Ingmarsson was startled, and stood staring at the man as though he were a ghost.

"Lord, as I live, it's a painter!" he remarked to himself. "And to think of his coming just now!" He was so dumbfounded that he could not answer the man. He distinctly recalled that every time any one had said to his father: "You ought to have that big, ugly house of yours painted, Father Ingmar," the old man had always replied that he would have it done the year Ingmar married.

The painter put the question a second time, and a third, but Ingmar stood there, dazed, as if he had not understood him.

"Are they ready at last with their answer?" he wondered. "Is this a message from father to say that he wishes me to marry this year?"

He was so overwhelmed by the thought that he hired the man on the spot. Then he went on with his plowing, deeply moved and almost happy.

"You'll see it won't be so very hard to do this now that you know for certain it is father's wish," he said.

## II

A fortnight later Ingmar Ingmarsson stood polishing some harness. He seemed to be in a bad humour, and found the work rather irksome. "Were I in our Lord's place," he thought, then put in another rub or two and beg again: "Were I in our Lord's place, I'd see to it that a thing was done the instant your mind was made up. I shouldn't allow folks such a long time to think it over, and ponder all the obstacles. I shouldn't give them time to polish harness and paint wagons; I'd take them straight from the plow."

He caught the sound of wagon wheels from the road, and looked out. He knew at once whose rig it was. "The senator from Bergskog is coming!" he shouted into the kitchen, where his mother was at work. Instantly fresh wood was laid on the fire and the coffee mill was set going.

The senator drove into the yard, where he pulled up without alighting. "No, I'm not going into the house," he said, "I only want a word or two with you, Ingmar. I'm rather pressed for time as I am due at the parish meeting."

"Mother is just making some fresh coffee," said Ingmar.

"Thank you, but I must not be late."

"It's a good while now since you were here, Senator," said Ingmar pressingly.

Then Ingmar's mother appeared in the doorway, and protested:

"Surely you're not thinking of going without first coming in for a drop of coffee?"

Ingmar unbuttoned the carriage apron, and the senator began to move. "Seeing it's Mother Martha herself that commands me I suppose I shall have to obey," he said.

The senator was a tall man of striking appearance, with a certain ease of manner. He was of a totally different stamp from Ingmar or his mother, who were very plain looking, with sleepy faces and clumsy bodies. But all the same, the senator had a profound respect for the old family of Ingmars, and would gladly have sacrificed his own active exterior to be like Ingmar, and to become one of the Ingmassons. He had always taken Ingmar's part against his own daughter, so felt rather light of heart at being so well received.

In a while, when Mother Martha had brought the coffee, he began to state his errand.

"I thought," he said, and cleared his throat. "I thought you had best be told what we intend to do with Brita." The cup which Mother Martha held in her hand shook a little, and the teaspoon rattled in the saucer. Then there was a painful silence. "We have been thinking that the best thing we could do would be to send her to America." He made another pause, only to be met by the same ominous silence. He sighed at the thought of these unresponsive people. "Her ticket has already been purchased."

"She will come home first, of course," said Ingmar.

"No; what would she be doing there?"

Again Ingmar was silent. He sat with his eyes nearly closed, as if he were half asleep.

Then Mother Martha took a turn at asking questions. "She'll be needing clothes, won't she?"

"All that has been attended to; there is a trunk, ready packed, at

Lövberg's place, where we always stop when we come to town."

"Her mother will be there to meet her, I suppose?"

"Well, no. She would like to, but I think it best that they be spared a meeting."

"Maybe so."

"The ticket and some money are waiting for her at Lövberg's, so that she will have everything she needs. I felt that Ingmar ought to know of it, so he won't have this burden on his mind any longer," said the senator.

Then Mother Martha kept still, too. Her headkerchief had slipped back, and she sat gazing down at her apron.

"Ingmar should be looking about for a new wife."

Both mother and son persistently held their peace.

"Mother Martha needs a helper in this big household. Ingmar should see to it that she has some comfort in her old age." The senator paused a moment, wondering if they could have heard what he said. "My wife and I wanted to make everything right again," he declared finally.

In the meantime, a sense of great relief had come to Ingmar. Brita was going to America, and he would not have to marry her. After all a murderess was not to become the mistress of the old Ingmar home. He had kept still, thinking it was not the thing to show at once how pleased he was, but now he began to feel that it would be only right and proper for him to say something.

The senator quietly bided his time. He knew that he had to give these old-fashioned people time to consider. Presently Ingmar's mother said:

"Brita has paid her penalty; now it's our turn." By this the old woman meant that if the senator wanted any help from the Ingmarssons, in return for his having smoothed the way for them, they would not withhold it. But Ingmar interpreted her utterance differently. He gave a start, as if suddenly awakened from sleep. "What would father say of this?" he wondered. "If I were to lay the whole matter before him, what would he be likely to say? 'You must not think that you can make a mockery of God's judgment,' he would say. 'And don't imagine that He will let it go unpunished if you allow Brita to shoulder all the blame. If her father wants to cast her off just to get into your good graces, so that he can borrow money from you, you must nevertheless follow God's leading, little Ingmar Ingmarsson.'"

"I verily believe the old man is keeping close watch of me in this matter," he thought. "He must have sent Brita's father here to show me how mean it is to try to shift everything on to her, poor girl! I guess he must have noticed that I haven't had any great desire to take that journey these last few days."

Ingmar got up, poured some brandy into his coffee, and raised the cup.

"Here's a thank you to the senator for coming here to-day," he said, and clinked cups with him.

### III

Ingmar had been busy all the morning, working around the birches down by the gate. First he had put up a scaffolding, then he had bent the tops of the trees toward each other so that they formed an arch.

"What's all that for?" asked Mother Martha.

"Oh, it suits my fancy to have them grow that way for a change," said Ingmar.

Along came the noon hour, and the men folks stopped their work; after the midday meal the farm hands went out into the yard and lay down in the grass to sleep. Ingmar Ingmarsson slept, too, but he was lying in a broad bed in the chamber off the living-room. The only person not asleep was the old mistress, who sat in the big room, knitting.

The door to the entrance hall was cautiously opened, and in came an old woman carrying two large baskets on a yoke. After passing the time of day, she sat down on a chair by the door and took the lids off the baskets, one of which was filled with rusks and buns, the other with newly baked loaves of spiced bread. The housewife at once went over to the old woman and began to bargain. Ordinarily she kept a tight fist on the pennies, but she never could resist a temptation to indulge her weakness for sweets to dip in her coffee.

While selecting her cakes she began to chat with the old woman, who, like most persons that go from place to place and know many people, was a ready talker. "Kaisa, you're a sensible person," said Mother Martha, "and one can rely on you."

"Yes, indeed," said the other. "If I didn't know enough to keep mum about most of the things I hear, there'd be some fine hair-pulling matches, I'm thinking!"

"But sometimes you are altogether too close-mouthed, Kaisa."

The old woman looked up; the inference was quite plain to her.

"May the Lord forgive me!" she said tearfully, "but I talked to the senator's wife at Bergskog when I should have come straight to you."

"So you have been talking to the senator's wife!" And the emphasis given to the last two words spoke volumes.

Ingmar had been startled from his sleep by the opening of the outside door. No one had come in, apparently; still the door stood ajar. He did not know whether it had sprung open or whether some one had opened it. Too sleepy to get up, he settled back in bed. And then he heard talking in the outer room.

"Now tell me, Kaisa, what makes you think that Brita doesn't care for Ingmar."

"From the very start folks have been saying that her parents made her take him," returned the old woman, evasively.

