

PERSONAL  
READER

LEVEL 5

For use with the Level 5 Language Arts and Literature course

  
The Good and Beautiful  
CURRICULUM



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# The Swallows

By Betty Sage



Dear birds that greet us with the spring,  
That fly along the sunny blue,  
That hover round your last year's nests,  
Or cut the shining heavens thro',  
That skim along the meadow grass,  
Among the flowers sweet and fair,  
That croon upon the pointed roof,  
Or, quivering, balance in the air;  
Ye heralds of the summer days,  
As quick ye dart across the lea,  
Tho' other birds be fairer, yet  
The dearest of all birds are ye.

Dear as the messengers of spring  
Before the buds have opened wide,  
Dear when our other birds are here,  
Dear in the burning summertide;  
But when the lonely autumn wind  
About the flying forest grieves,  
In vain we look for you, and find—  
Your empty nests beneath the eaves.

## Bird Bath

By Evaleen Stein

In our garden we have made  
Such a pretty little pool,  
Lined with pebbles neatly laid,  
Filled with water clean and cool.

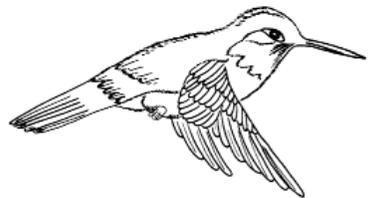
When the sun shines warm and high  
Robins cluster round its brink,  
Never one comes flying by  
But will flutter down to drink.

Then they splash and splash and splash,  
Spattering little showers bright  
All around, till off they flash  
Singing sweetly their delight.

## Hummingbirds

By Betty Sage

I think it is a funny thing  
That some birds whistle, others sing.  
The Warbler warbles in his throat,  
The Sparrow only knows one note;  
But he is better off than some,  
For Hummingbirds can only hum.





# The Hummingbirds

By Phebe Westcott Humphreys

From *A Natural History for Young People*

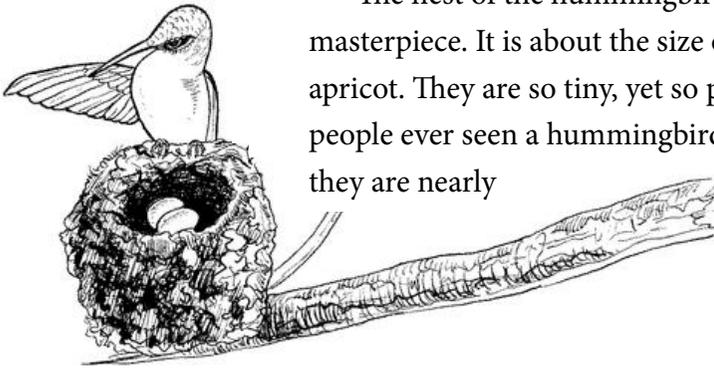
The Hummingbirds are one of the most lovely of the winged race. In creating them, God gave them grace, elegance, rapidity of motion, and magnificence of plumage. What can be more delightful than the sight of these little feathered beauties, flashing with the colors of ruby, topaz, sapphire, and emerald, flying from flower to flower? Such are the lightness and rapidity of hummingbirds, that the eye can scarcely follow the quick beat of their wings. When they hover they appear perfectly motionless, and one might fancy them suspended by an invisible thread.

Specially adapted for life in the air, they are unceasingly in motion, searching for their food in flowers, from which they drink the nectar with so much gentleness that the plant is scarcely stirred. But the juice and honey of flowers are not their only source of food.

The tongue of the humming-bird is a microscopic instrument of marvelous arrangement. It is composed of two half-tubes placed one against the other, capable of opening and shutting, like a pair of pliers. Moreover, it is constantly moistened by a sticky saliva, which can seize and hold insects.

Proud of their gay colors, the hummingbirds take the greatest care to protect their plumage. They frequently groom themselves by passing their feathers through their bills.

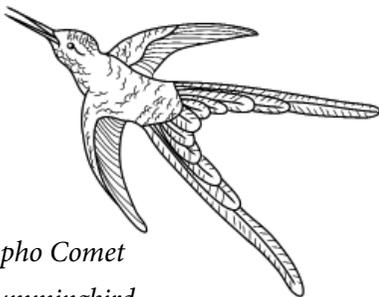
The nest of the hummingbird is a masterpiece. It is about the size of half an apricot. They are so tiny, yet so perfect. Few people ever seen a hummingbird nest because they are nearly



impossible to find. From the ground, they look like another bump on a branch. The interior is padded with the silky fibers furnished by various plants. Twice a year, the bird lays a pair of pure white eggs, each about the size of a pea.

Hummingbirds are scattered over the greater part of South and North America, even as far north as Canada; but in Brazil and Guiana hummingbirds are most abundant, having at least 500 species in these areas.

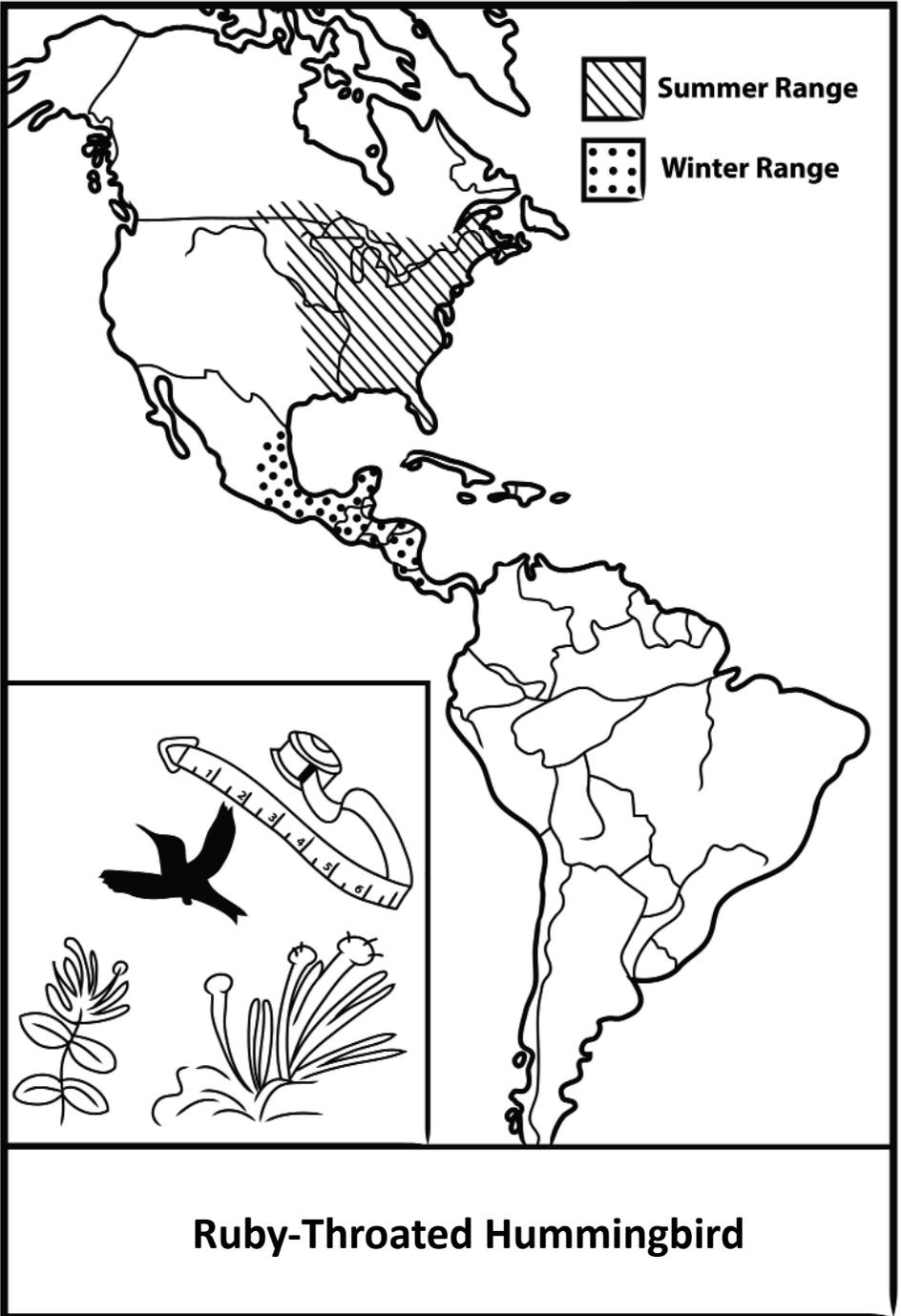
Among the more remarkable species we may note the Giant Hummingbird, which attains the size of a Swallow; the Dwarf Hummingbird that is the size of a bee; the Sapho Comet; the Racket-Tailed Hummingbird, so named from the shape of its tail, which hangs down in the form of little rackets; and the Sword-bill Hummingbird, with a bill as long as the whole body of the bird.



*Sapho Comet  
Hummingbird*



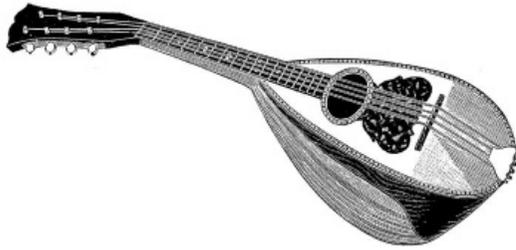
*Racket-Tailed  
Hummingbird*



**Ruby-Throated Hummingbird**

# JÖRLI'S *Mandolin*

Written By Johanna Spyri  
*(author of Heidi)*



Translated by Elisabeth P. Stork  
Edited by Jennifer D. Lerud and Jenny Phillips  
First published in 1926

Text has been modified and updated with modern-day  
grammar, spelling, and usage.

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## Chapter 1

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### *A Decision is Made*



High on the narrow mountain path stands a lonely hut. The joyous rushing of a clear mountain brook descending from the lofty summit resounds continually around the hut. On the narrow wooden bench beside the door one bright summer evening, old Lukas was sitting and watching the full moon as it rose behind the mountain and gradually poured its light over all the heights and depths. Lukas was the mountain guide known far and wide, who many years before had had to give up the big mountain climbs to the younger guides and only undertake the easier ones.

“Come here, Jörli, I must have a talk with you,” Lukas now called to the boy who, on his knees beside the brook, seemed to be performing some engaging task.

“Right away, right away, Grandfather,” he called back, hastening his work. After a little while, he rose and came running along. In spite of the cool evening air, his cheeks glowed, and his big eyes sparkled like blue flames in the moonlight.

“Grandfather, the wheel will not go. If I could see just once how it works in a mill, it would help me so much,” said Jörli, brushing his bright hair away from his hot face.

“Come, sit down beside me; then you will soon cool off. Come! I must have a talk with you,” replied his grandfather. Jörli sat down beside him. “See, Jörli, how beautiful the moon shines up there! It was shining exactly like that and looked down on us when I brought you here eight year ago.”

“I was so young—only four—I don’t remember anything before I came here. Isn’t there anything you know about my father?”

