



# *Holiday Adventures*

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German

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*Intermediate*

*43 min read*

## PART I

O it was so hot, so hot; the earth was well-nigh parched up, and moreover the use of water was restricted in the town where the children lived. The flowers in the little garden were drooping for want of moisture, and the trees began to shed their leaves as if it were already autumn instead of July. The schools were obliged to close early; the children came home at eleven o'clock instead of at one, and announced that they had heat holidays. For there is a regulation in Germany, if the thermometer is over a certain degree in the shade, the school is closed for the rest of the day. The high schools do not have classes in the afternoon; the children have six hours lessons in the morning, with intervals of course for recreation and drilling. Some headmasters douche the walls of the school-building with cold water, and then examine the thermometer; but children as well as teachers think this a very mean thing to do.

The school holidays commence at the beginning of July, not in August, as is the case in England. This year the two little girls, Trudel and Lottchen, and their mother were going to stay at a farm, which was situated high up in the midst of the most lovely woods. Trudel, I must tell you, was ten years old, and Lottchen eight; they both went to the same school. This farm was an inn at the same time; but very few people visited it during the week, and by nine o'clock the house was empty of guests; for the woodways were hardly safe at night. It was easy to

get lost in those vast forests where one path so closely resembles the other.

It was a long climb up from the station; the children began to flag, and mother was tired. Father had come with them to settle them in; but he could not stay longer than the first day or two; for his holidays did not begin till August. He invented all sorts of games for getting along quicker; he deposited chocolate on stones or tree-stumps by the wayside, which was discovered by the children with a shout of joy. Then just as Lottchen's legs were beginning to ache badly, and she was nearly crying, he helped them on by telling the story of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Trudel had read about it in her history-book at school; but it was written in such dreadfully historical language that she had not understood the story; she found it thrillingly interesting as father told it. Lottchen said that she could never have treated her little friend Hansi so cruelly, and that she hated that man Brutus.

At last they reached the end of the woodpath, and there lay Waldheim—for so the farm was called—before them. A big dog sprang out to meet them. Mother and Lottchen shrank back from his rough welcome; but Trudel was soon ordering him about, and did not seem in the least surprised when he obeyed her. His name was Bruno. The farm consisted of a group of buildings; two houses, one for the farm labourers and the maids, the other for guests. There were also large barns which had been newly erected, and a pond.

Round the houses were fields belonging to the farm, and then everywhere woods, woods, woods. Blue mountain-crests were visible above and beyond the woods.

The children partly unpacked the boxes themselves; for mother was still so tired. They even took off her boots and put on her shoes for her, like kind little daughters, and Trudel put away their clothes neatly in the cupboard. Then they all went downstairs joyfully to a cosy tea, which, I need hardly say, they enjoyed very much after their long walk and journey.

After tea all fatigue vanished, and the children flew out to inspect the premises for themselves. The farmer had two boys of about the same age as Trudel and Lottchen. Their names were Hermann and Fritz. Hermann was very shy; he hid himself at first and peeped out at the strange girls from corners of the yard or barns, rushing away when they caught sight of him. However Trudel soon coaxed him out, and they all played ball together.

Then Hermann and Fritz took the girls round the farm. They went first into the cow-shed; there were fourteen

cows, seven calves and a bull. The cow-herd was a strange, uncanny-looking fellow with a great shock of red hair, and a very red face. He shouted at the children in a dreadful hoarse voice; they felt frightened of him at first, and thought he was mad; but they soon found out that the poor fellow was only deaf and dumb. The cows were his intimate friends. He had christened each one of them when they were born: Sophie, Emma, and so on. After they had gone home again, the children learnt to their pride that he had named two new calves after them, Trudel and Lotty.

There were four horses that were used for driving and ploughing. Lottchen was especially fond of horses. She liked to see them come home from the field by themselves and walk straight into the stable with a noble air, like a lord returning to his castle. Her favourite horse was called Hector. Lotty noticed one day that he was left alone in the stable, whilst the other horses were ploughing in the field. The stable-door was open, and after a while to her surprise he walked out. "What is he going to do? I hope he will not run away and get lost," thought Lotty anxiously. But no, he just walked leisurely up to the field where the other horses were hard at work and looked on! It was evidently dull in the stable and he wanted a little distraction. When he was tired of watching his friends, he returned to the stable, where he was found innocently munching hay as if nothing had happened.

Pigs of course were there too in plenty; they ran about everywhere, grunting and snorting; also geese and chickens. Trudel liked to drive the geese into the water; she was fond of commanding, as her little sister sometimes knew to her cost.

