LITTLE MISS GRASSHOPPER

Title: Little Miss Grasshopper

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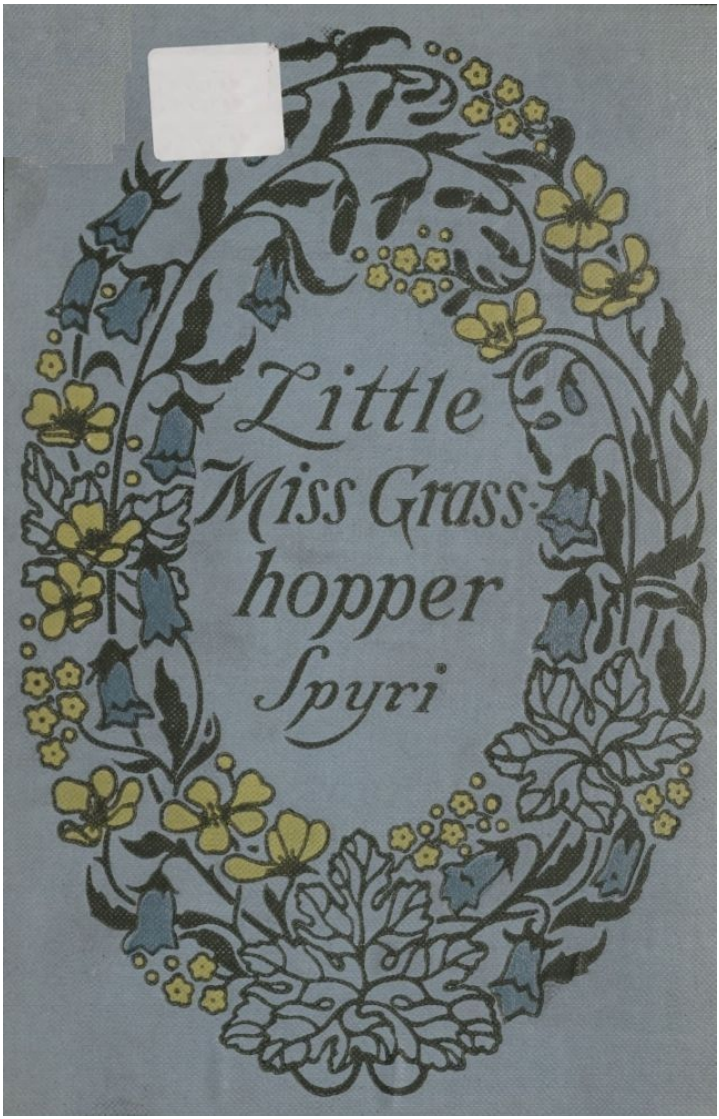
Release Date: July 10, 2017 [eBook #55089]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE MISS GRASSHOPPER ***

Produced by Al Haines.

Little Miss Grasshopper



Cover art

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By Johanna Spyri
Translated By
Helen B. Dole
New York
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BEFORE THE JOURNEY

In Dresden, not far from the Terrace on the Elbe, stands a large stone house. One sunny July morning Herr Feland was sitting there in his easy chair, and holding such a large newspaper in front of him that nothing at all could be seen of his face.

Opposite him sat his wife in a white morning cap. From time to time she poured a little water from the singing kettle on the fragrant coffee in the coffee-pot. Breakfast was about to be served.

Then the door opened and two little girls entered, followed by a young lady, who regarded with some anxiety the lively way in which little Rita ran bounding through the room in order finally to spring with one big leap on her papa's knee. By her skill in jumping it was plain to see that it was not the first time she had accomplished this. Rita now looked triumphantly around as if to say: "Now I am once more seated in my strong castle where no harm can reach me!"

Then she put her little curly head under the big newspaper and said roguishly:

"Oh, Papa, now I have found you! When are we going to the Gemmi?"

Papa laid aside his paper, kissed his little girl and said:

"First, good-morning, little Grasshopper; we will see about planning for the trip later."

On account of her nimble jumping her Papa called her little Grasshopper. When Rita found the big paper was no longer between her and her Papa she threw her arms around his neck and said, "Good-morning," with great affection. Meanwhile, her sister Ella was standing perfectly still beside her Papa's chair, waiting for his morning greeting. Then he kissed his older little daughter also, and she sat down quietly at the table.

"Now please go too and sit where you belong!" said Papa to Rita, who had made no move to leave her high seat.

"I am going right away, Papa," said Rita assuringly, but first she straightened herself up in her castle, and said:

"I was only waiting for you to say when we are going to the Gemmi."

"As soon as Mother has packed," replied her Papa.

Then Rita jumped down and ran to her Mother.

"Oh, Mamma, let us pack to-day! Please, please, right away," begged Rita coaxingly. "I will help you, and Ella can help you too, and Fräulein Hohlweg, and so we can go away to-morrow and then——"

"Now we will drink our milk and sit very quietly a while at the table, dear child," replied her Mother with firm decision, and Rita, who saw that there could be no further answer to her question, sat down in her place between her father and mother, and breakfast began.

Every morning for a long time had begun in Herr Feland's house with pressing question about the trip to the Gemmi, hardly any other thought entered little Rita's mind.

The plan for this journey had been impressed upon little Rita's imagination in the following way, and had fastened itself firmly there.

The Summer before her father and mother had made a trip to Switzerland. On the Gemmi Pass, leading from Wallis across to the canton of Berne, they had been so especially delighted that they decided to go there again the following Summer, to take the children and Miss Hohlweg with them and remain there for some time. On their journey the parents had made the acquaintance of the guide Kaspar, and had told him of their intention and desire to hire a house in the vicinity and settle his family there instead of living in a hotel. Then Kaspar had proposed to let them occupy his own cottage, which stood not far from the Gemmi Pass on a green slope near the foot-path. He could perfectly well give up his little house at just this time because he himself was always away traveling with strangers, his two boys were taking care of the big flocks in the mountain pasture, and his wife could live in the attic room and serve the Feland family. For

them the big living-room and the two sleeping rooms would be put in order.

This proposal was very acceptable to Herr Feland and his wife, and, after looking over the little house, they decided to engage it for the Summer months of the coming year.

This news and the description of the beautiful fields and lofty snow-clad mountains, the green pastures and the numbers of grazing cows, had made a deep impression on the two children, and for a long time Rita had been hardly able to wait for the day to start on the journey. Even in Winter not a day had begun and hardly had one ended without Rita's asking:

"Mamma, will Summer come soon now?"