“I only know that you were his son, and he was sick as I was helping him over the mountain. I did not even know his name before he died. He carried that mandolin that you so love. But I look back with pleasure to that evening when you came to live with me! Now I must tell you something, Jörli, something that I do not like to say to you, because it will pain me and you, too. So let us first sing a song of praise together.”

“May I bring out the mandolin, Grandfather?” asked Jörli. “You know it sounds much finer when I play it, too.”

“Yes, bring it out, and come right back,” said the grandfather.

## Chapter 2

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### *Jörli Looks for Work*

It was a bright summer morning when Jörli, all ready for his journey, stood in front of the hut. An old leather knapsack, which the grandfather had carried with him on many mountain trips, hung on his back and contained a change of clothing, a second shirt, and a pair of stockings. The grandfather had brought home a good pair of shoes for him a short time before, with the thought of the approaching journey. Jörli had them on his feet; the mandolin hung by his side.

“Well, go and be good. Your grandfather deserves it from you,” said old Lena, who had stepped out in front of the hut to bid him farewell.

“Goodbye, Jörli,” said his grandfather, holding the boy’s hand fast. “Keep God before your eyes, and if you are in trouble, sing a beautiful song so that real trust will come back to your heart. Never lose your trust in God, but hold fast to it with all your might; then all will go well.”

Jörli clasped his grandfather’s hand once more; then he started away. The grandfather must not see how he had to swallow to keep back the tears.

Jörli was soon far down the mountain, he went so quickly over the smooth pasture land to the valley. The sun was shining beautifully, and the birds were singing merrily in the branches. Jörli’s heart grew light again. It was still early in the day, for Jörli had started immediately after

sunrise.

He had walked a good while along the main road when the big, high hotels in Interlaken came into sight. Crowds of well-dressed people were walking through the avenues of trees; others were sitting on the benches under the shady nut trees. Jörli became happy and thought, *Where there are so many people, there must be work enough, more than I can do.*

He went in at once to the first hotel and asked the waiter who was carrying a big tray, piled high with dishes along the corridor, "Can I find work here? I could help you carry those."

The waiter looked back. "Get away from here, and don't let yourself be seen here again. We don't need any vagabonds!" he called threateningly, and his looks were even more threatening than his words. Jörli ran out in alarm.

A few steps farther on came to a much larger building with high windows. This was also a hotel. In the wide entrance stood a huge fat man with both hands in his pockets and with calmness watched the frightened Jörli hurrying along. Jörli thought he was surely the landlord himself, and he would not be so cross. So he stepped up to him.

"Can I have work here? I will surely do everything as it should be done," he said, encouraged by the steady calmness of the man he was addressing.

He looked at the boy in silence up and down. Then he shook his head. Finally he said, "There is no work here for music players."

Jörli remained standing a little longer. The landlord had spoken so slowly, perhaps he had not quite finished. Perhaps he was going to say something more, but there was nothing more said. Then the man drew

one hand very slowly out of his pocket and pointed with his big thumb toward the street, which plainly meant: "Get along!" And Jörli went.

At the next house there was a garden. Jörli had hardly entered this when a woman called warningly from the window: "Nothing! Nothing! Don't play any music! We don't need any wandering musicians around here—no vagabonds who have no settled home. Move on!"

"I am not a vagabond. I was going to ask for work, not to play music," replied Jörli.

"There is no work for you here. Shut the garden gate!" Whereupon the woman closed the window.

Jörli's courage began to wane. *If here, where there must be so much to be done, I could find no work, then where could it be found?*

There were a great many more houses, large and small. He would inquire further. The very next house might be the right one. It was not so; he was driven away. Jörli went on farther. Through the entire long street, from house to house, he asked for work. Everywhere he was sent off. Then he came away from the houses and out into the country.

He would now try the farmhouses. There, in the middle of summer, there must be enough to do. The old house with the big roof over there, standing in the middle of the meadow, looked so homelike, he went to it. The farmer's wife was cooking on the broad hearth, the kitchen door stood wide open, and a very inviting odor of baking came out to him.

"Can you give me work?" asked Jörli into the kitchen. The woman held a pan in each hand and was running hurriedly to and fro. She cast a hasty glance at the questioner.

"Come in the autumn, when there are apples and pears to gather. There is nothing to do now for such as you are!" she said to him, and

she went on hurriedly about her housework. Jörli breathed in the good odor and went away.

Since five o'clock that morning, when he had taken his little bowl of milk and potatoes, he had eaten nothing more and had been constantly on his feet, and now it was noon. He looked back once more. The farmer's wife had no time to think of anything else except that her men were waiting for their dinner. She did not see at all how the boy looked back.

He went on farther. He would not beg. His grandfather had told him that begging was shameful for people who could work, and he could surely work. Jörli wandered on again. Here and there, some distance away from the road, were small houses to be seen, but where there was little land, there would be little work, he thought, and so went on farther, until he noticed a large farm where two huge oxen were harnessed to an enormous hay wagon.

"They are surely going to bring home the hay. There must be work there," Jörli said to himself, and strode vigorously up to the house.

"Can I help you with the work? I am good at haying, for I have always helped my grandfather when he spreads the hay," said Jörli confidently.

The farmer threw a scornful look at the mandolin and shook his head. He went on talking with his men and showed plainly that he wanted to have nothing further to do with the boy. Very downcast, Jörli went on along the road. He asked again and again for work, but more and more faint-heartedly, for he always received the same answer.

It was now near sunset. Still he wandered on and on. Fatigue and hunger began to be very painful to Jörli, and finally he felt he would be too tired to go any farther and would have to drop down by the

wayside and die of hunger. At this prospect, he became so frightened, he couldn't go any farther and was obliged to sit down on the edge of the road. Then he thought of his grandfather, how he was sitting now on the bench beside the hut and surely thinking of him and wondering how well he was succeeding in his search for work.

Then it occurred to Jörli that the moment had now really come when he ought to sing a song of praise and thanks, as the grandfather had explained to him that one ought to do. He would begin at once, but this was not so easy as the grandfather had related to him. Jörli could not sing. The tones would not come out of his throat. Then he took up his mandolin; that must help him. Then he thought how many scornful looks today had been given his beloved old mandolin and consolingly said, "You are still dear to me, even if they did scorn you. I will never leave you behind, even if they drive me away everywhere on your account."

Then he struck the strings, but they had never sounded so sad before. He would now try to sing a song, then perhaps they would sound more cheerful again. But suddenly he began to sob aloud so pitifully over the strings of his mandolin and all the recollections of his life with his grandfather that rose before him, that he could not bring out another note of singing, and he heard nothing but the sound of his own sobs.

This was not at all as his grandfather had done, and yet Jörli was not lying in a crevice, but had the beautiful blue sky above his head and the firm ground beneath his feet. He would not be so ungrateful. He collected himself and began to sing loudly one of the songs of praise the grandfather had taught him. He sang all the verses through. His mandolin sounded more and more lively and cheerful, and with the last verse, it sang the loudest with him:

*I thank Thee for Thy grace to me,  
Thy help in every woe  
And that forsaken none need be  
That toward his God doth go.*

When Jörli had sung the last words, happiness had risen in his heart again. Now he suddenly knew where help would come from in his abandonment. Then he laid his mandolin aside, folded his hands, looked up to Heaven and prayed straight from his heart:

“Oh dear Lord, I cry to Thee. Thou wilt surely not forsake me when I am so alone.”

Then he rose quite courageously, hung his mandolin by his side, and started confidently on his way farther. From time to time he looked trustfully toward the bright evening sky and sang loud and cheerily:

*And that forsaken none need be  
That toward his God doth go.*

## Chapter 3

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### *A Door Opens*

Not far from the place where Jörli had sat sobbing on the ground, a full mountain brook came roaring down from the heights to Lake Thun nearby. Shaded by the thick foliage of old nut trees, a mill with strong walls and a high gabled roof stood beside the rushing stream. There the great wheel turned away incessantly, and big sacks filled with corn were constantly brought in and then packed in new bags as fine white meal and at last, piled high one above another, lay heaped on the big wagon, which the four strong gray horses then pulled out to the yard.

A happy life ought to prevail in such a beautiful place as this, but it was not so at Stauffer's Mill. The miller went silently through his rooms, from the house into the courtyard, from the courtyard into his barn, from the barn into the mill. He spoke no word except to growl now and then at one of the boys: "Why so slow!" or to an apprentice as he passed by, "Do better than that."

The miller understood his business remarkably well and attended to everything, but he never looked as if his beautiful property and the whole thriving establishment made him happy. He looked as if a hidden sorrow gnawed at him. The miller's wife also was no longer the happy woman she had been years before, when the young people liked to gather at Stauffer's Mill better than anywhere else, because the miller's wife always had some new pleasure ready for them, and they enjoyed themselves in all respects more than anywhere else.



## Winter Morning

By Ogden Nash

Winter is the king of showmen,  
 Turning tree stumps into snowmen  
 And houses into birthday cakes  
 And spreading sugar over lakes.  
 Smooth and clean and frosty white,  
 The world looks good enough to bite.  
 That's the season to be young,  
 Catching snow flakes on your tongue.

## Leaves in Autumn

Unknown

Red and gold, and gold and red,  
 Autumn leaves burned overhead;  
 Hues so splendid  
 Softly blended,  
 Oh, the glory that they shed!  
 Red and gold, and gold and red.  
 Gold and brown, and brown and gold,  
 Of such fun the west wind told  
 That they listened,  
 And they glistened,  
 As they wrestled in the cold;  
 Gold and brown, and brown and gold.  
 Brown and gold, and red and brown,  
 How they hurried, scurried down  
 For a frolic,  
 For a frolic,  
 Through the country and the town,  
 Brown and gold, and red and brown.





# Benjamin Franklin

By Charles R. Gibson

From *Stories of the Great Scientists*

By the time Benjamin Franklin had reached middle age, he had become one of the best-known and most important men in America. Many know him for the work he did in government, but he also did great work in the scientific world.

Franklin had been such a constant reader from childhood that he must have come to know something of science, but his first serious study of a scientific subject seems to have been when he was paid a visit by Dr. Spence of Scotland. That was in the year 1746, at which time Franklin would have been about forty years of age. Dr. Spence showed Franklin some of his electrical experiments, and it is supposed that Franklin bought the apparatus from the lecturer at the close of his visit.

Not long afterwards, Franklin wrote a paper on “The Sameness of Lightning with Electricity,” and this was sent to the Royal Society of London. The learned members laughed at the idea, but the idea of lightning being a huge electric spark was by no means new; it had been suggested a generation earlier, and the sameness had been remarked upon by great men, such as Sir Isaac Newton. Franklin’s paper does not set forth the idea as new, but he was the first to propose a method of proving the idea. It was he who suggested means of tapping the supposed electricity of storm clouds and bringing it quietly to earth. There is no doubt that it was the boldness of this idea which amused the learned members of the Royal Society. We can sympathize with

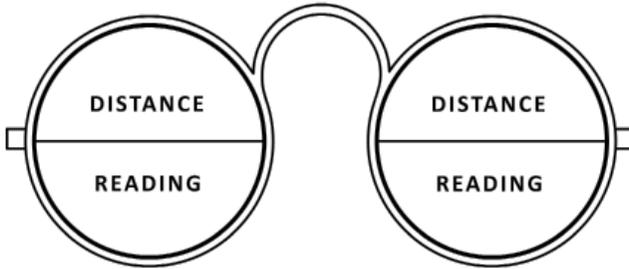
them; it would appear to be quite ridiculous.