The maids were two peasant girls who wore very short full skirts and a great many petticoats. Their dress was a modification of the wonderful Hessen peasant costume. These girls were ready to do anything for the children. Gustel, who was chief waitress and chambermaid at the same time, said that she had never seen such pretty "kindersche" (little children) in all her life before!

The only other guest in the house at this time was a Herr Baron; he told wonderful stories of his adventures in South America.

"Drought," he said, "yes, that's very bad, but floods may be worse. I have known years of labour destroyed in one night by a flood. All the beautiful fields of grain, our sole wealth. I lived at that time with my married sister and her family, and we had only just time to rescue ourselves and the children. I was the last to leave the house

which we were never to see again. I could not decide which of my possessions to take with me, so I seized up the skin of a puma that I had shot on another memorable occasion, and bore it off on my shoulder, like Jason carrying the golden fleece, and that was all that was left of my personal property. Ah! it needs patience to conquer the elements," he said.

Altogether the Herr Baron was a wonderful character; he seemed as if he were not real, but had stepped out of a book of romance. He delighted in reading English stories; he was especially fond of "She" and "King Solomon's Mines." The children believed that he smoked day and night; for they had never seen him without a cigarette, except at meal-times.

He told father and mother the story of how he had had a bullet extracted from his side that he had carried about with him for years. It had struck him during one of the revolutions that so frequently go on in South America. The bullet had recently set up inflammation, and a dangerous operation was necessary to remove it. "Chloroform! not if I know it," he said to the doctors. "Just you let me smoke my cigar, and I shall be all right. I won't say 'Oh!'"

The doctors were naturally very astonished and demurred at this new method of treatment; but he persisted in his determination, and the cigar never left his mouth till the painful business was successfully over!

The Herr Baron was a mysterious person; why he lived for months together in that lonely spot, no one knew. True, he was fond of hunting, and went out at nights with the landlord to hunt the stag.

There were hunting-boxes made of logs of wood, with steps that led up into them, placed in different positions in the woods near the inn.

The children loved to climb up into them. A hunting-box made such a nice airy room, they said; but mother was glad when they were down again without broken limbs.

Mother was surprised when she entered the inn-parlour to find the Herr Baron engaged in a game of quartette with Trudel and Lottchen and Fritz. Indeed he was so sociable and kind and fond of children that she thought it was a pity that he had none of his own.

On the pond near the house were two most remarkable-looking boats. These Hermann and Fritz had made

themselves with the aid, I believe, of the Herr Baron. They had a long stick and punted about in them on the water, and they managed them quite cleverly. To Trudel and Lottchen they seemed to suggest Robinson Crusoe and all sorts of fine adventures.

One day when mother was reading a book which absorbed her attention, and so was safe not to interfere with them, they thought, the children stole down to the pond. Hermann and Fritz were waiting for them. It was a pre-conceived plan. "Come along and get in," they shouted to the girls.

"I daren't," said Lottchen. "Mother would be so cross; she has forbidden us to go near the water."

"You are surely not going to spoil the fun," said Trudel. "Come along; I'm going to get in first. I can swim, you know!"

"But not in mud and water-weeds," said Lottchen wisely.

The boys began to laugh at them.

"Why, you're funky, I do believe; the pond isn't really deep anywhere," they said.

So with beating hearts the children got into the boats, Trudel with Fritz, and Hermann, who was the eldest of the party, with Lottchen. It was splendid, quite a real adventure.

"Sit still in the middle of the boat," said Fritz; "I think we had better keep near the bank."

"It's going down on my side; O dear, what shall I do?" said Trudel. "I don't like it! I want to get out."

"You're a bit too heavy and upset the balance," said Fritz. "Very well, then, get out!"

Trudel tried to do so; but the boat was very wobbly. It was not so easy; her foot slipped, and in she stepped with one foot into the deep mud. She grasped convulsively hold of a willow bush that grew on the bank.

Meanwhile Hermann, seeing the predicament they were in, jumped out of his boat, leaving poor Lottchen quite alone. She began to scream with all her might and main, and she could make a fine noise when she chose.

Mother heard the cries though she was some way off and flew to the pond.

The maids who were bleaching the linen in the meadow, came running to the rescue as well, as fast as their legs could carry them.