Now the Summer was really there, and Rita's question became more determined and urgent. Every morning in expectant tones sounded the words:

"When are we going to the Gemmi?"

Every day the child's impatience grew and these impetuous questions and pleadings increased, until Rita could hardly wait any longer to climb into the train and travel to the high mountains and green fields.

Finally the day came when the whole Feland house looked like a big annual fair. Every possible kind of clothing lay around in such piles in all the chambers that there was no more place to sit down. But, little by little, everything disappeared into three huge trunks, and two days later the whole Feland family were seated in the train: Ella in silent delight between her mamma and Fräulein Hohlweg; Rita next her papa, whom she embraced every moment in sheer delight, for now they were really going on the great journey; now they were going to the Gemmi!

CHAPTER SECOND

ON THE GEMMI PASS

Not far from the summit of the Gemmi pass a narrow path enters the woods and soon leads to the place where the traveler cannot look without a shudder over the steep walls of rock down into the deep precipice.

One beautiful Summer evening a young boy was coming along this woodpath. In his hand he held a large red flower which he had found deep within the woods and looked at it wonderingly from time to time.

Then he came out of the woods into an open place and gazed around, but

appeared to find nothing in particular to look at further, and continued his way. Then he stepped into a narrow field-path, leading to the left up a green slope. There stood two cottages not far apart, each with a small out-building behind it, evidently to shelter the animals. One of these sheds was larger than the other, and the cottage also with its brand new door looked more roomy and better kept. This belonged to the guide Kaspar, who lived in it together with his wife and two boys and every year was able to improve something about it, because he earned a good deal of money as guide to travelers. In his shed stood not only two goats, like all the neighbors, but for the last two years a fine cow also, which furnished him with wonderful milk and butter.

The smaller cottage beyond with its old worm-eaten door and tumble-down shingle roof belonged to the porter, Martin, the big man, who, on account of his powerful build, was called "strong Martin." He lived there with his wife and four little children, and behind in his small shed stood his two goats, whose milk had to feed the whole family.

All through the Summer, especially in fine weather, strong Martin really had a good income; then he carried travelers' luggage over the Gemmi, but he didn't earn nearly so much as his neighbor Kaspar, who was often away many days at a time with the mountain climbers.

In front of the new house door Kaspar's two boys were now standing and were evidently discussing something very important. They were examining, handling and comparing, with great eagerness, two objects, which they held in their hands, and when at last they seemed to come to an agreement they began all over again. The little fellow, who had just come out of the woods to the cottage, now stood still and looked full of astonishment at what was going on in front of the house-door.

"Seppli, come, look! look!" called one of the two boys to him.

Seppli drew near; his eyes gazed in motionless amazement at what was shown him.

"See what Father brought us from the fair in Berne," called the larger of the boys again to Seppli, and each one of them held up his present. What a wonderful sight was offered to Seppli's eyes! Chappi and Georgie each held in his hand a large whip, in this country called a *Geissel* or lash. The strong and yet pliable handle was wound round with little bands of red leather. The long white lash was of solid braided leather thongs; on the end hung a firmly twisted round cord of yellow silk with a little tassel at the end. This end, which could make a wonderful crack, was called the whip-lash. Seppli looked speechless at the whips. Never in his life had he seen anything so splendid!

"Now, just listen," said Chappi, beginning to swing his whip, and Georgie did the same, and then it cracked and thundered up and down the valley and

resounded from all the mountains, so that it appeared to Seppli as if there was nothing grander and more wonderful in the whole world.

"If I only had a whip with a yellow lash too!" said he, taking a deep breath, when the two had finally stopped cracking theirs.

"Yes, you will have to wait for it," replied Chappi haughtily, and with one last tremendous crack he ran away; he had to show his whip to other people. Georgie ran behind him; but Seppli gazed after the two boys and remained motionless. A heavy weight had fallen on his untroubled heart. He had seen something which he yearned and longed for more than he had ever done before in all his life, and Chappi had said discouragingly: "Yes, you will have to wait!" It seemed to Seppli exactly as if everything which could make him happy was lost for his whole life. He seized the red flower firmly and threw it away, for to have only a red flower and never, never to own a whip with a yellow lash turned Seppli against the flower; it flew far away into the field and Seppli looked after it in silent rage. No one knows how long he would have remained standing there if the door had not opened behind him and a woman stepped out with a big broom in her hand.

"Where are the boys, Seppli?" she asked curtly.

"Gone off with the whips," was the answer, for they were still before his eyes.

"Run and call them home, and be quick," commanded the woman. "Tomorrow early they will have to go to the mountain, and this evening the gentleman is coming, and there is still much to be done. Run and tell them, Seppli!"

The youngster then ran with all his might in the direction where the two boys had disappeared. The woman began to work her broom into every corner and to sweep. She was Kaspar's wife and the mother of the two boys, Chappi and Georgie.

That morning a letter had come from Herr Feland announcing that he and his family would arrive the following evening,—hence the great preparation with the broom, which was not unnecessary, for Chappi and Georgie brought a great deal of dirt, with their big shoes, into the house. Now the two boys came running along with a frightful cracking of whips, neighbor Seppli still behind them, for the sight of the whips drew him irresistibly along. But when their mother called the boys in, because they had to help with all sorts of work, Seppli finally turned and went over to his house, but very slowly, like one who bore a great trouble. And Seppli was bearing one, for the whips with the yellow lash hovered perpetually before his eyes, and besides he heard Chappi's crushing words:

"Yes, you will have to wait!"

Over in front of the old house-door on the spot where the earth had been trodden down firmly for a threshing-floor, stood Father Martin striving with a

heavy axe to split big knotty logs of wood into small pieces for the mother to lay on the hearth. In a row in front of their father stood Martheli, Friedli, and Betheli, with big, eager eyes, watching his work.

Seppli, the oldest, now came along, placed himself in the row, and opened his eyes wide, for wherever there was something to be seen he was always there. But soon his father pointed to the little pieces on the ground and said in a more gentle, friendly voice than one would have expected from such a big, strong man:

"Well, Seppli, take two at a time in your arms and carry them in to mother in the kitchen, so she can cook our potatoes for us."

Seppli did immediately as he was told, and the work helped him a little to forget his trouble. But later, when he lay beside Friedli in their little bed, he could not go to sleep at once, as usual, the great hurt rose again before his eyes, and he had to sigh:

"Oh, if I only had a whip with a yellow lash!"

