**About the author**



Selma Lagerlof (1858-1940) was a Swedish writer whose stories have been

translated into many languages. This story is set in the middle of  the mines

of Sweden which are rich in iron ore. The story is narrated in the manner of

a fairy tale. It gives us the message that the emotions of love and acceptance

can reform others.

**The Rattrap Summary**

The Rattrap is a story about a rattrap seller who leads a very poor life as his

earnings are very low. He has to resort to thievery and begging to make

both ends meet.

He is alone in this whole world and leads a miserable life.

So he starts knitting up various kinds of thoughts. One of

these thoughts is of supposing the whole world as a big

rattrap. His views are that the world offers us

various types of baits in the form of comforts of life.

This in return traps us into the rattrap of the world

and leads us to various types of miseries.

Every night, the peddler had to search for shelter as he has no home. One evening he was offered shelter by an old crofter. The next morning he stole the crofter’s money which he had earned by selling his cow’s milk. To safeguard himself, the peddler chose the path through the forest which was secluded, but soon found himself trapped in the forest as he wasn’t able to find the way out of the dense forest. Later on, he finds a way to a forge and takes shelter there. Something unusual happens. The ironmaster mistakes him as an old friend and invites him to his house. The poor peddler rejects the offer due to the fear of being caught. Soon he is invited by the ironmaster‘s daughter. The next morning he is somehow stopped by the ironmaster’s daughter for Christmas Eve even after being caught that he was a peddler and not Captain Stalhe.

The next day after Christmas, when the iron master and his daughter visit the church, they come to know that the man is a thief who had stolen money from the old crofter. The iron master and his daughter repent for sheltering a thief and wonder at what all things he would have stolen by that time. Here comes a twist as instead of stealing, the peddler gifts the ironmaster’s daughter a rattrap. She finds a letter of thanks and the stolen money inside the rattrap. The peddler thanks Edla for her kindness and requests her to return the stolen money to the crofter.  This story gives us the message that goodness in a human being can be awakened at any time with your own good deeds.

**The Rattrap Explanation**

Once upon a time there was a man who went around selling small

rattraps of wire. He made them himself at odd moments, from the

material he got by begging in the stores or at the big farms. But even so,

the business was not especially profitable, so he had to resort to both

begging and petty thievery to keep body and soul together. Even so,

his clothes were in rags, his cheeks were sunken, and hunger gleamed

in his eyes.

**Odd Moments: A short period of free time.  
Sunken: lowered  
Gleamed: Shone**

*Once there was a man who used to sell small rattraps made of wire.*

*These rattraps were made by him in his free time.*

*He used to collect the material required by begging from stores or big farms. Still his business was not earning him any profits. Therefore, he had to beg*

*or steal in order to survive. His clothes were old and torn. His cheeks*

*were lowered inside due to malnutrition and one could easily see*

*the hunger in his eyes.*



No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can appear to such a

vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations. But one

day this man had fallen into a line of thought, which really seemed to him

entertaining.

**Monotonous: boring  
Vagabond: wanderer  
Plods: walks heavily**

*The life of the rattrap seller was very sad and boring. He was homeless*

*and slowly, with heavy feet, he walked along the road, lost in his own*

*thoughts. But one day he got lost in a series of thoughts which he found*

*very interesting.*

He had naturally been thinking of his rattraps when suddenly he

was struck by the idea that the whole world about him — the whole

world with its lands and seas, its cities and villages — was nothing but

a big rattrap. It had never existed for any other purpose than to set baits

for people. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing,

exactly as the rattrap offered cheese and pork, and as soon as anyone

let himself be tempted to touch the bait, it closed in on him, and then

everything came to an end.

**Bait: Food placed on a hook to trap a rat, here it is referred to the comforts of life, which is offered to trap someone  
Tempted: convinced**

*The man was thinking about the rattrap and suddenly, a thought came to*

*his mind that the whole world which includes land, sea, cities and villages*

*was similar to a rattrap. He thought that there was no meaning of the*

*existence of this world. It was nothing but a temptation, just like cheese*

*and pork which we offer as bait to catch the rat. So according to him, as*

*soon as someone tries to comfort himself with joy, food and shelter he at*

*once gets trapped into this rattrap which is known as ‘world’.*

The world had, of course, never been very kind to him, so it gave him

unusual joy to think ill of it in this way. It became a cherished pastime

of his, during many dreary ploddings, to think of people he knew who

had let themselves be caught in the dangerous snare, and of others who

were still circling around the bait.

**Cherished: to love, protect  
Dreary: dull  
Ploddings: walk heavily  
Snare: trap**

*No one in the world had ever been kind to the rattrap seller. So, he started*

*thinking ill of others. It became a favorite pastime for him. During dull*

*moments, these thoughts made him happy. So, he continued with thinking*

*ill of those who were known to him. He would imagine those people who*

*were already trapped in the rattrap of worldly things and also those who*

*were about to get trapped in it.*



One dark evening as he was trudging along the road he caught sight of a

little gray cottage by the roadside, and he knocked on the door to ask

shelter for the night. Nor was he refused. Instead of the sour faces which

ordinarily met him, the owner, who was an old man without wife or child,

was happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness.  
Immediately he put the porridge pot on the fire and gave him supper; then

he carved off such a big slice from his tobacco roll that it was enough both

for the stranger’s pipe and his own. Finally he got out an old pack of cards

and played ‘mjolis’ with his guest until bedtime.

