

Picturebook Without Pictures

Hans Christian Andersen

It is strange that whenever I am conscious of the warmest and best feelings, my hand and tongue seem to be tied, so that I can express nothing, nor utter any of the thoughts that are within me. And yet I am a painter. My eye tells me that, and all those who have seen my sketches and pictures have agreed.

I am a poor fellow; I live in one of the narrowest of streets, but there is plenty of light, for I live high up, with a view over all the rooftops. The first few days after I arrived in town I felt depressed and lonely. In place of the forest and the green hills, I now had only the dark, gray chimneys to look at. I did not have a single friend here, and not one familiar face greeted me.

One evening I was standing quite distressed at my window. I opened it and looked out. Oh, how happy it made me when I saw a face I knew - the round, kindly face of my best friend from my old home! It was the Moon, the dear old Moon, with the same old brilliance, looking just as he did when he used to shine on me through the willow branches on the moor. I kissed my hand to him, and he shone full into my chamber, and promised to look in on me whenever he was out; and this he has faithfully done; it's a pity he stays such a short time. Every time he comes he tells me of something he has seen during the past night in his silent passage across the sky. "Paint the scenes I describe to you," he said at his first visit, "and you'll have a very pretty picture book." This I have done for many nights, and in my own way I could give a new *Thousand and One Nights* in pictures, but it would be too tiresome. The pictures I present here are not selected, but given just as they were described to me; perhaps a great painter, a poet, or a composer could make something of them. What I offer are merely slight sketches on paper, the framework of my own thoughts; for the Moon did not come every evening - often a cloud or two covered his face.

First Evening

"Last night" - these are the Moon's own words - "I glided through the clear sky of India and reflected myself in the Ganges. My rays struggled to force their way through the thick roof of old sycamore trees that arched beneath me like the shell of a tortoise. From the thicket, a Hindu maiden stepped out, graceful as a gazelle and beautiful as Eve. There was something truly spiritual, and yet material, about her, and I could even make out her thoughts beneath her delicate skin. The thorny liana plants tore her sandals, but she walked rapidly forward. The wild beasts that came up from the river after quenching their thirst fled away in fright, for the maiden held a lighted lamp in her hand. I could see the blood in the delicate fingers arched into a shield over the flame of the lamp. She walked down to the river, then placed the lamp on the surface, and it drifted away with the current. The flame flickered back and forth, as if it wanted to expire, but still it burned as the maiden's dark, sparkling eyes followed it, with a soulful gaze from beneath the long, silken lashes of her eyelids. She knew that if the lamp should burn as long as her eyes could follow it, her lover would still be alive; but if it went out, he would be dead. As the lamp burned and trembled, the heart of the maiden burned and trembled. She knelt and prayed. Beside her a deadly snake lurked in the grass, but she thought only of Brahma and of her bridegroom.

'He lives!' she shouted joyfully, and the echo answered from the mountains, 'He lives!' "

Second Evening

"It was yesterday," the Moon told me, "that I peeped into a little courtyard, enclosed by houses; there was a hen there, with eleven chickens. A pretty little girl was playing around them, and the hen clucked and spread out her wings in fright over her chicks. Then the

little girl's father came and scolded her, and I passed on, thinking no more of it.

"But this evening, just a few minutes ago, I again peeped into the same yard. It was very quiet there, but soon the little girl came out, crept cautiously to the henhouse, lifted the latch, and stole softly up to the hen and chickens. They clucked loudly and fluttered about, with the little girl running after them! I saw it plainly, for I peeped through a hole in the wall. I was very angry with the naughty child, and was glad when the father came and caught her by the arm and scolded her, still more sternly than yesterday. She bent her head down, and her big blue eyes were filled with tears.

" 'What are you doing here anyway?' he asked.

" 'I wanted to go in and kiss the hen and beg her to forgive me for yesterday,' she wept. 'But I was afraid to tell you.' Then the father kissed the innocent child's forehead. I kissed her eyes and lips."

Third Evening

"In the narrow lane close by - it is so narrow that my rays can slide down the walls of the houses for only a moment, and yet in that moment I see enough to understand the little world stirring below - I saw a woman. Sixteen years ago she was a child, and out in the country she used to play in the old parsonage garden. The rosebush hedges were old, and their blossoms had fallen. They had run wild, and grew rankly over the paths, twisting their long branches up the trunks of the apple trees. Here and there a rose still sat on her stem, not so lovely as the queen of the flowers usually appears, but the color was still there, and the fragrance too. The clergyman's little daughter seemed to me a much lovelier rose, as she sat on her stool under the straggling hedge and kissed her doll with the caved-in pasteboard cheeks.

"Ten years later, I saw her again; I saw her in a splendid ballroom, and she was the beautiful bride of a rich merchant. I was happy over her good fortune, and sought her again in the silent nights - alas, no one then heeded my clear eye, my trusty watch! My rose also grew up in rank wildness, like the roses in the parsonage garden. Life in the everyday world has its tragedies too, and tonight I witnessed the final act.

"In the narrow street, deathly ill, she lay upon her bed, and the wicked, rough, and cruel landlord, now her only acquaintance, tore away her blanket. 'Stand up!' he said. 'Your cheeks are enough to frighten anyone! Dress yourself! Get some money, or I'll throw you into the street! Get up, and hurry!'

" 'Death is in my breast!' she cried. 'Oh, let me rest!' But he dragged her up, painted her cheeks, put roses in her hair, set her at the window with a lighted candle beside her, and went away. I stared at her; she sat there motionless, though her hand fell down into her lap. The wind pushed against the window until it broke a pane, but still she did not move. The curtain fluttered about her like a flame - she was dead. There at the open window sat the dead one, as a preachment against sin - my rose from the parsonage garden!"

Fourth Evening

"Last night I saw a German play, " the Moon said. "It was in a small town, where a stable had been converted into a theater; that is to say, the stalls were still there, but had been fitted up as boxes, and all the woodwork was covered with colored paper. From the low roof hung a small iron chandelier; an inverted tub was fastened over it so that, as in a real theater, the lights could be drawn up when the prompter's bell tinkled.

" 'Ting-a-ling,' and the little iron chandelier skipped up half a yard; this was the sign that the play was about to begin.

"A young nobleman and his lady, who happened to be passing through the town, were present at the performance, and consequently the house was filled to capacity. The space

directly under the chandelier, however, was as clear as a small crater; not a soul sat there, for the candles of the chandelier dripped down - drip, drip!

"I could see everything that happened, for it was so hot that the windows were left open, and at every window the servants could be seen peeping in from the outside, though the constables were posted inside the door and threatened the intruders with their sticks. The young noble pair sat close to the orchestra in two old armchairs, which were usually occupied by the burgomaster and his wife. But tonight they had to sit on the wooden benches, like the rest of the townspeople. 'Aye, look there now,' one woman whispered to another, 'one sparrow hawk in turn outflies another!' Everything took on a more dignified aspect on this memorable occasion. The chandelier hopped; the mob outside got their knuckles rapped, and I - yes, the Moon was present too through the whole performance."

Fifth Evening

"Yesterday," said the Moon, "I looked down on the busy city of Paris - and my gaze penetrated into the apartments of the Louvre. An old grandmother, poorly clad, for she belonged to the class of beggars, followed one of the attendants into the great, empty throne room. She had to see it, and it had cost her many a little sacrifice and many a fawning word before she had managed to make her way this far into the palace. She folded her scrawny hands and gazed around as solemnly as if she were in a church.