CHAPTER THIRD
NEW ACQUAINTANCES

Very early the following morning a great cracking of whips was heard, for at four o'clock Chappi and Georgie were already waiting in front of the cottage for the cows which were to be brought here from one place and another in order to drive them up on the mountain, where the big herd was. Then the two would remain up there as shepherd-boys until Autumn, and they were so delighted about it, they couldn't make enough noise; for to be up there together and have nothing to do the whole Summer but run around with their whips and with the cows, was to them a splendid prospect.

When their mother had fastened on their knapsacks and admonished them to be good boys, and they had gone away with their cows, she went back into the house, and then began a sweeping and dusting in every room and corner, from top to bottom, so there was no end to it the whole day long. The sun had already gone down behind the fir trees when the woman once more wiped off the windows, one after another, and looked around to see if everything was in order. Everything was shining, the windows all around the house, the table with the slate top, the benches against the walls, and even the floor.

The woman now saw a whole procession of porters, horses and riders com-

ing up the path from the valley. She ran quickly up the narrow stairs to the attic chamber, put on a clean apron, and placed herself in the doorway in order to receive her strange guests. The procession stopped and Herr Feland lifted first his wife and Fräulein Hohlweg, then the children, from the horses.

Rita had hardly touched the ground when she ran to and fro for joy, and did not know which was the most beautiful, the tiny wooden cottage with the little bench in front of the door, the green fields around with the flowers and brooks, or the golden evening sunshine on the rocks and fir-trees. Everything was so new, so lovely! Ella, too, was quite filled with admiration, and looked around in silent astonishment.

Then their father and mother came into the cottage, and a new pleasure began for Rita, since everything here was so different from anything she had ever seen in her life before. She seized Ella by the hand and ran with her into every corner.

"See, see, there are seats all around the room against the wall, and just see where you can climb up."

Whereupon Rita ran quickly up the stairs, leading up behind the oven, to an opening through which the sleeping-room was entered. This was a wonderful discovery! From there they went through an open door into another chamber, where two beds stood. This led into a little garret room and a wooden staircase on the other side went down again into the living-room. This made a wonderful circuit which could be made many times a day, and everything about the whole house, inside and out, looked so new and unusual and promised so much Rita didn't know what she should enjoy the most.

When, at last, she lay in her big bed upstairs in the chamber, and Ella in the one beside her, and their mother had said good-night to the children after their evening prayer, Rita drew a deep sigh and said with the greatest contentment:

"Oh, now we are on the Gemmi!"

The most beautiful Summer days now followed, with golden sunshine on the meadows, with cool breezes blowing up in the evergreen woods, and the deep blue sky, spread out above the rocks and the white, snow-capped mountains.

In a few days Ella and Rita had discovered all the lovely spots in the neighborhood, where they could lie down and spend the warm afternoon hours agreeably until evening, when a stroll was taken with their papa and mamma. But Rita was more inclined to discover lovely spots than to rest, and while Ella was sitting on the soft moss under the fir-trees or on the green meadow ground of the mountain side enjoying the thought that Fräulein Hohlweg was coming to read her a charming story or tell one, Rita had always some new plan which she proceeded to carry out.

Meanwhile their mother sat in the house with their papa, and often had to

lie down to rest, for her health was very frail.

When Rita saw Fräulein Hohlweg come out of the house with a big basket filled with knitting materials on her arm all kinds of delightful places immediately came to her mind, where they could go, and before Fräulein Hohlweg had seated herself Rita would tell her that she must go in right away to her papa, for she had a great deal to say to him. In a twinkling she was in the house, had jumped up on her papa's knee and was telling him a multitude of plans,—how they could climb to the fir-trees high up on the rocks and see far around, or go deep, deep into the woods, until they came to the big birds that often screamed so frightfully. Papa would listen to her daring proposals with interest, but thought there were shorter excursions to take nearby and then would send her back to Ella and the Fräulein.

Rita had just come to her father's knee again. To-day she had a new proposal to make and it was very urgent.

"Oh, Papa, lay down your book for just a little minute," she begged, "I have something to tell you."

Her papa granted her request and listened attentively.

"See, Papa," continued Rita, "yesterday and again to-day, a little boy has been standing in front of the cottage, over there, and he opens his eyes wide and keeps looking over here. I must really go over there and ask him why he does that and what his name is."

Papa agreed to this necessary errand, and Rita started off at once. Seppli had been standing over there in the same spot for an hour, gazing at the neighbor's house opposite, for since the strange people had come there was always something new and remarkable to see.

When Rita reached him she placed herself directly in front of him, and put her hands behind her, just as her papa did when he had something important to talk over with her mamma.

"What do you expect to see that you keep looking over there?" she asked.

"Nothing," replied Seppli.

This answer didn't seem quite satisfactory to Rita.

"Did you think we had a little boy, too, and did you want to see how he looked?" she continued.

"No," replied Seppli curtly.

"Perhaps you have forgotten what you expected to see," said Rita then, in order to explain the matter to herself and to Seppli.

"What is your name?"

"Seppli."

"How old are you?"

"Don't know."

”You must know. Come, stand beside me so——” and Rita placed herself beside Seppli, and looked at him over her shoulder. He was a little shorter, but much more stoutly built than Rita.

”You are not so tall as I am,” she said. ”You are quite small. You see I shall be seven years old, for I was six years old on my birthday; that I know very well, because I had many presents. Perhaps you are six years old, because you are so small.”

Seppli took this information without any doubt, for he did not know that he had been seven years old some time ago, and that he had grown more in breadth than in height.

”What do you do all day long, Seppli?” asked Rita.

Seppli had to think about it a long time. Finally he said:

”I know where there are red flowers.”

This word fell like a burning spark into Rita’s heart. Suddenly she saw a bush with flaming red roses somewhere in the woods, and everything in her longed for the wonderful flowers.

”Where, where? Seppli, where are the flowers? Come, let us go there quickly!” and Rita had already seized Seppli’s hand and drawn him along. But Seppli followed rather slowly.

”There,” he said, and pointed with his finger to the woods above.

”Oh, can you go there into the big forest?” said Rita expectantly, pulling Seppli along with all her might.

”Yes, and then still farther,” replied Seppli deliberately and without hurrying his steps; he had heavy wooden shoes on his feet.

But Rita pulled Seppli still harder. She already saw the path through the dark woods before her, and behind the trees the big red flowers glowing and shimmering.

”Come, Seppli, come,” she cried, and pulled him along still harder.

They now came past Kaspar’s cottage. Her papa was standing in the doorway. He was looking to see why his little girl stayed away so long, for the visit granted must have come to an end by this time. Just as he stepped on the threshold the strange pair came along, Rita pulling Seppli after her with all her might.