**Trudging: walking slowly  
Carved off: to divide something into parts  
mjolis: a game played with playing cards**

*One evening the rattrap seller was walking very slowly. He saw a little*

*gray cottage which stood by the road. He went up to the cottage and*

*knocked at the door so as to get shelter for the night. Generally he was*

*not helped by anyone but this time he was welcomed by the old man*

*into his cottage. He was a lonely old man without wife and kids. The*

*old man was happy to get company that night. So, the old man gave him*

*some porridge to eat and then shared his tobacco with the guest. After this,*

*both played cards till bedtime.*

The old man was just as generous with his confidences as with his porridge

and tobacco. The guest was informed at once that in his days of prosperity

his host had been a crofter at Ramsjo Ironworks and had worked on the

land. Now that he was no longer able to do day labour, it was his cow

which supported him. Yes, that bossy was extraordinary. She could give

milk for the creamery every day, and last month he had received all of

thirty kronor in payment.

**Generous: liberal  
Confidences: Secrets  
Prosperity: riches  
Crofter: A person who works on a rented  farm  
Bossy: Latin word ‘bos’ used for a cow  
Creamery: A factory that produces cheese and cream  
Kronor: Currency of Sweden**



*The rattrap seller felt that the old man was not only liberal in sharing his*

*porridge but also his secrets. He tells him that he was a rich man when he*

*used to work on the rented farm. As he was old now and couldn’t work, so,*

*he had to depend upon his cow for his living. The cow  gave enough milk*

*everyday to be sold in the factory that produced cheese and cream.*

*The old man said that he was able to earn thirty kronors last month because*

*of the cow’s milk.*



The stranger must have seemed incredulous, for the old man got up and

went to the window, took down a leather pouch which hung on a nail in the

very window frame, and picked out three wrinkled ten-kronor bills. These

he held up before the eyes of his guest, nodding knowingly, and then

stuffed them back into the pouch.

**Incredulous: unbelieving  
Stuffed: to fill up with something**

*The rattrap seller did not believe the old man’s words that a cow could*

*earn him so much. Therefore, the old man took a leather pouch which*

*hung on a window and took out three notes of  ten kronor each which were*

*old and crushed. He showed those currency notes to make him believe*

*his words and then kept them back in the pouch.*

The next day both men got up in good season. The crofter was in a hurry

to milk his cow, and the other man probably thought he should not stay

in bed when the head of the house had gotten up. They left the cottage

at the same time. The crofter locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

The man with the rattraps said goodbye and thank you, and thereupon

each went his own way.

In a good season: early enough

*Next morning, both the rattrap seller and the crofter woke up early as the*

*crofter was in a hurry to milk his cow. Even the rattrap seller felt that as*

*the owner of the house had awakened, so he should also leave the bed.*

*They both came out of the cottage at the same time. The old man locked*

*the door and went to his work. The rattrap seller also thanked him and*

*went his own way.*



But half an hour later the rattrap peddler stood again before the door.

He did not try to get in, however. He only went up to the window, smashed

a pane, stuck in his hand, and got hold of the pouch with the thirty kronor.

He took the money and thrust it into his own pocket. Then he hung the

leather pouch very carefully back in its place and went away.

**Peddler: seller  
Smashed: badly broken**

*After about half an hour the rattrap seller returned to the cottage and he*

*broke down the window pane where the pouch hung. He took away the*

*money, kept it in his pocket, put the pouch back at its place and  walked off.*

As he walked along with the money in his pocket he felt quite pleased

with his smartness. He realised, of course, that at first he dared not

continue on the public highway, but must turn off the road, into the woods.

During the first hours this caused him no difficulty. Later in the day it

became worse, for it was a big and confusing forest which he had

gotten into. He tried, to be sure, to walk in a definite direction,

but the paths twisted back and forth so strangely! He walked and

walked without coming to the end of the wood, and finally he realised

that he had only been walking around in the same part of the forest.



All at once he recalled his thoughts about the world and the rattrap.

Now his own turn had come. He had let himself be fooled by a bait

and had been caught. The whole forest, with its trunks and branches,

its thickets and fallen logs, closed

in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape.

**Thickets: A dense group of bushes  
Impenetrable: impassable**

*The peddler was quite happy as he had money in his pocket. He then*

*thought of walking through the forest as it was unsafe to walk on the*

*highway because he feared being caught. So, initially it was not difficult*

*to walk through the forest but later on it got confusing for him as he*

*forgot his way. He tried hard to walk in the right direction but in vain as*

*he found himself at the same place again and again. At this point of time*

*he started thinking that now he himself was caught in the trap of the*

*world just like other people. He was fooled by the bait of money which*

*he had stolen from the old man’s house. The forest seemed like a prison*

*full of trunks and branches. It was like an impassable prison.*

It was late in December. Darkness was already descending over the forest.

This increased the danger, and increased also his gloom and despair.

Finally he saw no way out, and he sank down on the ground, tired to death,

thinking that his last moment had come. But just as he laid his head on the

ground, he heard a sound—a hard regular thumping. There was no doubt

as to what that was. He raised himself. ‘‘Those are the hammer strokes

from an iron mill’’, he thought. ‘‘There must be people nearby’’.

He summoned all his strength, got up, and staggered in the direction of

the sound.