" 'It was here!' she said. 'Here!' And she approached the throne, from which the rich, gold-edged velvet covering hung down. 'There!' she said. 'There!' And she fell to her knees and kissed the purple hanging. I believe she wept.

" 'It wasn't this velvet,' said the attendant, a smile playing on his lips.

" 'But it was here! said the woman. 'And it looked the same then!'

" 'The same, and yet different,' replied the man. 'That day the windows were smashed in, the doors burst open, and the floor was red with blood. Yet you may truthfully say, "My grandson died upon the throne of France!'"

" 'Died!' repeated the old woman.

"I don't believe another word was spoken, and they soon left the hall. The evening twilight faded, and my beams streamed with greater brilliance on the rich velvet hangings of the throne of France. Now, who do you think the old woman was? I shall tell you a story.

"It was during the Revolution of July, near the close of the evening preceding the most brilliant day of victory, when every house was a fortress, every window a barricade. The people stormed the Tuileries, even women and children fighting among the combatants; the mob forced its way through the halls and the apartments of the palace. A poor, ragged, half-grown boy fought bravely in the ranks of his older comrades. Mortally wounded with several bayonet thrusts, he sank to the floor. This happened in the throne room, and the bleeding body was laid on the throne of France; his blood streamed over the royal purple hangings that partly covered his wounds. There was a picture! That magnificent room - the mob of fighting rebels! A broken standard lay on the floor, while the tricolor waved over the bayonets; and on the throne lay the beggar lad, with his pale, glorified features, his eyes turned heavenward, his limbs stiffening in death; his naked breast and his ragged coat were half hidden by the rich velvet hanging with its silver lilies.

"Perhaps at the boy's cradle it had been prophesied, 'He shall die upon the throne of France!' and the mother's heart had dreamed of a second Napoleon. My rays have kissed the wreath of immortality on his grave; my beam last night kissed the brow of the old grandmother, when she saw in a dream the picture you may draw here - the poor ragged beggar boy on the throne of France."

Sixth Evening

"I have been to Upsala," the Moon told me. "I looked down on the great plain covered with coarse grass and on the barren fields. I saw my image in the river Fyris, while the steamer frightened away the fishes into the rushes. The clouds chased one another beneath me, throwing their long shadows upon the graves of Odin and Thor and Freya, as the hills there are called. The names have been cut in the thin turf that covers the hills; here there is no memorial stone where the traveler can engrave his name, no rock wall whereon he can paint it. So the visitor cuts it into the turf, and the bare earth along the range of hills is covered with a network of letters and names - an immortality which lasts until the next growth of turf.

"Upon the hilltop a man stood, a poet. He emptied a mead horn decorated with a broad silver ring, and whispered a name that he charged the breezes not to betray; but I heard it, and I knew it. The coronet of a count sparkled above it, and therefore he did not name it aloud. I smiled. For the crown of a poet sparkles above his! The name of Eleanora d'Este is with Tasso's. I too know where the rose of beauty blooms. . . ."

Thus the Moon spoke, but then a cloud passed between us. Oh, that clouds might never come between the poet and the rose!

Seventh Evening

"A fresh and fragrant grove of oaks and beeches, visited by a hundred nightingales with each return of spring, stretched along the seashore. The broad highway lies between this grove and the ocean, the ever-changing ocean. One carriage after another rolls past, but I do not follow them; my gaze rests mostly on one spot - a Viking's grave, Blackberry and sloe grow between the stones. Here is the true poetry of nature. How do you think people interpret it? Listen, and I shall tell you what I heard last evening and during the past night.

"First, two rich landowners came driving along. "What splendid trees!" said one of them. 'Every tree should give at least ten cartloads of firewood,' answered the other, 'and we're going to have a hard winter. Last year, remember, we got fourteen dollars a load!' And then they were gone.

" 'What a terrible road!' said another man as he drove past in his carriage. 'It's all because of those confounded trees,' his companion answered. 'The only way for the air to get in is from the sea!' And they rolled on.

"The stagecoach also came by, and during this loveliest part of the journey all the passengers were fast asleep. The driver blew his horn, but he said only to himself, 'I blow well indeed! It sounds fine right here! But what do those sleepy people inside care about it?' Then the stagecoach disappeared.

"Now two young lads galloped along on horseback. Here are the fire and spirit of youth, I thought. They also glanced with a smile at the moss-green hills and the dark grove. 'I should certainly like to go for a walk in here with Christine, the miller's daughter!' said one of them, and off they rode.

"The fragrance of flowers was very strong; every breath of wind was still; the ocean seemed almost a part of the heaven that overhung the deep valley. A coach with six passengers rolled by. Four were asleep; the fifth was thinking of how his new summer coat would fit him, and the sixth popped his head out of the window to ask the coachman if there was anything remarkable about the heap of stones beside the road.

" ' No, ' said the driver. 'That's nothing but a heap of stones; but the trees over there - they're really worth looking at!'

" ' Tell me about them.'

" ' Yes, they're most remarkable,' said the man. 'In the winter, when the snow is so deep that nothing can be seen, those trees are signposts to me; I follow them and keep from

driving into the sea. You see, that's why they are so remarkable!' And then he drove on.

"Now a painter came by. His eyes sparkled; he didn't say a word; he only whistled. Each nightingale sang more loudly and sweetly than the other. 'Stop that noise!' he cried, and then he carefully examined all the colors and tints in the landscape. 'Blue, purple, dark brown - what a beautiful painting this would make!' His mind took it all in, just as a mirror reflects a picture, and meanwhile he whistled a Rossini march.

"The last to come by was a poor girl. She sat down upon the Viking's grave to rest, and laid down her bundle. Her pale, lovely face turned toward the grove, and she listened; her eyes brightened as she raised them over the ocean toward heaven. Her hands were clasped, and I believe she said the Lord's Prayer. She herself did not fully understand the feeling that moment and the scene around her will in her memory be invested with colors more beautiful and richer than the artist's accurate colors. My rays followed her until the dawn kissed her brow."

Eighth Evening

Dark masses of clouds covered the sky, and the Moon did not come out at all. In my little chamber I stood more lonely than ever and gazed up into the sky where he should have appeared.

My thoughts flew far away, up to my great friend, who each evening showed me such lovely pictures and told me stories. What has he not experienced! He has floated above the waters of the Deluge, and smiled down on Noah's Ark, as now he does on me, and brought the consolation that a new world would bloom again. When the children of Israel wept beside the rivers of Babylon, he looked in sorrow through the willows where they had hung their harps. When Romeo climbed up the balcony and the kiss of love rose like a cherub's thought from the earth, the full Moon hung half hidden in the thin air behind the dark cypresses. He has seen the hero at St. Helena looking forth from the lonely cliff toward the ocean, while great thoughts stirred within him. Yes, indeed, what cannot the Moon tell? The history of humanity is to him a book of adventures. Tonight I cannot see you, old friend, and cannot sketch any picture in memory of your visit.

Then as I dreamily looked toward the sky, it brightened; there was a beam of light from the Moon, but it vanished, and black clouds glided by; still it was a greeting, a friendly "good night" sent to me by the Moon.

