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Amalia, the Little Fish-seller.

Little Amalia Baumer was one of the best known and most dearly loved among the people of Rohtstein, a fishing-station on the Friesland coast.

Her father, Hermann Baumer, was an unprincipled fellow who had first deserted from the army, and then run away from his wife Carolina and baby Amalia when the latter was only a few weeks old.

Carolina had managed, by hard work and careful management, to keep herself and her little girl, and to send the child to school, where she made good progress. But between school-hours and on half-holidays it was the child's delight to try and help her mother.

When the fishing-fleet came in, Amalia, who had friends in every boat, used to bring round a large basket, or big wooden bowl, and every skipper gave her a fish or two, according to his catch.

The child was a great favorite, and not a man in the fleet grudged the little gift to that dear, bright-faced young bread-winner. And when—almost always accompanied by her cat—she ran round visiting every boat, smiling at the kind fishermen, and thanking them in her pretty gratitude, they were more than amply repaid, and often paused in their work to look after her as she went away with her well-filled basket, to call at the various larger houses round the village and to sell her fish.

One day the fish given her had been unusually fine, and she had sold them for very good prices. The house where she had left the last of her wares was some two miles out in the country, and the darkness of a winter afternoon was rapidly closing in when she started on her way home.

Tripping along at a quick pace—considering the heavy wooden clogs with which she was shod—Amalia overtook a ragged tramp plodding wearily on, and stumbling often from sheer fatigue.

'Good evening, little maiden,' said he, as Amalia came up with him.

'Good evening,' replied the child very courteously.

'Pray tell me how far it is to the nearest village,' said the man; 'and what may be the name of it, for I am a stranger in these parts?'

'The nearest village is Rohtstein, about a mile and a half away,' answered the little girl. 'I am going there myself, and will show you the way.'

'Do you live at Rohtstein, little maiden?' enquired the tramp, to whose limping, halting steps Amalia had adapted her usually quick pace.

'Yes; my mother and I have lived there for some years—indeed, nearly all my life. We came there very soon after we lost father.'

'Oh! Then your father is dead?'

'I know not that he is dead,' replied the child, 'but mother says he went away when I was a tiny baby, and so I do not remember him. But she does not forget,' added Amalia, 'and every night she prays for him and asks the good Lord to bless and send him back to



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us; she has taught me to pray for him, too.' 'Was your father a bad man, child?' questioned the stranger, who seemed interested in the little girl's artless story.

'Mother never said so,' rejoined Amalia; 'nor know I why he went away from us, or why he returns not. But we have not lost faith—mother and I.' And the child lifted pure, trusting eyes to her ragged companion's face. 'And we think our prayers will be answered some day, in God's good time.'

'And your name, little one! Tell me your name!'

'Amalia, and my mother is Carolina. Everybody knows Carolina Baumer the laundress, and little Amalia the fish-seller. But what ails you, poor man? You groan—you are in pain!'

'No, child, no! It is nothing. A sudden pang, but it is over,' replied the stranger. But all the rest of the way he was silent, seeming absorbed in thought.

'Mother, dear, I bring thee a visitor, a poor tired man, whom I overtook on the road,' said Amalia, who had bounded on at a far quicker pace as they neared the cottage. 'He may rest here a while, may he not, and share our supper?'

'Surely yes, my child; bid him enter in the name of him who is the giver of all.'

The man, thus kindly welcomed, crossed

the threshold, his head bent, his hand leaning heavily upon his staff. But as he came forward into the lamp and firelight, Carolina gave a cry. 'Hermann! Hermann!' And the poor tottering, ragged wayfarer was clasped in his wife's arms.

That night he told his story. He said that after leaving his wife and child all those years before, he had been arrested and punished with long imprisonment for desertion from the army. In prison he had an illness which unfitted him for further use as a soldier, and when he was set free he nearly starved, for no one would employ a man just out of prison, and he often tramped miles in search of any kind of work.

But his troubles and privations had changed him, and for the last two years, sorely repenting, and longing to lead a new life, he had been seeking his wife and child. And now, in God's long-suffering mercy, Hermann's desire had been fulfilled, and by his own child, as by some angel unawares, he had been led back into the love and the quiet home-life which once he had valued so very little.

And once again, too, had humble, child-like faith been rewarded, and the Heavenly Father had proved himself anew the hearer and answerer of prayer.—The 'Child's Companion.'