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THE undersigned, acting as a committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Miss Dagmar Peterson for the degree of Master of Arts. They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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"MYSTICISM IN SELMA LAGERLÖF"

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Selma Lagerlöf's works:

"Gösta Berling's Saga"

"Jerusalem"

"Antikrists Mirakler"

"Osynliga Länkar"

"Liljecrona's Hem"

"Nils Holgerssons Resa"

"Körkarlen"

Should one wish to balance accounts in literature, one would have to write down on the debit side of the realistic movement two big items. One must remember that both Gustav Fröding and Selma Lagerlöf wasted years of their youth in trying to curb their romantic temperaments in accordance with the demands of the realists. Fröding was told that poetry was a poor kind of literature and that one could write novels and romances in prose only. Therefore he strove in vain to write in realistic prose. Selma Lagerlöf also made vain attempts at curbing her imagination and at writing in calm, realistic prose until finally her nature conquered and she decided to write the book "in her own way". Not only her modesty, but also the spirit of the times is shown when she says that she did not dare to publish her books for fear it would be ridiculed, and that none could endure to read it. Naturalism, or realism ruled the Swedish Literature. Realism has become such a catchword, that as it popularly is used, it means anything but realism in the sense of the representation of realities. When therefore Scandinavian Literature is included in realistic literature it simply means that it debates social and moral problems in the fearless way of the writer that calls "a spade a spade". It, so to say, turns the coat wrong side out. This however interesting it may be to the tailor, is not necessary for the public. It can

easily be understood how this would form a barrier between the dreams and sagas which occupied Selma Lagerlöf's mind and the ideas which the naturalists tried to promote.

The realist sought to present the outward life as photographically as possible. Selma Lagerlöf does not deal with the outer life at all. It is the innermost feelings and thoughts that she makes real. It is never the individual, or the unusual that interests her, but that which is common to all.

"The naturalists' view of life was very pessimistic, almost anarchistic in its Prometheus-like defiance of Society and their own existence, disharmonious and severed". (1) Selma Lagerlöf lives in perfect harmony with the world and avoids intentionally all deeper conflicts. She represents a direct reaction to Strindberg's coarser realism. While Strindberg seeks to show the wretchedness, the lowness, and that which is wormeaten in human nature, Selma Lagerlöf seeks to show the good in her fellowmen. "Intuition often takes the place of observation". (2) If one should examine her view of life more closely, possibly one would find it to be, that "man needs an illusion to live". (3) "Have you seen that he has an angel in his eyes?", asks one of the characters in her sagas. That is exactly what Selma Lagerlöf tries to see, an angel in everyone's eye. She has shown us in "Gösta Berling's Saga" how nobly she can speak of

- (1) Severtin "Svenska Gestalter".
- (2) Mortenson "Selma Lagerlöf".
- (3) Mortenson "Selma Lagerlöf".

the ignoble. We must, in spite of our better judgment, love the wierd cavalier at Ekeby. Selma Lagerlöf knows how to arouse our sympathy, and we are willing to forgive everything. In her latest work "Körkarlen", she has pictured another drunken wretch, who does not seem worthy of any sympathy, but she has succeeded in awakening the reader's sympathy, and has been able to find some good even in him. Selma Lagerlöf seems to understand the most widely differing emotions of the human soul; wild anger, sorrow and mirth, innocence and quiet, the lawlessness of frivolity and the despair of sin. She knows loneliness and love, fullness of life and the mysterious greatness of death. She has the gift of calling everything by its right name. No other Swedish writer has been able to portray the soul-life of the Swedish people as Selma Lagerlöf has done. She saw what the other writers had seen in a different light. She found life where other's had seen but dead things. She tried, as above stated, to throw into obscurity all human frailties and vices, and to turn the light on what was biggest and strongest in men as she sees them. Someone has said that it was for optimism in literature, that Selma Lagerlöf was awarded the Nobel prize. Her religion can be expressed in two words: "Love and compassion".