”Here, here! Not so fast, little Grasshopper!” called her papa. ”Come here! Where are you dragging your new friend?”

”Oh, Papa,” cried Rita in great eagerness, ”he knows where there are such beautiful red flowers in the forest; we are going to get them.”

”No, no,” said papa, taking Rita by the hand, ”that won’t do. We are going to walk with mamma now, and your little friend can get the flowers and bring them to you, then he shall have a nice piece of bread and butter.”

Whereupon her papa led his child into the house and soon they all came out

"COME, LET US GO THERE QUICKLY!"

"COME, LET US GO THERE QUICKLY!"

together again, father and mother, Fräulein Hohlweg, Ella and Rita, and walked along the sunlit mountain path down towards the valley.

Seppli remained standing in the same place until he could see nothing more of the company; then he turned around and went back to his own house.

CHAPTER FOURTH
A TERRIBLE NIGHT

On the following day, about the time when Frau Feland had to take her usual rest, Fräulein Hohlweg came with her big basket to a lovely, shady spot near the house, to spend the pleasant hour knitting and reading. Ella sat quietly on her mossy seat, and Rita stood in front of her, telling with great enthusiasm about a bush in the woods, with flaming red flowers, which shone far away through the trees. Her eyes grew bigger and brighter every moment, for the more she talked about it the more plainly she saw it all before her, and it seemed as if she was already on the path in the midst of the woods.

Fräulein Hohlweg put aside her big basket and said:

"Sit down now, Rita, and be quiet. I have something lovely to read to you."

But Rita was so full of her flowers and the woods, and all the things she saw before her eyes, that the command was forgotten.

"I must go right away to Papa. I have so much to tell him!" protested Rita, and ran to the house. It was the same thing that happened every day. Rita always thought of something very important to tell her papa, when she should have been sitting down. To-day she had something even more urgent than usual. When a long time had passed and the child did not return, Fräulein Hohlweg became uneasy and said:

"Go in quickly, Ella, and call Rita, so that she will not wake Mamma. Papa must have gone already, for he said at the table that he was going for a long walk."

Ella ran in, but did not come back for so long that Fräulein Hohlweg went in too. It was perfectly still in the house. No one was in the living-room, no one in the kitchen! Fräulein went up the little staircase and softly opened the door of the children's room. No one was there! Through the open door she could see into the parents' room. Frau Feland was lying with closed eyes on her bed; she was alone in the room.

Fräulein Hohlweg came out again. Then Ella came up from below and told

her she had searched for Rita in the whole house, in every corner, at last even in the yard back of the wood and in the little room belonging to Kaspar's wife, but Rita was nowhere to be found.

Fräulein ran down the stairs to the shed; there she got some information. Kaspar's wife was standing inside spreading the straw for the goats. When questioned about little Rita, she replied only that she had seen the child come into the house not long before. But where could Rita have gone afterwards? Fräulein Hohlweg and Ella began to search through the whole house once more, then all around it in every nook and corner. Kaspar's wife helped willingly for she saw that Fräulein felt a real anxiety; but nowhere was there any trace of the child to be seen. Kaspar's wife ran over to the neighbor's house, perhaps they had seen Rita, but no one was there, the door was closed, everything still. Then it came to the woman's mind that Martin was making hay to-day, high up on the rocks, and that the whole household had gone with him. She came back with this information. Fräulein Hohlweg was usually of a timid nature, and now she became more and more uneasy.

"Oh, if I had only gone after the child right away!" she exclaimed regretfully a hundred times, but this was of no use. What was to be done? Where should they look for Rita? Could she, perhaps, have gone after the people up to the rocks, with the little boy, with whom she had been seen the day before? The more she thought about this the more likely it seemed to her. If only there was someone to send up there immediately, she thought, before her mother had to be told about the matter.

The obliging woman offered to do this and to came back again as soon as possible, but it was a long and toilsome way; it would take more time than one would think from looking up there.

Fräulein Hohlweg promised her a handsome reward if she would only go and prevent Frau Feland from being frightened, and she was very hopeful that she would surely bring Rita back home with her. But the way was farther than Fräulein had thought, and long before the messenger could return Frau Feland came down from her room and wished to take a walk with the children. Then everything had to be told her.

At the first great shock the mother wanted to go out herself at once, to look for the child and see where she could be, but Fräulein was so sure that Rita must have run off with the little boy that Frau Feland calmed herself and decided to wait for the return of Kaspar's wife. She really didn't have a peaceful moment. She ran from one window to the other then back to the door, and then around the house. The time seemed so long to her,—so long!

At last, after two weary hours, the woman came back, panting and glowing from the heat, but—she came alone, without Rita. Martin had gone up to the

rocks, with his whole family early in the morning, to make hay, and had remained there. No one had seen the child since the day before. Moreover, along the way the woman had asked for her, here and there, but no trace of her was to be found.

Then the mother broke out into loud lament.

"Oh, if only my husband were here!" she cried. "Where shall we find people to hunt for the child? What must we do? Kind woman, what can we do?"

The woman offered to run around in the huts and summon the people to start out to search before it should be dark; they would have to go up along by the forest-brook, and into the forest.

"If only they hadn't all gone up to make hay," she complained, but she started off immediately. Ella, who now realized what might have happened to Rita, began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, Mamma, if Rita has fallen into the brook, which roars so frightfully, or if she went into the woods and can't find her way!" she sobbed. "Oh, let us go right into the woods. She will surely be so frightened!"

These were also the mother's thoughts. She took Ella by the hand and hurried up to the woods, faster than she was able to go at ordinary times. Fräulein Hohlweg ran behind her, for she hardly knew what she was doing she was so anxious.

One hour after another passed. Women and children ran, searching everywhere, but no trace of Rita was discovered. Night came on.

Frau Feland, all the while holding fast to Ella's hand, had been running in every direction through thickets and underbrush, until now she could run no more. She returned with Ella to the house and fell, completely exhausted. Fräulein Hohlweg, who had followed in her footsteps, stood breathless, looking as if she too were near collapsing. Ella sat still, weeping, beside her mother.

Then Herr Feland came back. When he learned in a few words from his wife what had happened, he first of all carried her up to her sleeping-room and told her to remain perfectly quiet, that he would do everything to find the child. Fräulein Hohlweg and Ella, he said, must go to bed. As soon as he had found Rita he would let them know.

Then Herr Feland went over to Martin's cottage, for his first thought, too, was that Rita had gone away with her new friend of the day before. Martin was just coming out of the door. He had already heard that a child was lost and was just coming to try to help. To Herr Feland's questions he replied how, since early in the morning, he had been away with his wife and children, and that the little girl had not been seen at all by them.