"Speak right out, Kaisa, for when I question you, you don't have to beat about the bush. I guess I'm able to bear anything you may have to tell me."

"I must say that every time I was at Bergskog Brit always looked as if she'd been crying. Once, when she and I were alone in the kitchen, I said to her: 'It's a fine husband you'll be getting, Brita.' She looked at me as if she thought I was making fun of her. Then she came at me with this: 'You may well say it, Kaisa. Fine, indeed!' She said it in such a way that I seemed to see Ingmar Ingmarsson standing there before my face and eyes, and he's no beauty! As I've always had a great respect for all the Ingmarssons, that thought had never before entered my mind. I couldn't help smiling a little. Then Brita gave me a look and said once more: 'Fine, indeed' With that she turned on her heel and ran into her room, crying as if her heart would break. As I was leaving I said to myself: 'It will all come out right; everything always comes out right for the Ingmarssons.' I didn't wonder at her parents doing what they did. If Ingmar Ingmarsson had proposed to a daughter of mine, I shouldn't have given myself a moment's peace till she said yes."

Ingmar from his bedroom could hear every word that was spoken.

"Mother is doing this on purpose," he thought. "She's been wondering about that trip to town to-morrow. Mother fancies I'm going after Brita, to fetch her home. She doesn't suspect that I'm too big a coward to do it."

"The next time I saw Brita," the old woman went on, "was after she had come here to you. I couldn't ask her just then how she liked it here, seeing the house was full of visitors; but when I had gone a ways into the grove she came running after me.

"'Kaisa!' she called, 'have you been up at Bergskog lately?'

"'I was there day before yesterday,' I replied.

"'Gracious me! were you there day before yesterday? And I feel as if I hadn't been at home in years!' It wasn't easy to know just what to say to her, for she looked as if she couldn't bear the least little thing and would be ready to cry at whatever I might say. 'You can surely go home for a visit?' I said. 'No; I don't think I shall ever go home again.' 'Oh, do go,' I urged. 'It's beautiful up there now; the woods are full of berries; the bushes are thick with red whortleberries.' 'Dear me!' she said, her eyes growing big with surprise, 'are there whortleberries already?' 'Yes, indeed. Surely you can get off a day, just to go home and eat your fill of berries?' 'No, I hardly think I want to,' she said. 'My going home would make it all the harder to come back to this place.' 'I've always heard that the Ingmars are the best kind of folks to be with,' I told her. 'They are honest people.' 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'they are good in their way.' 'They are the best people in the parish,' I said, 'and so fair-minded.' 'It is not considered unfair then to take a wife by force.' 'They are also very wise.' 'But they keep all they know to themselves.' 'Do they never say anything?' 'No one ever says a word more than what is absolutely necessary.'

"I was just about to go my way, when it came to me to ask her where the wedding was going to be held – here or at her home. 'We're thinking of having it here, where there is plenty of room.'

'Then see to it that the wedding day isn't put off too long,' I warned. 'We are to be married in a month,' she answered.

"But before Brita and I parted company, it struck me that the Ingmarssons had had a poor harvest, so I said it was not likely that they would have a wedding that year. 'In that case I shall have to jump into the river,' she declared.

"A month later I was told that the wedding had been put off and, fearing that this would not end well, I went straight to Bergskog and had a talk with Brita's mother. 'They are certainly making a stupid blunder down at the Ingmar Farm,' I told her. 'We are satisfied with their way of doing things,' she said. 'Every day we thank God that our daughter has been so well provided for.'"

"Mother needn't have given herself all this bother," Ingmar was thinking, "for no one from this farm is going to fetch Brita. There was no reason for her being so upset at the sight of the arch: that is only one of those things a man does so that he can turn to our Lord and say: 'I wanted to do it. Surely you must see that I meant to do it.' But doing it is another matter."

"The last time I saw Brita," Kaisa went on, "was in the middle of the winter after a big snowfall. I had come to a narrow path in the wild forest, where it was heavy walking. Soon I came upon some one who was sitting in the snow, resting. It was Brita. 'Are you all by yourself up here?' I asked. 'Yes, I'm out for a walk.' she said. I stood stockstill and stared at her; I couldn't imagine what she was doing there. 'I'm looking round to see if there are any steep hills hereabout,' she then said. 'Dear heart! are you thinking of casting yourself from a cliff?' I gasped, for she looked as if she was tired of life.

"'Yes,' she said. 'If I could only find a hill that was high and steep I'd certainly throw myself down.' 'You ought to be ashamed to talk like that, and you so well cared for.' 'You see, Kaisa, I'm a bad lot.' 'I'm afraid you are.' 'I am likely to do something dreadful, therefore I might better be dead.' 'That's only silly gabble, child.' 'I turned bad as soon as I went to live with those people.' Then, coming quite close to me, with the wildest look in her eyes, she shrieked: 'All they think about is how they can torture me, and I think only of how I can torture them in return.' 'No, no, Brita; they are good people.' 'All they care about is to bring shame upon me.' 'Have you said so to them?' 'I never speak to them. I only think and wonder how I'm going to get even with them. I'm thinking of setting fire to the farm, for I know he loves it. How I'd like to poison the cows! they are so old and ugly and white around the eyes that one would think they were related to him.' 'Barking dogs never bite,' I said. 'I've got to do something to him, or I'll never have any peace of mind.' 'You don't know what you are saying, child,' I protested. 'What you are thinking of doing would forever destroy your peace of mind.'

"All at once she began to cry. Then, after a little, she became very meek and said that she had suffered so from the bad thoughts that came to her. I then walked home with her and, as we parted company, she promised me that she would do nothing rash if I would only keep a close mouth.

"Still I couldn't help thinking that I ought to talk to some one about this," said Kaisa. "But to whom? I felt kind of backward about going to big folk like yourselves – "

Just then the bell above the stable rang. The midday rest was over. Mother Martha suddenly interrupted the old woman: "I say, Kaisa, do you think things can ever be right again between Ingmar and Brita?"

"What?" gasped the old woman in astonishment.

"I mean, if by chance she were not going to America, do you suppose she would have him?"

"Well, I should say not!"

"Then you are quite sure she would give him no for an answer."

"Of course she would."

Ingmar sat on the edge of the bed, his legs dangling over the side.

"Now you got just what you needed, Ingmar," he thought; "and now I guess you'll take that journey to-morrow," he said, pounding the edge of the bed with his fist. "How can mother think she'll get me to stay at home by showing me that Brita doesn't like me!"



He kept pounding the side of the bed, as if in thought he were knocking down something that was resisting him.

"Anyway, I'm going to chance it once more," he decided. "We Ingmars begin all over again when things go wrong. No man that is a man can sit back calmly and let a woman fret herself insane over his conduct."

Never had he felt so keenly his utter defeat, and he was determined to put himself right.

"I'd be a hell of a man if I couldn't make Brita happy here!" he said.

He dealt the bedpost a last blow before getting up to go back to his work.

"As sure as you're born it was Big Ingmar that sent old Kaisa here, in order to make me tale that trip to the city."

## IV

Ingmar Ingmarsson had arrived in the city, and was walking slowly toward the big prison house, which was beautifully situated on the crest of a hill overlooking the public park. He did not glance about him, but went with eyes downcast, dragging himself along with as much difficulty as though he were some feeble old man. He had left off his usual picturesque peasant garb on this occasion, and was wearing a black cloth suit and a starched shirt which he had already crumpled. He felt very solemn, yet all the while he was anxious and reluctant.