Thru Selma Lagerlöf mysticism is again introduced into the Swedish literature. She allows her imagination to sink down for a moment into reality, only to let it again the next moment soar up into the

highest realms of fancy. Levertin says: "I en tid då den intellektuella beräkningens vågskål avgjort vägar över omedelbarhetens är hon idel över bräddarna kvällande fantasi, och talar endast ur sitt hjärtas enfald - med ordet taget i dess stora och bibliska betydelse". She has especially treated the subject of transmigration of souls, and after having read Selma Lagerlöf one is almost tempted to believe the old doctrine, "Det finns isynnerhet i hennes kvinnogestalter uttryck, som komma djupt ner från själens botten, drag märkvärdiga som uppenbarelser sagofjärran, men dock av en sanning, som är trolsk och oemotståndlig. Selma Lagerlöfs egen själ har vandrat genom många åldrar och gestalter". (4)

She has tried to express her uncomprehensible love for the mystical Swedish nature, for the gloomy Swedish woods where spirits, fairies and dwarfs still roam around since the days, when the Gods dwelt here on earth.

Selma Lagerlöf does not belong to that class of authors that constantly dwell on their own personality, and ever seeks like Narcissus to see their own image in the fountain. Her views and interests are too broad for that. But this does not prevent her from inserting a touch now and then which shows her own development. She tells of a little girl that stood by her grandmother's side and heard stories. It was to the same little girl that the stories of Gösta Berling came stealing and begged to be related.

" O sena tiders barn !

Jag har inget nytt att berätta Er endast det, som är gammalt och nästan glömt. Sägner har jag från barnkammaren där de små sutto på låga pallar kring sagoberättarskan med det vita håret, eller från stockelden i stugan där drängar och torpare sutto och språkade medan ången rykte från deras våta kläder, och de drogo knivar ur läderslidan vid halsen för att breda smör på tjockt mjukt bröd; eller från salen där gamla herrar sutto i vaggande gungstolar och livade av den varma, ångande toddyn, talade om flydda tider". (5)

It was under the influence of such an evenings that Selma Lagerlöf's imagination developed. How has it not played with everything around her ! In the picturesque, fairy-like land of Värmland she passed her first twenty years more in a saga world of her own creation than in the real world. Very attentively she listened to the old story tellers, the workmen and the old gentlemen, until finally she saw all sorts of apparitions and revelations. If she stood at the window and looked out into the starry night, she saw how the clouds at once changed into cavaliers that hastily rode past; the stars at once became wax candles, which illumined the old castle, and the humming spinning wheel in a room near by trodden by old Ulrika Dilmer. The child's head was so filled with sagas and people from former times that it lived entirely in their sphere.

(5) "Gösta Berling's Saga" Chap. II.

Peter Nord, one of her characters, bears traces of her own fancies. He has the power of transforming the dull, gray reality into "lifslevande rosen-röda blommor".

Thus, Selma Lagerlöf's childhood has, in reality, passed in a saga world. It is largely to these influences that we owe, that Selma Lagerlöf became the "unrivalled story-teller". Critics have tried to point out similarities between Selma Lagerlöf and George Eliot, Kipling and others. But these similarities are largely accidental. She is without doubt original in her style. Her books were written in her own way. She tore herself loose from all the rules and laws of literature. A great many of her own expectations and dreams which she as a young girl harbored, are portrayed in her heroines, especially in "Gösta Berling's Saga". But many years elapsed before she dared to write unrestrained as she pleased. How many severe struggles are there not between her first attempts and "Gösta Berling's Saga". "Hon har förtvivlat, resignerat, stridit, försökt på nytt och slutligen låtit pennan löpa. Själva grundvalen i sin stil, hennes uppfattningssätt och tekniska utbildning har hon därunder kämpat sig till." She has learned during these struggles to understand the sufferings of humanity and learned to judge with compassion.