Herr Feland now thought Rita must have gone away alone, either as she had proposed to him, somewhere up on the rocks, or deep into the forest. So he ordered Martin immediately to get together all the men in the neighborhood,

provide them with good lanterns, and have some of them climb up to the high cliffs and hunt around everywhere and others go through the woods in every direction. These last Herr Feland himself would join, and he was determined to continue the search until the child was found.

So the men started off into the night, and Frau Feland heard one hour after another strike on the old wall-clock downstairs, but the night passed away more slowly, more lingeringly than any she had watched through in all her life. She did not close her eyes. At every distant sound that fell on her ear she jumped up and said to herself:

"Now they are coming and bringing the child! But will she be alive or dead?"

But they did not come. From time to time Ella would come tip-toeing in softly. She wanted to see if her mother was asleep, for through her anxiety she could find no rest either. When she found that her mother also was awake, she would ask again and again:

"Oh, Mamma, shall we not pray once more that the dear Lord will take care of Rita and bring her home again soon?"

Her mother assented willingly each time, and then Ella would kneel down beside her bed and pray and beseech the dear Lord to protect Rita from all harm and to show her papa the way to her. Then Ella would go back quietly to her room.

The night passed. The beaming sun was already rising behind the mountains and lighted up the woods and meadows, as if it had great joy to announce.

Frau Feland sank back exhausted on her pillow. Finally weariness overcame trouble and care. A quiet slumber snatched the anxious mother away for a short time from torturing suspense and waiting.

CHAPTER FIFTH

THE NEXT MORNING

Pale and worried, Herr Feland came through the golden morning light back to his house, and his clothes showed that he had pressed through many thorns and prickly briers. Frau Feland had immediately heard his footsteps and full of anguish called:

"Are you bringing the child?"

He stepped nearer, sat down by the bed, laid his head in his hands and said, almost inaudibly:

"I come alone. I can no longer hope, no longer think. In what condition shall we find the child after the long night, wholly or half dead?"

"Oh, no, Papa," sobbed Ella, who had come in softly, "the dear Lord has surely taken care of our Rita, for Mamma and I have prayed to him so many times in the night about it."

Her father rose. "We have gone through the forest in every direction all night long; the child cannot be there. Now we will go down through the ravine by the forest-brook."

Her father spoke these words in a trembling voice. The supposition that the child had fallen into the wild forest-brook became more and more certain to him. Herr Feland had arranged for a good breakfast to be prepared for the men at Martin's house, and then they were all to help further in the search. Now it was plain that they would be better able to climb down into the ravines and gorges.

When Herr Feland entered Martin's house the men were still sitting at the table and talking excitedly about what to do next. Seppli was standing by his father staring with open eyes and mouth.

Herr Feland sat down beside Martin. A silence ensued, for they all saw what great anguish and trouble were in his heart. Suddenly Seppli said bluntly:

"I know where she is."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Seppli," said his father reprovingly in his gentle way, "you were up in the hay-field when she was lost; you can't know anything about it."

Herr Feland asked for ropes and other necessary things, and while these were being made ready Seppli said half-aloud but quite distinctly:

"But I really know where she is."

Herr Feland rose, seized him by the hand, and said kindly:

"Little boy, look at me, and tell me truly, do you know anything about the child?"

"Yes," was the short answer.

"Then speak out, little boy! Have you seen the child? Where has she gone?" asked Herr Feland with increasing excitement.

"I will show you," replied Seppli, and went to the door. They all rose. They all looked at one another. No one knew whether to take the suggestion seriously or as foolish.

But Herr Feland followed the boy without any hesitation.

"Seppli, Seppli," said Father Martin reprovingly, "I really think you are making a promise you can't keep."

But Seppli kept trotting along, Herr Feland following, and the men coming

reluctantly after.

When the little fellow aimed for the forest they stood still, and one of them said:

"It is utterly useless to follow the boy in there, for we have searched through every place and found nothing. We will not go."

Martin informed Herr Feland that he himself did not have any confidence in the boy. But Seppli kept marching along, and Herr Feland and Martin decided to follow.

Seppli walked resolutely on farther into the woods. Suddenly he turned to the left toward the old fir-trees, where they soon saw something red gleaming through. Seppli steered straight ahead, through the midst of briers and prickly thistles, to a light spot, where there were many large bushes together, all covered with red flowers. Here he stood still and looked around a little puzzled. He had evidently expected to find Rita there. Then he went with determination on his way. The blossoming bushes became fewer, but larger and larger. Seppli stood still by each one for a moment and looked around, then he would go on, always to the left.

"No, Seppli, don't go any farther," cried his father. "We are coming to the big wall of rock."

But at the same moment there was a shining like fire through the trees. The sun glowed on a bush completely covered with the red flowers. Seppli ran up to it quickly, but he was close to the wall of rock, which extended, rugged and steep, down to the deep precipice below. Seppli looked around and across the flowers down over the rocks. Then he turned around. Herr Feland stood hopeless behind him. The path came to an end, and the child was not found!

Martin seized the boy by the hand and tried to draw him back from the dangerous spot, when Seppli said in his dry way:

"She is lying down there below."

Herr Feland rushed forward and bent over the precipice—his face grew deathly pale. He stepped back and had to cling to the nearest tree, his knees were shaking so. He beckoned to Martin, who was still holding Seppli fast by the hand. Then he stepped to the edge and looked down into the depths. Here and there a few bushes hung over the precipice. In one place, horribly low down, the rock had one small projection, like a narrow shelf. Here lay, nestled on the rock, a motionless little being, with her face pressed against the stone.

"God in Heaven, it is true, there she lies!" said Martin shuddering, "but whether living or——"

He did not finish the sentence. One look at Herr Feland closed his lips. He looked as if he were going to drop dead. But he recovered himself.

"Martin," he said faintly, "no time is to be lost. If the child moves she will

be over the precipice. Who will climb down? Who will get her?"

The other men now came along: hopeless, they had followed their little guide through curiosity. They too now looked, one after another, down the wall of rock.

"Listen, you men," said Herr Feland in a trembling voice, "there is not a moment to lose. Who will do it? Who will help? Who dares to go?"

The men looked at one another, but all remained silent. One of them stepped to the edge, looked down, then turned around, shrugged his shoulders, and went away.

"If we were only sure that she is still alive," said another. "But a man risks his life and perhaps only to bring back a dead child."

