

HEIDI

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Generations
PASSING ON THE FAITH

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Contents

Introduction	6
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PART I - HEIDI'S YEARS OF LEARNING AND TRAVEL

Chapter 1.....	11
Chapter 2.....	24
Chapter 3.....	33
Chapter 4.....	44
Chapter 5.....	55
Chapter 6.....	65
Chapter 7.....	72
Chapter 8.....	82
Chapter 9.....	89
Chapter 10.....	94
Chapter 11.....	101
Chapter 12.....	107
Chapter 13.....	115
Chapter 14.....	127

PART II - HEIDI MAKES USE OF HER LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

Chapter 15.....	140
Chapter 16.....	146
Chapter 17.....	153
Chapter 18.....	161
Chapter 19.....	170
Chapter 20.....	177
Chapter 21.....	188
Chapter 22.....	194
Chapter 23.....	204



INTRODUCTION



H *Heidi* is one of the most popular children’s books ever published, second only to *Pinnocchio* — with Wikipedia reporting over 50 million copies in print around the world.

Heidi is a delightful read. It may be the most heart-warming Christian story of all time (for children), outside of the Gospel. It is filled with joy, gratefulness, and praise to God. There are references to “the Lord” as well as references to God throughout. There are the vivid descriptions of sin, rebellion, mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, and God’s sovereignty. Faith in God and prayer are encouraged. The church plays a role in the life of Heidi and her grandfather, especially when grandfather is restored to the fellowship.

Don’t miss the major theme of the book as Heidi learns that God’s plan is better than her own. Her prayers are not answered at first, but she comes to realize that God’s ways are higher than her ways, and better in the long run.

The original *Heidi* was written from a solid Christian worldview perspective, and this editor would include this in the list of Christian classics. The goal of this republication was to restore all of the original Christian content, often edited out of modern translations.

In our research, we discovered that the lost condition of the grandfather was removed in later editions, as was the extended explanation of the story of the prodigal son and the hymn which explained God's sovereign grace. These essential parts of the Christian faith and the glory of the Gospel were removed in editions released after 1920.

We have relied mostly on the Elizabeth Stork translation of 1919, with some excerpts taken from the Helen B. Dole translation of 1880. The Stork translation attempted to best reflect the original German idiom contained in this children's classic. However, our editing team adapted this translation by providing a few modernized, anglicized expressions where the meaning of the text would have been too obscured.

The twentieth century marked a time when most institutions in the Western world were de-Christianized. A recognition of God, the fear of God, the Scriptures, the centrality of Christ, and almost all remnants of the Christian faith were carefully expunged from schools, children's media, and children's literature. However, there are still some Christian families and churches left in the English-speaking world. For us, it is time to *re-Christianize* the literature, the school curriculum, and the media for our children. That is the commitment of the Generations publishing team. We are committed to "passing on the Faith."

Editor

Kevin Swanson

January 2019

PART I

**HEIDI'S YEARS
OF LEARNING AND
TRAVEL**



WAVING HER HAND AND LOOKING AFTER HER
DEPARTING FRIEND TILL HE SEEMED NO
BIGGER THAN A LITTLE DOT



CHAPTER 1 GOING UP TO THE ALM-UNCLE



“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27 KJV)

The little old town of Mayenfeld is charmingly situated. A footpath leads out of the town through green, well-wooded stretches to the foot of the mountain heights which look down imposingly upon the valley. As the footpath becomes more steep upon the Alp, the heath, with its short grass and pungent herb-age, at once sends out its soft perfume to greet wayfaring travelers.

One bright sunny morning in June, a tall, vigorous maiden of the mountain region climbed up the narrow path, leading a little girl by the hand. The youngster’s cheeks were in such a glow that it showed even through her sun-browned skin. In spite of the heat, the little one, who was scarcely five years old, was bundled up as if she had to brave a bitter frost. It would be difficult to make her out under all

the clothes, for she wore two dresses, if not three, and around her shoulders a large red cotton shawl. With her feet encased in heavy hob-nailed boots, this very hot and uncomfortable little one trudged and toiled up the mountain.