Franklin's paper also appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and also in pamphlet form. A copy of the pamphlet was received by some French scientists who followed out the idea on the lines suggested by Franklin. By means of an iron rod placed at a considerable height, they succeeded in drawing electricity from storm clouds. Before news of this successful experiment had time to reach Franklin, he had become impatient waiting for the completion of a high spire from which he intended making his experiment. In the meantime it occurred to him that a kite might serve to carry up the conductor to an even greater height.

When Franklin and his son went out to try this experiment, they must have felt the importance of the trial. It would either confirm or contradict a world-famous suggestion. There were thunder clouds about, but they passed without giving any sign of electricity at the metal key attached to the end of the string tethering the kite. Franklin held this himself by means of a silk handkerchief which was to act as a non-conductor. He tells us that he had almost despaired of success,



across the following diagram, showing a pair of spectacles arranged for long distance and for reading.



In his letter, Franklin explains that he had found two different pairs of spectacles to be very inconvenient, so he had taken them to an optician and got the lenses cut in two and fitted into one frame as shown above. “By this means I wear my spectacles constantly; I have only to move my eyes up or down.” We are all familiar with bifocals, but it is interesting to find that the idea originated with Benjamin Franklin about one hundred and fifty years ago.

In dealing with the later part of Franklin’s life, chiefly from the science side, we are apt to overlook how extremely active he was up to the last. He was consulted on every political question which was of importance to America. Science was, therefore, a hobby with him. Until middle age, he was a very active businessman, a master printer, and during the long remainder of his life he was a very busy politician. But science was more than an ordinary hobby with him; he was a born philosopher, and he has made a lasting name for himself in the science of electricity.

Franklin was somewhat silent about his religion, although we have glimpses of his ideas at times, such as when he urged Congress to remember God and pray. Also, in a letter to a friend who wrote

# The Red Skirt

By James Baldwin

From *An American Book of Golden Deeds*

Illustration by Milena Vitorovic

Eldridge Hinkle and his sister Mary were the children of a farmer in New York state. One day in July, they took their baskets and went out to pick blackberries.

“Let’s go along the railroad, Ellie,” said Mary. “There is a big patch of briers just on the other side of the hill.”

So they walked along the railroad and then worked their way into and around the thicket of briers. It was a great year for blackberries, and their baskets were soon full of ripe, juicy fruit.

“Come, Mary,” said Eldridge, “we’ve gathered enough. Let’s go home.”

They came out of the thicket and reached the railroad at some distance above the point where they had left it. They had walked but a few steps along the tracks when Eldridge suddenly stopped.

“Oh, Mary, look at that rail!” he cried.

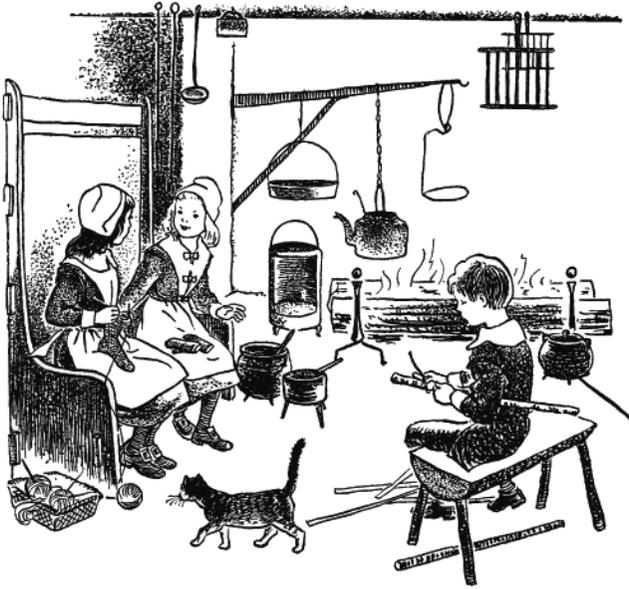
Mary looked. She saw that there was something wrong with the track. One of the rails seemed to have been lifted out of place, and it lacked several inches of meeting the one next beyond it.

“What’s the matter with it, Ellie?” asked the little girl.

“Why, don’t you see? That rail is out of place. Somebody has pried it loose from the ties and lifted it over to this side. Maybe it was careless workmen; maybe it was robbers.”

# A Winter Evening in Colonial America

From *My Country's Beginnings*



Shall we use this cold winter evening to make a visit to the home of a long-ago American family? Here we are, then, after a long walk between the high banks of snow. We are at the kitchen door of a low log house.

Our knock at the heavy plank door is answered, and we find ourselves in a big room. It is the kitchen, and it is the largest room in the house. This should not surprise us, for in old times, kitchens were not only kitchens but dining rooms and living rooms also. On this winter night, all the members of the family we have come to visit are gathered in the kitchen. It is the only place where they can be cozy and warm.

We are quite sure to notice, first of all, the huge fireplace with its mass of blazing logs. The fireplace reaches almost across one end of

## Common Gifts

By Mrs. Hawkesworth

*Hearth=the floor of a  
fireplace, usually of stone*

The sunshine is a glorious thing  
That comes alike to all,  
Lighting the peasant's lowly cot,  
The noble's painted hall.

The moonlight is a gentle thing,  
Which through the windows gleams,  
Upon the snowy pillow where  
The happy infant dreams

It shines upon the fisher's boat  
Out on the lonely sea,  
As well as on the flags that float  
On towers of royalty.

The dewdrops of the summer morn  
Display their silver sheen  
Upon the smoothly shaven lawn  
And on the village green.

There are no gems in monarch's crown  
More beautiful than they,  
And yet you scarcely notice them,  
But tread them off to play.

The music of the birds is heard,  
Borne on the passing breeze,  
As sweetly from the hedgerows as  
From old ancestral trees.

There are many lovely things  
As many pleasant tones,  
For those who dwell by cottage hearths  
As those who sit on thrones.

# SOD-HOUSE

## *Winter*

Written by Clara Ingram Judson



First published in 1957

Text has been modified and updated with modern-day grammar, spelling, and usage.

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## Chapter 1

### *The Journey from Sweden*

**G**ustaf Larsson leaped up the uncarpeted stairway two steps at a time and burst into the small bedroom.

“Elna! Hans! Wake up! Father says we are to have breakfast! A good, big breakfast. How fine it smells!”

Elna stirred and curled herself into a tighter little roll. That way, she had learned, she didn’t feel the aching hollow from hunger.

Gustaf laughed and shook her shoulder. “Sleepyhead! Hear me! We’re not on the old boat. This is the inn at Milwaukee. Father says, ‘Come to breakfast.’”

“Breakfast? Real breakfast, Gus?” Elna asked. She and Hans sat up like jack-in-the-box figures and stared hopefully at their older brother. He looked tall in the morning light, tall and very cheerful. His blond hair was neatly combed. His short blue coat was still grimy and limp from weeks of hard wear, but his thin face was clean and happy.

“Real breakfast,” he assured them. “Can’t you smell it?”

Elna and Hans sniffed. There was a good smell, for a fact. Surely that was pork cooking.

Elna reached under the bed and pulled forward two pairs of wooden shoes, dragging with them rolls of gray dust.

“Ugh! Mother will not like that,” Elna said. She brushed off the dust and slipped her bare feet into the shoes. “Here, Hans, put yours on.”

“Better hurry,” Gustaf reminded her. “You’re to tidy yourselves at the pump in the backyard. Father’s been walking the town, and he has plans to tell us. We must not keep him waiting.”

Hans and Elna scrambled down the stairs after their big brother and followed him out the back door. A wooden pump, surrounded by mud, stood in a bare, untidy backyard.

“I’ll pump,” said Gustaf. “Stand on that board now and wash.”

Elna rubbed her hands in the water and dashed a few drops on her face. “Don’t waste it, Gus. That’s enough.”

“Oh, take all you want. There’s plenty! See how fast I can pump?” He sent the handle up and down briskly, and great spurts of water dashed from the spout. “Wash again, it’s fun! Father says it’s only on the boat that water is scarce. Now that we have come ashore, there’s plenty. Isn’t that a silly joke?”

Elna and Hans thrust hands and faces under the cool water, shook off all they could, and smoothed their hair and clothes. Elna’s dark red, homespun dress and gray apron were soiled and travel-stained, but she tidily pulled the apron into place.

They followed Gustaf into the brick inn, down the hall, through a door on the right, and into a square dining room where people sat, eating at three tables. Their father and uncle were busily talking. Mrs. Larsson motioned the children toward chairs that were pulled up and ready before bowls of steaming porridge.

“Have plenty of sugar, Elna,” her father said. “It costs just the same. And cream. You’ll think it a little thin, but it’s good. There’s cornbread

## Chapter 2

## Walking West



The sun was high in the sky when the children saw their father striding down the narrow street toward the inn. Even at a distance, they saw his pleased look.

“We set out at once!” he said. “Is your mother ready?”

“She has repacked all the bundles to carry better, Father,” Gustaf answered. “Now she is in the kitchen bargaining for food to take with us.”

“Good, run and tell her I am here.” Mother met him in the hall. “We go.” He said nothing else, and she asked no questions. “The bundles are ready in the hall. Gus, you fetch Hans.”

As Gustaf went through the kitchen, the innkeeper’s wife dropped a

small parcel into his coat pocket. She put her fingers to her lips to show it was a secret, just for him.

“Thank you! Thank you!” he said in Swedish and smiled at her, delighted with a surprise.

“For your porridge,” she told him in German and pointed to a porridge bowl to tell her meaning.

In ten minutes they were off, Carl Larsson striding ahead, a great load swung over his left shoulder. Mother came next. Ernst, Gustaf, and Elna each carried as much as was possible. The bread sack Hans carried was full. Loads were heavier than when they left home. New tools, a jug of molasses (for sugar was too costly), coffee, and other supplies added weight.

Away from the dock the streets were wider and the houses newer, mostly made of yellow brick, cheerful and pleasant. Trees made pleasant shade. People seemed prosperous.

Elna ran to catch up to her father and mother. “It is nice here. Is it like Stockholm?” she asked.

“No, Stockholm is different again.” Mother tried to recall the one visit she had made to Stockholm as a little girl. “I like this better. This is America.”

The sun slanted lower. Houses were fewer. The open country spread before them.

“I might have eaten more breakfast if I had tried,” Gustaf said regretfully. “There was plenty.” He fingered the parcel in his pocket anxiously. Was it food? Likely as not; it had come from the kitchen. Should he eat it now? The innkeeper’s wife had motioned to a porridge bowl—something to eat with porridge, he’d thought she meant, or in a

The sun was halfway toward noon when they came to the hill with four trees. They walked around the south edge of the lake, up a rise. There, to the west, a large lake sparkled blue in the June sunshine—Pine Lake.