Ninth Evening

Again the sky was clear; several evenings had passed, and the Moon was in his first quarter. I again got an idea for a sketch. Listen to what the Moon told me.

"I followed the polar bird and the swimming whale to the eastern coast of Greenland. Bare rocks, covered with ice and mist, encircled a valley where twining willows and whortleberry bushes were in their fullest blossom, and the fragrant lychnis exhaled its sweet perfume. My rays were faint, my face pale as the leaf of a water lily torn from its stem and driven for weeks upon the water. The aurora borealis flamed; its ring was broad, and from it strange pillars of fire, changing from red to green, shot forth in whirling columns over the whole heavens.

"The inhabitants here had assembled for a dance and various kinds of merriment; but the splendor of the scene did not excite wonder in their accustomed eyes. 'Let the souls of the dead play ball with the walrus head!' they thought, according to their superstition; they had thought and eye only for the song and dance.

"A Greenlander, without his fur coat, stood in the middle of the circle, and, beating on the drum, he began a song about the seal hunt; the chorus responded with 'Eia! Eia!' and hopped around and around in a circle, dressed in their garments of white fur. Their eyes and heads moved strangely, and the whole scene was like a polar bears' ball. Now

judgment and sentence began. Those who had come with a grievance stepped forward, and the injured person chanted forth, boldly and mockingly, the faults of his opponent in an extemporaneous song, accompanied by the drumbeats and dancing. Then the accused replied with equal shrewdness, while all the people laughed and finally they pronounced sentence.

"From the mountains came a thunderous sound; the glaciers above had split into pieces, and the huge masses fell in showers of dust. It was a beautiful Greenland summer night.

"A sick man lay a hundred yards away, beneath an open tent of skins. There was still life in his warm blood, but he must die, for he believed that, and all the others believed it, too. Already his wife was sewing the skin covering tightly around his limbs, so that afterwards she would not have to touch the dead body. 'Do you want to be buried on the mountain in the firm snow?' she asked him. 'I will cover your grave with your kayak and your arrows, and the angekok will dance over it. Or would you rather be buried in the sea?'

" 'In the sea,' the sick man whispered, and nodded with a sad smile.

" 'The sea is a pleasant summer pavilion!' said his wife. 'Thousands of seals play there, the walrus sleeps at your feet, and the hunt is safe and merry.'

"And then his crying children tore the stretched skin away from the window hole, so that the dying man could be carried out to sea, to the swelling ocean, which in his life had given him food and now in death was to give him rest. The floating icebergs, passing back and forth by day and night, became his tombstone. The seal slumbers on the icebergs while the storm bird flies over them."

Tenth Evening

"I once knew an old maid," said the Moon. "Every winter she wore a coat of yellow satin trimmed with fur, which always seemed new, and was always her only fashion. Every summer she wore the same straw hat, and, I believe, the same gray-blue gown. She left her home only to visit an old lady friend who lived across the street; but in later years even these visits ceased, for the friend was dead. In her solitude my old maid used to putter about before her window, where all summer long a row of pretty flowers stood, and in winter a fine crop of cress grew on the top of a felt hat.

"During the last month she no longer sat at the window; but I knew she was still alive, for I had not yet seen her set out on that great journey which the old lady and her friend had so often discussed. 'Yes,' she would say, 'one day, when I die, I shall make a longer journey than I have made in my whole lifetime. The family vault is six miles from here, and that is where they will carry me, that I may sleep with the rest of my family.'

"Last night a hearse drove up before the house; a coffin was carried out, and then I knew that she had died. They packed straw and matting around the casket, and drove off. Now the quiet old maid, who in the last few years of her life had never left her house, slept quietly. And the hearse rolled swiftly out of town, as if this were a pleasure trip. On the highway it traveled even faster. From time to time the driver looked around nervously; I believe he feared seeing her seated behind him on the coffin, in her yellow satin and fur coat; therefore he lashed the horses recklessly while still holding in the reins as tightly as he could, until the poor horses were covered with foam. The horses were young and high-spirited, and when a hare darted across the road they became unmanageable and ran away. The quiet old maid, who year in and year out had only moved about slowly and noiselessly in a circle, was now a liveless corpse, rushed and bumped along the highway over stick and stone. The coffin, with its covering of straw, fell off, and lay on the road, while horses, hearse, and driver dashed wildly off.

"A lark rose from the field, twittering its morning hymn over the coffin, and then alighted on it, pecking with its beak at the straw matting, as if it wanted to pull it to pieces. The lark,

singing happily, flew into the air, and I withdrew behind the reddening clouds of dawn."

Eleventh Evening

"It was a wedding celebration," related the Moon. "Songs were sung and toasts proposed; everything was rich and splendid. It was past midnight before the guest departed. The mothers kissed the bride and groom; then they were alone. I saw them through the window, although the curtains were almost drawn; a lamp lighted the cozy room.

" 'Thank heaven they have left!' he said, and kissed her hands and lips. She smiled and cried, resting her head on his chest as happily as the lotus flower rests on the flowing water. And they spoke soft and blissful words.

" 'Sleep sweetly!' he exclaimed, as she drew the window curtains aside.

" 'How beautifully the moon is shining!' she said; 'see how quiet and how clear it is.' And she put out the lamp; it became dark in the cozy room, but my light then shone, as brightly as his eyes shone.

"Femininity, kiss thou the poet's harp when he sings of the mysteries of life!"

Twelfth Evening

"I shall give you a picture of Pompeii, said the Moon. "I was outside the city, in the Street of the Tombs, as they call the place where happy youths, with wreaths of roses on their heads, once danced with the fair sisters of Lais. Now the silence of death reigns there.

"German soldiers, in the service of Naples, kept guard, and played cards and diced. A group of strangers from beyond the mountains walked into the city, conducted by a guard. They had come to see, in the full clear rays of my light, the city arisen from the grave. I showed them the ruts of the chariot wheels in the streets paved with great slabs of lava. I showed them the names upon the doors and the signs still hanging before the houses. In the narrow courts they saw the fountain basins ornamented with shells, but the waters no longer spouted forth. No longer were songs heard from the richly painted chambers, where the bronze dogs kept watch before the doors. It was the City of the Dead. Vesuvius alone still thundered his eternal hymn, and each stanza of it men call a new eruption. We visited the Temple of Venus, built of pure white marble, with its high altar in front of its broad steps; the weeping willow has sprung up between the columns. The air here was transparent and blue, and in the background loomed Vesuvius, black as coal, its flames rising straight as the trunk of a pine tree. The glowing smoke cloud lay in the still calm of the night like the crown of the pine tree, but red as blood.

"Among the group was a lady singer, a truly great artiste; I have seen the honor done her in the first cities of Europe. They approached the amphitheater, and there they all seated themselves on the stone steps; thus a small space was filled, whereas thousands of years ago the entire place had been. The stage was still there, as in the olden days, with its brick side walls and the two arches in the background, through which the same scenery was visible as in times of old, and Nature herself spread out before us the hills between Sorrento and Amalfi.

"In jest the lady walked up onto the ancient stage and sang. The place inspired her, and I could not but think of a wild Arabian horse, snorting, its mane standing erect, as it dashes off in its wild course; here were the same ease and confidence. I had to think, too, of the suffering mother beneath the Cross of Golgotha, so deep was the feeling, the pain expressed. Round about sounded shouts of delight and applause, as they had thousands of years before here. 'What a heavenly gift!' they all exclaimed.

