

## THE GLOAMING.

A wish at close of day,  
The evening waits;  
A hope, a morning ray  
From eastern gates;  
A bright and sunny spot  
Along the stream;  
A quiet sheltered grot,  
Where we can dream;  
A window looking west,  
Toward sunset gold,  
Bespeaking gentle rest  
When we are old;  
A glow in yonder sky  
When shadows creep,  
And love's soft lullaby  
Invites sleep;  
A hand to clasp in ours  
With pressure dear;  
And then—some simple flowers  
With friendships near;  
A good-night gloaming kiss,  
Life's day complete;  
A lingering hour of bliss  
When twilights meet.  
—[Wallace Bruce in Blackwood.

## THE RED FORESTER.

BY JANE L. ROBERTS.

One fine day in October three children were merrily at play on the outskirts of one of the grand old forests that are found on the Baltic shore. The pretty red and yellow leaves under their feet afforded them immense delight as they massed them into a pile, upon which the three-year-old Elsa was seated in great contentment, making the bright things fly in all directions with the stick in her hand.

The eldest child, a boy of ten, had a kind, thoughtful face; but the other, a happy and light-hearted boy of eight, did not rest until he, too, had found a good, stout stick, with which he aided his sister in scattering the fluttering leaves to the four winds.

Suddenly the air about them was darkened, and over their heads a great bird came flying low with flapping wings and dismal croak. Down it came on the pile of leaves beside the little one. Its eyes were keen and piercing, and the child gave a scream of terror as it looked into her face with a hoarse cry. In a moment the older boy had caught up his brother's stick and, aiming two or three stout blows at the bird's head, laid it lifeless.

As he took Elsa in his arms and soothed her the younger boy examined the raven. "Oh, Hans," said he, "I fear that was one of the Red Forester's birds, it is so large and its look is so evil. Old Walther says sorrow comes to any who molest them."

"Mother says old Walther is not always truthful," answered Hans. "We must not mind his stories. Leave the bird, Otto. Come, the wind is cool, and Mother will look for the baby now."

Two or three hundred yards from where the children played might be seen the straw-thatched roof of their little home, and from the sand bluffs before the cottage one had a view of miles of seacoast. To-day the waves rippled and danced in the sunlight as if no storms could ever disturb their calm. At anchor near the shore lay a number of fishing boats, making a pretty bit of color with their copper-hued sails; and the white, sandy beach was covered for a long stretch with the nets hung out to dry on the endless frames, showing plainly the general occupation of the breadwinners of that pretty village nestling between the forest and shore.

Fisher Muller and his wife, although simple folks, were superior to the people with whom their lot was cast. In his youth the fisher had hoped to attain some better station; but the military service of his country held him the best years of his life, and he returned from service to find the only means left him of procuring a livelihood was to follow his father's calling, and so he continued to be a fisherman.

Fran Muller was gentle and thoughtful, and, as the little home was well tended and snug, they were content and only longed for something better for their children.

The mother met the children at the door, and, taking Elsa from Hans, asked the reason of her cry. The boy eagerly told the story of the great bird that would have eaten Elsa's eyes, but that Hans gave him a whack in time. "Mother," said Hans, "Otto says the Red Forester will push me. Old Walther told him so."

"What did Walther tell you about the Red Forester?" said the mother.

"Have you not heard of the old red man?" asked Otto.

"What about him?" said Frau Muller, as she clasped Elsa close in her arms and pressed her lips to the rosy cheeks.

"He has a castle in the wildest and darkest part of the forest, but no one ever returns that sees it; and if one kill his favorite bird, the raven, sorrow will come—bitter sorrow."

As the boy told his story, darkness had come on and the wind began to moan round the house.

The mother sat quiet, with her baby asleep on her knee. "Mother," said Hans, troubled at her silence, "you don't speak; do you believe old Walther's story?"

"No, Hans," said the mother; "but you should have tried to frighten away the bird before killing it."

Poor Hans. He felt sad and heavy-hearted. His mother's face wore a troubled look, he was sure. And this was true; for the entire force of fishermen were out at sea, and old Walther had called to tell her a heavy storm was brewing; many shooting stars had been seen the night before, showing clearly from which direction to expect the wind. Did she not recall the woe the last October storm had brought to three families?

Indeed, she remembered it only too vividly. The wind as it blew stronger sounded more and more dreadful to her. It, as last year, they were driven far out, it would be days before all could return; until then what terrible anxiety! The sight of a great pair of boots in the corner made her shudder, for she knew they were the fisherman's doom. Weighted down by these heavy rubber things which

are buckled securely about the legs and loins, there is no possible chance for a man to save himself in the water. And thus it is that none of the fishers learn to swim, preferring the little fellow had undergone. The gentlemen were deeply interested.

That boy will grow to be a fine man if he only has the right training," said the doctor.

"You cannot do better than train him yourself," said the Prince. "You are without family. In the meantime if sorrow has come to the home we must help that mother. How soon will he be able to return?"

"As soon as he wakes I shall drive him home," answered the doctor.

The next day the storm grew still more furious. The mother's heart became as lead. Her husband had gone from his home young and strong. Was he never to return? She would not, could not believe it. The second night of the storm she was startled by a cry of pain from Hans, as he ran to his bedside. She found him sitting up, white with terror. "Mother, the raven wants my father's life or mine. It came to me in my sleep."

"My child, pray for your father's life; he needs all our prayers," she answered, full of her sad forebodings.

The boy was in despair; did his mother really think he had brought trouble on his home? Would the Red Forester demand an equivalent? The little fellow spent the next day in a dazed condition. His mother was too full of anxieties to notice that he neither ate nor spoke. One thought grew stronger in his mind as the storm increased. He would find the abode of the Red Forester. What was his life if only his father was saved to the rest?

As the third morning dawned the storm was lessening; but when no boats came in all was gloom and sorrow. The old men shook their heads as they looked on the sea. No doubt some had gone out who would never return.

The little fellow's brain was disengaged. It was still early morning. The mother slept, worn out with care. He must go at once. Putting on his old jacket and looking his last on all he loved, the little fellow made his way into the wildest and most unfrequented part of the wood. He was a good walker and strong enough for his age, but his condition of mind for the last three days had brought on a feverish state; for he had neither eaten nor slept to dream of horrors.

Hans had not walked far in the cold, damp place before his limbs began to fail him. A few hours found him in a strange, helpless condition, with only one idea before him, to go deeper and deeper into the black, untraveled wilds.

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