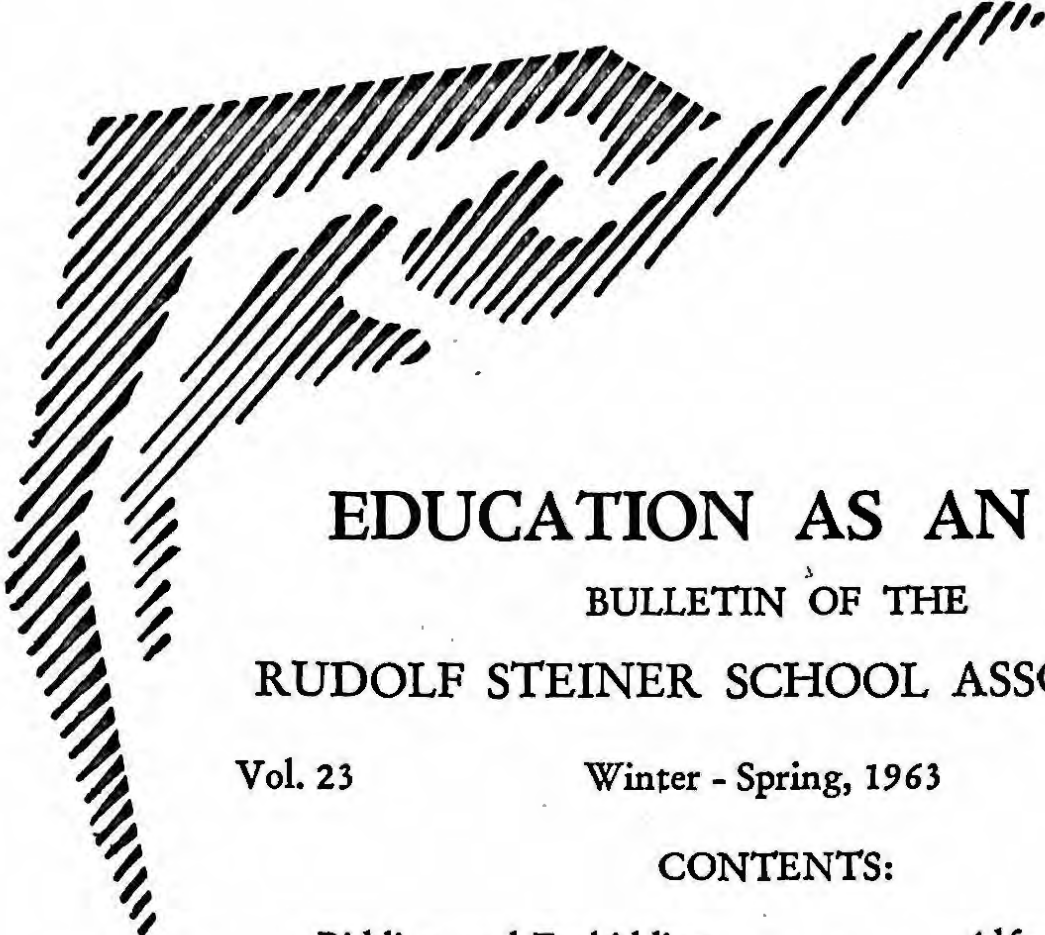




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Vol. 23

Winter - Spring, 1963

Nos. 1, 2

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BIDDING AND FORBIDDING

Discipline is a worry to all parents and teachers; questions and conversations circle round and round the problem, which is becoming more and more urgent in today's education. Here in abridged form is Alfred Schreiber's attempt to solve it, from his "Briefe über die religiöse Erziehung im Elternhaus" (Letters concerning religious instruction in the home).

A mother asked Rudolf Steiner, "At what age should one expect a child to obey?" This was his response: "Obey what is said to him in words - 'Do this, do that'? Not before the *seventh* year. If a child does not learn to obey by imitating, which is the right way up to his seventh year, if he simply obeys orders that are thrown at him, he will become a sneak and a hypocrite for the rest of his life."