On coming to the gravelled yard in front of the jail he saw a guard on duty and asked him if this was not the day that Brita Ericsson was to be discharged.

"Yes, I think there is a woman coming out to-day," the guard answered.

"One who has been in for infanticide," Ingmar explained.

"Oh, that one! Yes, she'll be out this forenoon."

Ingmar stationed himself under a tree, to wait. Not for a second did he take his eyes off the prison gate. "I dare say there are some among those who have gone in there that haven't fared any too well," he thought. "I don't want to brag, but maybe there's many a one on the inside that has suffered less than I who am outside. Well, I declare, Big Ingmar has brought me here to fetch my bride from the prison house," he remarked to himself. "But I can't say that little Ingmar is overpleased at the thought; he would have liked seeing her pass through a gate of honour instead, with her mother standing by her side, to give her to the bridegroom. And then they should have driven to the church in a flower-trimmed chaise, followed by a big bridal procession, and she should have sat beside him dressed as a bride, and smiling under her bridal crown."

The gate opened several times. First, a chaplain came out, then it was the wife of the governor of the prison, and then some servants who were going to town. Finally Brita came. When the gate opened he felt a cramp at the heart. "It is she," he thought. His eyes dropped. He was as if paralyzed, and could not move. When he had recovered himself, he looked up; she was then standing on the steps outside the gate.

She stood there a moment, quite still; she had pushed back her headshawl and, with eyes that were clear and open, she looked out across the landscape. The prison stood on high ground, and beyond the town and the stretches of forest she could see her native hills.

Suddenly she seemed to be shaken by some unseen force; she covered her face with her hands and sank down upon the stone step. Ingmar could hear her sobs from where he stood.

Presently he went over to her, and waited. She was crying so hard that she seemed deaf to every other sound; and he had to stand there a long time. At last he said:

"Don't cry like that, Brita!"

She looked up. "O God in Heaven!" she exclaimed, "are you here?"

Instantly all that she had done to him flashed across her mind – and what it must have cost him to come. With a cry of joy she threw her arms around his neck and began to sob again.

"How I have longed that you might come!" she said.

Ingmar's heart began to beat faster at the thought of her being so pleased with him. "Why, Brita, have you really been longing for me?" he said, quite moved.

"I have wanted so much to ask your forgiveness."

Ingmar drew himself up to his full height and said very coldly:

"There will be plenty of time for that I don't think we ought to stop here any longer."

"No, this is no place to stop at," she answered meekly.

"I have put up at Lövberg's," he said as they walked along the road.

"That's where my trunk is."

"I have seen it there," said Ingmar. "It's too big for the back of the cart, so it will have to be left there till we can send for it."

Brita stopped and looked up at him. This was the first time he had intimated that he meant to take her home.

"I had a letter from father to-day. He says that you also think that I ought to go to America."

"I thought there was no harm in our having a second choice. It wasn't so certain that you would care to come back with me."

She noticed that he said nothing about wanting her to come, but maybe it was because he did not wish to force himself upon her a second time. She grew very reluctant. It couldn't be an enviable task to take one of her kind to the Ingmar Farm. Then something seemed to say:

"Tell him that you will go to America; it is the only service you can render him. Tell him that, tell him that!" urged something within her. And while this thought was still in her mind she heard some one say: "I'm afraid that I am not strong enough to go to America. They tell me that you have to work very hard over there." It was as if another had spoken, and not she herself.

"So they say," Ingmar said indifferently.

She was ashamed of her weakness and thought of how only that morning she had told the prison chaplain that she was going out into the world a new and a better woman. Thoroughly displeased with herself, she walked silently for some time, wondering how she should take back her words. But as soon as she tried to speak, she was held back by the thought that if he still cared for her it would be the basest kind of ingratitude to repulse him again. "If I could only read his thoughts!" she said herself.

Presently she stopped and leaned against a wall. "All this noise and the sight of so many people makes my head go round," she said. He put out his hand, which she took; then they went along, hand in hand. Ingmar was thinking, "Now we look like sweethearts." All the same he wondered how it would be when he got home, how his mother and the rest of the folks would take it.

When they came to Lövberg's place, Ingmar said that his horse was now thoroughly rested, and if she had no objection they might as well cover the first few stations that day. Then she thought: "Now is the time to tell him that you won't go. Thank him first, then tell him that you don't want to go with him." She prayed God that she might be shown if he had come for her only out of pity. In the meantime Ingmar had drawn the cart out of the shed. The cart had been newly painted, the dasher shone, and the cushions had fresh covering. To the buckboard was attached a little half-withered bouquet of wild flowers. The sight of the flowers made her stop and think. Ingmar, meanwhile, had gone back to the stable and harnessed the horse, and was now leading him out. Then she discovered another bouquet of the same sort between the harness, and began to feel that after all he must like her. So it seemed best not to say anything. Otherwise he might think she was ungrateful and that she did not understand how big a thing he was offering her.

For a time they drove along without exchanging a word. Then, in order to break the silence, she began to question him about various home matters. With every question he was reminded of some one or other whose judgment he feared. How so and so will wonder and how so and so will laugh at me, he thought.

He answered only in monosyllables. Time and again she felt like begging him to turn back. "He doesn't want me," she thought. "He doesn't care for me; he is doing this only out of charity."

She soon stopped asking questions. They drove on for miles in deep silence. When they came to their first stopping place, which was an inn, there were coffee and hot biscuits in readiness for them; and on the tray were some more flowers. She knew then that he had ordered this the day before, when passing. Was that, too, done only out of kindness and pity? Was he happy yesterday? Was it only to-day that he had lost heart, after seeing her come out of prison? To-morrow, when he had forgotten this, perhaps all would be well again.

Sorrow and remorse had softened Brita: she did not grant to cause him any more unhappiness. Perhaps, after all, he really —

They stayed at the inn overnight and left early the next morning. By ten o'clock they were already within sight of their parish church. As they drove along the road leading to the church it was thronged with people, and the bells were ringing.

"Why, it's Sunday!" Brita exclaimed, instinctively folding her hands. She forgot everything else in the thought of going to church and praising God. She wanted to begin her new life with a service in the old church.

"I should love to go to church," she said to Ingmar, never thinking that it might be embarrassing for him to be seen there with her. She was all devotion and gratitude! Ingmar's first impulse was to say that she couldn't; he felt somehow that he had not the courage to face the curious glances and gossiping tongues of these people. "It has got to be met sooner or later," he thought. "Putting it off won't make it any easier."

He turned and drove in on the church grounds. The service had not yet started; and many persons were sitting in the grass and on the stone hedge, watching the people arrive. The instant they saw Ingmar and Brita they began to nudge each other, and whisper, and point. Ingmar glanced at Brita. She sat there with clasped hands, quite unconscious of the things about her. She saw no persons, apparently, but Ingmar saw them only too well. They came running after the wagon, and did not wonder at their running or their stares. They must have thought that their eyes had deceived them. Of course, they could not believe that he had come to the house of God with her — the woman who had strangled his child. "This is too much!" he said. "I can't stand it."

"I think you'd better go inside at once, Brita," he suggested.

"Why, certainly," she answered. To attend service was her only thought; she had not come there to meet people.

Ingmar took his own time unharnessing and feeding the horse. Many eyes were fixed upon him, but nobody spoke to him. By the time he was ready to go into the church, most of the people were already in their pews, and the opening hymn was being sung. Walking down the centre isle, he glanced over at the side where the women were seated. All the pews were filled save one, and in that there was only one person. He saw at once that it was Brita and knew, of course, that no one had cared to sit with her. Ingmar went and sat down beside her. Brita looked up at him in wonderment. She had not noticed it before, but now she understood why she had the pew to herself. Then the deep feeling of devotion, which she had but just experienced, was dispelled by a sense of black despair. "How would it all end?" she wondered. She should never have come with him.

