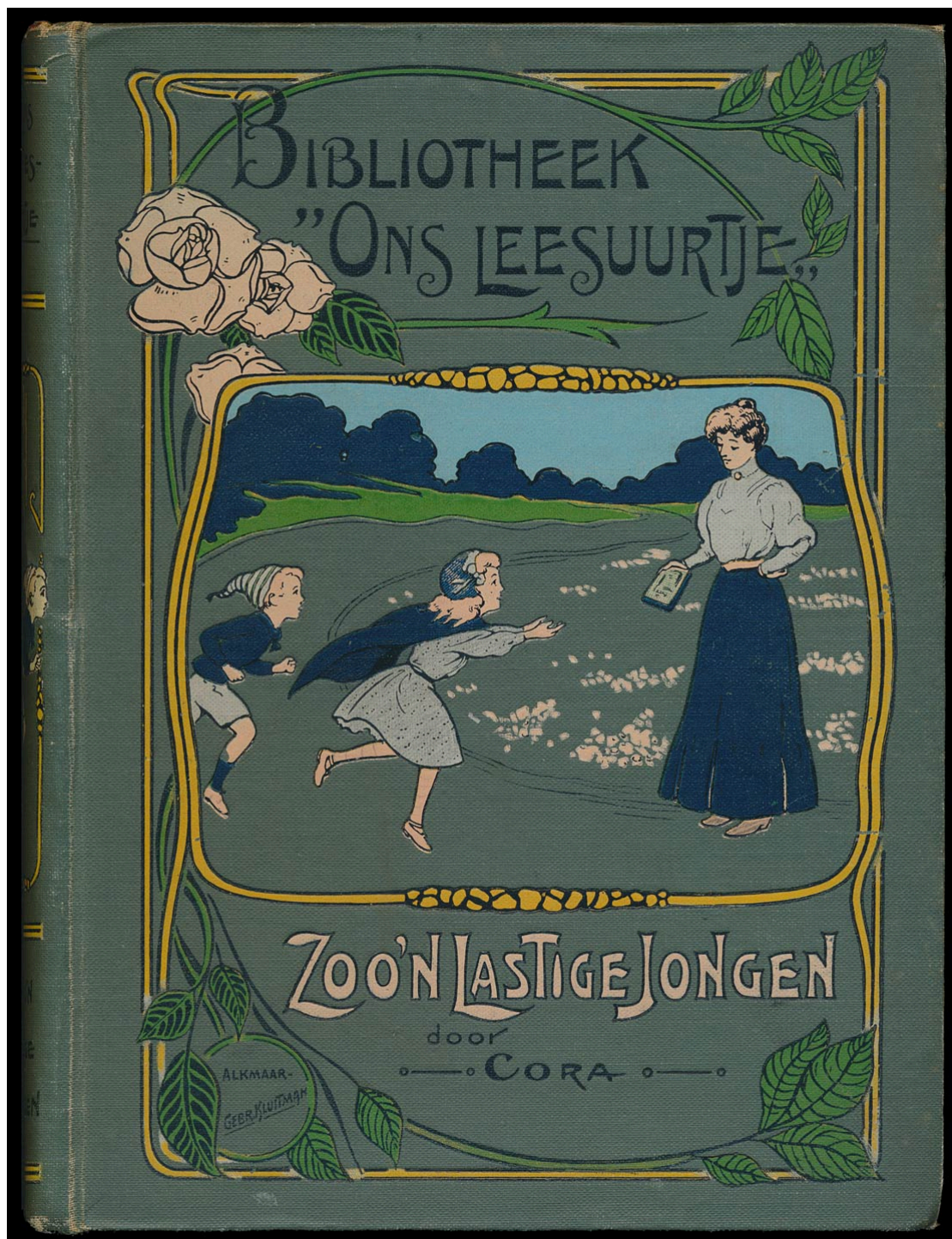


Such a difficult boy

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SUCH A TROUBLESOME BOY!

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GRACE STEBBING

ZOO'N LASTIGE JONGEN!

VRIJ NAAR HET ENGELSCH DOOR CORA

GEÏLLUSTREERD

GEAUTHORISEERDE UITGAVE



AMSTERDAM

C. A. J. VAN DISHOECK

1899

GRACE STEBBING

SUCH A TROUBLESOME BOY!

FREE TO ENGLISH BY CORA

ILLUSTRATED

AUTHORIZED EDITION

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I.

[Contents^[1]]

WHAT JO KNEW ABOUT HERSELF.

"Corrie! Come on, Corrie, listen for a moment!"

And if ever jollity and mischievousness could be read in a pair of blue boys' eyes, then this was certainly the case with the boys' soogen, whose small owner Jo Holmer.

With a doubtful expression, Corrie looked up from her work. "Yes, what's wrong?" she said.

"Oh, Corrie, I heard something so nice today, when I came home from school, something Very nice, really."

"So! What kind of beauty was that?"

"Well, somewhere at a door stood a woman, and she called to a little dirty boy, that played in the gutter, and she called and cried on and on, and it helped nothing, the boy didn't come anyway; and just when I was standing close to him, you know what I then heard him say—what do you think?" ^[2]

"I'm not curious about it at all. ' It must have been something naughty."

"Well, you see—" and Jo held his head to the side a little, as if he were very seriously thought about the matter;—"it wasn't very pretty, but he said it in such a funny way. way. "The more you call me, the less I will come." He didn't say it boldly, You see, but you can't understand how nice that sounded."

"No, I certainly can't understand that," was the answer of a pair of girls' lips, who did her utmost not to smile. It was not that the words of the naughty little boy, thus repeated by another naughty little boy, were in themselves so particularly comical, not at all; but the way and the tone in which they were uttered, and what was added to them, which made everything together that Jo's sister could hardly keep her seriousness completely.

Friend Jo came a little further into the room and stood right in front of his sister, stooped, and with a few ^[3] not very clean hands pressed to his knees. "Corrie—you don't know how comedian you look like, when you are almost laughing and don't want to laugh. Not only your lips vibrate, but also a small piece of one side of your nose—Look—" with a cry of delight—"there you have it again!"

The tormented Corrie stood up. "I'll slap you around the ears, Jo, really, you know, if you don't excrete."

"Go on, do it, Corrie! You've said so often that you'd do it, and you've I've never done it before. I should like to try to see if I felt anything of it."

Miss Corrie Holmer raised her hand and struck. And she struck hard too, Judging by the sound that followed. But that noise was not caused by the touch of Corrie's hand with her brother's cheek. When the requested blow Jo had unexpectedly brought out a wooden bat from behind his back, and who held it for shelter in front of his ear; and instead of giving himself a color as anyone would probably have expected, it was his sister, on whose cheeks there was a flush, not so much from pain, probably, as of annoyance. It is therefore anything but pleasant if someone is used as the means of making oneself ridiculous, especially if the guilty party is no^[4] more important person than a little toddler of nine years old.

Corrie sat down again and hurriedly bent over her knitting. "Go away, Jo. You're a very naughty boy, and I won't say a word to you before have asked for your apology."

"Huh!" said Jo, looking down on his "bat" with a thoughtful face. "That's always so annoying of girls. They are so very different from boys. When I recently with Fred Mackenzie playing a joke, he immediately tried another trick and then it was over; but if you want to have a joke with girls, Then it's always immediately a cry of "ask me excuse"."

"I don't see much funniness in you letting me slap my hand very much on your bat," was the somewhat indignant objection. "And as for that a toddler, just as you would know something about the difference in character between boys and girls—well, you don't even know anything about your own character so far."

"Oh, certainly," Jo replied at once. "For example, I know that I find it horrible to have to ask someone for an apology, or to say that I regret something. I get a feeling like I'm a—a—" with an expression of anger—"I am an ass when I have to do it."



"A w h a t ?" exclaimed Corrie. "What do you mean?"

"Oh," it sounded in a more calm tone—"I get such a desire to go and kick all the time, not against anyone, you see, but backwards, as the donkeys do. On and on and on on and on, until it's over."

Corrie looked up. A smile appeared on her nice, friendly face again .

[6]

"Well, little ass, if you think the excuse is such an ugly, bitter drink, then for once I will exempt you from taking it. But I think you can promise that you won't give me such a hard time another time. thing to save!"

Jo thought for a moment.

"Oh, you see, promises that you have to keep for so long, longer than a whole day, that are such nasty things. You have to think about it for such a l o n g time. Come on, rather think of a promise that I can finish in one go ."

Corrie laughed. "It's true, that might be safer. I have to see if I can think of something that you don't have to remember so long."

But Jo's thoughts seemed to work more quickly than his sister's. "I'm already there," was his exclamation. "I will promise that I will immediately wash my hands very neatly and brush my hair, then I'm done to eat, if you will promise to tell me a piece of a story, Immediately when I come back downstairs, and the rest after dinner, or to-night."

"Well, I have ever!" exclaimed Corrie. "Is that a way of—"

[7]

But she was interrupted by a confidential: "It's all right, you know, I see that you want to do it. I'll be back soon."

And then the door was opened with a jerk, and slammed shut again with a bang, and friend Jo ran up the stairs, echoing a cheerful song.

Corrie was the second eldest, and Jo the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Holmer. There were four of them. Willy, the eldest, twenty years old, studied at Oxford; Corrie, Her mother's right hand and a stout, cheerful, sweet girl, was eighteen for a moment. Then followed a fourteen-year-old girl who was at boarding school abroad. And it the other day Jo came, the small, difficult Jo. Because he was difficult, his parents would and his sisters. He was at once the joy and the plague of his loving relatives. If you had asked Corrie if she wouldn't would like to get rid of you, she would have told you with an expression of the greatest surprise and indignation. But if friend Jo had asked that question herself, then she would most likely have answered:

"Would I like to get rid of you? Of course, very much! Who would have such a troublesome boys?" [8]

"Oh," said Jo, one day when he had really received such an answer. "It's coming doesn't really care that much, Cor, what you think of it."

"Why not?" asked Corrie, with a hint of anxiety in her tone. "What do you mean do you think that it doesn't matter much what I think of it?"

"Well," was the calm answer, "if you really don't care very much or I don't care. with you, then I care so much about being with you, that there is nothing, nothing there's no chance you can lose me; so that comes down to the same thing, isn't it Isn't it?"

And the firm embrace that accompanied the question was met with an equally warm embrace while whispering the words resounded:

"My dear little toddler, I wouldn't sell you for a diamond, so big as your own curly head!" [9]

II.

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MEASURING GUTTERS.

"Not that I give so much now, you know that, Corrie—so really and really give a lot—to fairy tales; But that was still a smart little boy, I think, that makes you . I wish I had thought of it first, that plan of his."

"What plan?" asked Corrie, somewhat surprised.

But before Jo could answer that question, Mrs. Holmer's voice, which was the table was writing, hearing itself.

"Come, Jo," she shouted, glancing at the mantel clock. "It's more than time for you. If you don't hurry, you'll be late for school, boy."

Jo flew away, and Corrie's eyes turned to the focus again on the almost knitted stocking, which was intended^[10] for her brother. But on her face was still reading an expression of wonder, and again and again tried to she had asked Jo the question she had put to Jo, what he had about the plan of that little boy.

While Jo had been upstairs to wash his hands and brush his hair, Corrie had taken up some of Andersen's fairy tales and gone through the pages to come up with a suitable story. But she had a little headache, and her imagination completely failed her this time. Her brother came before she had been able to think of anything that could amuse him, and it was in the has become quite late in the meantime.

"Tell me, Jo," she finally ventured to suggest, "if I could give you one of the fairy tales from this book, until the dinner bell rings, and then when I read after dinner Once you tried to tell me something off the top of my head, how would you like that?"

"It is good," was the answer of the young commander, "for once it is possible; but then you have to count on me to have a real, nice story of yours, you know! Read it up!" [11]

And with the blond curly head leaning on her knee, Miss Holmer began very obediently. "to read on", the first best part of the book, which happened to occur. It was the story of the Elder Tree. A little boy gets wet feet, because of walking in a gutter, he catches a cold, is put to bed, his mother gives him drink warm elder tea, and an old friend of the family comes to sit by his bed and tells him stories until he falls asleep; and then he dreams for himself stories that are even stranger and more wonderful than what they have told him.

"A perfectly harmless little story," muttered Corrie, in a thoughtful tone; "There is there is nothing at all in it that could make Jo think of something naughty."

But although Miss Holmer did this again and again in the course of the afternoon, said to herself, she felt herself plagued by restless thoughts, as in her Ears the echo resounded with the words: "That was a smart little boy. I wish I had thought of it first, that plan of his."

As a rule, Jo did not keep much time making plans, except in those that they were connected with some mischief. When he was he had told his sister that she would be happy with the fairy tale because it had given [12] him so much to think about that he had no more room to in his head for new thoughts. But Corrie had that announcement on account of his interest in the adventures of the king of fairy tale writers . To tell the truth, Jo had hardly listened to that.

By four o'clock the stocking was finished, and Corrie put down her knitting needles and took it again the fairytale book.

"I'd think Jo must have had the peeing in the gutter in his head," muttered she, with a fearful premonition, after she had gone through the whole story again, without finding a single other point of mischief. "But he spoke of a plan, and I see nothing in that walking through the gutter, that would put him on the idea of some plan may have brought."

In the meantime, it turned out that the opinions of brother and sister on this subject were not at all agreed.

Corrie put the book down again and walked to the window. She had barely two stood for minutes, staring somewhat withdrawn into the garden and over the fields in the distance, or that subtracted expression [13] suddenly turned into an expression of amazement and shock.

"So it was the gutter after all!" she exclaimed aloud, as she walked away from the window and took the room.



Mrs. Holmer, who was reading on the couch, now had her her book fell in turn, and rushed to the window, where her daughter had just had run away from it. And soon enough she understood Corrie's haste and excitement.

"Oh! Oh!" she exclaimed, not quite knowing whether she had to cry or laugh. "What are we to do with a boy^[4] like that?"

Mr. and Mrs. Holmer and their eldest daughter had already made such an exclamation many times. And at least at this moment there was until the utterance of such an exclamation for every possible reason. The little boy, who there on that chilly November afternoon through the garden, without shoes or stockings, one crowd approached from head to feet dripping mud, really did not produce a very attractive display. And yet there was something in his manner of walking, and in the posture of the blond curly-head, which testified to triumph even before the shrill boy's voice uttered the exclamation:

"Oh, Corrie! You'll never guess what I did!"

"I don't have to guess at that, you dirty, dirty little vagabond," his sister said, in an indignant tone, in. "You have done all kinds of things you should not have done, I would say. And," this was added in a softer tone, "I think you will be able to will have a cold as a little boy can possibly be."

"That's nothing," was the philosophical answer. "I had so much fun today, that I don't care so much what happens tomorrow. I have the depth of every gutter on this side of the city. Fred Mackenzie also for a long ^[15] time, but when I slipped in one of them, he said that I had looked too dirty to walk with me, and then he went home. I'll start it anyway a bit of a silly boy, don't you?"

"No, certainly not," Corrie said, holding her brother's hand, muddy and Well, grabbed it, and quickly pulled him inside.

The experiments of friend Jo had made him a little cold and hesitant, so that he submitted himself quite patiently to the treatment which his mother, as soon as he came into the house, he was directed—immediately a warm bath, and Then to bed.