When she makes her debut, at thirty-three years of age, it is with a work that creates a stir in the Swedish literature! Since then she has continued to tell stories for old and young. She put new life into

a class of literature that had long been dead. Occasionally one catches glimpses of her stories of reminders from the good old folktales, in which goblins and giants, princes and princesses play the leading parts. She has also re-told legends about holy men and women. But usually she goes her own way and creates with a marvelous imaginative power her own stories. She is irresistible. Levertin says, "Det finnes också ögonblick, då hennes sagor äro så högtidliga, så allvarliga, så fulla av onämbar vishet, att man hellre föreställer sig, att det är den gamla Sibyllan, som berättar. Hon, vilken levat sedan tidernas gryning, hon, vilken lik en förvriden olivstam, eller en väldig gudablick den underbara natten möter kejsar Augustus uppe på kapitolium och visade honom framtidens hemligheter i den öppna skyn". Selma Lagerlöf herself said, "När jag diktar får jag ett stycke verklighet och det omformar jag så att det blir vackert". (6)

She has told us herself how she came to write her first saga. From childhood these stories and sagas, that she had heard worked on her mind. When she rode to church, it seemed to her as if fairies and brownies stood on the runners, or tinkled in the sleighbells, or pecked out at her from between the dark firtrees, or danced with her at the old Christmas parties. They sung to her on the lakes in summer, whispered to her in the spring breezes and appeared with the falling autumn leaves. She could get no peace

(6) Levertin. "Svenska Gestalter".

of mind before she had gathered them. In "En Saga om en Saga", she says, "Det var en gång en saga, som ville bli berättad och utförd i världen. Det var helt naturligt eftersom den visste med sig att den redan var så gott som färdig. Många hade varit med om att skapa den genom märkvärdiga handlingar, andra hava dragit sitt strå till genom att om och om igen förtälja dessa handlingar. Vad som fattades den var att bli nödtorftigt hopfogad, så att den bekvämligen kunde färdas omkring i landet". (7) This is exactly what Selma Lagerlöf has done. She was, however, in doubts as to the success of her attempts. Perhaps she would never have dared to submit it to the public had not a certain Swedish paper "Idun" offered a prize for the best written story. Selma Lagerlöf had no hopes of winning a prize but decided nevertheless to try. Her work merited first prize, and the eyes of the public were focused on Selma Lagerlöf. Nobody knew just what to think of this wild passionate Gösta Berling. He was a true, romantic and fanciful knight, completely carried away by a northern enthusiasm

The whole book reverberates with an enthusiasm over her native community. It seems, she says "as if courage and happiness were life's most sacred duties". But what is her greatest joy? ENTHUSIASM. Enthusiasm over life, over love.

Selma Lagerlöf busies herself with one class of people only. They may be called unsevered. Not

(7) "En saga om en Saga".

any of her characters are severed in mind or soul. They may change moods, become meek or angry, calm or excited, but they are so completely. Imagine Sintram, Greve, Dolma, Gösta Berling as one of our skeptical modern personages, severed in thought and feeling. It is impossible, for then their actions would be incomprehensible and unexplainable. There is a unity between their lives, words and deeds. Marianne Sinclair is the only exception. Dispair preys upon her mind, but she is also the only unhappy one.

The character of Gösta Berling is really not of any more importance than the other cavaliers, as one would suppose from the title of the book. He is the youngest and most prominent of them, and the development of the story moves around him as a centre. But the epic deals first of all with his country.

The duration of time in "Gösta Berling's Saga" is limited to one year. It begins one Christmas night in the smithy and ends the following Christmas. It is into a world of tradition that she brings us, but under the veil we catch glimpses of reality. She pictures life in an old manor house in Värmland. "Majorskan på Ekeby" is at the head. Disappointed in love, she has decided to live for others, but her power is based on a falsehood. Her wealth is a gift of a lover. She shows her weakness in caring for old degenerate gentlemen, the inhabitants of the cavalier-wing. They live a dishonorable life. Live only for pleasure. Their sole ambition is to maintain the spirit of joy and frivolity at Ekeby.

This cannot constitute a true foundation for a community.