Whenever I quoted this advice to parents, it almost always met with violent opposition. Before they gave any thought to the underlying reasons for it, they would cite practical experiences to prove how impossible it was and therefore how futile.

Education today is still influenced by our "Thou shalt not" frame of mind, by the image of a severe God. This was indeed right for a past epoch of humanity. And a child does go through all the levels of human evolution on a small scale. But he does not reach the Old Testament level, with its characteristic phrase: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth", until his seventh year. Only then does he begin to unfold his own individuality; only then can he begin to feel separate from the world around him, and even

in opposition to it. It is then that the struggle begins between duty and inclination. Before that time he lives in the world as a part of it; he and the world are still one. Between the ages of three and seven his feeling for good and evil slowly awakens. He eats of the tree of knowledge, and the gates of Paradise gradually close behind him. He will gradually acquire a proper feeling for human weaknesses and imperfections, but it is not good to force this process too soon. To waken his consciousness of sin is to help "the evil Accuser"—who gives trouble early enough to the adult, stealing away his strength and his courage to believe in the Good which is within himself. Rudolf Steiner presented quite a different view of man's nature when he gave the evening prayer for children: "From my head to my feet I'm a picture of God." However upset and discordant a child's day may have been, however painfully he may be feeling his own shortcomings, that will all be balanced out by the greater, consoling truth that Man is created in the image of God.

It does not agree with what is in a child's consciousness, to have to pray as in this old German prayer:

"Whatever wrong I did today,
Dear God, please do not see it;
Thy mercy and the blood of Christ
Will take it and redeem it."

A child is not yet ready for the mystery of the redemption of sin through Christ. Words like this can become mere phrases. Later, about the time of the preparation for confirmation, this mystery may be approached very gently, because only then does a young person begin to discover human weakness and sinfulness in his own experience, and thereby is able to unfold an organ of understanding for the fact of salvation. Religious instruction can never consist of moral sermons. They usually spring from a mind that says, "I, the teacher, am more perfect than you, and my task is to improve you." This will never promote reverence for the child-nature, which is essential in education.

It is very interesting that peoples who have come straight down from older cultural epochs have kept many customs that are spiritually right. In the bringing up of their children they instinctively take into account what lives in a child before it has reached the stage for moral commands. We quote the following from "Lectures on Folk-Morality" by Dr. Richard Karutz:*

"Primitive man allows his child to develop in complete freedom during its first seven years."

"The Batak never punishes his child, for fear its offended soul will run away."

"The Eskimo never strikes his child until its eleventh or twelfth year, for the child knows more than the grown-up: it possesses the wisdom of its earlier earth-lives as well as the wisdom from its life between death and a new birth."

"The American Indian says one must not scold or punish children or they will grow up to be cowards and bad hunters - in other words, one must not break a child's will, or spoil his self-confidence, his initiative, his courage - or even his obstinacy or wilfulness: these must be regarded as something good and promising for the future of his personality."

*R. Karutz, *Vorlesungen über Moralische Völkerkunde*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Stuttgart, 1933

Dr. Karutz adds this comment to the many examples he cites: "The pedagogical result of this gentle method is surely good. By general agreement the children are civil, peaceful, compatible, gentle, confident, industrious, brave, gay, not half so naughty as one would expect them to be, charming rather than wild, good and loving to their parents."

Thus we see that Rudolf Steiner's advice agrees with the ideas that prevail among primitive, uncivilized peoples. They still have a conception of the soul's existence before birth, and they revere the supersensible element that lives in a child.

"Yes, but children have to learn to obey!" is the objection. Certainly they must. But we should know how important the different age-levels are in this connection - something not usually observed carefully enough. This is even true of Jean Paul, who speaks out nonetheless in his *Levana*® against commanding and forbidding, recommending only the scarcest use of them.

If one thinks one has to enforce obedience at an early age and that one has to break down defiance and wilfulness, one will certainly get as a result what Rudolf Steiner called "a life-long sneak and a hypocrite."