**Gloom: dark  
Despair: hopelessness  
Thumping: the sound of some heavy object beating  
Summoned: gathered  
Stagger: To walk with difficulty**  
  
*As it was the month of December, it got dark early. As it got dark, his*

*hope of escaping the forest reduced. The danger to his life increased*

*and so did his feeling of being hopeless. There was no way left for him.*

*So, he sat on the ground and was so tired and terrified that he thought*

*this was his last moment and soon he would die. As he laid his head on*

*the ground, he heard a very strong regular sound. It was a hard sound*

*that was coming at the regular intervals. He soon realized that these*

*sounds were the sounds of hammer strokes from an iron mill. He thought*

*that he could find some people nearby. With this thought, he gathered*

*some strength and started walking with great difficulty, towards the*

*direction of the sound.*

The Ramsjo Ironworks, which are now closed down, were, not so long ago,

a large plant, with smelter, rolling mill, and forge. In the summertime long

lines of heavily loaded barges and scows slid down the canal, which led

to a large inland lake, and in the wintertime the roads near the mill were

black from all the coal dust which sifted down from the big charcoal crates.

**Forge: A shop where metal is heated  
Barge: a long flat-bottomed boat for carrying freight on canals**

**and rivers.  
Scow: a flat-bottomed boat used for transporting cargo**

**to and from ships in harbor.  
sifted: descended lightly or sparsely as if sprinkled from a sieve  
Smelter:A machine in which metal is melted to form into a shape  
Rolling mill: machine to roll metal into sheets**

*The Ramsjo Ironworks was a large plant which had shut down few years*

*ago. It had smelter, rolling mill and a forge. In summers, long, flat bottomed*

*boats carrying the material would come down the canal which led to a large*

*inland lake for supplying material to the mill and in winters, the roads*

*turned black because of the coal dust that came along due to the*

*transportation of the charcoal crates.*

During one of the long dark evenings just before Christmas, the master

smith and his helper sat in the dark forge near the furnace waiting for the

crude iron, which had been put in the fire, to be ready to put on the anvil.

Every now and then one of them got up to stir the glowing mass with a

long iron bar, returning in a few moments, dripping with perspiration,

though, as was the custom, he wore nothing but a long shirt and a pair

of wooden shoes.

Anvil: a heavy iron block with a flat top and concave sides  
Perspiration: sweat

*On one long,dark evening near Christmas time, the master Smith and his*

*helper were sitting in the dark forge which was built near the furnace.*

*He was wearing a long shirt and a pair of wooden shoes. Both of them*

*were waiting for the pig iron which was put inside the furnace fire to be*

*ready to put onto the anvil. (Anvil is a heavy block with flat top which is*

*used to shape the metals.) They took turns to stir the liquid which was*

*very hot. As they could bear the heat for a few minutes, each of them*

*would return, sweating profusely.*

All the time there were many sounds to be heard in the forge. The big

bellows groaned and the burning coal cracked. The fire boy shoveled

charcoal into the maw of the furnace with a great deal of clatter. Outside

roared the waterfall, and a sharp north wind whipped the rain against the

brick-tiled roof.



**Bellows: air bag that emits a stream of air used for blowing air into a fire.  
Shoveled: move  
Maw:  jaws  
Clatter: bang  
Whipped: beaten with a whip, here to hit something**

*One could hear different types of sounds in the forge. There was a big*

*bellow which was blowing air in the fire with great sound. Also, there was*

*the sound of cracking coal. One could also hear the bang of the charcoal*

*which was being shoveled by the fire boy. The sounds which were coming*

*from outside the mill. These were of the waterfall, the high speed north*

*wind which hit the raindrops against the brick tiled roof.*

It was probably on account of all this noise that the blacksmith did not notice

that a man had opened the gate and entered the forge, until he stood close

up to the furnace.

*It was due to these different types of sounds that the blacksmith didn’t*

*realize that a man had opened the gate of the forge and had entered, till*

*he came and stood near the furnace.*

Surely it was nothing unusual for poor vagabonds without any better shelter

for the night to be attracted to the forge by the glow of light which escaped

through the sooty panes, and to come in to warm themselves in front of the

fire. The blacksmiths glanced only casually and indifferently at the intruder.

He looked the way people of his type usually did, with a long beard, dirty,

ragged, and with a bunch of rattraps dangling on his chest.

**Sooty panes: window panes covered in soot ( black powder produced when coal, wood etc is burned.**

*Many homeless people used to get attracted to the lights of the forge*

*which peeked through the window panes which were covered with*

*the black powder of burnt coal.They would seek shelter there. They*

*would warm themselves with the help of the burning fire. As the*

*blacksmiths were accustomed to visitors, they were indifferent to*

*the man. They just looked at him. The rattrap seller’s appearance*

*was similar to that of other wanderers. He had a long beard, was dirty,*

*wore old worn out clothes and had a bunch of rattraps  hanging from*

*his chest.*

***(25.05.2020)***

He asked permission to stay, and the master blacksmith nodded a

haughty consent without honoring him with a single word.

**Haughty: arrogant**

*The peddler tried to seek permission from the blacksmith so that he could*

*stay in the forge for a night. He allowed the peddler with an arrogant*

*consent by just nodding and didn’t say a single word to him.*

The tramp did not say anything, either. He had not come there to talk

but only to warm himself and sleep. In those days the Ramsjo iron mill

was owned by a very prominent ironmaster, whose greatest ambition was

to ship out good iron to the market. He watched both night and day to see

that the work was done as well as possible, and at this very moment he

came into the forge on one of his nightly rounds of inspection.

