# ГАНС ХРИСТИАН АНДЕРСЕН

PICTURES OF SWEDEN

Ганс Андерсен

# Pictures of Sweden

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# Содержание

# H. C. Andersen
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## INTRODUCTION

### We Travel

It is a delightful spring: the birds warble, but you do not understand their song? Well, hear it in a free translation.

"Get on my back," says the stork, our green island's sacred bird, "and I will carry thee over the Sound. Sweden also has fresh and fragrant beech woods, green meadows and corn-fields. In Scania, with the flowering apple-trees behind the peasant's house, you will think that you are still in Denmark."

"Fly with me," says the swallow; "I fly over Holland's mountain ridge, where the beech-trees cease to grow; I fly further towards the north than the stork. You shall see the vegetable mould pass over into rocky ground; see snug, neat towns, old churches and mansions, where all is good and comfortable, where the family stand in a circle around the table and say grace at meals, where the least of the children says a prayer, and, morning and evening, sings a psalm. I have heard it, I have seen it, when little, from my nest under the eaves."

"Come with me! come with me!" screams the restless sea-gull, and flies in an expecting circle. "Come with me to the Skjärgaards, where rocky isles by thousands, with fir and pine, lie like flower-beds along the coast; where the fishermen draw the well-filled nets!"

"Rest thee between our extended wings," sing the wild swans. "Let us bear thee up to the great lakes, the perpetually roaring elvs (rivers), that rush on with arrowy swiftness; where the oak forest has long ceased, and the birch-tree becomes stunted. Rest thee between our extended wings: we fly up to Sulitelma, the island's eye, as the mountain is called; we fly from the vernal green valley, up over the snow-drifts, to the mountain's top, whence thou canst see the North Sea, on yonder side of Norway.

"We fly to Jemteland, where the rocky mountains are high and blue; where the Foss roars and rushes; where the torches are lighted as *budstikke*[1] to announce that the ferryman is expected. Up to the deep, cold-running waters, where the midsummer sun does not set; where the rosy hue of eve is that of morn."

That is the birds' song. Shall we lay it to heart? Shall we accompany them?—at least a part of the way. We will not sit upon the stork's back, or between the swans' wings. We will go forward with steam, and with horses—yes, also on our own legs, and glance now and then from reality, over the fence into the region of thought, which is always our near neighbour-land; pluck a flower or a leaf, to be placed in the note-book—for it sprung out during our journey's flight: we fly and we sing. Sweden, thou glorious land! Sweden, where, in ancient times, the sacred gods came from Asia's mountains! land that still retains rays of their lustre, which streams from the flowers in the name of "Linnaeus;" which beams for thy chivalrous men from Charles the Twelfth's banner; which sounds from the obelisk on the field of Lutzen! Sweden, thou land of deep feeling, of heart-felt songs! home of the limpid elvs, where the wild swans sing in the gleam of the Northern Lights! Thou land, on whose deep, still lakes Scandinavia's fairy builds her colonnades, and leads her battling, shadowy host over the icy mirror! Glorious Sweden! with thy fragrant Linnaeus, with Jenny's soul-enlivening songs!

[1] A chip of wood in the form of a halberd, circulated for the purpose of convening the inhabitants of a district in Sweden and Norway.

To thee will we fly with the stork and the swallow, with the restless sea-gull and the wild swans. Thy birch-woods exhale refreshing fragrance under their sober, bending branches; on the tree's white stem the harp shall hang: the North's summer wind shall whistle therein!

# TROLLHÄTTA

Who did we meet at Trollhätta? It is a strange story, and we will relate it.

We landed at the first sluice, and stood as it were in a garden laid out in the English style. The broad walks are covered with gravel, and rise in short terraces between the sunlit greensward: it is charming, delightful here, but by no means imposing. If one desires to be excited in this manner, one must go a little higher up to the older sluices, which deep and narrow have burst through the hard rock. It looks magnificent, and the water in its dark bed far below is lashed into foam. Up here one overlooks both elv and valley; the bank of the river on the other side, rises in green undulating hills, grouped with leafy trees and red-painted wooden houses, which are bounded by rocks and pine forests. Steam-boats and sailing vessels ascend through the sluices; the water itself is the attendant spirit that must bear them up above the rock, and from the forest itself it buzzes, roars and rattles. The din of Trollhätta Falls mingles with the noise from the saw-mills and smithies.

"In three hours we shall be through the sluices," said the Captain: "in that time you will see the Falls. We shall meet again at the inn up here."

We went from the path through the forest: a whole flock of bare-headed boys surrounded us. They would all be our guides; the one screamed longer than the other, and every one gave his contradictory explanation, how high the water stood, and how high it did not stand, or could stand. There was also a great difference of opinion amongst the learned.

We soon stopped on a ling-covered rock, a dizzying terrace. Before us, but far below, was the roaring water, the Hell Fall, and over this again, fall after fall, the rich, rapid, rushing elv—the outlet of the largest lake in Sweden. What a sight! what a foaming and roaring, above—below! It is like the waves of the sea, but of effervescing champagne—of boiling milk. The water rushes round two rocky islands at the top so that the spray rises like meadow dew. Below, the water is more compressed, then hurries down again, shoots forward and returns in circles like smooth water, and then rolls darting its long sea-like fall into the Hell Fall. What a tempest rages in the deep—what a sight! Words cannot express it!

Nor could our screaming little guides. They stood mute; and when they again began with their explanations and stories, they did not come far, for an old gentleman whom none of us had noticed (but he was now amongst us), made himself heard above the noise, with his singularly sounding voice. He knew all the particulars about the place, and about former days, as if they had been of yesterday.

"Here, on the rocky holms," said he, "it was that the warriors in the heathen times, as they are called, decided their disputes. The warrior Stärkodder dwelt in this district, and liked the pretty girl Ogn right well; but she was fonder of Hergrimmer, and therefore he was challenged by Stärkodder to combat here by the falls, and met his death; but Ogn sprung towards them, took her bridegroom's bloody sword, and thrust it into her own heart. Thus Stärkodder did not gain her. Then there passed a hundred years, and again a hundred years: the forests were then thick and closely grown; wolves and bears prowled here summer and winter; the place was infested with malignant robbers, whose hiding-place no one could find. It was yonder, by the fall before Top Island, on the Norwegian side —there was their cave: now it has fallen in! The cliff there overhangs it!"