"And then Corrie comes and sits with me until she eats; then she can tell me that story that I still have too good," said the little culprit filled the program without feeling any discouraged by his crimes.

"But I don't think Corrie should say that it was something very naughty, I think do you, Dad?" asked Jo, in a tone of deep conviction, when his father was came upstairs to take a look at the little nuisance of the family.^[16]

"You've said to me so many times, Pa, that even when we play, we'll be quite and do our best; and what I wanted to know about those gutters I thought was such a pleasant playing such as I haven't had in a long time, and that's why I did my best If only I could."

"That seems so," said his father, and then he burst out laughing. He had gone to to administer a serious admonition to his son, but how was it for him possibly grumbled a boy, who still expected praise for his obedience, Even now that he had made himself and his clothes undergo a mud bath?

"But what was the fun of the game?" asked Mrs. Holmer. "Because I must confess that I do not yet understand the matter properly."

"Yes," Corrie added, "and how did you walk like that without shoes and stockings?"

Here his mother came to his aid. "Oh, you see, Corrie, I understand that now. Of course he took them off so as not to let them get wet."

"But they are still full of mud," Corrie countered this view of the matter.

"Of course they're full of mud," Jo shouted, again indignant. "Oh, I notice that no one has changed the way^[17] have done it understands. It was just a pity that the little boy from the storybook plan, because dad said the other day that it doesn't take much cleverness to improve an invention that has been made a little bit. He came up with the plan to measure how deep the gutter was with his shoes, and I measured with my shoes and my stockings and my own legs. First I measured with my shoes, and when I came to a gutter, which was too deep for that, I pulled them out and measured only with my stockings on. And when I came to the gutter at the corner, those great stones, you know, then the water came up above my stockings, so then I took them off and noticed a line on my leg with chalk, and then I slipped on something and I fell in it; so you couldn't see anything of that brand anymore, and when I tried two more after that, I went home. But the brands are still on one of my shoes and on one of my stockings; and the gutter of stone is the deepest, and then follows the one at the bridge, and the gutter in that side street, behind here, is the dirtiest."

"And the boy, whose name is Jo Holmer, is the most farcical," said his father, laughing, "and the dumbest one; and I hope that the next time, when he wants to measure gutters, he will be so clever as to do it with a ^[18] stick, instead of with himself, otherwise he would run the risk of destroying the stick on his back, to remind him of it."

"Hey! I didn't think of that at all, of a stick!" cried Jo, with new excitement, out. "How stupid of me! I didn't think about it a t a l l !"

"Then now, for heaven's sake, don't think about it anymore," his mother said hastily, while a vision of new experiments in the mud, with colds at last, rose in her mind.

But Mr. Holmer went downstairs to eat, with a smile on his face. His The youngest child was certainly a very difficult boy; but it seemed so cheerful, and by honest little fellow, like him there, with a confused curly head

and fresh red cheeks, sat up in bed. Whatever he did, he did it in full daylight.

Mrs. Holmer stayed behind for a moment to tuck her boy in again and whispering a few kind words to him, with a kiss. Corrie stayed a moment longer, after her mother had already passed away. She also bent down blushing boy's face, but she did it very calmly and without a word to say, and then she turned to go out of the room. [19]

In the next moment, without worrying about tucked-in blankets and regulations to warm to care, Jo had jumped up and had his arms around his sister's neck.

"Corrie, tell me, you're not angry, really angry with me, are you? You don't think that I've been very naughty, isn't it?"

There was sincere seriousness in the tone in which the question was made, sincere, restless longing for an answer. What could Corrie say? She hesitated for a moment. They hardly knew whether it was very naughty to measure gutters and take mud baths. and under the eyes of all possible decent people barefoot home. At last she gave him a second kiss, and said, "Come on, don't do it more, little fellow; it could make you sick; and if you do your best now to not to have a cold to-morrow, and I'll tell you a nice story." Then she, in turn, tucked him tightly, whispering to him: "Sleep well, dear boy," and then she also went down to eat. Jo closed his eyes and soon slept like a baby. [20]

III.

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"WHAT NOW!"

It was in the first days of December. Mr. and Mrs. Holmer had finished riding to spend the day with some old friends, who were just around there and Corrie had agreed with a good friend that she would go to live at the her. She had been given permission to bring Jo with her, as it was a Wednesday afternoon; and she imagined after dinner that they would meet together very early that day. had used to write a few letters before they gave him the fun that he was in for him, for he loved the nice, cheerful Florence Elmslie almost as much as Corrie herself. [21]

"Now try to amuse yourself in the house for an hour with something or other, you know Jo," she said, as she prepared to leave the dining-room, "and if you were good be careful, then a wonderful pleasure awaits you for the rest of the day."

Jo's eyes sparkled. Almost every half day of vacation became a kind of but of course those pleasures usually consisted of matters of little significance: permission to help the gardener with the digging up of potatoes, or to pick up his father from the station, and then to be allowed to hold the reins when driving home. But this was apparently something of more importance. He rushed to his sister, and seized her by the arm as she left the room.

"Do you really mean something very, very pleasant?" he asked, with great seriousness.

"Really something very, very pleasant, if you are careful," was the laughing answer; and then Miss Holmer went to write her letters, while her little brother returned to the dining-room, where he thought for a few moments remained engrossed.

"Be a sweet boy today, and make it your own. sister is no more troublesome than necessary," his mother had^[2] said, when he had come to the went to school. And now Corrie promised him a reward if he was careful.

All in all, it was certainly worthwhile to try something very, very commendable. If he had sat down with his paint box to make prints, colors, or he would have calmly sat down and read a story-book, then his sister may have found him a particularly sweet boy, assuming at least that he had not taken a book from someone else to color, or a book from someone otherwise to make stains from dirty fingers. But this way of being careful was not sufficient to satisfy little Jo's desires at that moment. At last an idea occurred to him. A wonderful idea, he thought.

"I'm here," he exclaimed, as he began to dance a kind of war dance to the maid who had just come in to take the table. "I'm here, Anne. I have come up with something very beautiful!"

Anne gave him an impatient push.

"Come, Jo, let me go; I have so much to do today anyway that I don't know how I can get it done."

"Poor Anne," Jo said, in a tone of pity. "But you'll have a day off next week, you know, I've heard Mum say^[23] that."

And after uttering that confidential announcement, Jo hurried through the corridor and turned the doorknob of a large room at the end. The next moment he was standing inside, with the door closed behind him. It was not a room where he usually for it was his father's library; and the oak panels, The long rows of books, the heavy furniture, all that together made an impression of awesomeness, which was always somewhat oppressive for friend Jo. In addition, he has a fairly clear awareness that the life-making and noisy jokes that have been tolerated, would not be allowed within those learned walls.

But that day it was Jo's wish to be extremely diligent and to be very careful, and to use his zeal and caution in the service of others. To that end, He had made his way to the library. If only Corrie had known where she would certainly not have continued so quietly with the writing of her letters!

Jo's first work was after his father's writing table and a sheet of stationery, of the largest size he could find,^[24] on it spread out; then he dipped a pen very deep into the inkwell, and wrote on the paper, in large, round letters, with a few inkblots as decoration in between in, the word

"K a a t a a l o o g e s ."

So far everything went well, at least in Jo's opinion. "Daddy will like that," he murmured, with a beaming face. "He has said so often that he would like to have one."

It was true, dad had said more than once that he should have a catalogue layout of his books. But he would much rather never have owned one, than to entrust that work to the hands of his son. However, this fact was unknown to Jo; and the feeling of unlimited satisfaction that he will receive in the next proved that he did not suspect anything of it.

"First all the *A*'s, and then all the *B*'s, and so on," said Jo, with a very heavy face. "So now first all the *A*'s for the day!"

Half a dozen books were pulled out of the cupboard and placed on a chair, which was was prepared for. There was not a single *A* to be found. Another half dozen, with the same result. Jo waited a moment. ^[25]

"Quiet, I know what. I'm going to take out a whole bunch at a time and put them out here somewhere then I can look at the letters afterwards."

No sooner said than done. That wonderful idea was immediately implemented. Friend Jo put the small stairs in front of the cupboard, climbed on it and started so many books if only he could grasp. With the lower planks it went quite well, but when he took away some of the higher books, a piece tumbled or a little downwards, in a less gentle way than desired.



Bladz. 25. My friend Jo began to grab as many books as he could get hold of.

"But oh," as Jo remarked philosophically, "what a few loose covers hindered, Or a torn page here or there, on such a large mass of books?" He was startled a little, when a large treacherous inkblot fell on the title page of a velvet-bound part, which he had carried to the table to give it the name of . But even that surge of unrest immediately disappeared at the thought: "If someone else had done that work, making such a kaataalooges, he would have also spilled a b i t of ink."

It is certainly astonishing what a boundless a strong, industrious boy in a room within the space of an hour ^[26] and a half . No one could believe it who had never seen it put to the test. Even Corrie Holmer wouldn't have believed it until she discovered it herself, and yet she was somewhat aware of what a boy can do in that area.

Miss Holmer had a lot to write, including a few long letters from former school friends before her, whose answers took quite some time. And as Florence Elmslie did not wait for them until four o'clock, and Jo in an unusually quiet Miss Holmer continued to write longer than her plan, until finally a whole pile of letters was ready next to her which she wanted to post later, when she went out.

At last she got up, and while she ran her hand over her tired eyes, a slight hint of anxiety arose in her for the first time, concerning the unusual fact that her young brother had not for ages allowed himself to be seen or heard. After hastily closing her writing case, she walked to the sitting room and shouted:

"Johan—say, Jo—where are you? I wanted you something tell. Where are you, Jo?" and then she went up the stairs, where she repeated her cry.

But wherever he might go, there was no answer. The slight hint of anxiety became considerably larger.

"Anne, can you also tell me where Jo is?"

"No, miss, I haven't seen him at all since he came out of the dining-room. while I was taking the table, and that is a lot longer than an hour ago."

Corrie's anxiety grew bigger and bigger. She walked all the way up in the house to look for her brother, but in vain. Then she rushed into the garden, as far as the pond at the end, where he had almost drowned six months ago. Her heart stopped beating when she saw that there was a thin layer of ice on top. But the next moment she felt reassured, for the sheet of ice was too thin to tempt even his daredevil mind. In addition the ice was perfectly intact and whole, and the first touch of his foot would have it and at the same time betrayed the fact.

Meanwhile, without thinking of the time, without even thinking of the time, the promised fun, for for which^[27] he was so busy, full of interest and zeal with his work. While he has all kinds of books, mixed up, from the different shelves and from different parts of the room, he had come up with a wonderful plan. He now had found stacks of *A's* and *B's*, and had written down one or two titles. But on the whole he had content with making several piles of volumes, the titles of which are started with the same letter, because he had come to the conclusion that the writing down should rather be done by someone else, who would love to use steel pins had more dexterity than he did. The someone else he was thinking of was now very close to him.

After she had searched for her brother, in all possible and impossible places that she could imagine, Corrie finally straightened, with lead shoes and a fearful heart, her steps to the library. She gradually began to behave in a sad way that she should not have left him to his own fate for so long. She turned the doorknob of the library with a trembling hand, hardly knowing herself whether she hoped to find him there or not. If he wasn't there, he had to go with schoolmates and certainly he would have done something naughty, yes,^[29] may have put themselves in danger in one way or another, in that short, dark winter afternoon. But when he was in the library, he also had to, that was undoubtedly certain, to have done something naughty, because he could not have barely move in that room without causing disorder in one way or another.

For a moment longer, even with her fingers already clasping the button, she kept waiting. Then she opened the door, and stood there, speechless with consternation.

From a dense cloud of dust, which hung in the room and darkened Corrie's eyes, she heard a cheering cry. "Oh! Cor, are you there? That pleases me. I just wanted to come and get you. I already have such a mass together that you can eat To write. Come here soon!"

Corrie came, stumbling and stumbling over all kinds of objects, as if she were walking over a freshly ploughed field. She came to the middle of the room, where Jo, from the head of the until the feet were covered with dust, knelt on the ground and piled up more and more books. She looked at him for a moment;

Then she glanced across the room, at the fully loaded tables and chairs, the half-emptied cupboards, and the floor entirely covered with books; Then looked she turned on Jo again, and then, to his boundless astonishment and terror, she too showed herself, she sank to the ground and burst into tears.



Jo dropped the book he was holding in his hand, and walked, with a very frightened towards her, overturning a few high piles of books, which had been stood in the way.

"Oh, Corrie, what's the matter? Are you sick? Come on, tell me, what's the matter?"

[31]

And as he knelt down by her, he tried to put his arms around her neck; but Corrie fended him off.

"Go away, Jo, go away," she sobbed. "Oh, oh, naughty boy, if only I had you not left alone!"

With a blush of indignation on her face, Jo jumped to her feet.

"But, Cor, what do you mean? I haven't done anything naughty today; I've worked as hard as a man, just to get daddy with something to have fun."

Now Corrie also jumped up.

"Have fun!" she exclaimed. "Do you mean that your dad wanted to have fun with this!"

With a gesture of indignation and despair, she spread out both her hands to all the four corners of the room, and Jo, turning around like his sister, took for the first time the whole scene of confusion comes to mind. The expression of self-confidence disappeared from his face, and gave way to an expression of the deepest dejection.

"I didn't know I'd made such a mess," he said at last. "But—you see, Cor, I didn't need that much time for it, so it will probably be quickly put back in order, especially if you want to help me."

[32]

"Help," Corrie repeated mechanically. She had sat down on the floor again and looked at one of the heaps of books that had just been jumbled up by Jo's feet.

"No, but look, look at it, the spine of that beautiful book is completely broken, and the title page is full of stains from dirty fingers. Oh, oh, what should we do?"

Jo gave a practical answer to that question.

"Put the books back in their place, I would say," he said, with a deep sigh. "I should like to know, Cor, what kind of fun you had promised me?"

Because of her shock about the condition of her father's library, Corrie had her appointment before that afternoon.

"Oh yes!" she said, when Jo reminded her of it in this way. "I don't know if I can trust you to walk to Florence Elmslie, and see her saying we can't come today; She was waiting for us to drink tea with her."

"Oh—o—oh!" exclaimed Jo, with a very long face, and in a tone of great disappointment. [33]

N o w he knew what fun it was for which he had done so with such misapplied zeal. had been working, and he also knew—for the last five minutes he had this more and more clearly understood—that for him and his sister that day there was there would be no time left to go out, as a result of what he had done in the last hour.

"Can the girls"—he began. But he got stuck in the middle of that question, because he immediately saw the unnecessaryness of it.

The kitchen and the maid, who were sisters, had been given half a day of vacation and were therefore out, and the half-accomplished day girl, Anne, had never been in the allowed her master's library, not even to sweep or dust, much less to take one of the books in your hands.

"What were you going to do with those books—to light a fire out of them?" Corrie asked at last, with a feeble attempt to put a smile on her face .

But Jo felt no inclination to smile at all when he answered:

"I already told you, Corrie, that I wanted to make a gift for Dad. Dad has against yesterday Mum said he [34] wanted one so badly."

While he was talking, it struck four o'clock. Corrie took her dirty brother through and through and took him to the kitchen; and when she had washed him sufficiently there and shabby, to be able to walk on the street, without attracting the attention of all the other dirty and house-trained boys in the city, she sent him to the Elmslies. Then she returned, in company with Anne, who was very frightened by what had happened, and armed with a whole armful of dusters, to the disordered library Go back.