"Three minutes later the scene was deserted; everyone was gone, and not a sound was heard, for the group had wandered off. But the ruin stood unchanged, as it will stand for centuries yet to come. The momentary applause is forgotten, as are the singer's notes

and smiles, forgotten, gone. Even to me this hour will be but a fleeting memory."

Thirteenth Evening

"I looked in through the window of a newspaper editor," said the Moon. "It was somewhere in Germany. It was a handsomely furnished room, with many books and a chaos of newspapers. There were several young men present. The editor himself stood beside his desk; two little books, both by unknown authors, were to be reviewed.

" 'This one has been sent to me,' he said. 'I haven't read it yet, but it's well put together. What do you think about its contents?'

" 'Oh,' said one of the young men, who was a poet, 'it is very good - a bit drawn out, but then, good Lord! he's only a young man. It's true the verses might be improved. The thoughts are sound enough; it's only a pity they're so commonplace. But what can you expect? We can't always get something new. You might praise him a little, though in my opinion it's clear he'll never be anything great as a poet. Still, he has read a good deal; he's an excellent Oriental scholar, and he has rather sound judgment. It was he who wrote the splendid review of my *Reflections on Domestic Life*. After all, we must be lenient toward a young man.'

" 'But he's a complete ass!' said another gentleman in the room. 'There's nothing worse in poetry than mediocrity, and he certainly will never get any higher!'

" 'Poor fellow,' said a third. 'And yet his aunt is so proud of him. She's the lady, Mr. Editor, who got together that large list of subscribers for your last volume of translations.'

" 'Ah, the good woman! Well, I've just given the book a brief notice. Unquestionable talent - a welcome gift! A flower in the garden of poetry, well put together, and so forth. But now, about this other book - I suppose the author expects me to buy it. I have heard it praised; the author has genius, they say. Don't you think so?'

" 'Yes, so they all say,' said the poet. 'But it's rather wild. The punctuation, however, is indicative of genius! It'll do him good to be treated roughly, to be pulled to pieces; otherwise he will have far too good an opinion of himself.'

" 'But that would be unfair,' said a fourth. 'Don't let's pick at little faults, but rather find pleasure in what is good; and there is much here worth praising. He writes better than all the rest of them.'

" 'Heaven help us! If he's such a great genius, he can take some sharp criticism! There are enough people to praise him in private; let us not drive him mad with flattery!'

" 'Decided talent,' wrote the editor. 'The usual carelessness here and there; that he can write bad verses may be seen on page twenty-five, where there are two hiatuses. We recommend that he study the classics,' etc.

"I passed on," the Moon continued, "and peeped through the window of the aunt's house. There sat the praised poet, the tame one, receiving homage from all the guests, and he was happy.

"I sought out the other poet, the wild one. He also was in a large gathering, at one of his patron's. The subject of the conversation was his rival's book.

" 'Sometime or other I'll read your poems,' said the patron, 'but to tell the truth - and you know I always say what I think - I don't expect much from them. In my opinion you're too wild for me, too fantastic. But I must admit that as a man you are highly respectable!'

"A young girl sat in a corner, reading a book:

*In the dust are trodden genius and its glory,
While everyday talent wins high acclaim.*

*It is, alas, a very old story;
It'll never be new, but ever the same."*

Fourteenth Evening

The Moon spoke. "Near the forest path are two farmhouses. The doors are low and the windows placed irregularly; white thorn bushes and barberry ramble around them. Their mossy roofs are overgrown with yellow flowers and houseleek. Only green cabbage and potatoes grow in the little garden, but by the hedge grows a willow tree; and beneath it sat a little girl, her eyes fixed on the old oak tree between the farmhouses. Its tall and withered trunk had been sawed off at the top, and upon it a stork had built his nest. He stood above it now, rattling his bill. A little boy came out and stood beside the girl; they were brother and sister.

" 'What are you looking at?' he asked.

" 'At the stork,' she said. 'The neighbor woman told me he'll bring us a little brother or sister tonight, and I'm watching so I can see it when it comes.'

" 'The stork doesn't bring anything,' said the boy. 'The neighbor woman, believe me, told me that too, but she laughed when she said it, so I asked her if she dared say "on my honor." No, she didn't dare do that. I know perfectly well that what they say about the stork is only a story they tell to children.'

" 'But then where does the baby come from?' asked the girl.

" 'Our Lord brings it,' said the boy. 'God has it under His mantle, but no one can see God, so we can't see Him bring it.'

"Just then a breeze stirred in the branches of the willow tree. The children folded their hands and looked at each other. Surely this was God, who had brought the little baby! Then they clasped each other's hands. The door of the house opened, and the neighbor woman appeared.

" 'Come in now,' she said, 'and see what the stork has brought you; it is a little brother.'

"And the children nodded, for they already knew the baby had come."

Fifteenth Evening

"I sailed over Lüneburg Heath," the Moon said. "A lonely hut stood there by the roadside. Around it grew a few withered bushes where a nightingale, which had lost its way, was singing. It would surely die during that cold night; it was its swan's song that I heard.

"Morning dawned, and along came a group of emigrant peasant families who wanted to go to Bremen or Hamburg to take a ship for America, where they hoped to see their dreams of good fortune come true. The youngest children were carried on the backs of the women, while the bigger ones skipped along beside them. A wretched horse was dragging a cart that bore the few household effects they possessed.

"The cold wind blew, causing a little girl to nestle more closely to her mother, who looked up at my round, decreasing orb, and thought of the cruel hardships she had suffered in her home, of the heavy taxes they had not been able to pay. Her thoughts were those of the whole group. Hence the rosy glimmer of the rising dawn seemed to them like a ray of promise, the forerunner of the sun of happiness that would rise again. They heard the song of the dying nightingale, and to them it seemed no false prophet, but the herald of good fortune.

"The wind whistled, but they could not understand its song: 'Sail over the ocean! You have paid for the long passage with all your possessions. Poor and helpless shall you set foot on the promised land. You may sell yourselves, your wives, and your children. Yet you

shall not suffer long, for behind the broad, fragrant leaf sits the angel of death. Her welcome kiss breathes the deadly fever into your blood! Sail on, sail on over the swelling waves!

"And the group listened happily to the song of the nightingale, for it surely seemed to promise good fortune.

"The day broke through the light clouds. The peasants were crossing the heath on their way to church. In their black gowns, and with the strip of white linen bound closely around their heads, the women looked as if they had stepped out of the old paintings in the church. Around them lay a vast, dead scene - the withered, brown heath, dark, scorched plains between white sand dunes. The women were carrying their prayer books as they made their way to the church. Oh pray! Pray for those who go forth to their graves, beyond the swelling waves!"

Sixteenth Evening

"I know a punchinello," the Moon said. "The audience rejoices whenever he appears. Every movement he makes is so comical that it brings roars of laughter in the house, and yet there is nothing remarkable in his work to account for this - it is more his peculiarity. Even when he was only a boy, playing about with the other boys, he was a punchinello. Nature had shaped him for the character by putting a hump on his back and another on his chest; but the mind and soul hidden under the deformities were, on the contrary, richly endowed. No one possessed a deeper feeling, a stronger spiritual feeling, than he. The theater was his ideal world; if he had been tall and handsome, he might have become a great tragedian on any stage. His soul was filled with all that was heroic and great; still, it was his fate to be a punchinello. His very sadness, his melancholy, heightened the dry wit of his sharply drawn face, and aroused the laughter of a vast audience, which lustily applauded its favorite.

