

## Children's Department.

### Little Stine.

There is a country across the sea, away in the North from which the cold north-east wind comes, called Denmark. It is not so very bad a country, though it is colder than in England; and the people are very like the people here, and the little children have blue eyes and soft golden hair like the children here.

Now I am going to tell you about one of them, a little girl called Christine, at least that was her real name, only they usually called her Stine for shortness.

She lived in a large farmhouse with a thatched roof, close by the sea, and she had looked so often and so long at the little dancing, blue waves that her own blue eyes danced like them. I don't think there ever was a happier child than little Stine, for she was her parents' only child, and they were so kind to her.

In the pleasant summer weather, she dabbled in the rippling waves on the soft white sand, and she ran about under the tall beech trees in the woods; and in the still evening she perched on the back of the great cart-horses coming home from the fields, for she was so little they never felt her weight, and her father rode behind her or walked beside her, holding her that she should not fall. She did not mind the cold either, for then lake and sea and pond were all covered with bluish-grey ice; and she used to sit in her little sledge and her father would skate along and pull her after him so fast over the ice. Sometimes she would sit wrapped up in warm furs by her mother's side, as her father drove them in the big sledge over the white road with the bells of the harness jingling and tinkling. But the pleasantest time was the spring. When the very first warm days came,



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Stine would go out into the woods, with the other little girls of the village, to look for the snowdrops; and how happy she would be if she found some to bring to her mother.

And then the great, white storks came flapping their wings from the south. You never see storks here; but there they build on almost every house-top. Stine was rather afraid of the storks though, for they were so big, and she had heard that when one was naughty the others ran their long sharp bills through him, and killed him; and so, when she had been naughty, she used to run very fast past the storks' nest lest they should fly out and kill her, too. However, when the storks came, she used to sing with the other children a little song which I will try to translate for you:

"Stork, stork, long-legged stork.  
What dost thou bring for mother?  
A sister dear, with eyes so blue,  
Or a little brother?"

And I think they must have heard her, for one day there came a little brother. So Stine's happiness was complete, for the baby was a never-ending pleasure. Her father had once bought her a doll that cried when she squeezed it, but its cry was only a little squeak; the baby, however, cried whether she squeezed it or not, and its cry filled the house.

And summer went on, and the baby grew bigger and bigger, and so fat! and then came autumn, damp, dark and dismal, and the first snow fell; and Stine hoped for the bright clear frost to come soon.

But one day news came to the village; the king was dead, and everybody seemed so sorry, and Stine was very sorry, too, though she didn't know much about the king; and one evening her father and mother went out and took her with them; and when they got to the village they found all the people standing on a place where they could look out over the sea. It was late and they waited till it got quite dark, and they waited on, and Stine got very tired. At last they heard the bells of the next village tolling in the distance.

Every one looked out over the sea, and there was a ship moving quickly along out in the darkness; only the lights of it were to be seen, and then their own church bell began to toll. Stine asked her father what it was, and he told her that that ship was bringing the king's body to be buried; and she asked, "Who is the king and why is everyone so sorry?" For many people were crying bitterly. And there was an old man there, and he answered her, "Little girl, we are not crying for the king alone, it is for our sons, our fathers, our husbands and friends who are going to be killed, it is for them that we are weeping."

Stine did not understand what he meant then, but soon afterwards she found her mother and father talking; and her mother looked very sad. Her father had on a beautiful coat with bright buttons, and a belt with a sword hanging from it, and a curious hat on his head; and he took her up and kissed her: "I am going away, Stine, for a time; I hope I will be back again soon."

"Why are you going, dear father?"  
"Because there are wicked people coming here to burn our houses, and take all our things; and I must go to help drive them back."

And then he kissed her again, and kissed her mother, and then he went away. They watched him go, and when he was out of sight her mother took her in her arms and rocked her to and fro, crying bitterly.

Some time after they saw a regiment of soldiers passing along the road, and Stine saw her father among them; he waved his hand toward her and smiled, for all the soldiers were laughing and singing, but it seemed to her as if many of them would rather have cried. There was an old house-dog, a large one, called Sultan; and when the soldiers passed he leaped over the fence and ran to where his master was.

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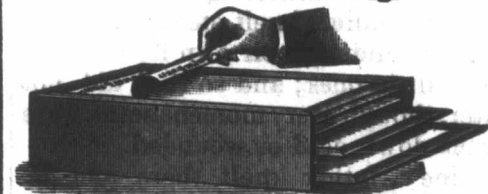
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