



SELMA LAGERLÖF (1858-1940) was born on a farm in Värmland, trained as a teacher and became, in her lifetime, Sweden's most widely translated author ever. Novels such as *Gösta Berlings saga* (1891; *Gösta Berling's Saga*) and *Jerusalem* (1901-02) helped regenerate Swedish literature, and the school reader, *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey through Sweden* (1906-07), has achieved enduring international fame and popularity. Two very different trilogies, the Löwensköld trilogy (1925-28) and the Mårbacka trilogy (1922-32), the latter often taken to be autobiographical, give some idea of the range and power of Lagerlöf's writing. Several of her texts inspired innovative films, among them *Herr Arnes pengar* (*Sir Arne's Treasure*), directed by Mauritz Stiller (1919) and based on *Herr Arnes penningar* (1903; *Lord Arne's Silver*), and *Körkarlen* (*The Phantom Carriage*), directed by Victor Sjöström (1921) and based on Lagerlöf's *Körkarlen* (1912). She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, as the first woman ever, in 1909, and elected to the Swedish Academy, again as the first woman, in 1914. Having been able to buy back the farm of Mårbacka, which her family had lost as the result of bankruptcy, Lagerlöf spent the last three decades of her life combining her writing with the responsibilities for running a sizeable estate. Her work has been translated into close to 50 languages.

SARAH DEATH has been a literary translator for over thirty years. Authors whose work she has translated include Victoria Benedictsson, Fredrika Bremer, Kerstin Ekman, Tove Jansson, Selma Lagerlöf, Astrid Lindgren, Sven Lindvist and Håkan Nesser. Three times the winner of the George Bernard Shaw Prize for Translation from Swedish, she was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star for services to Swedish language and literature in 2014.



Some other books from Norvik Press

Herman Bang: *Some Would Call This Living* (translated by Janet Garton, Charlotte Barslund and Paul Russell Garrett)

Victoria Benedictsson: *Money* (translated by Sarah Death)

Fredrika Bremer: *The Colonel's Family* (translated by Sarah Death)

Camilla Collett: *The District Governor's Daughters* (translated by Kirsten Seaver)

Vigdis Hjorth: *A House in Norway* (translated by Charlotte Barslund)

Selma Lagerlöf: *The Löwensköld Ring* (translated by Linda Schenck)

Selma Lagerlöf: *Charlotte Löwensköld* (translated by Linda Schenck)

Selma Lagerlöf: *Anna Svärd* (translated by Linda Schenck)

Selma Lagerlöf: *Lord Arne's Silver* (translated by Sarah Death)

Selma Lagerlöf: *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey through Sweden* (translated by Peter Graves)

Selma Lagerlöf: *The Phantom Carriage* (translated by Peter Graves)

Selma Lagerlöf: *A Manor House Tale* (translated by Peter Graves)

Selma Lagerlöf: *Mårbacka* (translated by Sarah Death)

Selma Lagerlöf: *The Emperor of Portugallia* (translated by Peter Graves)

Amalie Skram: *Betrayed* (translated by Katherine Hanson and Judith Messick)

Amalie Skram: *Fru Inés* (translated by Katherine Hanson and Judith Messick)

Amalie Skram: *Lucie* (translated by Katherine Hanson and Judith Messick)

Kirsten Thorup: *The God of Chance* (translated by Janet Garton)

Dorrit Willumsen: *Bang: A Novel about the Danish Writer* (translated by Marina Allemanno)

Memoirs of a Child (Mårbacka II)

by

Selma Lagerlöf

Translated from the Swedish
and with an
Afterword by Sarah Death

Series Preface by Helena Forsås-Scott



Norvik Press
2022

Originally published by Albert Bonniers förlag as *Ett barns memoarer* in 1930.

This translation and afterword © Sarah Death 2022.

Series preface © Helena Forsås-Scott 2015.

The translator's moral right to be identified as the translator of the work has been asserted.