In separate little stories she has pictured the life of pleasures which lasted from Christmas Day until late in the fall. This frivolity and wickedness spread so that it ruled not only Ekeby, but the entire community. This continued until October. But then the spell is broken. The people begin to resume their former useful life, the cavaliers repent, and finally the turn comes to Gösta Berling himself. The old "Majorskan" dies unforgiven and unrepenting. Work is resumed. Then, Gösta Berling speaks about the greatest of all difficulties, namely to be both good and happy. They had been forced to learn this during this year of joy and want, misfortune and wretchedness.

It is the power and essence of imagination that, first of all, strikes the reader of "Gösta Berling's Saga". Selma Lagerlöf loves to picture the mystical, to let her imagination loose. Levertin says: "Dygder och lyten stegras överallt i hennes böcker till det fantastiska och måttlösa. Liksom kvällljusets skuggbilder bliva hennes personer gigantiska och försvinna med konturerna i dunklet". (8) She always liked to depict the abstract in a concrete form. Sorrow, joy, death, all have definite forms to her. She sees them as we see real persons. Terror, for example, is described as an old witch who lives in the dark, mystic woods. There is the same struggle in nature as in humanity. Selma Lagerlöf makes no distinction between the organic and the inorganic.

(8) Levertin: "Svenska Gestalter".

The flowers, trees and everything in nature experiences the same longing, the same struggles, and entertains the same hopes as mankind. She uses symbolism so freely that at times one is puzzled to know whether "Gösta Berling's Saga" is an allegory or not. She tells of an Anna Stjärnhök who is about to trade off Ulrika Dilner's soul to Sintram, the personification of evil, in order to save Gösta Berling's. She has herself tried to explain this in the following: "O sena tiders barn! Jag begär ej att någon skall sätta tro till dessa gamla historier. De kunna ej vara annat än lögn och dikt, men ångern, som vaggar fram och åter över hjärtat till dess det jämrar sig, som golvtilljorna i Sintrams sal jämrade sig under den vaggande meden, men tvivlet som ringer för öronen i den öde skogen, när bliva de till lögn och dikt?" Selma Lagerlöf always aims to teach and inspire. Sometimes she explains, as above, what she wants to teach, but usually the reader must find the meaning by himself. Frequently she introduces mystic characters and mystical descriptions of nature. It is thru the latter that she is able to impart to her readers the mystic state of mind. Now and then, there are sea-monsters, witches or evil spirits and all sorts of supernatural creations in her stories. She is a master in the art of portraying moods. How can we not sympathize with Gösta Berling when he feels himself destitute and deserted by all mankind, and longs only for the eternal woods in the north where the pines

stand, tall and columnlike, where the winds play in their boughs; and for the dark dreary grave above Löven! It is hither he must flee, when he has severed connection with humanity.

In "Jerusalem", Selma Lagerlöf has treated both the individual and the mass with more care than in previous works. She has never before allowed her readers to follow her characters at so close a range as this entire Dale population. The picturesque begins broad as the entire parish, but narrows down until it finally includes only Ingemar's and Barbro's experiences.

One is just a little justified in calling "Jerusalem" a religious work as in considering "Brand" from this point of view. It is only the question of choosing between the common life at home and the magnificent one of worshiping God in the Holy Land. It is the mystical, the fanciful life, that lures them into leaving their native country and into journeying far away to this strange land. She describes with a master's skill the departure, how they sing, "Vi få mötas, vi få mötas en gång i Eden". It was the blue hills of their native country, the gray waters of the rivers and the swaying trees that they sang to. Perhaps they will never again see them, and their farewell-song sounded between sobs. This migration is considered as God's will, but the immigrants only seeking their

own happiness. They are unselfish in so far that they sacrifice their lives for others, and for peace. But they are selfish in the sacrifice itself, in that they do not consider the significance of it. How will future generations be able to endure the conditions existing in this strange country? Will they be able to accustom their natures to the new trials? Will they not demand something of their own? Selma Lagerlöf solves, no more than Ibsen or Sudermann, the questions one must ask after reading her works..