**Prominent: Important  
Tramp: vagabond, wanderer**

*The peddler also said nothing because his main aim was to warm himself*

*and sleep. The owner of the Ramsjo iron mill in those days was a very*

*ambitious person whose aim was to sell only the finest iron into the market.*

*Therefore, he used to keep a check on the workers both during the night*

*and the day. The owner was on a night inspection visit when the peddler*

*entered the forge.*

Naturally the first thing he saw was the tall ragamuffin who had eased his

way so close to the furnace that steam rose from his wet rags. The

ironmaster did not follow the example of the blacksmiths, who had hardly

deigned to look at the stranger. He walked close up to him, looked him over

very carefully, and then tore off his slouch hat to get a better view of his

face.

**Ragamuffin: A person in rags**

**Deigned: do something that one considers to be beneath one's dignity**

**Slouch hat: hat bend on one side of the head.**

*Unlike the blacksmiths, the ironmaster at once noticed the peddler who was*

*sitting so close to the furnace that steam was coming out of his torn clothes. He not only went near him but also removed the wanderer’s hat that was bent to one*

*side so that he could see the man’s face clearly.*

‘‘But of course it is you, Nils Olof!’’ he said. “How you do look!” The man

with the rattraps had never before seen the ironmaster at Ramsjo and did

not even know what his name was. But it occurred to him that if the fine

gentleman thought he was an old acquaintance, he might perhaps throw

him a couple of kronor. Therefore he did not want to undeceive him all at

once.

**Acquaintance: associate  
Undeceive: to tell someone that his belief is mistaken**

*When the iron master took off the peddler’s hat, he mistook him as an*

*old acquaintance- Nils Olof. The peddler didn’t know him nor had he seen*

*this man before. But he thought that if this man mistook him as his old*

*companion and gave him some money out of pity, then it would be a good*

*thing. Therefore, he didn’t let him know that he had mistaken him as Nils*

*Olof.*

‘‘Yes, God knows things have gone downhill with me’’, he said.  
‘‘You should not have resigned from the regiment’’, said the ironmaster.

‘‘That was the mistake. If only I had still been in the service at the time,

it never would have happened.  
Well, now of course you will come home with me.’’

**Downhill: worst  
Regiment: unit in the army or defence forces**

*So, the peddler started a conversation with the iron master by saying that*

*things didn’t went well with him. To this, the iron master replied that he had*

*made a big mistake by leaving the regiment. He also added that if he would*

*have been working in the regiment when he resigned, he wouldn’t have let*

*him do so. Later on he invited him to his home.*

To go along up to the manor house and be received by the owner like an

old regimental comrade — that, however, did not please the tramp. ‘No, I

couldn’t think of it!’’ he said, looking quite alarmed. He thought of the thirty

kronor. To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself

voluntarily into the lion’s den. He only wanted a chance to sleep here

in the forge and then sneak away as inconspicuously as possible

**Manor house: A large country house  
Comrade: A fellow soldier  
Alarmed: Frighten  
Inconspicuously: invisible or which is not noticeable**

*The rattrap seller didn’t find it to be a good idea to visit the iron master’s*

*place. He was frightened with the idea of visiting to the large house of an*

*old soldier which according to him was not safe. After all he had the stolen*

*money with him. He didn’t want to put himself in danger. His intentions were*

*to sleep in the forge and then go away from there without even being*

*noticed.*

The ironmaster assumed that he felt embarrassed because of his miserable

clothing.

‘‘Please don’t think that I have such a fine home that you cannot show

yourself there’’, He said... ‘‘Elizabeth is dead, as you may already have

heard. My boys are abroad, and there is no one at home except my oldest

daughter and myself. We were just saying that it was too bad we didn’t have

any company for Christmas. Now come along with me and help us make

the Christmas food disappear a little faster.”

*The iron master was aware of his friend’s miserable condition. So he tried*

*to make him comfortable by saying that he should feel free to come his*

*home as his home was an ordinary one. He told him that his wife was no*

*more and added that he must be aware of this. Then he let him know that*

*both his sons were settled abroad. Only he and his daughter were left at*

*home. He invited him to celebrate Christmas with his family. So, that he*

*and his daughter may have some good company at the Christmas feast.*

But the stranger said no, and no, and again no, and the ironmaster saw

that he must give in. ‘‘It looks as though Captain von Stahle preferred to

stay with you tonight, Stjernstrom’’, he said to the master blacksmith, and

turned on his heel.

*Though the ironmaster made many attempts to invite him, the peddler*

*didn’t accept his invitation. So, at last he says to the blacksmith, Stjernstrom*

*that it seemed that Captain Von Stahle (peddler) wanted to stay with him*

*in the forge.*

But he laughed to himself as he went away, and the blacksmith, who knew

him, understood very well that he had not said his last word.

*Then he laughed and went away. But the blacksmith knew that he was*

*hiding something.*

It was not more than half an hour before they heard the sound of carriage

wheels outside the forge, and a new guest came in, but this time it was

not the ironmaster. He had sent his daughter, apparently hoping that she

would have better powers of persuasion than he himself.

*After a gap of half an hour, the ironmaster sent his daughter. He hoped that*

*his daughter may bring his friend home as he believed that she was better*

*in persuading others.*



She entered, followed by a valet, carrying on his arm a big fur coat. She

was not at all pretty, but seemed modest and quite shy. In the forge

everything was just as it had been earlier in the evening. The master

blacksmith and his apprentice still sat on their bench, and iron and

charcoal still glowed in the furnace. The stranger had stretched himself

out on the floor and lay with a piece of pig iron under his head and his

hat pulled down over his eyes. As soon as the young girl caught sight of

him, she went up and lifted his hat. The man was evidently used to

sleeping with one eye open. He jumped up abruptly and seemed to

be quite frightened.