Norvik Press Series B: English Translations of Scandinavian Literature, no. 85.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-909408-71-5

Norvik Press gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Swedish Arts Council (Statens Kulturråd) and the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation towards the publication of this translation.

Norvik Press
Department of Scandinavian Studies
UCL
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT
United Kingdom
Website: www.norvikpress.com
E-mail address: norvik.press@ucl.ac.uk

Managing editors: Elettra Carbone, Sarah Death, Janet Garton,
C. Claire Thomson, Essi Viitanen.

Cover design and layout: Essi Viitanen
Cover image: *Narcissus maximus* Don. and *Narcissus bicolor* Linn.
Image by Abraham Jacobus Wendel, from book *Flora: afbeeldingen en beschrijvingen van boomen, heesters, éénjarige planten, enz. voorkomende in de Nederlandsche tuinen* by H. Witte, illustr. by A.J. Wendel. Groningen: Wolters (1868).

Contents

Series Preface	7
Helena Forsås-Scott	
Aline Laurell.....	15
Bible Interpretation.....	20
The Vow	28
Gårdsjö	47
Herrestad	51
Fear	54
The Game of Cards.....	59
The Marseillaise.....	64
FortyBelow.....	73
Maja Råd.....	83
The Church Visit.....	88
The Kiss.....	95
The Sunne Ball	106
Elin Laurell.....	115
Pastor Unger.....	123
The Easter Witch	133
Anna Lagerlöf.....	141
Uncle Schenson.....	146
The Pond.....	155
Agrippa Prästberg.....	175
At the Jetty.....	186
The Well.....	192
At Fair Time	209
Earthquake	217

An asterisk in the text indicates an Endnote, see pages 223-231.

NOTES	223
Translator's Afterword	233
Sarah Death	
Bibliography	251

The Church Visit

And we do so like the journey to church. We have to get up such a steep slope before we reach the level ground in front of the church, but the stable hand cracks his whip at the horses so we arrive at a full trot. There is usually a collection of people sitting on the low wall that runs round the church, waiting for the service to start, and when they see the Mårbacka party approaching, they all get up and give a bow or bob, and we think that is a pretty courtesy. There are also a lot of people standing in front of the church or in the road itself, and they have to move aside at some speed as we drive up. And Mama shouts to the stable hand to go carefully, but Papa sits there with his hat in hand, greeting one and all and laughing, for he knows very well that Jansson will not run over anyone.

We stop outside the parish hall, where there is a little room set aside for those who want to tidy their hair or shake out their clothes after the journey, although it is only ever the gentry who trouble to go in there. And there we generally meet Aunt Augusta Wallroth with Hilda and Emilia and Mrs Nilsson from Visteberg with Emilie and Ingrid. And for as long as we are there in the room in the parish hall, we are so merry and chatter about all manner of things. But as soon as we come back out of the church, we go so quiet and solemn, because that is the custom in Östra Ämtervik.

Mama always brings a big bouquet of flowers with her to church, and after her visit to the parish rooms, she goes into

the churchyard to lay it on Grandmother's grave and Anna and I go with her, of course. Mama clears away the dead leaves lying on the grass and tidies up the white briar rose that grows on the grave, and finally she says a prayer and lays the bunch of flowers.

I had a little sister who died, and who I never saw, and Papa and Mama loved her very much. She is buried next to Grandmother, and Mama always takes a couple of the prettiest flowers out of the bouquet and puts them at one corner of the grave, pushing their stalks into the grass.

I understand who they are intended for, of course, but I cannot help wondering whether Mama really does wish she had another little girl still living. It seems to me that she has so much to do, all that darning and mending and knitting and sewing for Anna and Gerda and me, that she should not have to cope with any more.

From the churchyard we walk straight to the church, and as soon as Mama sees some farmer's wife she knows, like Katrina in Västmyr or Mother Britta in Gata or Mother Katrina who is the daughter of Jon Larssa in Ås, or Mother Maja in Prästbol or Mother Kerstin Down There in Mårbacka, she stops to say hello and exchange a few words. Mama has been at their farms for funerals and weddings and knows how they are faring, so she is never short of something to say to each of them.