Lotty was soon helped out of the boat. Trudel had rescued herself with Hermann's assistance, and she looked very red and ashamed of herself. She said she did not wish for any more Robinson Crusoe adventures of that sort. Mother naturally gave the children a good talking to; but she thought they had been punished enough this time for their disobedience, by the fright they had had.

## PART II

### The Tree Man

There was a tree in the garden that was ideal to climb, and mother allowed the children to do so, for she had been very fond of climbing herself when she was a child.

They wore old serge skirts and jerseys that they could not spoil.

This tree made a splendid arbour, or house with a suite of rooms. Lottchen sat up in the branches like a little bird, and like a little bird she sang all the songs she knew. From this tree you could see the mountain called the Stellerskuppe and the blue sky through the tree-stems on the summit. At sunset time, the sky behind the trees turned a golden colour, till it looked like a picture of fairyland.

It was a fine view, but still you could not see from here the famous oak-tree, where the little green tree man lived. This was ten minutes' walk from the farm.

Trudel and Lottchen saw him first on a wet day when they had set out for a walk in spite of the rain, with their green waterproof cloaks on with hoods over their heads, looking for all the world like wood-goblins themselves. They were walking down a narrow green path, and mother was some distance behind.

"Do just look, Trudel," said Lottchen. "I believe there is a little man in that hollow tree!"

"So there is, he is smiling and bowing to us, let's go and visit him," said Trudel, always enterprising.

Lottchen hung back, feeling a little afraid; she was always on the look-out for the unexpected, and yet was

surprised when something really happened.

“Come along, darling,” said Trudel, grasping her smaller sister by the hand.

They both distinctly saw the little man; they said they could have drawn him afterwards, and indeed they attempted to do so as well as they could. But as they approached the venerable oak, the little man vanished, and all they saw was a strange green stain on the inside of the tree, resembling a dwarf with a peaked hood on.

“Just look at this Gothic window,” said Lottchen, proud of her knowledge of the word “Gothic.” “How nicely this tree-room is carved. I am sure he lives here; where are his little chairs and tables? I should love to see them.”

They peeped through a window or hole in the old tree and saw their mother approaching.

“Mother, mother, here lives a real tree man; we saw him—didn’t you?”

Mother smiled—what the children called her mysterious smile.

“You look like two little wood-men yourselves,” she said. “Lottchen, stand up straight in the hole and look at me.”

Lottchen stood up just fitting into the green mark on the tree behind her. She made a pretty picture, her laughing brown eyes with the long eyelashes, her rosy cheeks, and the wind-blown hair straying from under her hood.

“O look, Lottchen, here is a little basin of holy water, just like we saw in the cathedral,” said Trudel.

“Wood water,

Nice and brown,

In a little cup.

Wood water,

Wood wine,

Won’t you drink it up?”

said a tiny voice that sounded like that of a wood-bird.

“Mother! did you hear anything, mother?”

“Yes, darlings, the birds are singing so sweetly now the rain is over. I have brought my camp-stool. I shall sit here and sketch the tree,” said mother.

“Do draw him,” said Trudel, whose blue eyes were open wider than usual.

“Him! Whom do you mean?” said mother.

“Why, the tree man, of course.”

“Hum,” said mother mysteriously, “we’ll see,” and she settled herself down to sketch.

The children collected huge acorns, and laid them on a leaf in the hollow tree. Then they stirred up the brackish “holy” water and put their fingers in it.

“It smells like lavender and roses,” said Lottchen.

“Well, you’ve got a funny nose; it smells to me like blackberry and apple-tart,” said Trudel.

“Ha—ha—he!” said a little voice again. Somebody was laughing. Where could he be? Glancing round quickly the children saw a little man about three feet high, dressed in green, wearing a long peaked cap with a wreath of tiny oak-leaves around it. He looked very strong, although he was small, and he stuck his arms out akimbo in a curious angular way like the branches of an oak-tree.

“How did you know that trees were alive?” he asked the children.

They were embarrassed by the question.

“Why, of course we know they are not dead, unless they are cut down,” they said.

The little man shuddered; then he began to wave his arms about wildly.

“Let them try to cut me down, I’ll knock them down. I’ll fall on them and crush their bones. I’ll smash them like this stone!” Here he gave a stone that stood near by, such a tremendous whack that sparks flew out of it.

“Don’t smash us, please, Mr Tree Man,” said Lottchen trembling.

“No fear, little Miss Lottchen, no fear, you’re a nice little thing, you are; one can see that to look at you. You would never cut me down, would you?”

“Why, of course not,” said Lotty.