Her eyes began to fill. To keep from breaking down she took up an old prayerbook from the shelf in front of her, and opened it. She kept turning the leaves of both gospels and epistles without being able to see a word for the tears. Suddenly something bright caught her eye. It was a bookmark, with a red heart, which lay between the leaves. She took it out and slipped it toward Ingmar. She saw him close his big hand over it and steal a glance at it. Shortly afterward it lay upon the floor. "What is to become of us?" thought Brita, sobbing behind the prayerbook.

As soon as the preacher had stepped down from the pulpit they went out. Ingmar hurriedly hitched up the horse, with Brita's help. By the time the benediction was pronounced and the

congregation was beginning to file out, Brita and Ingmar were already off. Both seemed to be thinking the same thought: one who has committed such a crime cannot live among people. The two fell as if they had been doing penance by appearing at church. "Neither of us will be able to stand it," they thought.

In the midst of her distress of mind, Brita caught a glimpse of the Ingmar Farm, and hardly knew it again. It looked so bright and red. She remembered having heard that the house was to be painted the year Ingmar married. Before, the wedding had been put off because he had felt that he could not afford to pay out any money just then. Now she understood that he had always meant to have everything right; but the way had been made rather hard for him.

When they arrived at the farm the folks were at dinner. "Here comes the boss," said one of the men, looking out. Mother Martha got up from the table, scarcely lifting her heavy eyelids. "Stay where you are, all of you!" she commanded. "No one need rise from the table."

The old woman walked heavily across the room. Those who turned to look after her noticed that she had on her best dress, with her silk shawl across her shoulders, and her silk kerchief on her head, as if to emphasize her authority. When the horse stopped she was already at the door.

Ingmar jumped down at once, but Brita kept her seat. He went over to her side and unfastened the carriage apron.

"Aren't you going to get out?" he said.

"No," she replied, then covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

"I ought never to have come back," she sobbed.

"Oh, do get down!" he urged.

"Let me go back to the city; I'm not good enough for you."

Ingmar thought that maybe she was right about it, but said nothing.

He stood with his hand on the apron, and waited.

"What does she say?" asked Mother Martha from the doorway.

"She says she isn't good enough for us," Ingmar replied, for

Brita's words could scarcely be heard for her sobs.

"What is she crying about?" asked the old woman.

"Because I am such a miserable sinner," said Brita, pressing her hands to her heart which she thought would break.

"What's that?" the old woman asked once more.

"She says she is such a miserable sinner," Ingmar repeated.

When Brita heard him repeat her words in a cold and indifferent tone, the truth suddenly flashed upon her. No, he could never have stood there and repeated those words to his mother had he been fond of her, or had there been a spark of love in his heart for her.

"Why doesn't she get down?" the old woman then asked.

Suppressing her sobs, Brita spoke up: "Because I don't want to bring misfortune upon Ingmar."

"I think she is quite right," said the old mistress. "Let her go, little Ingmar! You may as well know that otherwise I'll be the one to leave: for I'll not sleep one night under the same roof with the likes of her."

"For God's sake let me go!" Brita moaned.

Ingmar ripped out an oath, turned the horse, and sprang into the cart. He was sick and tired of all this and could not stand any more of it.

Out on the highway they kept meeting church people. This annoyed Ingmar. Suddenly he turned the horse and drove in on a narrow forest road.

As he turned some one called to him. He glanced back. It was the postman with a letter for him. He took the letter, thrust it into his pocket, and drove on.

As soon as he felt sure that he could not be seen from the road, he slowed down and brought out the letter. Instantly Brita put her hand on his arm. "Don't read it!" she begged.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Never mind reading it; it's nothing."

"But how can you know?"

"It's a letter from me."

"Then tell me yourself what's in it."

"No, I can't tell you that."

He looked hard at her. She turned scarlet, her eyes growing wild with alarm. "I guess I will read that letter anyway," said Ingmar, and began to tear open the envelope.

"O Heavenly Father!" she cried, "am I then to be spared nothing? Ingmar," she implored, "read it in a day or two – when I am on my way to America."

By that time he had already opened the letter and was scanning it. She put her hand over the paper. "Listen to me, Ingmar!" she said. "It was the chaplain who got me to write that letter, and he promised not to send it till I was on board the steamer. Instead he sent it off too soon. You have no right to read it yet; wait till I'm gone, Ingmar."

Ingmar gave her an angry look and jumped out of the wagon, so that he might read the letter in peace. Brita was as much excited now as she had been in the old days, when things did not go her way.

"What I say in that letter isn't true. The chaplain talked me into writing it. I *don't* love you, Ingmar."

He looked up from the paper and gazed at her in astonishment. Then she grew silent, and the lessons in humility which she had learned in prison profited her now. After all she suffered no greater embarrassment than she deserved.

Ingmar, meanwhile, stood puzzling over the letter. Suddenly, with an impatient snarl, he crumpled it up.

"I can't make this out!" he said, stamping his foot. "My head's all in a muddle."

He went up to Brita and gripped her by the arm.

"Does it really say in the letter that you care for me?" His tone was shockingly brutal, and the look of him was terrible.

Brita was silent.

"Does the letter say that you care for me?" he repeated savagely.

"Yes," she answered faintly.

Then his face became horribly distorted. He shook her arm and thrust it from him. "How you can lie!" he said, with a hoarse and angry laugh. "How you can lie!"

"God knows I have prayed night and day that I might see you again before I go!" she solemnly avowed.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to America, of course."

"The hell you are!"

Ingmar was beside himself. He staggered a few steps into the woods and cast himself upon the ground. And now it was his turn to weep!

Brita followed him and sat down beside him, she was so happy that she wanted to shout.

"Ingmar, little Ingmar!" she said, calling him by his pet name.

"But you think I'm so ugly!" he returned.

"Of course I do."

Ingmar pushed her hand away.

"Now let me tell you something," said Brita.

"Tell away."

"Do you remember what you said in court three years ago?"

"I do."

"That if I could only get to think differently of you, you would marry me?"

"Yes, I remember."

"It was after that I began to care for you. I had never imagined that any mortal could say such a thing. It seemed almost unbelievable your saying it to me, after all I had done to you. As I saw you that day, I thought you better looking than all the others, and you were wiser than any of them, and the only one with whom it would be good to share one's life. I fell so deeply in love with you that it seemed as if you belonged to me, and I to you. At first I took it for granted that you would come and fetch me, but later I hardly dared think it."

Ingmar raised his head. "Then why didn't you write?" he asked.

"But I did write."

"Asking me to forgive you, as if that were anything to write about!"

"What should I have written?"

"About the other thing."

"How would I have dared – I?"

"I came mighty near not coming at all."

"But Ingmar! do you suppose I could have written love letters to you after all I had done! My last day in prison I wrote to you because the chaplain said I must. When I gave him the letter, he promised not to send it until I was well on my way."

Ingmar took her hand and flattened it against the earth, then slapped it.

"I could beat you!" he said.

"You may do with me what you will, Ingmar."

He looked up into her face, upon which suffering had wrought a new kind of beauty. "And I came so near letting you go!" he sighed.

"You just had to come, I suppose."

"Let me tell you that I didn't care for you."

"I don't wonder at that."

