

HAI! KARA
barn, the smell
of thy coffee is
like the taste
of wine to the
thirsty after
my long tramp
in the crusty
snow," and
Karl the iron-
founder threw
off his huge
skin coat and
emptied at a
gulp the brimming cup of coffee
handed him by his sister Olga. Then
placing a finger on his lip:

"Var stilla, my Olga, I have some-
what to tell thee, but yonder little
pitcher has long ears. So," he con-
tinued, turning to a mite of a girl
sitting sedately near the blazing fire-
place, intently engaged in thumbing
a well-worn primer book, "thou art
studious, min lilla flicka, as I told
thee to be. Come hither, my little
maid, and show me thy book."

He took the book quickly offered
him, and dextrously placing it in some-
thing he secretly drew from his pocket,
thrust it out of sight behind him.

"Dost remember, sweetheart, that
I told thee the rooster picture on the
front page of thy book would bring
thee something if thou wert
good?"

"Ja, brother Karl, and so I have
been good, ask sister Olga," said the
child, smiling up in his face.

"Indeed, yes," answered Olga, draw-
ing the little sister close into her
arms, and giving her a hug and a
kiss. "Thilda is always sweet and
good."

"Well, then, let us see what the
rooster has brought thee, my Thilda."

Opening the book, Karl pretended
to be amazed at something he saw,
and, showing it to the sister, raised
her hands in well-assumed astonish-
ment. Thilda, unable to restrain her
curiosity, suddenly seized the book
and, hastily held in Karl's hand, just
within her reach, and opening it,
uttered a shout of delight as she
drew forth a beautiful white, candy-
sack with a pink ribbon round its
neck.

"Thank you, good Karl," she said
simply, putting up her lips for a kiss.

"Say, child, is not no candy to
thank to, but the rooster?" he ex-
plained, adding: "Now, min lilla
flicka, thou knowest that the good
Johan is far away from home, will go
into thy chamber and pray for thy
sister's betrothed? I have that to say
to her which thou mayest not hear."

"Good child," he continued, putting her
head as she turned obediently to
obey.

"I have some news, my sister, about
thy sweetheart. It is of some im-
portance, since it tells me that thy
Johan still lives."

"May the good God so ordain," said
Olga fervently, "and may He restore
him to my arms."

"Amen," murmured Karl, "but to
the news. The snow three days since
Johan went into the dark forest to
cut the firs for the Jul Tieden and
returned not as he should have done
that same night. On the fourth day
we found his ax buried deep in a tree
as thou knowest, but all other trace
of him was lost. Well, to-day we per-
elected as far as the gloomy Fäln
mines and found his empty wallet."

"And—and thou didst follow his
steps in the snow?" stammered Olga.

"I did me quickly, Karl, my brother."

"That is what we did not do, Olga,
for the reason that there were no
footprints in the snow. The wallet
could not have been cast there by any
one, for we tracked a circle of a hun-
dred yards and found the snow un-
broken. Moreover, a piece of ore was
laid upon it as if to prevent its being
blown away. It was placed there, but
not by Johan, Olga."

"Thank God, he has found a shelter
there, some miners, perhaps. He
may even now be on his way to me,"
said Olga, jealously. "Go quickly, my
brother, to seek him."

"Do not raise thy hopes too high,
my sister, neither let thy heart sink.
Thy Johan is alive, true, but the hand
that placed his wallet where it was
found was not that of a mortal. Nay,
—be not alarmed," he said, putting
an arm around her, for the girl was
trembling with a fit of trembling. "Be
brave, my sister, and all will be well
if thou wilt be guided by me."

"In anything and everything, my
brother," said Olga, clasping her
hands. "My soul for Johan's if need be."

"Not that, Kara soster, not that shall
be required of thee, but bravery thou
must show, little woman, such brave-
ry as few men dare show. Thy Johan's
return depends upon thee."

"I am ready to face death himself,"
said Olga, "only tell me what to do."

"Listen, then, I would do it for thee
myself, but thou alone canst face the
 ordeal. I believe the Skogsfrau—"

might must not pass ere thou art
there."

"But Thilda? We cannot leave the
dear child here alone."

"—Tis all arranged with Dame Thok-
la," explained Karl. "We shall take
the child thither and she will sleep
with Thilda, min lilla flicka," called
Karl to the child, "come hither. Hast
prayed for Olga's Johan, child?"

"Ja, my brother, and the good God
tells me he shall come home again."

"Then so shall it be, my sweet child,
but come, wouldst like to taste Frau
Thokla's seed cakes, eh? I thought
as much. Well, thou shalt, as soon as
I can carry thee thither. Come, sweet
heart; come, Olga."