“I should not dream of such a thing either,” said Trudel. “But may we ask who you are?” Trudel continued, “You are surely not a tree?”

“Well, it’s like this,” said the little man; “I’m a tree, and the tree’s me!”

“I,” said Trudel, correcting him, “would be more correct.”

“Rubbish,” said the little man, “Pedantic rot!—the tree’s me, I repeat. Every tree has its gnome or elf; they used to call us dryads in old times; but nowadays people are getting so cock-sure of knowing everything, that they can’t see what is going on right under their noses. Trees are never still,” he continued; “they are always moving.

“Where there is movement, there is life,  
Where there is life, there is thought,  
Where there is thought, there is individuality.’

“Do you follow me? That is logically expressed.”

“You forget we are only children, Mr Tree Man; you are talking too grown-up for us. Father talks like that sometimes; but then we don’t listen,” they replied.

“Well,” continued the gnome, “in every tree there either lives a jolly fellow like me or a lovely lady fairy. Yes,” he said in a sentimental tone, “I, too, old and tough though I am, I, too, have known love.”

“Who is she?” asked Trudel eagerly.

“Alas! I can never reach her; my old bones are too stiff and unbendable. She is a graceful larch-tree in all the glory of her youth. You may see her yonder!” He sat down and sighed deeply.

The children looked in the direction that the gnome had indicated, and there they saw a larch-tree on which

the sunlight had just fallen. It was exquisitely dressed in a robe of delicate green and—was it only fancy?—for one moment the children thought that they saw a lovely lady with flowing tresses that gleamed golden in the sunlight, and large starry eyes. As they gazed, she melted into the blue mist which shimmers always between the forest trees.

“Now we must go home, children,” mother called out, “before it begins to rain again.”

The children glanced round; their little friend had vanished, and no trace was to be seen of the lady of the larch-tree. So they turned reluctantly from the tree-house fully determined to come again very soon to this enchanted spot.

“Mother, may we see your sketch?”

“Not now,” said mother, “it’s going to be a surprise.”

“Did mother see him too?”

“Do you think so?” said Lottchen. “Mother’s a fairy herself.”

“I think,” said Trudel, “she sees all sorts of queer things; but she won’t tell us everything she sees.”

“It spoils some things to tell about them,” said Lottchen. “I shan’t tell Hermann and Fritz about the tree man.”

However, when she got home again, she could not contain herself. “Do you believe in fairies and tree men?” she said to the boys.

“Of course not, that’s all rot,” said Hermann. “Like Santa Claus and such things, just invented to stuff us up!”

“Santa Claus will never come to you any more if you talk like that; he is quite true, I know. Trudel saw him come in last year when she was in bed, and she heard him filling our stockings. Of course she did not dare to turn round and look at him,” said Lottchen.

“I don’t say it isn’t nice to believe such things,” said Hermann conscientiously, “but it isn’t true; it’s superstitious. You know quite well, Trudel, who Santa Claus really is.”

Trudel was silent; she was ten years old, and she had her doubts.

“But I’ve seen a tree man to-day,” said Lotty.

The boys laughed.

“Don’t try to stuff us up with such nonsense; we’re not so green as your tree man,” they said.

Gustel, the maid, came in, and joined in the conversation. She supported the boys’ view.

“I don’t care,” said Lottchen, now in a high state of excitement. “My mother knows a man—a very clever Irishman—a poet and a painter as well, and he has often seen the fairies.”

“Yes,” said Trudel, “it’s true he draws them just as he sees them with rainbow-coloured wings.”

“Well I never, you don’t expect me to believe such things, do you?” said Gustel. “Why, that’s all lies, and it is very wicked to tell a lie!”

Lotty flew into a perfect tantrum. “How dare you say we tell lies; I will tell my mother of you,” she screamed, and threw herself on the floor crying violently.

Mother rushed in, not knowing what had happened. “Lotty, get up at once; tell me what’s the matter, darling!”

“Booh!—booh—booh!—Gustel won’t believe—booh, booh, booh—that you know a man who has seen the fairies!”

Mother could not help laughing. “Don’t be so absurd, Lotty. Of course Gustel does not understand what you mean. Gustel,” she said, “you are a Catholic and believe in the saints; they saw very queer things too, sometimes, didn’t they?”

“O yes, you’re right; of course, ma’am,” said Gustel, feeling embarrassed; for she had no arguments to support her disbelief in fairies.

“Some people can see more than others,” continued mother. “Now if I were to tell you that I could see the old poacher or wild huntsman who used to live in this house, riding through the yard on a moonlight night, what

would you say?"

