

signe (pronounced as Singne) Laven came from Sweden to Harston to nurse me through an illness. She came for a period of two months but she remained for thirty years and says now that she will stop in England all her life. After she had cured me she stayed to help Helen in her work at her Gymnasium in Cambridge and, eventually when Helen left to work in Norwich, she became its head. She had a younger sister, Gerd, (pronounced as Yaird) who had just finished a brilliant College course in Upsala and had started to study law. She badly needed a six months quiet time of study and we asked her to come to Harston House.

She arrived at Harston station one evening in early February, when it was dark, cold and very damp. We went to meet her with a lantern. There were no electric torches then. The lantern was a fine old fashioned one with many ornamental holes in the metal which made interesting patterns of light on the ground. A very pale, tired looking Gerd stepped from the train. She was a beautiful girl appearing to be much younger than nineteen years old. She was quiet as we walked through the dark avenue but when we left the road and entered our woodland by the wicket gate she cried out with joy and surprise for she saw the white, wet petals of snowdrops shining among the dripping ivy. The northern girl had not thought it possible to have flowers in early February. Gerd lost at once her tired

looks and with flushed cheeks she bent down to pick the snow-drops. Her golden, wavy hair escaped from her black velvet cap and met the flowers and she, they and the leaves were lit up in patterns of sparkling light from the old lantern.

She proved a delightful companion when she was not buried in her law books. She knew school English and soon could speak conversational English very well. I felt sorry that she was studying such a dusty subject as law. She told me that she had already engaged herself to be married. It was however to another law student whose name was Eric Schalling. "It seemed" she said sadly "as if I could not escape being married". She looked like a heroine of romance she was so beautiful but her love story did not sound at all tomanyic. However she would have strongly objected to it had it been so.

When her six months quiet study in England was over she went back to work hard in Sweden and became its first woman Statician. She married Eric Schalling and they lived in a tiny flat in Stockholm. It was not too small to hold nicely another occupant, a gentle baby girl whom they named Nea. It grew considerably smaller when another baby girl arrived who turned out to be by no means gentle. They called her Ursula and she was as strong and as wild as a little bear. She appeared to be born to take up space so when the wished for boy arrived, there seemed no room left for him. They called him Sven and he turned out to be only a normal boy not gentle like Nea or

rampagious like Ursula.

One summer when Ursula was two and a half years old, Signe visited Gerd and Eric in Sweden. Her small niece had an instinctive feeling that she came from some home with more space in it than in hers and promptly adopted her in consequence. Signe, who was then living with us, asked if she might bring her little niece for a short time to Harston House for she pitied the child living in such close quarters. My sister Florence, who was then head of our house, said yes. Ursula left a very loving father and mother quite cheerfully and when she reached Harston House promptly adopted the place. There was enough space for her in our garden at least for the present. We shared with Signe the task of bringing her up. Gerd was, I think, thankful that Ursula was with us. The other two children and law business filled her mind and time and her nature was unsuited for bringing up a child who was like a highly bred, exceptionally strong young colt. Signe was more fitted for the task.

Eric and Gerd later bought a fair sized house in Saltsjöbaden but Ursula had adopted her aunt, out family, Harston and England and made her home with us until she passed a University course when she returned to her parents in Saltsjöbaden and studied to become a doctor.

Saltsjöbaden (Saltseabaths) is a residential island and a favourite pleasure resort about half ~~an~~ an hour's run by electric train from Stockholm. It is on one of the thousand

islands that lie between Stockholm and the open Baltic. Those near Stockholm are connected by bridges. Not so very long ago they were covered with forest through which wandered elks. A few years ~~ago~~ before Helen and I went to stay with the Schallings a little boy who lived on ~~an~~ a neighbouring island was late for school because an elk took it into its head to lie down and sleep in front of, and against the only door of his mother's cottage and they had to wait until the giant beast had had its sleep out. Though so near the city the scenery on these islands is still very wild.

One day when I was staying with Gerd and Eric the young Schallings and I went for an expedition into the woods of one of them to hunt for cantarels, a little yellow agaric good to eat. The soil of the wood showed no signs of any attempt at drainage. The fallen trees rotted where they lay. We trod on soft, spongy, grey lichen, avoiding black stagnant pools, so black that they could not reflect the pine trees and undergrowth. We gathered cantarels from among the lichen and the tufts of cranberries. Occasionally we would find the ground becoming dry and the hot misty air fresh and we would come out on ~~to~~ a sunny bit of the shore along an arm of the sea.