A child should learn to obey by imitating, Rudolf Steiner says. Again the teaching methods of so-called primitive peoples, who still do things from instinct, show that this is the right way for the child. From Dr. Karutz' book:

"Primitive man cannot do otherwise than educate through the child's faculty of imitation, and he sets us an example for the first stage of development. 'When you sing, sing at the door so that the child passing by may learn wisdom.' This Schambala proverb shows the negro's insight into the matter, and the conviction upon which he bases his practice. A child in his first seven years does manage in passing to acquire many practical skills - in field and wood, by river and beach, in kitchen and house.

"A child learns life's realities while playing. If mother carries water, little daughter does also, in a crock just like mother's but tiny, and mother fills them both. As the little girl grows, the crock grows too. The boy grows and so does his fishing-net; at first he catches dead leaves and bits of broken dishes; in time he catches fish. So reports Nordenskiöld of the American Indians."

I wish to make it perfectly clear that in citing these examples from the life of primitive peoples I am not recommending that we return to that level of culture. What they did out of a dreamy instinct, out of an ancient, now-fading connection with the spirit world, we in this present age of awakened consciousness can try to understand with clear judgment, and can do out of our own free will, in accordance with the character of the different age-levels of the child.

Although the imitation-age ends with the seventh year, one can still use imitation for a while afterward as a pedagogical help. As Dr. Karutz points out in the same volume: "The grown-up as he works is still the natural example for the children to follow in their play, and he provides it in constant variety according to their ages, purposely giving them plenty of opportunities to observe and listen."

©Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, *Levana, or The Doctrine of Education*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1901

One will notice that the less obedience one has demanded from a child before his seventh year, the easier it is to do so afterward. Commanding and forbidding create a division; they destroy between parents and child the bond in which the forces of imitation are active. To educate a child through the use of these forces entails at first perhaps greater fantasy and ingenuity as compared to the simple task of ordering him about, threatening him, scolding him, telling him to stop. It requires a stronger self-discipline. But in the end it saves much useless energy and worry.

If mother is peeling potatoes in the kitchen, her little two-year-old daughter cannot help wanting to imitate her: an irresistible force drives her to do so. She splashes in the pan with her little hands, fingers get wet and dirty, perhaps a finger gets cut by the knife. Then the harried mother bursts out: "Stop it! let it alone!" But that's just like chopping off the spirit-hands that direct the child's physical hands. Naturally it is more work and less convenient for mother to get up every moment, wash hands, wipe them, try to find the child a different toy. But as long as she peels potatoes her child can only want to do the same. In most cases she would be perfectly content to use a little wooden knife that her father could whittle for her; and if she had her own little bowl with two or three potatoes in it, she would be supremely happy to do her work whenever mother calls, "Come, you may help me peel potatoes!"

Of course there are many kinds of work a child cannot and should not imitate. One should try to engage in these at a time when the child is not watching. With a little ingenuity one can work out many things. The idea is not only not to bid and forbid, but also in their place to do something that is suitable for the child, to set it an example with the help of imitation so that it likes to do things that are worthwhile and avoids doing things that are not worthwhile.

Jean Paul speaks from his heart when he says in *Levana*: "Do not find pleasure in bidding and forbidding, but rather in a free imaginative handling of your child. Frequent commands benefit the parent, but not the child."

If a child does things that could hurt him, things from which we should protect him, for instance like touching a hot stove, it is better to let him find out on his own body how it feels to be burnt. Then one never has to tell him again. From greater dangers one has to protect him in some way or other by careful thought. For instance, one will not run the hot water first, but the cold, into the bathtub while the child is playing nearby, in case he should fall in! Even so there will be occasions when a child has to learn from his own deeds about Nature's "iron necessity"; it will be an important experience for him when he learns that Earth has laws that cannot be broken, laws that set a limit to man's seemingly unlimited freedom. The inevitable consequence of natural laws — and they are really divine laws! — must foreshadow the moral laws which we adults present to a child, at first by just the actions of our lives, later in words. That is why we should be careful if we want to be law-givers in the child's world. For reprimands and explanations of a necessary command, however well-meant, are already an admission of feeble authority. A child should obey out of his love for the adult, and because for him whatever the adult says is right! At this age a child does not yet have the capacity for logical thinking which he would

