

LIFE'S LITTLE EVENTS DEPICTED BY JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

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HAS IT EVER HAPPENED TO YOU?—He promises himself never again to dine with a newly married couple.

Vagabond Simplicissimus Tells of Customs and Manners During the Thirty Years War

Hans von Grimmelshausen's Classic German Romances of the Adventures of the Wanderer, Translated Into English for the First Time

The stories of the "Adventurous Simplicissimus" by Hans von Grimmelshausen are familiar enough to German readers; in fact the romances about this vagabond are among the best known German classics. They have never been done into English, however, until the present time. A translation has just been issued by Heinemann of London. The stories throw a light on customs and manners during the Thirty Years War not otherwise recorded.

ALTHOUGH it was not my intention to take the peace-loving reader with these troopers to my dad's house and farm, seeing that matters will go ill therein, yet the course of my history demands that I should leave to kind posterity an account of what manner of cruelties were done and again practised in this our German war; yes, and moreover testify by my own example that such evils must often have been sent to us by the goodness of Almighty God for our profit. For, gentle reader, who would ever have taught me that there was a God in Heaven if these soldiers had not destroyed my dad's house, and by such a deed driven me out among folk who gave me all fitting instruction thereupon? Only a little while before I neither knew nor could fancy to myself that there were any people on earth save only my dad, my mother and me, and the rest of our household; nor did I know of any human habitation but that where I daily went out and in. But soon thereafter I learned the way of men's coming into the world, and how they must leave it again. I was only in shape a man and in name a Christian; for the rest I was but a beast.

The first thing these troopers did was that they stabled their horses; thereafter each fell to his appointed task, which task was neither more nor less than ruin and destruction. For though some began to slaughter and holl and yell, as if they looked as if there should be a merry banquet forward, yet others there were who did but storm through the house above and below stairs. Others stowed together great parcels of cloth and apparel and all manner of household stuff, as if they would set up a frippery market. All that they had no mind to take with them they cut in pieces. Some thrust the swords through the hay and straw as if they had not enough sheep and swine to slaughter; and some shook the feathers out of the beds and in their stead stuffed in bacon and other dried meats and provisions as if such were better and softer to sleep upon. Others broke the stove and the windows as if they had a never ending summer to please. Houseware of copper and tin they beat flat, and packed such vessels, all rent and spoiled, in with the rest. Beds, tables, chairs and benches

they burned, though there lay many cords of dry wood in the yard. Pots and pipkins must all go to pieces, either because they would eat none but roast flesh, or because their purpose was to make there but a single meal.

Our maid was so handled in the stable that she could not come out; which is a shame to tell of. Our man they laid bound upon the ground, thrust a gag into his mouth, and poured a pailful of filthy water into his body; and by this, which they called a Swedish draught, they forced him to lead a party of them to another place where they captured men and beasts, and brought them back to our farm, in which company were my dad, my mother and our Ursula.

And now they began: first to take the flints out of their pistols and in place of them to jam the peasants' thumbs in and so to torture the poor rogues as if they had been about the burning of witches; for one of them they had taken they thrust into the baking oven and there lit a fire under him, although he had as yet confessed no crime; as for another, they put a cord round his head and so twisted it tight with a piece of wood that the blood gushed from his mouth and nose and ears. In a word, each had his own device to torture the peasants, and each peasant his several tortures. But as it seemed to me then, my dad was the luckiest, for he with a laughing face confessed what others must out with in the midst of pains and miserable lamentations; and such honor without doubt fell to him because he was the householder. For they set him before a fire and bound him fast so that he could neither stir hand nor foot, and smeared the soles of his feet with wet sack, and this they made our old goat lick off, and so tickle him that he would nigh burst his sides with laughing. And this seemed to me so merry a thing that I must needs laugh with him for the sake of fellowship, or because I knew no better. In the midst of such laughter he must needs confess all that they would have of him, and indeed revealed to them a secret treasure, which proved far richer in pearls, gold and trinkets than any would have looked for among peasants.

Now did I begin to consider and to ponder upon my unhappy condition and prospects, and to think how I might best help myself out of my plight. For whither should I go? Here indeed my

poor wits were far too slender to devise a plan. Yet they served me so far that toward evening I ran into the woods. But then whither was I to go further? For the ways of the wood were as little known to me as the passage beyond Nova Zembla through the Arctic Ocean to China. 'Tis true the pitch dark night was my protection; yet to my dark wits it seemed not dark enough; so I did hide myself in a closet-thicket wherein I could hear both the shrieks of the tortured peasants and the song of the nightingales, which birds regarded not the peasants either to show compassion for them or to stop their sweet song for their sakes; and so I laid myself, as free from care, upon one ear, and fell asleep. But when the morning star began to glimmer in the east I could see my poor dad's house all aflame, yet none that sought to stop the fire; so I betook myself thither in hopes to have some news of my dad; whereupon I was espied by five troopers, of whom one hollowed to me, "Come hither, boy, or I will shoot thee dead."

But I stood stock still and open mouthed, as knowing not what he meant or what I should have; and I standing there and gaping upon them like a cat at a new barn door, and they, by reason of a morass between, not being able to come at me, which vexed them mightily, one discharged his carbine at me; at which sudden flame of fire and unexpected noise, which the echo repeating it many times, made more dreadful, I was so terrified that forthwith I fell to the ground, and for terror durst not move a finger, though the troopers went their way and doubtless left me for dead; nor for that whole day had I spirit to rise up. But night again overtaking me, I stood up and wandered away into the woods until I saw afar off a dead tree that shone; and this again wrought in me a new fear; wherefore I turned me about post haste and ran till I saw another such tree, from which I hurried away again, and in this manner spent the night.