"Yes, the Tailor's Cliff!" shouted all the boys. "It fell in the year 1755!"

"Fell!" said the old man, as if in astonishment that any one but himself could know it. "Everything will fall once, and the tailor directly." The robbers had placed him upon the cliff and demanded that if he would be liberated from them, his ransom should be that he should sew a suit of clothes up there; and he tried it; but at the first stitch, as he drew the thread out, he became giddy and fell down into the gushing water, and thus the rock got the name of 'The Tailor's Cliff.' One day the robbers caught a young girl, and she betrayed them, for she kindled a fire in the cavern. The smoke was seen, the caverns discovered, and the robbers imprisoned and executed. That outside there is

called 'The Thieves' Fall,' and down there under the water is another cave, the elv rushes in there and returns boiling; one can see it well up here, one hears it too, but it can be heard better under the bergman's loft.

And we went on and on, along the Fall, towards Top Island, continuously on smooth paths covered with saw-dust, to Polham's Sluice. A cleft had been made in the rock for the first intended sluice-work, which was not finished, but whereby art has created the most imposing of all Trollhätta's Falls; the hurrying water falling here perpendicularly into the black deep. The side of the rock is here placed in connection with Top Island by means of a light iron bridge, which appears as if thrown over the abyss. We venture on to the rocking bridge over the streaming, whirling water, and then stand on the little cliff island, between firs and pines, that shoot forth from the crevices. Before us darts a sea of waves, which are broken by the rebound against the stone block where we stand, bathing us with the fine spray. The torrent flows on each side, as if shot out from a gigantic cannon, fall after fall: we look out over them all, and are filled with the harmonic sound, which since time began, has ever been the same.

"No one can ever get to the island there," said one of our party, pointing to the large island above the topmost fall.

"I however know one!" said the old man, and nodded with a peculiar smile.

"Yes, my grandfather could!" said one of the boys, "scarcely any one besides has crossed during a hundred years. The cross that is set up over there was placed there by my grandfather. It had been a severe winter, the whole of Lake Venern was frozen; the ice dammed up the outlet, and for many hours there was a dry bottom. Grandfather has told about it: he went over with two others, placed the cross up, and returned. But then there was such a thundering and cracking noise, just as if it were cannons. The ice broke up and the elv came over the fields and forest. It is true, every word I say!"

One of the travellers cited Tegner:

"Vildt Göta stortade från Fjallen,
Hemsk Trollet från sat Toppfall röt!
Men Snillet kom och sprängt stod Hallen,
Med Skeppen i sitt sköt!"

"Poor mountain sprite," he continued, "thy power and glory recede! Man flies over thee—thou mayst go and learn of him."

The garrulous old man made a grimace, and muttered something to himself—but we were just by the bridge before the inn. The steam-boat glided through the opened way, every one hastened to get on board, and it directly shot away above the Fall, just as if no Fall existed.

"And that can be done!" said the old man. He knew nothing at all about steam-boats, had never before that day seen such a thing, and accordingly he was sometimes up and sometimes down, and stood by the machinery and stared at the whole construction, as if he were counting all the pins and screws. The course of the canal appeared to him to be something quite new; the plan of it and the guide-books were quite foreign objects to him: he turned them and turned them—for read I do not think he could. But he knew all the particulars about the country—that is to say, from olden times.

I heard that he did not sleep at all the whole night. He studied the passage of the steam-boat; and when we in the morning ascended the sluice terraces from Lake Venern, higher and higher from lake to lake, away over the high-plain—higher, continually higher—he was in such activity that it appeared as if it could not be greater—and then we reached Motala.

The Swedish author Tjörnerös relates of himself, that when a child he once asked what it was that ticked in the clock, and they answered him that it was one named "*Bloodless*." What brought the child's pulse to beat with feverish throbs and the hair on his head to rise, also exercised its power in Motala, over the old man from Trollhätta.

We now went through the great manufactory in Motala. What ticks in the clock, beats here with strong strokes of the hammer. It is *Bloodless*, who drank life from human thought and thereby got limbs of metals, stone and wood; it is *Bloodless*, who by human thought gained strength, which man himself does not physically possess. *Bloodless* reigns in Motala, and through the large foundries and factories he extends his hard limbs, whose joints and parts consist of wheel within wheel, chains, bars, and thick iron wires. Enter, and see how the glowing iron masses are formed into long bars. *Bloodless* spins the glowing bar! see how the shears cut into the heavy metal plates; they cut as quietly and as softly as if the plates were paper. Here where he hammers, the sparks fly from the anvil. See how he breaks the thick iron bars; he breaks them into lengths; it is as if it were a stick of sealing-wax that is broken. The long iron bars rattle before your feet; iron plates are planed into shavings; before you rolls the large wheel, and above your head runs living wire—long heavy wire! There is a hammering and buzzing, and if you look around in the large open yard, amongst great up-turned copper boilers, for steam-boats and locomotives, *Bloodless* also here stretches out one of his fathom-long fingers, and hauls away. Everything is living; man alone stands and is silenced by—*stop!*

The perspiration oozes out of one's fingers'-ends: one turns and turns, bows, and knows not one's self, from pure respect for the human thought which here has iron limbs. And yet the large iron hammer goes on continually with its heavy strokes: it is as if it said: "Banco, Banco! many thousand dollars; Banco, pure gain! Banco! Banco!"—Hear it, as I heard it; see, as I saw!

The old gentleman from Trollhätta walked up and down in full contemplation; bent and swung himself about; crept on his knees, and stuck his head into corners and between the machines, for he would know everything so exactly; he would see the screw in the propelling vessels, understand their mechanism and effect under water—and the water itself poured like hail-drops down his forehead. He fell unconscious, backwards into my arms, or else he would have been drawn into the machinery, and been crushed: he looked at me, and pressed my hand.

