The Christoph von Schmid Collection

The Good and the Beautiful Library
Beloved nineteenth-century priest and teacher Christoph von Schmid had a beautiful and engaging way of teaching important moral principles. He believed children learn and cherish these truths best when taught by the examples of relatable and admirable characters.

In this captivating collection of stories, readers come to know and love faithful Mina, whose simple, earthen water pitcher brings remarkable blessings; wise Frederic Vollmar and a sacred painting that reveals a generation-long mystery; and honest Mary, with her beautifully woven basket of flowers that both condemns and liberates her. Though they each face difficult trials, these characters learn the value of trusting and loving God completely and witness the blessings that come when they put Him before all else.
The Christoph von Schmid Collection

Christoph von Schmid

Christoph von Schmid.

Wood engraving by Karl Meier around the year 1850.

1768–1854
# Table of Contents

## The Water Pitcher

I. Mr. Albert Frank ........................................... 1  
II. The Young Water Carrier ............................... 6  
III. The Old Servant Maid ................................. 10  
IV. Wilhelmina ............................................... 14  
V. Miss Sax .................................................. 19  
VI. The Suitor ............................................... 22  
VII. Noble Conduct of the Young Couple .......... 25

## The Best Inheritance

I. The Vollmar Family .................................... 33  
II. The Blind Old Man ................................... 41  
III. The Ecce Homo ....................................... 49  
IV. The Treasure .......................................... 56  
V. Important Family Papers ......................... 61  
VI. The Parting Feast .................................... 67

## The Basket of Flowers

I. The Gardener’s Daughter ............................... 81  
II. The Basket of Flowers ................................ 88  
III. The Missing Ring ..................................... 94  
IV. Mary in Prison ......................................... 100  
V. The Trial .................................................. 105  
VI. A Painful Meeting ..................................... 109
THE WATER CRITCHE
Mr. Albert Frank was a very worthy man and had the highest character among his fellow citizens for honesty, prudence, and high principle. In all his business, he was a model of order and punctuality; but in his habits and the general tenor of his life, he was an oddity. He still dressed in the fashion of the last century. On Sundays his usual dress was a large, round, unpowdered wig, a neckcloth of the finest white linen, a frock of cinnamon brown, cut in the old fashion with large buttons covered with gold lace. The same taste was visible in his house. The furniture of the chambers, the tapestry, the frames of the pictures and mirrors, tables, chairs, and sideboard were all of costly material, but entirely out of fashion.
The writing desk of walnut, with its old drawers, was the very one which had been used by his grandfather, and the cumbersome armchair still held the place it had held three generations before.

The habits of the family were also in accordance with old custom. They rose early and were in bed early. No candle was ever used in the house of a summer evening, nothing but the lamp in the hall which was kept up during the night. Though Mr. Frank was the richest merchant in the town, he would gather up bits of thread and pieces of torn paper in his counting house because, as he used to say, they could be of some use. He thought that his mercantile correspondents used entirely too much sealing wax, a custom which he severely censured, not merely for the large annual outlay in the purchase of the article, but also for the heavy additional postage on the overloaded letters. He also severely reproved the servants if the lamp in the hall was not extinguished the moment it was clear day. No wonder, then, that he was looked on as parsimonious and narrow-hearted and that many who applied to him for relief and got a severe lecture on the economy and industry called him a miser. Still there were others who applied more than once and received such liberal assistance that they were surprised at his generosity and gave him a very different character.

His son, Mr. Frederick Frank, a fine, handsome young man, had just returned from England, where he had been for some time. He was dressed in the first fashion, and people said that he and his father would assuredly fall out. But to their great surprise, the father not only had no objection to his son’s taste, but on the contrary, heartily approved it. The first commercial families in the city would be happy to have young Frederick as their son-in-law, but the common report was that the only
son of old Mr. Frank and the only daughter of the rich Mr. Sax would be an excellent match. The two fathers had always been on excellent terms; Mr. Sax was, after Mr. Frank, the richest man in the city, and the young lady was beautiful, talented, and highly accomplished, so that the union was regarded as certain. Frederick, it was said, paid more attention to the young lady than to any other in town, and the father also, it was believed, was favorably inclined. But suddenly the friendly intercourse of the families was interrupted, and all rumors of marriage ceased. People were utterly at a loss to know the cause. “No doubt,” said they, “it must be some oddity of that singular old Frank.”