need in order to comprehend the rightness of a command or the reason for it. One would do well, if ever one thinks one has to give a command, to make sure first that the child has the strength to carry it out, and also the will to do it out of love for parent or teacher. If there has to be a trial of strengths, it will never go well. For even if one seems to emerge the victor, then the child's will has been seriously crippled and he becomes 'the sneak.' And if one fails, one has lost more than a battle; one has lost one's divine authority over the child.

There are many instances of naughtiness during the first seven years which we should not judge from a high-and-mighty standpoint of morality, as if we were God Himself, angry and avenging. We simply should not take them too seriously. Reprimands, punishment, drawing so much attention to them, can just bury them deeper in the child's soul. It is much better to overlook them in a big-hearted way, to see and yet not to see. Goethe once said to Eckermann that many bits of childhood naughtiness fall away of themselves, like twigs on a little tree while it is growing.

Rudolf Steiner expressed the same thing when a mother complained about her children's spitting, stamping their feet, grimacing and other nasty, small tricks: "Those things are not defects of character. By the time they are thirty years of age, they won't do them any more."

The more laws a government passes, the less they are obeyed. Let us not make laws for children at the age when they are unable to obey them or to understand the reasons for them. The authority of the lawgiver must remain supreme. He must be concealed, as it were, in the clouds of Sinai until the children have reached the stage where they are able to feel his presence, and to sense through him the divine Lawgiver Who rules the natural world and the moral world too.

—ALFRED SCHREIBER

(translated by Gladys Hahn and Clara von Woedke)

WHAT ABOUT ADULT DELINQUENCY?

A talk given in March, 1963, at the Anthroposophical Society. Gladys Hahn and her husband, William Hahn, are founders and former directors of Downingtown Special School, Downingtown, Pa.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I would hardly presume to speak of those mighty cosmic beings with whom Rudolf Steiner associates evil: Lucifer and Ahriman. May I just remind you that Lucifer and Ahriman are not simply sitting on their thrones in some nether kingdom: they are *in us* - living and working in us and through us. When we speak of evil we cannot say "They", however much we would like to - we have to say "we". And so let me talk about us, you and myself.

It is we in whom Lucifer and Ahriman live, we who are the environment for a newly born child, in some relation or other—parent, neighbor, uncle, friend. He comes into our midst and he must accept the world as we give it to him. He comes from a divine spiritual world, he is like a tiny angel coming among us, and he looks at us and at our world in wonder - wide-eyed, solemn wonder. You all know that look!

Have you ever tried to find your earliest childhood memory? I would like to tell you mine. It consists of just two picture flashes. I must have been

three years old. First I am in a sleigh, driving with my father at sunset-time over crusty snow, and my memory is of the magic sparkle of the snow. Then (with no transition) I am in a room, a woman is lifting me into a chair, and on the table in front of me, waiting for me, is an apple. The apple is brightest red, and perfectly, perfectly round. It is as though I saw roundness for the first time. I have no memory of eating the apple - in fact, there are no more details in either picture: just the marvel of the glistening snow, and then the astonishing redness and roundness of that apple. The wonder which that child felt is the experience of every small child.

Have you ever watched small children running about in a field in the country? They are just part of the tall grass waving in the wind; they are just brothers and sisters of the buttercups and daisies nodding first one way, then another. If you ask them to pick you a bouquet they pull the flowers quite fast as they rush about, not choosing, quite unaware that to a grownup a withered flower is less beautiful than a fresh young one. They do not look at the flowers with a detached, esthetic eye. They and the flowers are just one family. They and the flowers have the radiance of the spiritual world still around them.