“I see our cabin!” shouted Gustaf.

“I see it, too!” cried Elna.

“Oh, Mother!” cried weary Hans. “We’re here!”

## Chapter 3

*The New Home*

**G** rass and rushes grew thick and green by the water's edge. On the slope near the lake was a small log cabin. Panes of glass in one little window on the south side reflected sunshine; likely the door faced the water. Left of the cabin was a shed, barely large enough to shelter a cow and a couple of pigs. To the east, broken ground showed where a garden and a plowed field had been.

Without a word, the children walked straight to the cabin. The door sagged on bent hinges; a west window had several broken panes. The small room was dirty and disorderly, but they saw a fireplace of field stone, a well-built chimney, and a one-legged bed, its rope springs frayed and worn. Two shelves were pegged into the south wall; wood

cluttered the hearth. Father and Mother peered over the heads of the children, and for a long moment, no one spoke. Then Mother began planning.

“Gus, take your knife and get me short branches—stout ones, mind you. I’ll be needing a broom. Ernst, bring the bundles near, but don’t set one inside this cabin till I get it cleaned. Hans, gather us wood; you’ll find plenty of small stuff around. Elna, unpack the kettle and bring up water so we’re ready for when we have a fire. And fetch the soap, Daughter; that bed needs scrubbing! Aren’t we blessed to have a house to work in?”

Carl Larsson watered Blossom at the lake and tied her securely near the shed. Then, he hurried off to inspect the garden plot to see if there might be some self-sowed vegetables.

Gustaf and Ernst whistled gaily; Elna and Mother hummed snatches of songs as their hands worked.

In half an hour, the broom was made, short branches tied firmly with homespun twine. Elna brushed the hearth and scrubbed it with sand. Ernst repaired the crane, Elna brought the kettle, Hans gathered wood, and Gustaf fetched a great backlog. Soon the kettle boiled merrily.

“What shall I do now, Mother?” asked Hans.

“Get us leaves, Son, piles of leaves for towels. Later, we shall scrub ourselves.” And by the time Hans had gathered three piles, the others had the cabin tidy, the shelves washed, and the windows shining. Gustaf had repaired the hinge on the door.

“When do we eat, Mother?” Gustaf asked as he laid the hammer aside. “The sun says it’s after noon.”

“There’s no time yet for a meal,” Mother said firmly, “but if you’ll all wash, you may have the snack Mrs. Pederssen gave us. Call your father. Where shall we eat? Someday, we shall have a table your father will make, and we’ll be very grand.”

“Let’s sit here on the grass in the shade,” said Elna. “I’ll get the bread sack, Mother. You sit down. My hands are washed.”

They stretched out on the grass and enjoyed the rye bread and cheese.

“What next?” asked Gustaf. “I’d like to swim and bathe.”

“Three hours of work in the garden comes first,” said Father. “Do you think you are a gentlemen and can bathe in the middle of the day? Cleanliness is good, yes, but we must grow food and gather wood.”

“Pooh! I can get wood,” boasted Hans. “There’s plenty close by. They were careless!”

“Not careless, Hans,” corrected Father. “Unknowing. Pearman wasn’t a farmer. He does well in Chicago. He is learning to take a picture in a box, like magic, Pederssen says. They call the picture a photograph. He makes a good living. Come on, boys,” he finished, getting up from the grass. “I found some self-sowed beans. Gus, you better weed them; beans will taste fine in a month. Ernst and I will spade the garden.”

“But when the sun is so—” Mrs. Larsson said, pointing through the trees, “then you are all to stop work and bathe. Later it may be cool. And not another night shall the Larssons be unwashed. Hear me, Carl?”

Gustaf started toward the garden. Elna and Mother unpacked bundles and spread bedding and clothing and lengths of hand-woven

material on the grass. This sun would soon take away the musty smell from the boat.

“We’re blessed, Elna,” Mother remarked. “A house ready for us! A fine day to unpack and settle.”

“It’s an old house,” said Elna doubtfully. She had been remembering Cousin Axel’s accounts of great houses in Chicago. “And small,” she added.

“Old!” scoffed Mother. “Small! What do you expect for forty dollars? A palace, maybe? And a hundred acres?” She shook a quilt briskly and smiled at her daughter. “Wait till your father makes us furniture, and the cabin will seem nice. Lay the shirts there, a clean one for each. People work better when they are clean, Elna. This is a fine place.”

“May I wear my best petticoat this afternoon, Mother?” Elna shook out a pretty skirt of red-and-yellow striped material and admired it proudly.

“No, better save it. But your everyday petticoat is dirty, truly.” Mrs. Larsson sat back on her heels and squinted at the sun. “It’s early yet, and a fine day for drying. You and I shall wash the clothes and bathe. Hans!” she called to the little boy as he carried wood to the back of the cabin. “Come, take your clothes off and scrub in the lake. Time you are clean. We’ll have your clothes washed and dried.”

Gaily, she grabbed the pile of soiled clothes she had sorted out and ran toward the lake. “Bring me the washing paddle and the soap, Elna,” she called over her shoulder. “We can scrub with sand, but the clothes need soap.”

Down by the lake, to the right, grew a small clump of bushes; and out from there ran a narrow sandbar. Hans stripped, tossed aside his

They sat on the thick grass in front of the cabin to eat. The late afternoon sun was pleasant, the feel of clean clothes on clean skin was comfortable, and the thought of warm, well-cooked porridge made their mouths water.

“Please bring the books, good Wife!” Carl Larsson said. “We shall read and give thanks before we eat.”

“Let me get them, Father.” Gustaf jumped up quickly. “I carried them in my bundle, you know.”

“Aye, and we shall need them more than tools, Son.”

Gustaf ran and opened his bundle. In the center, wrapped in hanks of homespun yarn, were three small brown books: the Psalm Book, the Catechism, and the Bible, their covers worn with daily use. He handled them reverently as he gave them to his father.

Larsson laid the Catechism and Psalm Book aside and opened the Bible. It was a small book, not more than three inches high, its pages thin, the Swedish type tiny. He opened the fly leaf.

“Bring me my writing box, Elna. We should by rights have my father’s great Bible here. Someday my brother shall write in it for me, in Sweden.”

Elna set the writing box by him, and the children watched as he wrote: “This day, June 16, 1856, came to our farm by Pine Lake, Wisconsin.” He blew on the writing to dry it, shut the writing box, and turned the pages to the 121st Psalm.

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills,” he read.

Gustaf looked to the north where the hills were rolling and green, almost like in Sweden but with a difference—this was their own land.

empty, “but rest is good, too.” He stretched out on the grass, refreshed by the hot supper. “Play us a tune, Gus. Get out your harp, Ernst. Music ends the day well.”

Gustaf played a tune on his harmonica, and Ernst strummed at his Jew’s harp.

“Listen!” commanded Gustaf. He carefully played a few notes.

“I can play it.”

“That’s the Erie Canal Song,” cried Elna. “I know the chorus. I can sing it in English, Gus. The packet captain taught me.” She sang slowly, pronouncing each word with care:

Low bridge, ev’rybody down!

Low bridge, for we’re going through a town.

Mother clapped proudly. “It’s good to learn English, Elna.”

“There is another tune I learned to play on the packet,” remembered Gustaf. He played a few notes. “I don’t remember the English words. It’s something about a star-spangled banner. It’s a good song. Maybe we can learn it now that we are here.”

He looked around hopefully. June twilight deepened across the lake. Frogs croaked faintly. Fish made soft splashes. Birds stirred, nesting. But there was no human sound. Gustaf had been too busy to think of it until now. Were there no neighbors?

“Doesn’t anyone live near here, Father?” he asked. “If we had neighbors, they could teach us the song.”

His father couldn’t answer. The boy looked across the lake anxiously, little guessing that he himself would find the answer to that question—and change their lives.

## Chapter 7

### *Changes Brewing*



**G**ustaf could hardly get home fast enough that evening. Wouldn't the family be amazed to see a newspaper printed in English? His very own, too! And two nails so bright and shining. Sharp, fine for pencils. They would make an even line on soft wood.

But nearing home, he was surprised, too. He sniffed happily—plum jam! The pungent fragrance was exciting.

Elna ran to meet him. "You'll never guess what we are going to have, Gus!"

"Oh, wouldn't I? Think I don't know plum jam when I smell it?"

"Oh, that!" Elna dismissed plum jam with a laugh. "You knew the

plums were ripening. Mother made a tasty jam—even without sugar. But there's a real surprise. Mrs. Bergvaal sent Mother yeast and a recipe for making light bread. Mrs. Baker gave it to her, and she shared it. She had me bring it over this morning. The bread looks wonderful, Gus. Hans caught fish, too. The raft you made works fine. It's so steady he can fish by himself. Ernst is home. Better hurry and wash. Supper's nearly ready."

Elna missed her brother now that they worked at different places. She loved to meet him and report on the day's doings.

By the time the boys had a swim, the supper cloth was spread on the grass and the food brought out. Broiled fish, greens, light bread—very tasty and delicious—the new jam, and milk. A real feast, the best meal they'd had in many years.

"We eat like lords," said Larsson. "You are blessed to have a job with Mrs. Bergvaal, Elna. This bread is good."

"I've a start of yeast left over, as she told me. I keep it on the shelf your father made me in the well," Mother explained to Gustaf. "You boys should make us spoons so we can all eat at once the American way. Your father is planning a table, and when we each have a spoon and bowl, it will be nice."

Gustaf listened. So much was happening this evening. Would this be the time to bring out his paper? Or should he wait? Daylight was best for showing it.

"Do you like your supper, Gus?" asked Mother. He ate well but seemed quiet and thoughtful.

"Oh, yes, Mother! You made it fine! It's a celebration, though you didn't know that."

“A celebration?”

“Yes, I’m starting to learn English.” He paused to relish their amazement. “The coach driver gave me a newspaper this morning.” He pulled it out of his pocket and carefully spread it on the clean grass “It’s printed in Madison, the state capital of Wisconsin. The smith gave me nails for pencils, and I’m going to make a log slate for writing my lessons.”

They stared at the paper and nails, too amazed for words.

“What’s a log slate?” Hans broke the silence to ask.

“A split log. A passenger on the coach gave me the idea. I’ll smooth it and then press marks with the nail for letters. When I have it full with one lesson, I’ll learn that, then sand it down for the next lesson.”

“Do you know any of the words, Gus?” Larsson asked, looking from the paper to his son.

“No, but I can learn to print the words. Someday I’ll know the meaning.”

“Mrs. Bergvaal knows English words,” said Elna. “I’ll take the paper to her, and she can tell me. Maybe someday when Mr. Bergvaal gets better, she can come over and see your log slate.”

“You would have to be very careful of the paper, Elna,” said Gustaf. Much as he wanted to know the meaning of those words, he doubted the wisdom of letting Elna carry the paper through the woods.

“Careful!” cried Elna. “I’ll be as careful as you could be, Gus.”

“Then take it tomorrow, Elna. And be sure you listen and get it right when she tells you.”

