22. German Books for Girls

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In the English-speaking world the development of girls’ stories is particularly linked with two American classics – Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) and Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1872) – after which the genre blossomed in both North America and the British Isles. L. T. Meade's most famous book was *A World of Girls* (1886), but that was simply one of more than 300 that she wrote. Only a little less prolific was Evelyn Everett-Green, whose first stories appeared in the 1880s. Two of her later books are of special interest in that they deal with aspects of the Franco-Prussian War. However, neither Everett-Green nor Meade produced books that are classics and reprinted today. The German-speaking countries also had many women authors who wrote principally for girls, but only one of them from the second half of the nineteenth century has achieved lasting fame, namely, Johanna Spyri with *Heidi* (1880-81). Spyri’s predecessors, Amalia Schoppe (1791-1858), Marie Nathusius (1817-57) and Otilie Wildermuth (1817-77), had some of their books translated into English during the nineteenth century, but none of them made a lasting impression on their readers. By contrast, Spyri’s success with *Heidi* has been marked by countless twentieth-century reprints and adaptations right up to our own time.

Amalia Schoppe, writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, did not write specifically for girls, but she seems to be the first German woman writing for children whose work was translated into English and credited to her by name. For this reason alone she deserves our attention. As far as I can tell, only one of her many books for children was translated into English, and this was yet another of the stories about poor orphans that proliferated in both Germany and Britain during this period. *Heinrich und Marie oder die verwaisten Kinder* (Leipzig: Leopold Michelsen, 2. verbesserte
Auflage, 1839) was translated into English by Susan Cobbett with the title
*Henry and Mary, or the Little Orphans* (Manchester: John Heywood; London: Simpkin & Marshall, & Houlston & Wright, [1860]). The German edition
describes the book as ‘a moving and instructive story for good children of
both sexes from 8 to 12 years old’, while the English subtitle merely says it
is ‘an interesting tale for young readers’.

The Henry and Mary of the story lose their father, a former soldier, to
an accident with a horse, then their house and possessions are swept away
in a flood, and their mother is abducted to be an unwilling housekeeper
to counterfeiters in an underground forest den. The destitute children
encounter both hostile and friendly adults, the most helpful being an elderly
woman who earns her meagre living by drying and selling herbs. On her
death the children are assisted by Mr Truelove, the druggist to whom she
used to sell her wares. The children are then separated, with Henry being
employed by Mr Truelove’s brother. One night, while sheltering from a
storm, Henry overhears the two counterfeiters talking about their activities
as they wait, hiding in the same place, for an old Jew who buys their coins.
This results in the counterfeiters being apprehended and the children’s
mother rescued. The family is reunited, and all gain suitable employment
and a roof over their heads. These frightening events, which are little more
than variations on stock motifs from moral tales and popular chapbooks,
are interspersed with examples of Christian forbearance and trustfulness
that lead to the story’s happy conclusion. Both German and British writers
of the day had an inexhaustible appetite for tales that exposed children
to such wild fears – loss of parents and home, hunger and starvation,
abandonment in the forest – only to end with reunion, hope and economic
stability. Whether children enjoyed and profited from them in the way their
authors intended is open to question.

Like Amalia Schoppe, Marie Nathusius built on the traditions of Christian
stories exemplified by Christoph von Schmid, Christian Gottlob Barth and
Gustav Nieritz, but her work was not as comprehensively translated into
English as that of her male predecessors. The title story in *Christfried’s First
Journey, and Other Tales* (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter, & Co., c. 1871)
is typical of the optimistic Christian genre. As with Schoppe’s *Henry and
Mary*, this is not specifically a girls’ book, but tells how Christfried, the
fourteen year old son of a clergyman’s widow, through his obliging, candid
nature and trust that God will help him, gains financial backing to study to
become a clergyman himself. The help comes from a nobleman who signs
himself ‘Frederick, Count of Renna’. The story is not credited to Nathusius, nor is any translator’s name given. The other two equally anonymous tales in this little book appear to be by British writers. An eight-page list of other works published by Johnstone, Hunter, and Co. concentrates on similarly improving tales and includes Krummacher’s *Alfred and the Little Dove, Gottfried of the Iron Hand: a Tale of German Chivalry* and *Cockerill the Conjurer; or, the Brave Boy of Hameln*, a story of the Pied Piper. Another form of Nathusius’s story was published in *Max Wild the Merchant’s Son, and other Stories for the Young* (London and Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1874) with the variant spelling *Christfrid’s First Journey*. The title-story is by Franz Hoffmann. I have not been able to check whether the Nathusius translations, both anonymous, are identical or not.

