I had been stuck at home for two weeks because of the heavy snow on the ground and I was restless. My father had died from hypothermia and I did not want to stay in the house longer than I had to as my mother was unresponsive and grieving. I was also upset, but above all bored. I left, going for a walk and I was not planning to come back for a while.

I walked in the increasingly bad snow for about two days. I had lost all sense of time and place and my eyes were hurting, the onsets of snow blindness from looking constantly at the haze of sunlight reflecting off the snow. I desperately needed to rest. A few hours later, I reached a village. It seemed like a calm village, though people were queuing up to get ice skates, it seemed. They were going skating on the frozen, icy lake. As I explored the village further, people were looking at me as if to say ‘who are you, why are you intruding’. I smiled at them. Suddenly, panic took over as the ice cracked on the lake and I heard screams of sheer terror which broke the silence as the inhabitants rushed to the lake to save their drowning friends. There was nothing anyone could do. Now, in this state of panic, I looked around. There were people everywhere, screaming, not knowing what to do. The lack of organisation was frightening, there was no communication. People were cold and seemingly hungry, pale and frightened for the people in the freezing lake who were fighting for their lives against hypothermia and drowning. The majority of them could not swim. I could not just stand by and watch. There was this girl, amongst many others, struggling in the freezing water, she looked about my age. Her parents were trying to drag her out and I rushed to help them. They thanked me and invited me into their house which was, like most of the others, made of thatch and straw.

I explained who I was and where I had come from. ‘Do you know anywhere I can stay in this village,’ I asked ‘I have cooking and cleaning skills and I can read and write’. ‘You may stay here if you will perform servant duties,’ the father said after a few moments of discussion with his wife, ‘we would be happy to have you for as long as you like’. I was immensely grateful! ‘Thank you, Sir!’ I exclaimed with a beaming smile. ‘Laura, go and show Isabell to her room please’, said the parents. Obediently, she did so. I liked my room; it was big with lots of space to hang clothes. They obviously liked me!

As for the servant duties, they were hardly anything! I had to cook two days a week and do the cleaning the rest of the time. They kept the house very tidy to minimise the amount of work I had to do and the rest of the time they allowed me to go out and play with my newly made friends, Laura included. I made lots of new friends and they accepted and understood my rather odd ways!

When I got back to the house one Wednesday evening, I was called down to the kitchen. ‘It is your turn to cook tonight’, they said angrily, ‘I expected you to be back by 4pm!’ ‘I am s-s-sorry Sir’ I stammered, bowing my head. I started making the dinner. It went down well. I went straight to bed, not wishing to anger them further. I wrote a letter to my mother documenting my adventures. I received a response to that letter from my aunt several days later. I was devastated, my mother was seriously ill. I ran down the stairs. ‘I’m sorry, Sir, Madam, I must leave. My mother is ill, I received a letter this morning’. ‘Of course, child, go’. I picked up my few possessions, thanked them again for their hospitality and left. They said that I could come back anytime. I went straight into the hospital where I was met with the devastating news that my mother had died that morning. I was distraught. I ran back, sobbing, to the other village and went straight to my room. I was now an orphan. No one came to comfort me, I felt more alone than ever in those few hours. Life was never the same again, I floated about performing household duties like a ghost followed me and it was horrible. I smiled rarely, obviously very affected by my mothers’ death. No one seemed to understand how I felt.