SELMA LAGERLÖF

JERUSALEM

SELMA LAGERLÖF

JERUSALEM

Selma Lagerlöf

Jerusalem

EAN 8596547024170

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

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

What is the secret of the power that has made Miss Lagerlöf an author acknowledged not alone as a classic in the schools but also as the most popular and generally beloved writer in Scandinavia? She entered Swedish literature at a period when the cold gray star of realism was in the ascendant, when the trenchant pen of Strindberg had swept away the cobwebs of unreality, and people were accustomed to plays and novels almost brutal in their frankness. Wrapped in the mantle of a latter-day romanticism, her soul filled with idealism, on the one hand she transformed the crisp actualities of human experience by throwing about them the glamour of the unknown, and

on the other hand gave to the unreal—to folk tale and fairy lore and local superstition—the effectiveness of convincing fact. "Selma Lagerlöf," says the Swedish composer, Hugo Alfvén, "is like sitting in the dusk of a Spanish cathedral ... afterward one does not know whether what he has seen was dream or reality, but certainly he has been on holy ground." The average mind, whether Swedish or Anglo-Saxon, soon wearies of heartless preciseness in literature and welcomes an idealism as wholesome as that of Miss Lagerlöf. Furthermore, the Swedish authoress attracts her readers by a diction unique unto herself, as singular as the English sentences of Charles Lamb. Her style may be described as prose rhapsody held in restraint, at times passionately breaking its bonds.

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

the motives and emotions of the normal mind. This accounts for the comforting feeling of satisfaction and familiarity which comes over one reading the chronicles of events so exceptionable as those which occur in "Jerusalem."

In one of her books, "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils," Miss Lagerlöf has sketched the national character of mart Swedish people in reference to the various landscapes visited by the wild goose in its flight. In another romance, "Gösta Berling," she has interpreted the life of the province at Vermland, where she herself was born on a farmstead in 1858. A love of starlight, violins, and dancing, a temperament easily provoked to a laughing abandon of life's tragedy characterizes the folk of Vermland and the impecunious gentry who live in its modest manor halls. It is a different folk to whom one is introduced in "Jerusalem," the people of Dalecarlia, the province of Miss Lagerlöf's adopted home. They, too, have their dancing festivals at Midsummer Eve, and their dress is the most gorgeous in Sweden, but one thinks of them rather as a serious and solid community given to the plow and conservative habits of thought. They were good Catholics once; now they are stalwart defenders of Lutheranism, a community not easily persuaded but, once aroused, resolute to act and carry through to the uttermost. One thinks of them as the people who at first gave a deaf ear to Gustaf Vasa's appeal to drive out the Danes, but who eventually followed him shoulder to shoulder through the very gates of Stockholm, to help him lay the foundations of modern Sweden. Titles of nobility have never prospered in Dalecarlia; these stalwart landed peasants are a nobility unto themselves. The Swedish

people regard their Dalecarlians as a reserve upon whom to draw in times of crisis.

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

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

meet at midnight a stranger at the cross-roads speaking an unknown tongue and 'the stranger will buy thy bicycle!'"

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

In the course of the book we are introduced to two generations of Ingmars, and their love stories are quite as compelling as the religious motives of the book. Forever unforgettable is the scene of the auction where Ingmar's son renounces his beloved Gertrude and betroths himself to another in order to keep the old estate from passing out of the hands of the Ingmars. Thus both of these heroes in our eyes "play yellow." On the other hand they have our sympathy, and the reader is tossed about by the alternate undertow of the strong currents which control the conduct of this farming folk. Sometimes they obey only their own

unerring instincts, as in that vivid situation of the shy, departing suitor when Karin Ingmarsson suddenly breaks through convention and publicly over the coffee cups declares herself betrothed. The book is a succession of these brilliantly portrayed situations that clutch at the heartstrings—the meetings in the mission house, the reconciliation scene when Ingmar's battered watch is handed to the man he felt on his deathbed he had wronged, the dance on the night of the "wild hunt," the shipwreck, Gertrude's renunciation of her lover for her religion, the brother who buys the old farmstead so that his brother's wife may have a home if she should ever return from the Holy Land. As for the closing pages that describe the departure of the Jerusalem-farers, they are difficult to read aloud without a sob and a lump in the throat.

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

heart and his life's personal happiness in order to win back the farm.

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

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

HENRY GODDARD LEACH.
Villa Nova, Pennsylvania.
June 28, 1915.