"And all this goes on naturally," said he; "simply and comprehensibly. Ships go against the wind, and against the stream, sail higher than forests and mountains. The water must raise, steam must drive them!"

"Yes," said I.

"Yes," said he, and again *yes*, with a sigh which I did not then understand; but, months after, I understood it, and I will at once make a spring to that time, and we are again at Trollhätta.

I came here in the autumn, on my return home; stayed some days in this mighty piece of nature, where busy human life forces its way more and more in, and, by degrees, transforms the picturesque to the useful manufactory. Trollhätta must do her work; saw beams, drive mills, hammer and break to pieces: one building grows up by the side of the other, and in half a century hence here will be a city. But that was not the story.

I came, as I have said, here again in the autumn. I found the same rushing and roaring, the same din, the same rising and sinking in the sluices, the same chattering boys who conducted fresh travellers to the Hell Fall, to the iron-bridge island, and to the inn. I sat here, and turned over the leaves of books, collected here through a series of years, in which travellers have inscribed their names, feelings and thoughts at Trollhätta—almost always the same astonishment, expressed in different languages, though generally in Latin: *veni, vidi, obstupui*.

One has written: "I have seen nature's master-piece pervade that of art;" another cannot say what he saw, and what he saw he cannot say. A mine owner and manufacturer, full of the doctrine of utility, has written: "Seen with the greatest pleasure this useful work for us in Värmeland, Trollhätta." The wife of a dean from Scania expresses herself thus. She has kept to the family, and only signed in the remembrance book, as to the effect of her feelings at Trollhätta. "God grant my brother-in-law fortune, for he has understanding!" Some few have added witticisms to the others' feelings; yet as a pearl on this heap of writing shines Tegner's poem, written by himself in the book on the 28th of June, 1804:

"Gotha kom i dans från Seves fjallar, &c."

I looked up from the book and who should stand before me, just about to depart again, but the old man from Trollhätta! Whilst I had wandered about, right up to the shores of Siljan, he had continually made voyages on the canal; seen the sluices and manufactories, studied steam in all its possible powers of service, and spoke about a projected railway in Sweden, between the Hjalmar and Venern. He had, however, never yet seen a railway, and I described to him these extended roads, which sometimes rise like ramparts, sometimes like towering bridges, and at times like halls of miles in length, cut through rocks. I also spoke of America and England.

"One takes breakfast in London, and the same day one drinks tea in Edinburgh."

"That I can do!" said the man, and in as cool a tone as if no one but himself could do it, "I can also," said I; "and I have done it."

"And who are you, then?" he asked.

"A common traveller," I replied; "a traveller who pays for his conveyance. And who are you?"

The man sighed.

"You do not know me: my time is past; my power is nothing! *Bloodless* is stronger than I!" and he was gone.

I then understood who he was. Well, in what humour must a poor mountain sprite be, who only comes up every hundred years to see how things go forward here on the earth!

It was the mountain sprite and no other, for in our time every intelligent person is considerably wiser; and I looked with a sort of proud feeling on the present generation, on the gushing, rushing, whirling wheel, the heavy blows of the hammer, the shears that cut so softly through the metal plates, the thick iron bars that were broken like sticks of sealing-wax, and the music to which the heart's pulsations vibrate: "Banco, Banco, a hundred thousand Banco!" and all by steam—by mind and spirit.

It was evening. I stood on the heights of Trollhätta's old sluices, and saw the ships with outspread sails glide away through the meadows like spectres, large and white. The sluice gates were opened with a ponderous and crashing sound, like that related of the copper gates of the secret council in Germany. The evening was so still that Trollhätta's Fall was as audible in the deep stillness, as if it were a chorus from a hundred water-mills—ever one and the same tone. In one, however, there sounded a mightier crash that seemed to pass sheer through the earth; and yet with all this the endless silence of nature was felt. Suddenly a large bird flew out from the trees, far in the forest, down towards the Falls. Was it the mountain sprite?—We will imagine so, for it is the most interesting fancy.

# THE BIRD PHOENIX

In the garden of Paradise, under the tree of knowledge, stood a hedge of roses. In the first rose a bird was hatched; its flight was like that of light, its colours beautiful, its song magnificent.

But when Eve plucked the fruit of knowledge, when she and Adam were driven from the garden of Paradise, a spark from the avenging angel's flaming sword fell into the bird's nest and kindled it. The bird died in the flames, but from the red egg there flew a new one—the only one—the ever only bird Phoenix. The legend states that it takes up its abode in Arabia; that every hundred years it burns itself up in its nest, and that a new Phoenix, the only one in the world, flies out from the red egg.

The bird hovers around us, rapid as the light, beautiful in colour, glorious in song. When the mother sits by the child's cradle, it is by the pillow, and with its wings flutters a glory around the child's head. It flies through the chamber of contentment, and there is the sun's radiance within:—the poor chest of drawers is odoriferous with violets.

But the bird Phoenix is not alone Arabia's bird: it flutters in the rays of the Northern Lights on Lapland's icy plains; it hops amongst the yellow flowers in Greenland's short summer. Under Fahlun's copper rocks, in England's coal mines, it flies like a powdered moth over the hymn-book in the pious workman's hands. It sails on the lotus-leaf down the sacred waters of the Ganges, and the eyes of the Hindoo girl glisten on seeing it.

The bird Phoenix! Dost thou not know it? The bird of Paradise, song's sacred swan! It sat on the car of Thespis, like a croaking raven, and flapped its black, dregs-besmeared wings; over Iceland's minstrel-harp glided the swan's red, sounding bill. It sat on Shakspeare's shoulder like Odin's raven, and whispered in his ear: "Immortality!" It flew at the minstrel competition, through Wartzburg's knightly halls.

The bird Phoenix! Dost thou not know it? It sang the Marseillaise for thee, and thou didst kiss the plume that fell from its wing: it came in the lustre of Paradise, and thou perhaps didst turn thyself away to some poor sparrow that sat with merest tinsel on its wings.