Much more significant than *Christfried* is Nathusius’s *Tagebuch eines armen Fräuleins* (1854), of which five different English translations were published in scarcely more than a dozen years. First came an anonymous American translation entitled *Louisa von Plettenhaus: the Diary of a Poor Young Lady* (Boston and New York: Francis, 1857). It was followed in 1860 by two British editions – *The Diary of a Poor Young Gentlewoman*, translated from the German by M. Anna Childs (London: Trübner & Co.) and *Step by Step; or, the Good Fight* (London: R. Bentley). In 1867 Tauchnitz published Miss Thompson’s translation, *Diary of a Poor Young Lady*, in volume 12 of its ‘Collection of German Authors’, and the same title was given for Emily Ritzerow’s translation in 1869. The number of translations is remarkable. *The Diary of a Poor Young Gentlewoman* is a full-length novel aimed at an adolescent (and probably also adult) female readership. Focussing on the experiences of an impoverished young Christian lady who is forced to become a governess, it comes, for British readers, in the wake of Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey* (1847) and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), though it does not have their power. Luise finds the experience of being a governess humbling because of her social station, but she also has to negotiate the problems of a household divided between a stern, religious younger brother, Mr von Schaffau, and a socialite, malicious older sister, Frau von Schlichten. She gains the friendship and support of various members of the family and engages in works of mercy among the poor of the neighbourhood. She is pursued by the rich, but unacceptable Mr von Tülfen. However, Mr von Schaffau is generally helpful and pleasant, but sometimes seems stern and displeased. Eventually, on Luise’s birthday (26 March), Mrs von Schlichten dismisses her and sends her back home. The
date is significant in being the day after the Feast of the Annunciation and also the Tuesday in Holy Week, so a promise of improvement is combined with further suffering. At this same time Luise’s elderly aunt dies, and Plettenhaus, the ancestral home, has to be sold. The novel ends with Mr von Schaffau buying the property and marrying Luise. The narrative is conveyed in the form of Luise’s diary interspersed with occasional letters, a first-person technique that encourages reader-identification with the heroine. The whole book centres on the heroine’s Christian fortitude and humility, suffering patiently borne leading ultimately to redemption in the form of marriage and a return to home. The religious dimension is not insisted upon quite as strongly as one finds in other children’s books of the period and later, but the ending appears formulaic rather than realistically convincing.

Otilie Wildermuth was a more prolific writer of children’s books than Marie Nathusius, but not many of them were translated into English. A version of Die Ferien auf Schloß Bärenburg was published as The Holidays at Bärenburg Castle in Mary Howitt’s The Golden Casket: a Treasury of Tales for Young People (London, [1861]) and also William Howitt’s Luke Barnicott, and Other Stories (London and New York: Cassell, Petter, & Galpin, [1866]). It is not clear whether the translation was made by Mary or William, both being proficient in German. Another translation was published in 1865 with the title Midsummer Holidays at Castle Bärenburg. Among Wildermuth’s other books we find The Home Queen; or, Unconscious Rule (London and New York: Frederick Warne & Co., c. 1893) with the author’s first name misspelt ‘Ottalie’. This is most probably a translation of ‘Eine Königin’, a story included in Von Berg und Thal (2nd edition, 1861). Four other titles of books by Wildermuth are By Daylight; or Pictures from Real Life (1865), Nurse Margaret’s Two St. Sylvester’s Eves (London and Oxford: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1871), Barbara’s Christmas (SPCK, 1873) and The Little Sand Boy; or, Who is best off (Edinburgh, 1877).