"I felt relieved when I heard that you were to be sent to America."

"Yes, father wrote me that you were pleased."

"Whenever I looked at mother, I felt somehow that I couldn't ask her to accept a daughter-in-law like you."

"No, it would never do, Ingmar."

"I've had to put up with a lot on your account; no one would notice me because of my treatment of you."

"Now you are doing what you threatened to do," said Brita. "You're striking me."

"I can't begin to tell you how mad I am at you."

She kept still.

"When I think of all I've had to stand these last few weeks – " he went on.

"But Ingmar – "

"Oh, I'm not angry about that, but at the thought of how near I came to letting you go!"

"Didn't you love me, Ingmar?"

"No, indeed."

"Not during the whole journey home?"

"No, not for a second! I was just put out with you."

"When did you change?"

"When I got your letter."

"I saw that your love was over; that was why I did not want you to know that mine was but just beginning."

Ingmar chuckled.

"What amuses you, Ingmar?"

"I'm thinking of how we sneaked out of church, and of the kind of welcome we got at the Ingmar Farm."

"And you can laugh at that?"

"Why not as well laugh? I suppose we'll have to take to the road, like tramps. Wonder what father would say to that?"

"You may laugh, Ingmar, but this can't be; it can't be."

"I think it can, for now I don't care a damn about anything or anybody but you!"

Brita was ready to cry, but he just made her tell him again and again how often she had thought of him, and how much she had longed for him. Little by little he became as quiet as a child listening to a lullaby. It was all so different from what Brita had expected. She had thought of talking to him about her crime, if he came for her, and the weight of it. She would have liked to tell either him or her mother, or whoever had come for her, how unworthy she was of them. But not a word of this had she been allowed to speak.

Presently he said very gently:

"There is something you want to tell me?"

"Yes."

"And you are thinking about it all the time?"

"Day and night!"

"And it gets sort of mixed in with everything?"

"That's true."

"Now tell me about it, so there will be two instead of one to bear it."

He sat looking into her eyes; they were like the eyes of a poor, hunted fawn. But as she spoke they became calmer.

"Now you feel better," he said when she had finished.

"I feel as if a great weight had been lifted from my heart."

"That is because we are two to bear it. Now, perhaps, you won't want to go away."

"Indeed I should love to stay!" she said.

"Then let us go home," said Ingmar, rising.

"No, I'm afraid!"

"Mother is not so terrible," lie laughed, "when she sees that one has a mind of one's own."

"No, Ingmar, I could never turn her out of her home. I have no choice but to go to America."

"I'm going to tell you something," said Ingmar, with a mysterious smile. "You needn't be the least bit afraid, for there is some one who will help us."

"Who is it?"

"It's father. He'll see to it that everything comes out right."

There was some one coming along the forest road. It was Kaisa. But as she was not bearing the familiar yoke, with the baskets, they hardly knew her at first.

"Good-day to you!" greeted Ingmar and Brita, and the old woman came up and shook hands with them.

"Well, I declare, here you sit, and all the folks from the farm out looking for you! You were in such a hurry to get out of church," the old woman went on, "that I never got to meet you at all. So I went down to the farm to pay my respects to Brita. When I got there who should I see but the Dean, and he was in the house calling Mother Martha at the top of his lungs before I even had a chance to say 'how d'ye do.' And before he had so much as shaken hands with her, he was crying out: 'Now, Mother Martha, you can be proud of Ingmar! It's plain now that he belongs to the old stock; so we must begin to call him *Big* Ingmar.'

"Mother Martha, as you know, never says very much; she just stood there tying knots in her shawl. 'What's this you're telling me?' she said finally. 'He has brought Brita home,' the Dean explained, 'and, believe me, Mother Martha, he will be honoured and respected for it as long as he

lives.' 'You don't tell me,' said the old lady. 'I could hardly go on with the service when I saw them sitting in church; it was a better sermon than any I could ever preach. Ingmar will be a credit to us all, as his father before him was.' 'The Dean brings us great news,' said Mother Martha. 'Isn't he home yet?' asked the Dean. 'No, he is not at home; but they may have stopped at Bergskog first.'"

"Did mother really say that?" cried Ingmar.

"Why, of course she did; and while we sat waiting for you to appear, she sent out one messenger after the other to look for you."

Kaisa kept up a steady stream of talk, but Ingmar no longer heard what she said. His thoughts were far away. "I come into the living-room, where father sits with all the old Ingmars. 'Good-day to you, Big Ingmar Ingmarsson,' says father, rising and coming toward me. 'The same to you, father,' says I, 'and thank you for your help.' 'Now you'll be well married,' says father, 'and then the other matters will all right themselves.' 'But, father, it could never have turned out so well if you hadn't stood by me.' 'That was nothing,' says father. 'All we Ingmars need do is to walk in the ways of God.'"



## BOOK TWO

### AT THE SCHOOLMASTER'S

In the early eighties there was no one in the parish where the old Ingmarsson family lived who would have thought of embracing any new kind of faith or attending any new form of sacred service. That new sects had sprung up, here and there, in other Dalecarlian parishes, and that people went out into rivers and lakes to be immersed in accordance with the new rites of the Baptists, was known; but folks only laughed at it all and said: "That sort of thing may suit those who live at Applebo and in Gagnef, but it can never touch our parish."

The people of that parish clung to their old customs and habits, one of which was a regular attendance at church on Sundays; every one that could go went, even in the severest winter weather. Then, of all times, it was almost a necessity; with the thermometer at twenty below zero outside, it would have been beyond human endurance to sit in the unheated church had it not been packed to the doors with people.

It could not be said of the parishioners that they turned out in such great numbers because they had a particularly brilliant pastor or one who had any special gift for expounding the Scriptures. In those days folks went to church to praise God and not to be entertained by fine sermons. On the way home, when fighting against the cutting wind on an open country road, one thought: "Our Lord must have noticed that you were at church this cold morning." That was the main thing. It was no fault of theirs if the preacher had said nothing more than he had been heard to say every Sunday since his appointment to the pastorate.

As a matter of fact, the majority seemed perfectly satisfied with what they got. They knew that what the pastor read to them was the Word of God, and therefore they found it altogether beautiful. Only the schoolmaster and one or two of the more intelligent farmers occasionally said among themselves: "The parson seems to have only one sermon; he talks of nothing but God's wisdom and God's government. All that is well enough so long as the Dissenters keep away. But this stronghold is poorly defended and would fall at the first attack."

Lay preachers generally passed by this parish. "What's the good of going there?" they used to say. "Those people don't want to be awakened." Not only the lay preachers, but even all the "awakened souls" in the neighbouring parishes looked upon the Ingmarssons and their fellow-parishioners as great sinners, and whenever they caught the sound of the bells from their church they would say the bells were tolling, "Sleep in your sins! Sleep in your sins!"

The whole congregation, old and young alike, were furious when they learned that people spoke in that way of their bells. They knew that their folks never forgot to repeat the Lord's Prayer whenever the church bells rang, and that every evening, at the time of the Angelus, the menfolk uncovered their heads, the women courtesied, and everybody stood still about as long as it takes to say an Our Father. All who have lived in that parish must acknowledge that God never seemed so mighty and so honoured as on summer evenings, when scythes were rested, and plows were stopped in the middle of a furrow, and the seed wagon was halted in the midst of the loading, simply at the stroke of a bell. It was as if they knew that our Lord at that moment was hovering over the parish on an evening cloud – great and powerful and good – breathing His blessing upon the whole community.

