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Handwriting example 45

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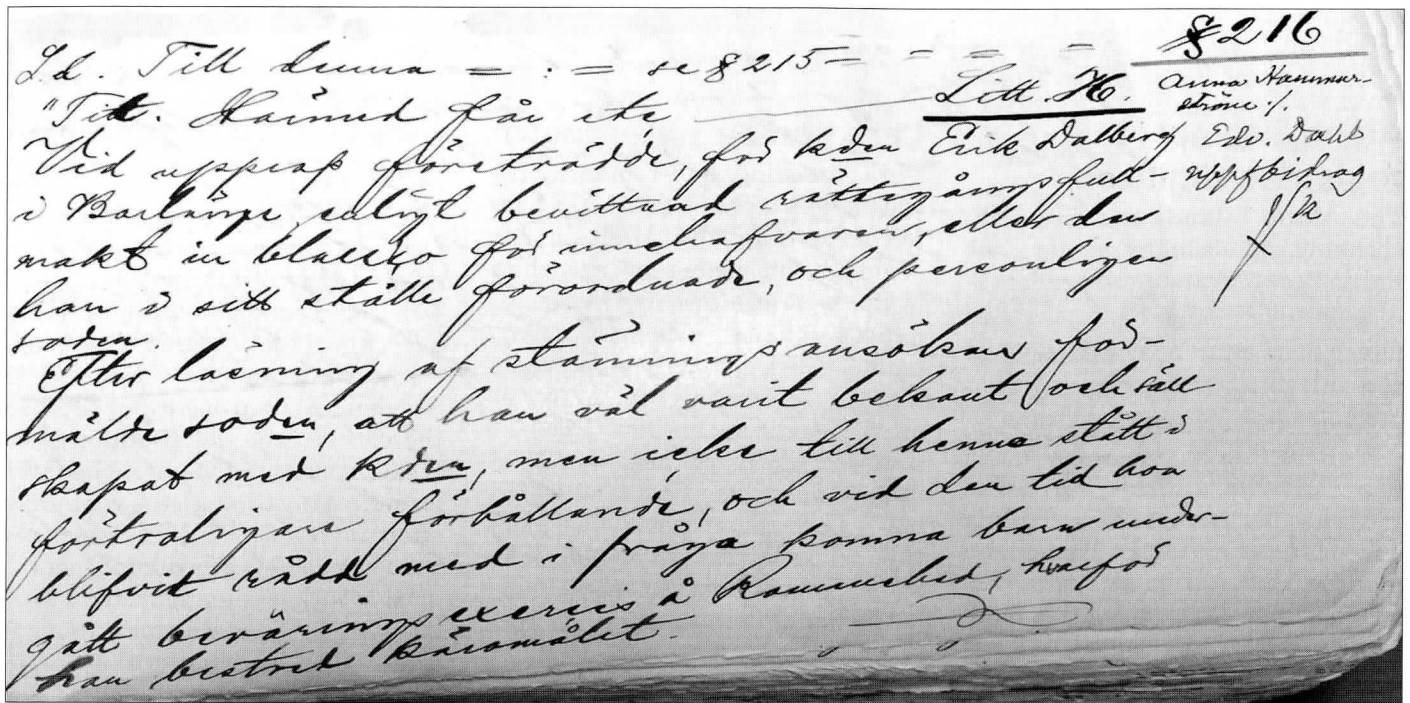
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Handwriting Example 45



Falu domsagas södra tingslags häradsrätt, AI:17 (1905), §216 (June 5), (Photo by Jan Kärrman). Translation on p. 26.

This handwriting example is a part of the court proceedings described by Jan Kärrman in his article on p. 8.

In 1864 the Swedish Penal Law (*Strafflagen*) was changed and it was no longer a crime to have a child out-of-wedlock.

In the law it is stated that an unmarried man who is cited for fornication with an unmarried woman could be fined up to one hundred *riksdaler* for adultery. Fines could only be levied if the man had been sued by the woman or her guardian to pay child support and a child was a result of their intercourse.

This change of the law made it much more difficult to trace absconding fathers. Before 1864 it was the duty of the local bailiff (*länsman*) to accuse the mother of breaking the law, and she often did not want to stand alone in the court, so she mentioned the man she claimed was the father. If he denied this, they both had the opportunity to call witnesses at the next meeting of the court. If the man still denied being the father, then the court decided that he must

go to his local clergyman and be taught about the dangers of perjury, which could lose him his eternal salvation, an awful thing to ponder. Then he should come back to the next meeting of the court and take the oath.

If he did not, he was regarded as the true father of the child.

As mentioned above, the change in the law the law lead to fewer accu-

sations of out-of-wedlock children being taken to the courts, even if the number of children grew rapidly.

In the decade 1851–1860 there were 8,887 children born out of wedlock. During the decade 1861–1870 12,266 such children were born, and during the decade 1901–1910 there were 17,404.

(Source: *Historical Statistics for Sweden 1720–1967.*)