The pair had been climbing for about an hour when they reached a hamlet half-way up the great mountain named "The Alm." This hamlet was called "Im Dörfli" or "The Little Village." It was the elder girl's home town, and as they traveled through she was greeted from nearly every house; people called to her from windows and doors, and from the roadside. But the girl did not loiter on her way and only came to a stop when she had reached the end of the hamlet. There a few cottages lay scattered about, and from the furthest of these a voice called out to her through an open door: "Deta, please wait one moment! I am coming with you, if you are going further up the mountain."

When the young woman stood still to wait for the one who called to her, the child instantly let go of her hand and plopped down on the ground.

"Are you tired, Heidi?" Deta asked the child.

"No, but I am so hot," she replied.

"We shall be up the mountain in an hour, if you take big steps and climb with all your little might!" The elder girl spoke encouragingly to her small companion.

A stout, pleasant-looking woman stepped out of the house and joined the two travelers. The child rose up and she began to wander around the old acquaintances, as they stood and gossiped about their friends in the neighborhood and various persons of the hamlet.

"Where are you taking the child, Deta?" asked the newcomer. "Is she the child your sister left when she died?"

"Yes," Deta assured her; "I am taking her up to the Alm-Uncle and there she shall remain."

"You can't really mean to take her there, Deta. You must have lost your senses, to go to him. I am sure the old man will show you the door. He won't even listen to what you say."

"Why not? Since he is her grandfather, it is high time he should

do something for the child. I have taken care of her until this summer and now I have been offered a good housekeeping position. This child shall not hinder me from accepting it, I tell you that!"

"It would not be so hard, if the old man were like other mortals. But you know him yourself. How could he look after a child, especially such a little one? She'll never get along with him, I am sure of that!—But tell me of your prospects."

"I am going to work at a splendid house in Frankfurt. Last summer some people went off to the baths and I took care of their rooms. As they got to like me, they wanted to put me in their employ at the home, but I could not leave at the time. Now they have come back and I am persuaded to go with them."

"I am glad that I am not the child!" exclaimed Barbara with a shudder. "Nobody knows anything about the old man's life up there. He doesn't speak to a living soul, and from the beginning to the end of the year he stays away from church. People move out of his way when he appears once every twelve months down here in the village. We all fear him as though he were a heathen, with those thick grey eyebrows and that huge untamed beard. When he wanders along the road with his twisted stick we are all afraid to run into him alone."

"That is not my fault," said Deta stubbornly. "He won't do her any harm; and if he should, he will be responsible for it. Not I."

"I wish I knew what weighs on the old man's conscience. Why are his eyes so fierce and why does he live up there all alone? Nobody ever sees him and we hear many strange things about him. Didn't your sister tell you anything, Deta?"

"Of course she did, but I shall hold my tongue. The old man would make me pay for it if I told anybody."

Barbara had long been anxious to know something about the old uncle and why he lived apart from everybody else. Nobody had a good word for him, and when people talked about him, they did not speak openly but always as though they were afraid. She didn't even know why he was called the Alm-Uncle. He could not possibly be the uncle of all the people in the village, but since everybody spoke of him so, she did the same. Barbara, who had only lived in

the village since her marriage, was always happy to obtain some little bits of information from her friend. Deta was born and bred in the hamlet, but since her mother's death she had moved away to earn her livelihood.

Barbara seized Deta's arm and in a low, confidential tone, said: "I wish you would tell me the truth about him, Deta; you know how people gossip. Tell me, what has happened to the old man to turn everybody against him so? Has he always hated his fellow-creatures?"

"I cannot tell you whether he always did, and that for a very good reason. He is sixty years old, and I only twenty-six. You can't expect me to give an account of his early youth. But if you'll promise to keep it to yourself and to not set all the people in Prätiggan talking, I can tell you a good deal. My mother and he both came from Domleschg. . ."