None of your college-bred men had ever taught in that parish. The schoolmaster was just a plain, old-fashioned farmer, who was self-taught. He was a capable man who could manage a hundred children single-handed. For thirty years and more he had been the only teacher there, and was looked up to by everybody. The schoolmaster seemed to feel that the spiritual welfare of the entire congregation rested with him, and was therefore quite concerned at their having called a parson

who was no kind of a preacher. However, he held his peace as long as it was only a question of introducing a new form of baptism, and elsewhere at that; but on learning that there had also been some changes in the administration of the Holy Communion and that people were beginning to gather in private homes to partake of the Sacrament, he could no longer remain passive. Although a poor man himself, he managed to persuade some of the leading citizens to raise the money to build a mission house. "You know me," he said to them. "I only want to preach in order to strengthen people in the old faith. What would be the natural result if the lay preachers were to come upon us, with their new baptism and their new Sacrament, if there were no one to tell the people what was the true doctrine and what the false?"

The schoolmaster was as well liked by the clergyman as by every one else. He and the parson were frequently seen strolling together along the road between the schoolhouse and the parsonage, back and forth, back and forth, as if they had no end of things to say to each other. The parson would often drop in at the schoolmaster's of an evening to sit in the cozy kitchen by an open fire and chat with the schoolmaster's wife, Mother Stina. At times he came night after night. He had a dreary time of it at home; his wife was always ailing, and there was neither order nor comfort in his house.

One winter's evening the schoolmaster and his wife were sitting by the kitchen fire, talking in earnest whispers, while a little girl of twelve played by herself in a corner of the room. The little girl was their daughter, and her name was Gertrude. She was a fair little lass, with flaxen hair and plump, rosy cheeks, but she did not have that wise and prematurely old look which one so often sees in the children of schoolmasters.

The corner in which she sat was her playground. There she had gathered together a variety of things: bits of coloured glass, broken teacups and saucers, pebbles from the banks of the river, little square blocks of wood, and more rubbish of the same sort.

She had been let play in peace all the evening; neither her father nor her mother had disturbed her. Busy as she was she did not want to be reminded of lessons and chores. It didn't look as if there were going to be any extra sums to do for father that night, she thought.

She had a big work in hand, the little girl back there in her corner. Nothing less than making a whole parish! She was going to build up the entire district with both church and schoolhouse; the river and the bridge were also to be included. Everything had to be quite complete, of course.

She had already got a good part of it done. The whole wreath of hills that went round the parish was made up of smaller and larger stones. In all the crevices she had planted forests of little spruce twigs, and with two jagged stones she had erected Klack Mountain and Olaf's Peak on either side of the Dal River. The long valley in between the mountains had been covered with mould taken from one of her mother's flowerpots. So far everything was all right, only she had not been able to make the galley blossom. But she comforted herself by pretending it was early springtime, before grass and grain had sprouted.

The broad, beautiful Dal River that flows through the valley she had managed to lay out effectively with a long and narrow piece of glass, and the floating bridge connecting both sides of the parish, had been making on the water this long while. The more distant farms and settlements were marked off by pieces of red brick. Farthest north, amid fields and meadows, lay the Ingmar Farm. To the east was the village of Kolasen, at the foot of the mountain. At the extreme south, where the river, with rapids and falls, leaves the valley and rushes under the mountain, was Bergsana Foundry.

The entire landscape was now ready, with country roads laid out along the river, sanded and gravelled. Groves had also been set out, here and there, on the plains and near the cottages. The little girl had only to cast a glance at her structure of glass and stone and earth and twigs to see before her the whole parish. And she thought it all very beautiful.

Time after time she raised her head to call her mother and show her what she had done, then changed her mind. She had always found it wiser not to call attention to herself. But the most difficult work of all was yet to come: the building up of the town on both sides of the river. It meant much

shifting about of stones and bits of glass. The sheriff's house wanted to crowd out the merchant's shop; there was no room for the judge's house next door to the doctor's. There were the church and the parsonage, the drug-store and post-office, the peasant homesteads, with their barns and outhouses, the inn, the hunter's lodge, the telegraph station. To remember everything was no small task!

Finally, the whole town of white and red houses stood embedded in green. Now there was only one thing left: she had worked hard to get everything else done so as to begin on the schoolhouse. She wanted plenty of space for the school, which was to be built on the riverside, and must have a big yard, with a flagpole right in the middle of the lawn.

She had saved all her best blocks for the schoolhouse. Now she wondered how she had best go about it. She wanted it to be just like their school, with a big classroom on the ground floor and another upstairs; then there was the kitchen and also the big room where she and her parents lived. But all that would take a good while. "They won't leave me in peace long enough," she said to herself.

Just then footsteps were heard in the entry; some one was stamping off snow. In a twinkling she went ahead with her building. "Here comes the parson to chat with father and mother," she thought. Now she would have the whole evening to herself. And with renewed courage she began to lay the foundation of a schoolhouse as big as half the parish.

Her mother, who had also heard the steps in the hall, got up quickly and drew an old armchair up to the fireplace. Then turning to her husband, she said: "Shall you tell him about it to-night?"

"Yes," answered the schoolmaster, "as soon as I can get round to it."

Presently the pastor came in, half frozen and glad to be in a warm room where he could sit by an open fire. He was very talkative, as usual. It would be hard to find a more likable man than the parson when he came in of an evening to chat about all sorts of things, big and little. He spoke with such ease and assurance of everything pertaining to this world, that one could scarcely believe that he and the dull preacher were one and the same person. But if you happened to speak to him about spiritual things he grew red in the face, began fishing for words, and never said anything that was convincing, unless he chanced to mention that "God governs wisely."

When the parson had settled himself comfortably, the schoolmaster suddenly turned to him and said in a cheery tone:

"Now I must tell you the news: I'm going to build a mission house."

The clergyman became as white as a sheet and sank back in his chair.

"What are you saying, Storm?" he gasped. "Are they really thinking of building a mission house here? Then what's to become of me and the church? Are we to be dispensed with?"

"The church and the pastor will be needed just the same," returned the schoolmaster with a confident air. "It is my purpose that the mission house shall promote the welfare of the church. With so many schisms cropping up all over the country, the church is sorely in need of help."

"I thought you were my friend, Storm," said the parson, mournfully. Only a few moments before he had come in confident and happy, and now all at once his spirit was gone, and he looked as if he were entirely done for.

The schoolmaster understood quite well why the pastor was so distressed. He and every one else knew that at one time the clergyman had been a man of rare promise; but in his student days he had "gone the pace," so to speak, and, in consequence, had suffered a stroke. After that he was never the same. Sometimes he seemed to forget that he was only the ruin of a man; but when reminded of it, a sense of deep despondency came over him. Now he sat there as if paralyzed. It was a long time before any one ventured to speak.

"You mustn't take it like that, Parson," the schoolmaster said at last, trying to make his voice very soft and low.

"Hush, Storm! I know that I'm not a great preacher; still I couldn't have believed it possible that you would wish to take the living from me."

Storm made a gesture of protest, which said, in effect, that anything of the sort had never entered his mind, but he had not the courage to put it into words.

The schoolmaster was a man of sixty and, despite all the work and responsibility which had fallen to his lot, he was still master of his forces. There was a great contrast between him and the parson. Storm was one of the biggest men in Dalecarlia. His head was covered with a mass of black bushy hair, his skin was as dark as bronze, and his features were strong and clear cut. He looked singularly powerful beside the pastor, who was a little narrow-chested, bald-headed man.