Though wrapped in the warmest of
furs, Olga shivered as she stood alone
amid the silent, gloomy, wintry waste
of the forest. Not long had she wait-
ed ere distinctly through the awful
stillness came the clanging strokes of
midnight which Karl rung upon the
barrel of his gun with a hammer to
warn her of the time. With a clear
but quivering voice the girl called out
three times: "Skogsfrau, in the name
of the Christ Child, I demand a gift of
thee."

"Now, my sister, thou must prepare
for the Jul Afton, the eve of the great
day when the Christ Child, I demand a gift of thee."

Do not fear, thy Johan will come at
midnight, as the terrible old hag
the forest said. I will help thee
pare trenches of snow, we'll lutka
and heaps of kott bollar. We must

is mine, I tell thee, mine forever. I
will not give him up, and she raised
her arm as if to strike, but now Olga
feared her not.

In the name of the Christ Child I
demand Johan of thee. "Thou hast
promised whatever I might ask, and
I will have no other gift from thee."

In vain the old crone raved and
cursed and begged the girl to take all
she possessed, but not the youth. She
tore her hair and beat her breast and
threatened dire vengeance upon the
girl and her betrothed, but the chang-
ing of Karl's hammer gave Olga cour-
age to repeat her demand: "Give me
my Johan in the name of the Christ
Child."

At last, the hag, worn out, said
harshly: "Get thee home, and at the
stroke of midnight on the Jul Afton I
will bring thee thy Johan," then with a
bitter scream she disappeared, and
Olga fell fainting in the snow, but the
faithful Karl revived her and brought
her safely home.

"Now, my sister, thou must prepare
for the Jul Afton, the eve of the great
day when the Christ Child, I demand a gift of thee."

Do not fear, thy Johan will come at
midnight, as the terrible old hag
the forest said. I will help thee
pare trenches of snow, we'll lutka
and heaps of kott bollar. We must

with thee, to lay up freshness for the
morrow. I will watch over the sweet
Thilda and bring her to thy arms in
the morning."

The Jul Tieden began with its mer-
riment and feasting. In one week
on the Jul Afton, the Christmas Eve,
the climax would be reached. There
was a squalling in the pens, a squall-
ing, cackling and quacking in the
coops. Every oven was kept at the
taking point and laden with savory
boothouse viands. Presents were drag-
ged out from their hiding places and
marked with loving mottoes, and the
ranches of the favored recipients. There
was a general scrubbing, cleaning and
dusting, and a scrubbing up of hol-
idays and finery.

The men drowned themselves in
coffee, punch and brandy and shouted
themselves hoarse with off-putting
"skål." The women gossiped and
cooked and cooked and gossiped, while
the chubby children stammered their
romantic but unwelcome vows and
sweetmeats unmolested. Everything
was free for the taking and the privi-
lege of freedom was accorded every-
body.

Olga threw her doors wide open, to
the whole village, promising a won-
derful surprise. Many thought she

of a banquet, everybody eating
when the humor seized him, and
drinking whether thirsty or not, be-
cause good drink was there to be had
without the asking. The whole vil-
lage was there waiting for the sur-
prise and nervous themselves up to
standfast by clattering their stom-
achs. None but Olga, Karl and the
pastor knew what it was to be, and
even they did not know in what shape
it would come.

At last the first stroke of midnight.
Olga turned back, Karl stood at at-
tention and the good pastor grasped his
bowl bowl firmly in his hand. The
last stroke was still ringing in their
ears when a violent gust of wind
shook the house and the dragging of
heavy chains over the roof brought
terror to the inmates. The door was
burst open by some invisible force
and a heavy bundle was hurled in
among the amazed rosters. An old
woman had appeared in the doorway
and screamed out above the confusion:

"Girl, take the gift of the Christ
Child, but beware of my vengeance."

Shouldst thou accept any other gift
before thou hast fully accepted this,
then shall it return to me and be mine
forever."

Johan was quickly restored by co-
pious libations of hot punch, and, and



"Johan, thy betrothed!" shrieked the hag. "Girl, thou art mad. Get thee gone, and at midnight on the Jul Afton I will bring thee a jewel such as none
can boast, but not Johan. He is mine, I tell thee, mine forever. I will not give him up," and she raised
her arm as if to strike, but now Olga feared her not.

"Why troublest thou me, mortal?"
Dost thou not know that I can blast
thee with a breath? Speak, what wilt
thou?"

"In the name of the Christ Child I
demand a gift of thee," was all that
Olga could utter in her terror. It was
a terrible old hag who stood before
her and her aspect was threatening.