“Better wrap the paper in a fold of linen, Daughter,” suggested

## Chapter 9

## Christmas, 1856



Quick, Hans! Now we can clean the house and surprise Mother.”

“Do you know how, Elna?”

“Of course, silly!” Elna peered at her mother’s departing figure from the crack in the door to make sure she was out of hearing. “She will be gone till dark. If Mrs. Baker likes the weaving and makes coffee for her,

she will be away three hours. That’s plenty of time for us. We’ll begin by the fireplace. I made new brushes, stiff and strong, and Mother doesn’t even guess I have them.”

Elna dashed out of the door and ran along the deeply trodden path through the snow. Hidden in the woodpile were the two new brushes, the twigs well selected and firmly tied. No wonder Elna was proud of making them. Back in the cabin, she poured hot water into a small tub, refilled the kettle, and swung the crane over the fire.

“Should I begin at the top, Hans, or at the bottom?”

## Chapter 10

# The Trek West



The storm lasted for three days, blowing snow into cracks, filling the air like a curtain. Fortunately, there was wood stacked by the cabin, so the Larssons kept fairly warm. The path to Blossom's shed was dug freshly every hour so she could be fed and milked. It was good, too, that clothes had been washed and food baked for Christmas.

The first morning after Christmas, Gustaf was as restless as a grasshopper in August. He fiddled around at this and that, never still a minute.

"What ails you, Gus, to act like this?" his father finally said. "The cabin is not over large, at best, and with you moving around all the

time, we're crowded!"

"I ought to be off to the smithy, Father!"

"We should all be at work, but with this storm, you'd be lost before you got to the end of the lake. The smith will not look for you."

"He won't have any horses brought in to shoe, anyway," said Ernst.

"That's why I want to be there," Gustaf answered. "He's showing me how to make a door latch for Mrs. Nelsen, and we could work on it if no one came in. She wants it now."

"Well, you can't go, Son." His father's voice was firm. "You might as well make yourself happy here. Get out your knife and whittle your mother a pair of spoons. I've the wood ready. She needs more, and it will keep you from fretting."

So Gustaf got out his knife and went to work.

At noon, the fourth day, clouds cleared away and the sun shone brilliantly. Gustaf had contrived some crude snowshoes, and on these, he set out for the smithy. Ernst left for the Bakers', and the others began to work at accumulated chores. Ashes were carried from the fireplace and dumped into the ash pit for soap-making in the spring. Blossom's shed got a cleaning. Larsson dug a path to the well, and Elna and her mother drew water. The supply in the cabin was gone.

Early in the afternoon, as Mrs. Larsson worked along in the cabin, someone knocked loudly at the door. "Come!" she called gaily. Perhaps Hans was making a little joke.

The door swung open. It was Herr Lange. He stamped his feet free of snow and rubbed his cold hands. "Is your husband here?" he asked.

"Yes, Herr Lange, I'll call him. But come to the fire and make

yourself warm.”

She hurried outside and called. Larsson came at once. What in the world could Herr Lange want important enough to bring him here in all this snow?

“I’ve an offer for your place, Larsson,” began Lange. “I told you I would.”

“My place?” Larsson was astonished. “No one has been to see it. Who wants it?”

“A Chicago agent. He knows land around about here. He came up once. He makes you an offer.”

“What will he pay?”

Elna and Hans came in with armfuls of wood. Pay for what? they wondered.

“Two hundred cash as soon as the papers are signed. With that in your pocket, Larsson, you can go to Minnesota Territory, take up a homestead claim, and have a real farm to be proud of. Others are doing it.”

“I may not want to sell,” objected Larsson stubbornly. He had thought much about this idea since Bergvaal left. Sunday in Watertown, he had talked with men after church. But he liked his place; Ernst and Gustaf had good jobs, and they were all happy. Minnesota Territory seemed far away.

Lange talked on. “You can move out in March while the snow lasts. Take your goods by sled, get to the Mississippi River by the time traffic opens, and go up by boat, cheap. Railroads will be through from Milwaukee to Prairie du Chien come summer, but that’s a costly way for a man with a family to travel. Sled and boat is better. You can get

## Chapter 14

*The Sod House*

The day was beautiful and warm with late May sunshine, tempered by a gentle breeze. The children were glad to leave the bustle of Red Wing and have the freedom to run and play. Wild flowers bloomed in profusion. The land rolled west—no hills, only a smooth roll like an ocean on a good day. The sturdy rented oxen plodded along, making about two miles per hour. They didn't mind the heavy load and needed only an occasional prod or a shouted "Gee!" or "Haw!" to keep them on their way.

## Chapter 15

## Big Whistle



It is a good thing you got the big plow and the oxen, Father,” said Gustaf. He wiped sweat from his forehead as they paused at the end of a row. “This tough prairie grass would be hard to break with a hand plow.”

Larsson looked back over the way they had come. Not more than half the field he had marked was turned, and this was afternoon of the second day’s plowing. Strong as he was, Larsson’s muscles ached more than he would admit. To hold the plow steady and straight taxed even his strength.

“You’re right. It is slow, hard work. But it will never take so long again, Son. Next year we’ll start early, and these fields we plow this year will be easy. Each year we’ll turn some new.” He looked across his land proudly. Even hard work seemed agreeable when he remembered that this wonderful land was his own.

“The clods are big, Father,” Gustaf remarked as he gathered up the reins. “Shall we plow it again?”

“If we have time with the team, we shall. If we don’t, I’ll do what Swansson told me he did. We’ll cut down a tree—we’ll need some down anyway—and drag the whole tree top over the field. He says it harrows and smooths the best way, with one pulling, too. Well, here goes, Gus.” He grasped the handles of the plow firmly. Gustaf tightened the reins and shouted to the oxen. Slowly they plodded across the field.

Ernst had driven the oxen all morning while Gustaf cut sod blocks and began digging the side of the hill for the one wall of the house. Larsson had soon realized that it was better to have the boys, Ernst and Gus, alternate with chores or sod cutting and driving the oxen. So Ernst worked in the fields in the mornings and Gustaf in the afternoons. Larsson himself worked at the plow ten to twelve hours a day, and would have to keep up that rate if he was to get all the work he hoped from the oxen before they went back to Red Wing in a fortnight, as promised.

Setting the sod blocks for the house was no easy matter either. If the house was to be ready for roofing by the time the men came over from Vasa, the boys would have to keep at the job more steadily than Larsson at first realized.

The sun shone warmly. A gentle breeze from the southwest sprang up, cool and dry.

“Look at that gopher run!” Gustaf laughed gaily. “We must have another hole, Father. This field is full of them. Are they good to eat?”

“Not that I ever heard of. They’re pretty little creatures, though. Soon as we get the crop in and the house finished, you and I are going hunting, Gus. No one need go hungry for meat out here. Swansson says there’s plenty of game. But I never heard of eating gophers. I don’t aim to start it.”

A flock of blackbirds passed overhead and settled on a thorn thicket at the south. “Now some of those would make good eating. They’d make a fine pie. Blackbirds might be a pest, come harvest, too, if they nest around here.... Well, now, is that more limestone? It’s good we don’t come on it often.”

He steadied the plow as it turned up a fairly large, thin stone. He lifted it away from the plow, brushed off the dirt, and admired it. “That’s a pretty one, Gus. Mother will like it for a doorstone. I’ll carry it home for her when we go.”

The sun was near the horizon before Larsson finally said, “Well, Son, if we’re going to get the oxen watered and fed before dark, we’ll have to stop work now. The plow can stay right here tonight; the sky is clear.” He unhooked the oxen, and Gustaf started them toward home.

For an hour Gustaf had been watching supper preparations on the slope near where the sod house was being built. But each time they neared the creek, Larsson had turned away to plow another row, and still another. Now Gustaf let the oxen drink at the creek, and he washed his hands and face, ducking his hot head under the water. How clean and fresh and cool it felt!

“Here, you!” he reprimanded the oxen. “You can’t drink more. Enough’s enough! If you drink your fill, you’ll have no room for supper.” He

pulled them away, drove them up the slope, and tied them to a tree. “Now you shall have some good prairie grass I cut yesterday.”

They eyed him, liking his quiet voice. He tossed before them armfuls of grass, the fresh green of new growth mixed with matted straw and seed heads of last year’s. It made fine fodder. Gustaf ran back to the campfire where porridge bubbled in the pot. Even on a warm night, hot porridge tasted fine after a day’s hard work.

“Before you start on the sod cutting,” remarked Larsson as they finished eating, “you’d better get your mother some more firewood, Gus. Ernst and I shall build up the blocks we have cut. You go over to the grove, east there. By that clump of trees, you’ll find a lot of windfalls and scrub wood. Fetch plenty while you’re at it, and you won’t have to stop again for a few days. Hans, you go with Gus and carry all you can. Stack it near, so your mother can get it handy.”

Hans was glad to go. He had very little time with Gustaf now. He felt important to be sent to help.

“Wait a minute, I’ll get a board,” Gustaf said. “I’ve a piece of rope in my pocket. I think I can make a drag. We’ll load heavy sticks on my board and drag them home. This grass is so slick, dragging out will be easier than carrying. We’ll try it.” He took one of the long boards that had made the sled, tucked it under his arm, and they set out.

The clump of trees his father had pointed out was near a bend in the creek, half-hidden from the campfire by the slope; it was shadowy in the twilight. Gustaf leaned the board against the tree and began hunting wood. Great branches had been blown down by winter storms; some were dry and brittle, easy to break; some, not so dry, he laid aside till later. The driest would make quick fires. His mother would like that.

Both boys worked steadily. There would be time for talk after

the light faded. Suddenly Gustaf looked up and rubbed his eyes in amazement. What was that? A man? He made no movement, yet Gustaf would have sworn he wasn't there a minute ago.

The tall figure leaned against a tree carelessly, watching Gustaf. Yes, it was a man—with torn trousers black with dirt, a ragged shirt with no sleeves, and bare feet. Black hair hung in two long braids; the face was dusky in the shadow. His arms were folded, his bearing dignified. He stood without a motion.

His own arms filled with wood, Gustaf straightened quickly. Over a great lump in his throat, he asked, "Who are you?" Hans heard and turned, staring.

"Big Whistle," replied the man in a calm voice.

The boys were astonished. Big Whistle sounded like the name of an Indian. While in Red Wing, they had seen a couple of Indians wearing "store clothes." They had seemed to be idle, shiftless men. This man, whose clothes were rags, had a proud manner. And though he had said only two words, he spoke them plainly.

"Where do you live?" asked Gustaf, amazed that his voice sounded so natural. His knees were shaking.

"West," Big Whistle replied, pointing. "Where the sun goes down," he added, as though they might not know. Still he had not moved. The three stared at each other. In the dim light, it seemed like a strange dream. Gustaf's courage began to return. The stranger had no visible weapon. If he had wanted to kill them, certainly he could easily have done it before they knew he was there. Gustaf set the armful of wood down and brushed the bits of bark off his sleeves.

"We live there." He pointed to the campfire. The Indian nodded.