In that wood did I abide for about two years until the hermit died and after his death somewhat longer than a half year. And therefore it seemeth me good to tell to the curious reader, who often desireth to know even the smallest matters of our doings, our ways and works and how we spent our life.

Now our food was vegetables of all kinds, turnips, cabbage, beans, peas and the like; nor did we despise beech nuts, wild apples, pears and cherries—yes, and our hunger often made even acorns savory to us; our bread or, to say more truly, our cakes, we baked on hot ashes, and they were made of Italian rye beaten fine. In winter we would catch birds with springs and snares, but in spring and summer God bestowed upon us young fiddings from their nests. Often must we make out with snails

and frogs; and so was fishing, both with net and line, convenient to us, for close to our dwelling there flowed a brook full of fish and crayfish, all which did help to make our rough vegetable diet palatable. Once on a time did we catch a young wild pig; and this we penned in a stall and did feed him with acorns and beech nuts, so fattened him and at last did eat him; for

my hermit knew it could be no sin to eat that which God hath created to such end for the whole human race. Of salt we needed but little and spices not at all, for we might not arouse our desire to drink, seeing that we had no cellar. What little salt we wanted a good pastor furnished us who dwelt some fifteen miles away from us, and of whom I shall yet have much to tell.



Frontispiece of the first edition.

Stories Throw Light on Incidents of the Struggle Not Otherwise Recorded—Writer Is Favorite Author Among Reading Public in Germany

Now as concerns our household stuff we had enough, for we had a shovel, a pick, an axe, a hatchet and an iron pot for cooking, which was indeed not our own, but lent to us by the said pastor. Each of us had an old blunt knife, which came from our own possessions, and no more. More than that we needed naught, neither dishes, plates, spoons nor forks; neither kettles, frying pans, griddles, spits, salt-cellar, no, nor any other table and kitchen ware, for our iron pot was our dish, our hands our forks and spoons.

Now, a few days after the hermit's decease I betook myself to the pastor above mentioned and declared to him my master's death, and therewith besought counsel from him how I should act in such a case. And though he much dissuaded me from living longer in the forest, yet did I boldly tread on in my predecessor's footsteps, inasmuch as for the whole summer I did all that a holy monk should do. But as time changed all things, so by degrees the grief which I felt for my hermit grew less and less, and the sharp cold of winter without quenched the heat of my steadfast purpose within. And the more I began to falter the lazier did I become in my prayers, for in place of dwelling ever upon godly and heavenly thoughts, I let myself be overcome by the desire to see the world; and inasmuch as for this purpose I could do no good in my forest, I determined to go again to the said pastor and ask if he again would counsel me to leave the wood. To that end I betook myself to his village, which when I came thither I found in flames; for a party of troopers had but now plundered and burned it, and of the peasants killed some, driven some away, and some had made prisoners, among whom was the pastor himself. Ah God, how full is man's life of care and disappointment! Scarce hath one misfortune ended and lo! we are in another. I wonder not that the heathen philosopher Timon set up many swallows at Athens, where men might strike themselves up, and so with brief pain make an end to their wretched life.

These troopers were even now ready to march and had the pastor fastened by a rope to lead him away. Some cried, "Shoot him down, the rogue!" Others would have money from him. But he, lifting up his hands to heaven, begged, for the sake of the Last Judgment, for forbearance and Christian compassion, but in vain; for one of them rode him down and dealt him such a blow on the head that he fell flat and commended his soul to God. Nor did the remainder of the captured peasants fare any better. But even when it seemed these troopers, in their cruel tyranny, had clean lost their wits, came such a swarm of armed peasants out of the wood that it seemed a

wasps' nest had been stirred. And these began to yell so frightfully and so furiously to attack with sword and musket that all my hair stood on end, and never had I been at such a merry-making before; for the peasants of the Spessart and the Vogelsberg are as little wont as are the Hessians and men of the Sauerland and the Black Forest to let themselves be crowded over on their own dunghill. So away went the troopers, and not only left behind the cattle they had captured, but threw away bag and baggage also, and so cast all their booty to the winds lest themselves should become booty for the peasants; yet some of them fell into their hands. This sport took from me well-nigh all desire to see the world, for I thought, if 'tis all like this, then is the wilderness far more pleasant. Yet would I fain hear what the pastor had to say of it, who was, by reason of wounds and blows received, faint, weak, and feeble. Yet he made shift to tell me he knew not how to help or advise me, since he himself was now in a plight in which he might well have to seek his bread by begging.

Now unless our hostess had been content to have herself and her whole house possessed by my army, 'twas certain she must be rid of them. And that she did, short and sharp, for she put my fags into the oven and burned them out as clean as an old tobacco pipe, so that I lived again as 'twere in a rose garden freed from my vermin; yes, and none can believe how good it was for me to be free from that torment wherein I had sat for months as in an ant's nest. But in recompense for that I had a new plague to encounter; namely, that my new master was one of those strange soldiers that do think to get to heaven by never harming a child. His whole fortune consisted in what he could earn by standing sentry and what he could save from his weekly pay, and that, poor as it was, he valued above all the pearls of the Orient; each sixpence he got he sewed into his breeches, and that he might have more of such sixpences I and his horse must starve; I must break my teeth upon dry Pumpernickel, and nourish myself with water, or at best with small beer, and that was a poor affair for me—inasmuch as my throat was raw from the dry black bread and my whole body wasted away. If I would eat I must needs steal, and even that with such secrecy that my master could by no manner of means be brought to book. As for him, gallows and torture, headsmen and their helpers—yes, and surgeons too—were but superfluous. Sultans and hawkers too must

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