

THE CHRISTMAS STOVE

ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR



THE
CHRISTMAS
STOVE





ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR

BOOKS FROM PURPLE HOUSE PRESS

A Grandma for Christmas (Norway)

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD SERIES

The Christmas Camera (Sweden)

The Christmas Compass (Netherlands)

The Christmas Donkey (France)

The Christmas Star (Norway)

The Christmas Stove (Switzerland)



The Tangled Skein
When the Dikes Broke

THE CHRISTMAS STOVE



ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR

Purple House Press
Kentucky



L

IS IT VERY MUCH farther, Peteli?" Trudi asked. "I don't believe I can make my feet go ten more steps!"

Peter looked down at his little sister. He spoke kindly, but impatiently. "We must push on more than ten steps, Trudi — a good deal more. And you must remember not to call me Peteli. That's the name for a little boy, and I'm about grown up — nearly twelve, you know." He straightened his shoulders under his rucksack. "You must call me just plain Peter," he said firmly.

Trudi nodded, but in spite of herself her lip

quivered. The two had come so far, climbing all day up the snowy mountain, through the pass, and now it was almost dusk. They had begun to descend the other side of the mountain but were still far above the little village of Zimmerli in the valley, where Tante Maria lived. They were hoping to find a home with her for the rest of the winter. Trudi sighed and trudged on.

“Remember,” urged Peter, “that a little Swiss girl like you can’t be — what?”

“A crybaby,” gulped Trudi, looking down at her feet and winking fast so that Peter wouldn’t see the tears which had sprung into her eyes.

“You have to be — what?” pursued Peter.

“Brave and strong,” answered Trudi. Her words were steadfast, but now a frightened look came over her face.

She pressed against her brother and drew her little shawl more tightly about her as she whispered, “Peter, who is that coming up the trail, do you suppose? Doesn’t he look strange?”

A tall, muffled figure had rounded a curve below and was climbing straight toward them. In a moment



they would meet, and Peter, in spite of his nearly twelve years, felt as uneasy as Trudi. The man steadily approaching, though tall, was stooped and weighed down with heavy wrappings so that only his eyes showed. As he drew nearer, they saw that those eyes were steely blue and very sharp. He carried an alpenstock with which he struck hard at the frozen snow as he came up the trail.

The children hoped he would pass them by with no more than a greeting. They were careful to step politely aside, giving him more than his share of the path, but he stopped stock-still beside them.

“Whose children are you? And what are you doing on the mountain alone at this hour?” he demanded, pulling his scarf aside to make speech possible while he surveyed the shabby little pair.

“We’re on our way to Zimmerli,” replied Peter, trying not to sound frightened.

“And if you please,” Trudi spoke up, wanting to help Peter though her voice was trembling, “we’re not anybody’s children.”

Peter thought that the man’s sharp eyes softened a little. Indeed, it would be hard to look very stern when





one was talking to dimpled, brown-eyed Trudi, especially when that little smile of hers stole out timidly as it did now.

“What does she mean, ‘not anybody’s children?’” the man asked, turning sharply to Peter.

“We’re orphans. Our parents and home were lost in an avalanche,” explained Peter, squaring his shoulders as if to give himself courage. “Hans the goatherd took us in while I could help him take the goats to feed up on the mountain. But in winter I can’t be much help, and he says he has too many mouths to feed as it is. He’ll take us back next summer, but now he sends us to Zimmerli where our Tante Maria lives — our mother’s aunt, she is.”

“Hans said one should be with relatives for Christmas, anyway,” offered Trudi, “and Christmas is not far off.”

“Why didn’t you go to her at once?” the man demanded, and then pursed his lips and nodded his head several times. “Tante Maria. Is that Frau Maria Fingerhut, the one who used to sew and who lives on the edge of the village?”

Peter and Trudi both nodded vigorously, and the man nodded in turn. “Yes, I see,” he said. “She has not much to offer these days or she would have sent for you, I believe.”

“Perhaps she can at least give us shelter, and I can help her,” said Peter stoutly. “Trudi, too.”

The man smiled a little. “You do not look of an age to be much help,” he observed, pursing his lips again. “And the little sister here, even less. Well, I wish you good-day. Frau Fingerhut will take you in, of that I am sure. But what the three of you will eat is something else again.”

This did not sound very encouraging, and the children were silent as they went on. Peter tried to think of something cheerful to say, but his heart was heavy when he recalled the good days in their old home. Especially the weeks before Christmas when Father would be busy carving out toys that would later appear on the Christmas tree. Peter himself had learned how to handle a knife pretty well. Though he had never done a finished piece of carving, Father had said more than once that he had the makings of a real wood carver. This year Peter





After their parents are lost in an avalanche, two Swiss orphans, 11-year-old Peter and 8-year-old Trudi, arrive at their aunt's home a few weeks before Christmas. Tante Maria is sick and barely able to support herself, much less care for two children.

Peter and Trudi bring cheer to their aunt through their faith in Christmas and their determination to help. And as Trudi says, they have a wonderful start toward Christmas joy with the Christmas stove in Tante's parlor—a beautiful enamel stove that has pictures of the Christ Child and other Christmas scenes.

Enjoy reading about traditional Swiss customs to celebrate Christmas as the children and their aunt work and plan for a happy holiday. A beautiful story of family and friendship that is a delight to read all year round.

Purple House Press



purplehousepress.com