"Lor, ma'am, if I saw him, I should die of fright," said Gustel, turning pale.

"But you know that there are no such things as ghosts and fairies!"

"Yes, ma'am, very true, ma'am, it's rather confusing what you say," said poor Gustel, feeling her head in a whirl.

It was a wonderful moonlight night. As father was still away, mother sat by herself in the big bedroom, whilst the children slept in the little room adjoining. There was a very high wind; the window-panes rattled; the wooden shutters blew to and fro; the branches of the trees made weird patterns on the ground. The moonlight was so white that the fields and paths looked almost as if they were covered with snow. The Stellerskuppe stood out black against the sky. As mother gazed, it seemed to her as if strange creatures were abroad that night, driven to and fro by that tireless hunter, the wind. Wild forms passed by and gazed at her with deathless eyes; for a while she remained there motionless, as under a spell. Then suddenly she remembered her joke about the old huntsman of evil repute, who had formerly lived in this farmhouse. Did his ghost haunt it still? Mother shivered; the nights were cold up in the mountains, though it was such a hot summer. She opened the door of the children's room and peeped in. To tell the truth, she felt a little creepy, and longed for human companionship. There were her darlings, sleeping soundly; but as she entered the room Trudel turned round and flung herself on the other side of the bed, saying: "Go away, go away, do not come near me!"

"Whom do you mean, darling?" said mother anxiously.

Then Trudel groaned and spoke again in her sleep. She uttered the following deep and mystic words: "Gustel, bring in the shark, please; mother can't eat the thimble."

Now, wasn't that a funny thing for a little girl to say in her sleep. Mother was so amused that she wrote the words down on the spot, so as not to forget them, and she troubled her head no more with thoughts of the wild huntsman; indeed the spectres of the night vanished as they always do vanish at a joke!

Some days passed, before the children visited the oak-tree again. When they did so, they found that an enormous branch had been broken off, and lay across the green pathway.

“O dear me,” said Lottchen, “our poor little man. I hope it hasn’t hurt him!”

“It must have happened on that windy night,” said Trudel.

“It was my own fault, it was entirely my own fault,” said a queer little voice, and there was the oak-tree man sitting in his house smoking a reed pipe. His arm was bound up with green fern leaves. “Yes, it was my own fault; the wind excited me, and stirred my sap (that’s my blood you know)—I stretched out my arms towards her—one embrace—one blessed moment in which to call her mine—and here you see me a cripple for ever!”

“O poor thing, we are so sorry for you,” said the children.

“Never mind, it heals easily,” said the oak man, “but, alas, my beauty and my symmetry are gone for ever!”

“Your leaves are so nice and fresh; and your house is so pretty; why, you have got furniture in it,” said the children in astonishment.

“Such a pretty oak table and beautifully carved chairs; where did you get them from?” asked Lottchen.

“I made them myself out of my own wood; it cheered me up a bit,” said the little man. “One must do something, you know; looks snug, doesn’t it? Ah, well—I have known love, that is something to be proud of; I have experienced the most pleasing of human emotions. Have you ever been in love?” he said inquisitively, looking at Trudel, who looked big enough in his eyes.

“Why no, not exactly, we’re only kiddies; but still we do love lots of people, of course,” said she.

“Your day will come, your day will come. Do not desire the unattainable, but content yourself with the reachable,” he said; “and yet ’Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,’ as the dear old poem says.”

“He’s getting grand in his language again; he is a funny little man,” said Trudel in a whisper to Lottchen.

“Stay,” said the tree man, “I have a good idea; I will give you a card of introduction to her, my beloved Lady Larch-tree.”

He gave them an oak leaf with the words: "Edle Eiche," printed on it, which is in English Noble Oak.

"You need not say anything; she will know it comes from me," he said, sighing sentimentally.

Full of curiosity, the children turned to go to the larch-tree, which was only a few steps further down the green pathway. The ardent lover watched the children from the window of his little house. They knocked three times on the bark of the larch-tree; and they were very pleased when a door opened in the tree, and a lovely lady was revealed to them. Her dress was of green, looped up with tiny pink flowers such as grow on the larches in early spring; her hair streamed down like a soft veil about her. She hardly seemed to see the children at first, when they presented their cards. She took the oak-leaf cards and pressed them to her heart.

"Heart of oak! King of the forest! for ever mine," she murmured, and her words were like the sound that a little brook makes when it trickles beneath dark forest trees.

"He sends you his love," said the children politely.