**Valet: personal attendant  
Modest: humble  
Apprentice: learner**

*The iron master’s daughter entered the mill with her attendant who*

*was carrying a big fur coat. She was a humble girl who was very shy.*

*When she entered, everyone was busy the same way as they had been*

*earlier. The blacksmith was still sitting on the bench with his trainees*

*and was working on the iron. She went up to the peddler and lifted his*

*hat. The peddler slept with one eye open and as soon as he saw her, he*

*got shocked and jumped up.*

‘‘My name is Edla Willmansson,’’ said the young girl. ‘‘My father came

home and said that you wanted to sleep here in the forge tonight, and

then I asked permission to come and bring you home to us. I am so sorry,

Captain, that you are having such a hard time.’’

*She introduced herself as Edla Williamson and was sorry to hear about*

*the hard times that he was facing. She explained to him that she had*

*come to take him home with her father’s permission.*

She looked at him compassionately, with her heavy eyes, and then she

noticed that the man was afraid. ‘‘Either he has stolen something or else

he has escaped from, jail’’, she thought, and added quickly, “You may

be sure, Captain, that you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as

you came. Only please stay with us over Christmas Eve.’’

**Compassionately: showing sympathy for others**

*Edla had sympathy for the peddler. But then she noticed that the reason*

*behind his fear could be that either he had committed robbery or jailbreak.*

*So, she said that he was free to leave their house at any time but she*

*wanted him to stay with the family just for Christmas Eve.*

She said this in such a friendly manner that the rattrap peddler must have

felt confidence in her. ‘‘It would never have occurred to me that you would

bother with me yourself, miss,’’ he said. ‘’I will come at once.’’

*Edla was talking to peddler in a very nice way which made him believe her*

*and he got ready to go with her.*



He accepted the fur coat, which the valet handed him with a deep bow,

threw it over his rags, and followed the young lady out to the carriage,

without granting the astonished blacksmiths so much as a glance. But while

he was riding up to the manor house he had evil forebodings.

**Astonished: greatly surprised  
Forebodings: a foretelling**

*The peddler wore the fur coat offered by the valet and started following*

*the lady. He didn’t even bother to notice the other people in the room.*

*On the way to the house, the peddler felt that as he had committed a*

*crime, he would be punished for it.*

‘‘Why the devil did I take that fellow’s money?’’ he thought. ‘‘Now I am

sitting in the trap and will never get out of it.’

*He started cursing himself that if he had not stolen the money, he would*

*not have got trapped like this. The money was a bait which had led him*

*into a trap.*

The next day was Christmas Eve, and when the ironmaster came into the

dining room for breakfast he probably thought with satisfaction of his old

regimental comrade whom he had run across so unexpectedly.“First of all

we must see to it that he gets a little flesh on his bones,” he said to his

daughter, who was busy at the table. “And then we must see that he gets

something else to do than to run around the country selling rattraps.”  
 **Flesh on his bones: here it means that the seller should eat good**

**food to gain some flesh on his body**

*The next day was Christmas Eve, both the ironmaster and his daughter*

*were at the dining table. The ironmaster said to his daughter that they*

*had to do something good for the peddler and should try to find some*

*better job for him.*

“It is queer that things have gone downhill with him as badly as that,” said

the daughter. “Last night I did not think there was anything about him to

show that he had once been an educated man.” “You must have patience,

my little girl,” said the father. “As soon as he gets clean and dressed up,

you will see something different. Last night he was naturally embarrassed.

The tramp manners will fall away from him with the tramp clothes.”

**Queer: strange  
Embarrassed: awkward, shy**



*The iron master’s daughter said that it was strange to see that the peddle*

*r had been in such hard times and was doubtful whether the man had*

*been educated. Hearing this, the ironmaster clarified that it was due to his*

*bad condition. He also added that the man would behave differently after*

*getting clean and dressed up.*

Just as he said this the door opened and the stranger entered. Yes, now

he was truly clean and well dressed. The valet had bathed him, cut his hair,

and shaved him.  
Moreover he was dressed in a good-looking suit of clothes which belonged

to the ironmaster. He wore a white shirt and a starched collar and whole

shoes.

**Starched collar: Starch is the stuff that makes your shirt collar look**

**crisp and fresh.  
Whole shoes: Proper fitted shoes**

*While both father - daughter were discussing about the peddler, he entered*

*the room with the valet. He was looking clean as he had bathed and his*

*hair had been cut by the valet. He was wearing the ironmaster’s clothes*

*and shoes - a shirt with a starched collar and shoes which covered the*

*entire feet.*

But although his guest was now so well groomed, the ironmaster did not

seem pleased. He looked at him with puckered brow, and it was easy to

understand that when he had seen the strange fellow in the uncertain

reflection from the furnace he might have made a mistake, but that now,

when he stood there in broad daylight, it was impossible to mistake him

for an old acquaintance. “What does this mean?” he thundered. The

stranger made no attempt to dissimulate. He saw at once that the splendor

had come to an end.