"But, miss, miss!" exclaimed Anne, as she left the room, in which she had never seen a had been allowed to set foot. "Oh, oh, what will Mr. say about that? Such a boy is never trusted alone, miss!"

"No, he's not," Corrie sighed, as she began to pick up the books, and began to try to restore some order to the chaos. [35]

FINE.

Usually things make such a very different impression on different people, and under different circumstances. When Corrie Holmer left the library shortly after half past three to look for her brother, she thought that the room was the worst, most discouraging spectacle she had ever seen in her life. And then Florence Elmslie entered at about half past five, with Jo by the hand, she said, cheerful tone, and with a cheerful tingle in her gray eyes:

"Oh, how farcical!"

"Do you call that farcical?" said Corrie, with an expression of great dejection in her voice. "I call it very, very ^[36] good and kind of you to come here and help us in misery, but I don't see at all that a totally spoiled afternoon has anything farcical."

The poor, afflicted, sad, disappointed Corrie spoke in such a mournful tone, that Jo finally felt totally conquered. He pulled his hand out of Miss's Elmslie, and, to hide his face, he stooped down and began to help Anne with the picking up of the books he had scattered on the ground. Soon Jo the only really sad person in the room, because in the company and with the help of her cheerful, cheerful friend, and now that the gas was lit and in a nice fire was burning, Corrie soon began her usual tidiness and to do what she could to put everything back in order.

After all, although it was generally assumed as certain that Mr. Holmer loved his books the most, after his wife and children, yet this was in at any rate, only after them, and with a very large space between them. There was therefore very little chance, although the covers of half a dozen volumes had come loose, and of a few other the blades or backs torn by Mr. Holmer, friend Jo therefore to an eight-day stay in the coal shed, ^[37] or condemn for a month to the water-and-bread penalty, or that he would be very seriously angry with Corrie herself, because she had kept the little man and had therefore given him the opportunity to do so for this new example of mischief.

And as to the matter and the disorder, the youthful day-girl Anne revealed, now that the need for the man, more quickness and dexterity than she ever imagined herself to be. State. When it was about half past six, the condition of the whole so little more to be desired, that Corrie declared that she and Miss Elmslie could now take care of the rest; and so she sent Anne away for tea of them all, and told Jo to go upstairs to fix up.

Jo came to her, while she was standing on the stairs in front of one of the cupboards, in which the books were all neatly lined up again.

"Are you sure I can't do anything more to help you, Corrie—quite surely?"

"Absolutely, Jo. Now walk over quickly, and fix yourself up a bit, and brush your hair a big deal."

[38]

"Yes, Corrie." But Jo lingered for a few moments by the side of the steps, until his sister came off. Then he quickly whispered, "Give me a kiss, Corrie."



"Well, two, if you like, you little troublesome boy," was the smiling utterance answer, while the two kisses were given.

"Such a poor little man, he is certainly quite depressed by it! He looks as serious as a judge." Corrie said, [39] when the door was closed behind him.

Miss Elmslie smiled.

"Yes. I never saw him make such a deeply unhappy face as when he was came to tell me in what an opportunity his zeal to want to do something useful had brought him. But he will look differently after tea-hour, you will see."

"Oh, but I have to," Corrie said, very decidedly. "I couldn't have that poor little Jo continued to make such a sad face, even though I had to spend the whole night sit up and tell him stories, to prevent it. Say, if you don't care I'll let you work alone for a moment, then I'll walk around for a bit of haste. to have it made with the tea, and to get some things we need. We are so much later than usual, so I almost think it's partly due to hunger that he looks so unhappy."

The library now had a fairly orderly appearance, and pity for the little one the guilty person had now become the most prevalent feeling in his sister's mind. It was more for his sake, for the sake of the guest, that there should be two kinds of jam and an extra bowl of cookies was put on the table. In the meantime, Jo's [40] preparations for the meal of a very special nature.

When he had come into his own little room, he began, according to the instructions of his sister, with great zeal to wash his face and his hands, and to wash his hair. brushing, but when that was over, he took his nightwear from under his and he began to undress to go to bed.

That occupation had ended even more quickly than the others had been; and then Jo fell on his knees before his bedstead, and with one sad sob he burst out—"Oh, oh! I would like so much, dear Lord, that you would want me learn what I have to do, to please people and not always bother them. And please bless our Cor, and make me a good boy.—"

After that outburst, there was a short break; Jo rested his cheek for a moment the dean. The room was quite dark; there was no one who could see it, when a few tears rolled down his freshly washed cheeks. Finally he was off his kneeling posture, muttering to himself:

"It may be possible now, for as long as it lasts. My Actually, I'll do a prayer later, when Dad is back home."^[41]

And so, with the tears still on his cheeks, and with a heart heavier than he still had ever had in his life, poor, hungry, tired little Jo got into bed, almost two hours before his usual bedtime and without food or drink. When the tea meal was ready, and Corrie and Florence Elmslie, with clean-washed hands and faces, were ready for it, they drew each other's attention, with some surprise, to the surprisingly long time it took Jo to make herself clean.

"He is in such a remorseful mood that I suppose he is extra much more to look very neat, just to do your pleasure," said Florence Elmslie, as she sat down by the fireplace and amused herself with the large log that lay in it, to turn it over and over again, to make it crackle.

Corrie thought it very likely that her friend was right in her assumption, but she thought that he had already had time to draw up a model of neatness and neatness. of themselves; and so she set the draught pot, which she had just lifted to pour it out, down again, and went upstairs to fetch him, while they, as he walked, called^[42] him by name.

But, as she had called in vain that afternoon, so it went now. She received No answer. At last she came to his room, the door of which was closed. "Jo, ben you there?" she asked.

"Yes, Corrie," a very serious boy's voice called back.

Corrie turned the knob and looked in, or rather peered into the darkness. "But, Johan, son, where are you? What are you doing up here in the dark?"

"I'm in bed, Cor."

Corrie Holmer approached the bed, or rather the part of the room from which her brother's voice reached her, for she saw nothing; But she stood by that answer suddenly startled silence. "Jo," she said in a low voice, "Jo, are you sick?"

The answer followed soon enough. "Sick! Well no, Corrie, of course not. I am never sick, you know that. But I gave you such a bad afternoon today because of to do everything completely wrong, that I thought I had to go without food for once go to bed. Maybe I can teach myself then so as not to be such a very troublesome^[43] boy another time. Are you there, Cor?—you hear me?"

But Cor's answer did not follow as soon as her brother's had followed, because Cor cried again. None of the whole Holmers family was particularly nervous or weeping. But the unpleasant incident in her father's library, the long writing letters, missing the pleasant afternoon on which they had been all in all, Corrie Holmer seemed a little upset. Two hours ago, when Jo saw his sister crying, totally confused, and this last, that self-imposed punishment and that repentant confession, now had the same effect on his sister. She lifted the young penitent up in her arms, and stammered, sobbing:

"Oh Jo, my dear, little Jo, how did you come to that? What a terrible I must have been a grumpy sister, to make you think of being in that way!"

"No, you haven't," Jo stubbornly objected. "You're such a nice, sociable sister if only one can exist somewhere; you couldn't get a grump even if you tried. And I believe Actually, I knew a l i t t l e bit that I [44] wasn't allowed to come into the library, even if I had to call Dad wanted to do a favor; for I remember trying to hold the stool very gently when I first went in, and I haven't got it to you yet. show that great ink—"

But here the confession was put to an end for the time being, because there was a rattle of wheels, and Corrie flew down the stairs to welcome her father and mother, and for the presence of her friend, and for the cause of Jo's absence, to give an explanation.

Mr. and Mrs. Holmer had come home earlier than their plan had been, because Mr. Holmer had happened to meet an unmarried brother of his, who had the plan to suggested to go back with them, to stay for a few days. So since there is a guest room had to be arranged, Mrs. Holmer had thought it better to go home a little earlier; and it was not yet seven o'clock, when Jo sat on his father's knee in the dark, to give him a full and truthful to report on the events of that afternoon. [45]

"And don't you think, Dad, that going to bed was rather well thought of me, to remind me of it another time?" he asked urgently, when his story .

And Mr. Holmer threw his arms a little tighter around his boy, when He replied:

"Yes, dear boy, I think it's so well thought out that I'm certainly grateful for it I feel that I have a little son who proves that he is so serious about the good will. And now, little fellow, what would you think if you put on your clothes again and downstairs to drink tea with all of us?"

But since both Mom and Jo herself raised objections to this for various reasons Mr Holmer ended up with, instead, a sheet for two people to the bedroom, and there Uncle Johan joined them for a while, who in this way got to know his nephew and godchild better that evening than he did had ever done before.

"Remember, William," he said, a few days later, as he was leaving, "as Corrie comes to me in three weeks, at Christmas, that the boy has to come with me too."

"What!" cried Mr. Holmer. "What!" cried Corrie. Mrs. Holmer did not add a third "What!" but she said, [46] "Really, Johan, that is impossible. Our Jo is such a best, good, honest boy as there is only one in the world can exist, but he would have a lot of a boy wild bull in a porcelain shop, if you had it there with you in your beautifully furnished, neatly furnished house."

"If you don't send it, you'll give me the trouble and the burden that I have to do it myself. "Uncle Johan. And with that decisive answer he took leave, and went away.



[47]

V.

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A RESTLESS MORNING.

Corrie Holmer had always liked staying with her uncle very much. Everything went on quietly, quietly and regularly there. None of the servants seemed to be to wear creaking boots, and even the black silk Sunday dress of the housekeeper seemed to be trained not to murmur at all. But as a short change of her own cheerful, busy home, Corrie did have that quiet, unusual environment Pleasant. But now that she was there with her little brother, she felt how much she loved him too, was not so completely sure whether his presence as it seemed so very desirable to her; And that doubt arose again involuntarily at her, when, on the third day^[48] of their visit, she heard friend Jo sliding down the stairs, with loud whistling and stumbling around.

"What a misery, that winter, and that frost, and everything," grumbled Mr. Holmer, when he came in that morning to breakfast. He had been outside in the backyard, to say good-morning to his favourite dog, as he used to do, and to be able to proof of his affection he had brought to Trust a leg. And in his haste to show that he appreciated the kindness of his master, he had a great, good, stupid old Trust, chokes. And then, in his distress, he had his container with water.

"Poor bastard!" said Mr. Holmer, and he picked up the box and walked with it the water tap in the yard to refill it. But by the frost, or the rust, or because it was never used, or for whatever reason, in any case the tap turned out to be stuck. He turned it several times, from right to right. left, and from left to right, but it didn't help anything; he could not do the slightest get things moving. So he ordered the servant to fill the box of Trust, who in the meantime had already recovered from his distress without water; and then the master of the^[49] house into the breakfast-room, grumbling and grumbling about the weather and about everything, until he could tell the friendly, cheerful face of his niece, and then suddenly all the wrinkles, and he exclaimed:

"Oh, oh, what an old grump of an uncle you have, dear child! I'll still make That you get scared of me and walk back home if I'm not careful. Give me a cup of coffee, maybe that is suitable for someone who is out of his mood."

Corrie complied with that request, laughing, and when she gave the tranquil drink to her she asked about the more specific reason why he was so was displeased.

"I bet I could turn the crane over," cried Jo, when the story was over, and he jumped from his chair.



Bladz. 49. "I bet I could turn that faucet around!"

"Yes, of course, and at the same time turn the table upside down," said his uncle wryly, for every cup and plate that stood on the table rattled, and half of his coffee had been spilled on the saucer.

"Corrie, dear girl," he added, "you will certainly want to clean this; and would you please fill your noisy brother's plate with everything you think he likes it, so that there is a chance that you and I will have ten minutes' rest." [50]

"Do you mean while I'm eating, uncle?" asked Jo.

"Yes, boy, while you eat. You don't talk while you eat, I hope?"

Jo held his head to the side, with a thoughtful expression.

"N—one, I don't believe that; Not if things are tasty, that is. But I kick sometimes with my feet against the table during dinner—Corrie and Ma say it at least at least—and you don't know how things sometimes jingle. Look, like this!"

And before poor Corrie could sound a warning, or go around the table to her brother, Jo had put her money where her mouth is, and a very clear example of what he meant. Mr. Holmer jumped to his feet, with, in front of at the moment, an expression of certain anger on the face. And Corrie stood, trembling and with clasped hands, to watch. The little culprit stared with grave glance at the contents of his cup, which flowed over the tablecloth, and then noticed he, in a tone of deep disapproval and annoyance, on: [51]

"Hey, uncle, what a terribly wobbly table that is! Hey, you're even older than dad, And daddy wouldn't want such a wobbly thing in his breakfast room, you know that I certainly do."

"But, Jo, how dare you?" Corrie shouted to him in a low voice. Amazement about the audacity of her little brother, and fear of the punishment, which is a necessity would be a result, competed in her heart for precedence. It was an ordeal to witness Jo's improper conduct, but to witness it being punished and feeling sad and unhappy was an even more severe trial. Once more she glanced at the face of her very punctual, meticulous uncle. And the expression she read on it surprised her even more than the behavior of her brother. For a moment Mr. Holmer had literally been speechless with anger, but in the next moment he burst into an irrepressible fit of laughter. At that completely unexpected sound, Corrie sank back into her chair, while Her uncle exclaimed:

"Tell me, friend Jo, I have heard of impertinent people, and I have heard of them too sometimes a couple in [52] my life, but I never met one, who compare to you is! That is what concerns me there, in the first place, out of sheer wantonness against my poor kicking the table, and making my beautiful white tablecloth totally dirty, and now my furniture really spoken badly into the bargain!"

Jo quickly raised his head.

"But I will never speak ill of you, Uncle Johan," he stammered hastily. "You are a t e r r i b l y n i c e , s o c i a b l e uncle. I thought I was going to get a slap around the ears, and—and—" The powerful boy's voice began to tremble a little bit—"I almost wished I would. What do you see that clean tablecloth out! If I knew a little about washing, I would I'll try to get those stains out for you."

"Then don't try, please," said his Uncle laughing. And then he got up, and, under the pretext of having coffee, flooded plate of his young guest for another, he bowed down to over him, and for the first time since Jo could remember, he was touched by the his forehead with his lips on. His nephew may have been naughty and too impertinent while that spot on his head, where the lump of reverence should be, seemed to be totally absent [53] but as for his heart, it seemed to be in the right place; and since Mr. Holmer himself, in spite of his outward modesty and severity, had a very kind-hearted man, it was not impossible that in the course of the years, a more close bond between him and his godchild, than if friend Jo would be a nephew had been, completely cut to the own model of his godfather, and so politely and submissive if only one could exist.

However, the evidence of this could only become apparent in the future. In the meantime, breakfast took its course and came to an end, without anything else worth mentioning with the exception of a short, half-whispered spoken chat between Corrie and her brother, when the meal was almost over. Mr. Holmer had his plate and head back, and was busy reading his newspaper, to all appearances deaf to everything that surrounded him.

"Say, Corrie! What do you do that for?"

"What do you mean, Jo?"

"Well, to put the jelly over there? I would say you must be tired enough as it is of the coffee pouring and all^[54] those things, and that you don't have to make an effort for nothing."

"Oh, that wasn't so much trouble to put that pot here."