The bird of Paradise! regenerated every century, bred in flames, dead in flames; thy image set in gold hangs in the saloons of the rich, even though thou fliest often astray and alone. "The bird Phoenix in Arabia"—is but a legend.

In the garden of Paradise, when thou wast bred under the tree of knowledge, in the first rose, our Lord kissed thee and gave thee thy proper name—Poetry.

# KINNAKULLA

Kinnakulla, Sweden's hanging gardens! Thee will we visit. We stand by the lowest terrace in a plenitude of flowers and verdure; the ancient village church leans its grey pointed wooden tower, as if it would fall; it produces an effect in the landscape: we would not even be without that large flock of birds, which just now chance to fly away over the mountain forest.

The high road leads up the mountain with short palings on either side, between which we see extensive plains with hops, wild roses, corn-fields, and delightful beech woods, such as are not to be found in any other place in Sweden. The ivy winds itself around old trees and stones—even to the withered trunk green leaves are lent. We look out over the flat, extended woody plain, to the sunlit church-tower of Maristad, which shines like a white sail on the dark green sea: we look out over the Venern Lake, but cannot see its further shore. Skjärgaardens' wood-crowned rocks lie like a wreath down in the lake; the steam-boat comes—see! down by the cliff under the red-roofed mansions, where the beech and walnut trees grow in the garden.

The travellers land; they wander under shady trees away over that pretty light green meadow, which is enwreathed by gardens and woods: no English park has a finer verdure than the meadows near Hellekis. They go up to "the grottos," as they call the projecting masses of red stone higher up, which, being thoroughly kneaded with petrifactions, project from the declivity of the earth, and remind one of the mouldering colossal tombs in the Campagna of Rome. Some are smooth and rounded off by the streaming of the water, others bear the moss of ages, grass and flowers, nay, even tall trees.

The travellers go from the forest road up to the top of Kinnakulla, where a stone is raised as the goal of their wanderings. The traveller reads in his guide-book about the rocky strata of Kinnakulla: "At the bottom is found sandstone, then alum-stone, then limestone, and above this red-stone, higher still slate, and lastly, trap." And, now that he has seen this, he descends again, and goes on board. He has seen Kinnakulla:—yes, the stony rock here, amidst the swelling verdure, showed him one heavy, thick stone finger, and most of the travellers think that they are like the devil, if they lay hold upon one finger, they have the body—but it is not always so. The least visited side of Kinnakulla is just the most characteristic, and thither will we go.

The road still leads us a long way on this side of the mountain, step by step downwards, in long terraces of rich fields: further down, the slate-stone peers forth in flat layers, a green moss upon it, and it looks like threadbare patches in the green velvet carpet. The high road leads over an extent of ground where the slate-stone lies like a firm floor. In the Campagna of Rome, one would say it is a piece of *via appia*, or antique road; but it is Kinnakulla's naked skin and bones that we pass over. The peasant's house is composed of large slate-stones, and the roof is covered with them; one sees nothing of wood except that of the door, and above it, of the large painted shield, which states to what regiment the soldier belongs who got this house and plot of ground in lieu of pay.

We cast another glance over Venern, to Lockö's old palace, to the town of Lendkjobing, and are again near verdant fields and noble trees, that cast their shadows over Blomberg, where, in the garden, the poet Geier's spirit seeks the flower of Kinnakulla in his grand-daughter, little Anna.

The plain expands here behind Kinnakulla; it extends for miles around, towards the horizon. A shower stands in the heavens; the wind has increased: see how the rain falls to the ground like a darkening veil. The branches of the trees lash one another like penitential dryades. Old Husaby church lies near us, yonder; though the shower lashes the high walls, which alone stand, of the old Catholic Bishop's palace. Crows and ravens fly through the long glass-less windows, which time has made larger; the rain pours down the crevices in the old grey walls, as if they were now to be loosened stone from stone: but the church stands—old Husaby church—so grey and venerable, with its thick walls, its small windows, and its three spires stuck against each other, and standing, like nuts, in a cluster.

The old trees in the churchyard cast their shade over ancient graves. Where is the district's "Old Mortality," who weeds the grass, and explains the ancient memorials? Large granite stones are laid here in the form of coffins, ornamented with rude carvings from the times of Catholicism. The old church-door creaks in the hinges. We stand within its walls, where the vaulted roof was filled for centuries with the fragrance of incense, with monks, and with the song of the choristers. Now it is still and mute here: the old men in their monastic dresses have passed into their graves; the blooming boys that swung the censer are in their graves; the congregation—many generations—all in their graves; but the church still stands the same. The moth-eaten, dusty cowls, and the bishops' mantle, from the days of the cloister, hang in the old oak presses; and old manuscripts, half eaten up by the rats, lie strewed about on the shelves in the sacristy.

In the left aisle of the church there still stands, and has stood time out of mind, a carved image of wood, painted in various colours which are still strong: it is the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus. Fresh flower wreaths are hung around hers and the child's head; fragrant garlands are twined around the pedestal, as festive as on Madonna's birthday feast in the times of Popery. The young folks who have been confirmed, have this day, on receiving the sacrament for the first time, ornamented this old image—nay, even set the priest's name in flowers upon the altar; and he has, to our astonishment, let it remain there.

The image of Madonna seems to have become young by the fresh wreaths: the fragrant flowers here have a power like that of poetry—they bring back the days of past centuries to our own times. It is as if the extinguished glory around the head shone again; the flowers exhale perfume: it is as if incense again streamed through the aisles of the church—it shines around the altar as if the consecrated tapers were lighted—it is a sunbeam through the window.

The sky without has become clear: we drive again in under Cleven, the barren side of Kinnakulla: it is a rocky wall, different from almost all the others. The red stone blocks lie, strata on strata, forming fortifications with embrasures, projecting wings and round towers; but shaken, split and fallen in ruins—it is an architectural fantastic freak of nature. A brook falls gushing down from one of the highest points of the Cleven, and drives a little mill. It looks like a plaything which the mountain sprite had placed there and forgotten.