"You dear little things," said Lady Larch; "it was so kind of you to come and call on me. So you understand trees and their language, dear, dear, so young and so clever! Would you like some wood wine?"

"Not if it is dirty water with caterpillars in it," said Trudel.

"O dear no, it is purified and refined; it is most delicious." So saying, she handed each of them a large acorn cup full; and they drank the contents.

"It does taste nice, dear fairy," said the children, "like what we make ourselves at a doll's feast. May we ask you for some more?"

"No, no, it is very strong, and would get into your heads, and you would find out all about.... No, I'm sorry ... but——"

"Children," said mother's voice, "where are you? I have been looking for you."

“We have only been to call on Lady Larch, mother; she has shut her door tight again or we would have introduced you to her,” said Lotty.

### PART III

They came home rather late that evening and found the farm in a great state of commotion. The red-haired cow-herd was shouting and crying in an unintelligible way; the house seemed to be deserted. They met the Herr Baron also preparing to set out in a hurry.

“What’s the matter? Where is everybody?” said mother.

“The silly old cow-herd has lost one of the best cows; it has strayed off among the bushes, and may die if it is exposed all night. Who knows where the poor creature may have got to in these vast woods?”

The search went on till late at night; the men, including the Herr Baron, walked miles with their lanterns, but in vain. The deaf mute was in a dreadful state of mind and kept crying out in his harsh, disagreeable voice: “Not my fault—Schimmel’s fault.” (Schimmel was the cow.)

It was difficult enough to sleep that night; but when mother had at last dropped into a light doze, it must have been about four o’clock in the morning, she and the children were aroused by a great shouting and disturbance in the house. They looked out of the window and—what do you think?—there was the lost cow, who had returned after all of her own accord. And with her a dear little black and white calf, who frisked and bounded along as if it thought it was fine fun to be in the world on this lovely morning. Now wasn’t that a queer thing, children, queerer than all the fairy stories you have read? for this story is quite true, you must know!

It was an exceptionally fine Sunday, and as father had come down to spend the week-end, mother and the children were in the seventh heaven of joy. It was not possible to go to church; for the nearest town was two hours’ walk away, and would be partly over fields that were exposed to the heat of the midday sun. So father and mother and their two little daughters went to the great woodland cathedral.

The service was on the Stellerskuppe; surely no one could wish for a more beautiful place of worship. Mountain after mountain ranged in the distance, some with rounded or knolled heads, others rising to a peak. Lottchen called the most pointed one Mesuvius, because she always forgot the "V."

As the children sat there and sang hymns, with their white Sunday frocks on, mother fancied that eyes were peering at them from out the forest depths. If they were merely those of the gentle deer, or if stranger creatures still were watching them as if fascinated, she did not know: she felt there were lookers-on. There is the old story of the God Pan who played so divinely that all living things came to listen to him. Perhaps there may be a stirring at times in the souls of the mysterious dwellers in the forest that makes them yearn for immortality and gives them a fuller sense of existence. So that all the woodland sang too at that Sunday service.

On Sunday afternoon, father and mother wanted to go for a longer walk than usual; but the lazy children petitioned to be left behind.

"You will promise not to go near the pond," said mother. "Remember it is Sunday, and you have your best frocks on; you must not romp or climb trees."

"O no, mother, of course not," said Trudel. "We'll stay in the garden and promise to be very good."

When father and mother returned from their walk, the first thing they saw was Lottchen staggering along with a stand of empty beer-bottles.

"Whatever are you doing, Lottchen?"

"Oh, mother, there are such heaps of people here this afternoon, and there are not enough waitresses to serve them; so Trudel and I are helping. Trudel has got such a lot of tips already; she has bought chocolate with the money. Do tell her to divide it fairly with me!"

Mother looked round. The whole place was covered with tables and benches; a number of gaily dressed people from the neighbouring town were drinking coffee and eating cake or waffeln, a kind of pancake for which the inn was celebrated.

"Mother, don't speak to me, I'm too busy," said Trudel. "I've been waiting on those gentlemen; the maids were

shy of them, so I said I would go and ask what they wanted.” She pointed out some young men in officers’ uniform, who had come from a military school. “I’ve got 6d. in tips, and I spent it on chocolate.”

“Well I never!” said mother, astonished at her daughter’s prowess—“you have turned into a waitress, and on Sunday afternoon too. Whatever would your aunts say?”