**Groomed: ready  
Puckered: wrinkle  
Dissimulate: pretend  
Splendor: luxury  
Thundered: make a loud noise**

*The ironmaster seemed very angry to see his well groomed guest as now*

*he could make out his appearance well and realized that he was not his*

*comrade. He understood that he mistook some stranger as his old friend.*

*He screamed at him and asked him to explain. The peddler knew that the*

*iron master could make out that he was not his old friend. As he already*

*knew this, he was ready for the consequences and felt that the luxurious*

*treatment was about to end.*

“It is not my fault, sir,” he said. “I never pretended to be anything but a

poor trader, and I pleaded and begged to be allowed to stay in the forge.

But no harm has been done. At worst I can put on my rags again and go

away”. “Well,” said the ironmaster, hesitating a little, “it was not quite

honest, either. You must admit that, and I should not be surprised if the

sheriff would like to have something to say in the matter.”



**Hesitating: to be reluctant  
Sheriff: chief executive officer of crown (in England)**

*The peddler tried to explain that he should not be blamed. He said that*

*he was just begging for a stay in the forge. He also said that he had not*

*harmed anyone and was ready to wear his rags again. To this, the*

*ironmaster hesitated and said that the peddler had not been quite*

*honest and so, he wanted to call the sheriff.*

The tramp took a step forward and struck the table with his fist. “Now

I am going to tell you, Mr. Ironmaster, how things are,” he said. “This

whole world is nothing but a big rattrap. All the good things that are offered

to you are nothing but cheese rinds and bits of pork, set out to drag a

poor fellow into trouble. And if the sheriff comes now and locks me up for

this, then you, Mr. Ironmaster, must remember that a day may come when

you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get

caught in the trap.”

**Fist: A person’s hand bent**

*The rattrap seller gets so enraged upon hearing about the sheriff,*

*that he struck the table very hard with his fist. He said that this world*

*is a rattrap and all the good things are a bait just like the rinds of cheese*

*and the small pieces of pork are a bait for the rat which are offered to trap it. Not only this, he also pointed out to the ironmaster that he may today be imprisoned*

*by the sheriff but one day, the ironmaster will also get trapped like this.*

***(27.05.2020)***

The ironmaster began to laugh. “That was not so badly said, my good fellow. Perhaps we should let the sheriff alone on Christmas Eve. But now get out of here

as fast as you can.”

*The iron master didn’t like the peddler’s words and decided not to call the*

*sheriff. He asked the peddler to leave at once.*

But just as the man was opening the door, the daughter said, “I think he

ought to stay with us today. I don’t want him to go.” And with that she went and closed the door. “What in the world are you doing?” said the father. The daughter

stood there quite embarrassed and hardly knew what to answer.

That morning she had felt so happy when she thought how homelike

and Christmassy she was going to make things for the poor hungry

wretch. She could not get away from the idea all at once,

and that was why she had interceded for the vagabond.

**Wretch: miserable person  
Interceded: intervened**

*The iron master’s daughter stopped the peddler. She wanted to help the*

*poor fellow. Since morning, she was planning how she could make the*

*peddler’s day happy on the occasion of Christmas. Therefore, she went*

*against her father’s will and stopped him by closing the door.*

“I am thinking of this stranger here,” said the young girl. “He walks and

walks the whole year long, and there is probably not a single place in the

whole country where he is welcome and can feel at home. Wherever he

turns he is chased away. Always he is afraid of being arrested and

cross-examined. I should like to have him enjoy a day of peace with us

here — just one in the whole year.” The ironmaster mumbled something

in his beard. He could not bring himself to oppose her. “It was all a mistake,

of course,” she continued. “But anyway I don’t think we ought to chase

away a human being whom we have asked to come here, and to whom

we have promised Christmas cheer.”

*She tried to explain the difficulties faced by the peddler. She said that he*

*didn’t have any house. He was turned out from wherever he went and he*

*always kept on running in order to safeguard himself from being arrested.*

*She said that she wanted him to enjoy Christmas with peace as they had*

*promised him. They should not send away a man on Christmas, the man*

*whom they had promised happiness on the day. The iron master was not*

*able to find an answer to go against his daughter.*

“You do preach worse than a parson,” said the ironmaster. “I only hope

you won’t have to regret this.” The young girl took the stranger by the hand

and led him up to the table.  
“Now sit down and eat,” she said, for she could see that her father had

given in.

**Preach: advice  
Parson: Churchman**

*The only thing he could say to his daughter was that she was trying good*

*at convincing others - better than the priest at the church. But he also*

*warned her that hopefully, her decision would not bring any adverse*

*effect on them. The girl took the peddler to the table and offered him food.*

*She saw that her father had consented to her wish.*

The man with the rattraps said not a word; he only sat down and helped

himself to the food. Time after time he looked at the young girl who had

interceded for him. Why had she done it? What could the crazy idea be?

*The peddler didn’t say any word and started eating. Though he was*

*doubtful about her intentions and was wondering why she stopped him.*

After that, Christmas Eve at Ramsjo passed just as it always had. The

stranger did not cause any trouble because he did nothing but sleep. The

whole forenoon he lay on the sofa in one of the guest rooms and slept at

one stretch. At noon they woke him up so that he could have his share of

the good Christmas fare, but after that he slept again. It seemed as though

for many years he had not been able to sleep as quietly and safely as here

at Ramsjo.