"Some paltry thing, a morsel, a ribbon,
a jewel. Speak, mortal, whatever it
may be," hissed she.

"Gravely bolder, Olga spoke more
firmly: "Thou hast promised, and in
the name of the Christ Child thou
must keep thy promise. 'Tis not a rib-
bon, or a jewel, but my Johan, my be-
trothed. I demand of thee as thy gift."

"Johan, thy betrothed!" shrieked
the hag. "Girl, thou art mad. Get
thee gone, and at midnight on the Jul
Afton I will bring thee a jewel such
as none can boast, but not Johan. He

was not very considerate on Johan's
account, thinking she would better be
going around with fearful eyes and
loud lamentations, but they are freely
of her good things none the less.
Simple souls, they were not aware
that the lost Johan was to be the
great surprise. Of course, everybody
had given him up for lost, and they
were amazed that Olga should be the
richest maiden in the village, and
that her home was to be the very
center of the merrymaking on the Jul
Afton. The pastor had been fore-
warned by Karl, and the good soul
came prepared to fight the wicked
troll for the salvation of Johan and
Olga.

The board groaned beneath the
weight of good cheer, and the huge
loaf was kept constantly brimming
with steaming punch. There was no

when able to stand on his feet, Karl
put his hand in that of Olga and gave
the pastor a signal. Forthwith Olga
took Johan for her husband, and when
the final words were spoken, a tem-
pest again shook the house, heavy
chains were again dragged across the
roof, and after a series of monstrous
laughter, all was still without.

With tears and laughter, Olga
grasped her brother's hand, and then
drew herself into the arms of her
husband, the gift of the Christ Child,
forever free from the thralls of the
Skogsfrau.

In dealing with the fresh romance
it is necessary to put a little salt on
his tale.

Life would hardly be worth living
if one could not forget with some
discrimination.

As the Christmas Bells Were Ringing

"Save my child! My God, save my
child!"

A lady dressed in traveling attire
passed herself up from the middle
of the road where she had been stum-
bling and sobbing and wringing her hands,
clattered painfully after a cab which
was dashing through the street.

In the cab was a little girl about
four years of age. She did not
scream, but clung desperately to the
dashboard, against which she had
been thrown, her large blue eyes
gleaming wildly around for help. Sud-
denly a man sprang out from the
back of the cab, and, with a desperate
attempt to seize the dragging reins,
but the horse averred to one side
without halting his speed, and drove
on, leaving the girl to her fate.

The impact of which cast the child out
into a heap of mud and slush which
the street sweepers had accumulated
beneath the pavement, where she
lay motionless. The horse, fright-
ened still more by the fall of the child,
a young girl who had struck against his
head, reared, and, with a snort, a
violent plunge shook her off, and she
fell with a broken arm and lay un-
conscious beside the child she had
saved.

Both the rescuer and the rescuer
were quickly carried to the office of
the same surgeon where the other
occupant of the carriage, after having
been revived, was still weeping and
wringing her hands. Restoratives
quickly applied soon brought the lit-
tle girl back to consciousness, and a
careful examination disclosed the fact
that not only was no bones
broken, but that its tender body was
scarcely bruised.

Its rescuer, however, was in worse
pain, for it was only by prolonged,
skillful work that she was finally re-
stored to sensibility. She had been
removed to a private room, where the
doctor had been exercising his skill
to bring her back to consciousness,
and was just completing the bandag-
ing of her broken arm, when the lady
rushed in crying:

"Let me see the savior of my pre-
cious child, I want to tell her how
much she has done for me, and pour
out my thanks to her."

"I must take to her," she insisted.
"Leave us, doctor, for a few minutes.
What I have to say will do her good,
and you do not know what she has done
for me. The savior of my child is
my sister, I tell you." The doctor
tossed and retired.

"Now, my dear young lady, thanks
are too weak to express what I feel.
What can I do you? What is there
in this world that a deeply grateful
mother can do to express her grati-
tude? Would you like to come and
live with me, and take charge of
the sweet child you saved from death?"

The girl tried to hide her face away
from the lady's eloquent gaze.

"Madam, you do not know what
you ask," she said. "If you knew all
you would spurn me from you."

"Madam, when I dashed before the
maddened horse, I thought of sav-
ing your child's life was not the
thought I had in mind. I—I wanted
to die, and hoped the animal would be
the instrument to relieve me of a
burden."

"I was betrayed, madam, by one
whom I loved, and who, I thought
loved me. He deserted me, and my
necessity, and I had just come from
a hospital when the opportunity I
sought presented itself."

"Wretched monster! Have you not
thought of obtaining redress?"

"It would be useless to try, madam.
He stands too high in the social scale.
I would not be believed."