BOOK ONE

Table of Contents

THE INGMARSSONS

Table of Contents

I

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

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

A long and rather broad valley, with stretches of green and yellow grain fields, with mowed clover meadows, potato patches in flower, and little fields of flax with their tiny blue

flowers, above which fluttered great swarms of white butterflies—this was the setting. At the very heart of the valley, as if to complete the picture, lay a big old-fashioned farmstead, with many gray outhouses and a large red dwelling-house. At the gables stood two tall, spreading pear trees; at the gate were a couple of young birches; in the grass-covered yard were great piles of firewood; and behind the barn were several huge haystacks. The farmhouse rising above the low fields was as pretty a sight as a ship, with masts and sails, towering above the broad surface of the sea.

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

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

"I believe I have managed this farm as well as any one who has borne the name of Ingmar Ingmarsson," he mused.

"I can get more for my hay than father ever got for his, and I'm not satisfied to let the weed-choked ditches which crossed the farm in his time remain. What's more, no one can say that I misuse the woodlands as he did by converting them into burn-beaten land.

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

"It's wonderful, all the same, that troubles can be so easily borne on a morning like this. I could almost laugh at them. And still I fear that matters will be worse than ever for me in the fall. If I should do what I'm now thinking of doing, neither the parson nor the judge will shake hands with me when we meet at the church on a Sunday, which is something they have always done up to the present. I could never hope to be made a guardian of the poor, nor could I even think of becoming a churchwarden."

Thinking is never so easy as when one follows a plow up a furrow and down a furrow. You are quite alone, and there is nothing to distract you but the crows hopping about picking up worms. The thoughts seemed to come to the man as readily as if some one had whispered them into his ear. Only on rare occasions had he been able to think as quickly and

clearly as on that day, and the thought of it gladdened and encouraged him. It occurred to him that he was giving himself needless anxiety; that no one expected him to plunge headlong into misery. He thought that if his father were only living now, he would ask his advice in this matter, as he had always done in the old days when grave questions had come up.

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

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

"And now as I come into the living-room," he went on, "I see many peasants seated on benches along the walls. All have sandy hair, white eyebrows, and thick underlips. They are all of them as like father as one pea is like another. At the sight of so many people I become shy and linger at the door. Father sits at the head of the table, and the instant he sees me he says; 'Welcome, little Ingmar Ingmarsson!' Then father gets up and comes over to me. 'I'd like to have a word with you, father,' I say, 'but there are so many

strangers here.' 'Oh, these are only relatives!' says father. 'All these men have lived at the Ingmar Farm, and the oldest among them is from way back in heathen times.' 'But I want to speak to you in private,' I say.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

as the banns had been read. But perhaps it was old-fashioned to think that way.'

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

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

The plowman walked along, his lips moving all the while. He actually imagined that he saw before him the face of his father. "I shall have to lay the whole case before the old

man, frankly and clearly," he remarked to himself, "so he can advise me."

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

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

her.' 'It's not so easy for a man to understand a bad woman!' says father. 'No, father, Brita was not bad, but she was a proud one!' 'It comes to the same thing,' says father.

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

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

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

"But father does not say a word.

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

"But father doesn't answer.

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

"Meanwhile, not a word out of father.

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

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

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

"And father doesn't utter a sound.

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

"Father sits there immovable.

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

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

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

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

"So father goes back to the living-room, while I remain in the kitchen. There I sit waiting and waiting, but father does not return. Then, after hours and hours of this, I get cross and go to him. 'You must have patience, little Ingmar,' says

father. 'This is a difficult question.' And I see all the old yeomen sitting there with closed eyes, deep in thought. So I wait and wait and, for aught I know, must go on waiting."

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

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

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

Ingmar Ingmarsson was, however, not the only person abroad at that hour. An old man came trudging along the winding path that crossed the fields. It was not difficult to guess his occupation, for he carried on his shoulder a long-handled paint brush and was spattered with red paint from his cap to his shoe tips. He kept glancing round-about, after the manner of journeymen painters, to find an unpainted farmhouse or one that needed repainting. He had seen, here and there, one and another which he thought might answer his purpose, but he could not seem to fix upon any special one. Then, finally, from the top of a hillock he caught sight of the big Ingmar Farm down in the valley. "Great Caesar!" he exclaimed, and stopped short. "That farmhouse hasn't been painted in a hundred years. Why, it's black with age,

and the barns have never seen a drop of point. Here there's work enough to keep me busy till fall."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

Table of Contents

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ingmar unbuttoned the carriage apron, and the senator began to move. "Seeing it's Mother Martha herself that

commands me I suppose I shall have to obey," he said.

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

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

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

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

"No; what would she be doing there?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Maybe so."

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

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

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

Both mother and son persistently held their peace.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III

Table of Contents

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, indeed," said the other. "If I didn't know enough to keep mum about most of the things I hear, there'd be some