I stayed at Salsjöbaden three times ~~in~~ in different years and each time it had become a more fashionable pleasure resort for Stockholm people. Facing the sea was a large hotel. Once when I stayed with the Schallings the annual fish party was held in the restaurant and we all went to it. I had heard

about cray fish parties but all the same I was surprised by this one. The big restaurant had white walls and they were decorated with scarlet. The long centre table and the small tables round it were covered with white cloths adorned with designs cut out of scarlet paper. On the tables were dishes heaped with scarlet cray fish. Everything that could be scarlet and white was so coloured and it certainly looked inviting for the guests. The feast began. The shells of the eaten cray fish formed high mounts on the plates. I could not compete with the Swedish people. A few shells only lay on my plate. I felt quite ashamed of myself for managing to eat so few and having so little wish to eat more.

The city of Stockholm and the country round is very beautiful. I found a good subject to paint at Saltsjöbaden. A group of pine trees on a slope overlooking a blue sea dotted with the white sails of pleasure boats. It was the most uncomfortable sketching ground that I had ever had, so steep was the slope that if I tried to sit on a chair or campstool I tumbled backwards and if I had neither of these I must lie down gazing upwards or else I must kneel.

I had a rest from such hard work every other day for then I went into Stockholm to sketch. I was entranced with a view of the city from the restaurant at the top of the hill of Skansen which formed the open-air museum of Stockholm. I looked over the Naval and Military Islands and the stately mass

of the royal palace, the far distant tower of town hall and the winding arms of the sea with its shipping. I sat in the greatest possible comfort occasionally sipping coffee.

The house of Dr. Schalling was built of wood and stood on a hillside. The garden went so steeply down to the narrow road that separated it from the sea, that it was some time before I could venture to walk to the gate at the bottom. At my first trial I failed and had to slip down to it in a sitting posture. The boy Sven of course could even run to the gate but one day he ran too quickly. The gate was open! He could not stop running even when he reached the road and he plunged down over the rocky edge into the sea. He was nearly drowned but was rescued just in time.

I learned to love the Schallings wooden house among the pine trees and enjoy the Swedish food. We had our meals on the verandah which formed an additional room. One day however we had a memorable meal in the dining room. It was separated from the drawing room only by curtains. It was too formal a room for family meals in summer. The Schallings, both Eric and his wife, were high up in their profession. Eric was King's Councillor and Gerd a Judge. An international lawyers conference was held that year in Stockholm and they felt that it was right that they should give a lunch party at their house in Saltsjöbaden to certain important delegates. It was a very anxious time for both of them to settle the menu well. It was decided

that Gerd should order a sumptuous ice pudding that was to arrive from Stockholm by train half an hour before the guests arrived by car. I would be met at the station. The children were excited and only hoped against hope that some of the ice pudding would be left for them. Ursula and Sven declared that they would peep through the curtains to see how it was going on.

To the horror of the host and hostess the precious parcel did not arrive by that train. Telephone messages flew between the Schallings and the shop. A promise was given that it should be sent by car. An extra entree was at once ordered from the kitchen to lengthen the first part of the meal. We were begged to be as slow over eating as we possibly could be and we were also asked to talk a great deal. It was a terrible anxiety to Gerd and Eric. There would be about eight or nine guests - all foreigners - and each one would have a different nationality. I could talk French very badly. Helen could talk French and a little German. Gerd and Eric knew English French and German well and we all trusted that the guests would know a little English.

The party arrived. We sat down to lunch. As far as I can remember I had a Frenchman for my partner and Helen a Pole. Gerd, with flushed cheeks and anxious sparkling eyes, kept her voice and attention apparently on her guests but certainly with half an eye on the maid who telephoned to her perpetually a

"No" with half her eye. The additional entree was brought in. A deepening flush on Gerd's cheeks appeared. Then Eric rose grandly to the occasion. He announced in a cheery voice that it was now time for healths and proceeded to make a very good speech in English of which all understood a little. Other speeches were made by the delegates. On the surface all was gay. Then the maid came in and quick indeed was the glance between mistress and maid. The speeches ended with a short extra one spoken with a flourish by Eric and the ice-pudding was brought in with a flourish by the maid. The three children did look from between the folds of the curtains. Gerd kept her colour through coffee and as long as the guests remained but was palw for two days afterwards. "But I dont believe" she said "that a single one of those delegates knew enough about Sweden to be sure that we dont as a rule have speeches and health in the middle of a meal".

Eric asked me one day, whether I would like to stay at Upsala for a few days. He would take me to the hotel and introduce me to the landlady who would look after me well. I should have a quiet sketching time if I did not mind being alone. I jumped at the idea. I prepared my paper and watercolours carefully but found that I needed a little light saucer for my colours so I asked Gerd if she would lend me an old one. She gave me one with a tiny wreath of roses round it and said that as the cup was broken it was of no value whatever.