The schoolmaster's wife thought that her husband, as the stronger, ought to give in, and motioned to him to drop the matter. Whatever of regret he may have felt, there was nothing in his manner to indicate that he had any idea of relinquishing his project.

Then the schoolmaster began to speak plainly and to the point. He said he was certain that before long the heretics would invade their parish; therefore, it was very necessary that they should have a meeting place where one could talk to the people in a more informal way than at a regular church service; where one might choose one's own text, expound the whole Bible, and interpret its most difficult passages to the people.

His wife again signed to him to keep still. She knew what the clergyman was thinking while her husband talked. "So I haven't taught them anything, and I haven't given them any sort of protection against unbelief? I must be a poor specimen of a pastor when the schoolmaster in my own parish thinks himself a better preacher than I."

The schoolmaster, however, did not keep still, but went on talking of all that must be done to protect the flock from the wolves.

"I haven't seen any wolves," said the pastor.

"But I know they are on their way."

"And you, Storm, are opening the door to them," declared the minister, rising. The schoolmaster's talk had irritated him. The blood mounted to his face, and he regained a little of his old dignity.

"My dear Storm, let us drop the subject," he said. Then turning to the housewife, he passed some pleasant remark about the last pretty bride she had dressed. For Mother Stina dressed all the brides in the parish.

Peasant woman though she was, she understood how it must hurt him to be so cruelly reminded of his own impotence. She wept from compassion, and could not answer him for the tears; so the pastor had to do most of the talking.

Meanwhile, he kept thinking: "Oh, if I only had some of the power and the capacity of my younger days, I would convince this peasant at once of the wrong he is doing." With that he turned again to the schoolmaster:

"Where did you get the money, Storm?" he asked.

"A company has been formed," Storm explained; then he mentioned the names of several men who had pledged their support, just to show the parson that they were the kind of people who would harm neither the church nor its pastor.

"Is Ingmar Ingmarsson in it, too?" the parson exclaimed. The effect of this was like a deathblow. "And to think that I was as sure of Ingmar Ingmarsson as I had been of you, Storm!"

He said nothing more about this just then, but instead turned to Mother Stina and talked to her. He must have seen that she was crying, but acted as if he had not noticed it. In a little while he again addressed the schoolmaster.

"Drop it, Storm!" he begged. "Drop it for my sake. You wouldn't like it if somebody put up another school next to yours."

The schoolmaster sat gazing at the floor and reflected a moment.

Presently he said, almost reluctantly, "I can't, Parson."

For fully ten minutes there was a dead silence. Where upon the pastor put on his overcoat and cap, and went toward the door.

The whole evening he had been trying to find words with which to prove to Storm that he was not only doing harm to the pastor with this undertaking, but he was undermining the parish. Although thoughts and words kept crowding into his head, he could neither arrange them into an orderly sequence nor give utterance to them, because he was a broken man. Walking toward the door, he espied Gertrude sitting in her corner playing with her blocks and bits of glass. He stopped and looked at her. Evidently she had not heard a word of the conversation, for her eyes sparkled with delight and her cheeks were like fresh-blown roses.

The pastor was startled at the sight of all this innocent happiness of the child in contrast to his own heart heaviness.

"What are you making?" he asked, and went up to her.

The little girl had got through with her parish long before that; in fact, she had already pulled it down and started something new.

"If you had only come a minute sooner!" exclaimed the child. "I had made such a beautiful parish, with both church and schoolhouse – "

"But where is it now?"

"Oh, I've destroyed the parish, and now I'm building a Jerusalem, and – "

"What?" interrupted the parson. "Have you destroyed the parish in order to build a Jerusalem?"

"Yes," said Gertrude, "and it was such a fine parish! But we read about Jerusalem yesterday in school, and now I have pulled down the parish to build a Jerusalem."

The preacher stood regarding the child. He put his hand to his forehead and thought a moment, then he said: "It is surely someone greater than you that speaks through your mouth."

The child's words seemed to him so extraordinarily prophetic that he kept repeating them to himself, over and over. Gradually his thoughts drifted back into their old groove, and he began to ponder the ways of Providence and the means by which He works His will.

Presently he went back to the schoolmaster, his eyes shining with a new light, and said in his usual cheery tone:

"I'm no longer angry at you, Storm. You are only doing what you must do. All my life I have been pondering the ways of Providence, and I can't seem to get any light on them. Nor do I understand this thing, but I understand that you are doing what you needs must do."

## **"AND THEY SAW HEAVEN OPEN"**

The spring the mission house was built there was a great thaw, and the Dal River rose to an alarming height. And what quantities of water that spring brought! It came in showers from the skies; it came rushing down in streams from the mountainsides, and it welled out of the earth; water ran in every wheel rut and in every furrow. All this water found its way to the river, which kept rising higher and higher, and rolled onward with greater and greater force. It did not present its usual shiny and placid appearance, but had turned a dirty brown from all the muddy water that kept flowing in. The surging stream, filled with logs and cakes of ice, looked strangely weird and threatening.

At first the grown folks paid no special heed to the spring flood; only the children ran down to the banks to watch the raging river and all that it carried along.

But timber and ice floes were not the only things that went floating by! Presently the stream came driving with washing piers and bath houses, then with boats and wreckage of bridges.

"It will soon be taking our bridge, too!" the children exclaimed. They felt a bit uneasy, but were glad at the same time that something so extraordinary was likely to happen.

Suddenly a huge pine, root and branch, came sailing past, followed by a white-stemmed aspen tree, its spreading branches thick with buds which had swelled from being so long in the water. Close upon the trees came a little hay shed, bottom upward; it was still full of hay and straw, and floated on its roof like a boat on its keel.

But when things of that sort began to drift past, the grown-ups, too, bestirred themselves. They realized now that the river had overflowed its banks somewhere up north, and hurried down to the shores with poles and boat hooks, to haul up on land buildings and furniture.

At the northern end of the parish, where the houses were scattered and people were scarce, Ingmar Ingmarsson alone was standing on the bank, gazing out at the river. He was then almost sixty, and looked even older. His face was weatherbeaten and furrowed, his figure bent; he appeared to be as awkward and helpless as ever. He stood leaning on a long, heavy boat hook, his dull, sleepy-looking eyes fixed on the water. The river raged and foamed, arrogantly marching past with all that it had matched from the shores. It was as if it were deriding the peasant for his slowness. "Oh, you're not the one to wrest from me any of the things I'm carrying away!" it seemed to say.

Ingmar Ingmarsson made no attempt to rescue any of the floating bridges or boat hulls that passed quite close to the bank. "All that will be seen to down at the village," he thought. Not for a second did his gaze wander from the river. He took note of everything that drifted past. All at once he sighted something bright and yellow floating on some loosely nailed boards quite a distance up the river. "Ah, this is what I have been expecting all along!" he said aloud. At first he could not quite make out what the yellow was; but for one who knew how little children in Dalecarlia are dressed it was easy to guess. "Those must be youngsters who were out on a washing pier playing," he said, "and hadn't the sense to get back on land before the river took them."

It was not long until the peasant saw that he had guessed rightly. Now he could distinctly see three little children, in their yellow homespun frocks and round yellow hats, being carried downstream on a poorly constructed raft that was being slowly torn apart by the swift current and the moving ice floes.

The children were still a long way off. Big Ingmar knew there was a bend in the river where it touched his land. If God in His mercy would only direct the raft with the children into this current, he thought, he might be able to get them ashore.