Then, when we get into the church, we take our seats in the front pew of the gallery, because that is where the gentry always sit. Our place is on the left side of the gallery. It simply will not do to sit on the right, because that is the men's side. If all the pews on the womenfolk's side were full but there was plenty of room on the other side of the aisle with the men, it would still not be appropriate to go and sit over there. We would rather stand all through the service.

When we get into the pew, we bend our heads and say a prayer, and then we sit and look around us. We look to see whether Melanoz the cantor is sitting at the organ and whether Mr Alfred Schullström, who keeps the shop in Älvsvik, is sitting beside him as usual, and whether the churchwardens have taken their seats on the little bench in

the chancel and whether Mrs Lindegren at Halla is sitting in the vicarage pew just below the pulpit. We also take note of whether Jan Asker the verger is standing at the door of the vestry, watching to see when the churchgoers have arrived and the service can begin. We also look to see whether the hymn numbers have been put up on the black hymn boards and whether the organ-blower's shirt is sticking out behind the organ, so that we know he is in his place. And once we have looked around us and made sure everything is in order, we have nothing else to do for the entire service.

For see, it is very genteel to sit in the front row of the gallery, but the trouble with those seats is that you cannot hear anything of what the clergyman says, down in the church. Well, the first part of the service at the altar, you can hear all right, up to the confession of sins, but then it is as if everything is swallowed up by the walls and ceiling. You can hear that more words are being spoken, but you cannot distinguish between them. Or we children cannot, at any rate.

When the organ sounds, we can certainly hear it, but there is not much joy to be had from that either, for no one ever dares to sing in Östra Ämtervik church. We sit there with our hymnbooks in our hands and follow along, but none of us dares to sing a note. Once when I was little, I did not understand how things were meant to be, and I sang a whole verse as loudly as I could, because I like singing, and at home I sing all day long. But when the next verse was about to start, Anna leant down to me and asked me to stop. 'Can you not see how Emilie Nilsson is looking at you, because you are singing,' she said.

The only person who sings in church is Jan in Skrolycka, who is not really in his right mind.

And I sometimes wonder whether Melanoz the cantor loses his temper with the congregation for making him sit there and play hymn after hymn and making no attempt to sing, because sometimes, all of a sudden, he will do something with the organ to make it rumble and roar and howl so violently that we think the church roof is about to crash down on us.

Cantor Melanoz is such fun and so full of mischief that it would be just like him.

But not being able to hear the sermon, that is a real disappointment to me, because Pastor Lindegren lives at Halla, very close to Mårbacka, and we are good friends with him. He is always so kind to us children, and he is so splendid. He is always splendid, but never so much as when he stands in the pulpit to give his sermon. He speaks so eagerly and flicks the big handkerchief that he holds in his hand, and the longer he speaks, the more splendid he looks. And almost every time he preaches, he is so moved that he starts to weep. And then I wonder if he weeps because we are not improving and finding our way to God, however long his sermons are. But for those of us in the front pew of the gallery, at least, it is not that easy to follow his guidance, for we cannot hear a word he says.

The grown-ups are so used to being bored that they probably do not mind, but for us children it is very hard to make the time pass. Emilia Wallroth has told me that she counts the heads of the nails in the church roof, and Ingrid Nilsson says she looks down at the old farmers to count how often they offer each other moist snuff* to put under their top lip. Emilie Nilsson, she adds up the numbers on the hymn board, and when she has finished her addition, she subtracts and multiplies and divides. She says that as long as she keeps busy with that, she can have no sinful thoughts in her head. It would be worse if she were to sit there gazing at Hilda Wallroth's lovely hat and wishing she had one like it. But Anna says she sits there learning hymns off by heart, and we all think that is still to be preferred to multiplication and subtraction.

- 91 *moist snuff*: *snus*, or smokeless tobacco, inserted in portions behind the top lip, was reportedly first introduced into Sweden in 1637, initially among the aristocracy. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has dated the earliest use of *snus* as a word in English to 1916.