"How can you speak like that, Deta?" replied Barbara in an offended tone. "People do not gossip much in Prätiggan, and I always keep things to myself, if I have to. You won't regret that you told me, I assure you!"

"All right, but you must keep your word!" Deta warned. Then she looked around to make sure the child was far enough away so as not to overhear their conversation. The little girl, however, was nowhere to be seen. While the two young women were talking, they had failed to notice her absence; quite a while must have elapsed since the little girl had wandered away. Deta looked about her, but no one was on the path, which—except for a few curves—was visible as far down as the village.

"There she is! Can't you see her over there?" exclaimed Barbara, pointing to a location a good distance from the path. "She is climbing up the mountainside with the goatherd Peter and his goats. I wonder why he is so late today. I must say, this suits us well enough; let him look after the child while you tell me everything without being interrupted."

"It will be no problem for Peter to watch her," remarked Deta; "she is bright for her five years and she is very observant. I have often noticed that about her, and I know that will be useful for the uncle.

He has nothing left in the whole wide world, but his cottage and two goats!"

"Did he ever have anything more than that?" asked Barbara.

"I should say so. He was heir to a large farm in Domleschg. But he set out in life as a fine gentleman, but he soon lost everything to drink and play. His parents died with grief and then he disappeared from these parts. After many years he came back with a half-grown son. Tobias, that was his name, became a carpenter and turned out to be a quiet, steady fellow. Many strange rumors went round about the uncle and I think that was why he left Domleschg for Dörfli. We did acknowledge a relationship; my mother's grandmother was his cousin. We called him uncle, and because we are related on my father's side to nearly all the people in the hamlet they also called him uncle. He was named 'Alm-Uncle' when he moved up to the Alm."

"But what ever happened to Tobias?" asked Barbara eagerly.

"Just wait. How can I tell you everything at once?" exclaimed Deta. "Tobias was an apprentice in Mels. When he became a master craftsman, he came back to the village and married my sister Adelheid. They had always been fond of each other and they lived very happily as man and wife. But alas, their joy soon ended. Two years after they married, as Tobias was building a house, a beam fell on him and killed him. Then, Adelheid was thrown into a violent fever out of grief and fright, and she never recovered from it. She had never been very healthy, and she had often suffered from strange spells, where we did not know whether she was awake or asleep. Only a few weeks after Tobias's death they buried poor Adelheid.

"People began to speak about the Alm-Uncle as if God were punishing him for his misdeeds. After the death of his son he never spoke to a living soul. He abruptly moved up to the Alps, and there he lives at enmity with God and man.

"My mother and I took Adelheid's little year-old baby, Heidi, to live with us. When I moved to Ragatz I took her with me; but in the spring the family from Frankfurt decided to take me to their house in the city. I am very glad to get such a good position."

"And now you want to hand over the child to this terrible old

man. I really wonder how you can do such a thing, Deta!" said Barbara with reproach in her voice.

"It seems to me I have really done enough for the child. I do not know where else to take her, as she is too young to come with me to Frankfurt. By the way, Barbara, how far will you go with us? We are half way up the Alm already."

Deta shook hands with her companion and stood there while Barbara approached the tiny, dark brown mountain hut, which lay in a hollow a few steps away from the path.

Situated half-way up the Alm, the cottage was nicely protected from the mighty winds. Had it been exposed to the tempests, it would have been a hazardous dwelling given the state of decay it was in. As it was, the doors and windows rattled and the old rafters shook when the south wind swept down the mountain side. If the hut had stood on the Alm top, the wind would have blown it clear down the valley during the storm season.

Here lived Peter the goatherd, an eleven-year-old boy. It was his daily duty to collect the goats from the village and drive them up the mountain to feed on the luscious grasses in the pastures. Peter would race down the slope in the evening with the light-footed little goats. When he'd whistle a shrill blast through his fingers, the owners would come and get their goats. These owners were mostly young boys and girls and the goats were always happy to see them, for they were not afraid of their owners. That was the only time Peter would spend with other children. The rest of his day was spent with the animals, his sole companions. At home, Peter stayed with his mother and an old blind grandmother. But he would only spend enough time in the hut to swallow his bread and milk for breakfast and consume a similar meal at suppertime. After that he would go to bed. He would always leave the cottage early in the morning and at night he would come home late, so that he could be with his friends as long as possible. His father was killed in an accident some years before; he was also known as "Peter the goatherd." His mother's name was Brigida, and the villagers would call her "Goatherd Peter's wife." Peter's blind grandmother was known as simply "grandmother" by

both young and old, for miles and miles around.