He stood very still, watching the raft. All at once it seemed as if some one had given it a push; it swung round and headed straight for the shore. By that time the children were so close that he could see their frightened little faces and hear their cries. But they were still too far out to be reached by the boat hook, from the bank at least; so he hurried down to the water's edge, and waded into the river.

As he did so, he had a strange sort of feeling that some one was calling to him to come back. "You are no longer a young man, Ingmar; this may prove a perilous business for you!" a voice said to him.

He reflected a moment, wondering whether he had the right to risk his life. The wife, whom he had once fetched from the prison, had died during the winter, and since her going his one longing had been that he might soon follow. But, on the other hand, there was his son who needed a father's care, for he was only a little lad and could not look after the farm.

"In any case, it must be as God wills," he said.

Now Big Ingmar was no longer either awkward or slow. As he plunged into the raging river, he planted his boat hook firmly into the bottom, so as not to be carried away by the current, and he took good care to dodge the floating ice and driftwood. When the raft with the children was quite near, he pressed his feet down in the river bed, thrust out his boat hook, and got a purchase on it.

"Hold on tight!" he shouted to the children, for just then the raft made a sudden turn and all its planks creaked. But the wretched structure held together, and Big Ingmar managed to pull it out of the strongest current. That done, he let go of it, for he knew that the raft would now drift shoreward by itself.

Touching bottom with his boat hook again, he turned to go back to the bank. This time, however, he failed to notice a huge log that was coming toward him with a rush. It caught him in the side just below the armpit. It was a terrific blow, for the log was hurled against him with a violent force that sent him staggering in the water. Yet he kept a tight grip on the boat hook until he reached the bank. When he again stood on firm ground, he hardly dared touch his body, for he felt that his chest had been crushed. Then his mouth suddenly filled with blood. "It's all up with you, Ingmar!" he thought, and sank down on the bank, for he could not go a step farther. The little children whom he had rescued gave the alarm, and soon people came running down to the bank, and Big Ingmar was carried home.

The pastor was called in, and he remained at the Ingmar Farm the whole afternoon. On his way home, he stopped at the schoolmaster's. He had experienced things in the course of the day which he felt the need of telling to some one who would understand.

Storm and Mother Stina were deeply grieved, for they had already heard that Ingmar Ingmarsson was dead. The clergyman, on the other hand, looked almost radiant as he stepped into the schoolmaster's kitchen.

Immediately Storm asked the pastor if he had been in time.

"Yes," he said, "but on this occasion I was not needed."

"Weren't you?" said Mother Stina.

"No," answered the pastor with a mysterious smile. "He would have got on just as well without me. Sometimes it is very hard to sit by a deathbed," he added.

"It is indeed," nodded the schoolmaster.

"Particularly when the one who is passing from among us happens to be the best man in your parish."

"Just so."

"But things can also be quite different from what one had imagined."

For a moment the pastor sat quietly gazing into space; his eyes looked clearer than usual behind the spectacles.

"Have you, Strong, or you, Mother Stina, ever heard of the wonderful thing that once happened to Big Ingmar when he was a young man?" he asked.

The schoolmaster said that he had heard many wonderful things about him.

"Why, of course; but this is the most wonderful of all! I never knew of it myself until to-day. Big Ingmar had a good friend who has always lived in a little cabin on his estate," the pastor continued.

"Yes, I know," said the schoolmaster. "He is also named Ingmar; folks call him Strong Ingmar by way of distinction."

"True," said the pastor; "his father named him Ingmar in honour of the master's family. One Saturday evening, at midsummer, when the nights are almost as light as the days, Big Ingmar and his friend, Strong Ingmar, after finishing their work, put on their Sunday clothes and went down to the village in quest of amusement."

The pastor paused a moment, and pondered. "I can imagine that the night must have been a beautiful one," he went on, "clear and still – one of those nights when earth and sky seem to exchange hues, the sky turning a bright green while the earth becomes veiled in white mists, lending to everything a white or bluish tinge. When Big Ingmar and Strong Ingmar were crossing the bridge to the village, it was as if some one had told them to stop and look upward. They did so. And they saw heaven open! The whole firmament had been drawn back to right and left, like a pair of curtains, and the two stood there, hand in hand, and beheld all the glories of heaven. Have you ever heard anything like it, Mother Stina, or you, Storm?" said the pastor in awed tones. "Only think of those two standing on the bridge and seeing heaven open! But what they saw they have never divulged to a soul. Sometimes they would tell a child or a kinsman that they had once seen heaven open, but they never spoke of it to outsiders. But the vision lived in their memories as their greatest treasure, their Holy of Holies."

The pastor closed his eyes for a moment, and heaved a deep sigh. "I have never before heard tell of such things." His voice shook a little as he proceeded. "I only wish I had stood on the bridge with Big Ingmar and Strong Ingmar, and seen heaven open!"

"This morning, immediately after Big Ingmar had been carried home, he requested that Strong Ingmar be sent for. At once a messenger was dispatched to the croft to fetch him, only to find that Strong Ingmar was not at home. He was in the forest somewhere, chopping firewood, and was not easy to find. Messenger after messenger went in search of him. In the meantime, Big Ingmar felt very anxious lest he should not get to see his old friend again in this life. First the doctor came, then I came, but Strong Ingmar they couldn't seem to find. Big Ingmar took very little notice of us. He was sinking fast. 'I shall soon be gone, Parson,' he said to me. 'I only wish I might see Strong Ingmar before I go.' He was lying on the broad bed in the little chamber off the living-room. His eyes were wide open and he seemed to be looking all the while at something that was far, far away, and which no one else saw. The three little children he had rescued sat huddled at the foot of his bed. Whenever his eyes wandered for an instant from that which he saw in the distance, they rested upon the children, and then his whole face was wreathed in smiles.

"At last they had succeeded in finding the crofter. Big Ingmar glanced away from the children with a sigh of relief when he heard Strong Ingmar's heavy step in the hallway. And when his friend came over to the bedside, he took his hand and patted it gently, saying: 'Do you remember the time when you and I stood on the bridge and saw heaven open?' 'As if I could ever forget that night when we two had a vision of Paradise!' Strong Ingmar responded. Then Big Ingmar turned toward him, his face beaming as if he had the most glorious news to impart. 'Now I'm going there,' he said. Then the crofter bent over him and looked straight into his eyes. 'I shall come after,' he said. Big Ingmar nodded. 'But you know I cannot come before your son returns from the pilgrimage.' 'Yes, yes, I know,' Big Ingmar whispered. Then he drew in a few deep breaths and, before we knew it, he was gone."

The schoolmaster and his wife thought, with the pastor, that it was a beautiful death. All three of them sat profoundly silent for a long while.

"But what could Strong Ingmar have meant," asked Mother Stina abruptly, "when he spoke of the pilgrimage?"

The pastor looked up, somewhat perplexed. "I don't know," he replied. "Big Ingmar died just after that was said, and I have not had time to ponder it." He fell to thinking, then he spoke kind of half to himself: "It was a strange sort of thing to say, you're right about that, Mother Stina."



"You know, of course, that it has been said of Strong Ingmar that he can see into the future?" she said reflectively.

The pastor sat stroking his forehead in an effort to collect his thoughts. "The ways of Providence cannot be reasoned out by the finite mind," he mused. "I cannot fathom them, yet seeking to know them is the most satisfying thing in all the world."

## **KARIN, DAUGHTER OF INGMAR**

Autumn had come and school was again open. One morning, when the children were having their recess, the schoolmaster and Gertrude went into the kitchen and sat down at the table, where Mother Stina served them with coffee. Before they had finished their cups a visitor arrived.

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