"No—but to give it back again, you see."

After this saying, uttered in a significant tone, there followed such an impatient rustling newspaper, that Corrie waited a moment before she, in a low voice and in a compulsively calm tone, answered:

"Oh, of course I would not have put the jelly pot on this side of the table, if I had thought that it might still be necessary on the other side. I don't have it before I saw that you had had enough."

"Before you saw that?" said Jo, shaking his head very seriously. "Then I can tell you, Corrie, that you were totally mistaken. I haven't even had half enough, and because I wanted the other half too, you'll be bothered to put the pot here for a while, where it has stood."

Corrie shook her head. "Impossible. That extra effort would just be the last straw you see, which would make my arm, which is already so tired, hurt."^[55]

"Very well," said Jo; "Then I'll have to go and get it myself; but you told me that Uncle would rather not have me get up from my chair when we sit at the table."

"He hasn't either," said Corrie, who was at last cornered, and felt compelled to speak frankly. "There is absolutely no reason why you should than only to play, for you have had plenty of jelly, is actually more than good for you."

"No, listen, Corrie, that's exactly what you're wrong about," Jo brought here in an urgent tone. "I still have a certain emptiness inside me—and, You know, uncle told me to have fun here."

Then came down the rustling newspaper, and Uncle sprang up from his chair, with a new burst of laughter. "You troublesome little turbulent water, why can't you old uncle don't let him read his newspaper quietly, do you?"

"I'm very sorry, Uncle," was the repentant answer. "But it's naughty of Corrie, isn't it that she won't let me do what you've told me?"

"Of course," said Uncle, "almost as naughty as she was disobedient herself. But because I said that you had^[56] to have fun here, and your obedience to that order was apparently in the eating of jelly seems to exist, what would you think if we were to made an appointment at that point, while Corrie gave you one spoonful from that jar."

Jo's face brightened, and he handed his plate to his sister. "Quite so, Uncle. *You* understand me, I can tell—you are not as stingy as a girl. Hey, Cor! you Could have let that long jet fall on my plate, instead of back again in the pot. A man would never have done that, I'm sure."

"And a man wouldn't regret it so much if you got sick," Corrie said, reproachfully. "Really, Uncle, I am afraid he will fall ill if you overload him like that with delicacies. We live so simply at home."

Mr. Holmer tried to put on a very serious face, and stroked Corrie encouragingly. over the blond hair.

"Look, dear child, you hear that Jo and I will make an appointment together, and since I'm sure we'll both stick to that, you don't have to, you think no longer worry me. You're staying here, Jo, will, you know, eleven more days, if everything is going well; so now I'll tell the kitchen maid that she has six jars of jelly separately^[57] that are specially intended for you—Corrie and I will use a different . As long as those six jars of jelly are not finished, you can stay here; you will have free disposal of them all the time, but if they are used up, before the eleven days are up, then it's over with staying here too."

"It is to be hoped that they will not be finished by then!" exclaimed Corrie. "More than half a jar a day!"

"And masses and masses of other tasty things on top of that," Jo said, with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Yes," Mr. Holmer agreed, "but, you understand, no other kind of jelly or jam, or something of that nature."

"Oh, no. Of course not," Jo replied, with a thoughtful face. "But six pots for eleven days—I will make sure that I get by with that. And, you see, I will still be there Talk to the kitchen maid about it too. She will certainly pick out big ones for me, when she hears that it must serve as a pleasure. She said yesterday that a having a little fun and good food was good now and then, for boys who in their growth. Your kitchen maid is nicer than the one at our house, Uncle Johan. They makes it completely Good thing you have a more wobbly^[58] table!"

"But Johan, shut up!" cried Corrie.

Uncle Johan said nothing; He had left the room.

"It's nice to have an uncle, don't you think, Corrie?" said Jo.

"A lot nicer than having a sister, I believe you think," said Corrie Holmer, with half a sigh. And then she also left the room, to try, before her brother, to have a word with the overly generous kitchen maid in private.

Corrie needn't have been in such a hurry. Jo's little curly head was during The last twenty minutes have been completely filled with yet another thought, except the one about the tasty things he got for his breakfast; and, in order to justify him, we experience, it must be said that this other thought is by far the most important for him. had been important of the two. He would even have his last two sandwiches with jelly in order to be able to carry out his plan more quickly if he had managed to get his uncle and his sister out of the way before then.

But these new plans of his require a new chapter.

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VI.

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A DIFFICULT MOMENT.

At an exhibition there once hung a painting, with the title that was written above This chapter is in place. A small child, sitting in a high chair making his sandwich to his great horror, finds himself suddenly besieged by an innumerable multitude chickens and geese and such intruders. "A difficult moment," indeed!

But if the clever maker of that painting is a second example of a difficult moment, it's a pity that he didn't live in the yard behind the house of Mr. Holmer was present, three days after his nephew and godchild, whom he

had asked to stay in an ill-considered moment, had come to him.

[60]

Mr. Holmer had entered the breakfast room, grumbling and simmering over a water tap, which would not open, and although the disorder and disturbances that followed at his otherwise quiet breakfast table had done the business for the moment this was not the case with his nephew. Jo loved to eat well, but The enjoyment of it was nothing compared to the delight he imagined he would by taking that crane in hand, and removing the stubbornness of it. overcome. Water was an element for which Jo had a certain passion, and all Many times that passion had brought him into all kinds of trouble. Even now, this would again.

From the breakfast room, Corrie Holmer went to the sitting room, at half an hour of to spend the rehearsal of a piece of singing that her uncle had given her the previous evening had given; and Mr. Holmer himself went to visit his stables.

"And he will stay there for a good while, as always," said Jo to himself, while he nodded his head very wisely, in answer to his sister's request not to be naughty. And as soon as he had heard her enter the sitting-room, he flew to the backyard, which was to become the scene of his victory. He was eager to do his uncle a favor; but the experience had taught him that the people around him were a little too inclined to such humane plans if they discovered them before they were he had had time to put them into practice.

"Uncle will be very happy when he finds that I have managed to open that tap for him, that's natural," was Jo's soliloquy, when he stayed a moment in front of it before he started his work. "But if I had said something about it first, then he or Cor would certainly have thought that I would hurt myself, whether it was one or more would destroy someone else, or something like that, that's for sure."

And Jo had to be right. Trust was very good in those few days became friends with him, but even he, rattling his chain, came out of his hutch, and laid his large, hairy head between his two forelegs, while he stared with serious eyes at the little intruder, when he was power at the water tap began to pry.

"Huh! how stuck that thing is!" sighed Jo, after he had had been working fruitlessly for about ten minutes, [62] and looked as red as a Angry turkey rooster.



He straightened himself up and took a moment's rest to catch his breath, and While he waited, before resuming his work, he looked around, looked at Trust, looked at the ivy on the wall, and it would have been a good thing if he had had not looked any further. But unfortunately he also got it in his head in a storage room that was in the yard, and there he saw, as he saw with a shout of cheering exclaimed, "just the thing he needed."

[63]

On a shelf inside the loft lay a large, heavy old hammer, and Jo took it with eager hands. When he stepped out again, armed with it, his eyes pressed of Trust expressed even more definite disapproval than before, and he even expressed a muffled as if he wanted to sound some kind of warning. But his companion was completely deaf to such hints.

"Now we will see who wins, you old stubborn crane, you or I," cried he expresses, with the satisfaction of someone who already feels sure of his victory. To o sure, because in the end the crane remained victorious in the battle. He walked towards it, raised the hammer, intending to put it on the handle of the to bring down the crane, but, as has been said, the tool was, as has been said, both a little size and weight, particularly unsuitable for the hands that were at that time tried to make use of it.

In true workman's fashion, the hammer was lifted up, over his shoulder, and with effort With all his strength it came down again—but not against the handle.

As he descended, the hammer went into the inexperienced hands that controlled him, a little to the side, and^[64] he came down with a blow, not against the handle, but on the pipe itself.



"O—o—o!!" burst out Jo, when the hammer came out of his numb hands with a second blow fell on the stones. For the first time in his life he was deeply upset about the immediate effect of something he had done. That the lower half of his Body was already thoroughly wet, did not mean much. But what would his uncle^[65]

say, what would Cor say, what would his father and mother say if they heard what he had done? These were the questions that flashed through his head like a bolt of lightning, while the water from the pipe flooded him.

The hammer had given the water free rein, that was certain, for he had, with that unfortunate blow, the whole crane, and a good piece of lead pipe with it, swept away, and the water flowed out with such force that it seemed as if it would never be would be stoppable. In his desperate desire to see that terrible stream of water Jo clasped his hands, one clasped over the other, against the broken piece of pipe, but he might as well have tried to use the water jet with an old piece of sponge. The only result he achieved was that the great ray now divided into smaller rays, which splash in all directions, so that he was dripping wet in a few moments, from his head to his feet.

With a hum, which soon turned into a sad whine about the deplorable state of affairs changed, the poor old Trust of the soaked stones stood and retreated to his pen, just as Corrie appeared at the back door to looking^[66] for her brother.

"But, Jo," she exclaimed in surprise, when she saw the flood, "what are you now started?"

"It was not because of me, but because of the hammer," was the answer uttered in a mournful tone. "Come and have a look."

And the unsuspecting Corrie, impressed by the moment, complied with the moment, to that invitation. She rushed to Jo, but in turn left a very frightened "O—o—o!" when she unexpectedly got a shower over her. Rising the tide she had defied the ground as something inevitable, but she was in the least not prepared for the stream of water that came upon her, when Jo suddenly had his hands and remarked, with the calm of despair:

"Look, Cor, that's what that wretched hammer has done now! And I think there are no stunners will be."

In the first moments it seemed as if Corrie, in her fright, had hopeless supposition; she mechanically did exactly the same what her brother had done, and tried to stop the stream of water with her hands, of course^[67] with the same result, that she is dripping wet . But at last, in the midst of her confusion and consternation, she fell upon her, one sensible thought.

"Go and call someone, Jo, and ask them to worry and bucket as soon as they can. . Oh, oh! What will Uncle say?"

"That's exactly what I'm thinking about," said Jo, with an expression on his own. face, as if he was planning himself to stay in bed for life and a lifelong water-and-bread punishment.

In the meantime he flew away to comply with his sister's request, but instead of of the house on the side from which he had come out, he walked into the around it, dripping wet as it was, not to dirty a larger piece of corridor than necessary . Just as he had turned the corner of the house, he saw a man, and without to see who it really was, he called out to him, full of haste and fear:

"P l e a s e walk quickly to the back yard to help Corrie! Her hands must already be half frozen are, I think, just like mine."^[68]

"All right," a voice called back. But that voice belonged neither to John nor to James, nor to any of the other servants, with whom the young visitor has so far . But whoever it might be, he had already disappeared, when Jo stopped for a moment and turned to see the man whom he had had sent to me a little more closely. Then he hurried on to the servant's entrance. Again he saw two men nearby, who were talking together. Again he was swifter with his words than with his eyes.

"Bring a bunch of buckets into the back yard," he screamed, "a whole mess, otherwise Trust, and—and Corrie maybe—and everything."

In the next moment, when he was about to turn to the scene of the accident, he was firmly grabbed by the shoulders by one of the two men and found himself in the hands of his uncle. With its dripping wet clothes, his deeply contrite face, and his hands, which were blue with cold, at that moment gave poor little Jo a sad sight. [69]

"Whether Corrie drowned, I don't know, but it seems to me that you certainly are," said Mr. Holmer, in a somewhat stern tone, although for the moment this was more the result was of fright than of anger. The next moment he turned around, opened the door, and called in:

"Marian, come here!"

The kitchen maid rushed to the door.

"Oh, my goodness!" she exclaimed in dismay, when she caught sight of Jo. "That poor dear boy, he'll get another disease on his neck!"

"At any rate, he has done his best for that," replied Mr. Holmer; "Please so hurry him along, and put him in a warm bed at once, and lose the little one rascal not out of sight for a moment, until I give you permission to do so."

"But the food, sir!" dared Marian to say for a moment, in a doubtful tone.

"That must be sorted out by itself," was the answer. "James, bring a piece Or some buckets to the backyard."

And after giving this order, Mr. Holmer hurried thither himself, Assuming that his enterprising nephew had succeeded in unruly tap, and that the buckets were needed to drain the water until the handle would have [70] been turned back again. Of the Extension he had not the slightest suspicion of the disaster. [71]



VII.

CORRIE EMBARRASSED.

"All right, you know," replied the clear, strong voice of the first person, to whom Jo Holmer addressed the request to go and help his sister. And if the owner of that voice said, "All right," then he meant it, and then as a rule he took the quickest and practical measures, to whatever it was that was asked for his help, to get it ^[72] right.

Jo could not possibly have made a better choice with his request, even if he had had a few thousand people to choose from. And yet it is also true that, as Miss Corrie had had the matter in her hands, she would certainly and certainly prefer to be twice as wet and cold as she was now, than to have to experience that she unexpectedly stranger came to her aid while she was flooded with water yard, with flabby, dripping wet clothes, pale with cold, and with a wind in the fluttering hair.

Corrie was still bent over the broken pipe, with the palm of her hand so pressed firmly on the opening when the coldness of it permitted, when suddenly a voice, close to her, in a tone of sincere pity, said:

"You must not stand there in that icy water, and in that sharp wind."

She had looked very pale when the speaker first caught sight of her, but It gave him a sense of relief when he saw the fresh blush that came to her face. now that she turned her astonished look into lifted it up, and in her ^[73] confusion withdrew her hand from the broken pipe.

It was a stranger standing next to her, a young man, with a strong, pleasant face, who also looked neat, as far as his dress was concerned, like Miss Corrie, even at the first frightened look. Full of pity for her shyness and surprise, the stranger hastened to apologize for having had appeared so unexpectedly.

"Your little brother—at least I suppose it was your little brother—sent me here to to help you."

"Oh," said Corrie, and she couldn't help adding, "he's always s u c h a troublesome boy!"

The stranger couldn't help laughing for a moment.

"Not, I hope, because he has been so good as to give me an opportunity to help you?" he asked, as he now, in turn, rushed to the shed in question, to go to the some kind of suitable tool to see.

Within five seconds he returned, with an object in his hand, which was in front of his was as suitable for his purpose as Jo had found the hammer suitable for *his* purpose. And within another five seconds, his firm hand, with the help of a sturdy pair of pincers, squeezed the broken pipe sufficiently to stop the further supply of water. Only a small one was dripping from both corners when Mr. Holmer appeared. This was to stare at the whole scene with such a surprised face, as if he were inability to speak.

"Corrie," he cried at last, "what does all this mean? You and Jo look like a few drowned rats, and where does all that water come from here? And—and—true Has the crane remained?"

"I don't know, Uncle," stammered Corrie, turning around and doing her best to take off her dripping wet gown, and her windblown hair behind her ears .

Mr. Holmer let her go for a moment, and he now turned away, still in the greatest surprise, to the stranger, with the question:

"And how on earth did you get here, Russell? I had absolutely no idea about it that you knew my niece."

"Me neither. Or at least"—this was added hesitantly and smiling—"I had no idea from to before three minutes. But accidents are wonderful things, I believe, to meet acquaintances all at once into friends. And because this is the case here, and Miss Holmer and I became friends, a few minutes after we met for the first time I may now make use of a friend's right and request her to do so immediately to take off those wet shoes and clothes? They are really dangerous, especially such weather as this." [75]

As he spoke, he did not look at Corrie, who was red with embarrassment, but at her uncle. And the latter immediately complied with the advice of the stranger and gave his niece welcome order to go in immediately.