Deta waited about ten minutes to see if the children were coming up behind with the goats. Not seeing them anywhere near, she climbed up a little higher to get a better view of the valley. She looked from side to side as a growing sense of impatience began to show on her face.

The children in the meanwhile were ascending slowly in a sort of haphazard manner, for Peter knew where to find all the good grazing places for his goats. Thus, they wandered up the mountain moving from this side to that side. The poor little girl was following the boy with a great degree of exertion, panting and straining because of her extra layers of clothing. She was so hot and uncomfortable as she climbed. Although she didn't say anything, she stared enviously at Peter, who was jumping about so easily in his light trousers and bare feet. She envied more so the goats as they climbed over bushes, stones, and steep inclines on their slender, nimble legs. All at once sitting down on the ground, the child swiftly took off her shoes and stockings. Then she untied the heavy shawl and the two little dresses. Without anymore ado, she stood up in only a light petticoat. In sheer delight over the cool relief, she threw up her dimpled arms, now dressed in short sleeves. To save the trouble of carrying the clothes, her aunt had put her Sunday clothes over her workday garments. Arranging her dresses in a neat little pile, Heidi then joined Peter and the goats as they frolicked along the path. She was now as lightfooted as the rest of them. When Peter noticed the little one in her light attire, he grinned. Looking back at the little heap of dresses on the ground, he smiled even more from ear to ear; but he never said a word.

Now feeling more free and comfortable, Heidi began to converse with Peter. She had all sorts of questions for him, like how many goats he had, and where he led them, what he did with them when he got there, and so forth.

At last the children reached the landing in front of the hut. When Deta saw the little party she cried out shrilly: "Heidi, what have you done? What a sight you are! Where are your dresses and



**SHE UNDED THE HEAVY SHAWL AND THE
TWO LITTLE DRESSES**

your shawl? Are the new shoes gone that I just bought for you, and where are the new stockings that I made myself? Where did you put them all, Heidi?"

The child quietly pointed down and said, "Over there."

The aunt followed the direction of her finger and spied the little heap with a small red dot right in the middle, which she recognized as the shawl.

"Oh careless child!" Deta said reproachfully. "What does all this mean? Why have you taken your things off?"

"Because I do not need them," said the child, not appearing in the least bit repentant of her actions.

"How can you be so stupid, Heidi? Have you lost your senses?" the aunt went on, in a tone of mingled vexation and rebuke. "Who is it that must go way down there to retrieve those things? It is half-an-hour's walk. Please, Peter, run down and get them for us. What are you doing staring at me like that?"

"I am already late," replied Peter, standing there with his hands in his trousers' pockets, and watching this violent outbreak on the part of Heidi's aunt.

"There you are, standing and staring, but that won't get you any closer to the things," said Deta. "I'll give you this if you will go down there." With that she held a five-penny-piece before his eyes. That made Peter start up, and in a great hurry he set off down the path. In a very short time he had returned, and Deta had to praise him for his haste, and she gave him the little coin. He did not often receive a treasure like this; his face beaming with happiness, he put the money deep into his pocket.

"If you are going up to the uncle with us, you can carry the pack of clothes," said Deta. They had yet to climb one more steep ascent which lay behind Peter's hut. The boy readily collected the things and followed Deta, his left arm holding the bundle and his right swinging the stick. Heidi hopped along happily by his side with the goats.