"The lovely Columbine was gentle and kind to him; yet she preferred to marry Harlequin. It would indeed have been too funny if in reality 'Beauty and the Beast' had married. Whenever Punchinello was dejected, she was the only one who could bring a smile to his lips; yes, she could even make him laugh loudly. At first she was as melancholy as he, then somewhat calmer, and at last overflowing with gaiety.

" 'I know well enough what's the matter with you, ' she said. 'You are in love!'

"And then he couldn't help laughing. 'Love and I!' he cried. 'That would be funny indeed; how the public would applaud!'

" 'It's love!' she continued, and added with comical pathos, 'it is I you love!'

"Yes, one may speak this way when one thinks there is no love in the other's heart. Punchinello laughed heartily and jumped high into the air, and his melancholy was forgotten. And yet she had spoken the truth; he did love her, loved her deeply, as he loved all that was great and noble in art.

"On her wedding day he seemed the merriest of the merry, but that night he wept. If people had seen his tormented face they would have applauded him more than ever.

"A few days ago Columbine died. On the day of her burial Harlequin had permission not to appear on the stage, for he was a grief-stricken widower. The manager had to present something very gay, so that the public would not miss the pretty Columbine and the graceful Harlequin. Therefore the nimble Punchinello had to be doubly merry; with grief in his heart he danced and skipped about, and all applauded and cried, 'Bravo! Bravissimo!' Punchinello was called back again and again. Oh, he was priceless!

"After the performance last night the poor little man strolled out of the town to the lonely churchyard. The wreath of flowers on Columbine's grave had already faded. There he sat

- and what a study for a painter! - with his chin on his hand and his eyes turned toward me; he looked like a grotesque monument - a punchinello on the grave, strange and comical. If the public had seen their favorite, how they would have applauded and cried, 'Bravo, Punchinello! Bravo! Bravissimo!'

Seventeenth Evening

Listen to what the Moon told me: "I have seen a cadet become an officer and dress himself in his handsome uniform for the first time. I have seen a young maiden in her ball gown, and the happiness of a prince's pretty young bride in her wedding dress. But no joy can be compared to that which I saw last evening in a child, a little girl four years old. She had received a new blue dress and a new rose-colored bonnet. She was already dressed in her finery, and everyone called for candles, as my beams were too faint through the window, and more light was needed. The little girl stood as stiff as a doll, her arms carefully stretched away from the frock, the fingers spread wide apart from one another. Oh, how her eyes and every feature beamed with joy!

" 'Tomorrow you shall go for a walk', said her mother. The little girl looked up at her bonnet and down at her dress, and smiled happily. 'Mother,' she said, 'what will the dogs think when they see me in these beautiful things!'

Eighteenth Evening

"I have told you about Pompeii," the Moon said, "that corpse of a city which is now once more listed among living cities. I know another, an even stranger one; it is not a corpse, but rather the phantom of a city. Whenever water splashes from fountains into marble basins, I seem to hear the tale of the floating city. Yes, the spouting water can tell about it. The waves of the sea sing about it.

"Over the face of the ocean there often hangs a mist - her widow's veil, for the bridegroom of the ocean is dead; his city and his palace are now but a mausoleum. Do you know this city? Never was the rattle of carriages or the clatter of horses' hoofs heard in its streets; only fish swim there, while the black gondola glides ghostlike over the green waters.

"I will show you the largest square in the city, the Piazza," continued the Moon, "and you will imagine yourself in fairyland. The grass grows up between the broad flagstones, and in the early dawn thousands of tame pigeons flutter about the tall, isolated tower. There are archways about you on three sides, and beneath one of them sit the motionless Turk, with his long pipe, and the handsome young Greek, leaning against a pillar, gazing up at the trophies aloft, at the tall masts, monuments of a lost power. The flags hang down like mourning crape. A girl is resting there; she has set down her heavy pails of water, though the yoke by which she carries them is still across her shoulders; she is leaning against the Mast of Victory.

"The building you see before you is not a fairy castle, but a church. The gilded domes and the golden balls around it glitter in my rays. Those magnificent bronze horses up there have traveled like the bronze horse in the fairy tale; they have journeyed to distant lands and returned. Can you see the brilliant colors on the walls and window panes? It is as if, at a child's plea, a fairy had decorated this strange temple. Can you see the winged lion upon that column? He still glitters with gold, but his wings are bound; the lion is dead, for the King of the Ocean is dead. The great halls are empty, and where gorgeous pictures once hung there are now bare walls. Beggars sleep beneath the archways, whereas once only great nobles were permitted to tread the pavement there. A sigh sounds from the deep dungeons, or is from the leaden chambers near the Bridge of Sighs, where once were heard the tambourines in the gay gondolas, just as they were when the wedding ring was cast from the glorious *Bucentaur* into the Adriatic, the Queen of the Ocean. Wrap yourself in your mists, O Adriatic! Cover yourself with the widow's veil, and let it enwrap your bridegroom's mausoleum - marble, ghostlike Venice!"

Nineteenth Evening

"I looked down into a large theater," said the Moon. "The audience filled the house, for a new actor was making his first appearance. My rays glided through a small window in the wall, and I saw a painted face with the forehead pressed against the pane - it was the hero of the evening. The knightly beard curled around his chin, but there were tears in his eyes, for he had been hissed from the stage, and for a good reason. Poor fellow! But incompetence cannot be tolerated in the world of art. He had deep feeling, and loved his art with a fervor, but art did not love him.

"The prompter's bell tinkled. In his part was written, 'Boldly and valiantly the hero advances' - and he had to appear before an audience which ridiculed him.

"When the play was ended I saw a man, muffled in a cloak, sneak down the stairs; it was he, the crushed hero of the evening. The stagehands whispered to each other. I followed the poor fellow to his room. Hanging oneself is an unsightly death, and poison is not always at hand. I know he was thinking of both.

"I saw him look at his pale face in the mirror, and peep through half-closed eyes to decide whether he would look well as a corpse. A man may be very unhappy and at the same time very affected. He thought of death, of suicide, and I believe he pitied himself. He wept bitterly, and when a man has wept until no more tears can come he no longer thinks of suicide.

"A year had passed since then, and again a play was produced, but in a little theater, by a company of poor wandering players. I again saw that familiar face with the curled beard, the painted cheeks. Again he looked up at me and smiled - and yet he had again been hissed from the stage, only a minute before, hissed from a miserable stage, hissed by a miserable audience!

"That same evening a shabby hearse drove out of the gate of the town, with no one following. It was a suicide - our painted and hissed hero. The only attendant was the driver of the hearse, and none but the Moon followed it. The suicide lies buried in a corner by the churchyard wall. Nettles will soon grow over his grave, and the gravedigger will fling over it the weeds and thorns he roots from the other graves."

Twentieth Evening

"I come from Rome," the Moon said. "There on one of the seven hills in the middle of the city are the ruins of the Emperor's palace. The wild fig tree grows in the breaches of the wall, and covers its bareness with broad, gray-green leaves. The donkey treads on the green laurels and enjoys the barren thistle among heaps of rubbish. To this spot, from which the Roman eagles once flew out over the world, and came, saw, and conquered, an entrance now leads through a humble little house, built of clay, and wedged between two broken marble columns. Vine tendrils hang down like a mourning wreath over the crooked window.

