

CHAPTER XI

SWITZERLAND

"I liked the mountain girl best of all," thought Arabella. "I wonder whether I shall ever visit the mountains again. There's a great stick in the corner that Uncle Joe calls his alpenstock. I'll go and read the names upon it. They are the names of all the mountains where he has used it."

She read Mount Blanc, Mount Cenis, the Wengern, and so on; and of course as she read and sung them over to herself, they lulled her off into her wonderful dreams, and brought her this time into a meadow, steep and sloping, but full of flowers, the loveliest flowers, of all kinds, growing among the long grass that waved over them. The fresh, clear air was so delicious that she almost hoped she was back in her dear Tyrol; but the hills were not the same. She saw upon the slope quantities of cows, goats, and sheep, feeding just as on the Tyrolese Alps; but beyond was a dark row of pines, and above, in the sky as it were, rose all round great sharp points—like clouds for their whiteness, but not in their straight, jagged outlines. And here and there the deep gray clefts between seemed to spread into white rivers, or over the ruddy purple of the half-distance came sharp white lines darting downwards.

As she sat up in the grass and looked about her, a bark startled her. A dog began to growl, bark, and dance around her, so that she would have been much frightened if the next moment a voice had not called him off—"Fie, Brilliant, down; let the little girl alone. He is good, Mademoiselle, never fear. He helps me keep the cows."

"Who are you, then?"

"I am Maurice, the herd-boy. I live with my grandmother, and work for her."

"What, in keeping cows?"

"Yes; and look here!"

"Oh, what a lovely little cottage! It has eaves and windows, and balconies, and a door, and little cows and sheep, and men and women, all in pretty white wood! You did not make it, Maurice?"

"Yes, truly I did; I cut it out with my knife, all myself."

"How clever you must be. And what shall you do with it?"



"I shall watch for a carriage with ladies winding up that long road; and then I shall stand and take off my hat, and hold out my little cottage. Perhaps they will buy it, and then I shall have enough to get grandmother a warm gown for the winter. When I grow bigger I will be a guide, like my father."

"A guide?"

"Yes, to lead travelers up to the mountain tops. There is nowhere you English will not go. The harder a mountain is to climb, the more determined you all are on going up. And oh, I shall love being a guide, too! There are the great glaciers, the broad streams of ice that fill up the furrows of the mountains, with the crevices so blue and beautiful and steep. It was in one of them my father was swallowed up."

"Ah! then how can you love them?" said Arabella.

"Because they are so grand and so beautiful," said Maurice. "No other place has the like of the ones here in Switzerland, and they make one's heart swell with wonder, and joy in the God who made them."

Maurice's eyes sparkled, and Arabella looked at the clear, stern glory of the mountain points, and felt as if she understood him.