The Holidays at Bärenburg Castle is particularly interesting for the English reader on account of the detailed descriptions it gives of German life. The plot is simple: the son and daughter of a village schoolmaster travel fifteen miles, mainly on foot, to stay with their godmother, who is housekeeper at the castle of Bärenburg. There they meet the Princess Clotilde and her two children, who are slightly younger than themselves. The social distinctions are preserved, but the children become friends. One day when Prince Hugo gets into difficulties climbing, Fritz rescues him and Hugo gives him a
beautiful ring with a red stone in recompense. The holidays come to an end, and the schoolmaster’s children return home. Fourteen years later, Hugo unexpectedly becomes the ruler of the principality and passes through the village. Through catching sight of the ring he recognizes Fritz, who is now a young curate, appoints him to the living and thus helps him to care for the previous clergyman’s widow, as well as his own schoolmaster father and sister. The story ends with the observation:

The brother and sister, who continued to find their daily bread supplied in honour without any especial princely generosity, yet retained, from their early intercourse with their high-born playfellows, something of great value as a bright memento of the past – a living faith in the help of God at the right time.

The unexpected happy ending, which comes as a complement to some earlier spontaneous act of help, is a commonplace of Christian children’s stories, but Wildermuth is skilful enough to place the primary interest of her tale elsewhere and not to overdo the explicitly Christian aspect. The descriptive details of rural life, the end of the school year, the furnishings of the castle, the lay-out of its gardens and Mrs Dote’s role as housekeeper make the story a fascinating social document. There are also interesting comments on social roles and status, since Fritz calls the traditional expectations into question. His sister, Mina, thinks she might be frightened if she should meet the princess, to which Fritz boldly retorts: ‘I shall not, . . .all men are equal before God, prince or peasant or nobleman; it makes no difference’. Their godmother, representative of the older generation, responds angrily:

it is true that God created all men equal, but the Lord himself has appointed to each one his particular place; one in a lofty position, another humbler, and the humble must never fail in respect; and the lofty will one day be called to answer before the Lord for his stewardship, whether he have done well or evil, with that which was intrusted to him.

As a boy being prepared to become a clergyman, Fritz displays the questioning attitudes of the younger generation, but when he is a man and a curate he is suitably deferent towards the prince, waiting for the latter to recognize the ring rather than taking the initiative himself.

Either Mary or William Howitt might well have been drawn to translate this story because of their own residence and interest in Germany. Nearly twenty years previously William had written *The Rural and Domestic Life of Germany* for an adult readership, and Wildermuth’s story provides a wealth
of comparable material for children. Being of a progressive mind himself, he would have also appreciated the gentle questioning of social distinctions that Wildermuth expressed through her depiction of Fritz.