Large masses of fallen stone blocks lie dispersed round about; nature has spread them in the forms of carved cornices. The most significant way of describing Kinnakulla's rocky wall is to call it the ruins of a mile-long Hindostanee temple: these rocks might be easily transformed by the hammer into sacred places like the Ghaut mountains at Ellara. If a Brahmin were to come to Kinnakulla's rocky wall, he would recognise the temple of Cailasa, and find in the clefts and crevices whole representations from Ramagena and Mahabharata. If one should then speak to him in a sort of gibberish—no matter what, only that, by the help of Brockhaus's "Conversation-Lexicon" one might mingle therein the names of some of the Indian spectacles:—Sakantala, Vikramerivati, Uttaram Ramatscheritram, &c.—the Brahmin would be completely mystified, and write in his note-book: "Kinnakulla is the remains of a temple, like those we have in Ellara; and the inhabitants themselves know the most considerable works in our oldest Sanscrit literature, and speak in an extremely spiritual manner about them." But no Brahmin comes to the high rocky walls—not to speak of the company from the steam-boat, who are already far over the lake Venern. They have seen wood-crowned Kinnakulla, Sweden's hanging gardens—and we also have now seen them.

# GRANDMOTHER

Grandmother is so old, she has so many wrinkles, and her hair is quite white; but her eyes! they shine like two stars, nay, they are much finer—they are so mild, so blissful to look into. And then she knows the most amusing stories, and she has a gown with large, large flowers on it, and it is of such thick silk that it actually rustles. Grandmother knows so much, for she has lived long before father and mother—that is quite sure.

Grandmother has a psalm-book with thick silver clasps, and in that book she often reads. In the middle of it lies a rose, which is quite flat and dry; but it is not so pretty as the roses she has in the glass, yet she smiles the kindliest to it, nay, even tears come into her eyes!

Why does Grandmother look thus on the withered flower in the old book? Do you know why?

Every time that Grandmother's tears fall on the withered flower the colours become fresher; the rose then swells and the whole room is filled with fragrance; the walls sink as if they were but mists; and round about, it is the green, the delightful grove, where the sun shines between the leaves. And Grandmother—yes, she is quite young; she is a beautiful girl, with yellow hair, with round red cheeks, pretty and charming—no rose is fresher. Yet the eyes, the mild, blissful eyes,—yes, they are still Grandmother's! By her side sits a man, young and strong: he presents the rose to her and she smiles. Yet grandmother does not smile so,—yes; the smile comes,—he is gone.—Many thoughts and many forms go past! That handsome man is gone; the rose lies in the psalm-book, and grandmother, —yes, she again sits like an old woman, and looks on the withered rose that lies in the book.

Now grandmother is dead!

She sat in the arm-chair, and told a long, long, sweet story. "And now it is ended!" said she, "and I am quite tired: let me now sleep a little!" And so she laid her head back to rest. She drew her breath, she slept, but it became more and more still; and her face was so full of peace and happiness —it was as if the sun's rays passed over it. She smiled, and then they said that she was dead.

She was laid in the black coffin; she lay swathed in the white linen: she was so pretty, and yet the eyes were closed—but all the wrinkles were gone. She lay with a smile around her mouth: her hair was so silvery white, so venerable, one was not at all afraid to look on the dead, for it was the sweet, benign grandmother. And the psalm-book was laid in the coffin under her head (she herself had requested it), and the rose lay in the old book—and then they buried grandmother.

On the grave, close under the church-wall, they planted a rose-tree, and it became full of roses, and the nightingale sang over it, and the organ in the church played the finest psalms that were in the book under the dead one's head. And the moon shone straight down on the grave—but the dead was not there: every child could go quietly in the night-time and pluck a rose there by the churchyard-wall. The dead know more than all we living know—the dead know the awe we should feel at something so strange as their coming to us. The dead are better than us all, and therefore they do not come.

There is earth over the coffin, there is earth within it; the psalm-book with its leaves is dust the rose with all its recollections has gone to dust. But above it bloom new roses, above is sings the nightingale, and the organ plays:—we think of the old grandmother with the mild, eternally young eyes. Eyes can never die! Ours shall once again see her young, and beautiful, as when she for the first time kissed the fresh red rose which is now dust in the grave.

# THE PRISON-CELLS

By separation from other men, by solitary confinement, in continual silence, the criminal is to be punished and amended; therefore were prison-cells contrived. In Sweden there were several, and new ones have been built. I visited one for the first time in Mariestad. This building lies close outside the town, by a running water, and in a beautiful landscape. It resembles a large white-washed summer residence, window above window.

But we soon discover that the stillness of the grave rests over it. It is as if no one dwelt here, or like a deserted mansion in the time of the plague. The gates in the walls are locked: one of them is opened for us: the gaoler stands with his bunch of keys: the yard is empty, but clean—even the grass weeded away between the stone paving. We enter the waiting-room, where the prisoner is received: we are shown the bathing-room, into which he is first led. We now ascend a flight of stairs, and are in a large hall, extending the whole length and breadth of the building. Galleries run along the floors, and between these the priest has his pulpit, where he preaches on Sundays to an invisible congregation. All the doors facing the gallery are half opened: the prisoners hear the priest, but cannot see him, nor he them. The whole is a well-built machine—a nightmare for the spirit. In the door of every cell there is fixed a glass, about the size of the eye: a slide covers it, and the gaoler can, unobserved by the prisoner, see everything he does; but he must come gently, noiselessly, for the prisoner's ear is wonderfully quickened by solitude. I turned the slide quite softly, and looked into the closed space, when the prisoner's eye immediately met mine. It is airy, clean, and light within the cell, but the window is placed so high that it is impossible to look out of it. A high stool, made fast to a sort of table, and a hammock, which can be hung upon hooks under the ceiling, and covered with a quilt, compose the whole furniture.