"I have sent Jo to bed," he said, "and I believe that it is best would be to give you the same order, Miss Corrie."

"Yes, Uncle," murmured Corrie, and she began the retreat across the water-flooded yard to the door, which seemed ten times as far away as it really was . She had told Jo many times that he was a difficult boy, but never she had felt the full meaning of that saying as she did at this moment, while they are in vain tried to adapt himself with some semblance of dignity to the gaze of the foreign national. Sloop, sloop, klits, klats it went through the water, while her dripping wet clothes almost prevent her from going, and she is in danger at any moment. was losing her soaked shoes. Poor Corrie felt deeply humiliated; she was always extremely neat and precise about such things, and the realization that the bright eyes of that strange young man probably rested on her now, made her Jo's last piece of naughtiness start to get worse and worse. . The fact that he had been sent to bed was a well-deserved punishment, he thought them. [76]

"But, miss!" exclaimed the second maid in dismay, as she entered, "you have just as soaking wet as Jo herself! Marian has gone upstairs with him, and she has a hot water bottle . And what will sir say, miss, if you are in those dripping wet clothes? go up the stairs? Excuse me for saying it, miss, but sir is so very precise, you see."

"Yes, yes," said Corrie hastily, "I know, I'll go in here." And there when she heard her uncle and Mr. Russell approaching, she quickly jumped into the little sitting room Marian inside, next to the kitchen, and, Pulling^[77] the maid with her, she closed the door until the gentlemen passed safely. Then she sent Sarah upstairs to get her another gown, and everything whatever else she needed. Marian's room was temporarily turned into a dressing room; and a quarter or so later Corrie made his way to the morning sitting-room, with an unusually high colour, partly caused by the cold outside air, where had been into it, and partly because she was reluctant to see the stranger again. whom Jo had sent to help her, where she had not done anything but was grateful for.

"Tell me, little lady," cried her uncle, as she entered the room where the two gentlemen by the fire were talking. "Tell me, is that obeying my orders? But, that is true, here, Mr. Russell, already said, that that meek "Yes, uncle" of meant to you something quite different than going to bed."

The young man sprang up, and as he pushed back his chair, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Miss Holmer, I beg your pardon, but I must certainly contradict that. Your uncle said so, and then I only said that I thought so too."

Mr. Holmer laughed.

[78]

"Well, at least you have agreed that you also considered her to be a real specimen of the stubborn female sex. The boy, how naughty and difficult as he is, has behaved much better in this, you can see that, because he is at least went to bed."

"Yes, uncle, I am too," a shrill boy's voice made itself heard, in answer to that statement; and not only Mr. Holmer, but also Miss Holmer and Mr. Russell looked around in amazement at that sound.

Before they could say anything to either of them, the door opened again, and Marian, the kitchen maid, put her head in, with the restless, nervous exclamation: "Oh, sir, miss, now he's gone again!"

"I should say that, Marian," replied Mr. Holmer. "But how is it possible that you l e t him run away?"

"Yes, you see, sir, he was so hesitant, and then I thought, it would be a good thing when I lit the stove; and then, I was not even a minute away for the wood and the coals, he ran away from me, no one knows where to go."

"Oh, yes, they already know, Marian," said the shrill boy's voice can be heard again. "Uncle told me to go t^[79] bed, but he didn't say where, and that's why I went to bed here under the table. I lie here very easily and comfortably, and it saves you a great deal of trouble, you see."

Marian stooped down to look under the table, and then she hastily took a look under the smothered exclamation, "Oh, oh, how did such a boy come to be!" the retreat to be outside in the hallway burst out laughing.

In the meantime Mr. Holmer and the others had also stooped down and looked under the table. and all expressed their remarks according to their special feelings about the case.

"Very easy, that's for sure," Mr. Russell remarked dryly.

"But, Jo! You naughty boy! How dare you?" stammered Corrie, who made her way through the audacity of her little brother felt completely dismayed. How it is possible for him was s o m e w h e r e at ease, with the thought of that broken pipe in the back yard, she could not imagine it. But now here, rolled in a blanket, on his under the table of the sitting room! No, until so Corrie had not even thought Jo capable of something ^[80] impertinent.

"Come out, my friend," said Mr. Holmer, with a show of severity, that did not mean much. "Weren't you afraid of punishment, after all that has happened, that you're just about to play one of your impertinent pranks, say? Tell me agree."

Jo raised himself on his elbow and looked up from his hiding place.

"No, uncle; I was no longer afraid of you, after that spilled tablecloth of this morning, and those six jars of berry jelly. And, you know, when Sarah just said to Marian there, "Oh, Oh! how angry Mr. Van Den Bosch, then Marian said, "Well, he can tell the boy at least don't eat it, so you don't have to make such a terrible face." And then I thought, you won't eat me either, even if I didn't r e a l l y go to bed. You see, before eating, and before I feed the rabbits and the pig and all those pleasant things, I would have found that s o v e r y dreadful. And oh, uncle, wouldn't you think it would be better for me? if only I could get out from under the table, and rather something on the hearthrug lay down?" [81]

That question was made in such a persuasive tone that Mr. Russell turned to his Host turned, and said:

"Surely a man would have to have a heart of stone to make such a humble request. refuse. You certainly have nothing against me giving the little suppliant a more easy position?"

And as his host nodded in agreement, Mr. Russell knelt on the ground and took out a packet of blanket and boy, with which he sat down in an armchair, before he laid it down on the hearth.

"Am I not rather heavy, wrapped up like that?" asked Jo, when his new friend withdrew and brushed the confused hair out of his eyes. "It would, I think, be better if you let me down. I weigh a lot, I know that, even without that thing around me."

"Yes," said Mr. Russell, "now that you mention it, I notice that you are also quite heavy; and Still, I want to hold that cargo for a while to get a better look at you, because You seem like a wonderful boy to me. What was your idea with that, say, to be able to fun to play a mischievous prank, and then run away and shout at your sister half-frozen hands and feet to her fate, while you yourself can easily in a woolen blanket under the table? Wasn't that a little bit ugly you?" [82]

With a furious movement Jo tried to get out of the blanket and out of the arms of the stranger which attempt ended with a tumble on the ground. But before that he could have stood up and said something, Corrie leaned forward, and, with a Hint of indignation in her voice, she said:

"Really, you don't have to pull my party, thank you. Jo may be naughty, but He will never do something ugly, he has never done that in his life."

Jo looked back at Corrie, with the smile full of meaning with which he had seen that much-loved sister a very few times. And when he turned to the stranger turned around, the mischievous boys' face showed an unusually serious expression .

"Nice, isn't it, to have a sister like that?" he said. "If only you knew Cor, you would understand that I could never do anything ugly to her. I just walked because she said it to me, and because I thought I was bothering her more than enough . And, you see, you are so much bigger and more skillful than I, and so I sent you as soon as I could to her." [83]

"What Miss Corrie was anything but grateful for, little tease, that's possible I'll tell you," said his uncle, laughing, looking at his niece, who was at the memory of that peculiar encounter was given a new colour. General Mr. Holmer was regarded as a dignified, rather measured man, but now he was And then he had his teasing moods, as well as his little cousin and namesake.

"You learned dancing and bowing and all that kind of stuff in school, didn't you, Corrie?" Miss Holmer looked at her uncle in amazement; but before she had the opportunity to do something he continued:

"It would certainly be an idea that would be worth money for a dance teacher, when she occasionally let her students practice being dressed in dripping wet clothes . It requires a lot of talent to do that with some dignity, I have marked. Don't you think so, Russell? I saw that you also had the necessary attention to it dedicated."

Mr. Russell cast a cursory glance at the ruddy girl's face opposite him, and then he said, in an honest, frank tone, that Corrie was pleasantly in the Ears sounded:

"Phew, shame, Mr. Holmer, you still have the teasing Not forgotten, I notice. Do you remember how desperate you could make me at the time with your teasing? I remember it very well. I looked after Miss Holmer as she left, that's true, but I did it only because I was really afraid she would fall. And although I I think I love my profession very much, when I have a day's holiday, it sets of broken legs not so very pleasant." [84]

"Broken legs! Oh, then you are surely a doctor?" exclaimed Jo, as he took his new friend stared with more interest than before. "And w h y don't you like to put broken legs on a holiday day?"

"It's a pity for Jo that he couldn't see you in your dignity perform," Corrie broke in, laughing, to put an end to the conversation on that subject . "Perhaps he hoped to get some drink from you himself, after the cold shower of tomorrow."

It gave the visitor great pleasure to see that the shy blush of a moment ago disappeared and that the speaker had completely regained her self-control.

"I believe it too, Miss Holmer," he cried cheerful. "Now, if I can please him with that, then I want to give him [85] a very ugly drink. Would you like to hand me the inkwell?"

And in the next moment Jo was lying on his back, over the young doctor's knees, in preparation for such a noisy romp, as has ever been seen in the house of Mr. Holmer. [86]

VIII.

[Contents]

A SURPRISE.

At Uncle Holmer's it was the custom to bake the bread in the house. The master of the house had a prejudice against other bread, and that prejudice was certainly one of his hobbyhorses. When his niece came to stay with him for the first time as a little girl, he had urged his kitchen maid to initiate her into the secrets bread-baking, and on every subsequent visit she had taken part in it, in order to not to mention it.

"What are the two of you going to do this morning?" asked Mr. Holmer, one morning at breakfast, when the stay of his niece and nephew began to come to an end. Since the incident with the broken crane he always felt a certain amount of interest in the plans that were made for that day although he also knew from experience that the execution of those plans would be could never be reckoned so firmly, as his youthful nephew and namesake were still was already inclined to bring some variation to the program. But still it gave he had a certain peace of mind if he was somewhat informed, and therefore had he, since the deliberate flooding of the backyard, has adopted the habit of to-morrow, as he did now:

"What are the two of you going to do tomorrow?"

Corrie looked at him with a smile.

"I intend to make myself useful this morning, Uncle, because I am going to bake bread. And then, if Marian has nothing against it, I will have some whipped cream for get ready, or a blanc-manger."

"Please whipped cream, Corrie," said Mr. Holmer, with an approving can. "That's a treat, which I only get if you prepare it for me. But If you intend to be so busy in the kitchen, what is to be done in the meantime? of this youthful to become the inventor of mischief?"

"I'm going to the kitchen with you too, to have a look," friend Jo replied immediately. [88]

"So!" was the somewhat doubtful answer. "I'll be curious, boss, how long that activity of watching will please you."

Jo kept his head to the side again, parrot-like, as always when he was left thought about something.

"Well, Uncle, I think until Corrie has put the bread in the oven."

"And prepared the whipped cream?"

"No, not for that long, because I'm not curious about how whipped cream is made. Men who live in wild forests or in mines will never be struck cream. food, I think."

"No, I don't think so," said Mr. Holmer dryly. "But wouldn't you give us Just want to give an explanation, young gentleman, of what you are saying? What do you have with that to do with the taste of men who live in wild woods and in mines, say?"

"Well, a lot, Uncle Johan," was the calm answer. "You remember that book Well, that you gave me last week? Now, when I grow up, I wanted to be Just like the men in that book, I wanted to live in a wild forest, or gold-digger or something. You see, that's why I wanted learn how to bake bread; those men did not know it, and [89] then they fell ill because they ate all kinds of undercooked good. If Corrie really w a n t s i t , she can come with me later, and then of course she has to cook everything and so. But I'm a bit afraid that mom and dad won't like it."

"That I'm preparing dinner for the expedition, you mean?" asked Corrie, that effort had to keep her face in a serious fold.

"No, Corrie, not that; If you come along, I think they'll be very happy with the fact that you help us a bit. But, of course, it will be a bit lonely for them without me, and so—"

"And so—and so, boss," Mr. Holmer broke in, laughing, "if you are not careful, to that happy loneliness, by picking you up and putting you in a washtub to have them moved to those mines over there, on the other side of the pond."

"Don't be with me, please, Uncle," Corrie said cheerfully, as she pushed back her chair "because if that is the way of traveling of the expedition, then I would rather To keep mom and dad company in their loneliness."

"Oh, if you put two or three washtubs together, and you had some sails and oars, it would be almost as good [90] as a ship," said her brother, half to himself, in a thoughtful tone, while also he pushed back his chair and got ready with his sister to the kitchen .

Fifteen minutes later Miss Corrie, with a large household apron and spill sleeves in front of the kitchen table, on which were the various articles which they had for her work. Everything was at hand there, except for the white sugar, which was intended for the whipped cream. This was put away in a gray stone pot on the court, for fear of mistakes, because the salt, which is used for the bread, was in the same gray stone pot, and therefore it was not at all necessary. It was impossible to be mistaken about those two. But now that the sugar was safely put away, that could no longer be the case.

Corrie was just about to start the weighty bread-making when the groom hurriedly came in, to convey to her the message that his master was already in the carriage, but that he would like to say something to her before he goes to the city .

Quickly the young lady cast a half-restless glance on the ready flour and on her little brother, while she ^[91] hastily asked: "Go too, "Didn't you come with me, Jo?" and then she hurried away to comply with her uncle's request. However, Jo did not comply with her invitation. At that moment he gave far prefers to stay where he was; and he thought that we were not sister had already happened at an extremely opportune moment.

Why people still put salt in the bread, if they had it in their power to put sugar in it? in it; That was something he just couldn't understand.

"It's nothing else, I bet," he muttered to himself, in a thoughtful tone, "as if One of those things that, as Papa often says, is d o n e o n l y out of habit, and I think girls and women can never do it well understand. I bet that good Cor wouldn't want to hear about it, sugar in her bread instead of salt, but I think it's terribly nice that I can do just that. And what a treat Uncle will think it!"

No sooner said than done. He quickly put the sugar bowl in the place where the salt bowl and of the contents of the former he sprinkled about half over the flour that was ready in the large bowl, after which he stirred the whole thing with a wooden spoon that stood in it. And after that humane work for the sake of the pleasure and enjoyment of the whole family had ended, Jo took up an old cookbook, with the intention of making some more interesting facts, which might be useful to him later in his woods. He had just sat down, with the book on his knees, when Marian, the kitchen-maid, came out of the back kitchen, to take a look at her youthful guests, and at the same time to borrow the salt that she needed for something or other that she prepared there .

"Are you so alone here, dear boy?" she said in surprise. "Where's your sister? Has she left the bread baking to you for a change?"

"No, I wish it were true," was the firm answer. "She's just for a moment because Uncle wanted to speak to her. She will come back soon."

"And do you know whether Miss Corrie had finished with the salt before she left?" Marian asked further, as she picked up the pot of sugar from the place where Corrie, just before, in her presence.

"I—I—no—yes—I don't know," stammered Jo, as he hastily bent his face over his book again, with so many ^[92] apparent interest, that the good Marian looked over his shoulder to see what he was so diligently studying. She didn't expect that Jo's desire to enjoy the bread would be very expensive, and when she saw that she was that he was working on the introduction to the cookbook, which was very nice and in the form of of a story, she understood the cause of his jerking off completely. She herself had laughed many times at that introduction.