The stories of Nathusius and Wildermuth, though popular in Germany in their day, pale in significance in comparison with Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi*, which deservedly enjoys classic status in both the German and the English-speaking world. A multitude of editions, translations and adaptations have rolled off the printing presses ever since its first appearance in 1880-81 and are still continuing to do so. Only a small proportion of the book’s success thus lies within our period. Johanna Spyri (1827-1901) was over fifty when her masterpiece was first published in Germany in two volumes with the titles *Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre* and *Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1880-81). There was also a subtitle: *Eine Geschichte für Kinder und auch für Solche, welche die Kinder lieb haben*, which is particularly significant since it points to the book’s dual readership – ‘a story for children and also for those who are fond of children’. *Heidi* tends to be thought of as a girls’ book, but this unjustly restricts its appeal. It has, undeniably, a central female character in Heidi and a preponderance of other female figures, but the male characters – the grandfather, Peter the goatherd, Herr Sesemann, the man-servant Sebastian and Dr Classen – all have serious roles to play. It is a pity to treat *Heidi* as a girls’ book just because it has a central female character. In the same way it is a pity to treat *Heidi* simply as a children’s book because it deals with the lives of children. The very title of the first volume – ‘Heidi’s years of learning and travel’ – by its allusion to Goethe’s novels *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* points to Spyri’s sense of ambition. The title of her second volume – ‘Heidi is able to make use of what she has learnt’ – shows us the Swiss author with her sights on that most ambitious of German prose genres, the *Bildungsroman*, the novel that illustrates the development of character. *Heidi* is actually a novel that an adult can read with pleasure because it is true to the feelings of the children – Heidi and Peter especially, Klara to a lesser extent – who are its focus. It is both a story of childhood and a study of it, accessible to children and adults alike. Like so many nineteenth-century children’s books, *Heidi* is the story of an orphan. Heidi enters the book as a little girl not quite five years old. We learn from her aunt Dete that Heidi’s father was killed by a falling beam

and that her mother was so severely affected by the event that she too died only a few weeks later. The one year old child was taken care of by Dete and her mother. Then Dete’s mother died, and now Dete has the offer of a job in Frankfurt and cannot take Heidi with her. She unceremoniously offloads responsibility for the child on to Heidi’s grandfather, a seventy year old widower who shuns contact with the people in the village and has a fearsome reputation among them. He lives in a mountain hut and is known as the Alm-Öhi, ‘Alm uncle’. From such inauspicious beginnings Heidi and her grandfather gradually develop a warm, mutually supportive relationship. Heidi’s innocent, open nature, uncomplicated by the fears and inhibitions of the adult world, eventually enables her grandfather to re-establish contact with the village and the people from whom he had been estranged.

Heidi’s relationship with her grandfather is the most important one in the book, but she also develops loving relationships with two other grandparent figures – first, the blind grandmother of her friend Peter, the goat-boy, and secondly, Frau Sesemann, the grandmamma of her invalid friend Klara in Frankfurt. Peter’s grandmother is the focus of Heidi’s outgoing, helpful nature. Heidi is saddened at her blindness and poverty and does everything she can to alleviate it: she talks to her and later reads to her, especially Christian hymns and poems, and when she returns from
Frankfurt she brings material comforts for her. By contrast, Frau Sesemann provides Heidi with love and support when she is badly treated by Fräulein Rottenmeier, the Sesemanns’ martinet housekeeper, and feels out of place and homesick. Frau Sesemann comes from Holstein, and it seems as though she and Heidi, coming from opposite ends of the German-speaking world, are kindred spirits. She is the epitome of the affectionate, understanding, commonsensical grandmother. She knows how to put Fräulein Rottenmeier in her place and counteract the regime of terror that she has inflicted on poor Heidi, who knows nothing of the niceties of middle-class social behaviour. Grandparents, whether blood relations or adoptive, are thus the most significant figures in Heidi’s life.

Parent figures occupy a more shadowy role in Spyri’s book. Heidi’s aunt Dete resembles nothing so much as a Greek messenger of the gods. She has done her best for Heidi as a small child, looking after her with her mother and then farming her out to old Ursel when she gets a job as a chambermaid in Bad Ragaz. But when she gets an offer she can’t refuse in Frankfurt, she has no compunction about abandoning the child to the strange, problematic figure of the Alm uncle. Then, just when it seems that Heidi is happily settled with her grandfather, Dete intervenes again by having the eight year old Heidi sent to Frankfurt to be a companion to the invalid, twelve year old Klara. Once Dete has managed to get Heidi into the Sesemann household, she disappears and virtually nothing more is heard of her. Heidi is delivered to the tender mercies of Fräulein Rottenmeier and the supercilious maid, Tinette, neither of whom has any understanding of or sympathy for her country background. Fräulein Rottenmeier insists on conformity to ritualized standards of bourgeois conduct; she cannot see anything below this rigid surface and thus makes Heidi’s existence miserable. These are the figures that occupy the displaced mother role, none of them attractive.