"Who knows that she is not alive?" cried Herr Feland, almost beside himself, "and if she stirs she is lost beyond recovery! Oh, is it not possible?"

"She would have gone down below long before this if she was still alive. No one could lie as still as that," said another. "And, sir, if one should roll down there, the best reward would be of no use."

Shrugging their shoulders, one after another stepped back. Herr Feland looked around him in despair. There was no prospect of help.

"I will do it myself," he exclaimed, beside himself; "only tell me how?"

Martin now stepped up to him.

"No, sir," he said quietly, "that will not do. Then both would be lost, that is sure. But I will do it, with God's help. I, too, have such little ones, and I know how hard it must be for Herr Feland."

Even before he spoke he had fastened the big rope around the trunk of the old fir-tree, for he had decided to bring up the child to her father, whether she was dead or alive. Then he took off his cap, prayed softly, seized firm hold of the rope, and slid down the rock.

He reached the little shelf in the rock. With one hand he held to the rope with all his strength, with his bare feet he tried to cling fast to the rock, in order to be able to seize the child with his other hand and lift her up. Gently, quietly, he drew near, for if the child was alive and should be startled by him—just a quick movement—even at the last moment she would be lost.

She lay motionless there. Martin bent over the child and laid his broad, strong hand on her. At the same moment she was about to turn around quickly and would have fallen down beyond recovery, but Martin's hand lay firmly on her. She could turn her head. A pair of big, wondering eyes looked up at the man.

"God be praised and thanked!" said Martin, taking a deep breath. "Say the same, little one, if you can still speak!"

"Yes, I can still speak! God be praised and thanked!" said the child, in a

quite clear voice.

Martin looked in greatest amazement at the child, who was wholly unharmed.

"You must be strangely dear to our Lord, for he has worked a miracle for you. You must never forget it all your life long, little one," he said thoughtfully. Then he lifted the child with his strong right hand up to himself.

"There, now you must put both your arms around my neck, very tight, as if I were your dear papa, for you see, I cannot hold you. I have enough to do, with both my hands, to climb up."

"Yes, yes, I will hold fast," said Rita assuringly and clasping Martin so firmly that he could hardly breathe. But how glad he was!

He now began to climb up the rock. It was no easy task. The blood ran down from his hands and feet. Occasionally he had to rest for a moment. Above stood Herr Feland and the men holding their breath and watching the man sway above the precipice. Would his endurance hold out? Would he come up? Or would he lose his strength? Would he slip and fall with the child into the dark abyss?

Nearer and nearer they came—now only the last frightful steep piece of rock—there——

"God be thanked!" cried Martin, breathless, when he took the last step over the edge. He took the child from his neck and laid her in her trembling father's arms.

Herr Feland had to sit down. He held his child and looked at her, speechless, as if he could not realize his good fortune.

"Oh, Papa, I am so glad," said Rita, throwing both arms around his neck affectionately. "I knew you would surely come to get me in the morning."

Martin stepped aside, with folded hands; he was gazing at the father and his child, and for joy the tears fell down over his sun-burned cheeks. Seppli had pressed close to him and clung to him fast, for he had realized that his father had been in great danger.

Then Herr Feland, with his child in his arms, stepped up to Martin. He held out his hand to the rescuer.

"You know very well, Martin, that I am now doing what I should have done before anything else," he said in a trembling voice. "I thank you, as only one can thank another, to whom a life has been given back. I shall never forget that you risked your life to save my child."

The two men shook hands, and Martin said sincerely:

"It is a great reward to me that I was able to bring back your little girl to you unharmed."

"I will see you again to-day. Now we must go to the mother," said Herr

Feland, and, holding his little girl fast in his arms, he started on the way back. Martin, holding Seppli by the hand, and the others followed.

As they were going along in this way through the woods, Martin said to his little boy:

"Now tell me, Seppli, how you knew that the little girl had come just here?"

"Because she wanted to go to the red flowers," replied Seppli.

"But how did you know then that she could be right there by the rock?"

"Because she was not by the first bush, so she must have gone farther, because the flowers keep getting more and more beautiful, and the most beautiful bush of all is the last near the rock. But I didn't know that she had fallen off," explained Seppli.

Herr Feland now reached his house. He went in and opened the door of the sleeping-room. Ella was still sitting by the bed and holding her mother's hand fast. Quite exhausted, she was leaning her head on the pillow and her eyes were closed. Herr Feland stepped up to her mother and placed Rita in the middle of her bed.

"Good-morning, Mamma! Did you sleep well?" said Rita quite gayly, as she did every morning when she came to kiss her mother. Her mother opened her eyes and stared at her child. Then she suddenly seized her in her arms, pressed her with all her might to her breast, and tears of unspeakable joy streamed from her eyes. She couldn't speak a word, could only thank the dear Lord again and again in her heart.

Ella held her little sister's hand fast and kept saying over and over:

"Are you back again, Rita? Where were you all night long alone?"

Little by little her father told how and where he had found Rita and how Martin risked his life to save the child. The mother shuddered at the description. She pressed the child again close to her when she realized the danger she had been in the whole night long.

"Oh, weren't you frightened almost to death?" asked Ella, who from sympathy was still struggling with her tears.

"Oh no, I was not frightened," asserted Rita gayly. "I will tell you now how it happened. At first I was going in to ask Papa if I might go with Seppli for the red flowers, but he was away. So I thought he would surely allow me, because I had wanted so much to go the day before, and then did not dare, so I went for Seppli, but he was away too. Then I thought I would find the red flowers alone, for Seppli had told me the way to go there."

"Then I went up into the woods and hunted a long, long time without finding them. But suddenly I saw something red shining behind the trees and I ran toward it. At first there were only a few flowers and not very bright red ones, but Seppli had said you had to go farther and farther into the woods. So I went

"MARTIN BENT OVER THE CHILD AND LAID HIS BROAD, STRONG HAND ON HER."

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still farther, and there were more and more flowers, and at last I came to a big, big bush with so many beautiful red flowers. They shone so wonderfully and I wanted them all, every one, and then suddenly I fell down and rested on a stone, but it was a small stone and so I pushed back against the rock and thought I would just lie still and Papa would soon come and get me. But then I was tired—and it was already getting rather dark—and I thought, I must really go to sleep, and in the morning Papa would come and get me. Then I thought I must say my prayer, so that the dear Lord would send his little angels to take care of me while I slept, and I prayed:

"Oh, gentle Jesus, hear me!
On bright wings hover near me,
And keep me from all harm!
Thru danger, pain and sorrow
I'll sleep until the morrow,
Protected by thine arm.