There was a smile on her good-hearted face as she took the sugar with her and with it a game pie, which was intended for lunch, was abundantly sprinkled. And that smile was still present when she brought the pot back, at the same moment that Corrie returned to the kitchen, and, half laughing half anxiously, exclaimed:

"So, little Jo, how naughty you have in the time that I've been away Executed, say? Let me hear it."

Jo lifted his eyes from the cookbook.

"I t h o u g h t about making dolls from the yeast, Cor, but I didn't do it."

[94]

"No, he has been as careful as it can be," said the non-detrimental suspecting Marian, and, as she put the sugar-bowl back on the table, she added at:

"I didn't rob you of all the salt, Miss Corrie, but I wanted my pie Quickly ready, so I took a little of this for the sake of convenience."

"A good deal," thought Corrie, with some surprise, when her keen eye took the great reduction that the contents of the salt-cellar had undergone. Enough salt to season fifty game pies had disappeared. Anyway, it went to her and she scarcely thought about it for a moment, when, on her own sprinkled a teaspoon of salt over the flour, and finally started making of the heavily sugared bread began. When everything was put in the oven, Jo wanted to kitchen but Corrie said:

"Listen, Jo, I'd wait a little longer if I were you, otherwise you know not even half what you need to know for life in your woods. I'm going to make some cookies now for tea, and it's absolutely necessary that you also know how t o d o t h a t."

[95]

Jo, who was already at the door, turned around and looked at her in amazement.

"Why do you think that, Cor?"

"Why! Well, because I've seen in that book, that in the last days everywhere here lying lying around the house, that the hero, Jim Slapdash—"

"Cor!" it sounded in an indignant tone, "you don't even know his name. ' It's Dashwood. But what would that do with him? He didn't bake cookies, did he?"

"Yes, definitely. In that chapter, in which that fight with the natives occurs, you remember don't you see how Dashwood comforts his trembling prisoner with a big slice of cake? And how would he have gotten cake at such a moment, if he hadn't baked it?"

Although the author of the book had unfortunately remained silent on that point, Corrie's reasoning seemed sufficient enough to move Jo to his place next to the kitchen table. Little did he suspect what a trial by fire he would be subdued.

"Hey, Cor, that's going to be delicious!" he shouted, watching how first a piled plate full of glistening raisins was placed in the batter, and then a large amount of sugared orange peels. "I don't believe Jim Dashwood w^{ould} put so many raisins and orange peels in his cake would it have done?"

"No, maybe not. He may have only put sugar in it. That's true, it It's good that I'm just thinking about that. Talking to you would almost make me forget to put sugar in it."

So saying, Corrie turned, went to the court, and took to Jo's great frightened, the pot he had changed. Sugar in the bread, instead of salt, would be a delicious variation, of that he felt convinced; but salt, in place of sugar, in biscuits, could not be otherwise than horrible.

"Cor," he began hastily, "I don't think there's any need for sugar in those biscuits. Don't you think they'll be so sweet enough, with all those raisins and sugared orange peels?"

Corrie laughed. "What, without sugar!" she exclaimed. "Just imagine! And uncle Johan and you, both of whom love sweets so much! No, Jo, I want my reputation about such things, by saving the sugar, when I have something tasty for you or uncle."

And as she talked, she picked up the pot, and about one Half a pound of salt went into the batter. A little bit^[97] was kept back for the whipped cream. But Jo didn't wait to watch them prepare. He had had enough, and more than enough, of the kitchen and the cooking and baking affairs, now that he saw how his sister, without thinking of anything evil, spoiled her biscuits; and he uttered a sigh, half of sorrow, half of relief, when John, the gardener, appeared at the door, and, touching his cap, asked if the young gentleman had any lust to take a ride in the donkey-cart, to get wood from the woods.



"John," Jo suddenly began, "I wanted to ask you something."

[98]

Jo sat on the bench in the wagon, which was slowly calmed down and slowed down by friend . John, the gardener, walked beside it, and he had already wondered wondered what would matter to the little young gentleman, because he was so unusually quiet . He immediately showed his willingness to respond to the question of his little companion.

"Is it something about those rabbits, which the gentleman said you could take home, young gentleman?"

"No, John," was the half-impatient answer. "I should like to know, John, if you had done something with the intention of making a fun of it, and a part of it was completely confused, what would you do?"

"Well, young sir, I would do my best to get things right again."

"Yes, but if there was nothing more to be done about it, if you c o u l d n ' t get things in order anymore, what then?"

Now the question of John was getting a bit too difficult, so he just gave up.

[99]

DISCOVERY.

The use of afternoon tea was just as good in the quiet country house of Mr. Holmer has become a fixed habit, if this is the case in large cities nowadays in most households. And both his youthful guests liked that habit very much good. Corrie was as great a lover of tea as most of us remembered. nowadays imagine it to be; and Jo had discovered that his godfather, during that quiet noonday, usually in its most cheerful, convivial mood, and then very often suggested some pleasant plan, or something nice had to say. It happened very rarely that Jo, between half past four and six, did not show himself in the sitting room. But there are exceptions to every rule. ^[100]

That day of the bread-making, Miss Holmer had already made a few cups of tea, and Mr. Holmer had been restlessly chair on the other, before friend Jo came out. And he would would not have come even then, if his uncle had not sent him a message to ask where he was. With the enviable forgetfulness, of his age and his character, Jo had already taken away all his worries and sorrows concerning the salted delicacies are completely forgotten, a few minutes after his mysterious attempt to old gardener for advice had come to nothing. The driving of a donkey, helping with loading wood, and then driving it home and unloading it again of the wagon, these were new and delightful occupations, which soon brought all the unpleasant fretting friend Jo's worries. He even recalled the coffee meal did not remember what he had done that morning, and the consequences of it, for his uncle when he came running in, permission to proceed as soon as possible, and then go outside again to help John with the charging of a load of firewood, which had to be brought to a poor old woman, who lived a long way outside the village. Jo hadn't had time to think about anything else as by the pleasant work that awaited him. ^[101]



"There you are, young gentleman," said John, as they finally returned at dark. "You helped me very much today, I have to say. I hope the tea is good will taste."

"Food and drink always taste good to me," was the frank answer. "But what you let me do it this afternoon, I found it much more pleasant. Go on, think of something like that again by tomorrow. Bye, John!" ^[102]

And then Jo ran into the house, where Corrie grabbed him and raised his eyebrows stared at him. "But, boy, what do you look like!" she cried.

"I will believe that, Cor," was the answer, "you should have seen what I have done. 'It was delicious! I will ask John if you can help load wood tomorrow; He is very kind-hearted, so I think he'll want it, although he also says that he finds the scurrying of women around him difficult."

"So, does John say that?" said Corrie, laughing. "Now, remember, little fellow, that you love the scurrying around you would be a lot of trouble if you didn't get as soon as You can go upstairs to fix yourself up before Uncle sees you. I have prepared other clothes for you, and a clean collar. Allo, quick, small boss!"

Fifteen minutes later, when Jo came down the stairs, the sight of a dish of small, light brown, appetizing-looking biscuits, with which Jane, the maid, was on her way to the sitting room, so violent, that he suddenly stopped and, after a few seconds, ran back to his own room, where he remained until Jane came to call him in the name of Mr. Holmer.

"And I would hurry a little, Jo, if I were you," added the kind-hearted girl "because Miss Corrie's biscuits look like that, no—"



"Horrible!" cried Jo, as he dashed past Jane with such rapidity that it really scared them.

Mr. Holmer looked at his young guest when he entered; and the serious expression of his and the unusually^[104] slow, calm manner in which he approached, aroused his uncle is a little worried.

"Tell me, boss, what's the matter?" he said. "I heard that today you have have been so beautifully careful all day that I have just written a letter to your mother. to ask if you can stay until after Thursday, so that you can attend the school party can still attend. But if you're going to get sick, or sad, you see, I'll take get you in as soon as possible, and I'll send you away."

Jo approached the tea-table, casting a hasty glance, first at the platter with biscuits, and then on his uncle's saucer. "I'm not going to get sick, Uncle, at least I don't believe that, and I I'm not exactly sad, but I have something very serious in my head to talk about and John couldn't help me, he said. I wish he had done it."

Mr. Holmer laughed. "So, what kind of mischief did you want to persuade John to do, Tell me that?"

"Oh! ' it wasn't John who had to do it," Jo said quickly. "I just asked how he thought about something, and he said he believed he couldn't see anything in it, And I couldn't do it either." [105]

"Could I do it?" asked Mr. Holmer, without knowing whether he would laugh or look serious. In any case, his nephew looked serious enough, while he replied:

"Yes—oh—I think you could. But then, I think, you would want everything from it know, you see; and I would have thought that John could have given me a little without that help."

"Oh, you foolish little Jo," Corrie broke in, laughing, when the mysterious conversation so far had progressed. "What wonderful, weighty things do you have in your head? Before you go any further, wouldn't you even taste my cookies? Uncle thanked, And now I would like to know how they taste to you."

As she talked, she pulled him to a chair close to the fire, for he was so tall Stayed up in the cold, that he looked decidedly cold. But he revealed not much inclination to taste the biscuits in question, and Mr. Holmer explained his book and began to make an extra effort to make his nephew happy again . Finally he succeeded, but still a half-bitten cookie remained lying untouched on Jo's saucer. Mr. Holmer did not understand a thing, and Corrie thought so too strange, although it was true that on her saucer there was also a small brown object, which she didn't care about. [106]

Several times she stared at her little brother with wide-open eyes, while the latter listened to his uncle's stories, and then she glanced at the bowl again with biscuits; but each time she shook her head in the negative, in answer to her own thoughts. It was quite impossible that he could have touched them. He was almost had been constantly engrossed in the cook-book while she was preparing them, and she was not been out of the kitchen for a minute, from the moment she started it, until they had been taken out of the oven.

"Uncle," she began at last, in a depressed tone, "when I prepare something for you again, may I use fresh butter?"

"Yes, my dear child," said Mr. Holmer, in the detracted manner that is his custom when he thought about other things. At that moment he did not feel at ease about his nephew. His sister-in-law had urged him to be careful that the boy did not get sick; And yet, in spite of all the good care, the uncle was afraid that his little guest on one or the other in another way. He turned away from Corrie again, and said: [107]

"Jo, my boy, you are not progressing with your cookies. Why is that? What did Corrie carried out with it?"

"Oh!—it's—it's not exactly Corrie's fault," stammered Jo, as he bravely picked up the spurned candy and prepared to bite into it.

But Miss Holmer took it out of his hand, and said hastily:

"No, uncle, it's not my fault, but he certainly can't eat them. They are so salt as anything. It's only because barrel butter will have been used for it; That is good for meat dishes, and the like, but for cakes and other sweets, it's horrible. That whole collection of biscuits has been spoiled by it."

Corrie looked very sad and disgruntled, partly because she knew her mother would have told her that she should have tasted the butter before she used it, if she had any doubts about the quality. Mr Holmer was

displeased that his it was niece, and because Jo had to do without the promised delicacies.

When Corrie had finished speaking, he stood up hastily and said:

[108]

"Dear child, you are definitely telling me something new. I had no idea at all, that Marian once bought what you call barrel butter, and I am surprised to the highest degree that she gives you something other than the best materials, if you are so kind as to . I will—"

"Call and ask her about it," Mr. Holmer wanted to say, but Jo fell hastily in:

"And Corrie h a s also had the best of everything, Uncle, to put in those biscuits. Candied orange peels, you don't know how delicious they looked; And t h e y even taste salty, I know, because I took a piece out to try. But even if you have everything of the best kind, salt cannot be used as sugar and, you see, I have—"

But here Jo's announcements were put to a sudden end by entering Jane, who informed the master of the house that a stranger had been visitor was waiting for him; and on the card given Mr. Holmer read the name of an acquaintance of his, a rather important and distinguished man, so that the kitchen matters dealt with were completely forgotten, and Mr. Holmer, for a moment, was exclusively concerned with the question whether the menu of that afternoon would be suitable for Dr. Barton, who is quite a gourmet without [109] objection. After having welcomed his guest, he soon left it in the care of Corrie, and went downstairs to drink wine from and also to discuss with Marian the question of lunch. Hair opinion was fortunately very encouraging.

"We also have that game pie this afternoon, sir. And of course, she can be disappointing, But that she looks beautiful is certain. And then we have the beaten cream of Miss Corrie, you see, and those little grated rolls, which always look real good on a table, isn't it, and—"

"And those that will be very good today, I 'm sure," broke in Jo, who was also the distinguished company in the reception room and who now looked very cheerful again. Although the cookies were spoiled Jo felt sure that the sandwiches would be very tasty. tastes.

"Precious!" he thought silently, as he took his place at table, and with a gaze of pleasure at the bowl of small, brown rolls. [110]

But the smile on Jo's face would, unfortunately, be chased away very soon. The soup was served, a tasty, powerful soup, which did Marian all the honor. Dr. Barton tasted it, and apparently he felt very satisfied. Then he took a piece of his sandwich, but almost at the same moment he cried, in a sharp tone:

"A piece of ordinary bread, please."

The words had hardly been spoken when he changed his mind, and turned away laughing and with an apologetic gesture to his host.

"Excuse me, Holmer! You make me feel so at home here, that I truly, I forgot for a moment that I am not sitting at my usual table in Oxford."

Of course, Mr. Holmer immediately accepted the apology, but Miss Holmer looked very surprised, and so did Jo from his side. That young gentleman even ventured expressing his feelings in a half-whisper:

"Imagine that someone likes ordinary bread more than those tasty things!"

Dr. Barton understood those words of his youthful neighbor across the street and laughed.

"Yes, boyfriend, I can imagine that you are worried about my taste amazes. At your age I also liked sugared^[11] buns more than of ordinary bread."

Mr. Holmer looked at his friend somewhat surprised. He had the sandwiches himself haven't tasted it yet. Corrie now broke off a piece of hers, while a slight blush rose to her head with annoyance, because the distinguished guest spurned them so much.

A muffled exclamation escaped her, as she put the piece of bread in her mouth, And she quickly glanced at her brother.

"Oh, Jo, now I'm sure you've been busy with it, and with those cookies too."

"Well, at least this has been a good thing, you can't say it any other way," whispered Jo, in a triumphant tone, back.

But now was not the time to answer him. Dr. Barton had regained to Corrie, and she had to think about her obligations as a temporary hostess. She cast a hasty glance at the place where her uncle was sitting, and noticed until her great pleasure that he was too absorbed in the conversation to see anything of it how his sandwich was exchanged for ordinary bread, on a sign that she to Jane. So she consoled herself with the ^[112] thought that Jo's meddling fingers after all, they had not done such a great harm. But how he had managed to interfere in things was a mystery to her. for it had gone through her head that she had been called away by her uncle.



With great satisfaction and great taste, Jo ate his whole sandwich. Then came the game pie .

[113]

Game pie was a favorite dish of Mr. Holmer, and Marian, knowing it, always did her utmost to prepare that special dish entirely according to her requirements. . Dr. Barton, too, was very fond of it, and it had happened more than once that he had enjoyed it under the hospitable roof of his friend. There was a pleasant smile on his face when the pie appeared on the table.

The dish was cut, served, and people began to eat it, and then— Dr. Barton lowered his knife and fork, while his face had a singular expression . Corrie and her uncle both stared at him in horror.