Father figures are more positive. Klara’s father, Herr Sesemann, is away on business when Heidi arrives in Frankfurt, but on his return he proves totally sympathetic towards her and instructs the daunting Fräulein Rottenmeier to deal kindly with her and not to regard Heidi’s differences of behaviour as misdemeanours. Herr Sesemann’s friend, Dr Classen, is another ally. It is he who diagnoses what lies behind Heidi’s unhappiness and sleepwalking in Frankfurt and urges his friend to let Heidi go back home to Switzerland. Dr Classen is the first to visit Heidi there when Klara is not well enough to undertake the long journey. Heidi takes the place
of his own daughter, who has just died, and Dr Classen moves his own residence to the mountains to be near Heidi and provide support alongside the Alm uncle. Sebastian, the Sesemanns’ man-servant, is a further adult male supportive to Heidi. He is a complete contrast to Tinette, doing little acts of kindness for Heidi and accompanying her as far as Mayenfeld on her journey home.

After the Alm uncle the most important male figure in Heidi’s little world is Peter, the goat-boy, who is eleven years old when Heidi is roughly deposited at her grandfather’s hut. Peter has no father either, but lives with his mother and blind grandmother. In certain respects he is the most realistically portrayed and most complex character in the book. While Heidi’s acts and reactions reflect a kind of primal goodness, honesty and spontaneity, Peter is altogether more ambivalent. His job is to take the villagers’ goats up to the high pastures and take care of them. The Alm uncle teases him by calling him ‘general of the goats’, but Peter is not entirely reliable, nor is he very bright. Although he is eleven and Heidi five, they do not seem so very far removed in mental capacity. Peter hates going to school in winter and makes little progress until Heidi actually teaches him to read properly, though he says he’s learnt before. Peter likes having Heidi to himself and is jealous when Klara comes to visit. As a result he destroys her wheelchair by furtively pushing it headlong down the mountain. Afterwards he is racked with guilt at what he has done, though no one knows who did it. When Herr Sesemann arrives in the village, Peter imagines he is the policeman come from Frankfurt to apprehend him, and he is terrified. However, Grandmamma Sesemann, insightful and sympathetic towards children as always, immediately realizes that Peter has punished himself quite enough with anxiety and guilt and needs reassurance rather than any further punishment from outside. She recognizes that the poor boy needs some kind of compensation for the fact that he is no longer Heidi’s only friend and asks him what he would like as a present. Peter demonstrates his simplicity of heart by asking only for the smallest sum of money, and Frau Sesemann is the very embodiment of mercy in making this sum what Peter gets every week for a whole year.