“I think I had better tell you what the young men said to me,” said Trudel seriously. “They said I was a sweet little thing, and that if I were older, they would fall in love with me. I laughed of course; I could see they were only silly old stupid heads. I told them they had not much taste; for their military school was the ugliest building in all the town. They quite agreed with me about this, however, and then they asked me who my father was, and when I said he was a professor, they laughed till I thought they would burst. But now you must excuse me, really, mother darling. I have promised to go into the kitchen and wash up cups and saucers!”

The landlady could not praise Trudel enough. Such a useful little girl, she does everything in a most orderly way and wipes down the table when she has finished! “If ever you want her to learn housekeeping, pray send her to me, I should be delighted to teach her,” she said.

“Yes,” thought mother, “and make a nice little slavey of her into the bargain. No, no, our Trudel is not going to turn into a housemaid!”

If Trudel had been some years older, father and mother might have objected to these experiences; but, as it was, they only laughed.

#### PART IV

As the world is full of fact and fancy, so is this story. Whether it is based mostly on fact or on fancy we will leave to the German philosophers to decide, but I have heard that they are doubtful on this point, with regard to the world, I mean.

It was a magical evening. Trudel was so engrossed in a game of cards with the boys that she could not be induced to come out; moreover she had a slight cold and the evenings were chilly. A glorious sunset glow illumined the sky as mother and Lottchen set out for their never-to-be-forgotten walk.

“We will go up and see the fire on the heath; I love the smell of dry pine wood burning,” said mother.

“I love to see the fire dancing and crackling,” said Lottchen. “How still everything is.”

“It is the calm of twilight. The wind usually drops in the evening,” said mother.

“Look, look, over there by those dark woods there is something moving,” said Lotty. “I think it is a white cat.”

“A white cat! How queer that she should have strayed so far; she does not belong to the farm, I know.”

“Hush! perhaps she is not a cat at all—then she will vanish.” And lo and behold when they looked again, there was no cat there, though they had distinctly seen it a minute before on the field at the wood’s edge.

“She is really a witch, I believe,” said mother, with the curious expression on her face that Lotty knew so well.

Going further up the hill, they saw a wonderful sight. Twenty or more peasant girls were busy working, hacking the ground, their faces illuminated by the wonderful sunset glow. They wore short full peasant skirts edged with bright-coloured ribbons, and each had a gaily coloured scarf pinned round the neck and bodice.

We learned afterwards that they were preparing the ground to plant young fir-trees on a clearing. Germans are so careful of their woods, they replant what has been cut down, so that they have a great wealth in wood that we cannot boast of in England. I believe that they would like to cut off all the dead branches in order to make the woods quite tidy! But this would be rather too big a job even for the German nation to accomplish!

A man dressed in green with a feather in his cap, and a gun over his shoulder stood by watching the girls at their work.

He was a forester and seemed to act as overseer. He gave the signal to stop work as the strangers (mother and Lotty) approached. The women hid their tools under the dry heather until the next day, and then strapped on the big baskets they carried on their backs, without which they hardly felt properly dressed. They then marched along together, singing a melodious song in unison. As they came to the cross-roads they parted company; some went this way, some that; all kept up the tune, which echoed farther and farther, fainter and fainter in the distance.

Before long Lottchen and her mother were alone; but they felt that the ground they stood on, was enchanted. Mother said it was like a scene from the opera. They watched the fire; how the flames leaped and crackled; yet they were dying down. The fire made a bright contrast to the dark fir-woods which formed the background to the picture. The glory died from the sky; but yet it was strangely light; darker and darker grew the woods near the fire. Suddenly Lotty espied bright sparks among the trees.

“I do believe they have set the wood on fire,” said mother.

“O no, mother, don’t you see; let us crouch down and hide; it is the fairies: they are coming to the fire.”

The air was suddenly full of bright beings.

“There is a wood fire on the hill;  
High on the heath it glimmers still.  
Who are these beings in the air  
With gauzy robes and flowing hair?  
Is it the wreathing smoke I see  
That forms itself so curiously?

Nay, they alight: they form a ring,  
Around the flickering fire spring,  
And from those embers burning low  
They light their wands, they gleam, they glow,  
Like firework stars of rainbow hue,  
Green, yellow, orange, lilac, blue!

Ah what a scene, how wild, how strange!  
The stars each moment break and change  
In thousand colours; look on high:  
Each slender wand points to the sky,  
Then waves and trembles: lo afar  
On lonely woods falls many a star!”

And all this Trudel had missed. It seemed too great a pity, with that silly old card playing.