"Barton, my dear fellow, are you ill?" exclaimed Mr. Holmer.

"Sick! No," replied Dr. Barton, with a forced laugh; "but you know, Holmer, I am a man of the old stamp—conservative in everything—and that sweetened commodity Here—don't blame an old friend for saying it frankly—is totally messed up."

Mr. Holmer stared at his friend in great amazement for a moment, then he hurriedly took some of the dish himself, and said: [114]

"Don't try to eat any of that horrible good, Barton. How did they daring to play such a prank!"

He sprang up, and without saying a word to Jane, who was serving the company, he rushed to the bell. But someone else was still ahead of him. A small, tanned hand took a hold of his large hand, and a rather anxious voice said:

"Go on, wait a minute, Uncle. ' It's all my fault. As a result, that misery is now all of the cream, and the pie, and the biscuits, and John said he would not help me if things were already completely confused. And it really wasn't to thank you or Cor that I have exchanged the salt and the sugar—but only to make the bread tasty, . And now I'm going to bed—and—and—" with an audible sob—"I got it all to you now and I will stay in bed all day to-morrow, and longer, if you like. But please don't be angry with me after that." [115]

X.

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AN UNFORTUNATE SAYING.

"As long as I live, I will never, never again suggest anything in the presence of children, neither in seriousness nor in jest, that I would not like to have them done."

Thus said Mr. Holmer, one day, to his sister-in-law and her husband, and, judging by the expression of his face at that moment, he thought it none, he said very seriously. But we will start by returning to Jo, and to the day following the feast of the crashed pie.

Breakfast was over. Jo had eaten the last piece of his sugared bread, Quietly thinking to himself that h i s share in the cooking affairs is, after all, a definite would have been an improvement on the ordinary way; but after that Marian and Corrie had actually spoiled the business. He was now standing out through the window of the dining room with his head to the side, in a manner which, as his sister well knew, never expected much good for the future peace and quiet in the house.

"What naughtiness are you thinking of now, little boss," she said, while She stood behind him and straightened his head.

Jo turned around.

"Cor," he said, gravely, and in a tone full of reproach; "Don't you know that my naughtiness things that a l w a y s come up all at once? I never think about it in advance. Fortunately not. When you see that When

I'm thinking about something, it's always that I'm busy with something good or something pleasant but never anything naughty. Don't you understand that yet, Corrie?"

"Well—yes," said Corrie, somewhat hesitatingly. "I do believe, Jo, that you can read more about it thinks he is doing something good or nice than something naughty. But, you see, your ventures are usually so unfortunate that—"

"Oh," Jo broke in calmly, "that's just because papa always comes from the things in the history says, by the power of circumstances. And you can't expect me to be there can do a lot about it, Cor."^[117]

Corrie burst into such hearty laughter at hearing that answer, that her young brother was about to get seriously angry. But she restrained herself and said:

"Come, come, little fellow, don't be angry because I laugh so much. You know that it very healthy for a person, to laugh heartily now and then, so you had to be happy that you let me do it. And now I'll be very serious again, I promise I told you, while you told me what plan you were coming up with."

Jo stared ahead with a somewhat uncertain expression. He felt wounded in his dignity, but still he found it terribly annoying, and difficult too, to stay angry with Corrie.

"I'd say you have absolutely no reason to laugh at me, Corrie, and—", This was added with a very serious face, "I think it's also for dad It is not pleasant that you laugh so much at something he has said. If you keep me like this then I can't think of anything more, and I was just thinking of something that I could do uncle pleasure with, because he wasn't very angry about that pie yesterday and all that."^[118]

"Oh—oh!" said Corrie, as her laughter vanished, and she gave her brother a look full of concern. "So I was right after all, little parrot, that you are busy something could be thought of, which might end badly again. I'll give you a look tell something much better. Be as careful as you can not to undertake the slightest more of those things that surprise you. but the consequences of which are usually difficult and unpleasant. That will be a lot more better way to thank Uncle John than anything else, believe me."

"Would you think so?" was the friendly answer, while the blond curly head was held aside again. "But, you see, Cor, your plans are all for nothing and I think it's much nicer to do something."

Before Miss Holmer could express her regret about the latter, well-known fact, Mr. Holmer poked his head in, saying hastily:

"Jo, I'm not going to my office today, so if you put on your hat right away, you can go with me to go around the farm; and maybe we can still do that after that, take a look at the school, and see the Christmas tree, when we go to pick up Corrie there."^[119]

"Hurray!" shouted Jo, as he ran to the door to get his hat. But Suddenly he seemed to remember something, and he remained with a slightly depressed face.

"That's true, uncle, I'm very sorry, but I promised Cor that I would go with her would go to help her."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Holmer, in a tone of seriousness that the expression of His face was contradicted. "That's a tricky case, boy! But would-you don't think that Corrie might want to release you from your promise, if we asked her?"

Corrie stepped forward, with a smiling expression in her eyes, to look for herself .

"Certainly, Uncle, it will even give me a great deal of pleasure. I mean, of course, Jo, that I think it's very good if you go with Uncle to look at all the animals, and I hope that you will have a very pleasant morning."

And so Jo was given over by his sister to the care of her uncle, while she was could not help breathing a slight sigh of relief, now that she was at last was able to breathe freely, even though the rascal was also out¹⁰ of sight. Poor Corrie! A few hours later she wept half blind, at the memory that she had been glad to give her little, troublesome brother a for a while, and she did her best, by means of all kinds of self-tortures, to draw material from that thought to bitter self-reproach.

For the moment, however, she set out full of cheerfulness, to welcome the very welcome to assist her in good taste and quick fingers in decorating the Christmas tree, which was to serve in the municipal school; and Jo walked along with his uncle, to make a proper inspection of the horses, pigs and cows, and all the other animals in that area.

Jo was particularly keen not to skip anything, so a visit had to be made to the goat, which is to be found in a field at some distance from the house. . Before uncle and nephew had reached that place, they were overtaken by the village clergyman, who had come to discuss with Mr. Holmer a few things about the regulation of the school party. Jo walked along next to the two gentlemen, listening now and then to their conversation, and then again busy with his own thoughts. But suddenly It allows him that his own thoughts and the subject of²¹ conversation of the two gentlemen are so that he was certainly surprised by them.

"What a beautiful old tree!" the preacher had just said, as he quietly stood under a broad-branched chestnut tree, which, even in its winter baldness, impressive looking.

"Yes," said Mr. Holmer, "that old giant is one of the things here that I particularly like. Much appreciated by a couple. But to my regret he has been able to summer a little ago. There is a branch yonder, you see, that has been struck by lightning; he's quite dead."



Bladz. 121. "Yonder is a branch that has been destroyed by lightning has been affected."

"So!" said the preacher, as he hurriedly stepped back a few steps. He was a somewhat nervous man, and the affected branch was quite large.

"Would it not be better if he were taken away?" he asked, with some anxiety. "In the case of strong winds it could become quite dangerous. Don't you think?"

Mr. Holmer looked up with an inquisitive look, and so did Jo.

"Yes," said Mr. Holmer; "I've thought about that myself. But the The matter is that John, my gardener, is so heavy that I was actually afraid to let him climb so high. It will be best that I go to some one or the other [122] young chimney-sweep to climb up, and a rope around the branch . It would be down soon enough, with one big tug. And I have to say that I should be glad of it, for it is not only dangerous, but an ugly sight too."

So saying, he came out from under the tree and rejoined his friend, too much filled with the conversation, which had been temporarily interrupted, to allow the interested longing to notice glances cast by friend Jo on the dead branch, that his uncle had talked about.

"I'm not a chimney sweep," Jo said softly to himself, as he slowly the two gentlemen; "but I can climb a lot better than Fred Mackenzie, and I believe he could even climb up very easily to make a rope to put him on the ground. dead old branch. In any case, I can certainly do it." [123]

XI.

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THE TROUBLESOME BOY HAS AN ACCIDENT.

"And how pleased Uncle will be," murmured Jo Holmer to herself, "if I walk back and tell him that the rope is all right, and that they can pull."

Friend Jo sat very high between the branches of the gigantic old chestnut tree, when he said that; And he looked up to see how far he still had to go. It Gave him a bit of pleasure to notice that he was only a little higher had to climb to be where he had to be, for the frost had left the branches somewhat "slippery," and in spite of the effort of climbing, his hands began to to be rather stiffened by the cold. He looked at the rope [124] which he had wound round his waist, and wished for it. he was lucky that he had not fastened it with a button, for it would have been difficult to could have been detached. And then he stretched out his arm again to a higher branch, and climbed on.



But while Jo was busy carrying out his plan to to render his uncle a real, real service, as a token of gratitude^[125] for all the kindnesses shown to him, were given by the persons who well-being and good behavior, made the usual question, where he would be somewhere.

Immediately after the coffee-meal, Miss Holmer was called away to the reception room, to to discuss a few things with the school teacher. Mr. Holmer had a philosophical conversation with the preacher, who had gone home with him to stay coffee, and Jo had taken that favorable opportunity to run away and unhindered to carry out his good plans.

The weighty questions concerning the school party, the reception of the children, the decorations of the Christmas tree, etc., had at last come to a decision, and Corrie now returned to the dining room. The inevitable question followed:

"Where is Jo, Uncle Johan, do you know too?"

"Jo, dear child?" said Uncle Johan, as he, in a somewhat withdrawn manner, looked around the room. "No, Corrie, I thought Jo was with you. Got it here returned?" [126]

"No, Uncle, I had left him here."

"Your little brother has gone out, miss," said Jane, who happened to come in, while they were talking about it. "About ten minutes ago I saw him in the kitchen window pass."

"Good heavens, where could he have gone?" said Corrie, with an extra feeling of unrest, at the memory of that morning's conversation about the various expressions of gratitude. She looked so dejected that her uncle stood up at the same time as she his guest, and in an encouraging, cheerful tone said:

"Come, come, dear girl, you can't expect that little rascal of a brother you always follow like a dog. But rest assured, I'm walking with Mr. Robinson back to the village, and I bet we'll see Jo here or there as she passes—on swing, or busy feeding the rabbits. If I find it, I will take it to for a grump."

Corrie laughed.

"That's good, uncle. I will be ready for it. But please tell you, if he he may come with me in a moment to look at the Christmas tree." [127]

"By way of grumbling, surely?" asked the preacher, smiling, and then we went the two gentlemen, and Corrie, completely reassured, sat down, at half a half-time to dress a dozen little dolls, which were still needed for the Christmas tree, but who, by the force of circumstances, as Jo would have said, would never have been able to .

Mr. Holmer saw one of the stable boys standing there as he went through the backyard, and he called out to him:

"Sam, has my nephew been in the stable the other day to feed the donkey?"

"No, sir," replied Sam, approaching. "I have just spoken to the young gentleman with a rope in his hand, across the field, in the direction of the village."

Mr. Holmer suddenly stopped while the boy was speaking, and he turned away to his friend, with such a singular expression on his face, that he could not be side stared at him in horror.

"What's the matter, Holmer?" he asked, in a worried tone. "Don't you feel well?"

"No, but I am afraid; that doesn't happen to me often," was the answer, loudly and cool. "But come on, we're just wasting time here. We can perhaps overtake the daredevil before he gets to the tree, if we hurry." [128]

"The tree?" gasped the preacher, breathless, not because he had heard his friend's fears. for he did not know how to explain it at all, but only because he it was difficult for him to keep up with his rapid pace.

But even if he had spoken so intelligibly, he would, most probably, did not receive a perfectly clear answer at that time, because Mr. Holmer spoke the simple truth, when he said he was afraid. He had understood at once what that rope meant, and in what direction to look for his nephew.

At last, when he caught sight of the tree, he paused for a moment, and, turning to the preacher, he said, pointing to the tree, with hoarse voice:

"Robinson, you can see better in the distance than I can—tell me, do you see the child?"

At last the preacher understood his intention. But he almost felt inclined laughing at his friend's fear.

"If I see the child!" he exclaimed. "Your nephew, you mean after all, Holmer? Well no, of course not. You [129] don't suppose that the little one boy would dare to climb such a tree, especially in such a weather as this!"

"He dares and dares a lot. What else did he need the rope for, if to to do what I suggested?"

The two gentlemen had moved on again, and were now nearer to the tree. Suddenly two farm workers came rushing towards them from another field.

"Sir," cried one, "there's a boy sitting in that tree over there. What he does there, I don't understand, because there are no bird's nests to take out now; but if he does not arms or legs, it is a miracle."

There was now no longer any doubt, and all four of them rushed forward to the place, just when a loud and cheerful "Hurray! I did it!" from the middle of the tree.

The next moment a loud crackle, a scream, a rubbing between them was heard. the branches, a thump, and before the four men could reach the spot, the poor man lay little Jo next to the broken branch on the ground, pale and motionless, with a broken leg, a broken arm, and a bleeding head. [130]

"Where are we going to take him, sir?" asked the men, turning more to the preacher addressing then to the mortally frightened kinsman, who with so sad a expression on the pale face of the poor little boy. But the gentleman Holmer was quick to say:

"True! Well, home, of course." And then he added, in a different tone and as if speaking to himself, with: "But, oh! what will Corrie say; what will Corrie say?"

The repetition of that name evidently attracted the attention of the half-unconscious boy, for suddenly the tightly closed blue eyes opened; the pale lips moved a soft cry was heard, followed by the imploring question:

"Oh! Uncle—don't tell—to Cor."

Mr. Holmer bent his face still deeper over the child, while he was in a soft, Friendly tone said, "Why not, dear boy? You don't think she's angry now will be on you?"

For a moment a blush appeared on the pale face, and Jo cried out with all her strength which he still has at his disposal could: "But uncle!! After all, Cor is never angry! I—I—am," here his voice sounded whole again [131] weak, "only afraid—that—she'll find it so bad—that poor man—"

He could no longer speak; again he lost consciousness.



It took a long, very long time that the small, troublesome Jo didn't have the slightest idea of it who heard of his misfortune or not, and who was sad and sad or not. left. Many a bitter tear had already been shed by Corrie Holmer, next to the cot in which her little brother lay, with short cut hair and a feverish blush on his^[132] cheeks, before a very weak voice unexpectedly asked one morning:

"Corrie, why are you sitting here?—Have I overslept?—is it time to have breakfast?"

It took a moment before those questions were answered, because Miss Holmer did not seem to be able to speak at once. Finally she said, forced calm tone:

"Yes, dear Jo, it's time for breakfast. But you've had some headaches, and that's why Mommy thinks it's better that you stay in bed a little longer."

"That's good," Jo said, half sleepy, and with a sigh of satisfaction. "Then faith I think I'm going to sleep a little longer."

And five minutes later, when his mother came into the room, to see Corrie downstairs, for her breakfast, and to take care of her little young herself, she found him quiet Sleeping. It was the first natural, refreshing sleep he had had for weeks enjoyed. The crisis was over. The fever had stopped, the broken limbs had begun good to heal, scratches and bumps had long since disappeared, and that much-loved, troublesome little boy, Jo Holmer, had nothing more to do now than as soon as he could could to get completely better. And in the^[133] meantime he evidently regarded it as a foregone conclusion, that lying in bed, with an arm and a leg in plaster cast, someone the right to make unlimited demands in the field of stories.