Selma Lagerlöf has here made use of one of her favorite situations, a conversation between the dead and the living. Ingemar has a wonderful vision. He sees his father sitting to-gether with the other "bönder" in heaven. Ingemar is now in a great trouble, so he asks his father for help and advice. Selma Lagerlöf has depicted this mystical meeting so realistically that one is tempted to believe it real.. It is the Swedish "bondliv" she wishes foremost to picture, so she has chosen the most characteristic trait of the Swedish people, the religious. She has not tried to trace the development of any certain sect, but the growth of the soul-life of an individual. She shows strikingly the influence of the south on the northmen, the mystical passion which their surroundings have succeeded in awakening; but also their ever longing for the green refreshing sod in the north. This work is actually based on real facts.

Many times there has been just such immigrations from Sweden, from Dalarna as she describes in her book.

Selma Lagerlöf never succeeded better than in the short stories. Our interest is aroused at the very beginning, and we are kept spellbound from beginning to end. That she can be humorous, she has shown us in her remarkable little story of "Morbror Reuben". The fool is needed at the court; and humor must not be lacking even in serious natures.

This little story is, in a way, the most complete that Selma Lagerlöf ever wrote. The symbolism is so clear. "Tonen är så säker, så löjesväckande förnumstig, Det finnes ju ställen i Selma Lagerlöfs arbeten, där man tycker att hon kunde ha behandlat sina vuxna läsare med lite mera hänsyn till deras ålder. Men här inpräntas ju barnalärdom, och därför passar tonen innerligen väl". The story is really unmerciful, or can you imagine anything more cruel than the mother's behavior toward her little son, who does all in his power to please her, but is always reminded of the fact that he can never be as good as "Morbror Reuben". It reminds us somewhat of Ibsen's satire on society. The story treats of a little boy that sat on a stone-step, caught a cold and died and became ever after an example for future generations. What does she wish to teach by this? She wants to show that the old venerated lie or falsehood is the means by which the present generation educates the future one.

She has developed the same idea in "Kejsarinnans Kassakista". But here the symbolism is even more striking than in the previous one. A monk is to preach for the people at Charlevoix, for the poor people. He does not dare to mention God's name or Providence, so he must use symbolism, or a parable. He tells about an Empress Marie, that visited a poor country and saw all its want and depravity. She realized that what these poor people needed was something to depend upon. She gave them a chest containing a treasure, having first extracted from them a promise never to touch it except in the most dire circumstances. This saved them. They had now something to depend upon, and this inspiration them, gave them new vigor and ambition to work. Through this parable the monk has wished to convey to his people an idea of the Divine Providence, "the power which mankind mocks because it cannot see it, but which must keep away for in the very moment that it would appear in comprehensible form, it would be misused". It is not only chance that the chest contains something. It contains an actual sum, but it is so small, that it will only suffice in extreme necessity. The idea is not that we should live only on an illusion, on falsehood, we have something of real value to depend upon. But if we knew that, that was all, we would despair. "Vi måste leva på vår arbete-

förtjänst och se till att inkomster och utgifter någorlunda uppväga hvarandra, ty om vår förtröstan ger oss spelet, då är det ute med oss. Maria Theresia är en verklig välgörarinna. Hon ger människorna nytt mod att bära livet, och enligt "Antikrists Mirakler" bestod ju stordådet just i detta, "Kunskapens rike gav olycka; omedvetenhetens återigen lycka".

In "Bland Klängrosor" we see another view of life. "Å du vackra liv. Jag tackar dig att jag fått på min lott det lustiga arbetet bland rosor och solsken. Jag tackar dig, att jag kan njuta dig utan ängslan och fruktan. Vål vet jag att spindlar lura och skalbaggar stjäla, men mitt är det lustiga arbetet och den modiga sorglösheten. Å du vackra liv, du härliga tillvaro". (12) It is Selma Lagerlöf's own enthusiasm for life that this little tale expresses.