"An old woman lives there with her little granddaughter. They are now the rulers of the Emperor's palace, and show the place to tourists. A bare wall is all that remains of the magnificent throne hall, and the long shadow of a dark cypress points to the spot where the throne once stood. There is earth a yard high on the broken floor. The little girl, now the daughter of the Emperor's palace, often sits there on her stool while the evening bells ring. Through the keyhole of a near-by door, which she calls her balcony window, she can overlook half of Rome, as far as the mighty dome of St. Peter's.

"The evening as always, was still, and down below the little girl was walking in my full clear light. Carrying an antique earthen pitcher of water on her head, she was barefooted, and her short skirt and little sleeves were torn. I kissed the child's finely rounded shoulders, her black eyes, and her dark, shining hair. She mounted the steps up to the house, which

were steep and formed of broken bits of masonry and a crumbled column. Spotted lizards ran frightened past her feet, but she was not afraid of them. Her hand was raised to ring the doorbell - a rabbit's foot suspended from a string was now the bell handle at the Emperor's palace - but she paused for a moment. What was she thinking of? Perhaps of the beautiful image of the infant Jesus, clad in silver and gold, in the chapel below, where the silver lamps burned, and where her little friends sang the hymn she knew so well. I do not know. She moved, and stumbled. The earthen pitcher fell from her head and crashed on the marble step! She burst into tears; the beautiful daughter of the Emperor's palace wept over a cheap, broken clay pitcher. She stood there barefooted and wept, and dared not pull the string, the bell rope at the Emperor's palace."

Twenty-first Evening

The Moon hadn't shone for more than two weeks, and then at last I saw him again, round and clear above the slowly rising mass of clouds. Listen to what the Moon told me.

"I followed a caravan out of one of the towns of Fezzan. The group halted near the sandy desert, on a salt plain, which glittered like an ice field, and was covered to but a small extent with the light drift-sand. The oldest man in the caravan, at whose girdle hung the water flask, and on whose head was a sack of unleavened bread, drew a square figure on the ground with his staff, and wrote inside it a few words from the Koran. Then the whole caravan passed over the consecrated spot. A young merchant, a son of the East, as I could see from his sparkling eyes and his handsome figure, rode thoughtfully on his white, snorting horse. Was he perhaps thinking of his pretty young wife at home? Only two days before, a camel, covered with costly furs and splendid shawls, had carried her, the lovely bride, around the walls of the city. Drums and bagpipes had sounded, and the women had sung, while all around the camel there had been rejoicing and gunshots, the greatest number of which the bridegroom had fired.

"And now - now he was journeying with the caravan far away into the desert. I followed them on their way for many nights, and saw them rest beside the wells, under the palm trees. They plunged a knife into the breast of a camel that had fallen, and roasted the meat at the fire. My rays cooled the glowing sands, and showed them the black rocks, dead islands in the immense ocean of sand. They met no hostile tribes on their pathless route; no storms arose; no wave of sand whirled destruction over the caravan.

"At home the lovely young wife prayed for her husband and her father. 'Are they dead?' she asked my golden horn. 'Are they dead?' she asked my brilliant orb.

"Now the desert lies behind them. This evening they are camped beneath tall palm trees, with the crane flying about them on long wings and the pelican watching them from the branches of mimosa. The luxuriant underbrush is trodden by the heavy feet of elephants.

A troop of Negroes are returning from a market in the interior; the women, with indigo-blue skirts and their black hair decked with brass buttons, are driving heavily laden oxen, on which the naked black children are lying asleep. A Negro is leading, by a rope, a lion cub that he has bought. They approach the caravan.

"The young merchant sits silent and motionless, thinking of his beautiful wife; in this land of the blacks he is dreaming of his white and fragrant flower, far away across the desert; he raises his head. . . . "

A cloud, and then another cloud, passed across the face of the Moon. I heard nothing more from him that evening.

Twenty-second Evening

"I saw a little girl weeping," the Moon said, "weeping over the wickedness of the world. She had received the loveliest doll as a gift. Oh, what a doll that was, so pretty and delicate, and surely it could not have been made to experience hardship! But the little girl's

brothers, who were tall boys, had placed the doll in a high tree in the garden, and had then run away. The little girl couldn't reach the doll, and had no way of helping it down, and that was why she was crying. The doll undoubtedly wept too, for it stretched out its arms through the green branches and looked very sad indeed.

"Yes, this was one of the hardships of the world, of which Mamma spoke so often. Oh, that poor doll! The evening twilight was already coming on, and night would soon be here. Did it have to sit alone in the tree out here all night long? No, the little girl didn't have the heart to let it do that. 'I'll stay with you!' she said, although she really was not very brave. She already imagined she could see the little goblins, in their tall pointed caps, peeping out from the bushes, and tall ghosts dancing in the dark walk, coming closer and closer, stretching out their hands toward the tree where the doll sat, and laughingly pointing their fingers at it. Oh, how frightened the little girl was! 'But if we haven't done anything sinful,' she thought, 'the evil spirits can't hurt us. I wonder if I have done something wrong!' She thought for a moment. 'Oh, yes!' she said. 'I laughed at the poor little duck that had a red rag around its leg. It's so funny when it limps, and that's why I laughed at it! But I know it's wrong to laugh at animals.' Then she looked up at her doll. 'Have *you* ever laughed at animals?' she asked. And it seemed as if the doll shook its head."

Twenty-third Evening

"I looked down on Tyrol," said the Moon, "and my rays caused the dark pine trees to cast heavy shadows across the rocks. I looked at the figures of St. Christopher, with the infant Jesus on his shoulder, that are painted on the walls of the houses, enormous figures that extend from the ground to the gables, pictures of St. Florian pouring water on the burning house, and of Christ on the great roadside crosses. To the present generation they are very old pictures, whereas I saw them being put up, one after the other.

"High up, on the slope of the mountain, is a lonely nunnery, wedged in between the rocks like a swallow's nest. Two of the sisters were in the tower above, tolling the bell; they were both young, and therefore they looked out over the mountains into the wide world beyond. A traveling coach rolled by on the highway below, and the postilion's horn sounded. As the poor nuns looked their glances, and a tear gleamed in the eye of the younger one. The horn sounded more and more faintly, until at last the convent bell silenced its dying sound."

Twenty-fourth Evening

Now listen to what the Moon told me.

"Several years ago, here in Copenhagen, I looked in through the window of a poor furnished room. The father and mother slept, but their little son was not asleep. I saw the flowered cotton bed curtain move, and the child peep out from behind it. At first I thought he was looking at the great Bornholm clock, which was brightly painted in red and green, with a cuckoo atop it, and heavy lead weights hanging below; the pendulum, with its glittering brass plate, swung to and fro - tick, tock! But it wasn't the clock that the little fellow looked at. No, it was his mother's spinning wheel, which stood just beneath the clock. To him this was the most precious thing in the entire house; yet, he never dared touch it, unless he wished to have his fingers slapped. For hours he would sit beside his mother while she spun, looking at the humming spindle and the circling wheel; and at those moments he always had his own thoughts. Ah, if he only dared to turn the spinning wheel by himself!