“Is your name really Big Whistle?” asked Hans. This meeting was one he had long hoped for, though, for a truth, the Indian didn’t look a bit as he had expected one would. “I never heard a name like that.”

For answer, the man unfolded his arms and put the fingers of his right hand to his lips. Instantly there was a whistle, a shriek, a terrorizing sound that echoed through the trees and beat back upon the ears. Hans was numb with terror. Gustaf’s knees were weak as water. Back at the camp, Elna and Mother cried out in fear.

The Indian laughed gleefully. These were good people; they respected his big noise. He was pleased with the impression he had made.

“Big Whistle. See? No one make such big whistle.”

“I should hope not!” exclaimed Gustaf.

“Gustaf! Hans!” Mother called to them. “Are you there?” Larsson and Ernst raced toward the grove.

“We’re all right,” Gustaf answered. “We’re coming!” Then he turned to Big Whistle. “Have you had your supper? We have eaten, but there is plenty for you.”

He gathered the wood he had dropped. The extra supply he’d meant to drag must wait till some other time. The Indian collected an armful, too. Hans, not to be outdone, hastily scooped up all he could carry, and the three walked toward the campfire.

“Big Whistle has not had his supper, Mother,” said Gustaf as they came nearer. “Is there porridge in the pot?”

That was the best thing he could have said. His mother loved to be hospitable. She hardly glanced at the stranger as she poked the fire, ran for spoon and bowl, and stirred the leftover porridge. Larsson saw that

## Chapter 17

### Harvest

Gustaf sat by the creek at twilight, whittling a flute. Already, more than a month after Midsummer Day, June 21, the sun set noticeably earlier. Nearby, Brownie, their new cow, browsed idly. She seemed to like this after-supper time. Gustaf had milked her; soon he would tie her up for the night. Brownie was a fine cow. She gave so much rich milk that the Larssons had butter and cheese as well as milk aplenty. Living was good now. And fine wheat was harvested only last week.

Gently, Gustaf blew into the hole in the willow stick. Not deep enough. Big Whistle would scorn the tiny sound such a small hole would make. Gustaf poked with the tip of his knife and enlarged it. He felt awkward; his arms still ached after hours of working with the wheat.

His father had been in a dither about the harvest. Then, one morning, after days of anxiously watching the ripening kernels, he had hurried to the sod house, calling, "Gus! Ernst! Come! The wheat's ready!" And harvesting began.

Larsson and Ernst cut the grain with scythes. Elna and Mother gathered the long yellow stalks and tied them into bundles. Gustaf stacked these in tidy stacks that would shed water if rain came overnight. The next day Gustaf and Ernst carried every bundle and made a large round mound on smooth ground east of the house. All

that afternoon, Larsson, Ernst, and Gustaf tramped over that mound—over and over and over—loosening the kernels.

“Next year we’ll have oxen do this part of the work,” Larsson promised. “Wheat like this will make us rich. Go to it, boys! It’s nearly all loose now.”

In mid-afternoon of that same day, they forked off the straw and stacked it near the place where they had started building a sod barn. Two large round stacks meant that Brownie would have plenty of clean straw all winter. The golden kernels, mixed with dust and chaff, lay on the ground, and Larsson eyed the sky anxiously.

“We’ll get rid of that chaff, come a wind. Tomorrow we cut rye.”

Nothing seemed to tire Father; he was so excited by his wonderful harvest. The boys worked till they ached with weariness, and still there was more to do.

This morning, for the first time since the wheat was cut, there came a west wind. It blew steady and strong and burning hot from the prairies. Gustaf and Ernst spent the whole day tossing handfuls of wheat and chaff into the air, letting the wind blow the chaff away. Mother brought bread and cheese and a jug of milk out to them. Larsson wouldn’t let them stop long enough to go to the house. The wind might die down any minute. He could hardly wait till the wheat was clean and bagged.

Mid-afternoon, a thick layer of golden kernels, clean and full, lay on the bare earth. Larsson buried his hands in this wealth, then began measuring and bagging at once.

“It’ll run forty bushels to an acre!” he gloated. “We’ll be out of debt in a year with a crop like this!”

## Chapter 19

*A Visit From Pastor Norelius*

Pastor Norelius put the bridle on his horse's head, set the saddle, and fastened the girth strap. Then he called to his wife, "If you have some food ready for me, I'll be on my way, Wife. I plan to visit Larsson's place and two or three others. I hope to be back in time to finish my sermon."

Mrs. Norelius hurried from the cabin, smiling at him cheerfully. "I have only rye bread and cheese for you this morning. Mrs. Larsson will want to give

you dinner if she has enough, so you can make out. I hope they will let the children come to school. It will mean a lot to them later, if they start this fall."

Mrs. Norelius wrapped the food in a piece of homespun linen and tucked it into the left saddlebag. The right-hand bag was reserved for the Bible and Psalm Book the pastor always carried with him.

"God be with you!" she said.

“And with you!” he answered, and started briskly on his way.

How fortunate to have this gray horse, the pastor thought as he turned southwest across the prairie. With only the tired old nag he'd had, traveling around the country had been slow and difficult. The pastor had a church in Red Wing. He took long missionary trips to the northwest and served the church in Vasa. New people were coming out to settle each week, most of them Swedish, and he should visit them and invite them to church. He was burdened with duties. Then, only last week, his congregation in Red Wing had surprised him with the gift of this lively horse. Now he could get about and work up at the school in Vasa and make his calls.

“Larsson has three children who should be in school,” he said aloud in his deep-toned voice. “Gustaf seems like a bright boy, from all I hear; Elna and Hans need schooling, too. They may think Hans is too young at the start; Elna and Gustaf can teach him, once they begin coming.”

He studied over the plans for caring for the children in Vasa. When he rode up to the sod house, Mrs. Larsson was down at the creek, washing.

She noticed that a visitor had arrived, dragged the wet things out of the water, and hurried to see who had come. What brought a stranger here? she wondered.

The pastor knotted the bridle around a small tree and went to meet her. “Mrs. Larsson?” he asked in Swedish. “Is your husband here?” He was surprised at the quiet. He had expected a stir of family activity. “I am Pastor Norelius. I was away, you remember, when you went through Vasa in the spring, and I have long hoped for a visit. Have I missed him?”

“Good day to you, Pastor.” Mrs. Larsson dropped a curtsy

respectfully. "You honor us, sir. My husband will be back later in the day. The others are with him; they help the Edstroms roof the new barn. I would have gone over with them, but my Hans cut his foot on a sharp stone this morning. It seemed he could not walk so far. They may come here for supper and music. Can you wait till then, Pastor?"

"No, though I wish I could. I will ride over to Edstrom's place and see them there. But the boy with the hurt foot, where is he? Is there anything I can do for him?" He turned to look and spied small Hans standing in the doorway of the sod house. Mother had left him lying on the trundle bed, but he came to the door when he heard the sound of a new voice. Together Mother and the pastor walked up the slope to the house.

"Good morning, Hans!" the pastor called. "So you cut your foot. Was it a clean stone?"

Hans, surprised at this question, looked round-eyed at the stranger. "No, it was muddy, from the creek. But Mother washed the cut with hot, soapy water till it hurt. My foot is clean."

Pastor Norelius nodded, approving. "Does it hurt now?"

Hans looked at the pastor uneasily. The cut did hurt some, far too much for Hans to care to run an errand. Often strangers wanted errands done, straw for a horse or water, maybe. On the other hand, the cut didn't hurt much. Hans wouldn't like to miss anything pleasant that the pastor might suggest.

"It hurts a little," he decided. The pastor laughed and patted Hans's head.

"I want to see your father, Hans," he said. "And he is at Edstrom's place. Now, I have a horse tied back of the house. I wonder if you could ride over on my horse and surprise them. What do you think of that?"

“I think I could go,” said Hans quickly. “I think my foot is about well now.”

“Fine! Then our only problem is to persuade your mother to pull the clothes quite out of the water. We don’t want them to float down the creek to the river and down the little river to the Mississippi, and down the Mississippi to the Gulf—”

“Truly, is that where the water goes?” demanded Hans. “I wondered.”

“If you come to school in Vasa where we want you, there is much you can learn.”

“You must not bother the pastor with silly questions, Hans.” Mother spoke as soon as she could get in a word. “I shall pull up my wash, Pastor, and we’ll go at once. But do not bother with Hans. I was going to help with the dinner anyway. He can stay by himself while I guide you.”

Hans’s face was a study. This stranger was a pastor; that was surprising enough. But to hear his mother suggest that he stay home when he had been offered a ride, really offered, was too much. His lip quivered.

“Hans is big and brave,” said the pastor kindly. “Of course he can stay alone.”

Hans’s heart plunked down to his hurt toe.

“But we need him,” the pastor continued. “I plan to speak to Fathers about our school, and Hans should be there with us. Come on, Hans! I’ll set you on the horse, and you can get the feel of it while your mother tends to her clothes.”

Hans barely limped when he went with the pastor to the tree where

the horse was tied. The pastor tossed him high and settled comfortably on the wide saddle. And Hans, in his delight, quite forgot that his new friend was a pastor and should be treated reverently. He laughed and touched the reins the pastor gathered up.

By the time they reached the Edstrom's, Pastor Norelius was a good friend of both Hans and his mother. He had heard the story of their settling and of the coming of the new neighbors, as well as much earlier history of the family.

Arrived there, he set Hans down, tied up his horse, tossed off his coat, and took a hand at the job of roofing. The ridgepole was set, and the trimmed saplings were in place, sloping evenly from ridge to wall. Now there remained the task of laying blocks of sod, each lapping a bit over the other on the saplings. The men were particular to set the sod with the lay of the grass downward for drainage. All winter the rain and snow would slide off, and next summer the grass roots would sprout and make a pretty green roof.

When the pastor arrived the men stopped work, but Norelius insisted on finishing the roof. He set to work at once.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Larsson and Elna helped Mrs. Edstrom and Breta make a dinner worthy of a visit from the pastor. (It made no difference that they had never seen the man before; he was the pastor, and as such, any Swede would do him honor.)

The girls fetched planks from the bottom of the wagon and set them across two carpenter's horses 'Dolph had made. Mrs. Edstrom opened the blue chest and took from it a handsome hand-woven tablecloth of red and white checkered linen and spread it over the planks.

"Now the silver, Breta," she commanded. "I haven't cleaned it since

we came, I've been that busy. You and Elna must polish for me. The powder is in the kitchen box. Don't be lazy, now!"

She turned to Mrs. Larsson. "It's good for me that Indian friend of yours was here only last night, so I have plenty of meat. Whatever do you suppose he took in trade? ... No, don't wait to hear, girls. Breta can tell you all about it, Elna. Get at the silver quickly." As the girls ran off, she continued the story to Mrs. Larsson.