*The peddler went to sleep after having food. He did not cause harm to*

*anyone and lay down on the sofa in the guest house. He was once woken*

*up in the afternoon but after having his lunch he again went to sleep.*

*It was like as if he had never got the chance to sleep so peacefully as*

*he had got at this place.*

In the evening, when the Christmas tree was lighted, they woke him up

again, and he stood for a while in the drawing room, blinking as though

the candlelight hurt him, but after that he disappeared again. Two hours

later he was aroused once more. He then had to go down into the dining

room and eat the Christmas fish and porridge.



*In the evening, the family woke him as they had to light up the Christmas*

*tree. He stood there blinking as if he was getting hurt by the bright light of*

*the candles. He again went to sleep. Finally they called him again for the*

*dinner of Christmas fish and porridge.*

As soon as they got up from the table he went around to each one

present and said thank you and good night, but when he came to the

young girl she gave him to understand that it was her father’s intention

that the suit which he wore was to be a Christmas present — he did

not have to return it; and if he wanted to spend next Christmas Eve in

a place where he could rest in peace, and be sure that no evil would

befall him, he would be welcomed back again.

*After the dinner was over, the peddler thanked everyone present.*

*The ironmaster’s daughter said that the clothes which were given to him*

*were a Christmas present from her father. So, he could carry them with him. She even invited the peddler to be with her family for the next Christmas Eve and*

*promised that nothing bad would happen to him.*

The man with the rattraps did not answer anything to this. He only stared

at the young girl in boundless amazement. The next morning the ironmaster and his daughter got up in good season to go to the early Christmas service.

Their guest was still asleep, and they did not disturb him.

**Boundless: limitless  
Amazement: wonder**

*The peddler did not have an answer for this and stared at the girl with*

*wonder. Next day both ironmaster and his daughter went for the Christmas*

*service early in the morning. They didn’t disturb their guest as he was*

*asleep.*

When, at about ten o’clock, they drove back from the church, the young

girl sat and hung her head even more dejectedly than usual. At church

she had learned that one of the old crofters of the ironworks had been

robbed by a man who went around selling rattraps. “Yes, that was a fine

fellow you let into the house,” said her father. “I only wonder how many

silver spoons are left in the cupboard by this time.”

**Dejected: sad**

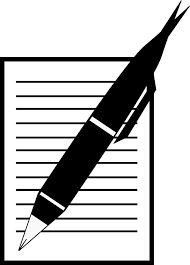
*Both iron master and his daughter had come to know that a rattrap seller*

*had stolen money from the old crofter. They realized that he was the same*

*man whom they had over as a guest. The ironmaster said that it was his*

*daughter who insisted to give shelter to a thief and was wondering that how*

*many silver spoons had been stolen by him.*



The wagon had hardly stopped at the front steps when the ironmaster

asked the valet whether the stranger was still there. He added that he

had heard at church that the man was a thief. The valet answered that

the fellow had gone and that he had not taken anything with him at all.

On the contrary, he had left behind a little package which

Miss Willmansson was to be kind enough to accept as a Christmas present.

*The ironmaster, on reaching home enquired about the peddler from*

*the valet. He also told him that he was a thief. To his surprise,*

*the valet told him that the peddler, instead of taking something had*

*left a small Christmas gift for Miss Willmansson.*

The young girl opened the package, which was so badly done up

that the contents came into view at once. She gave a little cry of joy.

She found a small rattrap, and in it lay three wrinkled ten kronor notes.

But that was not all. In the rattrap lay also a letter written in large, jagged

characters —  
“Honoured and noble Miss, “Since you have been so nice to me all day

long, as if I was a captain, I want to be nice to you, in return, as if I was

a real captain — for I do not want you to be embarrassed at this Christmas

season by a thief; but you can give back the money to the old man on

the roadside, who has the money pouch hanging on the window frame

as a bait for poor wanderers. “The rattrap is a Christmas present from a

rat who would have been caught in this world’s rattrap if he had not been

raised to captain, because in that way he got power to clear himself.

“Written with friendship and high regard,  
“Captain von Stahle.”

*The ironmaster’s daughter opened the gift. It was so roughly packed*

*that she could easily guess what was inside the pack. Apart from a rattrap*

*and three kronor notes, there was a letter. The peddler had thanked his*

*host who had taken care of him as if he was a real captain. In return, he*

*gifted her a rattrap and also requested her to return the stolen money to*

*the old man. He said that it was she who let him free from the rattrap by*

*raising his status from that of a mere peddler to that of a Captain. At last,*

*he undersigned as Captain Von Stahle.*

**In what sense was the world a big rattrap according to the peddler? (Compartment 2014)**  
**or**  
**Why did the peddler think that the world was a rattrap? (All India 2009)**  
**Answer.** The peddler was a very poor man who earned his living

by selling rattraps he made himself from the materials he got by begging.

His mind, thus, was always preoccupied with rattraps. One day,

he suddenly thought of the whole world was a big rattrap. He felt

that the shelter, food, clothes, riches and joys that the world provided

were all baits set to entrap man just as a rattrap offered cheese or meat

to entrap rats. As soon as one was trapped, everything came to an end.

**Question.2. Why did the peddler derive pleasure from his idea o**

**f the world as a rattrap?**  
**(Delhi 2014; Modified)**  
**Answer.** The world had never been kind to the poor peddler.

Wherever he went, he was greeted with sour faces and was turned

or chased away. Therefore, he derived pleasure from thinking ill of the

world in this way. Moreover, he perhaps envied those whose lot was

better than his, and was rather amused to think that some day they

too would be tempted by the bait and be caught in the Tattrap.