"His father and mother still slept; he looked at them first, then at the spinning wheel. Presently a little bare foot stuck out of bed, then another bare foot, and soon two small legs appeared. And - bumps! - then he was standing on the floor. Once more he turned around to see if his father and mother slept; yes, they did; and then, dressed only in his short little shirt, he stole very, very softly to the spinning wheel, and began to spin. The

thread flew off, but the wheel only turned the more quickly. I kissed his yellow hair and his light blue eyes; it was a pretty picture.

"Suddenly his mother awoke. The bed curtains moved; she peeped out, and instantly thought of goblins or other little sprites. 'In Jesus' name!' she said, and in her fright she nudged her husband. He opened his eyes, rubbed them with his hand, and looked at the busy little fellow, 'Why,' he said, 'that is Bertel!'

"My eye turned from the humble room - I have so many things to see, you know - and in the same instant I was looking down into the halls of the Vatican, where stand the marble statues of the gods. I lighted up the Laocoön group, and the stone seemed to sigh. I pressed my silent kiss on the breasts of the Muses, and they seemed to come to life. But my rays rested longest on the Nile group - on the colossal figure of the god. There he lay leaning on the Sphinx, dreaming, thoughtful, as if he were thinking of the years gone by. Around him the little cupids played with the crocodiles. A tiny little cupid sat in the horn of plenty, his arms crossed, and gazed at the stern and mighty river god - a true picture of the little boy at the spinning wheel, with the very same features. Here, lifelike and charming, stood the little marble child; and yet the wheel of time has revolved more than a thousand times since it was cut out of the stone. And it would have to revolve again - as many times as the boy turned the spinning wheel in the humble room - before the world would once more produce marble figures like these.

"Many years have since passed," the Moon continued. "Only yesterday I looked down on a bay on the eastern coast of Zealand, surrounded with high banks and beautiful forests. There is an old manor house there, with red walls and swans on the waters of the moat, while near by is a pretty little country town, with its church situated among apple orchards.

"A great many boats, lighted with torches, glided over the calm surface of the water. The torches had not been lighted for catching eel; no, this was a festival. Music sounded, and a song was sung. In one of the boats stood the man who was the object of this homage, a tall, powerful figure, wrapped in a great cloak, a man with blue eyes and long white locks. I knew him, and I thought of the Nile group, and the marble statues of the gods in the Vatican. And I thought of that humble little room - I believe it was in Grønne Street - where little Bertel, in his short little shirt, sat and spun. The wheel of time has turned, and new gods have been carved in marble. . . . From the boats arose shouts, 'Hurrah! Hurrah for Bertel Thorvaldsen!' "

Twenty-fifth Evening

"I'll give you a picture from Frankfort," said the Moon. "I noticed one building in particular there. It was not the birthplace of Goethe, nor was it the old town hall, through whose grated windows one may still see the horned skulls of oxen which were roasted and given to the people at the coronation of the emperors. The building was a burgher's type of house, plain and painted green, and stood at the corner of the narrow Jew's Alley. It was the house of Rothschild.

"I looked in at the open door. The staircase was brightly lighted; servants in livery, with wax tapers in massive silver candlesticks, bowed low before an aged woman who was being carried down the stairs in a chair. The master of the house stood by, bareheaded, and pressed a respectful kiss on the old lady's hand. She was his mother; she nodded kindly to him, and to the servants, who then carried her through the dark, narrow street, and into a little house. Here she lived, and here she had borne all her children. From this spot their great fortunes had blossomed forth. Were she now to leave the miserable street and the little house, perhaps fortune would abandon them; that was her belief."

The Moon told no more; his visit to me that evening was all too short. But I thought about the old lady in the narrow, miserable street. A single word from her, and she could have had a magnificent house on the bank of the Thames; one word from her, and she could

have had a villa on the Bay of Naples. "If I should desert the humble house from which the fortunes of my sons have sprung, then perhaps fortune might desert them!" This was a superstition, but one that, to those who know the story and have seen the picture, two words of postscript will give full meaning - *a mother*.

Twenty-sixth Evening

"It was yesterday morning at dawn" - these are the Moon's own words - "and I was looking at the chimneys of a large city, from which as yet no smoke arose. Suddenly a little head popped up from one of them; then half the body followed, and both arms rested on the edge of the chimney. 'Hurrah!' It was a little chimney sweep, who for the first time in his life had climbed to the very top of a chimney and stuck his head out. 'Hurrah!'"

Yes, this was indeed very different from creeping about in the narrow flues and little chimneys. The air was so fresh, and he could look out over the whole city, to the green woods. The sun was rising; it shone round and large into his face, which beamed with joy, and was prettily blacked with soot. 'The whole city can see me now!' he said. 'The moon can see me, and the sun, too!' Hurrah!' And then he waved his broom above his head."

Twenty-seventh Evening

"Last night I looked down on a city in China," said the Moon. "My beams shone on the long bare walls that formed its streets; here and there was a door, of course, but it was always shut, for what has a Chinese to do with the world outside? Tight blinds concealed the windows behind the walls; only from within the temple was there light, which shone faintly through its windows.

I looked in and observed its colorful grandeur. From floor to ceiling the walls are painted with many pictures, in vivid colors and rich gilt, representing the actions of the gods on earth. In every niche is the statue of a deity, almost entirely concealed by colored draperies and hanging banners. Before each of the gods - they are all made of tin - is a little altar, with flowers, holy water, and burning candles. But foremost in the temple was Fu, the principal deity, clad in a silken robe of the sacred color, yellow.

"At the foot of his altar sat a living figure, a young priest, seemingly lost in prayer; but in the midst of his prayers he seemed to fall into a deep reverie, and he must have had some sinful thought on his conscience, for his cheeks burned, and his head was bent to the ground. Poor Soui-houng! Could he perhaps be dreaming of working in his little bed of flowers, one such as separates every Chinese house from the long street wall? And was that work more agreeable to him than sweeping the temple and snuffing wax tapers? Or did he long to be seated at the richly laden table, wiping his lips with silver paper between courses? Or was his sin so great that, if he dared confess it, the Celestial Empire would punish him with death? Or were his thoughts bold enough to follow the barbarian's ships to their home in distant England? No, his thoughts did not wander so far, and yet they were as sinful as the hot passions of youth could make them - doubly sinful in the temple here, in the presence of Fu and the other holy gods. I know where his thoughts were.

"In the outskirts of the city, upon a flat, flagged roof, where the railing seemed to be of porcelain, and where there were beautiful vases with large white bellflowers, sat the beautiful Pe, with her small roguish eyes, full lips, and the tiniest feet. The shoes pained her feet, but in her there was a still greater pain. And the satin rustled as she raised her delicate, round arms. Before her was a glass globe with four goldfish. With a many-colored, varnished stick she stirred the water, oh, so slowly, for she was lost in thought. Perhaps she was thinking how richly clothed in gold the fish were, how safely they lived in the glass bowl, how generously they were supplied with food, and yet how much happier they would have been free. Her thoughts roamed far away from her home; her thoughts wandered to the temple, but it was not with homage for the gods. Poor Pe! Poor Soui-houng! Their earthly thoughts met, but my cold beam lay between them like the sword of

and angel!"

Twenty-eighth Evening

"The ocean was calm," said the Moon. "The water was as transparent as the clear air through which I sailed. Deep down beneath the surface of the waves I could see the strange plants which stretched up their long stalks like great forest trees, while the fishes played above the tops of them.