Several cells were opened for us. In one of these was a young, and extremely pretty girl. She had lain down in her hammock, but sprang out directly the door was opened, and her first employment was to lift her hammock down, and roll it together. On the little table stood a pitcher with water, and by it lay the remains of some oatmeal cakes, besides the Bible and some psalms.

In the cell close by sat a child's murderess. I saw her only through the little glass in the door. She had had heard our footsteps; heard us speak; but she sat still, squeezed up into the corner by the door, as if she would hide herself as much as possible: her back was bent, her head almost on a level with her lap, and her hands folded over it. They said this unfortunate creature was very young. Two brothers sat here in two different cells: they were punished for horse stealing; the one was still quite a boy.

In one cell was a poor servant girl. They said: "She has no place of resort, and without a situation, and therefore she is placed here." I thought I had not heard rightly, and repeated my question, "why she was here," but got the same answer. Still I would rather believe that I had misunderstood what was said—it would otherwise be abominable.

Outside, in the free sunshine, it is the busy day; in here it is always midnight's stillness. The spider that weaves its web down the wall, the swallow which perhaps flies a single time close under the panes there high up in the wall—even the stranger's footstep in the gallery, as he passes the cell-doors, is an event in that mute, solitary life, where the prisoners' thoughts are wrapped up in themselves. One must read of the martyr-filled prisons of the Inquisition, of the crowds chained together in the Bagnes, of the hot, lead chambers of Venice, and the black, wet gulf of the wells—be thoroughly shaken by these pictures of misery, that we may with a quieter pulsation of the heart wander through the gallery of the prison-cells. Here is light, here is air;—here it is more humane. Where the sunbeam shines mildly in on the prisoner, there also will the radiance of God shine into the heart.

# BEGGAR-BOYS

The painter Callot—who does not know the name, at least from Hoffmann's "in Callot's manner?"—has given a few excellent pictures of Italian beggars. One of these is a fellow, on whom the one rag lashes the other: he carries his huge bundle and a large flag with the inscription, "Capitano de Baroni." One does not think that there can in reality be found such a wandering rag-shop, and we confess that in Italy itself we have not seen any such; for the beggar-boy there, whose whole clothing often consists only of a waistcoat, has in it not sufficient costume for such rags.

But we see it in the North. By the canal road between the Venern and Vigen, on the bare, dry rocky plain there stood, like beauty's thistles in that poor landscape, a couple of beggar-boys, so ragged, so tattered, so picturesquely dirty, that we thought we had Callot's originals before us, or that it was an arrangement of some industrious parents, who would awaken the traveller's attention and benevolence. Nature does not form such things: there was something so bold in the hanging on of the rags, that each boy instantly became a Capitano de Baroni.

The younger of the two had something round him that had certainly once been the jacket of a very corpulent man, for it reached almost to the boy's ancles; the whole hung fast by a piece of the sleeve and a single brace, made from the seam of what was now the rest of the lining. It was very difficult to see the transition from jacket to trowsers, the rags glided so into one another. The whole clothing was arranged so as to give him an air-bath: there were draught holes on all sides and ends; a yellow linen clout fastened to the nethermost regions seemed as if it were to signify a shirt. A very large straw hat, that had certainly been driven over several times, was stuck sideways on his head, and allowed the boy's wiry, flaxen hair to grow freely through the opening where the crown should have been: the naked brown shoulder and upper part of the arm, which was just as brown, were the prettiest of the whole.

The other boy had only a pair of trowsers on. They were also ragged, but the rags were bound fast into the pockets with packthread; one string round the ancles, one under the knee, and another round about the waist. He, however, kept together what he had, and that is always respectable.

"Be off!" shouted the Captain, from the vessel; and the boy with the tied-up rags turned round, and we—yes, we saw nothing but packthread, in bows, genteel bows. The front part of the boy only was covered: he had only the foreparts of trowsers—the rest was packthread, the bare, naked packthread.

# VADSTENE

In Sweden, it is not only in the country, but even in several of the provincial towns, that one sees whole houses of grass turf or with roofs of grass turf; and some are so low that one might easily spring up to the roof, and sit on the fresh greensward. In the early spring, whilst the fields are still covered with snow, but which is melted on the roof, the latter affords the first announcement of spring, with the young sprouting grass where the sparrow twitters: "Spring comes!"

Between Motala and Vadstene, close by the high road, stands a grass-turf house—one of the most picturesque. It has but one window, broader than it is high, and a wild rose branch forms the curtain outside.

We see it in the spring. The roof is so delightfully fresh with grass, it has quite the tint of velvet; and close to it is the chimney, nay, even a cherry-tree grows out of its side, now full of flowers: the wind shakes the leaves down on a little lamb that is tethered to the chimney. It is the only lamb of the family. The old dame who lives here, lifts it up to its place herself in the morning and lifts it down again in the evening, to give it a place in the room. The roof can just bear the little lamb, but not more—this is an experience and a certainty. Last autumn—and at that time the grass turf roofs are covered with flowers, mostly blue and yellow, the Swedish colours—there grew here a flower of a rare kind. It shone in the eyes of the old Professor, who on his botanical tour came past here. The Professor was quickly up on the roof, and just as quick was one of his booted legs through it, and so was the other leg, and then half of the Professor himself—that part where the head does not sit; and as the house had no ceiling, his legs hovered right over the old dame's head, and that in very close contact. But now the roof is again whole; the fresh grass grows where learning sank; the little lamb bleats up there, and the old dame stands beneath, in the low doorway, with folded hands, with a smile on her mouth, rich in remembrances, legends and songs, rich in her only lamb on which the cherry-tree strews its flower-blossoms in the warm spring sun.

As a background to this picture lies the Vettern—the bottomless lake as the commonalty believe—with its transparent water, its sea-like waves, and in calm, with "Hegring," or fata morgana on its steel-like surface. We see Vadstene palace and town, "the city of the dead," as a Swedish author has called it—Sweden's Herculaneum, reminiscence's city. The grass-turf house must be our box, whence we see the rich mementos pass before us—memorials from the chronicle of saints, the chronicle of kings and the love songs that still live with the old dame, who stands in her low house there, where the lamb crops the grass on the roof. We hear her, and we see with her eyes; we go from the grass-turf house up to the town, to the other grass-turf houses, where poor women sit and make lace, once the celebrated work of the rich nuns here in the cloister's wealthy time.