"Then I slept very well, until a man came, and I knew right away that Papa had sent him."

Her mother trembled as she followed the story. Her father could not conceal his delight at it.

"Now my little Grasshopper doesn't go another step alone," he said in as severe a tone as in his delight he could find it in his heart to use.

The mother had not yet heard who had finally taken the searching party to the right spot, and she wanted to know all about it. Then the father thought of Seppli and that he was really the first one to trace Rita.

"We must especially reward the brave boy," he said, and Rita, who grasped this idea with enthusiasm immediately scrambled down from the bed, in order to carry out the plan at once.

But what should the reward for Seppli be? What could she take to him right away?

"He shall for once have his greatest wish," said her father. "We will see what will most delight his heart."

"Can I go to him right away?" asked Rita eagerly.

Her papa wished to go with her, to speak with Father Martin at once, and also to recompense the other men. Rita jumped all around the room for joy. She was full of great gratitude to Seppli.

"But, Papa, supposing he should wish for a menagerie, with the biggest animals there are?" she asked.

”Then he shall have it,” was the decided answer.

”But, Papa,” she asked again, ”if he should wish for a Turkish costume and a curved saber besides, such as Cousin Karl has?”

”He shall have that too!” was the answer.

”But, Papa,” she went on, ”if he should want a whole big fortress and twelve boxes full of soldiers, as Karl has?”

”He shall have them!” replied her father again.

Then Rita rushed out to Seppli, who was standing in front of the door.

”Come, Seppli,” she cried, ”now you can have the very best wish you can think of!”

Seppli looked at Rita with wrinkled brow. It seemed as if her words had awakened something that lay heavy on his heart. Finally he said, quite cast down:

”It’s no use.”

”Yes, really, it is, too,” replied Rita, ”because you found me you can ask for anything you would like, and you will have it. Papa said so. Now think right away about it and then tell what it is.”

Gradually Seppli seemed to understand the matter. He looked at Rita once more to prove whether she was really in earnest or not, then he took a deep breath and said:

”A whip with a yellow lash.”

”No, Seppli, that is nothing at all,” replied Rita quite vexed. ”You mustn’t wish for anything like that. Think once more what is the most beautiful thing of all and wish for that.”

Seppli thought obediently, took another deep breath, and said:

”A whip with a yellow lash.”

Herr Feland then came with the men out of the house. The men went away with many expressions of gratitude, but Martin remained standing in the doorway.

”I have not yet given you any reward, Martin,” said Herr Feland. ”To you above all the rest I must prove my gratitude in a way to give you a real joy. Tell me, have you some special desire?”

Martin turned his cap around for a while in his hands, then said hesitatingly:

”I have had a great desire for a long time, but I dare not tell you what it is; no, no, it should not have come into my mind.”

”Speak it out fully,” said Herr Feland encouragingly, ”perhaps I can help you.”

”I have always thought,” continued Martin, hesitatingly, ”if I could only get on as well as my neighbor over there, I would venture to think of buying a cow. I have quite a good deal of hay and then could take care of my family without any

anxiety."

"That is good, Martin," said Herr Feland, "we shall see each other again." Then he took Rita by the hand and started with her on the way back.

"And what did your friend Seppli wish for?" he asked.

"Oh, he is stupid," exclaimed Rita. "He only wants a whip with a yellow lash! That is nothing at all."

"Surely that is something," asserted her papa. "You see, every child has his own pleasures: to Seppli such a whip would give exactly as much pleasure as the most beautiful doll-house would to you."

At this explanation Rita seemed contented and could hardly wait for the wishes to come true.

On the following day Herr Feland had to make a journey down into the valley. Rita knew very well why, and hopped with delight all the morning long. Her papa did not go, without impressing it upon his little "grasshopper" that she must not take a step alone away from the house, and Fräulein Hohlweg received strict instructions. But she had endured such anguish that terrible night that the warnings were unnecessary. On the contrary she had determined from now on not to take her eyes off from Rita, no matter how hard it might be.

Two days later, when Martin had just sat down with his family at the table to their meal of steaming potatoes, they heard a loud mooing in front of the house—then again, and then a third time!

"Kaspar's cow must have run away," said Martin, getting up to go and catch her. Seppli had to go too! He ran hurriedly after his father, Martheli, Friedli and Bertheli followed, and behind them their mother, in order to fetch them all back again.

Outside Father Martin was standing in motionless astonishment, and all the others beside him opened their eyes wide. The mother, who had just come along, clapped her hands and couldn't speak a word from amazement. Fastened near the house stood a glossy brown cow, so big and splendid, such as was only seen occasionally among the rich peasants. To one of her horns was fastened a big whip, which had a strong, white, leather mesh with a thick, silk lash which shimmered in the sun like gold!

A paper was bound around the whip-handle and on this was written in large letters: "For Seppli."

Martin took down the whip and gave it to the boy.

"It is yours," he said.

Seppli held the whip in his hand. The most beautiful and the most wonderful thing he could think of was his very own! And, besides, there was the cow, which could be driven up on the mountain, with the whip to crack, like Georgie's and Chappi's!

Seppli, with beaming eyes, seized his whip, hugged it and held it fast, as if to say:

"No power on earth can take it from me!"

Martin and his wife couldn't look enough at the splendid animal. That it was to belong to them appeared to them like a miracle.

Finally Martin said:

"She moos because she wants to give her milk. Seppli, bring the pail; to-day we will enjoy ourselves."

Two large pails were filled with foaming, fresh milk and placed with the potatoes on the table; then all accompanied the brown cow in a triumphant procession to the shed.

Over in front of the neighboring cottage Herr Feland was standing with his children. They wanted to see how the brown cow was received, and Rita had, above all, to know what impression the whip would make, which she herself had marked with the big letters: "For Seppli."

When Frau Feland had recovered from the great excitement the whole family went up to the wall of rock in order to give praise and thanks from their full hearts once more to the dear Lord, on the very spot where he had so evidently spread his protecting hand over their child.