"When he came, I was repacking some things in my trunk—linen and festival clothes and a bit of marble my cousin brought me from Italy. Edstrom, he laughed at me for bringing such things to America. But it was a pretty stone, so round and pink. I dropped it in a corner of the trunk when I packed in Sweden. It was lying on the ground by me last evening, when that Indian arrived with a great hind quarter of venison. Edstrom was to pay him, but that creature wanted my marble. So silly! Edstrom said to me, 'Venison does us more good in Minnesota than a piece of stone, no matter where it is from.' And that does make sense. So we bought all this—" she pointed at the venison proudly, "for one round pink stone. Whatever an Indian wants with a stone when Minnesota is full of stones, I'm sure I don't know. But I am glad for the meat." She talked on, delighted with all the flutter of preparation.

Elna carried the small roll of woolen cloth and the powdered pumice stone to the edge of a tiny lake, a kind of widening in the creek. She and Breta polished until the small silver bowl and two great hammered serving spoons sparkled in the sunshine. Breta's tongue ran on as steadily as her mother's. She told Elna about Big Whistle's strange choice of her mother's bit of marble no bigger than an apple, in payment for a large quarter of venison and a handful of fish.

"Mother wouldn't part with her marble and leave it in Sweden, oh no," said Breta, giggling at the recollection. "But she was so amazed that

Big Whistle wanted it, and then there was no changing. He hurried away, pleased as though she had given him a fortune. I know he wanted it for some special reason. Do you know what it could be?" Elna had no idea.

Now the table was set for the men; wooden bowls and pewter spoons marked each place. The shining silver bowl, filled with store sugar, was near the end of the table where the pastor was to sit. Mrs. Edstrom counted the bowls and spoons and the log seats her husband had sawed. She was uncertain what to do about Gustaf. A glance at the work showed her that he sat astride the ridge-pole, setting the top rows of sod under the pastor's direction. He was working like a man. She set a place for him at the table. Hans and Axel could wait and eat later. Gustaf never guessed how suddenly he was promoted.

Mrs. Larsson turned the venison roasting over an open fire; fragrant odors streamed from the chowder in the cooking pot. The girls set a crystal bowl of plum jam and the red compote filled with honey on the table. The small hand mill hummed noisily; Mrs. Edstrom had decided there wasn't quite enough meal for the dumplings. Cakes made with currants and spices brought from Galena were set out in a basket woven in Sweden. Coffee boiled up, and the pot was pulled aside to settle the grounds.

Now the barn was finished. The men washed, came to the table, and stood by their places silently while the pastor read from the Bible and prayed. They said grace together at the end of the long prayer.

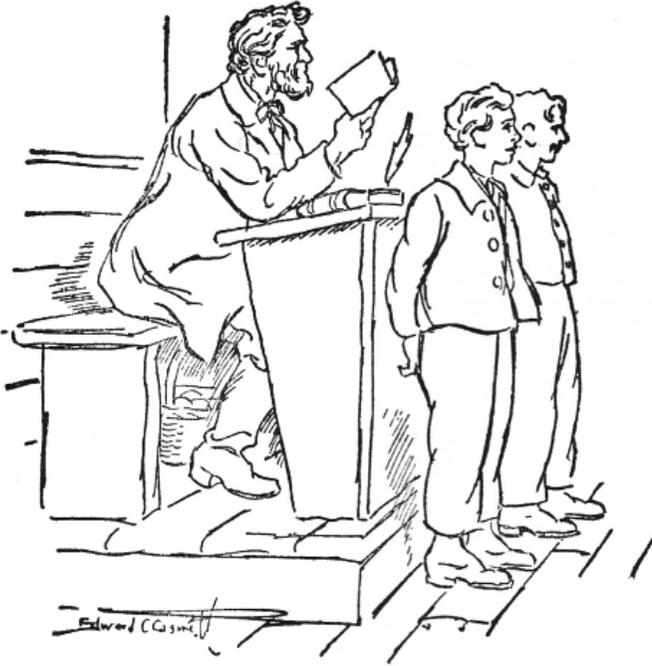
This was a wonderful occasion, not only because the late summer sun was brilliant, the harvest good, and the breeze warm and gentle. In that year, 1857, this party could have been given only in America. In the old country, the Larssons were cotters, and the Edstroms were landholders. Elna and her mother might have gone in to help a

neighbor, but only as servants. Larsson, Gustaf, and Ernst might have been hired to build a barn, but not as neighbors. Even in the church there would have been a difference in station. Here they were equals, helping each other. One family had silver and pewter; the other had neither. But all had become Americans, with an equal chance to make home and fortune.

Then they sat down to eat. Elna and Breta dashed about with coffee mugs. Mothers spooned meat pie and dumplings. Between helpings, the men ate rye bread and jam and honey. Everyone had a wonderful time laughing and talking. Pastor Norelius thought of his little roll of bread and cheese tucked in his saddlebag and smiled. He didn't need it here.

## Chapter 20

### School in Vasa



As they sat around after dinner was over, Pastor Norelius spoke to Gustaf. “You are Gustaf, aren’t you? The boy who wants to learn to speak and read English?” Gustaf nodded and came nearer.

“My wife told me about you. She said you had made a good start last winter.” These sentences the pastor spoke in English as a test.

“Thank you, sir. I do want to learn, and quickly as I can. The coach driver and a neighbor helped me last winter in Wisconsin.” He said the English words carefully to make sure of the sound.

“Wanting to learn is the first step toward an education, my boy,” approved the pastor. Gustaf started to ask a question, but the pastor said quietly, “I shall speak to the others now. We’ll talk more afterward.”

Continuing in Swedish, he told them about the church in Vasa where he held services on alternate Sundays, and about the school he had held for six weeks in the spring and hoped to open again soon, now that the snug log church was built.

“Teaching is in English, of course. Give your girls and boys a few months of teaching with a Swedish teacher first. New language, new neighbors, new books, and school all at one time slow a child’s learning. You must prepare them for their opportunity to get an education in America.” He talked earnestly and with good sense.

“Can you spare your older boys for a couple of days?” he continued. “We need them in Vasa to help us make benches and stools and cut firewood. With a fire for colder days, we can run the school for several weeks before severe winter begins. You may pay the small expense in money or in provisions; we need both. Bring cheese or a young pig or eggs or grain. Plan to send the children for three days a week. They can carry their food, and we’ll sleep them somewhere. On the week that we have service Sunday, they may stay on and school will begin Monday, the other week, Tuesday. How about it? Breta? Gustaf? Elna? All of you? Do you want to come?”

The glad look in their eager faces gave him the answer. The children came close to ask questions and to hear what Fathers were asking the pastor. Wasn’t it thrilling to have this happen so soon? They had wondered if a school might open in a year or two. And here it was.

Gustaf edged near the pastor. “You say schools will open in the towns first, sir. Is there a school in Red Wing?”

“Yes, a nice school, built two years ago. The town took up a collection and built a good building, three big windows on each side. The building is better than the teaching just now, but we’ll get good teachers as things settle down. And there is a college started, named for the Methodist bishop, Mr. Hamline. But the teaching in Red Wing is in English, of course. My church has a small Swedish school. Maybe you are ready for English, Gus; though I think Swedish this fall would get you along faster in the end.”

Gustaf listened quietly, willing for the pastor to decide for him.

“Several new Swedish families have settled in Red Wing this season. I think now of a cabinet maker who came from Winona. He has a son about your age. The name is Lindholm.”

“Nels Lindholm? Perhaps he is the boy I fished with in Prairie du Chien.” Gustaf was so excited, he forgot to speak in English; quick Swedish words rushed out, and his eyes danced with eagerness. “He is about as tall as I, sir, yellow hair and freckles across his nose.”

“Just like a dozen Swedish boys,” laughed the pastor. “But now that I think on it, I believe his name is Nels. The family came from Illinois, stopped in Winona, and then heard of a better opening in Red Wing. If you get to town, Gus, a friend will be fine. But a boy should not go to a town without a job or some good plan. Board and keep costs considerable. You can go to school in Vasa and get your start, then work out the other.”

Gustaf tried to forget the whole idea of going to town. He worked hard at home, put in three long days a week for Edstrom, and went with ‘Dolph and Ernst to Vasa to work on the furnishings for the school. He made a start on the fence posts. There was plenty to do.

A little more than three weeks after the pastor’s visit, school

opened. The cabin was clean and weather-tight. Two new tables and benches looked very handsome. The boys sat at one, on the right side of the room, the girls at the other, opposite. The teacher's table was against the wall, between. A small sheet-iron stove in the middle of the room was cold now, for the day was fine. Outside, wood was stacked, ready to use when the weather changed.

The pastor greeted nineteen girls and boys, more than he had hoped to gather, and gave each a copybook bought with money Fathers had contributed.

Gustaf opened his book quickly. Inside, the ruled top pages were blank except for a short proverb at the top, printed in English, of course. He read a few: "Handsome is as handsome does." "A rolling stone gathers no moss." "A penny saved is a penny earned." The twenty lines below would soon be filled with copies made with the goose-quill pen he had sharpened that morning. At the back of the book were empty pages. The pastor explained that these were to be filled with Bible verses written in English.

Mr. Swansson had collected money from Fathers and bought the teacher new books in town. Pastor Norelius showed them to his pupils. "Webster's Speller" cost twenty-five cents. Two "Parker's Readers" each cost forty cents. "With the Bible and the Psalm Book and Catechism, what more could a classroom need?" he asked them.

Shyly the girls and boys eyed each other. The pastor wrote their names in his book, and school started.

At the end of the third week, the pastor planned "exercises," and visitors crowded into the small room for the afternoon session to see how much the children had learned. Elna wished for her mother. Gustaf and Rueben Berg had been chosen as the two who had done the best work. When the time came for them to be examined and they

walked front to the teacher's desk, Elna could hardly sit still, she was so proud.

"It's a good thing I'm not up there for the first exercises since we came to America," she thought. "I'd forget all I knew."

Gustaf seemed very calm, though his eyes shone.

The two stood before the teacher's desk, each with his hands tightly locked behind. They bowed stiffly to the pastor, to each other, and then faced the audience. Of course they knew just what to do, for both Reuben and Gustaf had attended school in Sweden.

The room had never been so still.

"How many continents in the world?" the pastor asked Gustaf.

"Five, and Australia."

"Correct. Name them, Reuben."

"Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America."

"Correct. Bound the continent of Asia, Gustaf."

Their geography answers were perfect. Neither missed a word in spelling. They said their multiplication tables so fast and correctly, the younger children could hardly follow them. Then came the most difficult test: the reading of a passage of the Bible in Swedish and translating it into English. The pastor had selected a well-known chapter, the Beatitudes; both boys knew these by heart and had practiced reading them in English. Gustaf pronounced the words far better than Reuben; his accent, too, was good. He spoke without hesitation.

"You speak well, Gustaf," said the pastor. "Much better than Reuben." Gustaf raised his hand, and the pastor stopped, surprised by

the interruption. "Yes? What is it?"

"But, Pastor, perhaps the test is not fair. I studied English last winter."

The corners of the pastor's mouth curled into a smile. "The test is fair, my boy. Reuben has been studying over two years; he has been to school here. Tell your father you won the match today."

Exercises ended with the singing of a Swedish song, and the children left for their homes.