Spellbound mother and Lotty watched the fairies at their revels, till Lottchen began to shiver.

“We really must go home,” whispered mother. “Trudel will be anxious.”

“Oh, but mother I want to dance round the fire with the fairies, and I want a fairy wand with shooting stars,” said Lotty almost aloud.

Suddenly it seemed as if the fairies became aware that they were observed. They vanished away, and all became dark. Lottchen said she could hear the sound of little feet stamping out the fire.

“Fairies, dear fairies, come again, do,” said Lotty.

No answer, perfect stillness, not even a leaf stirred.

“Well, you are not so polite as our tree man, not half,” said Lotty, “though you are so pretty. Good night,” she shouted.

There was a sound of suppressed laughter; then from hill and dale the word “good night” was echoed all around. Spellbound, as if in a trance, they moved toward the farm. Trudel was wild with herself when she heard what she had missed.

“To-morrow,” she said, but to-morrow is sometimes a long, long way off, and the fairies did not show themselves again during these holidays.

One of Lottchen’s favourite walks was the echo walk, but she usually came home quite hoarse after having been this way. The path wound below the fairy heath on the incline of the hill; further down still were the fir-woods through which the light shone.

“Angel-pet!” “Cherry-ripe!” “Cheeky fellow!” “You’re another!” So Lotty shouted the whole time, and the echoes came back so surprisingly distinct that Lotty was sure it must be really the fairies answering her. When you turned the corner of the hill, the echoes ceased. It was too queer.

The next day Trudel distinguished herself again. Two great cart-loads of swedes arrived that were to be stored

up as fodder for the cattle in the winter. Now the joy was to throw these through a hole in the wall into the cellar. Hermann stood in the cart and Trudel threw the swedes to him as the bricklayers throw the bricks to one another. Fritz and Lottchen helped too; they had to take their turn and be very quick, as the hole was small. Hour after hour this went on, till the children were as black as chimney sweeps, and yet Trudel's energy did not fail. At last the carts were empty, and only then did the little workers leave off, dead tired.

Hermann could make curious heads out of the swedes, with eyes and nose and mouth. If you put an old candle-end inside, they looked ghastly, like some Chinese god. Lotty declared that they rolled about in the yard at night and grinned at her, and that she did not like "heads without people."

"But they are so funny, Lottchen," said mother, and then she laughed at them and was not frightened any more.

In the fields grew nice little buttony mushrooms. No one knew better than the Herr Baron where they were to be found and how to prepare them. Apparently he had lived on mushrooms in the wilds of South America. He was very kind in helping the children to fill their baskets to take home with them; for, alas, even the pleasantest of holidays must come to an end; and there was only one day left. He discovered a treasure in the field, a little mother-of-pearl knife, very old and rusty, and presented it to Trudel. He told her to soak it in petroleum to clean it. That knife was more trouble than all the rest of the luggage on the way back, for Trudel made such a fuss about it, and dissolved in tears several times when she thought that she had lost it.

To leave the beautiful cool woods, the fairies, the tree man and his sweetheart, the cows and the geese and all the marvels of the country, yes, it was hard; but home is home, and always turns a smiling face to us after a long absence. How nice to rediscover one's playthings and dolls. Trudel's first thought was always for her doll babies, and she would rush upstairs, and embrace each one tenderly.

As the children drove to the station from the farm, they passed the famous oak-tree, but no little man was to be seen.

"He's shy of the coachman, of course," said the children.

Looking back, they caught a glimpse of him in the distance, and shouted and waved their handkerchiefs.

Hermann and Fritz were very sorry to say "good-bye" to their little friends; but school began the next day, and

they would not have so much time for play then.

The landlady told the children a great secret before they left. "The Herr Baron is going to be married next week," she said.

"Well, I am glad," said mother. "I hope she is very nice," and the children echoed the wish warmly.

"She has lots of money, and is a countess, I believe," continued the landlady.

"Well, I do hope she does not object to smoking," said Trudel, and they all laughed.

"Mother, you have never shown us your sketch," said Trudel during the unpacking.

Mother laughed. "Where's Lottchen? I suppose she wants to see it too?"

"Here I am," said Lotty. "Oh, do be quick and show it to us!"

Mother held up the sketch. There was the hollow oak-tree, and standing in it the little tree man himself just as the children had first seen him, with his green peaked hood on.

"So mother really did see him too!" said the children.

Now this story disproves the common fallacy that only children can see the fairies and forest folk; for how could mother have painted the tree gnome unless she had seen him?

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