

without their consent; and rather than follow you, I will stay here and die without ever seeing my home again."

Scarcely was the last word spoken when the figure disappeared in mist, and the three sisters stood before the boy.

In his astonishment he could not utter a syllable. Then spoke one of the sisters:

"As you act so honestly toward us, your secret wish shall be gratified; you shall return to your home."

The boy knew not how to speak his pleasure and thankfulness. He cried for joy that he would be allowed to go to his home; he cried for sorrow that he must leave the kind sisters. He wanted to go back to his parents, yet he wished to remain where he was. He could do nothing but weep. Restlessly he laid himself on his couch, and the night was far spent when he fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning he found himself on the shore of the familiar lake. He looked up, saw the three swans as he had seen them before, and stretched out his arm toward them; they dived out of sight in the blue water and he saw them no more.

In the village his friends were greatly surprised at his reappearance. They gathered about him, and with open mouths heard the boy's wonderful story. But no one believed a word of it. After the first pleasures of again seeing his home, came a desire to be once more in the unknown land he had left. The feeling grew with each day. Then came frequent visits to the lake, but the swans never came more. He cried with regret at having left the three loving sisters. Wherever he went he grieved. Nowhere found he rest. He ever longed for his fairy paradise, and ever in vain. The bright eyes dimmed, the plump cheeks again became pale and sunken. Slowly he went to the lake one day, laid himself feebly on its pebble-strewn shore and slumbered, never to awake again upon earth.

#### SECOND HAND FOOD.

IN one of New York's shabbiest streets, in the basement of a large tenement house, a German and his wife deal in second hand food, which is eagerly bought by the neighboring poor. The writer recently visited this unique establishment. In the front room a crowd of purchasers were waiting, cans and money in hand. The German was in the back room emptying barrels upon a big, bare pine table. Occasionally a box or barrel proved too heavy, and his wife joined her strength to that of her husband's. She is a big, jolly German woman, rosy and neat. On the table was a constantly growing heap of meat. Some was cold and some was steaming. The heap was made up of fragments of everything that is included under the terms fish, flesh and fowl. It was not pretty to look at, but a moment's study of the heap showed that every fragment in the mound was of good origin, and had been well cooked. Ribs of beef with clumps of meat attached to the bones; skeletons of turkeys, ducks, geese, chickens and game birds in the same condition; chops of veal, mutton and pork, whole and cooked to a turn; slices of cold corned

beef, cold roast mutton and beef, cold ham and tongue—all this and probably as many other things beside were in the heap. The foremost little ones in the impatient crowd had to crane their necks around the door frame to see the nature of this second heap, and were charmed to see iced cake, jelly rolls and tapioca pudding. The man filled the deep and broad sill of the window with cans. Some were full of mashed potatoes, some with potatoes and turnips mixed, and some with cabbage. The woman was heaping up slices of bread, ends of loaves, little cakes, tea biscuits, rolls, slices of costly cake, boiled and baked potatoes in their jackets, crullers, gingerbread, doughnuts, Boston brown bread and crackers. Her heap grew so tall that an avalanche formed and food rolled on the floor. She was obliged to leave some barrels similarly stocked without emptying them. Suddenly she faced the troop of children, and they began to shout and scramble for the doorway, demanding to be waited on. There were plates in some of the baskets and tin pails in others. The man tossed in the meat and the woman shoveled bread, rolls and cake in until the baskets were loaded. Both used their hands. "You see," said the German, "that the food is clean and good. I buy it from the hotels. First-class houses never carve a rib after it is impossible to get nice-looking pieces from it. They never heat things up the second day or serve them the day after they are cooked. These potatoes I took out of the kettle in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. That's where the pudding came from. I am expected at a certain time, and I go right in and clean out the warming pans, all this is what are called 'cold pieces' and 'middlings' in the hotel trade. In some houses the help is fed on this. It is not what is left from the plates of the guests. That goes to the swill man. The bread and rolls and cake you see here were all baked to-day, and are as fresh as my customers could get at the bakeries for five times the price I sell it for. I get it in slices, ends, and quite often in whole loaves. I get, in addition to what you see here, stewed fruit and cold tea and coffee. I get a great deal more than you suppose—at least fifteen barrels of bread a day. In selling, I calculate to give enough for twenty-five cents to keep a family of four or five a whole day. I sell as little as ten cents' worth. I charge about four cents a pound for the meat, ten cents a gallon for the vegetables, and I sell as much bread for three cents as I can buy in a bakery for fifteen. For twenty-five cents I give meat enough for three meals for four people, with half a gallon of some vegetables, and then bread and cake enough for all day. Some of my customers are very particular, and want things nice. I pick them out nice things. Some want more cake and pudding, some want only meat, and so it goes. For a quarter they not only get as much weight of food as a dollar will buy, but they get the very best that can be bought—quality as well as quantity. It is also cooked in the best manner. I have nothing left over. I don't open this place till I finish collecting and drive up with my load. It is always after eight o'clock at night. In a very little while I have sold it all."