"Yes, child, I will believe you. Tell
me his name and perhaps I may be
your savior."

"Oh, madam, if you could be!"
exclaimed the girl with sparkling eyes.
"I do not hate Richard Talbot, and—"

"Impossible, I tell you, Richard Tal-
bot is the very soul of honor. Pardon
my words, but your charge against
him is so serious, your heavy blow
Richard Talbot could not have been
your betrayer."

"Read these letters, madam, and
tell me if you can," said the lady, and
handed her a bundle of papers. "I
small, soiled packet from her bosom."
"I told you I would not be believed,"
said the girl, looking down at the de-
voured contents; then taking a letter
from her pocket, carefully compared
the writings.

"My God, it is true," she muttered.
"In a few hours more I would have
been in his toils. Trusting to his
honor, I, too, would have been be-
trayed. Had he striking force, how-
ever, she burst out: "My father's
letter to my husband! I must get it

before he finds it!"

Several hours afterward, a cab
drove hurriedly up to the doctor's
door, and from it the same woman
rushed hysterically into the office.

"The doctor! I want the doctor! Will
he never come? He is keeping me
away from my husband. The assist-
ant vainly endeavored to pacify her.
She strode back and forth frantically
wringing her hands and sobbing.

"My husband's doctor! My husband!
Take me to him! Take me to him!
Take me to him, I say!"

After compelling the frenzied wo-
man to drink a soothing compound,
the doctor placed her in a chair and
took a seat before her. He said some-
thing until he perceived that his medi-
cine was taking effect.

"Madam, your husband's honor was
in poor hands a few hours ago. Rich-
ard Talbot is not a proper guardian
for the honor of any man or woman.
Listen, madam. Shortly after leaving
your home this morning with your
daughter, fagged, as you thought, a
man was fouled near it in a collapsed
condition. He was incoherent in his
talk and held clutched in his hand
a letter which the woman seized and
tore into fragments."

"No, no, it is not my letter. I
did not write it. It was some demon
within me. That man's girl is in
your yonder opened my eyes to my
folly and my sin, and I hastened to
leave the man by destroying the let-
ter before my husband saw it. I want
to tell you, I was too late. You would
not let me see him, doctor, a little
ago, but I want you to take
me to him now. I want to know
his feet and sue for pardon." But
the doctor shook his head.

"Do not tell me he is dead, doctor."

"He cannot be. Let me die, too,"
and she grasped at her bosom, tearing off
her fiery in her desperate clutch at
her throat. With a strong hand the
doctor restrained her and forced
down another soothing mixture.

"Take me to him, doctor, I can
tell him—I am the only one—do you
not understand? Am I his Charlotte?
—he wants me and I must go to him."

"It was a pitiful sight. The doctor
telling a lady with a strong, restrain-
ing hand to prevent her from throw-
ing herself upon the form of a man who
lay grasping at his throat and crying,
"Charlotte! Charlotte! Come back
to me, Charlotte; you have killed me.
My heart is broken, and I loved you
so. You did not mean what you
said, did you, Charlotte? How could
everything be so? You said I never loved
you, but you were so sweetly beauti-
ful that I was bursting to let you see
my heart. It is a foolish with love
for you, Charlotte. Come, my wife,
and he opened wide his arms, into
which the woman, tearing herself
away from all restraint, cast herself,
and, binding her arms around his
neck, laid her cheek close to his.

In the crisp, early morn, the bells
of an adjoining church rang out their
merry Christmas bells and awoke
the patient, who sat up and looked
around.

"Where am I?" he asked, rubbing
his dazed eyes. "I have heard the
Christmas bells! I have had a hide-
ous dream. Ah, Charlotte!" He laid
his hand caressingly upon that bowed
head and whispered: "Charlotte, have
you come back to me? Am I dream-
ing?"

"Edward, my husband, you have
been ill, and you have been dream-
ing, but now, dear, it is real that I
am by your side, and the Christmas
bells are real. Listen, they are tell-
ing you how much I love you."

With their arms around each other
they listened to the bells which spoke
to them in a language that could not
be misunderstood. Edward Dalling
recovered finally, but his wife re-
mained feeble and left him feeble for
many months. He never knew pos-
sibly whether the letter he found on
his wife's table, among some of his
papers, did love him, and that she was
about to depart to a foreign land to
seek happiness with Richard Talbot,
was a dream or a reality. He never
regretted tenderness and unwavering
devotion finally spotted it from his
mind.

"In a few Christmas mornings
they never fall by all in memory,"
cried the lady, listening to the bells
whose music dispelled the mist be-
tween her hearts and brought their
souls together, never to be separated
by any misunderstanding.