And into what sort of world do we welcome these small humans just out of Heaven? We don't worry much about it, do we? Don't you think we are stupidly complacent about our everyday world—forgetting that we have made it into an adults' world? As the baby crawls about our house, over the cold vinyl floors that we think are so smart, around the twisty metal legs of our modern chairs, past the flicker and blast and rubbish of the TV, past the artificial flowers on the little tables, over or around or under the telephone wire, the lampwire here, the lampwire there, the toaster wire, the ironing wire, as he stops in front of the whirling dishwasher, the roaring washing-machine, the grinding vacuum cleaner: as he absorbs all this from morning till night, day after day after day (and this is just in the house alone, and just external things) - as he absorbs all this, we forget - don't we? - that he has just come from a spiritual sphere, and has plunged right down into the most materialistic civilization of all time. We are complacent. And I think we are almost blind to a child's sensitivity as he somehow learns to cope with our artificial, ugly world.

I knew a boy who at three years of age was taken traveling with his parents. They were staying at a hotel in a small town; it was New Year's Eve. When the child had gone to sleep, the parents left him and went downstairs to the dance floor just below their room, to watch a Masked Costume Ball. As midnight approached, the noise of the drunken revel increased, and at the height of it the door of the dance-room opened, and in came the tiny child - in his pajamas, of course — calling anxiously for his mother. His entrance only made the people crazier as they crowded around him, the weird, howling, masked creatures; there was even a Mephisto coming toward him. The child shrieked with terror and could not be comforted by his mother. The next day he was a little human wreck, silent, withdrawn, deathly pale; and in his whole life he never recovered his normal mentality.

I knew another boy, Allen, who at four years of age was compelled by a force beyond his control to respond to every mechanical noise he heard. Not by imitating it, but by expressing the insistence of it. For instance, if

the oil-burner clicked on in the cellar and started working, Allen would throw himself on the floor, put his ear down to listen, then jump up and make some tense, shaking movement. When the telephone rang, we saw the shock of it and the jangle of it in Allen's instant response. During his waking life the mechanical things were like demons pursuing him, and he never became free of them.

I knew another boy, Paul, who at five years of age had to walk the designs of the rugs he found on floors, or linoleums, up and down, round and round, endlessly. He had to trace the wallpaper designs with his finger in the air, in their monotonous repetition over and over - or even the lines of the picture-frames on the wall. He was caught as if mesmerized by these things of our adult world.

"Oh", you will say, 'those are extreme cases!' Yes, in a sense. But they were happy, intelligent children first. And they were only a little more sensitive, only a little more vulnerable than is every child in this world.

Children often try to protect themselves from our adult monstrosities. Take Tommy, for instance, a little five-year-old who came to spend a summer at camp. He was the only child of sophisticated parents; they lived in the center of New York City, in an apartment that had been "done", as we say, by a professional decorator. I remember the living room walls: dark grey, with bursts of brass here and there. As the weeks of the summer went by, I found Tommy was gathering a pile of large, husky stones; he brought them back one by one from walks and kept them in a sunny spot. One day I said to him, "Tommy, what are you going to do with those stones?" He said, "I'm getting them ready to take home with me in September, home to my mother's apartment in New York." I said, "Do you like them so much, Tommy?" He took one up in his hands and said, "Yes - don't you see why? - because they're so warm and comfortable."

Another child came for a summer: Diane, from a wealthy modern home. She had two débutante stepsisters, and the whole household was geared to their fancy life. The day after Diane's arrival I noticed that she was not playing with the other children; she was sitting in the swing most of the day, not even swinging. All she could see from where she sat was a bit of lawn, some old trees, a brown cow off in the field. I was worried that she might be homesick, for we were all strangers to her, so finally I went out and walked along by the swing, and said, "Hello, Diane, are you all right?" She answered in a hard little voice, "I'm going to stay here forever and ever." She had found an escape, apparently, from the artificial trappings and conventions in which she had been caught.

We grown-ups are so involved in those trappings and conventions, aren't we? - we are hardly aware of the extent. We allow the conventions - and the contraptions - to entangle us, don't we? And then we think out such clever thoughts to justify them, to encompass them. And we lead our children into that kind of thinking. We *push* our school-children into it. I could give plenty of examples. The baby is hardly up on his feet before we start teaching him how to think clever little thoughts.