One cannot pass by her little book "Nils Holgerssons Resa". This is probably her best known work. A certain professor von Scheele says: "Thru this book, Selma Lagerlöf has given the world one of the best books for children. We, teachers find in it an educational medium which cannot be found in any other book except the Bible". She allows her imagination free play over the entire Sweden. Some one has said that "Nils Holgerssons resa" is like a big map over the entire country, showing the parge pine woods, the little red houses and the large roaring rivers.

(12) "Osynliga Länkar"

Selma Lagerlöf has, however, not confined herself to the home soil entirely. Her imagination reaches still further, even down to the south of Sicily, to a little walled town near Etna. It is a wonderful town, this Diamante. Not a house, not a stone or piece of earth but it has a story, but which we see only thru Selma Lagerlöf's eyes. There are heroes, poets and magicians in this wonderful little town. The legend hangs upon the stealing of a miracle working image of Christ, and the substitution therefore, a tinsel one which is also miracle working. It is the time of Anti-Christ that she depicts. He is made the symbol of socialism in conflict with Christianity.

The entire book is a hymn to the south. Only joy reigns here. Sorrows disappear like clouds on a summer sky. "Katolskt livsvarmt och katolskt människömt och skönhetsfyllt har Selma Lagerlöf återgivit det sydländska livet, med nordbons idealisering af en värld vilkens brister hon icke ser eller vill se tjugad av stämningen av mystier och saga, som lever bland kullarna och cypresserna". (13) She has in an extremely beautiful manner described the birth of Christ in her first chapter. Emperor Augustus goes out to ask the Gods whether a temple may be built in his honor or not. He meets the Sibyl. She only points into the distance, and now that whole heavenly scene is pictured to us as only Selma Lagerlöf can. The entire book is filled with just such mystical marvelous scenes.

In "Liljecronas hem" one of her latest books, we find some of her most beautiful characteristics. Here we are met first of all by her youthful, rich power of imagination, that never fails either in finding motives, or in developing them.

The story is about Maja Lisa, an old pastor's daughter, who is ill-treated by her step-mother. The story centers around her love for the wild musician Liljecrona. Just at the time when her sufferings are the greatest he comes, as a prince in a fairy tale to her rescue. He brings his brother, a minister in the northern wilderness, to her but this only increases Maja Lisa's sorrows and leads his brother into destruction. But now his love for the girl is awakened and one evening, "då det var fågelsång i träden, solglitter på de nyutspruckna löven, vatten sorl i dåkana och ett spirande och groende bland örter och gräs, så man tyckte att man kunde höra hur det växte,"⁽¹⁴⁾ he confesses his love. Liljecrona's life has been saddened thru the consciousness of having once in his youth played so wildly that his beloved one danced until she fell dead. It is this sadness, this melancholy feeling that greets him from the depths of his violin. One day shortly after the death of Maja Lisa's father, and the disappearance of her step-mother, he plays for her under her window. At first the tones are soft and calm, but gradually they become wilder and wilder until finally they burst forth in a pitiful complaint. The old melancholy has returned.

(14) "Liljecronas Hem".

Maja Lisa makes a last attempt. She understands that his true home is in music. "Den var det, som kunde ge honom vederkvickelse och trygghet. När han spelade, då spände tonerna över honom ett tak, som strålade mer än äppleblommorna och solkenet. Då trädde han in i sitt rätta hem, det, som varit hans tillflykt under hela hans ensliga ungdomstid." (15) But now the door had been closed. Would Maja Lisa's love be strong enough to open it? She asks him to play again. He played as he never had before. "It was her love that carried him up out of the darkness". It became perfectly quiet in the garden. The appleblossoms fell like a bridal veil over their heads. (16) Who could paint such a beautiful picture, but just Selma Lagerlöf?

The entire narrative breathes forth a most sincere love for her native country, a love that is broad enough to include everything, every minutest detail that she may mention, whether it be the spinning wheel in the kitchen, or the Svartsjö brook, the apple trees in the orchard, or the goat that does so much mischief.

The deep morose trait which is so characteristic of Selma Lagerlöf has perhaps never been as marked as in this work. "Inevitable as the demands of duty, man must fight his battles to the very end in order to be his true self." But these need not make anyone's fate harder, or life any sadder. A childlike confidence

(15) "Liljecronas Hem".