Eric and I started. The weather was lovely. As we neared Upsala we saw in the distance the square tower of stone topped by Milles's noble group of the Knight, Sten Sture, on his horse, attended by some of his peasant fighters. They are represented as on their way to the fierce battle that was to save their country from the Danes. The struggle had evidently begun. Sture and his men proceed stolidly towards the battlefield. No expression is given by Milles to them. The interest lies in the horse who has scented the battle and is gathering courage and fierceness. It is a fine monument.

Eric took me to the hotel and then we walked to the University Library. It was vacation time. There was only one Professor left in charge. I was introduced to him but unfortunately he did not know English but he knew French and told Eric that if I found myself in any difficulty I could telephone to him in French. I did not think that would happen. I was shown many interesting things, amongst them the celebrated Gothic Codex beautiful in its purple ~~and~~ and silver colouring. We spent some time looking over the airy, light, finely arranged building. It stands on a hill looking over a long straight street and road. Opposite to the long road high up in the building a red light is always burning. If anywhere in the Library a fire should start that light would go out. The people of Upsala watch that light.

When we went back to the hotel the address and the tele-

phonenumber of the Professor were given to me and also to the landlady and then Eric left me. No one knew English at the hotel but the landlady was overflowing with kindness. The waiting maid apportioned to me was a charming, helpful girl. She was young and looked pretty in her national costume. The two little page~~x~~ boys who were stationed at the foot of the long stairs seemed at once ready and glad to be at my service. I went into the luncheon room. Do they still have such meals in Sweden? The guests sat at little tables. In the centre of the room was a large table, loaded with the whole luncheon from which you helped yourself to as much or as little as you liked. Soup, fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, pastries, cream, milk, cheese, in abundance were ready for you to choose from. When I had passed the cheese stage my attendant opened a distant door in a most important manner and sped through the room towards with her long scarlet hair braids flying out behind her and she deposited on my little table a pot of tea. To all else I had helped myself but tea must be brought to me in lightning haste and with an expression of pride and triumph. It was good tea, very freshly made and extremely hot. As I was English it was felt that I must, of necessity, have tea, not coffee.

I sketched the old castle of Upsala from several positions. It had a delicate pink tint on the South side where the sun had faded it and was scarlet on the North. There was a flaming sunset every night when I was there and the scarlet side of the huge building was lit up. It was almost too much

of a flare and a flame. I look at my poor, sketch of it occasionally and wonder at it. I failed also in a drawing of the Cathedral. Its sharp, hard pointed spires with no ornament to catch a shadow might appeal to a cubist artist but it did not please me. The College Halls were interesting but not subjects for painting.

I had a dear little high-up room in the hotel and I was sad when the time came for me to leave it. I prepared to go and meet Eric at the station. There had been no drawbacks to my enjoyment. No need to rouse the learned professor from his studies. I had packed all my things, the little page boys had fetched them and I went down the long stairs to the hall. When I had settled everything in the office I happened to look in my painting bag and realized that I had left Gerd's little saucer on my washstand, so I started to walk up again. The little boys barred my way. "What did Madam want?" I tried to explain. All the attendants came to listen as well as the landlady. I tried hard to go up the stairs but that could not be allowed - I suppose because it was too high a climb. At last I took my sketch book and drew a saucer and put roses round it. It met with admiration but gave no enlightenment. The landlady disappeared into her office and then came and pulled me with gentle persistence to the telephone. I resisted but it was already connected on to the University Library! The professor was waiting for my request. Good

Heavens ! what was the French for saucer ? My knowledge of the French language flew away from me head. The landlady not only put the telephone into my hand but lifted my hand to hold the receiver to my ear. A refined voice in French asked me my difficulty. I remembered the word "Souscoupe" just in time and said I had left one in my room and they would not let me go upstairs to fetch it or let me go to the station without it ! Madam seized the telephone, listened, gave the boys the word and like arrows they sped upstairs and brought the saucer down. By that time visitors as well as attendants were in the hall. My drawing had to be handed round and again admired and I was allowed at last to go off to the station. When pictures of Upsala, the beautiful and learned city, come into my mind I see not only Cathedral, Castle, monument and College Halls but a round white saucer with little pink roses round it.

The Schallings took me for a lovely expedition to visit the home of Linnaeus, the Botanist. There was a hill behind his house up which we climbed. Gerd picked for me a seed vessel of a tall wild lily that had grown and flowered on the hill. I have this year a strange seedling lily growing in my dell. Although it is many years since I left the garden of Linnaeus I watch that seedling with a vague hope that it may be one ~~of~~ from a lily grown by the great botanist. Lily seeds are slow to develop. This year it may flower. If it is from Gerd's gift of stolen seeds what a memory it will be of her and of happy days with her and Eric in Sweden.