How still, solitary and grass-grown are these streets! We stop by an old wall, mouldy-green for centuries already. Within it stood the cloister; now there is but one of its wings remaining. There, within that now poor garden still bloom Saint Bridget's leek, and once ran flowers. King John and the Abbess, Ana Gylte, wandered one evening there, and the King cunningly asked: "If the maidens in the cloister were never tempted by love?" and the Abbess answered, as she pointed to a bird that just then flew over them: "It may happen! One cannot prevent the bird from flying over the garden; but one may surely prevent it from building its nest there!"

Thus thought the pious Abbess, and there have been sisters who thought and acted like her. But it is quite as sure that in the same garden there stood a pear-tree, called the tree of death; and the legend says of it, that whoever approached and plucked its fruit would soon die. Red and yellow pears weighed down its branches to the ground. The trunk was unusually large; the grass grew high around it, and many a morning hour was it seen trodden down. Who had been here during the night?

A storm arose one evening from the lake, and the next morning the large tree was found thrown down; the trunk was broken, and out from it there rolled infants' bones—the white bones of murdered children lay shining in the grass.

The pious but love-sick sister Ingrid, this Vadstene's Heloise, writes to her heart's beloved, Axel Nilsun—for the chronicles have preserved it for us:—

"Broderne og Systarne leka paa Spil, drikke Vin och dansa med hvarandra i Tradgården!"

(The brothers and sisters amuse themselves in play, drink wine and dance with one another in the garden).

These words may explain to us the history of the pear-tree: one is led to think of the orgies of the nun-phantoms in "Robert le Diable," the daughters of sin on consecrated ground. But "judge not, lest ye be judged," said the purest and best of men that was born of woman. We will read Sister Ingrid's letter, sent secretly to him she truly loved. In it lies the history of many, clear and human to us:—

"Jag djerfues for ingen utan for dig allena bekänna, att jag formår ilia ånda mit Ave Maria eller läsa mit Paternoster, utan du kommer mig ichågen. Ja i sjelfa messen kommer mig fore dit täckleliga Ansigte och vart kårliga omgange. Jag tycker jag kan icke skifta mig for n genann an Menniska, jungfru Maria, St. Birgitta och himmelens Härskaror skalla kanske straffe mig hårfar? Men du vet det val, hjertans käraste att jag med fri vilja och uppsät aldrig dissa reglar samtykt. Mine föräldrer hafva väl min kropp i dette fangelset insatt, men hjertät kan intet så snart från verlden ater kalles!"

(I dare not confess to any other than to thee, that I am not able to repeat my Ave Maria or read my Paternoster, without calling thee to mind. Nay, even in the mass itself thy comely face appears, and our affectionate intercourse recurs to me. It seems to me that I cannot confess to any other human being—the Virgin Mary, St. Bridget, and the whole host of heaven will perhaps punish me for it. But thou knowest well, my heart's beloved, that I have never consented with my free-will to these rules. My parents, it is true, have placed my body in this prison, but the heart cannot so soon be weaned from the world).

How touching is the distress of young hearts! It offers itself to us from the mouldy parchment, it resounds in old songs. Beg the grey-haired old dame in the grass turf-house to sing to thee of the young, heavy sorrow, of the saving angel—and the angel came in many shapes. You will hear the song of the cloister robbery; of Herr Carl who was sick to death; when the young nun entered the corpse chamber, sat down by his feet and whispered how sincerely she had loved him, and the knight rose from his bier and bore her away to marriage and pleasure in Copenhagen. And all the nuns of the cloister sang: "Christ grant that such an angel were to come, and take both me and thee!"

The old dame will also sing for thee of the beautiful Ogda and Oluf Tyste; and at once the cloister is revived in its splendour, the bells ring, stone houses arise—they even rise from the waters of the Vettern: the little town becomes churches and towers. The streets are crowded with great, with sober, well-dressed persons. Down the stairs of the town hall descends with a sword by his side and in fur-lined cloak, the most wealthy citizen of Vadstene, the merchant Michael. By his side is his young, beautiful daughter Agda, richly-dressed and happy; youth in beauty, youth in mind. All eyes are turned on the rich man—and yet forget him for her, the beautiful. Life's best blessings await her; her thoughts soar upwards, her mind aspires; her future is happiness! These were the thoughts of the many—and amongst the many there was one who saw her as Romeo saw Juliet, as Adam saw Eve in the garden of Paradise. That one was Oluf, the handsomest young man, but poor as Agda was rich. And he must conceal his love; but as only he lived in it, only he knew of it; so he became mute and still, and after months had passed away, the town's folk called him Oluf Tyste (Oluf the silent).

Nights and days he combated his love; nights and days he suffered inexpressible torment; but at last—one dew-drop or one sunbeam alone is necessary for the ripe rose to open its leaves—he must tell it to Agda. And she listened to his words, was terrified, and sprang away; but the thought remained with him, and the heart went after the thought and stayed there; she returned his love strongly and truly, but in modesty and honour; and therefore poor Oluf came to the rich merchant and sought his

daughter's hand. But Michael shut the bolts of his door and his heart too. He would neither listen to tears nor supplications, but only to his own will; and as little Agda also kept firm to her will, her father placed her in Vadstene cloister. And Oluf was obliged to submit, as it is recorded in the old song, that they cast

"– den svarta Muld
Alt öfver skön Agdas arm."[2]

She was dead to him and the world. But one night, in tempestuous weather, whilst the rain streamed down, Oluf Tyste came to the cloister wall, threw his rope-ladder over it, and however high the Vettern lifted its waves, Oluf and little Agda flew away over its fathomless depths that autumn night.