As he hurried along the road, Gustaf passed Swansson, who called to him. "Say, Gus! Stop by and get a ten-pound sack of wheat seed to carry to your father. It's the winter wheat Weatherby in Red Wing promised him. I brought it over in my cart. They say this wheat makes the best flour in the world. Worth trying, I'd say. Weatherby will get the pay next time he comes out this way; he'll take it in grain or stock if your father prefers. He can sell stuff up the river and make money."

Gustaf was glad to carry the extra load. They planned to plow the next day; now the new seed could go right in and get a start before frost. He got the wheat, swung it over his left shoulder since he already carried a bundle of supplies over his right, and called to Elna that he was ready to go. She had waited for him. The Edstroms had gone an hour ago.

For a while they tramped silently, glad to be away from the village. Elna shifted hanks of wool for her mother that lay warm on her shoulder and admired the geranium slip Mrs. Norelius had given to her.

"Maybe we can make a little pot for it, Gus, from the clay you discovered up the creek. Mrs. Swansson makes pots for her plants. She bakes them in her oven. Ellen says they crack sometimes, in baking. A

pot with a geranium would look fine by the window, Gus.”

“Aye.” Gustaf’s tone was absent-minded. They tramped on.

“I’ll not be making anything till the posts are cut, Elna,” he said presently. “I’ve only started on them. Father wants that pasture fenced. I’m to get my choice of the new pigs, you know, for pay when the posts are all cut. I’ve the trees marked now, so I can work mornings and evenings before dark. A fence will be a fine improvement on our place.” He spoke as a partner, not a mere lad helping with odd jobs.

All over the country, settlers had been prosperous. Little of the terrible depression in the cities that autumn of 1857 touched them. Many a city man had put all his savings into high-priced land (as the man who bought the Pine Lake farm had done) and then lost all of it. Too many bought and could not resell. Immigrants went west and took up cheap government land, worked their own claims, as Larsson had, put in their own improvements, and got along well, as the Larssons had.

“A fence is a fine thing,” Gustaf continued, walking so fast Elna had to skip to keep up with him. “I like getting the pigs, too. It will give me a start toward an education.”

“Yes, it will,” agreed Elna indifferently. Imagine wanting pigs! She would a thousand times rather have a dress made of store cloth.

“See how well Judge Turner did in Red Wing?” Gustaf talked on. “Now he has a big case in St. Paul, Mr. Swansson says. Red Wing will grow every year; or I might go to St. Paul. Father says Minnesota Territory may become a state. I want to learn all the laws.”

Elna said nothing. Such serious talk made Gustaf seem very grown up. She looked around, admiring the scene; this strip of woods was pretty in the autumn. Out on the prairie, tall sunflower blooms

were gone, and the heavy seed pods hung low. Goldenrod was rusty, its bright color faded from the hot sun. Here, under the trees, it still gleamed bright gold. Long graceful fronds of lavender cosmos swayed with a stir of air. Purple asters with golden centers were fresh, here; those in the meadow had dried up in the last heat. Looking around to find more flowers, she spied something moving.

“Gus!” she whispered in terror. “Gus!”

He glanced where she was looking. Then, quick as a flash, he dropped his load, grabbed her shoulders, and pushed her down flat behind a great elderberry bush.

## Chapter 22

### *The Fire*

Gustaf put a stick of wood in the stove, turned the damper halfway, and went back to his work. “Davis’s Arithmetic” was spread open on the table, and beside it, a slate covered with problems. Gustaf checked each answer, then laid the slate aside for the judge to see when he returned. Before starting on his history lesson, he leaned back, relaxed, and looked thoughtfully at the glowing fire in a base burner. Even now he could hardly believe all that had happened recently.

The trip to Red Wing had not been easy. Two young pigs in a sack made complications. They squealed, as Elna had predicted. But their squirming was more bothersome than the squealing. Gustaf had folded his blanket over one shoulder and swung the sack over that. He carried his winter coat on his arm. Pockets were filled with food for himself and corn meal for the pigs. Mother had tied the meal tightly, but it was quite a pocketful.

At dark, he stopped by a little brook and laid the sack on the grass. Carefully he pulled one little pig out, tied its forefoot with stout twine, and knotted that around a sapling. Then the second piglet got his freedom the same way. They squealed happily and rooted in the grass while Gustaf mixed a soft mash of the corn meal for their supper. He ate his bread and cheese and fried fish and rolled into his blanket to rest. The pigs were a big responsibility. He didn’t sleep much.

Early the next morning he came in sight of Barn Bluff, the great

# On Board the Mayflower

From *My Country's Beginnings*



A small ship called the *Mayflower* sailed toward the New World from England in the year 1620. At that time, only a few white people were living in what is now our country. America was still a wild, rough country.

But the people on the *Mayflower* wanted to make homes for themselves in the new land. They were glad to leave their home country, England. They had not been treated kindly in England

because their religion was different from that of most of the English people. They wanted to live in a place where they could go to their own church without being punished for it. In America, they believed, no one would care what church they attended.

The people on the *Mayflower* were the Pilgrims. They had a stormy voyage across the ocean. The ship was so small that the Pilgrims were crowded together in a gloomy place below the deck of the vessel. The people had with them their small trunks, rolls of bedding, bags of seeds they hoped to plant in the soil near their new homes, spinning wheels, tools, and guns. The most precious thing each family had was a Bible. The Pilgrims hardly had room to turn around in the damp, dark place where they had to stay.

It was almost wintertime when the *Mayflower* brought the Pilgrims to America. Storms drove the small ship out of its course. When the Pilgrims at last saw land, they were disappointed because it looked cold and snow lay on the ground. They had hoped to make their new homes where the weather was warm and pleasant. But they made up their minds to build their settlement somewhere on the stormy shore before them. The *Mayflower* came to anchor near the tip of what is now called Cape Cod.

Before the Pilgrims went on shore to find a good place for their town, the men all gathered in the cabin of the *Mayflower*. Spread out on a table was a written paper. One by one, the men signed the paper. The paper said that all who signed it agreed to obey the laws and rules made by the officers they elected to govern them. In this way, the Pilgrims made a plan for governing themselves even before they began building their town.

## The Woodpecker

By Elizabeth Madox Roberts



The woodpecker pecked out a little round hole  
And made him a house in the telephone pole.  
One day when I watched he poked out his head,  
And he had on a hood and a collar of red.  
When the streams of rain pour out of the sky,  
And the sparkles of lightning go flashing by.  
And the big, big wheels of thunder roll,  
He can snuggle back in the telephone pole.

## The Moonlight

By Ann Hawkshawe

The moonlight is a gentle thing,  
Through the window it gleams  
Upon the snowy pillow where  
The happy infant dreams.

It shines upon the fisher's boat,  
Out on the lovely sea,  
Or where the little lambkins lie  
Beneath the old oak tree.

# Trees

By Sarah Coleridge

The Oak is called the king of trees,  
The Aspen quivers in the breeze,  
The Poplar grows up straight and tall,  
The Peach tree spreads along the wall,  
The Sycamore gives pleasant shade,  
The Willow droops in watery glade,  
The Fir tree useful in timber gives,  
The Beech amid the forest lives.



# Squanto

From *My Country's Beginnings*



How hard the Pilgrims had worked to build their new town of Plymouth! One of the men wrote down the things that happened each day. Once he wrote:

“Saturday, the three-and-twentieth, as many of us as could went on shore, felled and carried timber to provide ourselves with stuff for building.” Later he wrote: “Monday, the five-and-twentieth, we went on shore, some to fell timber, some to saw, ... and some to carry, so no man rested all that day.”

First the Pilgrims built a fort and several log houses. As soon as a few houses were finished, the people left the *Mayflower* for the last time and moved into the new Plymouth houses. Two or three families lived in each house. So many persons were in each house that they had to sleep close together on the floor.

Native Americans had once lived where the new Pilgrim village stood. It was they who had cleared away some of the forest. But a disease had spread among the wigwams, taking the lives of many of the Native Americans. Those who had not died had moved away.

Miles Standish knew there were many Native Americans living at some distance from Plymouth. Fearing these natives might come to fight the people at Plymouth, he kept a careful watch for them. Standish had learned that some white fishermen had once treated these Native Americans badly, and he thought the red warriors might want to get even with the white people.

One spring morning, the Pilgrims were frightened to see a tall Indian come walking down the rough little street of Plymouth. He held one hand high, palm out, to show that he came as a friend. In a deep, odd voice, he cried, "Welcome, Englishmen!" The people were surprised enough to see a red man walking toward them. They were even more surprised to hear him speak to them in their own tongue!

In a few minutes, the Pilgrims were all gathered around their visitor. He told them his name was Samoset. He made the white people understand that he had learned the few English words he knew from the fishermen who visited the coast.

The settlers were glad to learn that not all of the natives were their enemies. When Samoset went away, he promised to send to Plymouth a Native American who could speak English much better than he could.

Not long after Samoset's visit, another Indian came to Plymouth. The second Indian's name was Squanto. Squanto, so the Pilgrims learned, had been carried away by the captain of one of the fishing ships. But this had turned out to be a piece of good luck for Squanto. It was while he was far away that the great sickness had visited the land.

## Story Telling

By Edgar Guest

Most every night when they're in bed,  
And both their little prayers have said,  
They shout for me to come upstairs  
And tell them tales of gypsies bold,  
And eagles with the claws that hold.

And I must illustrate these tales,  
Must imitate the northern gales  
That toss the native man's canoe,  
And show the way he paddles, too.  
If in the story comes a bear,  
I have to pause and sniff the air  
And show the way he climbs the trees  
To steal the honey from the bees.

And then I buzz like angry bees  
And sting him on his nose and knees  
And howl in pain, till mother cries:  
"That pair will never shut their eyes,  
While all that noise up there you make;  
You're simply keeping them awake."  
And then they whisper: "Just one more,"  
And once again I'm forced to roar.

New stories every night they ask.  
And that is not an easy task;  
I have to be so many things,  
The frog that croaks, the lark that sings,  
The cunning fox, the frightened hen;  
But just last night they stumped me, when  
They wanted me to twist and squirm  
And imitate an angle worm.

At last they tumble off to sleep,  
And softly from their room I creep  
And brush and comb the shock of hair  
I tossed about to be a bear.  
Then mother says: "Well, I should say  
You're just as much a child as they."  
But you can bet I'll not resign  
That story telling job of mine.

## The Eagle

By Alfred Tennyson

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.



# Eliza Lucas and Her Indigo Farm

From *My Country's Beginnings*



Perhaps you never heard of an indigo farm, but a little girl named Eliza Lucas had one. Eliza moved to the new colony of South Carolina with her father and her chronically ill mother. They called their farm, or plantation, “Wappoo.” Soon Eliza’s father was called away to be a soldier of England. From one of the islands where he went, he gathered and sent to Eliza some indigo plants.

No one had tried to raise indigo plants in the colonies. But Eliza set out the plants, and they grew and became tall and strong. When Eliza’s father heard about this, he sent a man who knew how to make the dye, indigo, from the plants. This man cut the plants and began steeping them in water, at the same time beating them with a stick. As the plants slowly decayed, a deep violet color spread through the water. After the colored water had been treated and allowed to settle, it became a true indigo in color and made a very good dye.