With Heidi herself Johanna Spyri created a most engaging character, for Heidi is unusual in being admirable without being a goody-goody. She is a child of nature, spontaneous, kind and thoughtful. She blossoms under the care of her grandfather, who respects her abilities and choices and allows her freedom to develop. In turn, Heidi is the catalyst for her grandfather’s
gradual reintegration into village life. Without knowing what she is doing, she enables him to put the wrongs of the past and his soured relationships behind him, to help Peter’s mother and grandmother in practical ways and eventually to become reconciled with the pastor and return to live in the village. In the hands of another writer Heidi might well have been portrayed as a sentimental and unbelievable example of Christian goodness, but Spyri avoids this trap by making her into a fully rounded figure. Heidi’s goodness is natural rather than calculatedly Christian. But she is human and has her limitations. She cannot cope with the restraints of the city, the petty restrictions and rituals imposed by Fräulein Rottenmeier, the loss of contact with the mountains, the countryside and the sky. In Frankfurt and middle-class society Heidi wilts and becomes sad and depressed. Gaiety and spontaneity are gradually squeezed out of her so that she becomes emotionally as weak as Klara is physically. Spyri does not psychologize about Heidi’s state, but gives her readers sufficient description for them to understand, according to their different ages, what Heidi must be experiencing. A lesser writer might have attempted to spell out and account for Heidi’s feelings, but Spyri allows them to unfold through the events and actions of the story, largely free from authorial comment.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Heidi is the fact that the story takes place in a clearly identified geographical setting and that the setting is crucial for the story’s meaning. Johanna Spyri locates the major part of the book in eastern Switzerland near the little town of Mayenfeld (now spelt Maienfeld) in the northern part of the large canton of Graubünden (Grisons), only a mile or two across the Rhine from the spa of Bad Ragaz in the canton of St. Gallen. The actual village is given the fictitious name of Dörflis (‘little village’), but the Alm uncle specifically identifies two of the mountains that Heidi describes as the Falknis and the Schesaplana. The Prättigau is the area between Maienfeld and Klosters, and Domleschg, where the Alm uncle and Dete’s mother come from, is south of Chur, the capital of Graubünden. The mountains and pastures, the snow-capped peaks that turn rosy in the setting sun, the meadows, the goats and wild flowers are constantly described and celebrated for their beauty, yet the harshness and poverty of the peasants’ life is not glossed over. Admittedly Bad Ragaz provides Dete with a job as a chambermaid, but to get something economically more worthwhile she has to travel as far afield as Frankfurt, and that is where Heidi later has to follow her. The great city provides wealth, but not health. In the city Klara is an invalid and Heidi becomes
emotionally and physically debilitated. Both recover in the pure air of the mountains of eastern Switzerland. Ironically, it is Peter’s malevolent destruction of Klara’s wheelchair that leads directly to her gradual acquisition of the strength to walk again and to the establishment of a new small community at Dörflis, where people from the city and the mountains can live together in health and harmony.

Spyri’s *Heidi* came at an opportune time for British readers. Switzerland had opened up to a wider range of visitors with the extension of the railway system, and the enjoyment of an unpolluted environment was increasingly sought by those who were making their money in the expanding cities of the Industrial Revolution. Germany, Belgium and France provided a multitude of spas that promoted this quest for health, but Switzerland added a grander landscape, a large number of picturesque lakes and the thrill of the mountains for climbing, walking and breathing pure air. There had been travel books aplenty up to this time, most catering to an adult readership, but C. J. G. and F. Rivington published *Travels in Switzerland* in a format suitable for children as early as 1831. Every book on Switzerland mentioned its national hero, William Tell, and his story was immensely popular with children. The tone had been set by Jean Pierre Claris de Florian, whose *William Tell; or, Switzerland Delivered* appeared in English translation as early as 1809. Other versions of the Tell story were published throughout the nineteenth century, reworking the traditional material in a variety of ways and focussing attention on the Forest Cantons, the ancient core of the Swiss Federation. Alongside the Tell story the idea of Switzerland was alive to British children through the protagonists of that most popular adventure story, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, first published in 1814, but printed in a large variety of formats and editions from then until the present day. *The Swiss Family Robinson* was not about Switzerland, of course, but it formed part of the awareness of Switzerland and Swiss history in nineteenth-century Britain. When *Heidi* was first published in English, rural Switzerland became visually and emotionally alive to new generations of child readers, especially girls. Florian had made the William Tell story more appealing to children through the invention of a sub-plot centring on Tell’s son and his young girl friend, and we can see Spyri using a similar pattern with Heidi and Peter, though they were not to be future lovers. With *Heidi*, however, the emphasis is on the young female character,

in contrast to Florian, where the males dominate, whether it is Tell's son or Tell himself and his compatriots who are at the centre of action. Many generations of British children must have had their image of Switzerland first shaped by their enjoyment of Spyri's masterpiece.