A child does not yet have neat, rectangular thoughts in ordered rows in his brain. A child has lively images weaving around him like an aura - they are so lively, you can almost see them! It is his fantasy, that the Gods

have given him. It is a luminous bridge They have provided for him to travel on, so that he may cross over slowly from Their shining moral world into our drab, calculating world. And may They forgive us! - for do we appreciate the child's fantasy? Most of us think it's "cute". Do we realize its importance in the child-nature? its significance for humanity as a whole? particularly for this present epoch of intellectualism?

I sat outdoors one day in summer and watched as a very small girl took a very large basket and proceeded to travel over the lawn with it, breaking off the tips of the blades of grass and putting these green morsels one by one into the enormous basket. She went slowly, and after a long time I called to her, "What are you doing, Deborah?" She turned around and called back to me, "I'm picking spinach." Then she turned back to her self-appointed task. It was like watching a dream. I felt sure that she was talking to the grass, and the grass to her.

One day I watched a boy and girl playing. The boy tied a rope under the little girl's arms, gathered up his reins, and galloped her off at a good speed. When they came in sight again, he guided her over to a fence and tied the reins around the post. He sauntered off. She stood there, quiet, head down. Ten minutes went by; she still stood there, quiet, head down. Ten more minutes went by; no sign of the boy, so I went down to speak to the horse. I said, "Jeddy seems to have forgotten you. I don't think that's quite fair. Shall I untie you?" "Oh, no!" she said, "I'm the horse! Jeddy's gone to see a man, and I have to wait." I looked around the corner of the house. There was Jeddy down by the barn, sitting on top of a gate, talking and talking quite loudly, with plenty of gestures, to his imaginary man. I left them after that, but I've always hoped since that as I went into the house I had the sense to get a handful of sugar for that good little horse.

Once in the city I watched some school-children playing for weeks in a vacant lot. It was next to a church that was being rebuilt, and the workmen had thrown out the frame of a central church window. No glass - I checked on that - just the empty frame, with large and small shapes in it. The children sat on the thin edges, they stepped from one space to another, they sat again; they seemed to speak very little. I wondered as I watched them from my window what they were playing. One day they told me: that was the floor of their palace. - Can you see it? - Every day after school they went to live in it; they were king and queen, princesses, lords and ladies. Mind you, this was on a city street, with building going on right next to them. But the children had escaped from the city. - Can you still see their beautiful palace? - Whatever the intellectual pressure had been at school each day, they relieved it afterward by their fantasy. They did this instinctively, out of their own wisdom, for their own joy.

Another child I knew was not so fortunate as they. David, three years of age, was a bright, happy child. His father was highly intellectual and began to teach him to read and write. David learnt so easily that his father began to teach him Hebrew also. So that while he was still three years old David was reading and writing English and reading and writing Hebrew. But then he began to change, and before many months had gone by, he had completely withdrawn from the world into which his father had been forcing him. He became a silent boy with a stony face. And now - in this epoch of intellectual culture, as we call it - David has spent his life shut up in an institution.

Ladies and gentlemen! we can hardly say it was the father's fault alone. Evil is not so simple as that. We are all to blame for David's ruined life. We are all unobserving, uncomprehending, almost blind to the delicacy of a child's nature, and to the intensity of his experience of our world and of us. Rudolf Steiner has pointed it out to us often enough. But it takes us a long time to learn the lesson. And Time is running out!

For those of us who are in earnest, Rudolf Steiner has described the children's needs, what we must do for them, and especially what we must *be* for them. And for those of us who are concerned for humanity as a whole, Rudolf Steiner points to impulses which human beings do now bring with them into earth-life, impulses which could keep the materialistic forces in their proper place: impulses to find spiritual reality. And more - impulses of the human ego for sacrifice rather than for self-glory. And Rudolf Steiner points to that Being Who can, Who does balance the forces of evil, the Being Whom coming generations will recognize more and more clearly if we allow them to be free.