(16) "Liljecronas Hem".

and cheerfulness permeates Selma Lagerlöf's works like soft light clouds on a summer sky. Was it not just this to be carefree and trust in God that one learnt at her childhood home Sövdala, or Mårbacka?"

The seriousness and mysteriousness of life appears more strongly in her last work "Körkarlen" than in any other. "Körkarlen" is in the service of Death. The old tradition is that the one who dies last on New Years Eve, must assume this duty for a year. He must drive day and night, visiting all the dying and carry them away in his old clattering, creaking wagon.

David Holm, a drunken wretch, who has ill-treated his wife and children is suffering from consumption. The Driver finds him New Year's Eve half dead. He takes him along and shows him all the dying. He hopes to awaken a remorse for past sins. Only those that are dead, or those almost to die can see the Driver.

A poor slum-sister Edith, that loves David Holm sincerely, is dying and begs to see him. She exposed herself to his disease and became infected, but she wishes to try once more to rescue him from his miserable life. Holm refuses to go but is finally forced by the Driver to accompany him. The latter takes such a position that Edith cannot see his scythe, or suspect that he is in Death's service and has come to get her. Holm throws himself at her bedside and

promises to repent. Both are carried away by the Driver. David feels that he is bound by something stronger than fetters, or chains, It is love, spiritual love which surpasses all earthly love.

They are now at the end of their journey. It is David's turn to take the Driver's place, unless someone else would be willing to assume it. The former driver offers to take his place, so that Holm would have an opportunity during this coming year to atone for his transgressions. Holm's New Year's prayer is that "Gud måtte låta hans själ komma till mognad innan den skall skördas". (17)

It is under such a veil that Selma Lagerlöf has pictured the sorrows of life and the power of death. She has again given the abstract a concrete form. We can see vividly in our mind how the Driver mows down humanity with his scythe. He and his wagon are described as if they were real things. She defines death as "the mighty one who has all power over humanity". "Det finns ingen borg", says the Driver, "så mäktig att jag inte bestiger dess mur. Det finns ingen kunskap så djup, att den kan sätta en damm för min framfärd. Jag slår de trygga bäst som de sola sig i lycka, och jag skänker arv och egendom åt de elända, som ha försmäktat i fattigdom." (18)

The most prominent feature in Selma Lagerlöf's authorship is her Swedishness. Fru Lenngren has in one

(17) "Körkarlen"

(18) "Körkarlen"

of her works said about herself that she is rarely ever away from home. One can say about Selma Lagerlöf that she is almost always at home. Swedish scenes of nature afford backgrounds for nearly all her works. History plays a very small part with her. It is the people, the country that constitutes Sweden for her. She never dwells on political situations. It is the mysterious growth of the soul-life that she deals with, these elementary powers that are as eternal as the people themselves.

"Selma Lagerlöfs eld är skymningsbrasan i hemmet. I dess sken och värme samlar hon oss, sätter sig riktigt tillrätta i någon trevlig gammal bekväm stol och berättar. Kvällen faller allt djupare. Därute står vinterhimlen, stjärnrik och kall över gården, och tomtar och små folk övertaga vård och vaka. Men därinne spinnes berättelsens tråd oavbrutet vidare medan brasskenet leker i reflexer än på det ena, än på det andra av rummets gamla välakapade föremål. De äldre ha lagt bort handarbeten och tidningar och lyssna med erinringens muntra glimt i ögonen, ungdomarna ha dragit sig lite unadn i skumrasket, där man får vara för sig själv med intresse och drömmar; men framme vid hennes, (berätterskans) knän flocka sig barnen och hänga fast vid hennes läppar med ögon som bliva allt större och djupare. Och när brasan fallit samman i en glödhög och sagoförtäljerskan slutat, då tränga vi oss alla, efter ett ögonblicks tystnad, närmare henne och bedja:

23.

"En till, bara en endaste till" ! (20)

(20) "Ungdomsvännen"