The report soon went out that young Frederick had given his affections to a young lady who, even her enemies were compelled to admit, was beautiful and virtuous, but who had not a hundred florins fortune. “Impossible!” was the general cry. “Impossible! The father will never tolerate such a marriage.” The whole town laughed at the rumor until it was positively announced that Mr. Frederick Frank and Miss Wilhelmina Grünheim were really to be married on a certain day. Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the whole town at this unexpected news.

The old gentleman very seldom saw large companies or was a guest at public entertainments. He could not endure these boisterous meetings and fatiguing pleasures, which were kept up till a late hour of the night. Every person was sure that the wedding would be very private. But far from it; old Mr. Frank invited all his respectable townsmen and all those with whom he had any connection. All joyfully accepted the invitation—all except Mr. Sax, his wife, and daughter, who left the town a few days before.

The guests all expected a marriage party in the old style. “No doubt,” said they, “we shall all be ranged in the
The Vollmar family, which consisted of the father, Frederic Vollmar, an eminent merchant, his wife Teresa, a most amiable lady, and two promising children, Maximilian and Fanny, was one of the richest and, what is far better, one of the worthiest in the great commercial city where they resided. Mr. Vollmar had inherited from his father a very extensive and flourishing trade and, by his own talents, industry, and integrity, had enlarged and improved it and acquired a very considerable fortune. But he was not unduly elevated by his prosperity and would often say to his wife, “Dear Teresa, everything that we possess is the
The Best Inheritance

gift of God, but our children are our richest treasures, and to bring them up well is our first and most essential obligation.”

Up to the period at which our tale commences, Vollmar had been uniformly successful in all his commercial undertakings, but a reverse came at last. One morning, as he sat at the breakfast table with his wife and children, the postman brought him a letter which announced that an extensive house with which he had been connected had most unexpectedly failed and that their liabilities reached to an enormous amount.

This was a great blow for Mr. Vollmar: a large portion of his property was lost, but as he had not been puffed up by prosperity and wealth, so neither was he cast down by misfortune and failure. “The Lord gave; the Lord hath taken away!” said he to his wife, and she unhesitatingly added, “Blessed be the name of the Lord!”

Vollmar took advantage of this melancholy event to impress a lesson on his children.

“This,” said he, “is what I have always said to you: we must never place our trust in the wealth of this world, but only in God, who gives and takes it away and who can restore it to us when it accords with His all-wise designs. This is a truth which you may clearly learn from the history of your grandfather and great-grandfather, whose portraits, as you see from their richly gilt frames, are the most cherished ornaments of this apartment. Your great-grandfather, Lucas Vollmar, who was my grandfather, was by far the richest man in this city. If all that we have or ever had were put together, it would be but a trifle compared with his enormous property. But he lost all in the Thirty Years’ War, of which you have often heard. He was obliged to fly from the enemy. My grandmother did not long survive this affliction; she died a little before
her husband was compelled to fly from his home; their only son, my father, was an infant at the time, and my grandfather took him with him in his flight. Soon after this the city was hard pressed by the enemy: numberless balls and shells, which are even to this day occasionally found in the walls, were thrown into the town, and many houses were leveled to the ground. A large shell fell into this very house in which we are now living and damaged it exceedingly, without, however, setting it on fire. The city was sacked and pillaged—numberless families were reduced to the most extreme distress, and many were carried off by famine and pestilence. It was indeed a time of affliction and sorrow.

“Meanwhile, my grandfather was residing in a foreign country where he was sorely pressed by want, for though he had provided himself with a large sum of money for his journey, he had the misfortune of being plundered by the enemy upon the road. The friends on whose assistance he had calculated received him with great coldness. As long as he was rich, they had treated him with deference, but now that he was visited by misfortune, they would hardly recognize him, and he thought himself very fortunate in being able to obtain a trifling subordinate appointment in the commissariat department. He placed his son, Hugh, my father, as soon as he was old enough, as apprentice in a respectable mercantile house some miles distant from the place where he resided; but when the boy was scarcely fourteen years old, his father was suddenly carried off by a violent fever which prevailed in the district in consequence of the war. As soon as he suspected that his death was approaching, he dispatched a special messenger to summon his beloved and only son, Hugh, with all speed to his deathbed. But he only arrived to behold his dear father a corpse and to bathe his pallid face with
The Basket of Flowers
Chapter One