Early in the morning the nuns missed little Agda. What a screaming and shouting—the cloister is disgraced! The Abbess and Michael the merchant swore that vengeance and death should reach the fugitives. Lindkjöping's severe bishop, Hans Brask, fulminated his ban over them, but they were already across the waters of the Vettern; they had reached the shores of the Venern, they were on Kinnakulla, with one of Oluf's friends, who owned the delightful Hellekis.

Here their marriage was to be celebrated. The guests were invited, and a monk from the neighbouring cloister of Husaby, was fetched to marry them. Then came the messenger with the bishop's excommunication, and this—but not the marriage ceremony—was read to them.

All turned away from them terrified. The owner of the house, the friend of Oluf's youth, pointed to the open door and bade them depart instantly. Oluf only requested a car and horse wherewith to convey away his exhausted Agda; but they threw sticks and stones after them, and Oluf was obliged to bear his poor bride in his arms far into the forest.

Heavy and bitter was their wandering. At last, however, they found a home: it was in Guldkroken, in West Gothland. An honest old couple gave them shelter and a place by the hearth: they stayed there till Christmas, and on that holy eve there was to be a real Christmas festival. The guests were invited, the furmenty set forth; and now came the clergyman of the parish to say prayers; but whilst he spoke he recognised Oluf and Agda, and the prayer became a curse upon the two. Anxiety and terror came over all; they drove the excommunicated pair out of the house, out into the biting frost, where the wolves went in flocks, and the bear was no stranger. And Oluf felled wood in the forest, and kindled a fire to frighten away the noxious animals and keep life in Agda—he thought that she must die. But just then she was stronger of the two.

"Our Lord is almighty and gracious; He will not leave us!" said she. "He has one here on the earth, one who can save us, one, who has proved like us, what it is to wander amongst enemies and wild animals. It is the King—Gustavus Vasa! He has languished like us!—gone astray in Dalecarlia in the deep snow! he has suffered, tried, knows it—he can and he will help us!"

The King was in Vadstene. He had called together the representatives of the kingdom there. He dwelt in the cloister itself, even there where little Agda, if the King did not grant her pardon, must suffer what the angry Abbess dared to advise: penance and a painful death awaited her.

Through forests and by untrodden paths, in storm and snow, Oluf and Agda came to Vadstene. They were seen: some showed fear, others insulted and threatened them. The guard of the cloister made the sign of the cross on seeing the two sinners, who dared to ask admission to the King.

"I will receive and hear all," was his royal message, and the two lovers fell trembling at his feet.

And the King looked mildly on them; and as he long had had the intention to humiliate the proud Bishop of Lindkjöping, the moment was not unfavourable to them; the King listened to the relation of their lives and sufferings, and gave them his word, that the excommunication should be

[2] The black mould over the beautiful Agda's arm.

annulled. He then placed their hands one in the other, and said that the priest should also do the same soon; and he promised them his royal protection and favour.

And old Michael, the merchant, who feared the King's anger, with which he was threatened, became so mild and gentle, that he, as the King commanded, not only opened his house and his arms to Oluf and Agda, but displayed all his riches on the wedding-day of the young couple. The marriage ceremony took place in the cloister church, whither the King himself led the bride, and where, by his command, all the nuns were obliged to be present, in order to give still more ecclesiastical pomp to the festival. And many a heart there silently recalled the old song about the cloister robbery and looked at Oluf Tyste:

"Krist gif en sadan Angel
Kom, tog båd mig och dig!"[3]

The sun now shines through the open cloister-gate. Let truth shine into our hearts; let us likewise acknowledge the cloister's share of God's influence. Every cell was not quite a prison, where the imprisoned bird flew in despair against the window-pane; here sometimes was sunshine from God in the heart and mind, from hence also went out comfort and blessings. If the dead could rise from their graves they would bear witness thereof: if we saw them in the moonlight lift the tombstone and step forth towards the cloister, they would say: "Blessed be these walls!" if we saw them in the sunlight hovering in the rainbow's gleam, they would say: "Blessed be these walls!"

How changed the rich, mighty Vadstene cloister, where the first daughters of the land were nuns, where the young nobles of the land wore the monk's cowl. Hither they made pilgrimages from Italy, from Spain: from far distant lands, in snow and cold, the pilgrim came barefooted to the cloister door. Pious men and women bore the corpse of St. Bridget hither in their hands from Rome, and all the church-bells in all the lands and towns they passed through, tolled when they came.

We go towards the cloister—the remains of the old ruin. We enter St. Bridget's cell—it still stands unchanged. It is low, small and narrow: four diminutive frames form the whole window, but one can look from it out over the whole garden, and far away over the Vettern. We see the same beautiful landscape that the fair Saint saw as a frame around her God, whilst she read her morning and evening prayers. In the tile-stone of the floor there is engraved a rosary: before it, on her bare knees, she said a pater-noster at every pearl there pointed out. Here is no chimney—no hearth, no place for it. Cold and solitary it is, and was, here where the world's most far-famed woman dwelt, she who by her own sagacity, and by her contemporaries was raised to the throne of female saints.

From this poor cell we enter one still meaner, one still more narrow and cold, where the faint light of day struggles in through a long crevice in the wall. Glass there never was here: the wind blows in here. Who was she who once dwelt in this cell?

In our times they have arranged light, warm chambers close by: a whole range opens into the broad passage. We hear merry songs; laughter we hear, and weeping: strange figures nod to us from these chambers. Who are these? The rich cloister of St. Bridget's, whence kings made pilgrimages, is now Sweden's mad-house. And here the numerous travellers write their names on the wall. We hasten from the hideous scene into the splendid cloister church,—the blue church, as it is called, from the blue stones of which the walls are built—and here, where the large stones of the floor cover great men, abbesses and queens, only one monument is noticeable, that of a knightly figure carved in stone, which stands aloft before the altar. It is that of the insane Duke Magnus. Is it not as if he stepped forth from amongst the dead, and announced that such afflicted creatures were to be where St. Bridget once ruled?

[3] Christ grant that such an angel were to come, and take both me and thee!

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.