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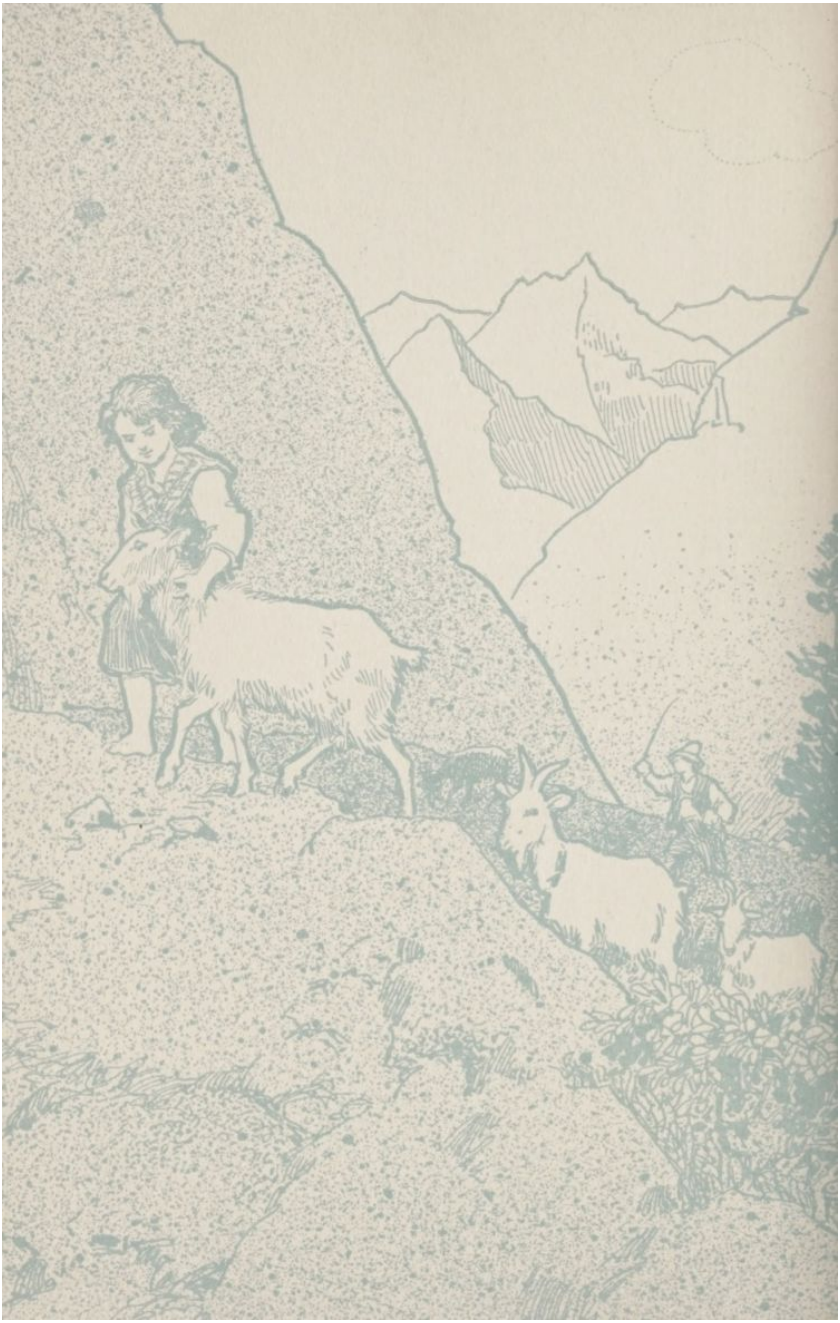

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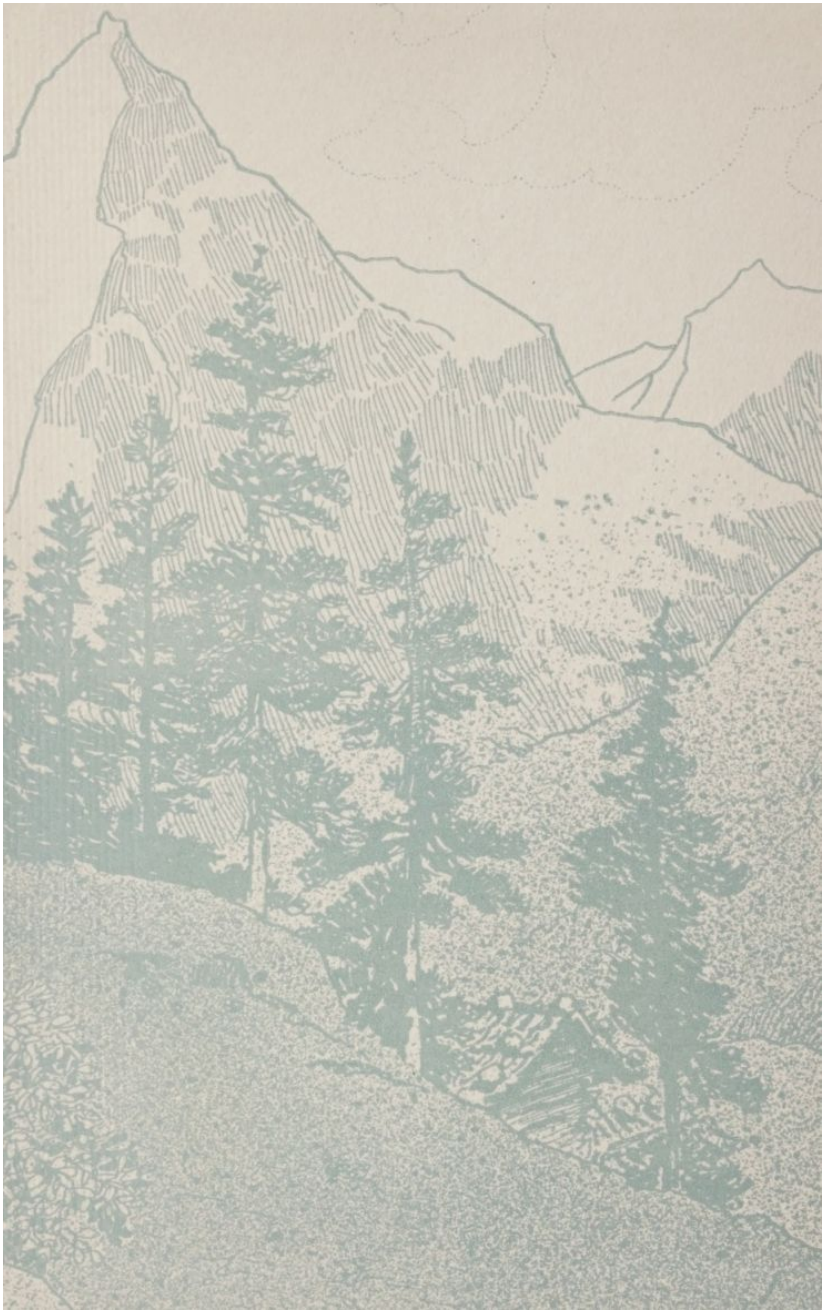

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