**Question.3. Why did the peddler knock on the cottage by the**

**roadside? How was he treated by the Owner Of the cottage? (Compartment 2014)**  
**Answer.** The peddler knocked on the cottage by the roadside to seek

shelter for the night. The owner of the cottage was a crofter who lived

there alone. He regarded the peddler as welcome company and treated

him quite hospitably. He not only put him up for the night, but also

offered him food and played cards with him.

**Question.4. Why did Edla plead with her father not to sen’d**

**the vagabond away?**  
**(All India 2014; Modified)**  
**or**  
**Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him? (NCERT)**  
**Answer.** Edla had always thought the peddler to be a poor, homeless

tramp. Therefore, she didn’t feel cheated when his true identity was

revealed. Instead, she felt very bad for him and his miserable condition,

and pleaded on his behalf. She and her father had promised

him Christmas cheer, and she felt that it would be wrong to send him away.

**Question.5. What conclusion did the ironmaster reach when he**

**heard that the crofter had been robbed by the peddler? (Compartment 2014)**  
**Answer.** It was at the church th$t the ironmaster and his daughter heard

that the crofter had been robbed by a peddler, who, no doubt, was the

one they had sheltered at the manor house. The ironmaster at once

concluded that the peddler would probably have stolen all his

silverware in their absence, and rdn away.

**Question.6. What was the content of the letter written by the**

**peddler to Edla? (Foreign 2014)**  
**Answer.** The peddler had written that since Edla had treated him

like a captain, he wanted to be nice to her in return. He did not want

her to be embarrassed at Christmas by a thief. He had requested

that the crofter’s money that he had stolen be returned. He further

wrote that the rattrap was a Christmas present from a rat who

would have been caught in the world’s rattrap, if he had not been

raised to the status of captain, which motivated him to reform himself.

**Question.7. What were the contents of the package left by the**

**peddler as Christmas gift for Edla Willmansson? (Compartment 2014)**  
**Answer.** The package left by the peddler as a Christmas gift for Edla Willmansson comprised a small rattrap with three wrinkled ten kronor notes in it, which the peddler had robbed from the crofter. It also contained a brief letter for Edla explaining the peddler’s conduct.

**Question.8. Why did the peddler decline the invitation of the ironmaster? (Delhi 2012)**  
**Answer.**The ironmaster has mistaken the peddler for an old regimental comrade and invited him home. The peddler declined the invitation because he was carrying the money he had stolen from the crofter. He knew that if the ironmaster discovered his identity, he would hand him over to the police. Therefore, for him, going to the manor house was like walking into a lion’s den.

**Question.9. Who was the owner of Ramsjo iron mills? Why did he visit the mills at night?**  
**(All India 2012)**  
**Answer.**The owner of the Ramsjo iron mills was an ex-army man and an ambitious and prominent ironmaster. He was very particular about the quality of his products, and visited the mills even at night to make sure that good iron was shipped out from his mills.

**Question.10.How did the ironmaster react on seeing the stranger lying close to the furnace?**  
**(All India 2012)**  
**Answer.** When the ironmaster saw a stranger in rags lying close to the furnace, he went near him and removed his slouch hat to get a better view of his face. Due to dim light in the forge and the peddler’s dirty appearance, he mistook him to be Nils Olof, an old acquaintance of his regiment. He was delighted to see him and invited him home for Christmas.

**Question.11.Why did the stranger not tell the ironmaster that he was not Nils Olof? (All India 2012)**  
**Answer.** The stranger did not tell the ironmaster that he was not Nils Olof because he thought that if the gentleman believed that he was an old friend or acquaintance of his, then he might take pity on him and help him with some money.

**Question.12.Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler? (Delhi 2012)**  
**Answer.** The old crofter was lonfly and leading a dreary existence as he had no wife or children. He was happy to get someone to talk to and share his thoughts with, even though it was a tramp. So he welcomed the peddler who was quite a patient listener, and extended his hospitality to him.

**Question.13.Why was the peddler surprised when he knocked on the door of the cottage?**  
**(All India 2011)**  
**Answer.** The peddler had never been treated kindly by the world. He was meted out cold treatment wherever he went. He was pleasantly surprised when the crofter greeted him with warmth and hospitality. Ordinarily, he always met ‘sour faces’ when he knocked for shelter and food, and was usually turned away.

**Question.14.Why did the peddler keep to the woods after leaving the crofter’s cottage? How did**  
**he feel?(All India 2011)**  
**Answer.** After stealing the money from the crofter’s, the peddler was cautious to. avoid the public, highway lest he be identified and caught. He got into the woods but finally realised that it was a big and confusing forest. The end of the forest was nowhere in sight and he felt lost. That’s when he recalled his thoughts about the world being a rattrap and he realised that he had indeed become a victim of a rattrap.

**Question.15.What made the peddler finally change his ways? (All India 2010)**  
**Answer.** The peddler believed in giving back to the world what he received from it. He was always treated with contempt and hostility and so he never did anything good. However, Edla’s kind and caring behaviour finally changed him. She had treated him with love and respect befitting a captain, even after realising that he was a poor vagabond. The trust that Edla showed in him made him change his ways and he decided to live with dignity and respect.

**Question.16.Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler? (All India 2010)**  
**Answer.** Edla felt very dejected when she came to know about the theft of the crofter’s money by the peddler, but the gift left behind, which consisted of a small rattrap and three wrinkled ten kronor notes, restored her faith in him. She felt happy because her trust in him had been justified. Her kindness had finally changed the peddler and brought out his essential goodness.