"High in the air flew a flock of wild swans. One of them, whose wings were exhausted, sank lower and lower, while its eyes followed the aerial caravan disappearing in the distance. It kept its wings spread wide, and sank as a soap bubble sinks in the still air, until at last it touched the surface of the water. Its head bent backwards between its wings, and it lay there motionless, like the white lotus flower on the peaceful lake.

"A breeze arose, fanning the quiet surface of the water, which gleamed and rippled until it curled up in large whitecapped waves. Then the swan raised its head, and the shiny water splashed, like blue fire, over its breast and back. The dawn of day touched the clouds with red. With new strength the swan arose and flew toward the rising sun, toward the bluish coast, the way the aerial caravan had gone before, but the swan flew alone, with longing in its breast. In loneliness it flew over the blue, the swelling waves."

Twenty-ninth Evening

"I'll give you another picture from Sweden," said the Moon. "Between dark pine forests, near the dreary banks of Lake Roxen, is the old convent church of Vreta. My rays penetrated through the grating in the wall, into the spacious vault where the kings sleep in huge stone coffins. A kingly crown, symbol of earthly pomp, shines on the moldering wall above; but it is made of wood, painted and gilded, and hung on a wooden peg driven into the wall. The work has eaten into the gilded wood, while the spider has spun its web from the crown to the coffin like a mourning veil, and its is as frail as sorrow for the departed often is.

"How peacefully they sleep! I can remember them quite well. I can still see the proud smiles on their lips, from which came mighty and decisive pronouncements that brought joy or sorrow.

"When the steamboat winds its course among the mountains like a magic bark, a stranger frequently makes a pilgrimage to that church and visits the burial vault. He asks the names of the kings, but they sound unfamiliar and empty to him. He smiles at the worm-eaten crowns, and if he happens to be of a pious nature, there is a sadness reflected in his smile. Slumber on, ye dead! The Moon still remembers you and by night sends his cold rays into your silent kingdom, where the pinewood crown hangs."

Thirtieth Evening

"Close by the highway," said the Moon, "stands an inn, and opposite it is a large wagon shed, the roof of which was being thatched. I looked down between the rafters and through the open loft shutters into the dismal shed. The turkey cock was asleep on a beam, and a saddle lay in the empty manger.

"In the middle of the shed stood a traveling coach, in which the travelers were napping in easy security, while the horses were being watered and the coachman was stretching his legs; I well know that he had spent more than half the journey sleeping comfortable. The door to the servant's room was open; the bed was all topsy-turvy, and on the floor stood a candle which had burned deep down into the socket of the candlestick. The wind blew coldly through the shed. The time was closer to dawn than to midnight. In one of the side stalls slept a family of poor wandering musicians. The father and mother were probably dreaming of the burning drops left in their bottle, while the pale little girl was dreaming of the burning tears in her eyes. At their head lay their harp, and at their feet their dog."

Thirty-first Evening

"It occurred in a little provincial town," said the Moon; "it was last year that I saw it, but that doesn't matter, for I saw it very clearly. Tonight I read about it in the newspaper, but there it was not nearly so clearly told. The owner of a dancing bear was tied up behind the woodpile in the yard - the poor bear that looked so fierce, but did nobody any harm. Up in the attic room three small children were playing by the light of my rays; the oldest was perhaps six, the youngest not more than two. Tramp, tramp! There was somebody coming up the stairs; who could it be? The floor flew open - it was the bear! the huge, shaggy bear. He had tired of waiting so long out in the yard and had found his way up the stairs. I saw it all," said the Moon.

"The children were terribly frightened of the great, shaggy animal, and each ran to hide himself in a corner. The bear found all three of them and put his snuffling muzzle up to them, but didn't harm them. 'This must be a big dog,' thought the children, and then began to pet him. The bear stretched out at full length on the floor. The youngest boy rolled over him, and putting his curly head in the beast's shaggy black fur, began to play hide and seek. Then the eldest boy brought his drum, and thumped away on it with might and main; where upon the bear promptly stood erect on his hind legs and began to dance. What a charming sight! Each boy shouldered a musket, and of course the bear had to have one too, which he held onto firmly. What a playmate they had found! And away they marched - one, two, one, two!

"Suddenly the door opened, and the children's mother appeared. You should have seen her, speechless with horror, her face white as a sheet, her mouth half open, her eyes glassy with terror. But the smallest boy nodded to her with a look of great delight, and cried out childishly, 'Mamma, we're only playing soldier!'

"And then the bear's owner appeared."

Thirty-second Evening

The wind was stormy and cold; the clouds flew swiftly by. Only for a moment at a time could I see the Moon.

"I looked down through the silent sky at the drifting clouds," he said. "I see the great shadows chase across the earth."

Recently I looked down on a prison, outside of which stood a closed carriage waiting to take a prisoner away. My rays went in through the barred window to the wall where the prisoner was scratching lines as a parting memento. He was not writing words, but a melody, the outpourings of his heart, on his last night in this prison. Then the door opened, and he was led outside; he looked up at my round face. Clouds drifted between us, as if he should not see my face, nor I his. He entered the carriage; the door was closed, the whip cracked, and the horses galloped off into the deep forest, where my rays could not follow him. But as I glanced again through the barred window, my rays fell on the melody scratched on the wall - his last farewell. Where words fail, often music can speak. My beams could light up only a few of the notes, so that most of what was written there will be forever dark to me. Was it a song of death that he wrote? Or were these notes of joy? Was he driving away to meet his death, or to the embrace of his beloved? The rays of the Moon do not read all that mortals write.

"I look down through the great, silent sky at the drifting clouds. I see the great shadows chase across the earth."

Thirty-third Evening

"I am very fond of children," said the Moon, "especially the little ones, who are so amusing. When they are not thinking of me at all, I peep into the room, between the curtain and the window frame. I like to watch them dressing and undressing. First the

round, naked little shoulder comes creeping out of the frock, and then the arm slides out; or else I watch the stocking being drawn off, and a sweet little leg, so white and firm, appears, with a little white foot that's fit to be kissed - and I kiss it too!"

"This evening - and this I must tell you! - this evening I looked through a window where there was no curtain drawn, for nobody lived opposite. I saw a whole flock of youngsters, brothers and sisters. Among them was a little girl; she is only four years old, but she can say the Lord's Prayer as well as any of the others, and every evening the mother sits beside her bed and listens to her pray; then she gets a kiss, and the mother remains there until the child falls asleep, which happens as soon as she closes her little eyes.

"This evening the two elder children were a bit wild. One of them danced about on one leg in his long white nightgown, while the other stood on a chair where all the children's clothes were, and announced he was posing for Greek statues. The third and fourth put their toys carefully away in a drawer, for that has to be done. Then the mother sat by the bed of the youngest, and ordered all the rest to be quiet, for their little sister was going to say the Lord's Prayer.

"I peeped in over the lamp," said the Moon. "The four-year-old girl lay in her bed, between the neat white linen, her small hands folded, and her little face was very serious. She was saying the Lord's Prayer aloud.

" ' Why is it,' said her mother, interrupting her in the middle of the prayer, 'that when you've said, "Give us this day our daily bread," you always add something else that I can't quite understand? What is it? You must tell me!'

" ' Mother dear, please don't be angry. I only said, "with plenty of butter on it!'"