The Gardener’s Daughter

The simple story which is told in this little book treats of things which happened a long time ago in a foreign country where the manners and customs are widely different from our own. It is necessary to explain this at the beginning because the reader will meet with incidents in the narrative which would otherwise seem strange and inconsistent. Two lessons which the story teaches, however, may be learned in all countries. The first is that the human heart has from the beginning been full of sin, producing, for the most part, evil fruit, which results in misery; and in the second place, that there is only one remedy for this state of the soul, the remedy of God’s Holy Spirit, which, wherever it enters, produces the fruits of righteousness and perfect peace. It is because we believe that the study of these opposing principles, as exhibited in the experience of others, may be profitable to young readers that the story of The Basket of Flowers is now presented.
James Rode, who, with his daughter Mary, forms the subject of our tale, lived over one hundred years ago in the village of Eichberg in Germany. When he was very young, his parents sent him to be trained as a gardener in the beautiful grounds of the Count of Eichberg. James was a bright, intelligent lad, fond of work, and of an amiable disposition, and he soon made himself a favorite with the people among whom he associated. His happy, genial disposition, and his readiness to oblige, endeared him to all with whom he came in contact. The secret of James’ character lay deeper than mere disposition. He had early given his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the amiable qualities which he now displayed were the fruits of the Holy Spirit which had been implanted in him. But it was not only among his companions that James was well liked. He was a favorite with the count’s children, and so modest and unassuming was his behavior that he was sometimes allowed to be in the castle with them and to share in the lessons which they got.

Being of an intelligent turn of mind, James profited by all the advantages which his position gave him, and, after his engagement was completed, the Count offered him a well-paid position in his large household at Vienna. It was a temptation for James, who had the ambition common to young men, and, but for one thing, he would have gladly accepted his master’s offer. The count was a kind man, but he was not a Christian, and God was not honored in his household. James knew that if he took the place in his house, he might be asked to do things which, as a Christian, he believed to be wrong, and so he decided to refuse the offer, tempting as it was, and to remain in the humble position in which he had been born. The count was not offended with James for his decision, and to show his respect for him, he gave him an easy lease of a little
The Gardener’s Daughter

property, consisting of a cottage, a well-stocked orchard, and a kitchen garden.

By and by James married a young woman whose principles, like his own, were deeply religious, and together they lived in comfort and harmony many years. Then children came to brighten their life, but one after another were taken away, and at last only Mary remained, whose history this story is mainly occupied in telling.

When James Rode was a little over sixty years of age, his wife died. Mary was now five years old and a fine, beautiful girl. The neighbors were foolish enough sometimes to call her pretty to her face, and, although this was a dangerous thing to do, it had not the effect of spoiling her. Besides being beautiful in face, Mary had a beautiful character and was modest and obedient and possessed unbounded love for her father. When she came to be fifteen years of age, she became her father’s housekeeper, and so thorough and constant were her habits of cleanliness that the kitchen utensils shone brightly enough to be easily mistaken for new.

We have already informed our readers that her father, James Rode, earned his living as a gardener. Twice a week he carried the vegetables and fruit which he cultivated to
the nearest market town. But, while the growing of fruits and vegetables had to be looked after in order to secure his subsistence, his greatest delight was in the cultivation of flowers, and in this pleasant task, Mary assisted him every hour which she could spare from the work of the house. She counted the hours devoted to this task among the happiest of her life, for her father had the art of turning labor into pleasure by his interesting and entertaining conversation. To Mary, who had grown up, as it were, in the midst of plants, there had come a natural taste for flowers, and the garden was to her a little world. She was never at a loss for a delightful occupation, for every hour which she had at her disposal was spent in cultivating the young plants with the utmost care.

Specially did she find pleasure in studying the buds of every strange species. Her young imagination delighted in picturing what kind of flowers they would become, and so impatient was she to see her expectations fulfilled that she was hardly able to wait until the flowers had unfolded. When the flower for which she had waited appeared in all its beauty, the sight filled her with a strange joy. In truth, there was not a day which did not bring some new pleasure to Mary’s heart. Sometimes, it was by a stranger passing the garden and stopping to admire the beauty of the flowers. The children of the neighborhood, as they passed on their way to school, never failed to peep through the hedge and were generally rewarded by Mary with some little present of flowers as a token of her goodwill.

James, as a wise father, knew how to direct the taste of his daughter toward the most noble ends. Often he used to say, “Let others spend their money on jewels and silks and other adornments; I will spend mine for flower seeds. Silks and satins and jewels cannot procure for our children