—GLADYS HAHN

PRAYER

For very small children to be spoken by the mother or another adult, 'in a singing tone'; it is good if the child falls asleep, listening.

Light! may it pour into you, take hold of you.
I will follow its rays with the warmth of my love.
I will think with my mind's most joyous thoughts
Upon the stirrings of your heart.
 My thoughts shall strengthen you;
 My thoughts shall carry you;
 My thoughts shall cleanse you.
I wish to summon upon the steps you take in life
All my joyous thoughts,
That they may join themselves to your life-will,
Which should then find itself
Throughout the world
Ever more
By its own strength.

—RUDOLF STEINER
(translated by Ruth Pusch)

THE SEVEN RAVENS

(Play for First Grade)

Stars: Sometimes we sparkle in the night;
Sometimes we're hidden by daytime light,
But we have watched with patient eyes
All things that move below the skies.

(Father enters)

A father once had seven sons,
But of daughters he had none.

Father: How I wish my eighth-born child
Might be a girl, all fair and mild.

Nurse enters,
saying:

Good news! Good news! for she is born,
A little girl this very morn!
She's small and weak, but with great care
She yet may grow up strong and fair.

(Nurse leaves)

Father: Hasten, boys, straight to the spring.
Dip water for her christening.

(Seven brothers enter)

1st brother: Come on, my brothers, I've such a thirst.

2nd brother: No, give me the pitcher; let *me* be first.

Brothers go off, skipping and singing:

Through the meadow now we go,
To the spring where waters flow.
Tra la la la la la,
Tra la la la la la.

(Mother enters with the baby, accompanied by the nurse)

Mother: Oh, I hope our sons will hurry.
She's so weak that I must worry.
What if she died before they came?
Her brothers would have to bear the shame.

Father: What idle games; they don't come back!
I wish they would turn into ravens, all black!

(Mother, Father and Nurse see the ravens and exit)

Stars: No one could undo the spell,
But the girl grew strong and well.

(Enter two neighbors, girl and mother)

1st Neighbor: She is lovely, but when she came
Seven brothers were lost!

2nd Neighbor: Was *she* to blame?

Little girl: What! Had I brothers, did they say?
 Oh Mother, where are they? Tell me, I pray.

Mother: As seven black ravens they flew far away,
 But where they are living, there's no one can say.
 (Exit Mother and neighbors)

Little girl: Now I must find them, wherever they've fled.
 I've bread and some water, and earth for my bed.
 The sun sees all that happens each day.
 I'll go there and ask him to show me the way.

Enter sun: Don't come too close, or look in my face!
 You'll burn and blaze if you enter this place.
 (Sun exits)

Little girl: The moon is more gentle and guards the night.
 Perhaps she has seen seven ravens in flight.

Enter moon: This place is cold and dark and still.
 There's only ice; you'll catch a chill.
 (Moon exits)

Little girl: Then I'll ask the stars with their many eyes.
 Perhaps they know where a raven flies.

Stars: Long is her journey—she travels so far.
 But look! She comes near to the morning star!

Morning Star: Little girl, you need not fear.
 You'll find peace and rest when you enter here.

Little girl: You sparkling stars who are so kind,
 My seven brothers I hope to find.

A star: Take this key to the crystal door;
 Then enter the cave and search no more.

Stars: Quickly she goes to the door of ice,
 But the key is lost! She must pay the price.

Enter Dwarf: Your little finger you must give
 If you would let your brothers live.

Little girl: This sacrifice I'll also make,
 Since it's for my brothers' sake.

Dwarf: The right to enter you have earned.
 By evening the ravens will have returned.
 (They go in. Dwarf sets table. Girl divides her bread and pours her water.)

Little girl: Here's a bit of bread and drink.

Dwarf: Listen! Here they come, I think.
 (Girl hides. Ravens come flying in and sit down at the table.)

Ravens: All day our wings have swept the sky,
 But cold is the shelter to which we must fly.