After three quarters of an hour more of climbing, they finally reached the heights where the old man's hut stood on a prominent

rock, exposed to every wind, but bathed in the full sunlight. From there you could gaze far down into the valley. Behind the hut stood three old fir trees with great shaggy branches. Further back the old grey rocks rose high and sheer. Above them you could see green and fertile pastures, till at last the stony boulders reached the bare, steep cliffs.

Overlooking the valley the uncle had made himself a bench, which sat at the side of the hut. There he sat, with his pipe between his teeth and both hands resting on his knees. He quietly watched the children climbing up with the goats with Aunt Deta coming behind them. For the children had passed her up a long ways back. Heidi reached the top first, and approaching the old man she held out her hand to him and said: "Good evening, grandfather!"

"Well, well, what does that mean?" replied the old man in a rough voice. Giving her his hand for only a moment, he watched her with a long and penetrating look from under his bushy brows. Heidi gazed back at him without a blink of the eye. She examined him with much curiosity, for he was a strange sight indeed with his thick, grey beard and shaggy eyebrows that met in the middle like a thicket of brush.

By this time Heidi's aunt had arrived with Peter, who was eager to see what was going to happen.

"Good day to you, uncle," said Deta as she approached. "This is Tobias's and Adelheid's child. You would not recognize her, because the last time you saw her she was scarcely a year old."

"Why do you bring her here?" asked the uncle. Turning to Peter he said irritably: "Get away and bring my goats. How late you have come now!"

Peter obeyed and quickly disappeared; the uncle looked after him as though he was glad to see him go.

"Uncle, I have brought the little girl for you to keep," said Deta. "I have done my share to care for her these last four years and now it is your turn to provide for her."

The old man's eyes flamed with anger. "Indeed!" he said. "What on earth shall I do, when she begins to whine and cry for you? Small

children always do this and then I will be helpless.”

“You’ll have to figure it out for yourself!” Deta retorted. “When the little baby was left in my hands a few years ago, I had to learn how to care for the little innocent myself and nobody told me anything. I already had to care for my mother and there was plenty for me to do. You can’t blame me if I want to earn some money for myself now. If you can’t keep the child, you can do with her whatever you please. If she comes to harm though, you will be responsible and I am sure you do not want to burden your conscience any more.”

In her excitement, Deta had said more than she had intended; for her conscience was not quite clear about leaving the child. The uncle had risen during her last words and now he gave her such a look that she retreated a few steps. Stretching out his arm in a commanding gesture, he said to her: “Away with you! Begone! Go back to wherever you have come from and do not venture here again!”

Deta did not have to be told twice. She said “Good-bye” to Heidi and “Farewell” to the uncle, and started back down the mountain. Like a steam engine, her excitement drove her forward, and she continued running down to the village at a tremendous rate. When she reached the village, a great many people called to her, because they were all wondering where she had left the child. They were well acquainted with both the grandfather and the child. When she heard people calling from door and windows: “Where is the child?” “Where have you left her, Deta?”, each time she answered with more hesitation in her voice: “Up with the Alm-Uncle,—with the Alm-Uncle!” Then, she became much provoked when the women would say to her: “How could you do it?” “The poor little creature!” “The idea of leaving such a helpless child up there!” and, over and over again: “The poor little dear!” Deta ran as quickly as she could and was glad when she heard no more calls, because, to tell the truth, she herself was uneasy. Her mother had asked her on her deathbed to care for Heidi. But she consoled herself with the thought that she would be able to do more for the child if she could earn some money. She was very glad to go away from people who interfered in her affairs, and looked forward with great delight to her new place.

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7)

CHAPTER 1 LESSONS

1. For five years, Deta has cared for the orphan Heidi. This is the pure religion spoken of in James 1:27. God wants us to take care of the orphans in our churches and communities.
2. After losing his son and his son's wife, the grandfather went up to the mountain, a bitter man. There he lived "at enmity with God and man." He was upset with God for the things that happened to him. Peter told Simon in Acts 8: "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (Acts 8:22-23). These words apply to the Alm Uncle in this story.
3. Grandfather was not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had not repented of his sin. He had lived a rebellious life. He had been disobedient to his parents. And he did not want to attend church.