

**BRIGITTA: A
TALE. VOL. 41**

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Brigitta: A tale. Vol. 41 by Berthold Auerbach & Clara Bell

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BERTHOLD AUERBACH & CLARA BELL

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445
COLLECTION
OF
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VOL. 41.

BRIGITTA BY BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

IN ONE VOLUME.

BRIGITTA.

THE GOLDEN LAMB

is the name written up on the sign that projects from the wall, and the fat gilt lamb hangs its head bashfully, but with a slight and as it were inquisitive twist on one side. I smell the aroma—pungent and bitter, but refreshing too—of pressed wild cherries whenever I remember the inn on the country high road.

It is the time of year when summer is fading into autumn; in the meadows the aftermath is being mown in the valley through which the mountain stream—navigable for timber rafts—tumbles over the sluices; now and again I hear the whetting of the scythe, and a passing gleam of reflected sunshine flashes from the blade. In the walnut trees behind the house and in the

sweet chesnuts higher up the slope, the nut-hatches are whisking and flying to and fro; the trout in the mountain brook, which is so clear that you may see the bottom, swim merrily up and down, never dreaming of their companions imprisoned in the floating tank that is chained to the shore. A fresh atmosphere of water, field, and meadow breathes round the house—it is to be wished that some such air might be wafted across these pages and pervade my story.

Aye! there are still to be found in retired spots such peaceful and thriving inns, kept up with primitive and genial hospitality, and one of the most comfortable is the Golden Lamb. The spacious one-storied house stands back a little way from the high-road to leave room for the vehicles that stop at its door; formerly above a dozen of moveable mangers stood here, so that loaded horses might feed without being unharnessed.

Those who came down from the mountains could here congratulate themselves on having reached the valley, and those who were going

up the mountain, and wanted additional horses would recruit themselves as well, by a good measure of liquor of indigenous growth, much relished by the native taste. The fire blazed cheerily in the kitchen; and was there not a better savour then than now, when a tunnel has been cut through the mountain? As I write the train comes snorting in, gives one shrill screaming halloo, then it is swallowed up by the mountain, and again all is still. But even now there often comes a timber cart slowly creaking down, or a more rapid Bernese waggonette with well-to-do men and women in the costume of the country; if they are returning from a funeral they halt awhile, and have wine brought out to them; if they are going home from some jollification they nod to the host and drive on—they have had enough for to-day.—

The rafts-men, who bring down the trunks of timber from the upper part of the valley, are always ready to lean their long steering poles against the house wall in token that here they tarry awhile; they appreciate the good food and

pure wholesome wine of the house, and are glad to arrange so that they can pass a night here. The weather-beaten and gigantic figures of the rafts-men sit in the large eating-room, with its stove of glazed green tiles and its loudly ticking Black-Forest clock; they clean and brush themselves up before they sit down to the long table on which they prop themselves with their bare and massive arms, and devour huge pieces of fat meat and heaped spoonfuls of thick horse-radish porridge; nor, of course, is the liquor neglected; an open wine-flask stands between every two men, and is emptied and filled again and again. At first they speak hardly a word; they eat and drink silently, almost solemnly; presently they begin, shouting as if across the roar of waters; it is not without reason that it has become proverbial of a man, who talks piercingly loud: He has a voice like a rafts-man.

Then, when the men are going to bed so as to be ready to start early before day-break, the hostess says in her persuasive but decided tones:

"Softly there, you men, we have a wonderful learned writer here in the house—he is a light sleeper and needs rest." And the strong men pull off their high rafts-men's boots, and creep noiselessly up in their stockings to the room under the roof, and come down again just as softly next morning. Yes, for the hostess knows what a blessed refuge and remedy is quiet, and she knows too what a nervous man requires; she has learned it by much experience.

But it shall not be told where the hostelry of the Golden Lamb is to be found, or it will be distinguished with a star in the guide books, and within a twelvemonth Englishmen in plaids and Englishwomen in red shawls will have scared away its homelike repose; and instead of the simple but perfectly neat Agnes some black-coated Jean, at odds with his destiny, will wait upon us; and the genuine honey—every thing is called genuine in these days—the honey made by the bees in the kitchen garden, will run short and sham honey will be set before us. And, worst disaster of all, a piano will be

brought into the house, and the guests who are waiting for their dinner or who have satisfied their appetites, will strum upon it to kill their own time and the peace of the hearers. No—the world need not know of that inn; the hosts are pleased when guests arrive but they are not disheartened when they stop away, for they are not mere inn-keepers; they have fields and pasture and wood, and those who are lucky enough to stay at the Lamb have it said to them: "You are in good quarters; neither man nor wife has an enemy far or near; they never had but one, and the wife did more good to him than could be thought possible."

The people round about talk much more of the wife than of the husband; she treats all the peasant folk as if she were perfectly and merely their equal, and that without any constraint or effort, for at heart she is still a simple peasant child, though she has made acquaintance with a large part of the world even in the highest circles, and owns many books of the best class, which she has read and understood. The hus-