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Post Seppl fastened Hansi's bag to the top of the sleigh, stuffed himself a pipe, and lit it. Then he poured a little more oats into the horses' crib—all he had left in the sack—and walked into the station.
He came back with a package of letters which he put under the driver's seat. The horses were impatient to be off. They tossed their heads, jingled the bells

loudly, stamped the snow, and looked around at Seppl.

Hansi got the seat next to the driver. Then Seppl jumped up and with one wide swing that was very hard to learn he cracked his whip six times. It made a noise like a giant firecracker and everybody knew, "That's Seppl starting his team."



Then he drove into the road a little way off behind some trees.
The stag had followed them. It came with many other deer from all sides of the forest—big little fawns hardly a year old at the side of their mothers. They

were hungry, yet they fed without haste. Ever proud and free they turned their heads with halting movements—soft, brown eyes, slim bodies, lovely trim ebony hoofs.



The evening passed as quickly as the day had been slow in going. Soon it was time to go to midnight services.

This was one of those days in the year when Uncle Herman mood in frons of a mirror. He buttoned his tunic and pinned his medals on according to regulation, "six fingers down from the seam of the collar, three fingers over from the second button—right over the heart." Belt and sash were adjusted carefully. Uncle Herman breathed on the buckle and polished it with his sleeve.

Aunt Amalie said, "Why don't you ask for a piece of cloth? It's a shame—the nice new uniform."

The feathers on the green huntsman's hat were straightened out, the white gloves put on.

The children looked up in awe at their new uncle who looked like a picture of his old emperor.

Aunt Amalie had her best dress on with a wide silk shawl around her shoulders and silver lacing from which jingled heavy thalers as she walked.

Hansi and Liesel sat around like pictures painted on the wall. They had been ready for an hour, and held the little lantern that were used to light the way down the path.

Aunt Amalie put some things on the table for a small supper when they came back.

The night helped to make Christmas. All the stars were out. The windows of the mountain church shone out into the blue night from the valley and from high up little rows of lights came towards the church. People carried them. They shone up into happy, quiet faces. Silent night, holy night—only the bells of the churches rang from near and from the far white fields.