The earliest translations of Heidi into English were American. The first, by Louise Brooks, was issued in two volumes with the titles Heidi: Her Years of Wandering and Learning and Heidi: How she Used what she Learned, corresponding to those of the German (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske & Co., 1884). A British edition appeared in the same year, but with the different titles Heidi's Early Experiences and Heidi's Later Experiences. Fifteen years later a second American translation was published, this time by Helen B. Dole, with the subtitles Heidi's Years of Learning and Travel and Heidi Makes Use of what she has Learned (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1899). Further translations were made by H. A. Melcon (New York: A. L. Burt, [1901], and Springfield, Massachusetts: McLoughlin Bros., 190-?); Helene S. White (New York: T. Y. Crowell & Co., [1902]); and a translator whose identity is concealed behind the initials M. E. (London: J. M. Dent & Co., [1909]). This last translation enjoyed a wide circulation through being reprinted frequently in Everyman's Library. The number of different translations and publishers involved shows what a commercial proposition Heidi was in the English-speaking world in the period before the First World War, and its popularity has not waned since then.

The success of Heidi led to some of Spyri's other stories being translated into English too. In 1888 (though dated 1889) five stories were translated by Lucy Wheelock as Swiss Stories for Children and Those who Love Children (London, etc.: Blackie & Son). They are said to have been taken from a volume of Kurze Geschichten and are titled ‘Toni’, ‘In Safe Keeping’, ‘Rosenresli’, ‘Lisa's Christmas’ and ‘Basti’s Song in Altorf’. ‘In Safe Keeping’ was published separately by the same publisher in 1896. All five stories are set in the German Swiss Alps and focus on children below the age of ten. They are suffused with a similar piety to that we have encountered in many earlier books, but it is more marked than in Heidi. While all the stories end happily, they show a side of Alpine life that is hard and rugged. ‘Toni’ gives a moving account of a shy boy left with virtually no human society in a mountain hut, while his mother is forced to get work in a hotel in Interlaken. The boy's loneliness leads to his total inner withdrawal and inability to communicate, and he has to be sent to a hospital in Berne. There a lady from Geneva who has lost a son befriends him and helps him to do
what he has always wanted – train to become a wood-carver. ‘Rosenresli’ has quite a lot in common with the section of *Heidi* that deals with Heidi’s relationship with Peter’s grandmother, for Rosenresli (i.e. little Theresa with the roses) establishes a mutually supportive relationship with a poor widow who is known as Mother Grief.

When Rosenresli is forced out of her own home, the widow’s long lost son coincidentally returns home and takes care of her because of all she has done to help his mother. ‘Lina’s Christmas’ centres on the loss of a pet lamb, which is found again in the local church just in time for Christmas. ‘In Safe Keeping’ concerns the rescue of a little girl who has fallen down a mountain precipice, while ‘Basti’s Song in Altorf’ tells about two children who, when their mother is ill, try to earn money by singing in an inn. Their wholly inappropriate song provokes laughter, but then generous and continuing help from a group of young men once they realize the plight the children are in.

Spyri’s short stories have obvious affinities with *Heidi*, but they can more easily be viewed as part of the long tradition of moral Christian tales that precedes her masterpiece. Her characters seem more real than, say, Amalia Schoppe’s Henry and Mary because they are not all paragons of Christian virtue who always do the right thing. Lisa, who forgets to look after the pet lamb and fails to bring it back home, does not immediately tell her mother what she has done. She knows she has done something wrong, but when her mother voices her belief that Lisa couldn’t have been the person who lost the lamb, she keeps silent through shame. Many readers will have identified with Lisa in her distress. We can recognize Spyri using commonplaces of story-telling like all the other nineteenth-century authors of moral tales, but she has many touches that ring psychologically true. Another example is Toni’s catatonic depression deriving from the appalling situation to which he is subjected at home because of dire poverty. This is a situation analogous to Heidi’s homesickness and sleepwalking in Frankfurt, where she feels truncated from her life with her grandfather. Alpine life is not always an idyll in Spyri’s stories, however much it may be so at the end of *Heidi*. Some of the stories have been reissued and others published for the first time in the twentieth century, but Spyri’s lasting reputation unquestionably rests on the appeal and distinction of *Heidi*. 