Not only Corrie, but everyone else who approached his cot, was service, until at last, one evening, Marian, the kitchen-maid, who was with the special purpose of paying homage to the young tyrant, With the joyful exclamation was greeted:

"Oh! Marian, I'm very glad you came. I believe Cor is a little bit has become drowsy in her head from all the telling. She doesn't have a lot today at least nothing nice, so you want to think of that cookbook of yours upstairs I would like to hear that funny beginning again."

"And I hope, boss," said Mr. Holmer, "if Marian will be so good as to get out of that cookbook, that you will then think again of certain sugared pie and heavily salted cookies. Come, Corrie, dear child, come with me to the reception room, there is someone there who, I believe, is waiting for you, and who is not, like Jo, you doesn't like stories enough." [134]

"Who is that, Cor?" asked Jo, when his sister, with a somewhat shy expression, bent over him to give him a kiss. "Who's waiting for you?"

"I—I—don't know, dear boy," was the rather hastily given answer, that true was too, because Miss Holmer really didn't know; she only had a suspicion. At the same time, she escaped the possibility of further questioning, as fast as she could, and Jo had to turn to Marian:

"Marian, who's downstairs, do you know, with mom and uncle?"

Marian hesitated for a moment, before answering, and then she said:

"Mr. Russell came a while ago, Jo. But I don't know if he is still there ."

"Of course he can't be there anymore," he said immediately, in a very decisive tone. "If he had stayed, he would of course have come upstairs, because he keeps it mostly mine, more than anyone else here in the house."

And since that insurance friend Jo was completely satisfied, Marian had no inclination against it . [135]

XII.

[Contents]

JO MAKES HIMSELF DESERVING.

It was in the very first days of April. Soft, lovely, clear, lovely weather—in short, just the kind of weather, to get someone to pile up all kinds of adjectives in honour of it. Just the kind of weather, to make hopeful people say to each other with a cheerful smile:

"What a b e a u t i f u l summer we shall have!"

"Listen, Uncle," began Jo Holmer, "it hasn't really been so bad, that I've broken my arm and my leg, because, you see, you'd never get over it thought to keep Corrie and me here for so long." [136]

The young patient was lying, supported by pillows, on a couch surface, in front of a large, casement window, that gave a view of a spacious lawn, in which small flower beds had been laid out, full of fresh crocuses, daisies and hyacinths.

Not far from that couch sat Jo's father and mother, his uncle, Mr. Holmer, Corrie of course, and Mr. Russell. The whole company had for a few moments when Jo suddenly put an end to the calm and silence by his Decisive tone, remark expressed. After waiting a moment, he added at:

"Is it right, Uncle? Would you?"

Mr. Holmer laughed.

"Now, if I had to keep you here somehow, I would rather have had a healthy guest."

Jo, with a very wise face, shook his head.

"Yes, Uncle, I believe you think so. But you would never have endured, you see. u. That's what Marian, the kitchen maid, told me. She used to say, before I fell I am told me that if I had stayed a week longer, you would have become so thin of all the fuss with me, so thin—she said that you have already had fallen so [137] much since I was staying here, and she said—"

"Now shut up, little chatterbox," said his mother, laughing, while She put her hand on his mouth. "You can read all those confidential communications from Marian just don't give it away. Tell us why you think it's such a special good that your uncle has had to keep you here so long."

"Oh! Mom, that's very easy to tell," he replied at once. "In winter I don't think it's such a d r e a d f u l place to live out here, except, you see, as for the asses, which are Very nice, and so are the pigs. But now that I've seen it in the spring, now I know that it's v e r y beautiful here. And then, of course, there is that other reason."

"Is he as good as the first, little boss?" asked Mr. Holmer, laughing. "Come, Let's hear them."

"That's good," Jo said calmly. "And that reason is actually even better than the others, because it does not concern me. If I hadn't fallen from that tree, Corrie would have and Mr. Russell have not so often sat with me, and I am sure that they both had a very pleasant time—Oh!"

Jo was allowed to say "oh!", because speaking was made impossible for him this time by a sudden pushing of [138] his chin upwards, which made him bite his tongue, while Corrie, really angry, with indignant looks and very red cheeks, in a hushed tone said:

"How dare you, Jo? How dare you say such things!"

And then Jo's chin was let go, and again he uttered a distressed "oh!" while Corrie jumped up from her chair, and walked out through the open glass door, where she immediately disappeared around the corner of the house.

The next moment Mr. Russell had sprung up, and, evidently encouraged, by Mr. Holmer's laughing remark:—"I would only guess you what hurry, Frank, if you want to catch up with that fugitive"—he too flew out and disappeared around the corner of the house.

Speechless with astonishment, Jo stared into the garden for a moment. Then he raised himself on his elbow and looked at his mother, to see some clarification on her face. of the case. But Mrs. Holmer's face provided for her youthful son at that moment already had as great a riddle as everything else. He had there has never been such a strange expression . She didn't look sad at all, and yet there were tears in her eyes. It was [139] wonderful, very wonderful! For little Jo the case was in any case an unfathomable one riddle.

"What's wrong with them?" he murmured softly to himself. Then he looked at his father and his uncle, who, although they both smiled, also looked at a little strange way.

Jo got a bit out of his mood because of all the enigma around him.

"Uncle Johan," he said at last, in a tone of reproach, "that is not a good one way to help a boy get rid of his headache, when all the people around him put a face, as if someone has given them a mass of riddles, where they didn't want to tell the answer."

At that accusation, Mr. Holmer started to laugh even more.

"It is you, little boss, who have given up the riddle, and Mr. Russell has now tried to see if your sister would like to tell you the answer to it. He has I've tried it a few times, I think, but I've got such an idea that you can give him a lot of to get the answer at last." [140]

"What answer, Uncle?"

"Yes! You should ask Corrie yourself when she comes back," said Uncle Johan. "I can only guess, and I think she'd rather tell you the truth of the matter itself. than that I spoil it, by telling you what I think of it."

And then, as if they had agreed on it, all three great men stood at the same time and went together to another room. Jo was left alone, to avoid the riddles, that arose, to find a solution in silence and solitude.

The issue, which occupied all his housemates at the same time, was apparently quite Important, for he was left to his fate for more than an hour, a neglect that had never been heard of in the last three months. Yet Jo did not feel hurt by it; He didn't care at all, On this special occasion, he was far too busy solving his riddle.

To help his thoughts a little, he finally made a pencil and a sheet of paper, and wrote, with a rather shaky scribbling hand:

"The trouble started like this, I said I was sure that Cor and Mr. Russell thought it was very pleasant to sit [141] together with me, and that's where the trouble started. I think Mr. Russell only thought it was funny, and that Cor did it because she didn't want to be naughty, and mama is sure of that, and he is happy because Cor has been so kind. And now Mr. Russell is afraid that he won't be allowed to stay because Cor is angry, and—"



"Oh!" was his joyful exclamation, and he dropped the pencil when a shadow between him and the light. [142]
There Corrie herself stood on the threshold.

"Hey, you don't look angry at all now, fortunately," said Jo, in a tone full of satisfaction, after he had first looked at her with the necessary attention. "Will you please do this now read it, Corrie, and tell me if I have guessed right?"

Corrie took the scribbled paper and read, very slowly and with some difficulty, some and when Jo then said again insistently: "Well, Corrie?" she dropped to her knees by the side of the couch, and threw her arms round her neck from her brother.

"Was I right, Cor?" asked Jo again.

"Not quite, darling," she whispered to him, resting her head on his shoulder .

"Hey!" said Jo, in a tone of great disappointment, and then, with a hint of unrest, at: "But you're not angry with me at all anymore, are you, Cor?"



Bladz. 142. "But you are no longer at all angry with me, huh, Cor?"

With an even warmer embrace than before, and a hearty kiss, that question became answered at first, and then it followed: "No, not at all, my dear Jo, really, not at all. I just got there too Not angry, really angry with you,^[143] I just didn't like it. Because, see you, dear Jo, you were a terribly troublesome boy, for such things so to speak."

Jo pulled his face back a little way, to see his sister with a very serious, inquisitive look.

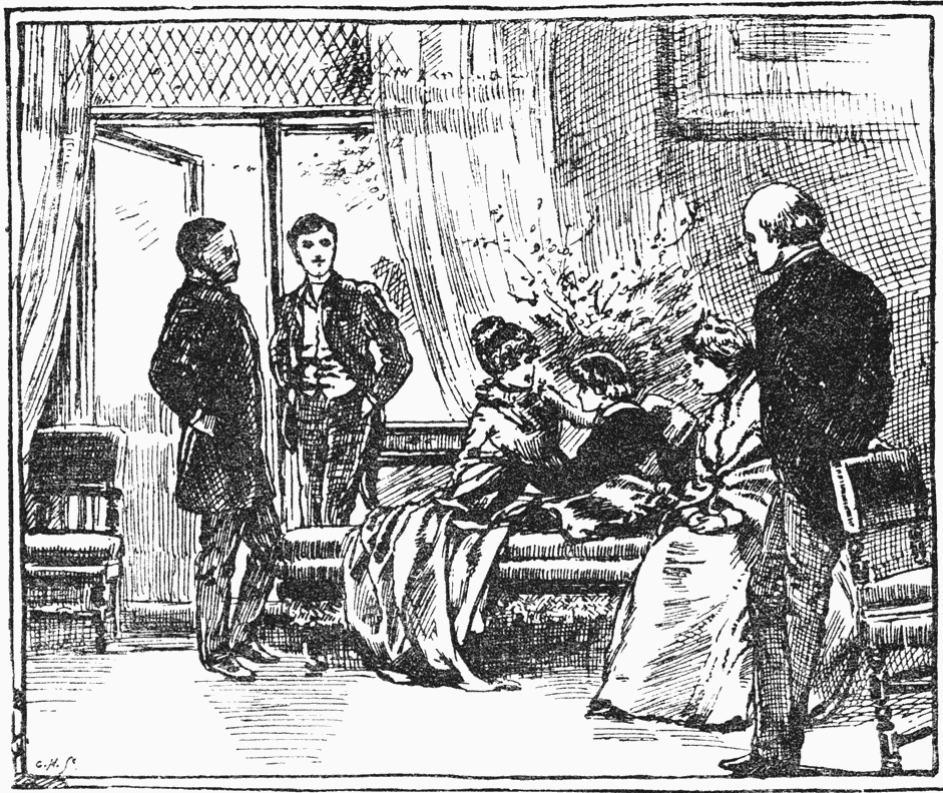
"But you know, Cor, when I said all that, that I really thought it was true."

"And it was, darling. You were right."

"Oh, I'm glad of that!" said Jo. And then he laid his head resignedly on the couch pillow and fell asleep. All kinds of strange solutions of the "misery" came to his mind in his dreams, but with the true solution they had

none of them make anything. Cor was his Cor; and the opportunity did not come into him that any one would dare to rob him of his property.

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XIII.

A WEDDING.

"Dr. Walter, how long do you think it will be before I can dance?"

Jo asked that question very calmly, and with the most serious face in the world, but the The doctor looked at his young patient in amazement, and he began to laugh heartily.

"Dancing on your head—you mean for sure, you little joker! Well, I'd rather not try for the time being. Do^[145] you want it so badly?"

Jo shook his head, and he answered, very seriously:

"No, Dr. Walter, I don't mean anything like that. I mean really, really dancing. Would you please tell me when I would be able to do that again?"

Now that the question was made so seriously, Dr. Walter ceased to laugh, and said:

"I don't think your leg will be able to bear much effort before the autumn, but I hope that by Christmas you will be able to dance again, as merry as any man. Do you like to dance so much?"

"Oh, no!" said Jo, and he made a very ugly face. It was a fact that he abhorred dancing, and little girls, who had to give him an arm, and of putting on gloves, and of everything else that belonged to it.

The doctor looked at him in amazement.

"But why do you want to know that so much, little man?"

"Oh, for a very important reason," was the very solemn and calm answer, "But, you see, Corrie might prefer not to have me tell him. But I thank you do say that you said it won't be before Christmas. After all, you will have to Don't say something else, huh?"^[146]

"No, if you don't break your leg again, to make me think change," said Dr. Walter, smiling, as he took up his hat and departed, to other patients, who may have been less amusing, but who were also less Felt inclined to ask puzzling questions.

A few hours later, Jo was back in his comfortable place on the couch, in front of the open window, with the same people around him, whom he had been waiting for about a week in had been so confused by his remarks. The riddle in question was already solved a few days ago, and, although he had been completely satisfied with that solution, had not been pleased, she left nothing to be desired in terms of clarity. Mr. Russell himself had told his future brother-in-law that he would have to do much more of Cor even kept Jo doing it, and that Corrie had now promised him in the future to take care of him, instead of her brother.

"Then I hope," said Jo gravely, "that you will be careful not to give her too much because she can't tolerate even a little bit. Caring for I wasn't bad now, and I think she even got tired of that sometimes."^[147]

But he had already made that remark a day or so ago, and it was already a day or so ago, that Jo, in the arms of mommy, in the arms of Corrie, and then in the dark, in the evening in his bed, had wept his first bitter tears, the prospect that "that good Cor" would leave the house.

"Come, come, dear boy," said Marian, the kitchen-maid, one morning, on pitying people tone, when she came upstairs, she saw his depressed face, "I would not be too If I were you. Who knows if you won't get a nice, sweet Miss Corrie of your own."

But Jo looked at her with an indignant look. "So, do you think so, Marian? Right away then you're very wrong, you know! Because I hate girls!! I wish they didn't exist."

"But, Jo, Miss Corrie is a girl too, or at least a young lady," Marian dared to argue against this.

"Cor is Cor," said Jo curtly, and then he turned his face to the wall, and laid his head on the pillow again, determined not to say a word to anyone perhaps as long as he lived, but in any case not for the time being.^[148] the next half hour. And so far he kept his decision, for he was asleep longer than that.

But all these things, as we have said, were already in the past, when the whole family and Mr. Russell gathered on that morning for the open window of the breakfast room, and Jo gradually became accustomed to the new state of things began to feel somewhat reconciled.

"At any rate," he said, taking advantage of the pause in the general conversation, and after he had been lost in thought for a while—"at any rate, you will have to wait a long time wait a while, Mr. Russell, before you can take her with you."

Jo spoke with a calmness and determination that none of the listeners could explain. Corrie bent over him, and whispered:

"What do you mean by that, dear Jo?"

He straightened up, and said aloud, "Well, of course he has to wait. You remember Surely you are, Corrie, that nice nanny, Anne, who used to be with us? Well, that said that it did not bode well if any one got married, and there was no mention of the wedding danced. And I won't be able to dance before Christmas, Dr. Walter^[149] has said that. I asked him. So that's how it is, you understand."

Of course, no one will be surprised to hear t h a t everyone understood, and it was therefore between Corrie Holmer and her future husband, that no marriage would be thought of until little Jo became a at least he would be able to dance, whether he intended to do it or not.

And when it was getting close to Christmas, Jo had become so healthy and strong again that it was decided after the holidays he was sent to a suitable boarding school, which was very close to the at Corrie's new home. The latter contributed a lot to Jo with to reconcile the new plans; and when Corrie in the first days of January with Mr. Russell married, her little brother consoled himself as she parted, with the thought that he would soon see her again. And now that he is so big and so dignified, that good Cor would no longer call him "such a difficult boy" every time, assumed he.

It is to be hoped for Corrie's peace that he has made it!

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