

SVIZZERO; A TALE OF YOUTH

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Svizzero; a tale of youth by Niklaus Bolt

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A TALE OF YOUTH

With sketches from nature by Rudolf Muenger

Translated from the German

by Emmie M. A. POTHS



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TO THE FRIEND OF MY YOUTH
PROFESSOR DR. ANDREAS HEUSLER

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HE'S A NE'ER-DO-WELL

After its headlong descent from the mountains the Aare flows quietly and smoothly through the Bödéli. Its blue-green waters are bearing mighty logs down to the saw-mill. This quiet mood, however, is only put on,—which is a way they have in the Oberland. The river is already preparing to deposit another load of glacial debris in the Lake of Thun. Near the wooden bridge with the lock, part of the ancient town wall is still to be seen. This wall formerly protected the little town of Unterseen from its enemies. It would probably never have dreamt that holes would one day be pierced through it here and there, in order to let light and air into the poor people's dwellings which have since been built in its corners. Brown wooden Oberland houses with projecting eaves stand side by side along the river, their balconies and windows gay with flowers. The old church tower keeps watch over the little town like a shepherd, while in the background rise the rocky slopes of the Harder, where fir trees find a footing even in the steepest places.

The Abplanalps lived in the smallest of the dwellings built in the corners of the old wall. Abplanalp was an invalid who could not often get up, and to-day of all days he found it very hard to stay in bed. He wanted so much to go to church and to join in the service and hear the sermon.

"Why are you laying the cloth so early, Vreneli?" he said to a curly-headed child of six. The child turned round and glanced lovingly at her father.

"You know, Daddy, it'll take longer than usual to-day, 'cos we're going to have a tablecloth. I want to lay it now, then Mother won't have so much to do when she gets back from church."

She went back to her work. Having laid the cloth on the table, she unfolded it, climbed onto a stool, and with her whole dainty little body and outstretched arms carefully smoothed it out. Then off she jumped again, and her busy little hands pulled down the corners. After that she trotted to the dresser and placed a chair in front of it.

"Child, you'll fall down with the plates!"

"Oh no, Daddy, I won't," and she clambered off the chair successfully with her load.

"Why do you shut your eyes, Vreneli?" he said a little later, as he watched the little one putting the forks round.

"'Cos there's a prong missing on one of the forks, and